

16

Elm

Ulmus 'Sapporo autumn gold'

These elms are a hybrid between a Siberian and a Japanese elm, bred to be resistant to Dutch Elm disease. There were originally five of these trees here, donated by a blind gentleman in memory of his guide dogs which he used to exercise on this area.



Look up through the canopy to see the distinctive "herringbone" arrangement of the twigs.

Take the third path on your left and walk through the avenue of lime trees.

17

Small-leaved lime

Tilia cordata

The Latin name "cordata" means heart-shaped and refers to the leaf shape.



Look for the pale green, sweet smelling flowers in July; once pollinated they turn into small, hard round fruits.

Cross over the roads back onto the grassy area in front of Christ Church. Here you will see two hornbeams on your left.

18

Hornbeam

Carpinus betulus

Although this tree species closely resembles the beech, it has more rippled bark and comes into leaf much earlier. The leaves are also more ribbed and are edged with double teeth.

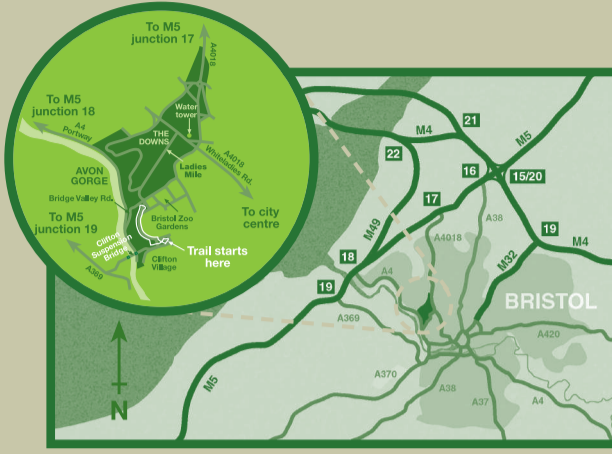
We hope you enjoyed your walk! Visit again throughout the year to see how the trees change with seasons.

How to get here

By Bus: Services 8, 9, 586 and 587 have stops along the route of the Trail (see map inside for bus stop locations). For further information call Traveline on 0871 2002233.

By Train: The nearest train station is Clifton Down Station, 10 minutes walk from the Downs. For further details call National Rail enquiries on 0845 7484950.

By Road: Follow the map below.



Contacting us

If you would like further information about the Avon Gorge & Downs Wildlife Project, a copy of our leaflet Discover the wildlife of the Avon Gorge & Downs, a copy of our Downs Meadow Trail or our Downs Bird Trail leaflet or our Events Programme please contact:

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The Avon Gorge & Downs Wildlife Project is a partnership of:



We are also working with the National Trust who manage part of Leigh Woods on the North Somerset side of the Avon Gorge.

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THE DOWNS Tree Trail



Take a walk on the Downs

Discover the incredible trees that are planted here

Visitors with wheelchairs and pushchairs

On the whole the route is flat with no significant slopes or stiles. There are two places with steps indicated on the map. Divisions have been suggested at these locations. Some of the route is on tarmac paths and some of it is on grass. In spring and winter, and at times when it has been raining, some areas on the trail can be muddy. The nearest toilets are on the approach road to the Clifton Suspension Bridge. There are disabled toilets and baby changing facilities here.



Route information

The complete trail takes around 1 hour. It is 2.2 km (1.4 miles) long.

Safety

At certain points on the trail you will need to cross roads. Please take care, especially if you have children with you. Some sections of the trail can be muddy and slippery after it has rained.

Introduction

The area that this trail covers, Christ Church Green and the Promenade, are actually part of Clifton Down. For centuries, people grazed sheep and cattle on the Downs creating a landscape of short turf, bracken, gorse and hawthorn trees. As grazing began to decline in the 19th Century, the rural landscape began to change. The Downs became popular for recreation, specimen trees began to be planted and this part of the Downs took on a park-like character. Some of the trees on this trail are native to our shores, others are from the far-flung corners of the Earth. We hope you enjoy meeting these fascinating and fantastic trees!



THE DOWNS Tree Trail

↓ Where to begin!

The map overleaf shows our suggested route around the Downs. The trail is marked on the map with an arrowed line. Each tree on the trail has a numbered disc on it to help with identification (except for Tree 14). Please note that some of the trees (eg. Tree 13 and 14) are on private property. We ask that you respect this and only view the trees from the pavement.

We hope you enjoy your walk!

Stand on the patch of grass in front of Christ Church. Look for Tree 1 next to the bench.

1 Hawthorn

Crataegus monogyna

Hawthorn (May) trees are a traditional part of the Downs landscape. They provide food for over 150 insect species. The berries (haws) are gobbled up by birds in the autumn.

Creamy white or pink flowers appear in May; red berries in autumn. Leaves are glossy, bright green. The bark is grey and fissured, often on a knotted, twisted trunk.

On this area of grass you will also see three cherries.

2 Double gean cherries

Prunus avium 'Plena'

The gean, or wild cherry, normally produces white flowers with a single row of petals. These particular cherries have been bred to produce 'double flowers'. Double cherries keep their petals three times longer than wild cherries.



3 Corsican pine

Pinus nigra subsp. laricio

This evergreen conifer is a variety of black pine. It produces 8cm (3") cones and has very dark-green, distinctively twisted, paired needles. Its straight, tall trunk makes it ideal for using as telegraph poles.

With the road on your left, continue towards the top of this triangle of grass.

4 Turkey oak

Quercus cerris

A native of southern Europe and south west Asia, this species was introduced to the UK in 1735. It's a handsome, fast growing tree but its timber is of little value as it cracks and warps easily during seasoning.

Notice the dark green, deeply lobed, leathery leaves. Look out for whiskers or 'stipules' at the end of the twigs. The acorns take two years to mature and sit in 'mossy' cups.

Walk towards the top of the triangle. Cross over the road to the "To Bristol 2" milestone. Take the diagonal right path. Continue for approximately 100m. On your right are two horse chestnut trees. (Wheelchair users please follow the diversion).



5 Horse chestnut

Aesculus hippocastanum

This species was brought here in the 16th century from the Balkans. Why is it called a horse chestnut? Chestnuts were once fed to horses as a stimulant and to make their coats shine.



'Sticky buds' in spring open to produce large five to seven-fingered leaflets on a stiff green stem. From April to mid-May look out for the upright white flower spikes, known as 'candles'. In September look for the chestnuts or 'conkers'.

Head towards the children's play area, crossing over the road. On either side of the path you will see several sycamore trees. (Wheelchair users please follow the diversion).

6 Sycamore

Acer pseudoplatanus

These particular trees are thought to have grown up amongst Brunel's building materials, stored here during the construction of the Clifton Suspension Bridge (1831-1864). Their insect pollinated flowers make them a really important source of pollen and nectar for bees.

In spring, small pale green flowers hang in clusters. Fertilised flowers develop into winged seeds or "helicopters" that spin away from the parent tree when ripe. In autumn there may be distinctive black tar spots on the leaves.

Sycamores are a type of maple, or Acer. In Latin, Acer means "sharp", as maple wood was good for making spears.

Turn right up this path to its junction with the road. On your left, opposite the signpost to the Observatory, is the...



7 Silver maple

Acer saccharinum var. laciniatum

Native Americans had many medicinal uses for this tree. Bark infusions were made to treat cramps, dysentery and sore eyes. The sap can also be made into maple syrup.

The leaves are pale green on top and silvery white beneath, turning yellow in autumn.

Walk back towards the main road. Turn left along the path marked "No Cycling".

8 Highclere holly

Ilex x altaclerensis

Look closely at the leaves of the holly on your right. Highclere holly was bred selectively by the Victorians to have no prickles!

Continue along the path along the Promenade, down through the avenue of beech trees.

9 Beech

Fagus sylvatica

Originally these beeches were inter-planted with elm trees but sadly they died of Dutch Elm Disease.

10 English oak

Quercus robur

At the end of the beech avenue, to your left, you will see a handsome English oak. It was planted in 1903 to commemorate the coronation of Edward VII.

Cross over the Promenade. You might like to read the plaque on Proctor's Fountain. It commemorates the passing of the 1861 Down's Act 'whereby the enjoyment of these Downs is preserved to the citizens of Bristol for ever'.



Walk behind the fountain. On this triangle of grass you will see...

11 Tree of Heaven

Ailanthus altissima

So called because this tree from Northern China grows rapidly to great heights. Another common name for this is the stinktree – the male trees of the species have an objectionable odour when in flower!

The leaves are very large and feather-like with 15 or more pairs of leaflets.

12 Cristate oak

Quercus robur 'Cristata'

This species is a genetic mutant of the English oak. This is the only one of these trees in Bristol.

Look out for the clumped leaves and deeply engrained bark. (Compare this with the other oaks close by: English oak 12a, Scarlet oak 12b).

Head back up the Promenade, on the opposite side of the road to your downward route. Notice the ancient purple beech in front of Merchants' Hall.

Just up from this is a young Bristol whitebeam.

13 Bristol whitebeam

Sorbus bristolensis

This grows wild only in the Avon Gorge and no-where else!

Look for the white hairs on the underside of the leaves. Creamy-white flowers appear in June and orange berries in the autumn.



Approximately 50m up on your left you will see the spectacular.

14 Monkey puzzle tree

Araucaria araucana

Over 60 million years old, this species was once native in the UK but died out during the first Ice Age! It was re-introduced from Chile by Achibald Menzies in 1795. At a dinner held by the Governor of Chile, Menzies took seeds from a dessert he was served and planted them onboard the ship Discovery.

This tree is female – look for the big, round, light-green cones at the end of some branches. The leaves are dark-green, overlapping, with sharp spines.

Continue along the Promenade for 250m. At 2, Litfield Place (Riversleigh) cross the road, up the steps and follow the path that curves left. (Wheelchair users please follow map diversion).

15 Silver birch

Betula pendula

Known as 'Lady of the Woods', this tree was believed by pagan, Celtic and Germanic tribes to protect against evil spirits and to symbolise love and fertility.

Notice the silvery white bark, delicate drooping branches and hanging catkins.

Continue along the path towards the zebra crossing. On the right there is an elm tree.

