



A wander in Weston Woods

Take a woodland wonder and a trip back in time at Weston Woods.

Walk information

Distance: about 1 mile from the car park at end of Worlebury Hill Road to the hillfort.

Difficulty: a flat route. Watch your footing on the hillfort. Can get muddy so wellies recommended.

Be Covid aware: the woods are popular with walkers and dog owners. Be mindful of up-to-date lockdown restrictions and abide by the latest guidance, including that on hygiene and physical distancing.

Weston Woods was grassland until the 1820s when landowner John Hugh Smyth Pigott planted trees to create a private game reserve.

Once the trees began to mature he opened the woodland for public use, creating drives and walks to take in the views.

During the First World War about 80 per cent of the trees were felled for military use.

Since then, the wood has naturally re-vegetated.

Weston Woods covers about 130 hectares and the south-eastern section, called Ashcombe Wood, is classed as ancient semi-natural woodland.

This area is best visited in Spring when the ground is covered in wildflowers.

There are many paths to take through the woods. Those heading south lead back down to the hillside streets, such as Bristol Road Lower, while going north leads towards Kewstoke Road and Sand Bay.

A wooden play area provides fun for younger children, while older ones can visit the purpose-built BMX track.

At a junction in the paths is the water tower, built in 1925 to supply houses in Worlebury.

On the wall nearby is a blue plaque marking when General Dwight Eisenhower visited Weston Woods for one night in 1944 en-route to the D-Day landings.

Troops camped in Weston Woods between the Toll Road and the water tower, hidden from enemy planes by the tree cover.

The blue plaque was installed last year by Weston-super-Mare Town Council.





To the west of the water tower you might see the Picwinnard cairn, a mound of stones.

The stones were built up in previous centuries by fisherman from Birnbeck Island, who would throw a stone on the pile for good luck.

From the water tower there are two paths to take, both leading to Worlebury Camp Hillfort (the left-hand path is less muddy).

This Iron Age hillfort dominates the western end of Weston Woods and was designated as a scheduled monument in 1915, a nationally important archaeological site due to its rare coastal location, size and considerable defences.

Hillforts are defended settlements – mostly found on hilltops – that are surrounded by circuits of banks and ditches.

It may have been home to about 200 people in the Iron Age. Many hillforts would have been places of refuge, though, and not always lived in year-round.

In the Iron Age most people would have lived in small settlements and farmsteads throughout the landscape and farmed the fertile higher ground.

Remnants of the prehistoric field system, known as Celtic fields, are still visible today to the east on Worle Hill.

Worlebury Camp covers about 10 hectares and has a set of seven banks and ditches on the eastern ramparts.

The banks appear as rubble now but in the Iron Age they would have been dry-stone walls, also called ramparts, up to 20 foot high.

These are most impressive at the eastern end, with a single rampart still visible along the southern slope.

The holes in the ground within the hillfort are stone-cut grain storage pits. Ninety-three were excavated in the 19th century with discoveries of charred grain, weapons and animal bones.



A detailed plan of the hillfort from the 1886 survey, taken from the book *Worlebury: An Ancient Stronghold in the County of Somerset* by CW Dymond (1886).

