

Introduction



The Test Way is a 44-mile long-distance walking route that will take you from its dramatic start, high on the chalk downs at Inkpen, to follow much of the course of the River Test to Eling where its tidal waters flow into Southampton Water. Without doubt, the Test is one of Hampshire's finest chalk streams, world famous for its superb trout fishing.

The Way has been divided into eight sections, each providing a really good day out. Choose between water meadows or tidal marshes, riverbank picnics or cosy pubs, steep hills with exhilarating views or cool, peaceful woodland.

The route passes through some of the most picturesque villages in Hampshire, strewn with listed buildings, historic churches and houses. There are many places such as Romsey, Stockbridge and Totton where you can stop along the way for refreshment, visit antiques shops, sample local crafts and foods or even to stay for a night or two. We have listed a selection of refreshments in the more rural parts at the end of each section.

The crystal-clear waters of the little streams, or bournes, are ideal for watercress growers, and the numerous water meadows and tidal marshes are thick with wildlife, flora and fauna. As the route criss-crosses backwards and forwards over the river, you may spot some of the many rare birds and plants that can be found here, such as kingfishers, marsh harriers and little grebe, green-winged orchids and butterbur.

History

In addition to the local fare, the Test Way is steeped in history. There is a host of historically important buildings and places to visit along its route dating from the Bronze Age period to the recent past.

Near Stockbridge is Danebury, a large Iron Age hill fort from the 6th C BC, and whose ramparts and ditches are still clearly visible today. Just south of St Mary Bourne, the path crosses the line of the Harrow Way, one of the great prehistoric trackways and a medieval pilgrim's route, and at Wherwell the route crosses a section of Roman road that stretched from Winchester to Cirencester.

In Harewood Forest, King Edgar is said to have killed Earl Ethelwold of Wherwell, who had counselled him against marrying Elfrida, whom he then married. When Edgar saw her beauty, he killed the earl and married her. Later she had his son, Edward, murdered in order to secure the throne for her son Ethelred. In remorse, she founded the nunnery at Wherwell in 986 AD. This was later demolished after the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1539.

Just north of Horsebridge is a disused canal lock from the Southampton to Andover canal. In 1857, the Andover Canal Railway Company utilised much of the route for a railway locally called the 'Sprat and Winkle Line' (closed in the 1960s), which was literally built over the top of the canal. Along the path, white gashes can be seen in the cliffs where it is said the chalk was excavated to fill in the old waterway.

Stockbridge was first referred to in 1141. The main street is particularly wide, reflecting its earlier role as part of a drovers' road. It developed as a thriving market town in the 13th C, and is still thriving today.

Further south is Mottisfont Abbey – when the Domesday Book was compiled in 1086, the ancient manor house at Mottisfont belonged to William the Conqueror. The priory was founded by the Austin Canons in 1201 until it was dissolved by Oliver Cromwell in 1536. It became a private house until given to the National Trust in 1957, and is now famous for its superb walled rose garden.

The beautiful abbey at Romsey was founded by Edward the Elder in the 10th C. It was a Benedictine monastery for nuns that in its early years had strong royal connections and attracted ladies from some of the wealthiest families in the land. In its latter years the monastery declined, and its nuns were often rebuked for 'scandals' such as staying out all night! It survived the Dissolution and became the parish church.

Just outside Romsey, the route passes the grand Palladian mansion of Broadlands – home of the late Lord Louis Mountbatten, the last serving Viceroy of India, and once the home of the prime minister, Lord Palmerston.

Totton and Eling have a history traceable back to the Bronze Age – a dagger from this period was discovered at Testwood Lakes. As the first point at which Southampton Water could be forded, a settlement has thrived here for thousands of years.



Mottisfont Abbey

Local fare

Hampshire boasts a wide range of fine local products such as watercress, trout, beef and lamb, wine, cheeses, handmade chocolates and many more. For a guide to producers, call 01962 845999 or visit www.hampshirefare.co.uk on the web. There are also regular farmers' markets in Hampshire's towns and villages, so why not take home an edible souvenir for your family and friends. Details and dates are available on 01962 845135 or visit www.hampshirefarmersmarkets.co.uk

How to follow the Test Way

Test Way

Stockbridge 10 miles

The route stretches between Inkpen in Berkshire and Eling Wharf in Hampshire.

The route is well sign posted with the logo of TW on a green arrow.

Horse-riders and cyclists can also use some parts of the Test Way, this is shown the map inside.



Maps

This leaflet does not provide navigation details. The route is shown on the following Ordnance Survey maps:-

Explorer maps at 1:25,000 scale
158 (Newbury & Hungerford),
131 (Romsey, Andover & Test Valley),
OL22 (New Forest)

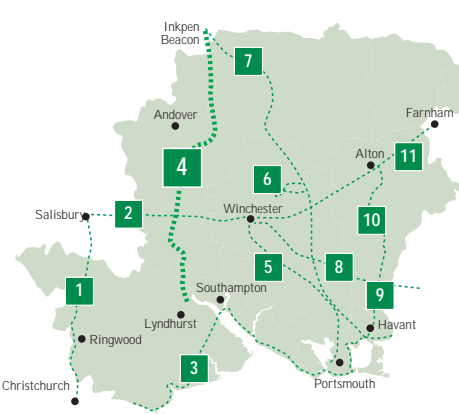
The route is indicated on these maps with a green diamond and the name of the route (Test Way).

Further information and a detailed route description is available on the web:- www.hants.gov.uk/walking/testway



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Other long-distance walks



- 1 Avon Valley Path
- 2 Clarendon Way
- 3 Solent Way
- 4 Test Way
- 5 Hampshire Millennium Pilgrims' Trail
- 6 Oxdrove Way
- 7 Wayfarer's Walk
- 8 South Downs Way National Trail
- 9 Staunton Way
- 10 Hangers Way
- 11 St Swithun's Way

Further information

Publications

For information about the other ten long-distance walks or for leaflets about the following, tel: (01962) 870500, or visit your local Hampshire County Council Information Centre or Tourist Information Centre.

Long-distance walks
Walking in Hampshire
Finding Your Way
Guided Walks
Discover Hampshire's Countryside
Accessible Countryside in Hampshire
Defence of the Realm

Useful websites

www.hants.gov.uk/walking
www.hants.gov.uk/countryside
www.hants.gov.uk/cycling
www.visit-hampshire.org.uk
www.traveline.org.uk
www.metoffice.co.uk



Useful contacts

Hampshire County Council
Information Centre Winchester 01962 870500
Met Office (weather information) 0870 9000100
The Traveline 0870 608 2608

Tourist Information Centres (TICs)

Andover 01264 324320 www.visit-testvalley.org.uk
Basingstoke 01256 817618 www.visit-northhampshire.org.uk
Romsey 01794 512987 www.visit-testvalley.org.uk
Southampton 023 8083 3333 www.southampton.gov.uk
Lyndhurst 023 8028 2269 www.thenewforest.co.uk

Recreation & Heritage Department
Hampshire County Council, Mottisfont Court, High Street,
Winchester Hampshire SO23 8ZF.

Available in alternative formats
01962 870500

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Totton and Eling Town Council

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walking in Hampshire

Test Way

A 44 mile
long-distance walk
from Inkpen Beacon
to Eling



Hampshire
County Council

Inkpen to Hurstbourne Tarrant

Distance: 8 miles Time: 3-4 hours

The Test Way begins high on a dramatic chalk escarpment at Inkpen. From here you can see the bleak downs to the north and the lush plain to the south. On a fine day you may even glimpse the soaring landmark of Salisbury Cathedral's spire. From here the trail drops sharply to the valley and rises to the small village of Linkenholt, then follows farm tracks to the pretty hamlet of Ibthorpe, where Jane Austen was a regular visitor at Ibthorpe House. The path then follows alongside the bed of a winterbourne (a seasonally rising stream) into the village of Hurstbourne Tarrant – a favourite of William Cobbett, author of 'Rural Rides'.

Accommodation: Andover TIC

Refreshments:

George and Dragon, Hurstbourne Tarrant 01264 736277

Public Transport: Inkpen and Hurstbourne Tarrant

Four Valleys Taxi Bus - 114 0118 975 3070

Newbury Buses - 13 01635 567500

Stagecoach - 20 0845 121 0180

Cango - C2 & C3 0845 602 4135

Hurstbourne Tarrant to St Mary Bourne

Distance: 3 miles Time: 1-2 hours

In Hurstbourne Tarrant the path runs through the village, crosses the valley and heads steeply uphill to the copses of Wallop Hill Down where you can look back for a postcard view of the village nestling below. Gently descend past Stokehill Farm to St Mary Bourne which straggles alongside the course of the Bourne Rivulet where the 12th C church contains several treasures. Look downstream for the huge nine-arch viaduct at Hurstbourne Priors and the numerous watercress beds.

Accommodation: Andover & Basingstoke TICs

Refreshments:

George Inn, St Mary Bourne 01264 738340

Public Transport: St Mary Bourne

Cargo Services - C2 & C3 0845 602 4135

St Mary Bourne to Longparish

Distance: 5½ miles Time: 2-3 hours

Over the river, you can walk the farm tracks crossing one of the great prehistoric roads, the Harrow Way. Pass through more farmland and around the beautiful eastern edge of Harewood Forest, a remnant of ancient coppiced woodland. You will then come to Longparish with its many listed buildings, including the early 13th C church of St Nicholas. The path brings you straight to The Plough pub garden.

Accommodation: Basingstoke & Andover TICs

Refreshments:

The Plough, Longparish 01264 720358

Public Transport: Longparish

Cango - C4 0845 602 4135

Stagecoach - 26 0845 121 0180

Longparish to West Down, Chilbolton

Distance: 5 miles Time: 2 hours

Walk through the pretty hamlet of Forton on the banks of the Test. You then re-enter the lovely Harewood Forest on Second World War concrete tracks, used to conceal vehicles from snooping enemy aircraft. Leave the woods and walk along pleasant old farm lanes back into the valley to Wherwell. The route runs behind the village, but much more scenic is a walk down the main street. Cross the different branches of the river via footbridges, past Chilbolton Common with its vast variety of flora and fauna. Skirting Chilbolton and its Observatory you will reach West Down.

Accommodation: Andover TIC

Refreshments:

The White Lion, Wherwell 01264 860317

Public Transport: Chilbolton Village

Stagecoach - 25,99,X99 0845 121 0180



Eling



West Down, Chilbolton to Stockbridge

Distance: 3 miles Time: 1-2 hours

This part of the route uses an old dismantled railway line to lead you down to Stockbridge. The river is always beside you, peeping through the trees, passing the villages of Leckford and, across the river, Longstock. Stockbridge's wide main street rests on a chalk causeway built over the seven streams that make up the River Test. The water criss-crosses the high street, where you can take a break from your route to feed the huge trout or explore the many antiques and crafts shops, galleries, pubs and cafés.

Accommodation: Andover TIC

Refreshments: (small selection)

Mayfly PH, Westdown 01264 860283

White Hart Inn, Stockbridge 01264 810663

Places of interest:

Houghton Lodge Gardens 01264 810502

Public Transport: Stockbridge

Stagecoach, 77,99,X99 0845 121 0180

Wilts & Dorset, 68 01722 336855

Stockbridge to Mottisfont

Distance: 5½ miles Time: 2-3 hours

Still using the old railway line, the path passes through Stockbridge Common – a quiet world of reedbeds and waterfowl. Here, beside the water, the Clarendon Way (which stretches from Winchester to Salisbury) crosses the valley just before you reach the ancient crossing point of Horsebridge. Pass the John of Gaunt pub before continuing past one of the few remaining old railway stations (now privately owned). On to Lower Brook, cross the meadows and finish this section on grass tracks at the famous Mottisfont Abbey, a National Trust property whose walled kitchen garden holds the national collection of old-fashioned roses.

Accommodation: Andover & Romsey TICs

Refreshments

John of Gaunt, Horsebridge 01794 388394

Places of interest:

Mottisfont Abbey, Mottisfont 01794 340757

Mottisfont to Romsey

Distance: 5 miles Time: 2 hours

The Way now passes the church of St Andrew and crosses the River Dun just before it joins the Test. Lanes and tracks skirt around the village of Awbridge before entering Squabb Wood, reminiscent of the New Forest. Emerge from the wood and see the 10th C Romsey Abbey across the marshland. Then go past Sadlers Mill and its salmon leap and down to the thriving medieval market town of Romsey.

Accommodation: Romsey TIC

Places of interest:

King John's House, Romsey 01794 512200

Romsey Abbey, Romsey 01794 513125

Public Transport: Romsey

Solent Blue Line from Southampton 023 8061 8233

First from Southampton (Sundays only) 023 8022 4854

Wilts & Dorset from Salisbury 01722 336855

Stagecoach from Winchester 0845 121 0180

Wilts & Dorset from Eastleigh 01722 336855

Trains 08457 48 49 50

Romsey to Eling

Distance: 9 miles Time: 3-4 hours

Walking south from Romsey, you can glimpse the grand Palladian mansion of Broadlands through the trees, once home of the late Lord Louis Mountbatten. The path now hugs the western edge of the valley with its waves of wooded terraces beside you, before crossing the river and taking you through a wonderful nature reserve of reedbeds and saltmarshes that is alive with rare birds and plants. Take care though: this area can be waterlogged at any time of the year. Cross the river for the last time before finishing the Way at Eling Wharf.

Accommodation: Romsey, Southampton & Lyndhurst TICs

Refreshments:

Salmon Leap, Totton 023 8086 2694

Anchor Inn, Totton 023 8042 8206

Places of interest:

Broadlands 01794 505010

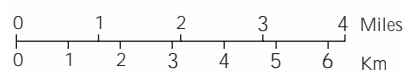
Eling Tide Mill 023 8086 9575

Public Transport: Eling

Solent Blue Line from Southampton 023 8061 8233

Wilts & Dorset from Southampton 01202 673 555

Trains to Totton Station daily 08457 48 49 50



- Key
- Trail (walkers only)
- - - - - Trail (walkers, horse-riders and cyclists)
- P** Parking
- i** Tourist Information Centre (TIC)
- Train Station