

HARE AND HOUNDS LANSDOWN TRAIL: FINE VIEWS AND FURLONGS, SOMERSET



Moderate Terrain

5.5 miles
Circular
2.5 hours

120617



Access Notes



- IMPORTANT NOTE:** The loop through Bath Racecourse is only passable on days when race meetings are not taking place, so check the racecourse website before you travel.
- The route follows mainly grass paths through pastures and the racecourse, which can get muddy after wet weather.
- The walk is relatively flat with just a few gentle gradients. You will need to negotiate several kissing gates and pass under horse-railings, but there are no stiles on route.
- You will cross three hillside pastures that may be holding cattle, but these pastures are very large so you may not see the cattle and there is usually room to give them a wide berth.
- Dogs are welcome in the racecourse site, but please do not allow them to wander onto the track itself.

The Hare and Hounds is a great pub situated just north of Bath city centre, where you will find fabulous food, friendly service and stunning views.

A 5.5 mile circular walk from the Hare and Hounds in Bath, Somerset. The walking route leads you along the natural high plateau of Lansdown Hill, with superb views all the way. Heading through lush hillside pastures, you will pass Beckford's Tower, the former retreat of a novelist, before crossing playing fields to reach Bath Racecourse. The loop around the racecourse includes a visit to the toposcope viewpoint at Prospect Stile, with far-reaching views across Bath, Bristol and beyond.

Getting there

The Hare and Hounds is located on Lansdown Road, about 1.5 miles north of Bath city centre. If you are coming by car, the pub has its own car park and there is additional roadside parking available as well (but please do not block the neighbouring driveways).

Approximate post code **BA1 5TJ**.

If you are coming by public transport, the Lansdown Park bus stops are directly outside the Hare and Hounds, served by buses from Bath city centre (including Bus 31 for Lansdown Park and Ride).

Walk Sections



Start to Beckford's Tower



Leave the car park via the vehicle entrance and turn right along the pavement. As you draw opposite the side road,

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Lansdown Park, cross over the main road with care to swap to the left-hand pavement. Continue past the bus stop called Hamilton House and, where the pavement ends, turn left onto the rough access lane. The lane leads you immediately to the right of Hamilton House. At the fork in the track, take the right-hand branch and this leads you to a metal kissing gate.

NOTE: You may come across cattle in the next few fields. You will be following the top field boundaries and the fields are very large, so you may not see them and there is usually space for you to give the cattle a wide berth.

Go through the gate into the first pasture, walk ahead for a few paces and then turn right through another kissing gate to enter the second pasture. Keep directly ahead along the top boundary of this field. There are beautiful views across Bath to your left and a stone wall running up to your right. Beyond this wall is a cemetery and a tall ornate tower.

Beckford's Tower is a neo-classical tower, crowned with an octagonal lantern decorated with gilt gold columns. Completed in 1827, it was commissioned by William Beckford as a study retreat and to house his precious collection of art and rare books. Beckford was an English novelist, an art collector and patron of works of decorative art, a critic and travel writer. From the top of the tower, using a strong spyglass, Beckford could make out shipping in the Bristol Channel. The surrounding cemetery was, in his lifetime, part of a beautiful pleasure garden known as Beckford's Ride, which ran from his house in Lansdown Crescent up to the tower at the top of Lansdown Hill. The tower is now home to a museum displaying furniture originally made for the tower, alongside paintings, prints and objects illustrating William Beckford's life.

1 → 2 Beckford's Tower to Lansdown Lane



Continue to the far end of the field. Pass through the kissing gate and go ahead across this third (narrow) field, where another gate leads you into a fourth pasture. A few paces in, you will reach a waymarker post, marking a choice of two paths. Take the right-hand path, which continues along the top boundary of this field.

Follow the subtle grass track leading you along the length of this fourth pasture, reaching a waymarker post halfway along. Bear right here and follow the narrow path winding along the top boundary and passing through several sections of hawthorn bushes to reach the gate in the far top corner. Go through the gate into a rough meadow and follow the grass path which leads you to a wooden kissing gate in the right-hand wall boundary.

Go right through the gate and then immediately left to follow a stone track (along the edge of sports fields) and then an enclosed tarmac access track. Where the tarmac track swings

right, go straight ahead to join the grass path continuing along the left-hand boundary. Simply stay along the left-hand edge of this large grass playing field, winding alongside trees and passing the fenced park and ride car park across to your right. At the far end, go ahead through a kissing gate to reach a junction with Lansdown Lane.

2 → 3 Lansdown Lane to Prospect Stile



Turn left along the grass verge and then the tarmac lay-by. At the end of the lay-by, cross over the road to turn right onto the signed public footpath (leading you through a gap in the stone wall).

NOTE: You are now entering the site of Bath Racecourse, and this loop is only suitable when horse racing meetings are NOT taking place. If you are walking on a race day, you will need to cut your walk short by heading back at this point. On non-race days, people and dogs are welcome on the site, but please do not stray onto the race track itself.

Follow the narrow footpath through the rough grass as it bears right, heading for the stone buildings in the distance. About halfway towards the buildings (and before you reach the white railings), you will reach a fork in the path. Take the left-hand branch which continues with a stone wall running across to your left. At the corner of the stone wall, go ahead up the grass bank to reach a T-junction with a grass track (with the white railings of the circular branch of race track ahead). Turn left along this grass track and follow it as it swings steadily right (with the railings and horse racing track on your right and the stone wall and then trees on your left).

The first major horse racing meet was held at Bath Racecourse in 1811. Originally there was just one meet per year, but this grew steadily and there are now around 20 meetings each year. At 238 metres above sea level, Bath is Britain's highest flat racecourse. During World War II the course was used as a landing field for the Royal Air Force, with the name RAF North Stoke.

Further along, a white railing crosses your path. Duck under this but do NOT continue on the most obvious path ahead. Instead, turn right across the grass for about 8 paces (towards but not reaching the track) and then turn left to join a well-trodden grass footpath. This path leads you diagonally through the rough grass, about halfway between the race track on your right and the tree line on your left. At the far left-hand corner of the racecourse site, duck under the white railings ahead and you will find a stone plinth marking the viewpoint of Prospect Stile.

3 → 4 Prospect Stile to Clubhouse



There are fabulous views here and the toposcope mounted on the stone plinth shows just some of the landmarks that can be seen on a clear day, including Kelston Round Hill, Bristol city centre and Westbury White Horse. Sometimes it is possible to see as far as the Black Mountains in Wales.

When you are ready to continue, turn around, duck back under the white railing but this time turn left to continue along the left-hand boundary of the racecourse site. At the next corner, you will see a kissing gate to your left and a starting point within the race track to your right (surrounded with tall white railings). Walk ahead past this starting point and then turn immediately right, between sections of white railing. The path soon forks, take the left-hand branch, staying alongside the racecourse boundary fence on your left. On a clear day, across to your left you will be able to see the white towers of the Severn Bridge in the distance, the suspension bridge that formed the original road crossing between England and Wales, across the River Severn.

As you approach the grandstand building, keep ahead on a stretch of path between railings for 100 metres, to reach a junction with an access track. Turn left and follow the tarmac track leading you past stables and facility buildings on your left. Beyond these buildings, bear right, continuing to follow the fence on your right. Pass the grandstand entrance on your right and keep ahead on the access track for a further 50 metres to reach a public footpath waymarker on your right.

Turn right here, following the rough track between the racecourse buildings on your right and the edge of a golf course on your left. Follow the track through a gateway and then swinging left, following the racecourse boundary on your left (with the white railings of the track visible to your right once again). At about 1 o'clock in the distance you will be able to see Beckford's Tower peeping above the trees. Where a stone wall begins on your left, you will notice a waymarker post showing the footpath running to the left of the wall. However, given that path would be along the edge of the golf course, you will find it safer to continue on the right side of the wall (within the racecourse site). Continue on the grass track and you will pass the clubhouse and other golf course buildings beyond the wall on your left.

4 → 5 Clubhouse to Pasture Fields

Simply continue ahead on the grass track, with the white railings of the race track on your right. Where the stone wall and buildings on your left end, keep ahead for another 5 paces and glance to your left where you will see a footpath entering the racecourse. We need to turn right at this point, to join the continuation of this official public footpath. Turn right, duck under the white railings, cross the race track, duck under the second railings and keep ahead on the narrow grass path.



The path leads you up to the circular branch of the race track. Turn left for just 25 paces (to a point just before the stone wall corner down to your left) and then turn left again, down the bank to join the path that you used on the outward leg. From this point, you will be retracing your steps back to the Hare and Hounds. To do this, follow the path ahead (with the stone wall running across to your right) and it will lead you back out to Lansdown Lane.

Cross over the lane, turn left along the lay-by and verge and then turn right through the kissing gate to enter the grass playing fields. Follow the right-hand edge of the playing fields and, as you draw level with the brick buildings on your left, bear right along the grass avenue and then keep ahead on the narrow grass path to reach the tarmac track. Keep ahead along the tarmac track, then follow the stone track for 30 metres to turn right through the kissing gate into the rough meadow. Turn left along the meadow path to reach the metal kissing gate at the start of the pasture fields.

5 → 6 Pasture Fields to End



Pass through this gate and walk ahead on the path along top boundary of this first pasture. Continue in the same direction, crossing a further two fields (via three kissing gates). As soon as you enter the fourth pasture, turn immediately left to reach the kissing gate in the top boundary. Go through this and follow the track out to the junction with the main road.

Turn right along the pavement and, as soon as you are able, cross the road with care to swap to the left-hand pavement. This left-hand pavement will lead you directly back to the Hare and Hounds for some well-earned hospitality.

Disclaimer

This walking route was walked and checked at the time of writing. We have taken care to make sure all our walks are safe for walkers of a reasonable level of experience and fitness. However, like all outdoor activities, walking carries a degree of risk and we accept no responsibility for any loss or damage to personal effects, personal accident, injury or public liability whilst following this walk. We cannot be held responsible for any inaccuracies that result from changes to the routes that occur over time. Please let us know of any changes to the routes so that we can correct the information.

Walking Safety

For your safety and comfort we recommend that you take the following with you on your walk: bottled water, snacks, a waterproof jacket, waterproof/sturdy boots, a woolly hat and fleece (in winter and cold weather), a fully-charged mobile phone, a whistle, a compass and an Ordnance Survey map of the area. Check the weather forecast before you leave, carry appropriate clothing and do not set out in fog or mist as these conditions can seriously affect your ability to navigate the route. Take particular care on cliff/mountain paths where steep drops can present a particular hazard. Some routes include sections along roads – take care to avoid any traffic at these points. Around farmland take care with children and dogs, particularly around machinery and livestock. If you are walking on the coast make sure you check the tide times before you set out.

