Fancy Free Walks *point your feet on a new path*

Devil's Punch Bowl: High Road and Pine Valley

Distance: 9½ km=6 miles — easy walking

Region: Surrey — Date written: 25-may-2017

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Refreshments: Devil's Punchbowl pub or café — Last update: 25-sep-2026

Map: Explorer 133 (Haslemere) *but the map in this guide should be sufficient*

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

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Dramatic hills, woodland, views, quiet lanes, cottages, austere pinewoods

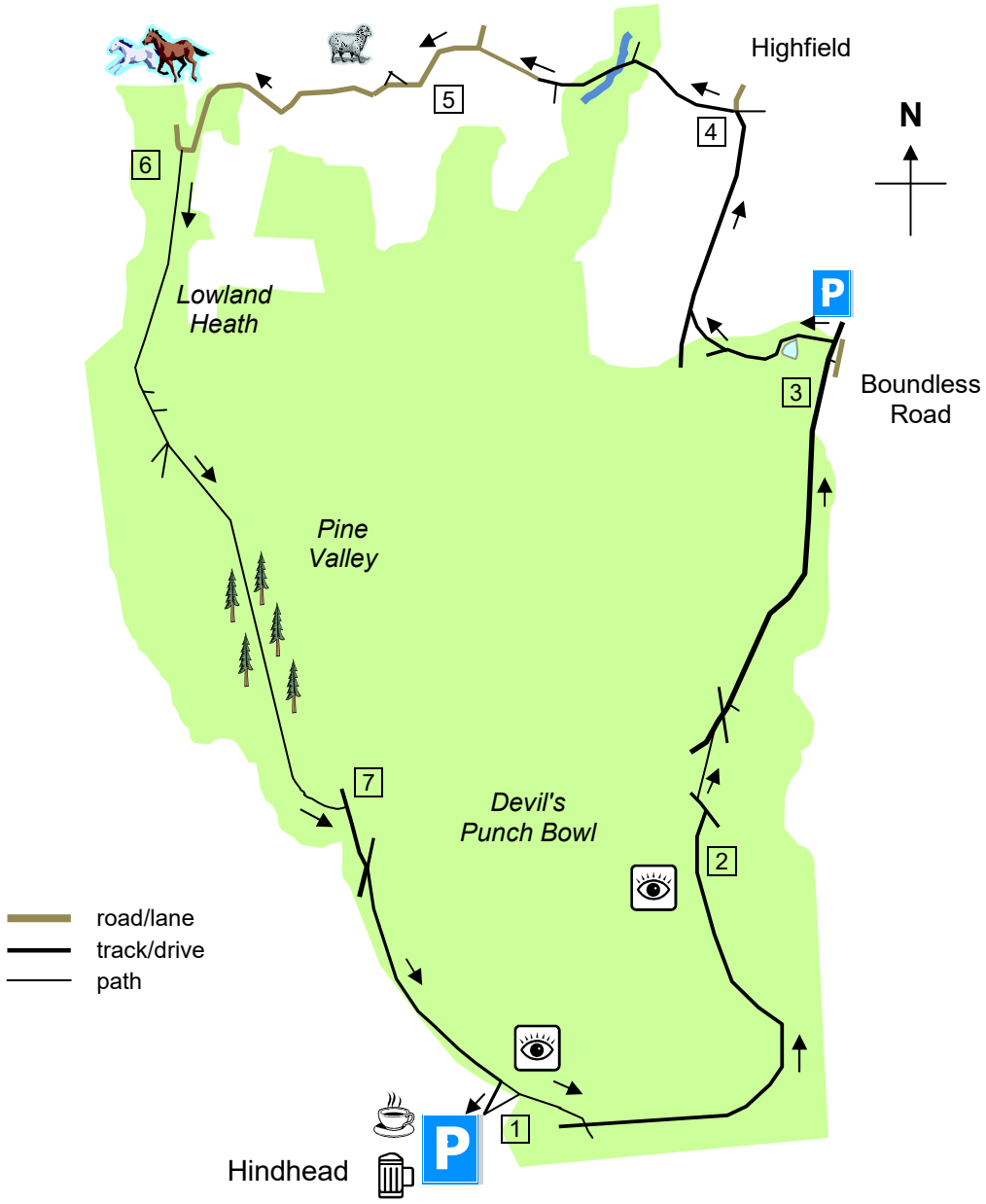
In Brief

After the construction of the Hindhead Tunnel, the old winding Portsmouth Road was returned to its pristine state and is now a glorious scenic walk where you can breathe the air of the moorland far away from traffic, with huge open views. Only later as you descend do you become aware of the traffic, only to disappear quickly into peaceful woodland. The middle section takes you along a quiet village lane passing some period houses and farmsteads. The last section is a lonely brooding pinewood where you might not meet another walker. Indeed, this walk is one of the quietest in this popular adventure spot. The route is simple, making this a sociable walk with time to chat (or meditate) without the risk of going astray.

There are no nettles on this walk so shorts are wearable. This is a good winter walk because there are only two potentially muddy sections: just after Highfield Farm and in the Pine Valley; nevertheless, except in a dry summer, you will find boots a blessing. Your dog can also come on this adventure, with a lead for the section along the lane.

The walk begins at the **National Trust Punch Bowl** car park, postcode **GU26 6AG**, w3w:lizards.cooked.totally. There is a charge to non-NT members. There is also a small *free* car park at Highcombe Edge (postcode **GU26 6SJ**, w3w:tilt.grudging.dragonfly). Another good start is the free **Punch Bowl Lane** car park, just off Boundless Road, 2 km south of Thursley (w3w:skin.grants.series), no postcode but the approach road goes *past* **GU8 6NJ**); this gives you a break after 4 miles at the Punch Bowl Café. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk



1 From the back of the car park, go to the famous viewpoint over the Punch Bowl to take in some of the landscape that will soon be under your feet. Turn **right** on a path which runs round the rim. In 100m keep straight ahead, avoiding a left fork with a metal gate. In 150m, you meet a very wide crossing track with some stone sculpture on your right. Turn **left** on this generous sandy/grassy path, passing through a metal gate.

So many of us still remember the scenic traffic jams as lorries, cars and buses ground their way round the curves on this road, and the congestion coming from the southwest on the long crawl up to Hindhead. What a difference! There is no trace of the old road surface – in fact it is no longer level but takes on the natural contour of the hillside. It is certainly hard to imagine two lines of traffic speeding along this road. The Hindhead tunnel was opened in 2011 and this re-landscaping began shortly afterwards.

The path bends left, all the time with terrific views to your left. The relay mast on the other side will be on your return stretch.

2 After a pleasant 1¼ km, you pass some through a grove newly planted oak saplings, now on a narrower course. Go over an oblique crossing path via a metal rider's gate. Continue straight over, following the path, rising gently, bearing left shortly to join a wider drive. In 200m, a tarmac driveway joins you from the left. From this point, stay on this tarmac drive, ignoring a crossing byway and ignoring a footpath shortly after on your right. After ½ km on this easy surface you pass a milestone showing that you are half way between Liphook and Godalming whilst the roar of the new Portsmouth Road gets more and more obvious. In a further ½ km you come through a gate with the narrow Boundless Road on your right and the A3 road itself just beyond. Keep **left**, into the National Trust Punch Bowl Lane car park (alternative start).

3 With the main A3 road on your right, go to the end of the car park and turn **left** at a fingerpost on a dirt drive uphill, marked as a byway. You come through a large wooden gate to avoid a cattle grid and pass a weedy pond on your left. Note the small flecks of tarmac along these paths, indicating their importance in past decades. 300m from the road, you reach a fork with red arrows. Take the **right** fork. Your track curves right and then goes past (or over) a new cattle grid and continues on a wide sunken track under banks of tall beeches. Veer **right** on this track, passing a bucolic landscape on your left. You pass a house and quickly arrive at the hamlet of Highfield with a junction and a 4-way fingerpost.

4 Turn sharp **left** on a tarmac drive and, by a house, keep **right** steeply down a slope. (Riders often turn left and sharp right up a narrow path rather than risk the slope, as you can too.) The route is now a dirt track which may be muddy in winter. It curves left to reach a ford over a stream bed in an area rich with ferny fronds and tree roots. Ignore a footpath on the right and use the footbridge to stay dry shod. Your track resumes uphill, soon more steeply, climbing out of the gulch and passing meadows and gardens, becoming a surfaced drive. You meet a tarmac lane at a bend. Ignore a bridleway on your left and the lane on your right and keep straight on, joining the lane ahead. (The grassy path up a slope just to its right is private and not an alternative footway.)

5 The lane soon curves right past the picturesque *Upper Ridgeway Farm* and its reedy pond. Stay on this quiet lane all the time, avoiding tracks on your right and avoiding a bridleway on your left as the lane bends right. You pass *Glenhead* on your left then the paddocks of Hyde Hill Farm and, on your right, the fabulous timbered *Hyde Farm House* which is Grade-II listed. On your right is a long green valley which must be horse-heaven. The lane suddenly takes a right hairpin. **Leave** the lane here by turning **left** at a small fingerpost, just after the entrance driveway of *Woodlands*.

6 The path runs straight into the deep forest. In around 650m the area on your right is more open, due to restoration of the ancient lowland heath by the *Countryside Restoration Trust*. Later, ignore swing-gates on your left and stay on the main path at all times. After a total of 800m on this path, you reach a multiple junction in a clearing with a marker post. Ignore paths ahead and to your right and instead turn **squarely left** at the marker post, on a path which wheels right and runs close to the sloping pine forest on your left. Soon you are in a V-shaped valley with pine slopes on both sides.

Follow this austere path, keeping straight ahead at a marker post after 300m. If there is a choice of paths it makes no difference because the valley confines you. (In 2026: this area has become popular with cyclists, so *keep a look out*!) After a dense patch of rhododendrons, you are joined by overhead wires. The path now climbs out of the forest and curves left as it comes up to meet a fingerpost and a surfaced driveway.

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Turn **right** on the drive. You reach a major junction of tracks at Highcombe Edge under the big relay tower, with a small car parking area on your left. Avoid a semi-tarmac drive straight ahead and instead veer **left** on a wide level dirt track leading through woods. Soon there is a bench on your right with fine views into the Punch Bowl. Keep straight on at a marker post, soon reaching the viewpoint, parking area and café where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: For the **Devil's Punch Bowl** car park, take the A3 and turn off, just south of the tunnel, at a sign for *Hindhead*; at the traffic lights in Hindhead, keep straight ahead into a cul-de-sac. The car park is on the left. Refreshments are available at the Punch Bowl (or Punchbowl) Café.

If you decide to park at the **Punch Bowl Lane** car park, (a) if coming from the **north** (Guildford or London) filter **left** off the A3 as for ***Thursley***. Cross over the A3 and turn **left** as for the village. But in 300 yds where the road forks, instead of keeping right on the main road into the village, fork **left** downhill, passing a house and an engineering workshop. In only 50 yds after the workshop, at a road junction, turn **right** onto Boundless Road at a sign for *Boundless*. (b) if coming from the **southwest**, 2 miles after the tunnel, filter **left** as for ***Bowlhead Green, Thursley***, but in 250 yds, at a road junction, turn **left** onto Boundless Road at a sign for *Boundless*. (a) or (b) This lane goes for 2 km=1.2 miles parallel to the A3 road, where the (unmarked) car park (just a wide strip parallel to the road) is on your right.

By bus and train: several bus services from Haslemere station. Check the timetables.

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