

Eastwood to Battlesbridge

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Start	Eastwood, Rayleigh Road at Flamboro Walk — SS9 5PT
Finish	Maltings Road, Battlesbridge — SS11 7RE
Distance	15.90km
Duration	3 hours 25 minutes
Ascent	155m
Access	Bus throughout; bus and train at end of section
Facilities	Shops and café at start of section; pubs at Hockley, Hullbridge and Battlesbridge

2.1	Eastwood, Rayleigh Road	0m
2.2	W; R on path onto MacMurdo Road; R/L onto Green Lane; half-L onto green lane to rd; R to car park; R on track; after L bend, R to lane; L to Flemings Fm.	1510m
2.3	Ahead on track which bends R; L on track to Gusted Hall Lane; ahead; L past fm and R on bridleway to Mount Bovers.	1830m
2.4	L onto path; R; R onto lane; L and L into woodland; R at crosspath; after 450m, R over fb; rise to barrier on R; bear L to Hockley Woods car park.	1680m
2.5	From toilet block, lower path S to cross fb; R; R on path at high fence; ahead to rd; L on Hillside Rd; R on Woodside Rd to High Rd; L to Fountain Lane.	1390m
2.6	Half-R to path; out to far L corner of field; L/R; descend to cross rly; half-L, then R fork (N) through wood; R on path; at rly, L (N) to Murrels Lane.	1710m
2.7	Ahead to Lower Rd; L to Pevensey Gdns; R across rd onto path opp; diag across field to Long Lane; R to Cracknell's Fm.	1840m
2.8	Ahead to rd; L bend; R; diag across rec gd to sea wall; L to slipway; L to Anchor Inn, Hullbridge.	1670m
2.9	W to Esplanade; bear R on path onto sea wall for 600m to sharp R bend.	1210m
2.10	Ahead under power lines; on until forced L/R; follow path out to Beeches Rd.	1760m
2.11	R on Beeches Rd (no footway for 1km); R on Chelmsford Rd to bus stop opposite Maltings Rd, Battlesbridge.	1300m

2.1 This section starts on Rayleigh Road in Eastwood. The route mixes hard surfaces with grassy (and occasionally muddy) paths. Nettles and brambles will also be encountered, so it cannot be recommended that a walker should wear shorts, skirt or kilt: lightweight boots, though, are highly recommended, bordering on essential.

Eastwood is served by frequent buses running between Rayleigh station and Southend.

2.2 Start the section by going west along Rayleigh Road, using its left-hand pavement, crossing to the right-hand pavement by a light-controlled pedestrian crossing at a filling station. Pass a row of shops, and a free-standing funeral director's office, then turn right on a path to MacMurdo Road. Follow MacMurdo Road to its end, then do a quick right-and-left zigzag onto Green Lane.

Where Green Lane bends right, take a path half-left which bends to run alongside a hedge, and which comes out onto a road. Turn right and follow the road for 140m. Where the road bends left into a small car park, take an enclosed lane on the right.

Follow this lane as it descends: eventually the path will follow the right-hand edge of a field to a park bench in the corner. Take the left-hand curve, but after 75m, take a gap on the right to a road, where turn left. Follow the road to reach Flemings Farm on the left.

2.3 Continue past the barrier, and follow the lane round a right-hand bend, soon turning off left onto another track. Follow this track which soon rises through woodland to a small car park where the track joins Gusted Hall Lane.

Here, there is a decision to be made. The Saffron Trail ahead will encounter a lane thick with brambles, nettles, mud, and fallen trees which have not been cleared. If you are deterred by this, you may prefer to follow the alternative which is described below.

Edwards Hall Park



Continue ahead on Gusted Hall Lane to the point where it bends to the right. Here, turn left onto the access track to Honeyhops Farm.

There is a Saffron Trail waymark here, but it is rather unhelpfully placed over to the right on a pole: the sign for the bridleway ahead is the surest indication of a left turn here.

Go past the farm buildings, out into an open field, where turn right to follow the bridleway on a bearing of 330°, then bearing right to reach the cluster of dwellings at Mount Bovers. When you emerge onto the road, cross half-left, and bear left on a footpath between two buildings.

2.4 This is where you will encounter the brambles, nettles, mud and fallen trees — by far the worst conditions met thus far on the route from Southend. The path turns right into the lane of purgatory, which may only be 250m long, but seems much longer as you fight your way, branch by branch through it all.

At the end of the struggle, the path turns right onto a lane. After only 60m on the lane, turn left and immediately left again to take a line north of west and enter the woodland. At a path crossing after 70m, take a track to the right, which soon bends to the left. Follow this track for 450m until you find a waymarked path to the right, over a footbridge.

Cross the footbridge and follow the main track as it rises: after 300m, you will see a traffic barrier over to the right: make towards the barrier, but do not go through it. Bear left on the clear track, which rises to pass a children's play area at Hockley Woods car park. Advance (past a café kiosk on your left) to a toilet block, the end of this section.

Buses serve the Bull Inn frequently as they ply the routes between Rayleigh and Southend. From Hockley station, exit onto the main road and turn right, bearing right at the Spa corner (1.2km). There are shops and cafés on the route between the station and the Bull Inn.

There is an alternative route which avoids Mount Bovers.

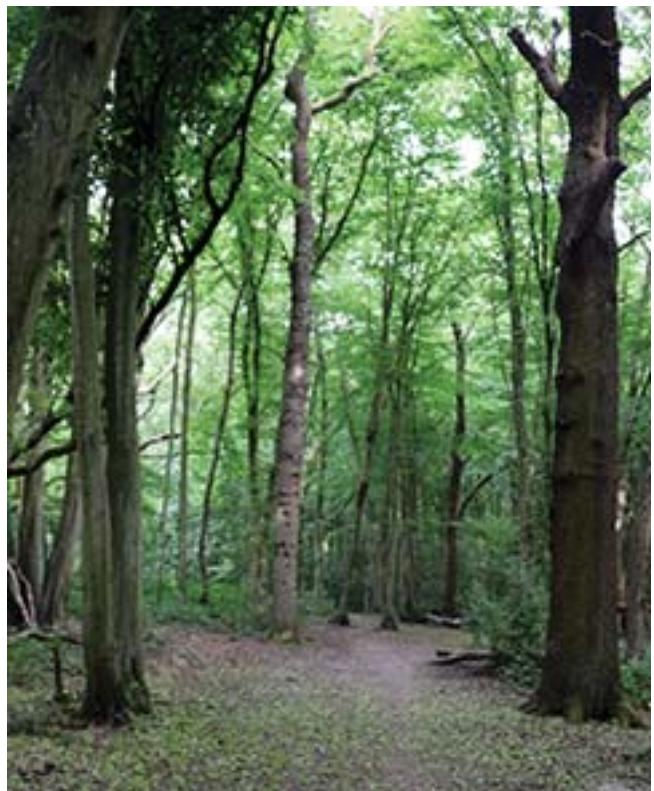
From the car park on Gusted Hall Lane, turn left past Gusted Hall following the Roach Valley Way, which makes three right-then-left zigzags before turning right into the woodland.

Immediately after entering the woodland, the Roach Valley Way turns right, making its way to the car park and joining the Saffron Trail just after the latter enters the woodland (going straight ahead at the junction where the Saffron Trail turns right). However, by continuing straight ahead on entering the woodland, the track will take you directly to Hockley Woods car park. Your choice.

Note that if you take the direct route towards the car park, and you are not breaking your journey at Hockley, you may turn left onto



Approaching Mount Bovers from the south



Hockley Woods

Risible waymarking



the Saffron Trail just before crossing a stream, about 850m from your entry into the woodland.

2.5 From the end of the toilet block farthest from the main road, take the lower broad path to the south-west, soon bending to the left to take up a southerly line. In about 480m, cross a bridge and turn right onto a less well-defined track.

If you have followed the alternative route, you will reach this point coming from the opposite direction. If you are not breaking your journey at Hockley Woods (there is a bus stop less than 1km ahead), you will turn left onto the path before reaching the bridge.

Follow the path westwards until a high laplink fence rears up on your right. Turn right to follow this fence (on your left) up to a road. Your left turn onto Hillside Road is accompanied by a weather-faded paper coin-sized waymark,

which is invisible on your approach and risible in its poverty of usefulness. This, unfortunately, gives a fairly accurate indication of the level of care devoted to waymarking and maintaining the Saffron Trail.

Take Hillside Road to its far end, then turn right onto Woodside Road. At the dead end, exit by a path on the left-hand side of the road to come out onto High Road.

The bus stop at the end of the path is for Rayleigh; across the road to the right, you may use the other stop for buses to Hockley (not all serve the station) and on to Southend.

Turn left along High Road for the few paces to reach the junction with Fountain Lane.

2.6 Cross the road at the junction, and bear half-left across the grass (to the right of a gravelled driveway) to enter an enclosed lane, whose deep gravel makes for an unnecessarily noisy and energy-sapping 100m of trudge.

The lane comes out onto the left-hand edge of a large field which falls away to your right; at the end of the field.

Here, unnecessarily hostile notices berate you, where a simple, polite sign indicating *Footpath this way* would be more helpful, and more conducive to happy co-operation.



Cut over to the left to follow the right-hand edge of the next field as it descends past numbered pastures to reach the railway line (hectored onto it with more notices).

Cross the line carefully, over stiles at each side (kissing-gates would be much safer). Take the path half-left at the railway exit stile; after 40m, where the major path bends left, take a smaller path (under an arching tree-trunk) within the woodland, with a golf course almost invisible on your left.

You will be travelling northwards. The path comes out at the end of Blountswood Road, a rather grandiose name for the track. Turn right to face east.

In rainy weather or when conditions are generally muddy, the track north from this point will lead you to Lower Road by a more direct and drier route than the official route.

Walk along Blountswood Road, through a kissing-gate next to which is a waymark which is almost hidden by the gate and is, unaccountably (unless you might suspect otherwise), pointing downwards, and on to reach a gate with no help for pedestrians: hold onto the left-hand gatepost and swing yourself round it.

Bear left with the track, now travelling northwards away from the railway to reach Murrels Lane as it comes in from the right.

Descending to the railway

Below — unmetalled Blountswood Road

Bottom — field path leading to Long Lane



2.7 Press on northwards, ignoring a track which goes off half-left. The track becomes unmetalled and is quite muddy — the going is just as tough in dry weather as you negotiate the hard ruts and humps. Eventually, you will come out onto a road. Turn left to reach the end of Pevensey Gardens.

If you have taken the alternative route, when you reach Lower Road, turn left for 70m, then right onto Long Lane, where you will rejoin the main route at a path crossing 330m along Long Lane.

Cross the road and take the path opposite, which leads out into an open field at a stile. Cross the field diagonally half-left to another stile, where continue ahead to come out onto Long Lane at a crossing-point of paths. Turn right, and follow Long Lane to pass Cracknell's Farm.

2.8 Continue to the end of Long Lane, coming out onto a road at a 90° turn. Do not turn right, but cross carefully to take the right-hand side of the road ahead (there is no footway). Take the left bend, and pass some houses on the right (there is still no footway).

A few metres beyond the last house, go through a hole in the hedge on the right (using a kissing-gate). Bear half-left to cross the recreation ground, then half-left onto the path along the sea wall, with the tidal estuary of the River Crouch on your right.

Follow the sea wall past an encampment of park homes and the extensive garden of the Anchor Inn on to reach the end of Ferry Lane, at the Hullbridge public slipway. Turn left for 20m towards the Anchor Inn.

There is no ferry, and the alleged ford is of no use to pedestrians, but there is a frequent bus service (even half-hourly on a Sunday) via Rayleigh station to Southend.

2.9 Continue westwards from Ferry Road, past the Smuggler's Rest. The path makes its way through a woodland nature reserve, and emerges onto a road at the Esplanade.

The Crouch estuary to the west of Hullbridge



Continue ahead on the Esplanade for 80m, then bear off to the right on a path which runs between houses and jetties. After about 100m, the path opens out onto the sea wall. Walk along the top of the sea wall for 600m, to the point where the wall takes a distinct right-hand bend.

This is where the official route bears slightly left to pick up an enclosed track. At the time of research (August 2021), this lane was as impenetrable as the notorious Mount Bovers example above. The practical (and nicer) route is to follow the sea wall.

2.10 Take the bend, and follow the wall round to the left, and beneath some power lines (taking the distances on the maritime warning signs with a pinch of salt, and hoping that the clearance height is more accurate). The wall turns left again: follow it until it is blocked with vegetation. Here, bear left through a hedge and out into a field. Keep to the right-hand edge of the field, and follow the clear path out through woodland and onto Beeches Road.

The next 1km is along a fairly busy road with no footway and only limited refuges on the verge: the negotiation of a refuge route would be an important development. Hold something bright in your left hand; protect children with an adult leading; break up the party into groups of two or three, and spread these groups out about 150m apart (that's ten seconds for an approaching car); re-group only at Chelmsford Road, or at the goat farm in an emergency.

2.10 Breathe deeply, and spend the next kilometre alert for (and alerting) oncoming vehicles. This is no time for dawdling, nor for conversation and other distractions: eyes on the road ahead with full concentration.

When you reach the junction with Chelmsford Road, breathe more easily and relax (but watch out for half-alert motorists emerging from the driveway just before the corner without checking for pedestrians). Turn right along the road (with a footway). Cross the bridge and pass the entry to the Barge Inn and one of the (many) antiques centres, and continue to the corner of Maltings Road.

There are bus stops here for the minibus service to Rayleigh and Southend (back the way you have come) and to Chelmsford via East Hanningfield (ahead). This is a two-hourly service (approximately), six days a week. Battlesbridge station (trains to Wickford every 40 minutes) is 500m distant (350m ahead on Chelmsford Road, then turn right at the Hawk Inn up the station approach road).

The Barge and the Hawk provide the usual pub facilities. There is a tea-room in the building next to the Barge Inn. There is another café outlet behind the pond at the Maltings Road junction which may be pressed into service in an emergency.