

6. The Leckhampton Loop

This walk guides you around one of the most beautiful and varied stretches of the Cotswold Way. From rich grassland to peaceful woodlands, from Iron Age remains to Victorian quarries, this route offers up a taste of the entire Cotswold landscape in 4½ sheltered and windswept miles.

Distance:

4 ½ miles

Duration:

2 ½ - 3 hours

Difficulty:

Moderate to easy – no stiles, some steep sections

Public transport:

No. 51 bus (Cheltenham - Swindon): ask for Seven Springs (See Cotswold Way public transport leaflet, or call Traveline on 0871 200 2233)

Start/Finish:

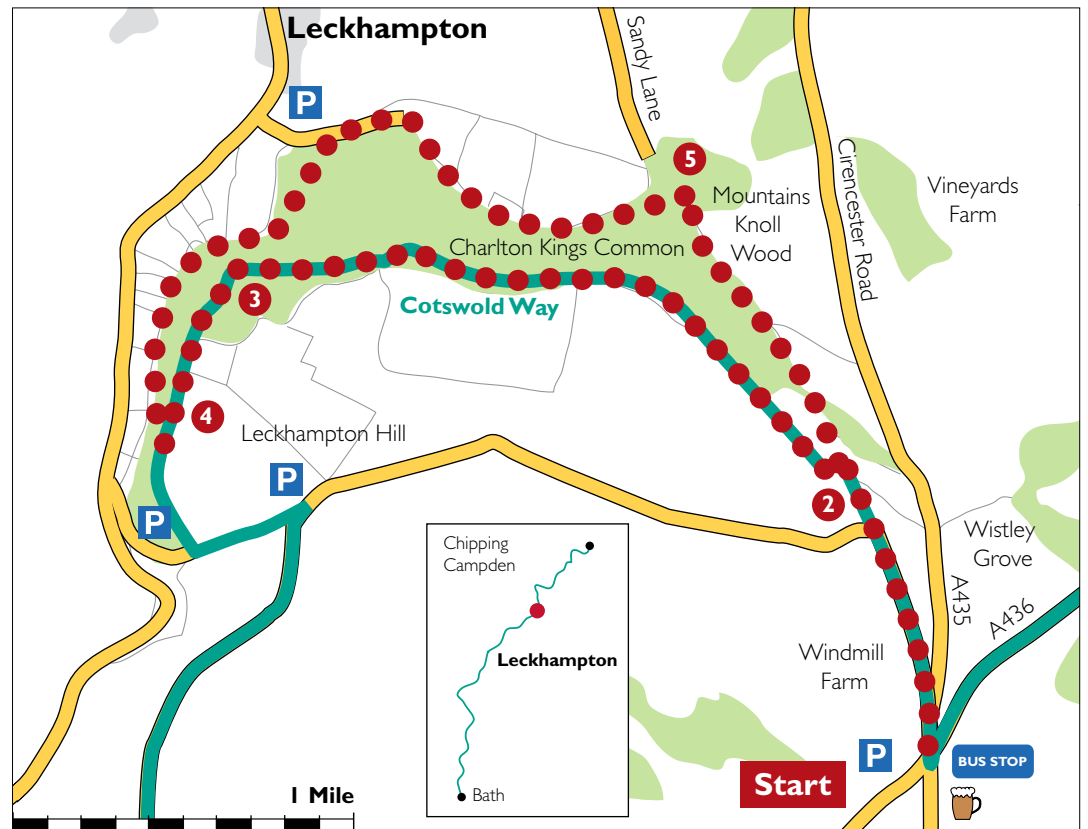
SO967170: OS Explorer sheet 179. Postcode GL53 9NG. Alternative start points are from car parks indicated on map.

Refreshments:

Pub at Seven Springs. Others nearby at Birdlip and Leckhampton.

1 Start at the lay-by opposite the pub, and take the footpath up towards the busy roundabouts and follow the Cotswold Way as it leads down the narrow road off to the left. At the junction, follow the track straight on.

2 Continue to follow the Cotswold Way up to the left, along the edge of the meadow and through the trees until you emerge onto grassland at the top of the slope. This precious nature reserve is expertly managed in partnership



with volunteers from the Friends of Leckhampton Hill and Charlton Kings Common (FOLK). Keep on the Trail as it follows the edge of the scarp for just over a mile, eventually passing through ramparts to the left of the pine trees. Enter into this Iron Age hillfort, built between 500 and 100BC, and continue on towards the viewpoint.

3 Take a few minutes to breathe in the magnificent views, and then follow the path to your left, through the gap in the bushes. For a short detour to an iconic Cotswolds landmark, the Devil's Chimney, follow the path down to the right. After puzzling at this intriguing monument to the hill's quarrying past, retrace your steps to the gap in the bushes and then continue to follow the Cotswold Way along the top of the hill. After about 400 yards look for a waymarker post

down to your right, approximately 15 yards from the path. At this point leave the Cotswold Way, head for the marker post and follow the steepish path leading diagonally down across the slope into a wooded area

4 At the bottom of the slope continue along the peacefully enchanting woodland path, keeping the tumbledown wall on your left. After approximately a quarter of a mile you will pass a number of houses on the left hand side; at this point the Devils Chimney can be clearly seen, up towards the top of the slope on the right. Continue along the path until you reach the old quarry buildings at the junction of five paths. Take the second path on the left, an old quarry tramway, and continue straight downhill to the fence and gates at the bottom. Turn right and continue to follow

the road after it becomes an unmade track for half a mile along the bottom of the escarpment, eventually forking right to take the narrow footpath.

5 At the end of the path, follow the waymarkers left, then right, then continue on the wider track all the way along the bottom of the hill until you rejoin the Cotswold Way at point 2. From here, retrace your steps back to the start. This spectacular and diverse walk is now at an end, but the rest of the Cotswold Way is waiting to welcome you back for another splendid stroll.