

8. Commons and Canals - The Selsley Circuit

This extremely popular walk is one of the easiest to follow, winding its way along the National Trail for nearly all of its length. From sheltered beech woodlands and over rich open grassland, it guides you around remnants of an industrial past that shaped the landscape we love today. Wander between the grandeur of Victorian mills alongside the sleepy beauty of the waterway, and discover a timeless journey between past and present that reveals yet another face of the glorious Cotswolds.

Distance:

5 miles

Duration:

3 - 4 hours

Difficulty:

Moderate - Three stiles, some steep sections.

Public transport:

No 14 bus between Stroud and Gloucester or train to Stonehouse. See Cotswold Way public transport leaflet, or call Traveline on 0871 200 2233

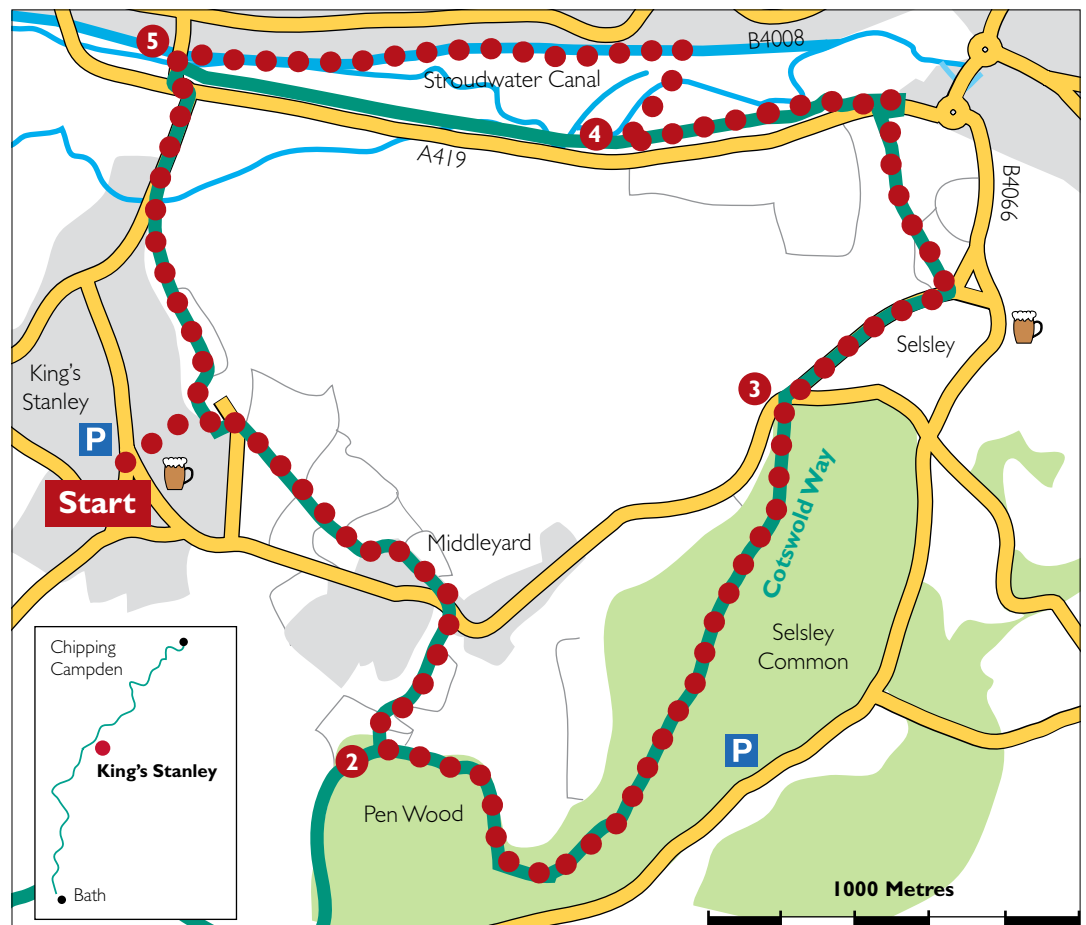
Start/Finish:

Grid reference SO812035
(OS Explorer sheet 168)
postcode GL10 3JD

Refreshments:

Pubs in Kings Stanley and Selsley

1 Start the walk at the Kings Head pub, with the free car park behind you and the playing fields ahead. Pass around the left of the fields, turning right after the ball-sports court, making for the waymarker post between the floodlights. Turn left to head down the steps and over the little footbridge. Continue straight on to join the Cotswold Way, ignoring the gate to the left, and head right to follow the signs over the fields. Continue around the edge of the fields, until you emerge out at Middleyard Baptist Chapel. Turn left and in 50 yards turn right across the road to head up Coombe Lane. Carry on following the Cotswold Way as it forks right up a track, over a stile and across a meadow. After the



second stile, turn left up the metalled road and then into a steep, stony gully.

2 At the top, turn left at the fingerpost and follow the path down through the woods. Carry on around the edge of the woods, crossing over a small road, and after half a mile keep your eyes peeled for a marker post pointing up a steep track to the right. At the top of this track, pass through a kissing gate to exchange the shelter of the woods for the wide open space of Selsley Common. Head straight onto the common, taking the path up towards the large ash tree. As the incredible views open up to your left, ignore the path around the bottom of the hill and head straight on up towards the benches. After a moment to catch your breath and cast your eyes across the Severn Estuary into Wales, continue straight uphill towards the Toots, an Iron Age burial mound. Pass over the crest of the hill between the long barrow and the topograph,

and follow the path straight downhill towards the church below.

3 At the bottom of the path, pass through the gate, cross the road and follow the signs along to the right past the lychgate. If you are in need of peace and cool serenity, there is no finer place on this walk than Selsley Church with its beautiful 19th Century stained glass windows designed by leaders of the Arts and Crafts movement such as William Morris and Ford Madox-Brown. Continue on past the houses, crossing a stile on the left to follow the Cotswold Way. Heading down across the fields towards the fence at the bottom, beautiful views spread out beneath you of a valley rich in industrial heritage and with Ebley Mill its centrepiece. Pass through the kissing gate and take the pedestrian crossing over the road, continuing left along the cycle track.

4 After just under half a mile, pass through the kissing gate on your right and follow the path across the fields towards the river. Pass over a small bridge and through an area of new housing, turning left when you meet the canal. Continue alongside the picturesque Stroudwater Navigation, opened in 1779 and soon to be restored, for just under a mile until you reach a second bridge at Ryeford.

5 Leaving the canal behind, take the path up to the left and head down towards the busy road. Cross at the lights and follow the signs up past Stanley Mill. Keeping a good ear and eye out for traffic, cross the road just after the bridge to follow the high path across the top of the fields. Follow the Cotswold Way past two footbridges, turning right after the gate at the end and retrace the steps you took those five wonderful, scenic, historic miles before.