Walk Highlights

Chalk grassland is home to a wide variety of plants and animals. Grazing animals help to maintain the balance of different plants found here, which provide valuable food for rare butterflies including the Adonis blue, silver-spotted skipper and Duke of Burgundy. It is also a home for many threatened birds, including skylarks.

St. Catherine’s Hill is a wildlife-rich chalk grassland nature reserve with an abundance of wildflowers and butterflies. The Hill is also an Iron Age hillfort and boasts spectacular views over Winchester and the Itchen Valley. The reserve is owned by Winchester College and managed by the Wildlife Trust. In the summer, look out for musk orchids and frog orchids on the south facing slope.

In December 1991, Twyford Down became the site of the UK’s first road protest camp when environmentalists gathered to try and hinder work on the construction of the final link in the M3. Despite years of protests, the highly controversial road building project was completed in 1994.

The Itchen Navigation Heritage Trail Project is a Heritage Lottery Fund project managed by the Wildlife Trust, preserving an internationally important chalk river system for future generations. Find out more about the Itchen Navigation at: www.itchennavigation.org.uk
Take a walk across the rolling hills of the South Downs National Park and along the stunning Itchen river valley.

1. From Compton Lock, go through the right hand gate into the water meadows and follow the path heading southeast.

2. Go through the gate into the next field and keep left along the field edge. Cross the bridge over the river.

3. Go up Berry Lane past Twyford Parish Church. Cross Twyford Road (B3335) and continue onto Bourne Lane.

4. At Bourne Field take the footpath straight ahead.

5. At the end of the path, turn left and follow the road to the waterworks.

6. Turn right onto the track before the waterworks (under a vehicle barrier).

7. Turn left onto Mare Lane.

8. At the T-junction cross the road and join the footpath. Follow the path to the motorway.

9. Cross the bridge over the motorway and take the path around the left hand side of St. Catherine’s Hill.

10. When you reach the Itchen Navigation, turn left and follow the towpath south to the motorway. Cross the road at the level crossings and follow the pavement along the Twyford Road a short distance until the footpath turns right off the road. Follow the Itchen Navigation south.