

Railway days out from London Bridge



The text in this book is merely an indication of what might be possible ... or what might have been possible at the time of researching or later revision.

Each reader must assess whether each part of the route qualifies as suitable or safe for public access. The author does not warrant any point of legality or safety in any part of the description of the route.

Thanks are due to many people who have helped me with route-finding and with intelligence local to a number of areas traversed by the route. Their contributions enrich the route and the stories along it. Clearly, any mistakes and misinterpretations remain with the author.

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Front cover photograph:
Enhaw Maltings
(Gatwick to Nutfield)

The days out

Introduction

This document contains details of some walks which may be reached from London Bridge. The Thameslink services may also be joined at St Pancras, Farringdon, City Thameslink or Blackfriars. The others may be joined at Charing Cross, Waterloo East or Cannon Street, but it is easier to use London Bridge.

Routes

- **Ashurst to Edenbridge (linear)**
13.0km; 2hr 45min (see page 15)
- **Balcombe and Ardingly (circuit)**
16.3km; 3hr 52min (see page 19)
- **Gatwick Airport to Nutfield (linear)**
13.0km; 2hr 45min (see page 25)
- **Higham to Gravesend (linear)**
14.4km; 3hr 13min (see page 31)
- **Maidstone East to West Malling via Barming (linear)**
19.5km; 4hr 14min (see page 37)
- **Sevenoaks to Knockholt (linear)**
14.4km; 3hr 13min (see page 41)



General information

Planning your days

Getting to and from the routes

First of all, I intended to reach the start of each route as early in the day as possible. I did this by catching (generally) the first bus of the day from my nearest stop in the outermost fringe of London. This demonstrated the great difference between Sunday walking and the rest of the week: the first Sunday bus (at about 0740, as opposed to 0610 on other days) meant that the day's walk might not be started before 1000, and sometimes even later. I aim to finish the day's walk by 1400 if at all possible, because that's when the heat is switched off by the sun in winter (and the switch-off time comes even earlier if you are to the north of higher ground).

In the route guides, useful bus stops and stations are noted, with link routes described if they are not adjacent to the route itself. You will need both the TfL journey planner (<https://tfl.gov.uk/>) and the National Public Transport Information site (which has superseded and consolidated the various regional Traveline offerings and is at <https://www.nationalpti.co.uk/>) to plan your days. Once you know the routes you will need to research, <https://bustimes.org/> comes into its own, providing information about every bus and every stop — to give you shorter options and emergency exits.

You may note that I have tried to ensure that linear walks are chosen to be walking northwards or westwards as much as possible (unless the opposite direction makes significantly greater sense). This minimises staring into the sun, particularly in the morning when it is low in the sky. On circular walks, of course, the direction is all but immaterial, for you will be pointing south at some point in the circuit.

Finding the way

Map

Of course, the first step in finding the route is to read and to follow the detailed route-notes in the guide! But a map is still a very helpful aid, especially to find context, exit routes and alternatives, and the very best published maps for walkers are the Ordnance Survey Explorer series at a scale of 1:25000.

Assuming that you have access to a computer and printer, though, there is a far better option open to you than buying large fold-out paper maps which go out of date with every by-pass, brownfield

conversion, or cliff collapse. A subscription to the Ordnance Survey's online map service is one of the best investments any walker in Great Britain can make. For less than £40 per year (at 2026 prices), this will give unlimited online access to Ordnance Survey cartography stretching from Shetland to Scilly: you will note that they have a range of subscription plans available. See

<https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/osmaps/>)

for details of the subscription service.

With this subscription, you may import GPX routes and create your own routes: these may be stored in the cloud, accessible only to you with your account or, if you so desire, made available to other users of the app. Also, you may export basic GPX data for any route to a file, and the software is able to calculate optimal directions for road trips too. You may then print maps and route-plans, using your own decisions as to paper size (A4 or A3), scale, and orientation, without limit) for your personal use. The map quality is second to none, just as one would expect from the Ordnance Survey.

The A-Z atlases and maps (and similar publications) are also useful for street names, etc., and show some of the paths, particularly in the built-up areas, but the limitations of scale are greater with a mapset which prioritises roads and streets, so the precision is diluted.

Needless to say, Google Maps (and other online services) can show the route of an imported GPX file on top of their base maps. However, the quality of the map, and of the resultant print, will suffer badly in comparison with the Ordnance Survey app's offering of crisp, clear, high-quality cartography.

Never rely solely on a map on your smartphone: the drain on the battery as the phone polls for your location is significant, and the consequences of losing navigability because of battery drainage, while perhaps not quite as life-threatening as it was for the idiots who tried to navigate across the Lakeland Fells with a phone, are still serious. Also, when all is said and done, the places where you are need navigational assistance are precisely those with extremely limited signal quality.

To return to the Lake District for an example of the vagaries of signal strength, I pulled out my phone at Hardknott Roman camp (but only to check for a text), and there was only a very weak signal ... from Manx Telecom. To cap it all, I had a text from Manx Telecom two days later, asking for my views on having experienced their service in using my phone while abroad.

Compass

Within the narrative, the sixteen main compass directions are used for most instances of orientation where the bearing is close enough. However, sometimes more accuracy is required, and a numerical

compass bearing has to be given (clockwise from north). It should be stressed that a compass is a very useful piece of equipment, even on suburban streets, but it becomes essential when crossing areas of heath or woodland where there is a multitude of paths (or none at all).

Nowadays, many of our mobile phones have compass apps, and for those whose phones are missing the app ... well, a basic Silva or Suunto (or similar) compass will be fine for these walks. Just keep yourself clear of danger by using your phone (and its battery) sparingly.

Of course, if you can see the sun, you can gauge directions pretty easily: it is in the east at 6am, in the south-east at 9am, south at noon, south-west at 3pm and west at 6pm (an hour later during British Summer Time, of course). The pedants may raise the question of longitude, but even at Maidstone East station, the clock lags the sun by only two minutes.

Logistics

Start and finish

You should note the restricted nature of much Sunday travel (and also on Saturdays, in some cases), and this may inform your choice of the day of the week for a particular route. The National Rail status page

<https://www.nationalrail.co.uk/disruptions/>

should warn you of planned and *ad hoc* disruptions to rail services, as will the TfL site for disruptions within London. Be sure to check <https://bustimes.org/> for bus availability, particularly at weekends.

Food and drink

It might seem, at first glance, unnecessary to carry provisions while walking in a well-populated area, but needing to hunt down victuals can be distracting and dispiriting. If a café or pub is not reached at the right time of day (or is found to be closed when you arrive), a period of gloom may set in; at the wrong point of the natural cycle of walking spirit, the need for a formal stop can disrupt the flow of the walk.

Each of these eventualities may lead to a mental off-switch being thrown, when you will be walking *through* an area without the experience of being *in* the area. Indeed, if you stick rigidly to the routes as given in the notes, there will often be long stretches along which you will not encounter a shop on the route itself. In areas of dearth, off-route facilities are indicated.

Of course, this applies more stringently in the rural areas, where you know that there could be long distances between refreshment facilities. You should always carry a small water bottle and some emergency nibbles; on some stretches, it can be handy to have a sandwich or similar in reserve. You are encouraged to make use of local facilities in the areas passed through, but you should also make sure that you have a Plan B tucked away in your pocket or backpack — whether for yourself, or for someone you might meet who is in greater distress.

First aid

The above advice applies equally to the carrying of a simple first aid kit of sticking plaster, antiseptic cream, antiseptic wet wipes (for disposal other than by flushing), tissues and sunscreen, plus zipped polythene bags for the sterile collection and subsequent disposal of any contaminated material. The small barrel of brandy which is stereotypically to be found round the neck of a St Bernard is optional.

Directions

I try to keep out of the trap of “cross the stile, and make for invisible barn over the skyline”, a direction which I discovered (and revised) within a set of route-notes to a long-distance path more than forty years ago.

You will see that these directions are sufficient to follow the route if you have a capable map in your hand ... and a capable map-reader in your party.

Times and distances

Each route is headed by details of the distance, ascent and duration. For the purposes of the calculation, standard walking pace is set at 5 kilometres per hour: individual readers may adjust expected timings according to their natural speed.

Distances are given in kilometres (after all, that's how the grid squares are constructed on the map, and we should really have ditched the awkward multiples of 12, 3, 220, and 8 several generations ago); the duration is based on Naismith's Rule at a flat-ground pace of 5 kilometres per hour, and accounting for slope. If your natural walking speed is at 4 kilometres per hour, you will need to adjust the duration by a factor of 1.25 to obtain an approximate duration for your own needs.

Do not assume, though, that you can manage a faster gait, especially in towns and cities: that will just put you under the cosh on expectations, and will leave no time to stand and stare. Urban

walking has its own accelerations and decelerations, separate from its rural counterpart — even waiting at traffic lights will change your overall speed. Key access points to public transport within routes are given at the appropriate points in the narrative of the route directions.

Background information

Throughout the text, I have attempted to give historical and other context to the areas through which you are passing. This may discuss a physical aspect of the route, such as the geology or architecture. Alternatively, it may point out something which might be interesting in social terms — a famous resident, perhaps, or a link with another route. These discursive alerts will be in [blue](#).

While each reader may have a favourite topic for such background information, it is hoped that there will be some interest for all in each of these inserts into the route-text.

Another form of insert alerts the reader to the various logistical matters which you will encounter — either for good (the presence of opportunities for refreshment or for the replenishment of supplies, and transport opportunities), or for the not so good (having to travel along a busy road or cross a busy railway, or the presence of other poor or dangerous walking conditions). In addition, this covers any points where an apparently obvious next step is the wrong answer. These logistical alerts will be in [red](#).

Respecting the route

Responsible walkers will always obey the Countryside Code when in the country, but respect for the route does not stop at the 30mph signs.

Whether you are on a street, a towpath, a footpath, or any other part of the route, you are only a guest passing through the community of others. The residents and other users have every right to expect that you do not abuse their environment while you borrow it for your transient use.

- Parking in residential roads, in front of gates or other field access, and beside farm driveways at the start or end of your walk is dissuaded most strongly — use local car parks if you really must arrive by car (though using public transport is a far better option, especially in walking linear routes). After all, these routes are described as *railway* days out.
- Do not make excessive noise as you go along — play no music, and quiet conversation barely above a whisper is loud enough. Let the surroundings do the talking.

- Do not block the way for other users by walking in large groups or more than two abreast (this is, of course, the most civilised way to act wherever you walk, be that along Oxford Street or in the Outer Hebrides).
- Be extremely careful not to leave litter anywhere — it is always an eyesore and may be dangerous (*e.g.*, in starting a wildfire). Always try to replenish your supplies at local shops, cafés, and so on: this helps to pay back the community for your use as you pass through.
- Finally, be sure to enjoy your passage through the areas borrowed by the routes — and show it by smiling to the locals you meet.

Conventions used in this guide

Measurement

One convention will already have been noted — the consistent use of metric measurements. This is the logical choice to correspond with map scales, and avoids the need for mental arithmetic in scales of three or of 22. Most people can be happy to consider their natural walking pace at 6kph, 5kph, or 4kph: that translates to one kilometre per 10, 12, or 15 minutes respectively. Even an ambling 3kph comes out at a nice round 20 minutes per kilometre.

However, there are other conventions to give you, the reader, help in reading the text.

Colour

Within the route sections of the guide (that is, excluding these preamble pages), black text is used to denote the detailed route descriptions, while coloured text is used for other types of information.

- Text in black is used for detailed route description.
- Text in maroon is used for logistical information, such as access to public transport or the whereabouts of cafés, restaurants, pubs or shops. It is also used to warn of dangers or “wrong-route” options
- Text in blue is used for historical and other background information, and for descriptive discussion text.
- Text in green is used to describe alternative routes.

Clearly, these classes of information may overlap in places to a greater or lesser degree, and inevitably there will be some leakage of text into what some readers may consider the ‘wrong’ colour.

Words

Within the text I use the word *refuge* in two ways to describe specific aspects of the route.

- A *refuge path* is a path provided (usually as a permissive route by the landowner, and often by agreement with the local highway authority) along the edge of a field, etc. This typically separates the walker from a roadway which would be dangerous owing to the lack of a verge. Some refuge paths are also used as off-road equestrian refuges.
- In crossing a road where there is no pedestrian crossing (whether light-controlled or a plain zebra crossing), a small island between the two directions of road travel is described as a *refuge*.

I use the word *triangle* to describe a refuge of that shape, usually as a means of separating the traffic at the approach to a junction or roundabout. The word *footway* is preferred to *pavement*, and *underpass* to *subway* to avoid ambiguity with road surfaces and underground railways respectively.

Maps of the route

The routes are mapped and are available to view on the *OS Maps Online* website and app (see the appropriate link at the end of this introduction) — *OS Maps Online* subscribers have access to the 1:25000 and 1:50000 maps, the latter really only useful for broad planning. You should note that the online access to the mapping will give you automatic updates to roads, paths and other features in the landscape (such as cliff erosion and rewilding projects) as they appear. This very useful feature is, of course, not covered by using paper maps, unless you keep purchasing replacements every time they are updated.

To find a particular route, you should home in on the area of interest (making sure that the start of the route is covered by the displayed area of the on-screen map).

- Select *Routes*, then *Discover routes*, and untick the *Premium routes* constraint (which restricts the search to some commercial providers).
- You should then be able to find the required route (whose name will begin with “Railway days out”, followed by the starting point, by scrolling through the list of routes alphabetically).

Alternatively, you may find it easier to paste the URL from the introduction to the route as given in the appropriate section of this document.

Online resources — transport and logistics

There are some very useful resources from the major transport players, and from others. A few of the most notable resources are listed below.

- **Transport for London**

<https://tfl.gov.uk/>

Full details of all TfL services, including timetables, bus route maps, status reports, live arrival data, journey planning, and more. Third-party connections such as National Rail and non-TfL bus services are included. The website also contains resources for walking routes in London.

- **National Public Transport Information**

<https://www.nationalpti.co.uk/>

Journey planning for public transport across the country. TfL is generally more detailed and more accurate within London, but NPTI is needed when you stray beyond the TfL area. This website/app supersedes and consolidates the former regional Traveline offerings.

- **National Rail**

<http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/>

Journey planning for rail services. Note that the TfL journey planner includes rail services within London. There is coverage of some rail services beyond London (there are inexplicable gaps) — however, since fares, disruptions and many other details may be found on the National Rail website, it is to be preferred for travel beyond London.

- **Bustimes**

<http://www.bustimes.org/>

Timetables (and maps of bus stops) for just about every bus route in Britain and Ireland. The compact format is kinder to smartphone usage than the apps from some transport organisations, and of course it consolidates data from all such organisations.

- **Ordnance Survey**

<https://explore.osmaps.com/>

Access to Ordnance Survey maps online, for desktop, laptop, tablet and smartphone. Printing maps is possible. Walkers are urged to take out a subscription: the cost will be repaid countless times over.

- **Bikehike**

<http://www.bikehike.co.uk/mapview.php>

Using OpenStreetMap, footpaths and cycle paths are overlaid on the base map. Useful for viewing link paths

to and from the route.

- **National Library of Scotland**

<http://maps.nls.uk/>

It may seem curious to reference a library in Edinburgh for information about the topography of London and elsewhere, but NLS carries an extensive collection of digitised historic maps covering the whole of Great Britain. These may be searched from an overlay on the modern map. Within the narrative text, if a reference is made to “old maps”, then NLS will be your source.



Ashurst to Edenbridge

AHS–EBT

Start	Ashurst station (AHS) — TN3 9TL
Finish	Edenbridge Town station (EBT) — TN8 5LP
Distance	16.8km
Duration	3 hours 39 minutes
Ascent	180m
Transport and ticketing	Train from London Bridge; train at Cowden and Hever; day return to Ashurst (Kent — not New Forest)
Facilities	Pubs at Markbeece and Hever; all facilities in Edenbridge
Map	https://explore.osmaps.com/route/13699294/

Introduction

This country walk is predominantly on paths, with no really significant road sections until you reach Edenbridge. The route also passes Cowden station. The route starts at Ashurst, 50 minutes from London Bridge on the Uckfield line. The return trip from Edenbridge Town (note — **not** Edenbridge station, which is on the line between Redhill and Tonbridge) takes 45 minutes.

Apart from the two pubs mentioned in the table above, there are no opportunities for refreshment and replenishment until you reach Edenbridge, so carrying your provisions for the route would be a good idea.

Route

2 Exit the (minimalist) station from Platform 2 and turn left along Station Road to its end at the junction with Ashurst Hill.

At this point, the route is joined by the Sussex Border Path, making westwards towards Gatwick and Emsworth. The Sussex Border Path runs for 220km between Emsworth and Rye. Full details of the Sussex Border Path may be found at

<https://www.sussexborderpath.co.uk/>

Cross the road ahead and turn left along the right-hand footway. Pass beneath the railway and cross the River Medway. Continue along the road for a further 150m to the beginning of a lay-by on the left. Turn right and take the Sussex Border Path which crosses a stream before heading off in a north-north-easterly direction, towards the railway and the River Medway.

Pass beneath the railway with the River Medway on your right, and follow the path close to the river across a field. Pass some trees on your left, and start ascending, leaving the river bank. Pass through a gap, then continue ahead, keeping a copse on your right. Pass a pond on your left and reach a T-junction of paths, where turn right to pass through Willett's Farm.

3 Continue ahead for 350m and cross a stream, returning into Kent. Turn half-left and after a further 70m, turn left, still with the Sussex Border Path. Pass beneath high-voltage power lines and continue roughly westwards to reach Sussex Lane.

4 Turn right onto Sussex Lane, then turn left to cross a stile and clamber into a field. Follow the public footpath ahead for about 450m, then take the left-hand of two paths ahead, keeping close to the stream on your left. After about 250m, turn left at a T-junction of paths and cross the stream. Turn right to continue with the water on your right until you can cross the field to a railway bridge. Pass beneath the railway.

5 Turn right to walk parallel with the railway for 250m and cross a stream. Pass two ponds on your left and continue ahead to reach a bridleway, where turn right.

The Sussex Border Path continues straight on at this point, making for Gatwick and Emsworth.

Pass The Moat on your left and exit through a gate onto Moat Lane. Cross the lane and turn half-left to reach a protruding corner of the fence on your left, then bear slightly left to make for the far right-hand corner of the field. Continue along the right-hand edge of the next field with the water on your right, then turn right, cross the stream, and pass beneath the railway. Turn left to follow the path with the railway on your left to reach Blowers Hill opposite the entrance to Cowden station.

6 Turn left and cross the railway, then turn right, parallel with the railway on your right and a stream on your left. After about 500m, at the southern portal of the Markbeech Tunnel, continue ahead close to the stream on your left. Ignore a path which goes off to the left as you trend gradually to the right. Cross a stream and ascend, still easing to the right, to reach Cowden Pound Road.

There is a pub 100m distant to your right, which is open daily from noon and serves sandwiches, light meals and pub classics. On Sundays, there are no sandwiches, but there is the inevitable roast meals.

7 Turn left to follow Cowden Pound Road for 250m, then turn right to pass through a gate onto a public footpath which passes Bramsell's Farm on your left and continues into, through, and out of Oak Wood. Turn right to pass beneath the railway and continue out onto Uckfield Lane. Turn left and follow the lane to pass a hotel on the left.

A short cut is available when you reach Uckfield Lane. If you turn left rather than right, and turn left onto Chippens Lane, you will reach the junction with Hever Lane in 500m, as opposed to 2.2km by the main route. Turn left at the junction to regain the route at waypoint 11 below.

8 Immediately beyond the hotel building, turn left and take a set of steps up to a public footpath which runs alongside the wall of the hotel on your left. At a hedge, turn half-right (eastwards) and pass a pond on your left to reach a T-junction of paths, where turn left. Pass a pond on your right and cross a field, then follow the right-hand edge of the next field to reach Rectory Lane, where turn left. After 60m, where the lane bends to the left, continue ahead on a public footpath which takes you straight past a school on your right to the centre of Hever village.

There is a pub here with 1597 painted on the wall. It opens at noon daily and serves “pub classics plus”.

At this point, the Eden Valley Walk joins from the right. This is a 24km route which starts to the west of Edenbridge before passing through the town and continuing to Tonbridge. Full details of the route may be found at

<https://explorekent.org/activities/eden-valley-walk/>

9 Turn left along Hever Road, passing the pub on your right. Follow the road for 450m to reach a T-junction, where turn right, still on Hever Road. After 60m ascending a slight hill, turn left with the Eden Valley Walk to pass through a kissing-gate. Follow the path ahead for a little over 500m to reach Chippens Lane at the junction with Hever Lane.

10 Continue ahead along Hever Lane and cross the railway. Turn right onto a public footpath, still with the Eden Valley Walk, to reach an entrance to the London-bound platform of Hever station.

11 Ease away from the railway to cross a field to the left-hand corner of a copse, then aim for the far left-hand corner of the field. Turn right at a driveway and follow it round to the left to reach Lydens Lane.

Turn right to follow Lydens Lane for 150m, then take a public footpath on your left, continuing in the same direction to reach the railway embankment. Pass beneath the railway and turn left, parallel to the embankment on your left, for 150m, then turn half-right. Cross the field to the hedge on the far side and turn right to follow a refuge path for 90m, then turn left to emerge onto Hever Road.

12 Cross the road and continue ahead for 150m. With Delaware Farm ahead, you will reach a T-junction of paths.

The Eden Valley Walk, which continues ahead, makes an alternative route into Edenbridge, using a path which arches round to the left after crossing the River Eden..

Turn left onto a public footpath and pass to the right of a hedge. Cross the field on the diagonal, then pass through the gap on your right. Turn left and pass a pond. Continue along the left-hand edges of two fields and cross the railway on a footbridge. Continue ahead to Burnt Oak Farm on your right.

13 Continue along the track and, just before you reach the junction with Hever Road, turn right to follow a path to the north-west (*not* the one which sets off west-north-west) across a field. Pass through the gap on your left and continue in a north-westerly direction across two fields to reach a footbridge over the River Eden.

Cross the river and continue ahead to reach Church Street and turn left along the left-hand footway. After 120m, the Eden Valley Walk joins the route from the right. Continue out to the junction with High Street.

Ahead, across High Street, there is a supermarket. From this point to Station Road, High Street is filled with a great variety of shops, cafés and pubs.

Turn right to follow the right-hand footway of High Street. After 80m, the Eden Valley Walk departs on the left for Cernes Farm and the Wealdway. Continue along High Street for 350m and turn right onto Station Approach. Follow the left-hand footway to reach the entrance to Edenbridge Town station.

There are toilets on Platform 1, the London-bound platform. There are no ticketing gates.

Edenbridge station is 1km north of Station Approach. For trains to Redhill, turn left before the railway bridge. For Tonbridge, pass beneath the railway and turn left. Edenbridge station is unstaffed and has no facilities such as toilets.

Balcombe and Ardingly

BAB

Start	Balcombe station (BAB) — RH17 6JG
Finish	Balcombe station (BAB) — RH17 6JG
Distance	16.3km
Duration	3 hours 52 minutes
Ascent	377m
Transport and ticketing	Train from London Bridge and from St Pancras and intermediate stations to London Bridge; bus at Ardingly for Three Bridges station (!); day return to Balcombe
Facilities	Convenience shop off-route at Ardingly; café off-route at Wakehurst Place; convenience shop, pub and café in Balcombe village
Map	https://explore.osmaps.com/route/15444750/

Introduction

This circuit starts and finishes at Balcombe station. The railway arrived in 1841, and the present station opened in 1849. The journey time between St Pancras and Balcombe is just under an hour.

The route is predominantly on paths through the rolling countryside. As well as Ardingly village, the route passes the Ouse Valley Viaduct, Ardingly Reservoir and the outstation of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Wakehurst Place.

There is a shop near the route at Ardingly and a café near the route at Wakehurst Place. The centre of Balcombe village has a convenience shop, a pub, and a café. It would be wise to carry provisions for the journey.

Route

2 On alighting at Balcombe station, ascend to the footbridge and turn right to exit the station onto London Road, where turn right. Pass the entrance to the car park and deal with parked cars littering the roadside to reach a public bridleway on your right. Turn right, then immediately turn left off the bridleway onto a path which parallels the road on your left. After a little over 350m, the path returns to the roadside.

After a further 130m, just in front of the back of a chevron road-sign, take a signposted public footpath which eases away to the right. Cross a stile and follow the right-hand edge of the field to reach

a footbridge on your right. Cross the bridge and ascend through woodland, bearing left at a fork and then crossing a track. Ascend to the edge of the wood and continue over the shoulder of a hill to reach Upper Pilstye. Continue ahead across two small fields and one large one to reach Rowhill Lane.

3 Cross the lane and follow the right-hand edge of a field for 250m to reach Cherry Lane, where turn right and cross the River Ouse. Follow the lane for about 550m to reach the junction with London Road.

4 Cross the road ahead and turn left along the right-hand footway for 30m, and turn right onto a lane, signposted as a public footpath. Follow the lane for 750m and take the right-hand bend to reach Great Bentley Farm. Turn left to follow the right-hand edge of a field, and where the hedge bends to the right, continue ahead eastwards on the path to cross the River Ouse.

Pass a tree on your right to reach a hedge on your left and follow it to reach a stile on your left. Cross the stile and turn half-right to cross the field on the diagonal. Use two stiles to pass through a thin belt of trees and advance to reach Ryelands Farm on your right.

5 Turn left, then turn right to pass through a kissing-gate and cross a field on the diagonal to the far right-hand corner. Pass through two gates and pass beneath the railway. Continue out to reach Haywards Heath Road, where turn right to cross the River Ouse again over Upper Ryelands Bridge.

On your right as you pass along Haywards Heath Road is the magnificent Ouse Valley Viaduct, which carries the railway. It is 450m long and 29m high, with 37 arches. The viaduct carried its first train in 1841 and was renovated at the end of the nineteenth century, and again at the end of the twentieth century. The viaduct is listed Grade II*, as is the later Ribbleshead Viaduct between Settle and Carlisle.

Just beyond the bridge, turn left to pass through a kissing-gate. Follow a path with the water on your left for 750m, then turn left to cross the River Ouse for the final time using a footbridge for each of the two channels. Follow the right-hand edge of a field for 120m, then turn right to follow the right-hand edge of a field. Turn left at the corner to continue along the right-hand edge.

You are now following the line of the Roman road between Portslade in Brighton and Kennington Park in London.

Continue ahead to reach the reservoir at the western end of its dam wall.

6 Continue ahead along the dam wall and curve round to the left. About 370m after joining the dam wall (130m from leaving it), turn right to follow a path as it ascends along the right-hand edge of one field and across a larger field to reach, on your left, Townhouse Farm.

Turn half-right to follow Church Lane for 600m to reach the T-junction, with Balcombe Lane and Street Lane, with the church on your left.

Street Lane is not a tautology. it is the lane which leads to the *stræt*, a common old name for a Roman Road (think of the various Strettons, and even Streatham).

7 Turn right along Street Lane for 100m to the point where the road bends to the right. Turn left to enter a field and immediately turn right along a path. Keep to the right-hand edge of the field, passing a school on your right. Follow the path out to High Street.

There are toilets in the park at this point. About 150m distant along High Street to the right, there is a convenience shop.

8 Cross High Street and turn left along the right-hand footway for 600m to reach the village exit sign, where turn right onto Cob Lane, following it round a left-hand bend. Continue along the lane, with the valley of the Cob Brook down to your right, for 850m to reach the point where the High Weald Landscape Trail joins from the right.

The High Weald Landscape Trail is a route which takes 145km to make its meandering way between Horsham and Rye. Full details, including excellent route maps and textual directions, may be found at

<https://highweald.org/things-to-do/high-weald-landscape-trail/>

9 Follow the High Weald landscape Trail ahead for 850m, and just in front of some lakes, turn left (while the Landscape Trail continues eastwards towards West Hoathly). In 100m of ascent, the path curves from north-west to south, then turns right to reach a T-junction of paths, where turn right (north). Follow the path out to Selsfield Road, then cross the road and turn left along the right-hand side of the road without benefit of footway for 250m to reach the northern entrance to Wakehurst Place.

Wakehurst Place was built in 1690 and went through several noble families until it was placed in the care of the National Trust. The Royal Botanic Gardens have leased and managed the house and estate since 1965. The mansion is listed Grade I, the stables Grade II*, and the South Lodge Grade II. The gardens are listed Grade II* on the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens. In the Great Storm of 1987, 20000 trees on the estate were felled and the woodland walks were re-designed to provide a visit to the temperate zones of the world.. For full details of the estate, see

<https://www.kew.org/wakehurst>

Note — National Trust members must show membership cards to gain entry to the house or gardens, but they are not entitled to free parking at the site, as is usually the case at other National Trust properties.

10 Turn right to follow North Drive for a little over 400m, passing the car park on your left and crossing a cattle grid to reach a pedestrian crossing (where there are traffic-calming humps on each side of the crossing).

If you turn right, you will reach the Millennium Seed Bank, which aims to store seeds from all British flora and a quarter of the world's flora.

If you turn left, then turn right to follow the path to its end at a T-junction, you will find the Stables restaurant, which is open from 1000 and offers coffee, light meals and lunches.

Beyond the pedestrian crossing, where *No pedestrians* has been painted on the road surface ahead bear right onto a lane towards Wakehurst Farmhouse.. Pass a *No entry* sign on your left and continue westwards for 200m, continuing ahead on a path where the lane bends to the right.

After a further 450m of descent across fields, the path enters woodland and bends to the right. Cross a track after 90m, and continue your descent. Cross a footbridge, then after a further 50m, turn left to reach Ardingly Brook.

11 Ascend the other side of the valley for 130m, then turn left to exit the woodland through a gate. Follow the left-hand edge of the field through a 90° right turn at the corner. Continue ahead to emerge over a stile onto Paddockhurst Lane. Turn right onto the lane and immediately turn left onto a farm access road. After about 150m, where the access road turns half-right to reach Forest Farm, continue ahead on a public footpath along the left-hand edge of a field for 300m to pass through a gap with Woodward's Farm on your right.

12 Turn half-left to cross the field, making for the right-hand edge of woodland. Pass through the gap and turn right to follow the right-hand edge of the field out to the access road for Woodward's Farm. Turn left to follow the access road for about 400m to reach, on your right, Balcombe Lake.

Balcombe Lake is a private 4ha fishing lake. The road runs along the top of the dam.

At the far end of the dam, cross the spillway and pass through a kissing-gate on your right to leave the road behind. Cross the field on a public footpath at a bearing of 256°. Pass through another kissing-gate and cross a stream on a footbridge. Turn left at a T-junction of paths, then after 30m turn right to ascend the field, passing a tree on your right.

There may be a track which makes its way directly from the footbridge to the gap at the top of the field, passing the tree on your left. You should observe any local signage (apart, of course, from any which deny the existence of the public footpath or otherwise deter its use).

When you reach the top of the field, do not go through the gap but turn left, with the hedge now on your right. At the end of the field, pass through a kissing-gate and bear slightly to the right as you pass through the north-west corner of Braky Wood and emerge onto a cricket ground.

Turn half-right and make your way round the boundary of the pitch to reach a lone tree. Turn right in front of the tree and exit the ground onto a lane, the access to the cricket ground. Follow the lane ahead, turning half-left where you meet houses and again at the entrance, on your right, to Balcombe House, to reach the centre of Balcombe village.

There is a convenience shop on your right, and then a pub on your right. Apart from Mondays when it is closed, and Tuesdays when it opens at 1700, the pub is open from noon. Sandwiches are available at lunchtime except Sunday, and full meals are available throughout, with the inevitable choice of roasts on Sundays.

13 Beyond the pub, turn right and cross Haywards Heath Road to pick up the right-hand footway of Bramble Hill. Pass, over to your left, a book exchange designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott (it is a former telephone kiosk) and continue ahead to reach Bramble Hall, a community hall.

There is a coffee shop just before you reach the hall, which is open between 0730 and 1530, but is closed on Mondays and Tuesdays.

Continue along the right-hand footway of Bramble Hill to its end at the junction with London Road. Cross the road ahead and turn left along the right-hand footway, crossing over the end of Rocks Lane, to reach the entrance to Balcombe station on your right.

For trains to London, cross the footbridge before descending to Platform 2. There are toilets and a part-time ticket office on Platform 1 and a ticket vending machine on Platform 2.



Gatwick Airport to Nutfield

GTW–NUF

Start	Gatwick Airport station (GTW) — RH6 0RD
Finish	Nutfield station (NUF) — RH1 5RR
Distance	13.0km
Duration	2 hour 45 minutes
Ascent	92m
Transport and ticketing	Train from London Bridge; some direct trains from St Pancras and intermediate stations to London Bridge; bus at Smallfield for Gatwick, Horley and Redhill stations; day return to Gatwick and a single from Nutfield to Redhill
Facilities	Shops and café off-route at Smallfield.
Map	https://explore.osmaps.com/route/12666081/

Introduction

The route begins in Gatwick Airport's South Terminal at the entrance to the railway station. Fast trains take 45 minutes for the journey. The return journey time depends on the wait for a connection at Redhill: for the most part, trains take less than 1 hour 15 minutes from Nutfield to St Pancras.

The route, once out of the airport, follows paths and small roads, mainly to the east of the M23 before finishing along the streets of South Nutfield.

A look back to the brutalist architecture of the station at Gatwick Airport



The only intermediate source of refreshment and replenishment is off-route in Smallfield, where there is a convenience shop, a small supermarket, and a café.

Route

2 From the entrance to Gatwick Airport station within the South Terminal, follow the signs for the bus station (**not** the coach station). Turn left onto the footway of Lower Forecourt and head north, with the ramp from Upper Forecourt above your left shoulder. Where the road curves to the right, pass beneath the ramp from Upper Forecourt to reach a trackside path with the railway on your left. Pass beneath the main road and continue as far as a footbridge on your left, where turn right to join the eastbound Sussex Border Path.

The Sussex Border Path (Surrey begins at the motorway spur) runs for 220km between Emsworth and Rye: it is fair to say that much of that route is decidedly more scenic than this short link patch. Full details of the Sussex Border Path may be found at

<https://www.sussexborderpath.co.uk/>

Follow the path which rounds the northern edge of a horse pasture then turns left to head eastwards to reach Balcombe Road, where turn right along the right-hand footway. As you approach the motorway bridge, with the Sussex boundary sign ahead, turn left onto a public footpath just beyond a driveway.

3 Follow the path for 1km, ignoring two public footpaths on the left, to reach Peeks Brook Lane, a by-way. Pass the entrance to a haulage yard on your left, then pass Peeks Rough Farm on your left, and continue across Burstow Stream. The route beyond is unfit for motor traffic. With the woodland of The Roughts on your left, Pass beneath high-voltage power lines to reach, on your right, the gated entrance to a house named Trentham, at the start of the road section which is again fit for vehicles.

4 Continue along Peeks Brook Lane for 500m, then turn right onto Perrylands Lane. Follow the lane beneath the M23, beyond which the Tandridge Border Path joins from the right.

The Tandridge Border Path encircles Tandridge District in a circuit of 84km. The route is mapped (albeit without any helpful intermediate waypoints) at

<https://explore.osmaps.com/route/5381124/>

Continue along Perrylands Lane in tandem with the Tandridge Border Path to reach a T-junction with Broadbridge Lane. Turn left for 90m to reach the junction with Wheelers Lane.

If you are in dire need of supplies, turn right onto Wheelers Lane and follow it to its end at the junction with Redehall Road in the

centre of Smallfield, where there is a breakfast café (open between 0700 and 1500 but closed on Sundays), a small supermarket with an ATM, a convenience shop and, for particular emergencies, a pharmacy. To return to the route, follow Redehall Road north to Weatherhill Road, where turn left to follow the right-hand footway, crossing over the end of Raleigh Drive, to reach waypoint 5 below at the end of a fence with a hedge behind and above. This detour adds only 500m to the distance.

Continue along the left-hand footway of Broadbridge Lane to its end at a T-junction with Weatherhill Road.

The bus stop on your left has hourly services (all week) which will take you to Horley station (if an exit is required).

Turn right to follow the right-hand footway of Weatherhill Road, crossing to the left-hand footway using the refuge at the junction with The Cravens, to reach a potentially muddy public footpath which goes off to the left.

5 Turn left along the enclosed path, initially with house-backs to left and right. Pass beneath high-voltage power lines to reach, on your right, Burstow Lodge Farm (which is predominantly industrial in nature). Take a left-and-right zigzag and continue northwards to reach Rookery Hill, where turn left to follow the road for 80m to reach, on your right, the access road to Rookery Farm, a public footpath.

6 Turn right, and continue ahead where the access road to the farm turns left. Cross two fields to reach a small wooded area, and cross the copse to the right of a crater. Beyond the copse, ascend the left-hand edge of a field, then pass through the gap to follow the right-hand edge of the next field. Pass between houses to reach Miller's Lane, where turn left onto its service road and continue out onto the lane proper.

The pub marked on the map is now closed.

*Looking back towards the
copse above Rookery Farm*





*Top — point of arrival
at Wasp Green Lane*

*Above — harvest time
south of Burstow Park Farm*

Cross the road and turn left along the right-hand footway, passing the former pub on your right. After 70m, turn right onto a public footpath (which is signposted from across the road) and follow it through a right-and-left zigzag, continuing ahead to come out onto Wasp Green Road, where turn left to reach the junction with Brickfield Road.

7 Cross the road to take Church Walk ahead, with the church on your left. After 120m, turn left, then follow the path round to the right to return to a northbound direction. Descend gradually across several fields, passing beneath medium-voltage power lines on the way, to reach a crossing path, with Burstow Park Farm ahead.

8 Turn right to pass through a gap onto a track. After 60m, turn left to pass the farm

buildings on your left. Cross a track and bear left to cross a field on the diagonal. Go anticlockwise round a pond on your left to pick up a path along the right-hand edge of two fields to reach Salfords Stream.

Cross the stream using the footbridge and take the left-hand of two paths across a field. Pass through a hedge and turn half-left to cut the corner of a field. Pass through the gap and turn right to follow the right-hand edge of a field. After 250m, bear left, aiming for a stile across the field.

If the crops are high and no footpath is obvious, simply continue ahead to the corner of the field and turn left along the right-hand edge of the field to reach the stile.

Cross the stile, then follow the path across two more stiles to reach a driveway at Henhaw Farm, where turn left to pass an impressive brick building (formerly maltings) to reach T-junction with Cooper's Hill Road.

9 Cross Cooper's Hill Road and turn half-left to take a path opposite. The path (potentially muddy) turns half-right and crosses the M23 on a footbridge. Pass a care centre on the right and cross over the end of Nutfield Park. Continue ahead for 500m,

passing Crab Hill Farm, to reach Crab Hill Lane. Turn right to follow the lane.

Bear left at a triangle and cross over the end of King's Cross Lane. Turn left along the right-hand footway and immediately turn right onto Mid Street. Cross the road to follow the left-hand footway for 500m to reach the junction with The Avenue, where turn left with a pub on your right. Turn right onto South Station Approach and continue onto The Copse, which bends to the left to leave Nutfield station on your right.

Your train for Redhill will arrive on the platform where you enter the station. Change at Redhill for London.



Henhaw Old Maltings



Higham to Gravesend

HGM–GRV

Start	Higham station (HGM) — ME3 7JQ
Finish	Gravesend station (GRV) — DA11 0HP
Distance	14.4km
Duration	3 hours 13 minutes
Ascent	215m
Transport and ticketing	Train from London Bridge to Higham via Gravesend; some direct trains from St Pancras and intermediate stations to London Bridge; high-speed trains between Gravesend and St Pancras; buses at Gad's Hill and Chalk (N of Thong Lane Bottom) ; day return ticket to Higham
Facilities	Convenience shop at Higham; pubs at Higham, Gad's Hill and Shorne Ridgeway. All facilities in Gravesend.
Map	https://explore.osmaps.com/route/12645576/

Introduction

The walk begins at Higham station, which requires a change of train at Gravesend from the high-speed line from St Pancras (just over half an hour) ... or an extra 50 minutes' travel trundling along on Thameslink.

The route is mainly on paths with short street stretches until you reach Thong Lane Bottom, after which the streets of Gravesend take up the final 4km. There is a bus link with Gravesend at Thong Lane Bottom.

Opportunities for refreshment and replenishment are sketchy, so all provisions should be carried.

Route

2 Turn right on exiting Higham station and make your way up the right-hand footway to reach the junction with School Lane. Turn right onto Chequers Road to cross the railway.

If you look to your left as you cross the railway bridge, you will see the remains of the Thames and Medway Canal on the right of the tracks. The railway tunnel on the other side of the station originally took the canal, and even at one point took a single-track railway with one rail on the towpath and the other placed on stakes drilled into the canal. The railway company bought the canal in 1846 and filled in the canal through the tunnel, allowing a double-track railway to be laid. The tunnel was the second longest tunnel on the British

canal network (second only to Standedge on the Huddersfield Narrow Canal). The Higham tunnel was, however, the largest on the network, since it had to be wide, deep and high enough to accommodate sixty-tonne barges. The rest of the canal limped on until 1934.

After crossing the bridge, pass a house and turn right along a public footpath which runs parallel to the railway and the ex-canal. After 400m, turn right onto Land Way, a by-way, and follow it past White House Farm on your left to a five-way junction of paths.

3 Turn half-right to cross a field on the diagonal, then turn half-left to follow a by-way out to Hermitage Road. Turn right to follow the road out to the junction with School Lane.

There is a convenience shop and a pub on the junction. The pub opens at noon daily (at 1300 on Mondays) and offers standard pub fare.

4 Turn left to pass the convenience shop on your left and the pub on your right, crossing to the right-hand footway at a suitable location. Pass a convenience shop on your right and continue to the end of the street at the junction with Gravesend Road at Gad's Hill. Cross the road ahead using the refuge and turn right along the left-hand footway.

The brick building on your left is Gad's Hill Place, home of Charles Dickens and his place of death. The house was built in 1780 and is now a Grade I listed building. It is part of Gad's Hill School; on one weekend a month, tours are organised by the school — details of the tour schedule may be seen at

<https://www.visitgravesend.co.uk/whats-on/tours-gads-hill-place/>

Dickens first saw the house at the age of nine when on a walk with his father, and was determined to work hard enough to afford such a house: in the end, he bought that very same property.

5 Turn left onto Crutches Lane and follow it for 700m, passing the entrance to the school on your left, to reach a makeshift parking area on the right (apparently blessed by the local authority by the provision of a litter bin).

6 At the end of the parking area, follow the path away from the lane and immediately turn right, with Great Crabbles Wood on your right. After 750m (that is, about 130m before you would come up against the M2 junction), turn right to follow a public footpath through the wood. Ignore paths going off to the right and, after a left-hand bend, exit the wood and descend to Peartree Lane, where turn left to follow the lane to the junction with Bowesden Lane.

There is a pub on the left which is open daily from noon, offering standard pub fare with some extras.

7 Continue ahead for 200m, crossing over the end of Tanyard Hill at the triangle, to reach a brick building of 1893. Turn right

along a public footpath to keep the building on your left, and bear left at the back of the building. Follow the path across Racefield Close and on to its end at Woodlands Lane, where turn left to follow the lane for 70m.

At the driveway to a house on the left, you will notice a low concrete footpath sign in the “tombstone” format of the 1970s and 1980s. Across the road on the right, there is an entry (with two stepovers) onto a footpath which makes its way through Shorne Woods. After almost 600m, having ignored two paths which go off to the left, turn left to keep a pond on your left. After 150m, turn right to follow a path for 220m to reach the access point for Shorne Woods Country Park Visitor Centre on your left.

There are toilets and a café at the visitor centre. The café is open between 1000 and 1600 on weekdays, and between 0900 and 1700 at weekends, closing one hour earlier throughout the week during the period when clock-time has reverted to the sense and logic of Greenwich Mean Time.

Full details of the country park may be found at

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure-and-community/kent-country-parks/find-a-kent-country-park/shorne-woods-country-park>

8 Continue ahead, keeping some distance from the visitor centre, along a path which bends to the right. Execute a left-and-right zigzag to cross a stream, then after a further 150m, turn left (with a pond on your right). After another 150m, the path bends slightly to the right and passes the end of a path on your right. Keep to the edge of the woodland to cross another path, then continue ahead for 270m within Randall Wood to reach a path crossing. Forge ahead along the left-hand edge of a field to descend to Shorne Ifield Road using a set of rustic steps. Turn right to follow the road for 250m to reach a set of residential gates on the left-hand side of the road at Upper Ifield.

9 Turn left in front of the gates to follow Muggins Lane. Pass beneath high-voltage power lines and ascend to a five-way path junction.

10 Continue ahead, bearing slightly left, for a little over 600m to reach the corner of the field, then continue with a slight right-hand adjustment to descend the field on the diagonal to reach Thong Lane Bottom through a kissing-gate.

If you turn right and cross the busy Rochester Road using the central reservation as a refuge, then follow Vicarage lane ahead to the junction with Chalk Road, you will see a bus stop on Chalk Road to your left, where there is a half-hourly bus service seven days a week to Gravesend.

The final 4km of the route from here are on Gravesend streets. The distance from the kissing-gate to the bus stop is 300m. Are you tempted?

11 From the kissing-gate at Thong End Bottom, cross the road and turn left along the right-hand footway as far as the junction with Barr Road, where turn right. Follow the right-hand footway for a little over 500m to reach the junction with Forge Lane on your right.

12 Cross over the end of Forge Lane and continue ahead on the right-hand footway of MacLean Terrace. Cross over the end of Hampton Crescent and continue along the right-hand footway of Jubilee Crescent, taking its left-hand bend. Pass a mini-roundabout on your right at the junction with Silver Road and continue to the end of the street. Turn right to reach Hampton Crescent, where cross the road and turn left to follow the right-hand footway of St Benedict's Avenue past a roundabout on your left to reach the junction with Valley Road. Cross the road ahead using the light-controlled pedestrian crossing a few metres to your right.

There is a parade of shops on Valley Road which includes a breakfast/lunch café which is open until 1500 seven days a week.

Turn right along the left-hand footway of Valley Road, then turn left onto Hillside Avenue. Turn right to follow the right-hand footway of The Curlews to the T-junction with The Sandpipers, where continue ahead onto a tarmac path to reach The Turnstones.

Turn right to follow the street for 60m, then take the left turn to follow the left-hand footway to the junction with Old Road East, where cross the road and turn left along the right-hand footway to reach the junction with Pine Avenue.

13 Cross over the end of Pine Avenue, then turn right at a postbox to follow a tarmac path to reach the left-hand footway of Milton Hall Road. Cross the junction ahead to take a path ahead to the left of Townfield Court. This lane takes a half-left turn to continue with house-backs on your left and emerge onto Parrock Road.

After passing Christ Church Garden on your right, turn right to pass between bollards onto a path which leads, with house-backs on your left, to reach and cross Trinity Road. Continue ahead, passing a school on your right, to reach the railway.

Do not cross the railway, but turn left with the railway on your right to reach the junction with Wellington Street. Cross over the junction to follow the right-hand footway of Saddington Street to its end at the junction with Parrock Street, where turn right to cross the railway and advance to the junction with Manor Road on your left. Turn left to cross Parrock Street using the light-controlled pedestrian crossing and make your way along the cobbled Manor Road to reach the junction with Windmill Road. Continue ahead along the left-hand footway of Railway Street (which is built above the railway). Cross Stone Street using the light-controlled pedestrian crossing and follow the right-hand footway of Rathmore Street ahead to reach, on your right, the entrance to Gravesend station.

This is the most convenient entrance for trains to London — half an hour to St Pancras on the high-speed service, or 1 hour 20 minutes by Thameslink.

Gravesend station opened in 1849 with the completion of the link to the South Eastern Railway line at Northfleet.

The centre of Gravesend lies to the north of the railway, and has several buildings connected to the coach trade. There is a statue of Princess Pocahontas (Rebecca Rolfe to her husband) in the churchyard: she fell ill shortly after leaving London to return to Virginia, and was put ashore at Gravesend, where she died. She was buried in the church. Outside the church, there is a statue of Pocahontas which is a copy of one in Jamestown, Virginia. This was donated to Gravesend by a wealthy Virginian to mark the 350th anniversary of her death. Perhaps there is something lacking in the teaching of arithmetic in Virginia, because the statue was unveiled 340 years after her death.



Maidstone East to West Malling

MDE–WMA

Start	Maidstone East station (MDE) — ME14 1QN
Finish	West Malling station (WMA) — ME19 6HJ
Distance	15.7km
Duration	3 hours 22 minutes
Ascent	152m
Transport and ticketing	Train from London Bridge; train links at East Farleigh and East Malling; bus link at Barming; day return to Maidstone East
Facilities	All facilities in Maidstone and West Malling; café at East Farleigh; convenience shop and pub at Barming
Map	https://explore.osmaps.com/route/33584631/

Introduction

The route begins at Maidstone East station, the larger of the two stations in the centre of the town. It follows the Medway Valley Walk to Barming Bridge, then follows streets through Barming. With the exception of short outbreaks of streets at East Malling and West Malling, the remainder of the walk is on paths.

Like the station at West Malling, Maidstone East station was opened in 1874, with links to London. Current services to London terminate at Victoria, with a few at Blackfriars. If the idea ever bears fruit, these Blackfriars services will be extended to Cambridge, taking some trains from other Thameslink services.

Fast trains from London Bridge take about an hour, with stopping trains filling the gap and taking 1 hour 30 minutes. The return journey from West Malling to London Bridge takes a few minutes less.

There is a coffee bar inside Maidstone East station building on Station Approach, on the London-bound (Platform 1) side of the station.

Route

2 Turn right as you exit the station onto Station Road on the south side of the tracks. Enter the station car park, then use a

flight of steps to reach a footpath . Turn right to follow the footpath past the car park and over a main road on a footbridge, then turn left before your reach the River Medway.

The footpath continues ahead to Maidstone Barracks station on the line between Strood and Paddock Wood. This is the station for links with East Farleigh station.

Turn left to descend three flights of stairs to reach the riverside path, and follow the path with the water on your right.

You are now following the Medway Valley Walk, a 47km route between Rochester and Tonbridge. Full details of the route may be found at

<https://explorekent.org/activities/medway-valley-walk/>

Pass beneath two road bridges, then double back on your left to reach road level. Turn left to follow the left-hand footway across the River Medway. Descend steps to return to the riverside and continue ahead with the water on your left to pass, on your right, the Maidstone Court Centre.

3 Continue along the riverside path, passing beneath a footbridge and with industrial/commercial premises on your right. After 1km, you will reach and pass Tovil Bridge (another footbridge). The path then squeezes between the river and the railway on your right to reach, after a further 850m, a by-way on your right called Unicumes Lane.

Unicumes Lane leads to the Grade II listed Fant House.

4 Continue along the Medway Valley Walk with the water on your left and with the railway on your right for 1.5km to reach East Farleigh Lock. Pass the lock and pass beneath the historic bridge.

There is no direct access to the road at this point. For East Farleigh station and village, the access is 40m ahead on your right, then turn right along Riverside Park to reach Farleigh Lane. The station is just to your left and the centre of the village is 350m distant on your right, over the bridge.

There is a pub which opens at 0800 (for breakfast, teas and coffees) with the standard pub fare kicking in at noon, which is opening time on Sundays.

There is a bus service, approximately hourly but with a significant afternoon gap, to Maidstone, with no Sunday bus service at all.

5 Continue ahead along the riverside path with the water on your left for 1.8km to reach Barming Bridge (otherwise known as Kettle Bridge, a footbridge over the river.

6 Turn right to leave the Medway Valley Walk and pass beneath the railway to follow South Street, generally without benefit of footway, for 500m to reach the junction with Tonbridge Road in Barming at the war memorial.

There is a community-owned pub to your left at the junction which opens at 1100 (1200 on Sundays) and serves a standard range of pub fare. Diagonally across the junction, there is a bus stop with a half-hourly service daily to Maidstone, and a convenience shop.

At the end of South Street, turn right along the right-hand footway of Tonbridge Road to reach a light-controlled pedestrian crossing. Use this to cross the road and turn left along the right-hand footway to regain the junction at the bus stop. Turn right to follow the right-hand footway of North Street.

After 500m, you will reach a pub on your right, which opens at noon daily and serves standard pub fare plus some extensions into gastropubbery. There is a lunchtime menu of lighter fare during the week, but on Sundays, it is only the inevitable roast lunch which is available.

From the pub, continue along North Road, crossing over the end of Heath Road to continue along North Pole Road without benefit of footway. After you pass the houses on your right, and where North Pole Road bends to the left, follow a track ahead with allotment gardens on your right to reach, after a little over 200m, a crossing path at Ditton Common.

7 Turn left to follow a public bridleway for 150m to enter woodland. Continue westwards along the bridleway for 1km to reach a crow's-foot junction of paths. Turn right through 90° to head north (the other path is on a north-east / south-west line) for 330m, then turn left with the public bridleway. After 230m, you will come to Luckhurst Farm on your left.

8 Pass beneath high-voltage power lines, then turn right to reach Sweets Lane. Turn left to follow the lane for 250m, and turn right onto a public footpath. Pass beneath the high-voltage power lines once again and continue out to The Rocks Road.

9 Turn left to follow the road out to the junction with Chapel Street, with the westbound entrance to East Malling station on your right.

For trains towards Maidstone, the station entrance is beyond the bridge on your right.

About 200m distant beyond the bridge on your right, there is a café and, across the junction, a pub/hotel which serves standard pub fare and offers accommodation.

10 Turn left to follow the left-hand footway of Chapel Street for 130m to the point where the speed limit is painted on the road surface. Turn right to take an enclosed public footpath. After 70m, take the path which branches left to reach some woodland, passing beneath the high-voltage power lines for the third time.

Follow the path through the wood to reach a T-junction of paths, where turn left to follow East Malling Stream with the water on your right to Well Street. Turn left to follow the road for 60m, then

turn right onto a public footpath. Pass a house on your left and continue, with a right-and-left zigzag, to pass Broadwater Farm on your left and reach Broadwater Road.

11 Turn left onto Broadwater Road, and after 50m, turn right onto a public footpath. Pass a house on your left to reach a tarmac path. Turn left to follow this path out onto Lavenders Road, where turn right to cross over Ashton Way. Follow Lavenders Lane to the junction, on your left, with Windmill Lane East.

Immediately after you pass the junction, turn left to pass through a kissing-gate to enter Manor Park Country Park. Cross over a public bridleway and bear right within the car park to reach the park café.

The café is open between 1000 and 1500 (opening at 0900 at the weekend).

12 Follow the path leading off to the north-north-west from the café. The path eases to the right, then swings to the left to reach a lake, then bends to the left to cross the feeder stream and exit the country park onto St Leonard's Street. Turn right to follow the right-hand footway to the junction with Swan Street, where turn right.

There are plenty of opportunities for refreshment and replenishment in the centre of West Malling.

Follow Swan Street out of the centre of the village to reach the railway. Turn right in front of the bridge to follow Station Approach to West Malling Station.

Sevenoaks to Knockholt

SEV–KCK

Start	Sevenoaks station (SEV) — TN13 1DP
Finish	Knockholt station (KCK) — TN14 7HR
Distance	13.9km
Duration	3 hours 07 minutes
Ascent	209m
Transport and ticketing	Train from London Bridge; direct train from St Pancras and intermediate stations to London Bridge; day return to Sevenoaks (but see below)
Facilities	Café and convenience shop at Sevenoaks station (and all facilities in the town centre); pub between M26 and M25 crossings; pub and convenience shop at Knockholt Pound
Map	https://explore.osmaps.com/route/12646628/

Introduction

The route begins at Sevenoaks station (which opened in 1862) with fast and frequent services from London taking less than half an hour. On the return trip from Knockholt, direct trains take 40 minutes, but by changing at Chelsfield, the journey time is reduced by ten to fifteen minutes.

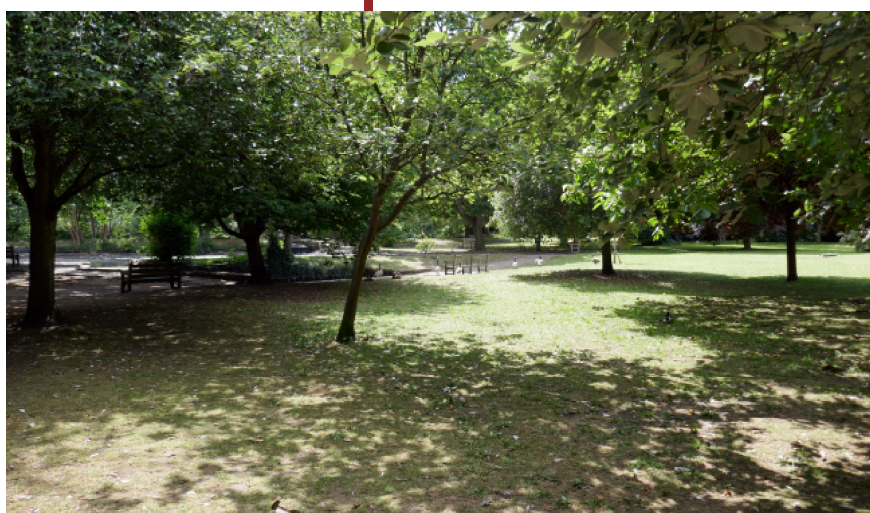
If you are making use of an Oyster card within London, it may be less expensive to buy a single ticket to Sevenoaks and use your Oyster card from Knockholt, contributing to the daily cap (or using an Oyster season ticket).

After passing through Sevenoaks, the route follows the Darent Valley Path's alternative route to the junction with the North Downs Way, where it follows the latter to the northern tip of the Chevening estate. It then passes through Knockholt Pound. The route continues, predominantly on paths, passing Rushmore Hill and grazing the edge of Halstead, to its end at Knockholt station.

The only practicable break-point is at Knockholt Pound, where there is a pub, a convenience shop, and an infrequent bus link with Orpington.

Route

2 Exit the station and turn right onto London Road, then turn left to cross the road using the divided light-controlled pedestrian crossing.



Bradbourne Lakes Park

Top — lake wall detail

Above — parkland view

There is a convenience shop just to your right.

Turn left along the right-hand footway of London Road to the junction with Hitchen Hatch Lane. Cross over the end of Hitchen Hatch Lane using the divided light-controlled pedestrian crossing and turn right along the left-hand footway.

Turn left onto Bradbourne Park Road and follow the left-hand footway for 500m to the junction with Clockhouse Lane, where turn left. Cross the railway and pass the end of Oakdene Road on your right to reach Lambarde Road.

Turn right along the right-hand footway and pass the end of Lakeview Road. Cross to the left-hand footway and continue ahead to reach a gate on the left. Pass through the gate and follow the public footpath into the calm of Bradbourne Lakes Park.

The series of lakes were laid out in the middle of the eighteenth century by the owner of Bradbourne Hall, Henry Bosville. They make use of waterfalls and sluices to take water from a tributary of the River Darent down to Riverhead by a sequence of steps. There is some interesting detailing on the lake walls. A watermill stood here during the Saxon era.

Keep the lakes on your left as you descend gently, crossing Betenson Avenue, to reach Bradbourne Vale Road through a gate.

3 Cross the road ahead and turn left along the right-hand footway for 300m. At a public footpath signpost, turn right onto a lane and immediately pass through a gate on the right of the lane to follow the Darent Valley Path northwards.

The Darent Valley Path is a 31km route between Chipstead and the Darent Flood Barrier at the river's outflow into the River Thames. Full details of the route are available at

<https://explorekent.org/activities/darent-valley-path/>

Follow the path ahead, passing lakes on your right. After about 500m, where a public footpath arrives from the left, bear slightly

right to continue with house-backs on your left to reach Rye Lane, where turn right.

4 Follow the lane past an exit, on your right, from a mobile home park at a left-hand bend, and on reaching the entrance to the park, turn left and cross a stile, following the signage for the Darent Valley Path.

Cross the field on a bearing of 263° (or follow the right-hand edge of the field and turn left at the bottom) to reach a railway bridge. Pass beneath the railway and turn right to pass beneath the M26.

5 Follow the path with the railway on your right for about 600m to reach a T-junction of paths at Newbarn Bridge.

Here, the Darent Valley Path crosses the bridge to the right right to head for the River Thames, joining the North Downs Way as far as Otford.

The North Downs Way is a 246km National Trail between Farnham and Dover. It splits near Wye, where the western arm takes the walker high above Folkestone and along the cliffs, while the eastern arm is, for the walker, a duller trod via Canterbury. Full details of the National Trail may be found at

https://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/en_GB/trails/north-downs-way/

Turn left to follow the North Downs Way (and the upstream main route of the Darent Valley Path) for 800m to come out onto London Road, with a hotel on your right. turn left along the left-hand footway to reach the junction with Morants Court Road, where turn right to cross London Road using the refuge.

There is a chain pub at the junction. It is open from noon daily and offers food from a nationwide standard menu.

This is the point of departure of the Darent Valley Path as it heads for Chipstead.

6 With the pub on your right, follow the right-hand footway of Morants Court Road for 400m, crossing to the left-hand footway before crossing the M25. At a roundabout, turn left onto the left-hand footway of Sundridge Road After 350m, the footway ends, so cross to the right-hand side of the road and follow it for 220m, passing an estate road crossing on the way.

Just beyond a triangular road sign for a junction, at the end of the hedge on your right, turn right to cross a stile and follow the North Downs Way, with the buildings of Turvin's Farm over to your left. After 300m, the path turns left onto a trackway known as the Pilgrim's Way.



*Railway underpass at
Dunton Green*



Star Hill, looking east

The name for the trackway between Farnham and Dover was invented, without any conclusive evidence of its use as a pilgrimage route, by the Ordnance Survey. It forms a part of a much longer and much older route known as the Harroway, or Harrow Way (the nomenclature is rather inconsistent on the various Ordnance Survey maps along

its course). This route is known to have existed around 600 BCE, but is thought to date from the Stone Age. Its western end was at Seaton, on the southern coast of Devon, and its eastern end was at Dover. One of its earlier uses is thought to have been for trading in tin.

The etymology is unclear: it is probably a name for a military road (*hær* is still the Danish word for *army*), but may be linked with the word *hearg*, a shrine (in which case the shrine was probably Stonehenge). Another name for the track is "the Old Way", though that name is used and abused in naming other routes of lesser antiquity.

After 40m, turn right to ascend the right-hand edge of a field. At a belt of trees, bear slightly left to keep the trees on your right to reach, at a slight left-hand bend, a path on the right which leads to Star House.

7 Continue ahead on the North Downs Way across the flank of Star Hill, with fine views, especially back to the south-east. After almost 600m, you will be faced with Minny Wood ahead. Turn right and follow the North Downs Way with the wood on your left for 400m to meet a crossing path, where turn right, then immediately turn left. Pass through Lees Wood, then continue westwards along the right-hand edge of a field to emerge onto Chevening Lane through a kissing-gate.

On your left, a gate bars your way. Beyond the gate is the 1200ha Chevening estate. It is the country residence of a senior minister, usually the Foreign Secretary, and is used as a governmental and diplomatic retreat. The minister's private expenses are not paid by the Government.

Turn right to follow the lane. After 40m, the North Downs Way departs to the left, heading for Box Hill and Farnham. After a further 500m or so, you will reach the triangle at the centre of Knockholt Pound.

On your left, there is a pub and a convenience shop. The pub opens at noon daily and offers simple pub fare.

On the right-hand side of the triangle, there is a bus stop with a tiny bus shelter, which is served by half of the buses to Orpington. This

is the R5 stop. For the other buses on the R10 route, turn right along Main Road to find a bus stop (without a shelter) on your left. Use

<https://bustimes.org/search?q=knockholt+pound>

to find the timetables. all the other buses are school services.

There is a bench next to the bus shelter, where you may gaze upon the fingerpost road sign. This should have been removed over sixty years ago, when the road signs designed by Margaret Calvert and Jock Kinneir became the accepted design. The old signs, with upper-case lettering of small size may have been adequate for the speed of horses and cars in 1926, but were woefully inadequate by the 1960s. After much research, Calvert and Kinneir designed the signs we see elsewhere, with mixed-case lettering in the Transport font which they designed for the job (the same font is used on the railway), and at a size which is legible to an approaching driver. It is a horrendous dereliction of the highway authority's duty of care to sacrifice public safety in order to placate backward-looking fantasists who want to believe it is still 1952 and Winston is still Prime Minister.



Knockholt Pound

*Woodland east of
Rushmore Hill*

8 Cross Main Road and continue ahead onto Pound Lane. After 300m, just beyond a riding school on your right, turn right onto an enclosed path. After 50m, bear left onto a northbound path which crosses a large field. Pass through a gap and continue slightly to the right, parallel with medium-voltage power lines on your right shoulder, with the buildings of Oak Farm a field away on your left. Pass to the right of some trees and follow the right-hand edge of two fields to emerge, over (or round) a stile, onto Randle's Lane. Turn right to follow the lane out to the junction with Rushmore Hill.

9 Turn left through the triangle and follow the narrow right-hand footway of Rushmore Hill for 400m, passing the entrance to a garden centre on your right. At the end of the wall on your right, enter a driveway on your right. Ignore the gate on your left and continue onto a public footpath. Follow the path with the garden centre on your right. At the end of the garden centre, continue ahead onto a path which passes a superannuated stile and continues through woods.





*Looking back from the ascent
on the Halstead Place estate*

Descend along the left-hand edge of a strip of open land, then continue ahead on the ascent along the right-hand edge of the open land. At the top of the hill, turn right, then turn left at a T-junction of paths and follow the path out onto Church Road through a gate. Turn left along the left-hand footway to reach, on your left, the entrance to Halstead Place.

The village of Halstead is off to the right. Walkers should note that the pub marked on the map is closed.

Halstead Place was established as a country house during the fifteenth century, and counted among its owners an Archbishop of Canterbury. The house was completely rebuilt during the second half of the eighteenth century. John Atkins, after his term as Lord Mayor of London, bought Halstead Place in 1822, and the property remained in the family for a century. It was sold and operated as a school between the wars. Following the Second World War, when the house served as a prisoner-of-war camp, the house was derelict, and was demolished in 1952.

The site of Halstead Place is now covered in expensive housing of, compared to the various historic Halstead Place buildings, limited architectural merit. Further details may be found at

<https://landedfamilies.blogspot.com/2016/10/233-burnaby-atkins-of-halstead-place.html>

During her girlhood, Edith Nesbit stayed at Halstead Hall (in the village): she used the Hall and Knockholt station (then called Halstead station) as the location for *The Railway Children* (though film and television versions have used Oakworth on the heritage Keighley and Worth Valley line in West Yorkshire for location work).

Lodge, Halstead Place



10 Continue along the left-hand footway of Church Road for 100m, and turn right onto a public footpath. Follow the left-hand edge of a field, then execute a left-and-right zigzag to pass through the gap and follow the right-hand side of the next field, with woodland on your right. At the end of the wood, continue ahead onto land which is gradually returning to the wild.

This land is the site of the Broke Hill golf course (1993-2017). The future of this area is uncertain, but a proposal to build 800 houses on the land was rejected on appeal in early 2022 as a considerable loss of green-belt land and its public good. Before the golf course came, the land supported orchards.

Continue ahead across the course to reach, on your left, a car park. Ignore the public footpath on your right, but continue onto a path ahead which bends round to the left for 200m, then turn right through 90° and descend to London Road, emerging through a kissing-gate. Cross the road and turn left along the right-hand footway for 80m to reach Station Approach on your right, and follow it to Knockholt station.

The station opened in 1876 and was originally called *Halstead and Knockholt*. The name was abbreviated in 1900 to *Knockholt* rather than *Halstead* to avoid confusion with the station of the same name in Essex. That station closed in 1962 and it is rather a mystery, since Knockholt is more than 5km away by road, via Halstead and Knockholt Pound, why Knockholt station was not then renamed *Halstead*.

The station is on the boundary between Kent and the London Borough of Bromley, so there are Oyster validators at the entrance to the station, which has neither café nor toilets. The ticket office is only open during the weekday morning peak, and there is a ticket vending machine. You enter the station onto the London-bound platform, so for trains to Sevenoaks, you will need to cross the footbridge. There is a stopping service taking about 45 minutes, but by changing at Chelsfield (the next station up the line), you can often pick up a faster train which shaves up to 15 minutes off the journey time.



Broke Hill, ex-golf course



An abandoned green

