Independent Hostel Guide

INTER-HOSTEL WALKING ROUTE

Puttenham Barn to Tanners Hatch Hostel

Along the Pilgrims' Way and the North Downs Way, Surrey Hills

By Simon Gibbs for Independent Hostels UK · independenthostels.co.uk









PUTTENHAM BARN

TANNERS HATCH HOSTEL

26.3 KM · 16.3 MILES

500 M · 1,650 FT ASCENT

APPROX 6 HOURS

Puttenham Barn and Tanners Hatch Hostel stand twenty-six kilometres apart on the same chalk escarpment, joined by one trail and one long day.

Puttenham Barn Bunkhouse stands on the village street at Puttenham, below the Hog's Back. Tanners Hatch Hostel is a timber-framed house in the woods on the northern edge of Ranmore Common, on National Trust land that belongs to the Polesden Lacey estate. Between them the North Downs Way follows the line known as the Pilgrims' Way, and the day runs from lane to river meadow, then a steep hill, then open chalk ridge and beech wood.

Start early. It is a big day, but you are rarely far from help: a kiosk at Newlands Corner, a pub in Puttenham, and a railway station within a few kilometres of each end.

History · Home Farm Barn

The barn already appears on Rocque's map of Surrey in 1762, and the village road was later moved around it, in 1824, to suit the owners of Puttenham Priory. It is a classic Surrey barn: an oak frame with much re-used timber, weatherboarded walls, long catslide roofs carrying some eighteen thousand handmade clay tiles, and a waggon porch with a flap for loaded carts.

By 1995 it was almost derelict. A local charity, Project Oasis North Downs, raised the money to convert it, and after four years of volunteer work the camping barn was opened on 23 June 2005 by Penelope Keith. The old listed building has been restored to be environmentally friendly, with rainwater harvesting, solar electricity and solar hot water.

START
Puttenham Barn Bunkhouse

FINISH
Tanners Hatch Hostel

DISTANCE
26.3 km, 16.3 miles

ASCENT
about 500 m, 1,650 ft

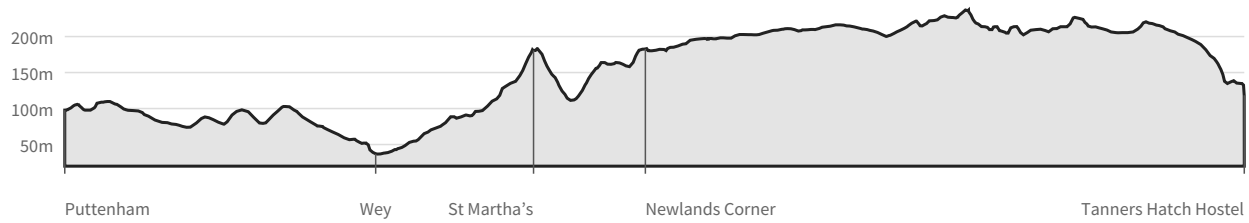
TIME
approx 6 hours without stops

TRAIL
North Downs Way, the Pilgrims' Way

HIGHEST POINT
about 237 m, on Blatchford Down

LOWEST POINT
37 m, the River Wey

THE PROFILE

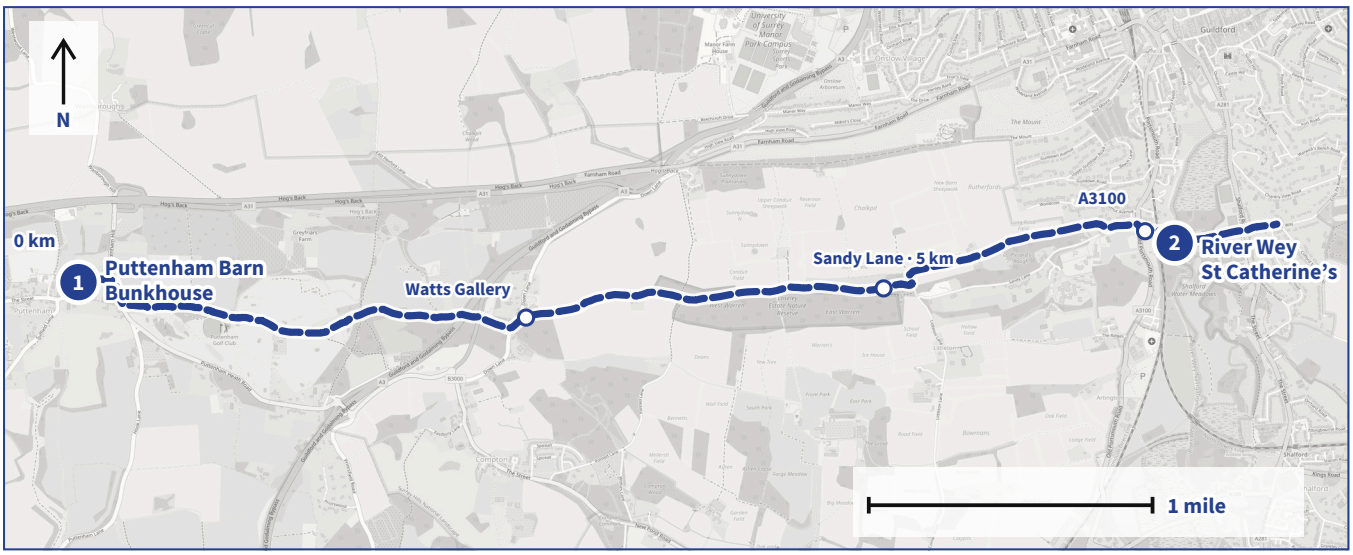


ON THE WAY

1	Puttenham Barn Bunkhouse	start
2	River Wey crossing and St Catherine's Chapel	km 7.0
3	St Martha's Church	km 10.5
4	Newlands Corner and the Optohedron	km 12.9
5	Tanners Hatch Hostel	km 26.3

STAGE 1 · KILOMETRES 0 TO 7.0 · ALMOST LEVEL

Puttenham to the River Wey



Map: © OpenStreetMap contributors. Route from the GPS track recorded on 18 October 2026.

Leave the Barn and turn east along The Street. The village road is the Pilgrims' Way itself, and from here to Ranmore you are rarely out of sight of an acorn waymark, the National Trail's symbol.

Underfoot it is mostly firm tracks and bridleways, with a little road. At the gate by Puttenham Golf Club the road gives way to a bridleway, and for seven kilometres the Way keeps to the foot of the downs, with the ridge on your left. Sandy Lane, a sunken track, takes up nearly three of them. The one road to cross with care is the A3100 at 6.7 km, just before the River Wey.

History · Compton

Watts Gallery stands right on the route, and the Watts Cemetery Chapel lies about 750 metres south of the track at Compton, a detour of roughly fifteen minutes each way. The chapel is a Grade I listed terracotta building and the work of the artist and designer Mary Watts. It was built between 1896 and 1898 by villagers working under her; she designed its richly patterned interior and ran the community pottery that made much of the decoration, and her husband, the painter G. F. Watts, paid for it.

Inside the chapel you will find one of the most important and experimental wall paintings in England.

From Compton the Way drops to the Wey, which it crosses on the Ferry Lane bridge at 6.8 km.



The sign to Puttenham Barn Bunkhouse.



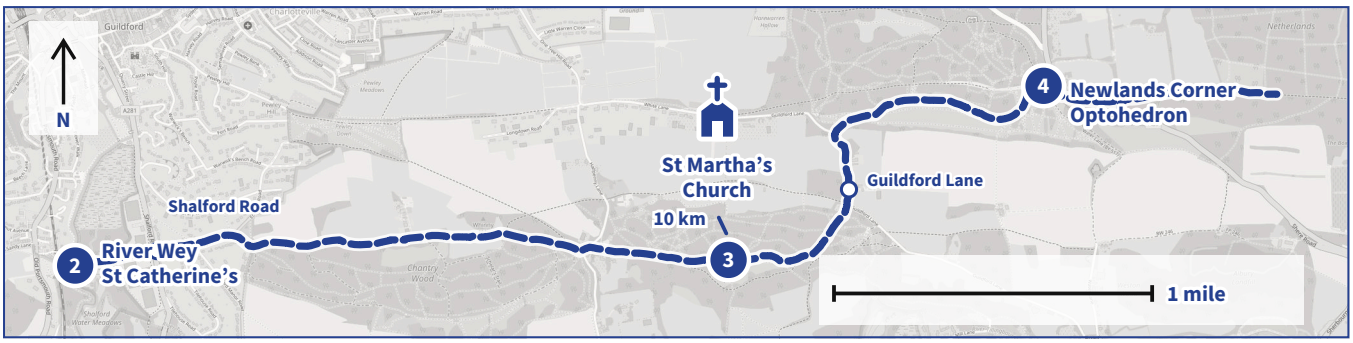
The Watts Cemetery Chapel at Compton.



Terracotta carving at the chapel.

STAGE 2 · KILOMETRES 7.0 TO 12.9 · THE FIRST BIG CLIMB

St Martha’s Hill and Newlands Corner



Map: © OpenStreetMap contributors. Route from the GPS track recorded on 18 October 2026.

History · The Wey crossing

A ferry is recorded at the foot of St Catherine’s Hill in the Middle Ages, and it ran until the 1960s. On the hill above stand the ruins of St Catherine’s Chapel, built in 1317 and disused by 1546.

Tradition says pilgrims bound for Canterbury stopped here, though Surrey archaeologists think the odd upper doorways are eighteenth-century Gothic touches, so the story is best held lightly.

History · St Martha’s

Across the river, the trail climbs to St Martha’s, a hilltop church reached only on foot and the only church in Surrey to stand on the Pilgrims’ Way. Henry Woodyer rebuilt it in 1848–50, retaining its Norman features.

The climb up to St Martha’s is steep and sandy in places, and the going eases along the ridge to Newlands Corner, where a broad viewpoint and kiosk offer a chance to pause.

History · The Optohedron

Beside the North Downs Way near Newlands Corner stands the Optohedron, by the artist Will Nash. Its inspiration is the faceted eye of an insect: five identical cells of weathering steel, packed with locally cut hazel logs, rise in a curve that would close into a sphere if the sequence went on. Hidden among the logs are kaleidoscopes, each aimed at a different piece of the surrounding nature. It belongs to the Inspiring Views programme, and chalk scrapes in front of it have been planted with Horseshoe Vetch to attract the rare Small Blue butterfly.

Nearby, Agatha Christie’s car was found abandoned in December 1926, prompting a widely publicised search. She was eventually found alive at a hotel in Harrogate.



St Martha’s Church, reached only on foot.



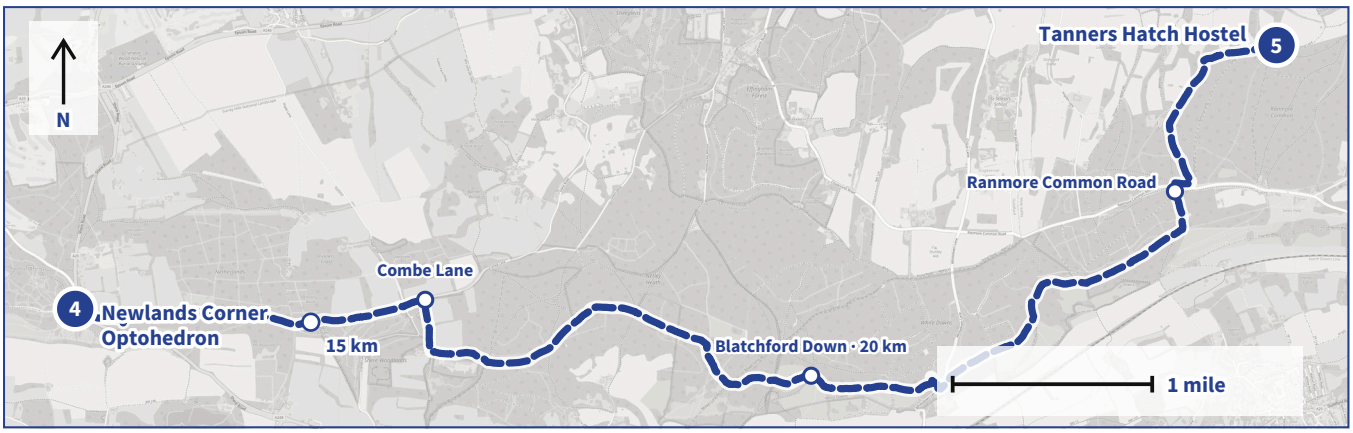
The Optohedron, near Newlands Corner.



Along the ridge.

STAGE 3 · KILOMETRES 12.9 TO 26.3 · HIGH, WOODED AND QUIET

The ridge to Tanners Hatch Hostel



Map: © OpenStreetMap contributors. Route from the GPS track recorded on 18 October 2026.

After Newlands Corner the trail runs along a long, mostly wooded ridge, over Netley Heath, Hackhurst Downs and White Downs, at about 190 to 235 metres. The ground is chalk, so the paths drain well, and the woods are beech and yew.

Look out for a Bronze Age burial mound beside the path at 13.2 km, and a viewpoint at Little Kings Wood at 18.7 km. The benches on Blatchford Down, at about 237 m, mark the highest point of the day; from there to 22.5 km you pass a string of Second World War pillboxes.

There are no shops on the ridge, so carry food and water. Newlands Corner is the last easy place for lunch before Ranmore; the Carb Up and Go café at Sheer Woodlands (km 15.8) opens at weekends, so check first.

The last mile leaves the National Trail for a track through the woods to Tanners Hatch Hostel.

History · Tanners Hatch Hostel

The Grade II listed cottage has a seventeenth-century timber frame and was restored in 1946, though one account traces the volunteer rebuilding effort to the war years. The name is older still: ‘Tanners’ most likely comes from the Tanner family, who owned the land between 1340 and 1530, and a ‘hatch’ was a gate into enclosed common land. Its walking connections run deep. The thirty-mile Tanners Hatch Marathon began in 1960, with early events starting and finishing here. In January 1973, the hostel hosted the Long Distance Walkers Association’s first official members’ gathering.

History · St Barnabas, Ranmore

About a kilometre east of the trail, and not on this route, stands Ranmore Common’s church of St Barnabas, built in 1859 to the design of Sir George Gilbert Scott for George Cubitt, later the first Lord Ashcombe, as the estate church for his house at Denbies. Cubitt’s father, the builder Thomas Cubitt, had stopped him taking holy orders, and the church was his consolation. It is worth the detour if you have the time. The mansion was demolished in the 1950s and much of the land passed to the National Trust.



The gable end, Tanners Hatch Hostel.



The kitchen.



Inside Tanners Hatch Hostel.

KILOMETRES 0 TO 26.3

Puttenham Barn to Tanners Hatch Hostel

0.0 km — **Puttenham Barn Bunkhouse**

Leave the barn and walk to The Street. Turn right along it, following the North Downs Way and Fox Way signs.

0.3 km — **Leave the road**

At the gate, leave the tarmac and take the bridleway beside Puttenham Golf Club.

2.9 km — **Watts Gallery**

The route meets Down Lane at Watts Gallery and Studios, which has toilets and a bus stop. The Watts Cemetery Chapel is about 750 m south, an optional detour.

3.8 km — **Sandy Lane**

Follow Sandy Lane, a sunken track, for about 2.7 km. Keep straight on.

5.2 km — **Gate and bench**

Go through the gate by the bench, bear left and then right, and carry on in the same direction.

6.7 km — **Cross the A3100**

Cross the Old Portsmouth Road with care. It is the busiest road on the walk.

6.8 km — **River Wey**

Cross the Wey by the bridge on Ferry Lane, where there are a memorial, a bench and information boards. Take the steps and footbridge to join the Wey-South Path.

7.4 km — **Shalford Road**

Meet the Pilgrims' Way at the A281 Shalford Road, where there is a bus stop. Cross and begin the climb.

7.9 km — **St Martha's Hill**

Climb steadily from about 60 m to 178 m, reaching St Martha's Church by km 10.4. The path is steep and sandy in places.

11.3 km — **Guildford Lane**

Cross Guildford Lane and continue along the ridge.

12.9 km — **Newlands Corner**

Pass the kiosk and car park, then follow the North Downs Way east.

13.2 km — **Tumulus**

Pass the Bronze Age burial mound beside the path.

15.8 km — **Sheer Woodlands**

Pass the Sheer Woodlands board. The Carb Up and Go café is nearby, open at weekends from 10 to 4, but check first.

16.0 km — **Combe Lane**

Cross Combe Lane and keep on the trail.

18.3 km — **The Tube**

Pass The Tube. At 18.7 km there is a viewpoint at Little Kings Wood.

20.1 km — **Blatchford Down**

Benches at about 237 m, the high point of the walk. Second World War pillboxes appear from 20.2 to 22.5 km.

21.2 km — **Dog-leg**

Follow the path round a dog-leg at 21.2 km and again at 21.4 km.

24.3 km — **Ranmore Common Road**

Cross Ranmore Common Road and continue.

25.2 km — **Yew Tree Walk**

Follow Yew Tree Walk through the woods.

26.2 km — **Connicut Lane**

Turn left along Connicut Lane. Tanners Hatch Hostel is at 26.3 km.

Directions are drawn from OpenStreetMap and the GPS track recorded on 18 October 2026. Distances are from the start. Check signs and conditions on the day.

Planning the day

Getting there and away

Wanborough station is 3.5 km from Puttenham; Box Hill & Westhumble is 3 km from Tanners Hatch Hostel. Bus stops at Watts Gallery (km 2.9) and on the A281 Shalford Road (km 7.4) give early exits, so check times before you set out.

Food and water

Carry lunch. Newlands Corner has a kiosk, but there is no shop on the ridge.

Light

In October it is dark by about 6.15 pm. Start early and carry a head torch.

Paths

The North Downs Way is waymarked with an acorn. Check for diversions before you go.

THE HOSTELS

Puttenham Barn Bunkhouse

The Street, Puttenham GU3 1AR

Eleven beds, self-catering, shop on site. Open Easter to October.

Tanners Hatch Hostel

Ranmore Common, Dorking RH5 6BE

Twenty-six beds, self-catering, camping pods.

At the end of the day, Tanners Hatch Hostel is the next welcome.



Surrey Hills National Landscape.



The garden at Tanners Hatch Hostel.

Route length 26.3 km (16.3 miles), with about 500 m of ascent and a similar descent, measured from a GPS track recorded on 18 October 2026. Times follow Naismith's rule without stops.

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With thanks to Nansi Taylor, whose research on Home Farm Barn is on the Puttenham Barn website.