

# Mendip Hills AONB



## TRAIL TYPE

Walking

## GRADE

Moderate

## DISTANCE

6km (3¾ miles)

## TIME

1½-2 hours

## OS MAP

Explorer 141:  
Cheddar Gorge &  
Mendip Hills West;  
Landranger 182:  
Weston-super-Mare

## CONTACT

01761 462338  
mendiphills@somerset.gov.uk

## FACILITIES

Parking and picnic area  
in East Harptree Woods.

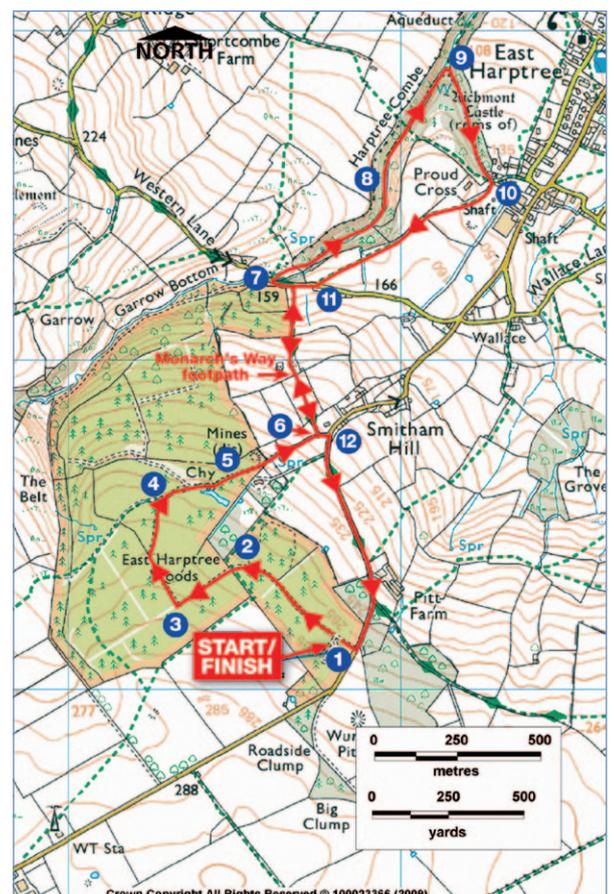
Pub and village shop in  
East Harptree.

# East Harptree Woods & Combe

Most coniferous woodlands in Britain have been planted for forestry purposes. As conifers can grow up to six times faster than broadleaved trees, plantations produce much higher yields of timber than slower-growing broadleaf woodlands. Conifer plantations typically tend to be planted at high density which reduces the amount of light reaching the floor. Broadleaf woods usually allow far more light through leading to a greater diversity of ground flora. Most conifers are evergreen so they do not shed their needles in winter. East Harptree Woods has been designed and managed with wildlife in mind with a wide *ride* (open, tree-free space) to link areas of natural vegetation. The area was once important for lead and zinc mining, and the undulating terrain, known as 'gruffy ground', indicates old pits and spoil heaps. Much of the ore was processed and smelted at this site and you can see the restored Smitham Chimney (see above right). Connected to the north-eastern end of the woods is a narrow gorge with a small stream running down – Harptree Combe – a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). In contrast to the conifers, this area contains deciduous oak and ash woodland, with old hazel coppice and rough, marshy grassland. This is an opportunity to enjoy two contrasting but equally interesting wildlife habitats: young coniferous plantation and old ash, oak and hazel woodlands.



Mendip Hills AONB Unit



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## START/END

East Harptree Woods  
car park, OS Grid Ref  
ST 557 541

## HOW TO GET THERE

### BY BIKE

The start point is 2  
miles off Sustrans  
National Cycle Route 3  
[www.sustrans.org.uk](http://www.sustrans.org.uk)

### BY BUS

Service 672 Bristol to  
Chew Valley (bus stop  
near point 10 on the  
walk route).

### BY CAR

East Harptree Woods  
are 1 mile south of East  
Harptree Village.

## DIRECTIONS & INFORMATION

**Waymarking:** Look for the waymarkers wherever there are stiles, gates or changes of direction. This route follows part of the Monarch's Way footpath.

From car park **(1)**, follow the forestry track north-westerly through woods.

Bear left **(2)**, then right **(3)**, then join a path **(4)** from the left.

Continue to the open area near the chimney and pond **(5)**.

Walk out of the woods, cross the field and turn left before the lane onto the Monarch's Way footpath **(6)**.

Continue northwards to the lane, and walk left for a few metres. Take the path on the right **(7)** to Harptree Combe **(8)**.

Cross the first path that bisects it and take the second path that joins from the right **(9)**. Follow this uphill towards East Harptree.

Where a footpath crosses near the houses **(10)**, carry straight on through the fields (beware of grazing animals) until you rejoin the lane **(11)**.

Turn right and left back on to the Monarch's Way footpath until point **(6)** is reached.

Turn left and right on to the lane **(12)** and return to the car park.

## Other points of interest around East Harptree Woods and Harptree Combe

- Prehistoric ochre mine
- Smitham lead mine chimney  
(right)
- Views of the Chew Valley
- Ruins of Richmond Castle

