

Cleeve Common Self-Guided Walk 2 – Bluebell Walk

Start point: Wardens Wood Car Park

Nearest postcode: GL54 4EX – please note this is for houses close to the car park. Carry on up the track and you will find the car park. Do not park anywhere else on the common.

Suitable for: Everyone able to walk on uneven tracks. No stiles or steps.

Length: 1.1 km (0.7 miles)

Terrain: Relatively flat route through young plantation woodland. Tracks can be very muddy in autumn and winter, boots essential in and after wet weather.

Dogs: Well behaved dogs are welcome at Wardens Wood. No sheep or cattle graze this part of Cleeve Common. Please pick up after your dog anywhere on Cleeve Common.

Refreshments: Please pack a picnic or snacks!

What to take with you:

- Dress for the weather and be prepared, the weather on Cleeve Common can change quickly and it is usually a few degrees cooler and much windier up here than on lower ground.
- Drinks and snacks
- Binoculars if you have them
- Camera
- Phone – Rangers Phone number: 07756 828 458
- Dog walkers make sure you have poo bags and a lead
- Wellies or good boots in autumn and winter months, or during/after very wet weather
- Insect repellent in June and July as horseflies can be abundant
- A sense of adventure!

1. *From the car park enter Wardens Wood by passing between the two large stones and turning Right.*
2. *Head immediately into the woodland here. When the path forks in a few metres take the left fork. Quickly followed just 20m later by a right fork. Follow the path between rows of trees.*
3. *Follow the path round and walk down between two rows of plantation trees. These trees were planted in the late 1990s. The thirty acres of woodland is named 'Wardens' Wood' in tribute to the Cotswold Voluntary Wardens who undertook most of the planting. All the trees planted are native trees and include hawthorn, wild cherry, oak and hazel amongst others. In this part of the woodland the trees are mostly ash & beech. Use the leaf chart at the end of the walk to see if you can find these trees.*

If you are walking in the summer, you may be able to detect signs of Ash Dieback in the ash trees here. The disease causes leaves to develop dark patches and then wilt and discolour to black. Lesions also develop where branches meet the trunk which are often diamond-shaped and dark brown. It is thought 80% of ash trees in the UK will succumb to the disease so we are interested to see how this woodland fares.

4. *When you reach a big hawthorn bush bear left and you might even stumble across your first Bluebell here.*

Many of the trees in this area are suffering with squirrel damage. Look closely at the trunks and branches and you can see where squirrels have stripped away the young bark. Trees can cope with some nibbling, however if the damage 'rings' a tree or limb or is extensive then the tree may die. The result can be standing deadwood in a woodland. This is great habitat for fungi and invertebrates such as beetles and other creepy crawlies. However, a balance must be met where some trees survive resulting in a variety of different habitats which supports lots of different species of wildlife.

5. *The path meanders between more rows of trees bearing left a couple more times before you meet a more well-defined track. Here the real bluebell show starts. To avoid trampling the bluebells please stick to the path between the rows of trees even outside of bluebell season.*

6. *At this T-junction turn right and after about 10 m turn left between a patch of bramble and holly bush back into the woodland. If you pass the wild apple on your right, you've missed the turn.
If you fancy a picnic stop continue straight down the main track to a glade, called The Circle. This is covered in wildflowers including Betony in the summer and there are also benches here. Retrace your footsteps afterwards to re-join the bluebell walk. Please take any rubbish with you.*

There is more than one species of bluebell growing in the UK: Our native British bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), introduced, garden-escaped Spanish bluebells and hybrid bluebells when the two species crossbreed.

Hybrid bluebells are becoming more widespread throughout the UK. There is a worry that as hybridisation becomes even more widespread, the gene pool of our pure, native bluebell will become increasingly diluted, even resulting in their loss completely. This means patches of native bluebells like this one are really special. It is also why it is important not to plant garden plants in with places such as Cleeve Common.

There are a few different ways to tell a native bluebell from a Spanish bluebell.

Native bluebells	Spanish bluebells
Pollen cream-white colour	Pollen green or blue
Deep violet-blue. But you may also occasionally find white or even pale pink flowers	Pale to mid-blue, often also white or pink
Flower stems may droop or nod to one side	Flower stem is stiff and upright
Almost all flowers are on one side of the stem	Flowers all around the stem
Flowers are a narrow, straight-sided bell with parallel sides	Flowers maybe wide open and cone-shaped
Petal tips are curled back	
Flowers have a strong, sweet scent	Flowers unscented

7. *Back on the route. Enter another Bluebell glade. Please remember to watch your step.*

- 8. Follow the route through under some lime trees, look up at the beautiful heart shaped leaves which are lime green in colour in the spring. Soon the main track will appear ahead of you, follow the curve of the path you are on as it bears right to walk parallel to it for a while. The path then turns left to meet this track.*

In the soft mud here, it is a good place to keep an eye out for signs of deer passing though as they leave the 'deer slot' hoof prints behind.

- 9. At the track turn right passing a large cherry tree on your left. A few metres up the track, turn right. The path then forks, take the left-hand fork between gorse and bramble bushes. Taking the right-hand fork will lead you back to The Circle.*

No livestock graze in Wardens' Wood so The Circle is a good example of how the main common would start to look if it was left. At first wildflowers would grow up tall but soon the scrub would take over, enclosing the meadow. Here we cut it back each year manually.

- 10. Back on the route, continue along the long straight path until it veers to the right and passes a bench. This is a very peaceful spot to sit a while.*

Maybe close your eyes and listen to the bird song and other woodland sounds around you.

- 11. Continue along this path, which runs parallel to the boundary wall of both the woods and the land Cleeve Common Trust looks after, all the way back to the car park.*



We hope you enjoyed this walk, the second in our self-guided walks series. If you have any feedback or amendments, please get in touch at hello@cleevecommon.org.uk

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