

5. Cleeve Hill Common ring

This breathtaking walk leads you over open hilltops, across streams and through woodlands, immersing you in one of the country's most fascinating and precious habitats – limestone grassland. Over half of this wildflower and butterfly rich natural resource is within the Cotswolds and some of the finest examples are on Cleeve Common. The unsurpassed views along this route therefore, are the perfect backdrop for getting even closer to the outstanding natural beauty of the Cotswold Way.

Distance:

6 miles (Shorter route 4 miles)

Duration:

3½ - 4½ hrs (Shorter: 2 - 3 hrs)

Difficulty:

Moderate, no stiles but some steep sections (Shorter: Easy, no stiles and mostly level)

Public transport:

No. 606 bus from Cheltenham/Winchcombe – ask for Golf Course junction (See the 'Explore the Cotswolds' public transport guide or visit www.traveline.info)

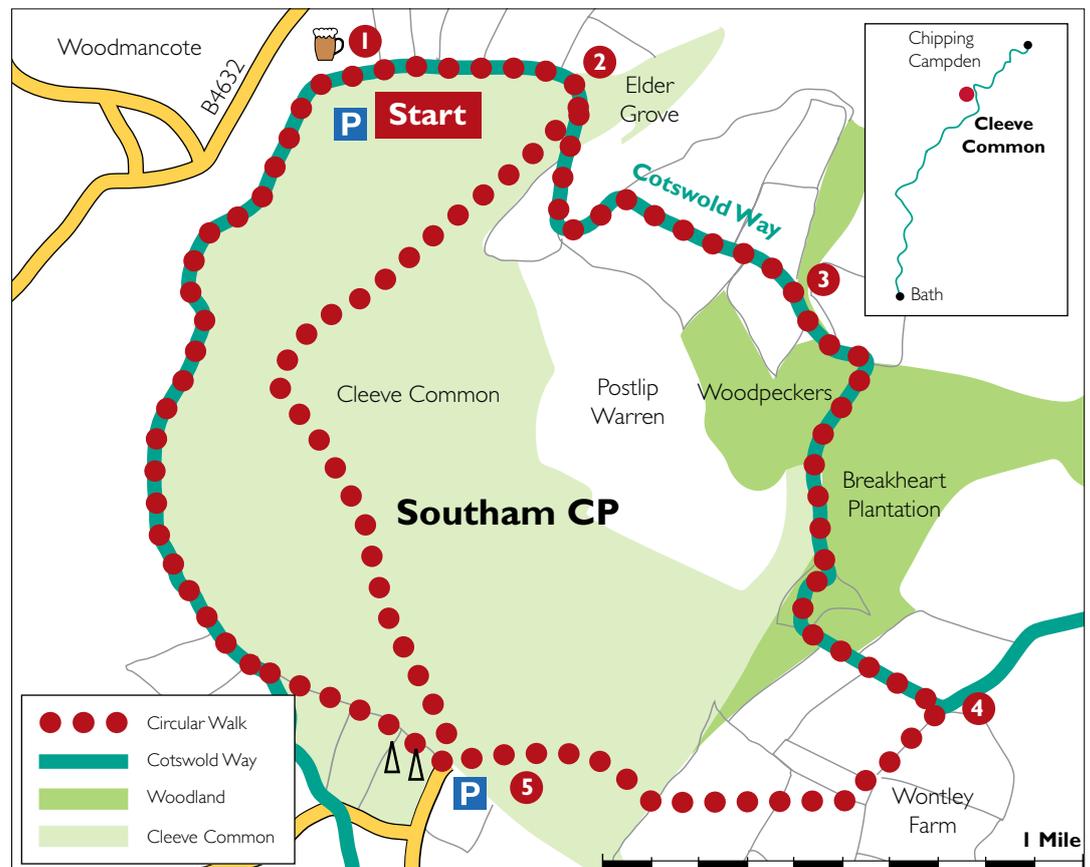
Start/Finish:

Grid reference SO989272
(OS Explorer sheet 179)
Postcode GL52 3PW

Refreshments:

Bar café/restaurant at Golf Club.
Toilets and extra parking for customers.

1 Start at the quarry car park across the track from golf clubhouse. Leave the car park and turn right to follow the track with the golf course on the right and a stone wall (and a wonderful view of Winchcombe nestled in its valley) on your left. Through a metal field gate and along a hedged section, taking care to follow the



Cotswold Way markers, to a second metal field gate.

2 Through the gate and then the decision – for the short cut see the last paragraph. For the main walk follow the Cotswold Way which is the middle of the three tracks facing you, angling downhill. Through the gate at the bottom, past the high stone wall of the 17th century Postlip Hall, past various farm buildings and out onto a metalled road. Turn right, still on the Cotswold Way, and pass through the farm (There is a detour signposted for when the farm is busy!) down a field to a stream at the edge of a small wood.

3 At any time of the year, the shade of the woodlands and the calming sound of peacefully flowing water make this little bridge the ideal spot to stop and rest awhile before the climbs ahead. When you are ready, cross over the bridge and follow the Way up to the right. At

the top, pass through the gate and across the paddock, turning right when you meet the road. Carry on past the stable, and continue to follow the signs through the woods. After the steep climb snaking up the wooded hillside the Way will take you along a field edge and under some pylons before arriving at a kissing gate and an unmade road.

4 Now leave the Cotswold Way by turning right, and follow the road down to reach some deserted farm buildings. Turn right through a gateway and follow the path slowly uphill through the fields towards the radio masts in the distance. Pass through a gate back onto the common and take the path on the right towards the waymarker post, and continue to head for the masts.

5 At the masts, turn right to follow the fenceline until you meet the Cotswold Way. Continue right

along the edge of the escarpment, past some of the finest views in England, over the golf course, and down towards the reward awaiting you at the clubhouse. A rest at the end of your walk is a chance to plan the next...

The Shortcut – for this choose the track leading off sharp right from the gate. There are no route marker posts on this section, but simply choose the most level of the the routes at any junction. After a while the path will get narrower and you will find yourself walking up a shallow dry valley. At the top this will meet a much more substantial track – turn left. Soon the three masts which are your target will come into view – follow the track until it fades away and veers off course, then strike across the common for the last 200m. At the fence line turn left and you have rejoined the main route at point 5.