

ROUTE 2: Kingley Vale

Paths through the historic yew forest of Kingley Vale and a steep climb to open downland and Bronze Age burial mounds.

5½ miles | allow 2½ hours | steep in places

1. Cross the road outside the Horse & Groom and turn left. Continue along the pavement and turn right onto Stoke Road. Past the houses on the left and opposite the flint cottages dated 1700 turn into Stoke Woods and follow the footpath north. Turn right at the first turning and then straight on at the bridleway crossroads.

2. Upon reaching the exit onto the road turn left and left again over to Kingley Vale car park (take care on the road). Go through the gate at the far end of the car park and follow the track. You will soon see the wooded slope of Kingley Vale Nature Reserve ahead of you. After ¼ mile you will arrive at a gate on the edge of the reserve.

3. Go through the gate and continue straight ahead to follow the numbered nature trail. There are groves of ancient yews, some of which are as much as 1,000 years old. As legend has it, they were planted on the graves of slain Viking Warriors! At post '11' cross the vale to the right, passing the dew pond on your left. Continue up the short steep hill to post '13' and enter the wooded slope. Turn right at post '14' and follow the path around to the left following the edge of the field. At the end, pass through the wooden gate and turn left to the top of Bow Hill.

4. Turn left at the crossroads on the top of Bow Hill. Pass through the metal gate out onto a grass plateau where you will see two barrows, known as the 'Devil's Humps', bronze age tombs erected around 500BC. There is a marvellous view over Chichester harbour. On a clear day you can see the Isle of Wight and Chichester Cathedral.

5. Keeping the humps on your right, continue along the path and exit left down the wooden steps and wooden gate. Follow the path down through the reserve. On reaching the bottom, turn right to exit the reserve through the entrance gate. Return to the Kingley Vale car park and retrace your earlier steps back to the Horse & Groom.

