



STEP INTO THE COTSWOLDS WALK **THREE**

Stonesfield



Points of interest

Stonesfield

Stonesfield's name derives from the Old English, 'stunt's field', meaning stunted, or possibly fool's, field. Cotswold stone tiles, know in Oxfordshire as Stonesfield slates, were quarried and mined here from the 16th century until the beginning of the 20th century.

North Leigh Roman Villa, East End

North Leigh Roman Villa is a part-exposed floor plan of a large Roman Villa first unearthed in 1813 and consists of over 60 rooms, including some well preserved mosaics that are now under shelter. The villa is in the care of English Heritage.

Combe

Combe's name derives from the Celtic word 'cumb', meaning 'at the valley'. St Laurence Church was rebuilt by Eynsham Abbey in 1395 and has been little altered.

Blenheim Palace and Great Park

Blenheim Palace was presented by the English nation to John Churchill, first Duke of Marlborough, in recognition of his victory in 1704 over French and Bavarian troops. It is also closely associated with Sir Winston Churchill. Blenheim Palace was inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 1987 for its architectural importance and for its landscaped Park designed by Lancelot

'Capability' Brown, which is considered as a "naturalistic Versailles".

Akeman Street/Wychwood Way/Oxfordshire Way

Akeman Street was a major Roman road that linked London to the Fosse Way at Cirencester. This section of Akeman Street also forms part of the Wychwood Way (a circular 60km/37 mile walk which goes around the heart of the ancient forest of Wychwood) and the Oxfordshire Way (a 108km/67 mile route which traverses Oxfordshire from the Cotswolds to the Chilterns and links the Heart of England Way to the Thames Path National Trail).

Wychwood Forest

At the time of the Domesday Book in 1086, the Royal Forest of Wychwood covered much of what is now West Oxfordshire. In 1854 an Act of Parliament was passed to clear the Forest for agricultural land. In a period of only 18 months, thousands of trees were cut down and areas of woodland and heath were cleared, leaving only the present rump of woodland round Cornbury Park to the north east of Leafield. In 1997 the Wychwood Project was established to raise awareness of the history and identity of the area, and to work with local communities to restore its rich patchwork of landscapes and habitats within the Forest boundaries.

The Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

The Cotswolds is considered by many people to be one of the most beautiful areas of England – the quintessential English landscape. It is also a very special area: one of only 40 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) in England and Wales, it is protected by Government as being of great value to the nation. This ensures the very features that attract people are there for future generations to enjoy.

The natural qualities of the AONB are unique. Limestone gives the Cotswolds its distinctive, unified appearance, visible everywhere in buildings, walls, towns and villages, which subtly blend with their surroundings.

The Cotswolds is a place of immense diversity: rolling landscapes with breathtaking views and open skies contrast with intimate valleys, villages and pastures. Ancient beech woodlands, rare flora and limestone grasslands alternate with broad swathes of arable fields. Pre-historic hill forts are found close to the fine craftsmanship of manor houses and stone cottages.

'Step into the Cotswolds' & the Cotswolds Conservation Board

This walk, and others in the series, has been funded through money raised by the 'Step into the Cotswolds' Visitor Payback Scheme, where visitors make voluntary donations to local access and conservation projects.

The scheme is run by the Cotswolds Conservation Board in partnership with West Oxfordshire District Council and supported by Oxfordshire County Council's Countryside Service. The scheme has also been part-financed by supported financially by the European Community West Oxfordshire Network Leader+ 2000-2006 programme and the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment and the Waste Recycling Group through the Landfill Communities Fund. For more information about the Visitor Payback Scheme, the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the work of the Cotswolds Conservation Board contact:

Cotswolds Conservation Board

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Summary

A walk of 6.5 miles from Stonesfield to Combe and Blenheim Great Park and back to Stonesfield. There are two extensions of 2.5 miles and 2.8 miles.

This walk is part of a visitor payback scheme called 'Step Into the Cotswolds' and has these waymarkers along the route. →

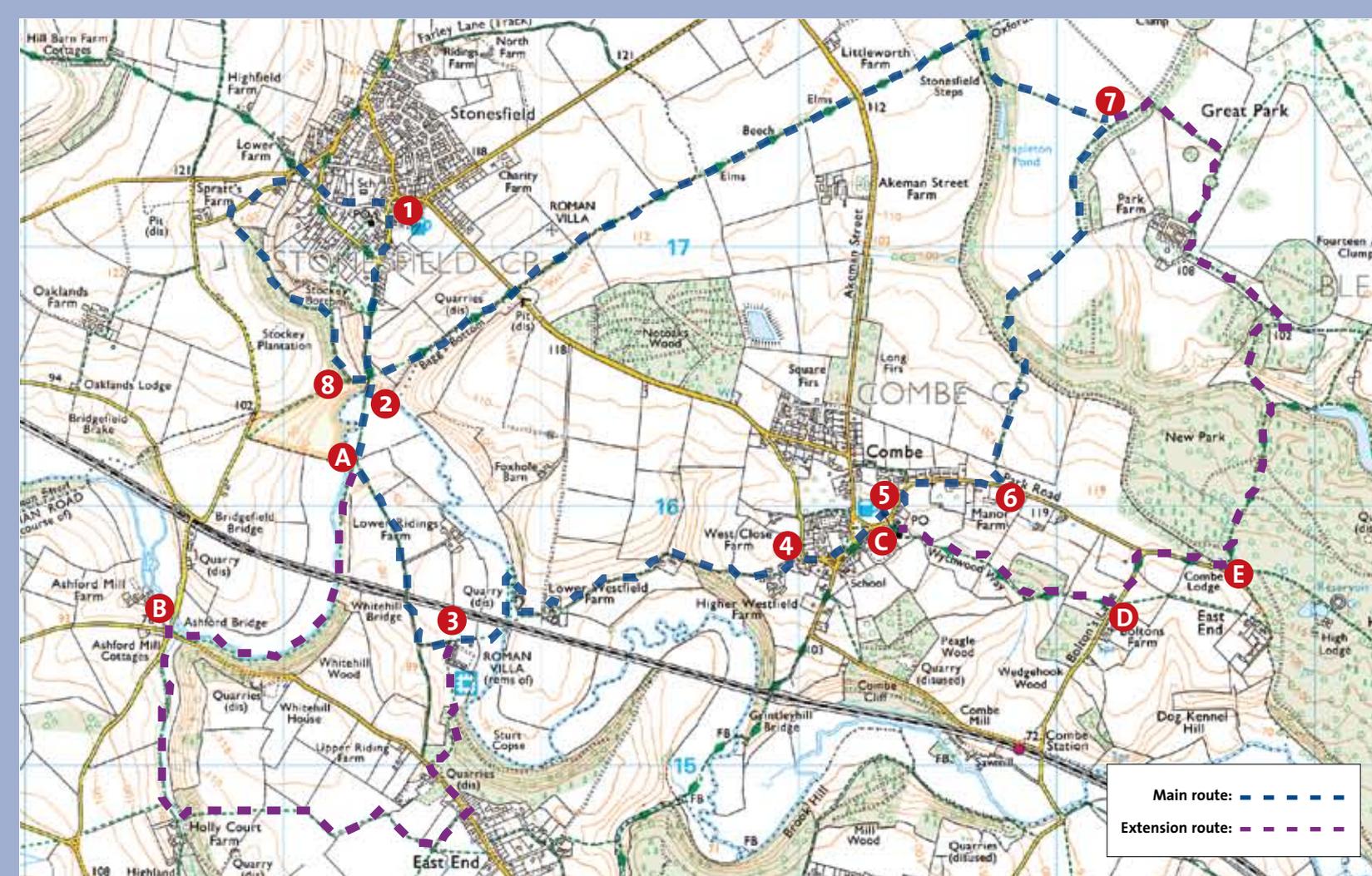


Walk information

Start/End Point:	Centre of Stonesfield
Grid Reference:	SP394171
Distance:	6.5 miles (10.5km); two optional extensions of 2.5 miles (3.9km) and 2.8 miles (4.5km)
Terrain:	Gently undulating with a couple of short, steep sections
Parking:	On-street parking
Public Transport:	Details of bus services can be found in the 'Explore the Cotswolds by Public Transport' leaflets available from the Cotswolds Conservation Board (Tel: 01451 862000). You can download the leaflets from: www.cotswoldsaoonb.org.uk . They are also available at most Tourist Information Centres and libraries.
Public toilets:	None
Refreshments:	Stonesfield - White Horse and Black Head public houses and General Store; Combe - The Cock Inn



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Route Description

1 Starting in Stonesfield village centre (near the church/Post Office), walk down Church Street. Where the road bears right, continue straight ahead onto Brook Lane until you reach the river. Cross the river.

Route for extension 1 – see A right.

2 Continue straight ahead. The path will become a track, passing the entrance for Lower Riding Farm. Keep straight ahead, crossing Whitehill Bridge and take the footpath on your left to North Leigh Roman Villa.

3 Take the gate on your left, turn right and follow the footpath towards the river. Go under the railway bridge and cross the river via the accommodation bridge. Turn right up a slight incline to a kissing gate. Continue straight on along a track until you reach Combe.

4 Keep right into West End and continue straight on ignoring other turnings until you reach Coombe Green (Cock Inn). Keep to the right hand side of the village square onto Park Road. You will pass a footpath leading to the church

Route for extension 2, turn right here – see C right.

5 Pass the Post Office on your right. Continue walking past the houses on your left and the cricket field/park area on your right.

6 Take the next footpath on your left. Continue until you reach the Blenheim Palace's Great Park - enter the park via a step ladder. Once over the wall, turn left walking along the estate track for approximately 100 metres. Turn right following the footpath sign (easy to miss). The path will take you through the Blenheim Estate and is clearly signed.

7 After 1km/0.6 miles take the public footpath on your left, following the path until you reach the track next to the estate wall. Turn right onto the track and, after approximately 200m, turn left and climb the wooden steps over the estate wall. Continue straight ahead, following the field edge to the road. Cross the road following the signposts for the Oxfordshire Way. At the metal kissing gates through Bagg's Bottom continue straight ahead, until you are back at the River Evenlode.

8 With the river on your left, look for the footpaths ahead of you. Take the right hand path which will take you through a wooded area known as Stockey Bottom. Go through the double gate, turn left, then right. Continue along the road into Stonesfield, turning right into Well Lane (signed 'Oxfordshire Way/Bridleway'). At the top of the lane you will come to a cross roads. Go straight across into the High Street.

Route for Extension 1 - Approx 3.9 km/2.5mile

A After crossing the river, continue straight ahead to the far side of the field. Go right through a gate. The footpath soon follows the bank of the River Evenlode, under a railway bridge and through Whitehill Wood until you reach a road junction at Ashford Bridge.

B Turn left and walk along the road for a few metres. Turn left onto bridleway to Holly Court Farm. Turn left and go uphill, and then follow the footpath across the fields to East End until you reach the road Turn left away from East End and then right at the sign marked Roman Villa to rejoin the main walk at point 3.

Route for Extension 2 - Approx 4.5km/2.8 miles

C Take the footpath through Combe Churchyard following the well marked footpath until you reach a narrow road called Bolton's Lane.

E Turn left and walk up the lane. When you come to a road junction turn right and continue along the lane to the entrance into Blenheim Park on your left.

D Once through the gates, go straight forward, following the public footpath signs, along the Blenheim Estate road. At a square grass junction take the left hand estate road to Park Farm. At the entrance take the public footpath on your right. Go through the gates towards the clump of beech trees in front of you. Just after the trees, take the left hand footpath. When you reach an estate track turn right. Almost immediately turn left off the estate track, to rejoin the main route at point 7.



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