

The Old Orchard and Colne Valley, Hillingdon, Middlesex



Challenging Terrain

4.5 miles
Circular
2 hours

161213



Access Notes



1. There are many steady climbs and descents throughout.
2. The paths are a mixture of well-made stone towpaths and tracks, plus field and woodland paths, the latter of which can be narrow and a little overgrown and can get muddy after periods of rain and in winter.
3. You will need to negotiate one gate and two stiles (both stiles having open fencing alongside which should be easy for most dogs to negotiate).
4. The stiles and gate can be avoided by changing the first few hundred yards of the walk – leave the car park via the vehicle entrance and turn left down the hill until you reach a right hand bend with a stile to your left. Pick up the main directions here from the last sentence of section one.

The Old Orchards hillside position affords it some of the best views of any pub, an uninterrupted panorama of the Colne Valley lakes with their beautiful wooded slopes. In the summer you can enjoy your refreshments on the terrace or in the large garden to enjoy these views but, if the weather is less inviting, the inside of the pub is just as welcoming with open fires and plenty of cask ales to choose from.

A 4.5 mile circular pub from the Old Orchard in Harefield, Middlesex. The walking route has something for everyone. A stretch along the bustling canal towpath, meandering paths between the lakes plus woodland and quiet farm tracks.

Getting there

Harefield is located in the London Borough of Hillingdon in Middlesex, north west London. The walk starts and finishes from the Old Orchard pub which is signed off Park Lane in Harefield. Just turn down the small side lane (Jack's Lane) and you'll find the pub (and its large car park) half way down on the left.

Approximate post code **UB9 6HJ**.

Walk Sections



Start to Black Jack's Lock



To begin the walk, walk to the far end of the car park (enjoying the spectacular views across the valley to your right) and continue through the gated grass overflow car park. At the far end, pass through the gate into woodland, keep ahead for a few paces and you'll reach a T-junction with a wider woodland path. Turn right along this heading downhill.

The path leads you to a stile with a Hillingdon Trail



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signpost alongside. Cross the stile into an open field, and cross this diagonally downhill to reach the far bottom corner, with the Grand Union Canal now visible running along the bottom of the field. In the bottom corner cross the stile and turn left along the tarmac lane. After just a few yards turn left again, signed for the Hillingdon Trail and Black Jack's Mill. Follow the lane over the arched bridge alongside Black Jack's Lock.

1 → 2 Black Jack's Lock to North Orbital Road



Immediately after the bridge, turn right along the towpath passing Black Jack's Mill on the left with the Grand Union Canal running on your right. Follow the towpath over a brick-sided bridge, crossing a weir down to the left. Immediately before the next high arched bridge set within the towpath, turn left down a narrow footpath signed to Old Uxbridge Road.

Soon the path runs directly alongside an inlet of the canal on the right. After crossing a metal footbridge you'll emerge to a T-junction with a gravel track. Turn right along this and follow it with lakes now visible each side.

The Colne Valley covers a total of 43 square miles. In this section, north of the M40, there is a distinct valley with the rolling chalk hills forming the valley sides. The wide valley bottom has a wetland landscape created by the River Colne, the Grand Union Canal and a succession of lakes. There are 50 lakes in total stretching from Batchworth Lake in Rickmansworth in the north to Church Lammas in Staines in the south. The lakes are former gravel pits which have now been flooded and are important for both recreation and wildlife.

Keep ahead as the track becomes concrete and on the left you'll pass a Marble and Granite Centre, which includes a large gantry crane used to move the heavy blocks around. As you draw level with the centre's gates, follow the track as it bends right. You'll emerge to a T-junction with Old Uxbridge Road. Turn left along this quiet tarmac lane, passing first a pair of cottages and then further along the ornate metal gates of Troy House. Keep ahead through bollards to join the path signed for Denham Way. A little distance further the path swings right to reach a T-junction with the main North Orbital Road, and you'll notice you are between the boundary signs for Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire.

2 → 3 North Orbital Road to Crossroads

Cross over with extreme care to join the bridleway opposite. Keep ahead on the path between hedgerows with a large crop field visible to the right. Continue as the path climbs into a belt of woodland and you will reach a crossroads with a tarmac lane.

Cross over to continue on the bridleway opposite, now part of the South Bucks Way. Follow the path down to a dip and continuing to climb once again. As the hedgerow on the right gives way, take time to enjoy the views across the surrounding hills.

Across the crop fields you'll be able to see the traffic on the M25 in the distance. Over to the far right you'll see the village of Harefield from which you came. Harefield has a number of diverse



claims to fame.

Harefield Hospital is a world-famous heart and lung hospital and Alexander Fleming (Noble Prize winner for the discovery of penicillin) was the pathologist at the hospital in 1939. It is also remarkable that a village as small as Harefield is associated with three Victoria Cross recipients, the highest and most prestigious award for gallantry.

The path continues undulating and swinging steadily right. Eventually you will cross over a concrete access road, in a dip in the path, and immediately afterwards you'll see a crossroads of paths.

3 → 4 Crossroads to Grand Union Canal



Turn right here onto the bridleway signed to Pynesfield Lake. Follow this grass track with a fence running to the right and a field sloping up to the left. You'll emerge to a T-junction with the main North Orbital Road. Cross over with care and take the track directly opposite which crosses a narrow crop field to reach a T-junction with a quiet tarmac lane.

Turn left and then immediately right signed as public footpath 003 to Coppermill Lane. Continue as the path narrows between fences, passing to the left of the garage ahead. Keep ahead over a footbridge and on to join a fenced woodland path. Soon you'll be walking again between lakes, with Pynesfield Lake to the left.

You'll emerge to a T-junction with a tarmac road. Keep right and then left to join a fenced footpath between lawns. Keep ahead over the tarmac access lane, with the gated entrance to the Clancy Group on the right. Pass a car park on the left and then keep ahead to reach a T-junction with the main road. Turn right, with care, along the road edge over the first bridge and then turn right again (before the second bridge) to join the towpath with the Grand Union Canal on the left.



The main line of the Grand Union Canal runs from Brentford on the River Thames to Birmingham and has 166 locks. The route is used for the annual Grand Union Canal Race, a 145 mile race from Birmingham to London which must be run within a maximum of 45 hours. Resting for more than 40 minutes at a time is not permitted – so clearly not for the faint-hearted!

A little way along the canal towpath, keep ahead over the arched bridge, and continue on the towpath (you are now on the section you followed on your outward leg). Continue on to reach Black Jack's Mill and Lock and immediately afterwards cross the bridge over the canal.

At the T-junction, turn right and you will come to a left-hand bend on the road (with the stile to the right that you used on the outward leg). For the return journey simply follow the road left and climbing fairly steeply uphill. Continue until you reach the Old Orchard on the right for some well-earned hospitality.

Disclaimer

This walking route was walked and checked at the time of writing. We have taken care to make sure all our walks are safe for walkers of a reasonable level of experience and fitness. However, like all outdoor activities, walking carries a degree of risk and we accept no responsibility for any loss or damage to personal effects, personal accident, injury or public liability whilst following this walk. We cannot be held responsible for any inaccuracies that result from changes to the routes that occur over time. Please let us know of any changes to the routes so that we can correct the information.

Walking Safety

For your safety and comfort we recommend that you take the following with you on your walk: bottled water, snacks, a waterproof jacket, waterproof/sturdy boots, a woolly hat and fleece (in winter and cold weather), a fully-charged mobile phone, a whistle, a compass and an Ordnance Survey map of the area. Check the weather forecast before you leave, carry appropriate clothing and do not set out in fog or mist as these conditions can seriously affect your ability to navigate the route. Take particular care on cliff/mountain paths where steep drops can present a particular hazard. Some routes include sections along roads – take care to avoid any traffic at these points. Around farmland take care with children and dogs, particularly around machinery and livestock. If you are walking on the coast make sure you check the tide times before you set out.

