

Railway days out

Hockley and Hullbridge

Start	Hockley station (HOC) — SS5 4BG
Finish	Hockley station (HOC) — SS5 4BG
Distance	13.22km
Duration	2 hours 58 minutes
Ascent	165m
Transport and ticketing	Train from Liverpool Street; bus at Hullbridge to Rayleigh station; day return to Hockley
Facilities	Convenience shop and pub at Hullbridge; café and pub at Bull Lane; all facilities in Hockley

1	Hockley stn.	
2	Exit the stn, bearing L to Spa Rd; R on rd to bus shelter.	430m
3	Path on R with bldgs to R; over rly; ahead to cross-path; L, R, L and half-L to Hockleyhall Wood.	1470m
4	Through neck of wood; path with wood on L then through main wood; keep nursery on L; through churchyard to Church Rd.	960m
5	R to jct; half-L then path L to track; R to rd; L; R on path; half-L to Long Lane.	1650m
6	R on track; ahead then L on rd; half-R across rec gd; L on path to Hullbridge.	950m
7	L (Ferry Rd); L (Keswick Ave); R (Burnham Rd); L at 118; path SE to Long Lane.	1540m
8	R to rd; L, then R on Central Ave.	390m
9	Ahead on Central Ave to S tip of golf course; L to cross rly.	1570m
10	Climb with fence on L for 400m; L/R to follow path out to High Rd.	880m
11	Cross, then L to bus stop; R on path; L (Hillside Rd); R (Bullwood Approach); cross stream; L on path for 330m; L on major path past toilets to Bull Lane.	1460m
12	R on High Rd; L on Spa Rd to bus shelter.	700m
13	Ahead on Spa Rd; L on Station Approach to stn.	430m

1 The walk begins and ends at Hockley station, on the Southend Victoria line from Liverpool Street. If you are arriving from London, cross the line by the footbridge to exit the station.

The modern housing, and the industrial units behind, cover a space formerly occupied by a brickworks. Until the middle of the twentieth century, Hockley was just a ribbon development along the High Road, with some more buildings on Spa Road. By the late 1960s, the town was essentially the shape we see today, barring the new build on the brickworks site.

The Pump Room for Hockley Spa operated for just a few years during the 1840s, after which it cascaded through many uses — Baptist chapel and billiard hall among them, though not at the same time, of course — and is now a private residence.

2 Make your way out from the station forecourt onto Spa Road by bearing left at the little roundabout, and turn right, keeping to the right-hand pavement of Spa Road. Pass the Spa building on your left, then the Co-operative Society shop on your right.

3 Just beyond the prominent bus shelter, turn right to pick up a path: the buildings which replaced the brickworks are on your right. Continue straight ahead to reach and cross the railway tracks. Keep in the same direction for a further 700m to reach a T-junction of paths.

Turn left, then follow the path through a right turn, then a left turn. Bear left to enter the north-eastern section of Hockleyhall Woods.

4 Once through the short woodland section, emerge to follow a field path ahead, with woodland on your left. Plunge through the main section of the wood, at the end of which, take a path to the left, arriving at Mill Hill nursery.

Take a path on your right (westwards); after a right turn, follow the path through the churchyard and descend to reach and cross Church Road.

5 Turn right along Church Road and descend to the first junction on the left — the access for Wadham Park Farm. Here, do not approach the farm but take a path half-left (between signboards on the corner) across fields.

After about 400m, take a path on the left to reach Blountswood Road (little more than a track).

Turn right along the track, which becomes 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.

*Unmetalled and muddy
Blountswood Road*



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.

6 Turn right, and follow Long Lane to its end, 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, escape the roadside by going 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.

The encampment of park homes covers the site of another brickworks. As noted with regard to Hockley, Hullbridge expanded to its current size during the 1960s, though there has also been minor expansion in more recent years. Mesolithic artefacts have been found nearby.

The bridge hinted at in the village's name only lasted from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. The passenger ferry is marked on maps of the 1960s.

Today 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 from Ferry Road.

The Anchor Inn is an obvious source of refreshment: other options lie ahead on Ferry Road.



Diagonal field path leading to Long Lane



East of Hullbridge, low tide on the River Crouch

7 Turn left to follow Ferry Road past the bus terminus on your left, then pass a row of shops on your right. Pass the school (on your left), then turn left into Keswick Avenue. Just before the road runs into a dead end, turn right on Burnham Road.

At 118 Burnham Road, take a path between the houses on the left. Behind the houses, bear right to follow the right-hand edge of a field. Follow the path to reach Long Lane.

8 Turn right onto Long Lane, and follow it out to the main road. Here, turn left and take the first road on your right, Central Avenue.

9 Follow Central Avenue southwards. When the bungalows on your left come to an end, continue on the narrower lane ahead. Do not veer off the lane. You will pass through a gate, and when the buildings peter out, you will pass between horse pastures — note the old-fashioned lighting on the lane.

You will eventually reach a path junction at the corner of a wood: there is now a golf course immediately on your right. Turn left and immediately right to take up a path within the wood and parallel to its edge. At a path junction (where the route to the right returns to the golf course), turn left to follow the path out to a level crossing over the railway.

10 Cross the railway with care, and ascend the left-hand side of the field ahead, with the fence immediately on your left. Continue for 400m, and make a left-and-right adjustment so that the hedge is now on your right.

Follow the field edge until it runs into a lane: this leads out onto High Road through a noisy and energy-sapping covering of shingle.

Cross High Road, and turn left along its right-hand pavement. When you reach the bus stop, turn right along a narrow path which gives out onto Woodside Road. Take Hillside Road on your left, and follow it to its end.

11 Turn right on Bullwood Approach. After passing the lodge, descend on a path to cross a stream. Take the forest path to the left until it meets a major cross-path. Turn left on this path, and follow it up to a car park. Exit the car park with the row of toilets immediately on your left, and regain High Road via Bull Lane.

The car park is the main access point for Hockley Woods, an important natural habitat for local exploration. The Saffron Trail (which links Southend-on-Sea and

*Great Bullwood, in
Hockley Woods*



Saffron Walden if you can find your way through the briars and brambles, and if you can cope with inadequate waymarking) and the more local Roach Valley Way make their separate ways through the woods, and there are many other paths to discover.

There is a café in the car park, as well as the aforementioned toilets. To the left at the end of Bull Lane is the Bull Inn, which has been on this spot for many years: it was recently restored after a fire, and serves drinks from 1100 until 2300, and standard pub fare throughout until mid-evening.

12 Turn right along High Road, following it all the way to the junction with Spa Road in the middle of Hockley. Turn left onto Spa Road to reach the bus shelter where you turned off at the start of the walk.

The area around the junction of High Road and Spa Road is the commercial hub of Hockley. There are several options for refreshment or replenishment.

13 Continue along Spa Road. Just before the railway bridge, turn left onto Station Approach. Ascend slightly to the little roundabout and bear right to reach the station.

If you are travelling to London, your train will depart from platform 1 — you will be glad that there is no need to haul yourself over the footbridge at the end of the walk.



*Refuelling at the Bull Inn
before the final push
to Hockley station*