

Chessington Countryside Walk

5 mile circular walk through the beautiful countryside of Chessington.

Allow up to 4 hours, boots or stout footwear recommended.

This walk can be started at several points, such as Horton Country Park car park or Stew Ponds car park on Epsom Common. This route description starts at Chessington South train station. Most of the route is waymarked with discs bearing the walk's logo.

From the station turn right along Garrison Lane and follow this to reach Kingston Road. Cross over using the zebra crossing and turn left along the pavement to reach the Lane leading to Barwell Court. Turn right up the lane and follow this to a kissing gate on your left leading into Winey Hill.

Winey Hill is a public open space. From here there is a magnificent view towards the North Downs to the south and across the Thames Valley and London to the north. Volunteers from the Lower Mole Project constructed the viewpoint cairn, which indicates famous landmarks that can be seen from here.

Go through and walk up the hill through the trees to the top and bear left along the summit. Continue past the viewpoint cairn and a pond and then straight on downhill to reach a kissing gate in the corner. Go through and follow the path ahead to turn left over a stile.

The private wood to the south west of this point is called Sixty Acre Wood. It has features of ancient woodland, which means that it dates back to at least 1600.

Continuing with Chessington World Of Adventures on your left. Near the bottom of the hill cross over a stile and follow the path to reach Leatherhead Road. Cross over carefully. Continue along the bridleway straight ahead, through the wood, crossing a bridge and onwards to reach Rushett Lane.

The World War II pill box has been converted to a new use as a bat roost! This work was carried out in 1991 by the Lower Mole Project volunteers, in conjunction with Surrey Wildlife Trust, and involved bricking up the gun slits and hanging tiles inside to create crevices.

Cross over carefully and go through the gate. Continue straight on along the bridleway to go through a gate, then another gate shortly afterwards. Continue straight on up the hill to go through another gate on to Ashtead Common.

Ashtead Common, once the 'wasteland' of the Manor of Ashtead is steeped in history. There are many oak pollards, remnants of a mediaeval management system known as pasture woodland. This type of woodland had the dual purpose of providing grazing and shelter for domestic animals, whilst providing wood from the branches of the pollards, which were cut on a rotational basis above the browse line. Ashtead

Common is a National Nature Reserve for the pollards and rare beetles associated with them, and is owned by the Corporation of London.

The white cast iron post here is a City of London Coal Duty Boundary Mark or coal tax post. From the late mediaeval times to 1890 the Corporation of the City of London had the right to levy a duty on coal brought into the City. This duty helped to pay for the rebuilding of St Paul's Cathedral and several other churches that were destroyed in the Great Fire of London in 1666. After the 1861 London Coal and Wine Continuance Act enlarged the area for collection of duties, over 200 coal tax posts were erected on the boundary.

Turn left along the bridleway at the edge of the Common, continuing straight on, ignoring side turnings to reach Stew Pond on Epsom Common.

Epsom Common was once the unenclosed common waste belonging to the Manor of Epsom, but is now a Local Nature Reserve. It was bought by Epsom and Ewell Borough Council in the 1930's after the demise of the Manor. Until World War II the Common was used for grazing, but during the War it was ploughed and cultivated. Now, with large areas of developing woodland, conservation grazing has been introduced on a small part of the Common. This is part of the management for maintaining open areas to conserve the diverse flora that gave the Common its Site of Special Scientific Interest Status. The two ponds were constructed by the Abbots of Chertsey in the 12th Century. The largest Great Pond has only recently (1975 – 79) been restored after being drained when the dam was breached in the mid- 19th Century. The other is known as Stew Pond, which means fish pond.

Continue straight on past the pond and then uphill. Follow the path around to the left to reach Christchurch Road. Cross over at the crossing point and follow the bridleway straight ahead to come out by the entrance to West Park Hospital. Cross over, past the entrance and turn left down a narrow path to reach a gap in a wooden fence into Horton Country Park.

Horton Country Park was established in 1973, when 400 acres of land were purchased by Epsom and Ewell Borough Council from London County Council. It had previously been farmland, which supplied food and work for the patients of the surrounding psychiatric hospitals. The Country Park is a rural landscape of fields, hedgerows, woods and ponds of wildlife and historical value. Within the Park the walk crosses a disused railway line at two points; this was once the route of the Horton Light Railway, which was used to help build and then supply the hospitals.

Go through and turn right to follow the path through the trees, crossing a hedge line to reach a surfaced track. Cross over and continue straight ahead through the trees. On emerging from the trees turn right along the track and follow it around to the left to reach some double gates. Turn right past the gates to go past another set of double gates. Turn left and follow the car park around to the far end, following the path through the trees that leaves the car park to the left. At the top of the hill turn right to follow the track straight ahead with the Equestrian Centre on your right. Ignore turn to left and continue to next junction to bear left. At track crossroads go straight on down a narrow path to go through kissing gate into field.

At this crossroads you can choose to follow the Thames Down Link to the right, which goes all the way to the River Thames at Kingston. A short way down this route is Castle Hill, which is leased to the Royal Borough of Kingston as a Local Nature Reserve. The 'castle', a scheduled ancient monument, is probably the remains of a moated farmstead dating from the 13th Century.

Turn right around edge of field to reach a stile, go over and continue straight ahead to a footbridge over the Bonesgate Stream. Cross over the bridge and continue straight ahead, over a stile and along a narrow path to reach another stile. Go over it into Green Lane and turn left along the pavement.

Green Lane follows the line of a route that has been in use since at least 1495. Much of the surrounding land has been in the ownership of Merton College, Oxford since the 13th Century. It was an important link between Kingston and Leatherhead, however most evidence of it has disappeared on the ground. Further south where this walk crossed the open space of Rushett Farm it appears as a hedged lane on aerial photographs taken as recently as 1945.

Follow the pavement through the trees until the path comes out alongside a wide verge, continue ahead looking out for a path to the right across the golf course. Follow this up the hill to the top where it turns right downhill through the trees to come out on Garrison Lane. Cross over and turn left along the pavement back to the station.

How to Get There

By Car – Parking is available at Horton Country Park and Stew Ponds car park. Please do not park in or near farm or field entrances.

By Train – Chessington South Station.

By Bus – There are regular bus services from Kingston, Epsom and Leatherhead serving the main roads.

Ideally this walk description should be used in conjunction with an Ordnance Survey Map Explorer 1:25 000 161.

Please note: This walk is not suitable for those with limited mobility as there are several stiles along the route, plus a steep incline up to Winey Hill. There are several busy roads in the area and special care is needed when crossing them.