



North Wessex Downs Walk

Distance: 4½ miles, allow 2 to 2½ hours.

Access Information: This walk has no stiles and 3 narrow kissing gates. There is a fairly steep uphill climb and a steep downhill. Paths are natural and not muddy even in winter.

Description of route:

- Leave the rail station by platform 1, then turn right into Red Cross Road and then left down the High Street. Continue past the shops and eventually cross the River Thames over the bridge.
- Just after the bridge cross the road and turn left along Vicarage Lane (next to 1 Icknield Cottages). Keep straight along the lane, then turn right just after the lane splits, following the footpath sign. Follow this path until you reach the road (the path used to be known as Lover's Walk).
- Turn left along the pavement for 300m. Just past the last house cross the road (take care!) and follow the footpath up the steps and alongside the road through the wood and then through a gate into the Holies.
- Go straight ahead to the far side of the field and then turn right and follow the fence line up the valley with the woodland on your left, then eventually veer right, following the path through a gate and along the track to the top. Then through more gates and continue to follow the track along the hilltop, then slightly downhill, through a gate and straight on, eventually to the road (If you wish to shorten your walk you can return to Streatley by taking paths on your right downhill).

- Cross the road into the National Trust car park. Do not follow the public footpath but walk to the far end of the car park and go through the gate and follow the path along the top of the hill. (Public access to these paths is kindly granted by The National Trust who manage the land)
- When the path bends to the left towards a gate veer right downhill towards Streatley (For great views over Oxfordshire turn left and follow the path through the gate).
- At the bottom of the hill go through the gate in the corner and follow the track straight ahead to the road. Turn left and walk along the road to the crossroads (take care!). Cross over the road and head downhill along High Street and then back over the bridge to Goring. Retrace your route along the High Street to the rail station.

Chilterns Walk

Distance: 4 or 5½ miles, allow 1¾ to 2½ hours

Access Information: There are no stiles and 2 kissing gates. There is a gentle uphill slope. The River Thames can flood during winter so check with the Environment Agency's Flood Information line on 0845 988 1188. There is an alternative walk leaflet for people with disabilities, call 01844 271316 or www.chilternsaonb.org/accesswalks/

Description of route:

- Leave the rail station by platform 4 (ticket office). Turn right outside the station and walk along the pavement past the houses, then along the lane. Continue to follow the lane to the left, gently uphill, then past the large houses and for a further 500m until the lane bends sharply to the left.

- For the **uphill scenic route** continue to follow the lane uphill, then past some farm houses and after a further 600m the lane turns sharply to the right, as it then bends sharply to the left take the path straight on, then right downhill for 700m. Eventually turn left joining a footpath through a gate into Hartslock Nature Reserve.

- For the **easier route**, at the bend leave the lane by turning right along a track. After 100m turn right through a gate into Hartslock Nature Reserve.
- Follow the left hand path to the information board, then turn right walking alongside the fence. Then downhill and through a gate.
- Then turn right along the Thames Path bridleway. After the horse paddock on the left turn left following signs to river and Thames Path (if you reach the houses you have gone too far!).
- Cross the footbridge and then turn right following the Thames Path alongside the river for 1.5 miles back to Goring. When you reach the bridge over the River Thames turn right.
- Turn left and cross the bridge for the North Wessex Downs Walk. To return to Goring station carry on along the High Street past the shops and then over the rail bridge. Turn right for the station.



About the walks



These circular walks take you from picturesque Goring along the River Thames, through wildflower meadows and to the top of the North Wessex Downs. There are amazing views of the Chiltern Hills and Thames Valley. The Chiltern Hills are to the north-west of London and easily reached on a short train journey.

You can enjoy the fresh air and fantastic countryside of two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Along the way you can see features of interest and wildlife such as red kites, kingfishers and muntjac deer.

The Chilterns walk is easy going, with a hilly option, the North Wessex Downs Walk is more hilly or you can combine the two to make a longer walk:

North Wessex Downs Walk: 4½ miles, allow 2 to 2½ hours

Chilterns Walk: 4 or 5½ miles, allow 1¾ to 2½ hours

Combined Walk: 7½ or 10 miles, allow 4 to 5 hours

You can start, break or finish your walk with a tasty meal or refreshing drink.

Walking gets you fit and keeps you healthy!!



Features of interest: (see numbers on map)

At the end of the last ice age meltwater broke through the hills to make its way to the sea, cutting through the chalk and creating the "Goring Gap" and River Thames.

1. Bridge over the Thames. Since Celtic times, Goring has marked a major crossing of the River Thames. A river ford is marked by great stones placed on the river bed by the Romans, they were followed by the Saxons, and finally the Normans who established three manors and founded Goring parish church. Before the first bridge was built in 1837, the two villages had little contact, though there was a ferry; in fact, Streatley originally was larger and more important than Goring because it was on the turnpike road to Reading. The present bridge was built in 1923.

Chalk grassland. This area is nationally important for the conservation of wonderful flowers and insects which live on unimproved chalk grassland. The flowers provide a riot of colour in spring and early summer. Across England around 25% of this type of habitat has been lost since 1960, largely due to changes in farming. The grass has to be grazed by animals during the autumn and winter to keep it short, otherwise delicate plants are shaded out by more aggressive plants and grasses. Without the tireless work of conservation organisations and farmers most of the remaining chalk grassland would be invaded by bushes and eventually develop into woodland:

2. Hartslock Nature Reserve is managed by Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust. Call 01865 775476 www.bbowl.org.uk

3. Lardon Chase and the **Holies** are managed by The National Trust. Call 0118 984 3040 www.nationaltrust.org.uk

1. The Thames Path and Ridgeway National Trails meet on the bridge. The Thames Path follows the river for 184 miles. The Ridgeway runs 85 miles from near Avebury in Wiltshire to Ivinghoe Beacon in Buckinghamshire. www.nationaltrail.co.uk



Celebrity. The area has always been popular with the rich and famous. George Michael owns a house alongside the river. Oscar Wilde lived here in 1893 and used the village name for one of his characters - Lord Goring. For a short time in the 1970s The Swan pub in Streatley was owned by variety performer Danny La Rue. Turner painted Goring church and mill in 1805, this unfinished work is on display at the Tate Britain in London. Other former residents include Lord "Bomber" Harris.

1. Goring Water Mill was originally built as a corn mill before 1086 but was converted in 1895 to generate electricity. Following the introduction of the National Grid the mill ceased to function in 1927. In 1674 sixty people were drowned after their boat was rowed too near the weir. Today **weirs** control the level of water for navigation, water supply, land drainage and flood prevention.

4. The brick **railway bridge** was designed during the 1830's by Isambard Brunel, one of the greatest engineers of all time; he also designed the Great Western Route from Paddington Station and the Clifton Suspension Bridge.

5. Little Meadow is being managed by Goring & Streatley Environment Group partly as a traditional hay meadow to encourage wildflowers and partly as a coppice for wildlife. The group was awarded the Chilterns Conservation Award in 2000 to celebrate this work.

Visitor Information

Goring and Streatley are small picturesque villages at the foot of hills separated by the River Thames. There are several pubs serving food, restaurants, cafes, local shops, accommodation and a Youth Hostel. There is a regatta during the summer. Public toilets are located in Goring car park. There are no toilets or refreshments on the walks outside of the villages.

For details of places to stay, visitor attractions or other walks and rides contact Wallingford Tourist Information Centre 01491 826972 or www.southoxon.gov.uk

How to get to the start

Goring is located off the A329, 8 miles north-west of Reading.

By train: There are direct services to Goring & Streatley rail station from London Paddington (55 mins), Slough (40 mins), Maidenhead (30 mins), Reading (15 mins), Didcot (10 mins) and Oxford (30 mins). Visitors from Windsor, Guildford and Basingstoke can connect at Reading. Goring station is manned and has toilets. For train times and fares call National Rail Enquiries on 08457 484950 www.nationalrail.co.uk

By bus: There are regular bus services from Reading and Wallingford. For bus times call Traveline 0870 6082608 www.traveline.org.uk

By cycle: There is cycle parking at the rail station or Goring car park.

Parking: There is pay & display parking at the rail station or Goring car park. From Goring car park walk past the toilets and along the passage to the High Street. Turn left for North Wessex Downs Walk and right to the rail station for Chilterns Walk.

This walk follows permitted paths and rights of way, which are waymarked as follows:

-  Footpaths (walkers only)
-  Bridleways (horseriders, cyclists and walkers)
-  BOAT (Byway open to all traffic)

Please be considerate in the countryside:

- Keep to public rights of way, and leave farm gates as you find them.
- Please keep dogs under close control and on leads where animals are grazing.

If you have enjoyed this walk there are many other wonderful walks in the area including walks in the Chilterns, call 01844 271300 www.chilternsaonb.org; The Thames Path and Ridgeway National Trails www.nationaltrail.co.uk; walks in Oxfordshire www.oxfordshire.gov.uk; Or buy Ordnance Survey Explorer Maps 171 or 170 and make your own walk www.ordsvy.gov.uk

The North Wessex Downs and Chiltern Hills have been designated as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). This is in recognition that their countryside is amongst the finest in England and Wales. For more details contact: Chilterns Conservation Board, 01844 271300 or www.chilternsaonb.org. North Wessex Downs AONB, 01488 685440 or www.northwessexdowns.org.uk

If you, or a member of your community would like this leaflet produced in another language or format (large print or audio cassette), please contact the Chilterns Conservation Board.

This leaflet has been produced by © Chilterns Conservation Board, 2004, with the support of:



www.countryside.gov.uk



www.chilternsociety.org.uk



www.nationaltrust.org.uk



www.southoxon.gov.uk



www.westberks.gov.uk

Photographs © Chilterns Conservation Board and Tina Stallard/Countryside Agency.

Chilterns Country

Views of the Thames Walks



Circular Walks:
From 4 to 10 miles

Start and Finish:
Goring & Streatley