



Juniper Bottom, Box Hill, Juniper Top

Distance: 5½ km=3½ miles
or 3¼ km=2 miles

easy walking with some long gradients

Region: Surrey

Date written: 8-dec-2013

Author: Fusszweig

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Refreshments: Box Hill

Last update: 19-feb-2022

Map: Explorer 146 (Dorking) *but the maps in this guide should be sufficient*

Problems, changes? We depend on your feedback: feedback@fancyfreewalks.org

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Woodland, heath, high hills, views

In Brief

This walk takes you up to Box Hill via the beautiful “side entrance” known as *Happy Valley* or Juniper Bottom. After a tour of Box Hill for views and two chances for refreshment, you return over Juniper Top, a heavenly high grassy slope with wonderful views. An optional shorter version does only Juniper Bottom and Top.

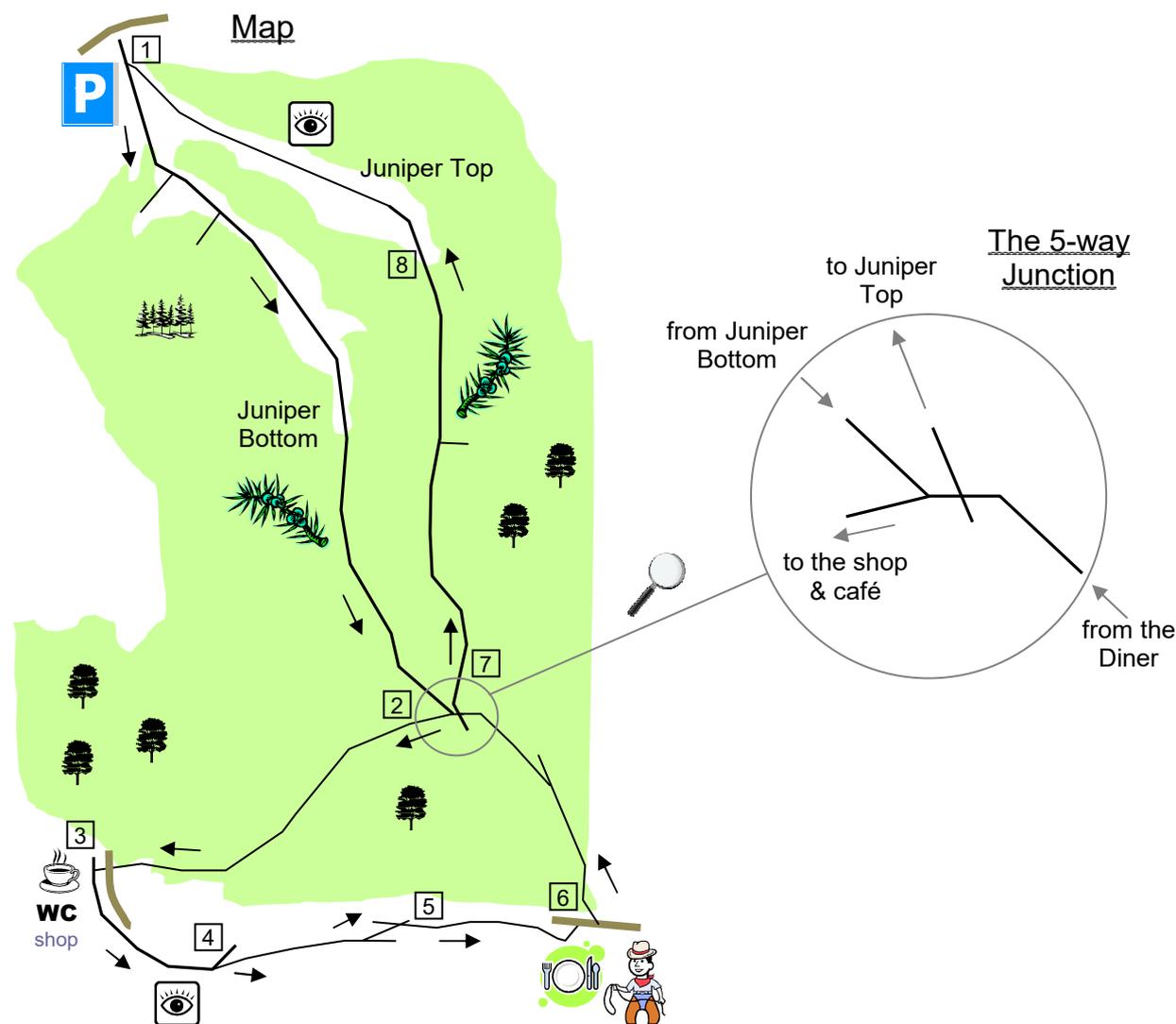


There are no nettles or stiles on this walk and the going underfoot is usually very dry. In a wet winter, you may need to cross a waterlogged section, so you will be glad to be wearing boots. Nevertheless, this is a walk to suit *any* season, with *any* suitable footwear and clothing and, not least, any four-legged companion.



The walk begins at the free **Whitehill NT car park**, near Mickleham, Surrey, **postcode RH5 6DF**, grid ref TQ 180 525. It is best to arrive early as this small car park gets full very quickly. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk



- 1 Take the main track leading from the back of the car park. Ignore a wooden gate, fingerpost and footpath on your left shortly after, staying on the main track. In 100m or so, go through a wooden gate beside a larger one, soon coming out into the open. You pass a stile on the left and several steep paths on the right. Ignore all these side paths: this is a gentle walk and there are no gradients to speak of. This path is properly called *Juniper Bottom* and you can see why from the juniper bushes mingling with yew trees and box trees from which Box Hill gets its name. It is popularly called *Happy Valley* and that seems fitting from the various plants, trees and flowers. You pass a group of larches and the track curves to the right, getting a bit steeper, passing through another wooden gate. Soon the trees seem to close in quite densely, then you are in the open once more with the trees changing to beech. The path gets steeper and the final section may test your legs a bit until finally, 1½ km from the start, you reach the top. You are at a junction of five wide paths under with dark yew trees. (Look for the “**5-Way Junction**” in the map above.) Here you have a choice:

Decision point. If you are doing the short option, the walk that comes directly back over Juniper Top, veer sharp **left** on a wide path immediately reaching a four-way junction. Turn **left** here and skip forward in this guide to section [7](#). (See the magnified detail on the map.)

 **2** Immediately turn **sharp right** on the first wide path, with a (broken) sign *Car Parks / Café*. Stay on this wide twisty path, avoiding all side paths, passing several marker posts. After about 500m on this path, you reach a donation pillar with a wide grassy space ahead. The café and shop are straight ahead and of course you can find your way from here. The author of this guide kept right to reach the car park and walked along the right-hand side to cross the road and reach the servery area. *There is a café inside the shop to your left, also loos. There are several books in the shop dedicated to Box Hill and its plant and animal life.*

 **3** After refreshment, with the shop on your right, follow the main surfaced path in the direction of the *Viewpoint* and other sights. Continue on the path parallel to the road and follow it to reach a sudden spectacular view south with a platform showing directions to various landmarks. *Below to the right is Dorking and to the left, much smaller, is Brockham. (See the “Mole Villages” walk in this series.) Gatwick Airport is visible to the left in the distance with the South Downs beyond. The high hills to the right are the Greensand Hills, beginning with Leith Hill (seven walks in this series go there). You cannot see the North Downs because you are standing on them! After checking out the Viewpoint, continue in the same direction on a wide path which is part of the North Downs Way (NDW), a long-distance path that runs from Farnham to Dover. Very shortly you reach a fingerpost [Feb 2021: grounded] with the NDW signed as a left fork.*

 **4** *If you like, you can take this left fork and stay on the NDW, but this walk takes a parallel, more scenic, route.* Keep straight ahead, temporarily leaving the NDW, to go through a small wooden gate. Up on your left is a curved stone seat. You have some more spectacular views south with some places to pause and admire. In only 50m, opposite a plain wooden bench on your left, immediately before your path runs through some thorn bushes, fork **left** up a shallow bank onto a very narrow path. You pass trees on your left and a bench seat with a rounded back. Your path goes diagonally up the hillside, joining another path, heading for a small wooden gate. But before the gate, turn **right** on a wide path, thus re-joining the NDW.

 **5** The NDW takes you through another gate ahead into woodland with a group of yews and beeches. Keep on the main fairly level path avoiding turn-offs. You pass a post with a yellow arrow and white acorn symbol. Soon after, in a yew glade, avoid the steps down on your right and keep ahead, veering **left** to meet the road. Turn **right** on a path beside the road, immediately meeting a welcome sign for Box Hill village. Here you have a second chance for refreshments. *The Smith & Western Bar Grill Diner is a fun family eatery providing burgers, nachos, BBQ ribs and the like, plus cold beer. The piped music has been assessed by transatlantic visitors as a woeful introduction to country music.* Just after the welcome sign, cross the road and take a footpath opposite, sharp **left**, into woodland. (If coming back from the diner, this is a right turn.)

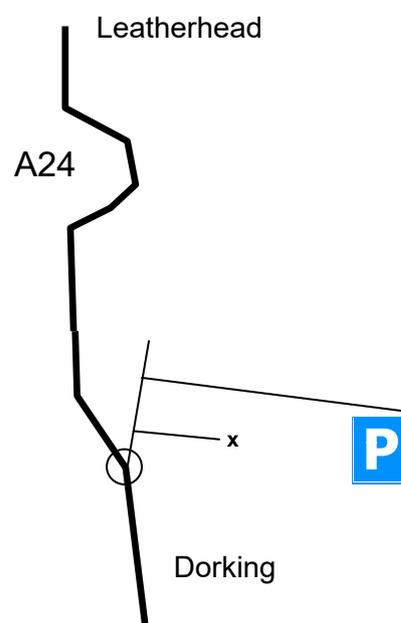
6 Stay on the main path all the time, with a not-so-mobile homes village beyond the fence on your right. You soon reach a corner of the fence, with a dark yew glade on your right. Just keep going straight on. In 100m you reach a fork in the path: take the **left** fork, the major path, avoiding a more grassy path straight ahead. After another 150m or so, it veers left to a major junction of paths by a post with a blue arrow (the “**5-Way Junction**” again). Turn **right** here on a wide path.

The shorter walk re-joins the main walk [here](#).

- 7 In 30m you pass a post with blue arrows and a NT symbol . Always stay on the main path, avoiding all side paths. When you pass a post with a blue arrow, again ignore the right turn and stay on the main path, passing a sign that says *Walkers Only*. Your nice wide level path runs through woods for another 500m and finally leads you to a large wooden gate. Go through the small wooden gate beside it onto the open hillside of Juniper Top, one of the most exhilarating sights in Surrey.
- 8 Keep to the left-hand side of the grassy slope, on a comfortable downhill course. (In fact this slope is used as a “green run” for skiing when there is snow.) *The cattle here are the quiet-natured belted Galloways*. Near the bottom, you pass a bench over on your left and a footpath joining from the right. Finally you reach a large wooden gate. Go through a small wooden gate beside it onto the track you used on the outward journey. Veer **right** on it to arrive back at the car park where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: to reach the Whitehill Car Park, take the A24 between Leatherhead and Dorking, turn off at the Burford Bridge roundabout, signposted *Mickleham Box Hill*, go past the hotel on the Old London Road and take the **second** road on the right. This is *not* the Zig Zag Road but the road after it, Headley Road, opposite a bus stop. The car park is 600m on the right.



By bus/train: bus 516 goes from Leatherhead station to Headley, including Sundays. Bus 465 has a request stop at the junction of Old London Road and Headley Road. Check the timetables.

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