

Cookham Round: Starting in Marlow

LENGTH

7.2km (4.3 miles) from Marlow to Cookham, 7.8km (4.7 miles) from Cookham to Marlow.

Optional short cut at Bourne End saving 3.2km (2 miles)

Optional 6.6km (4 mile) extension via Temple Lock

WALK NOTES

This is a variation on the Cookham Round walk in book one of the Time Out Book of Country Walks, the most obvious variation being that it starts and finishes in Marlow. This enables you to have lunch in Cookham, which has several nice options, and tea in Marlow, which also is full of cafes.

The morning route of the walk departs from the book in that it essentially just follows the Thames Path from Marlow to Cookham – a very pleasant and easy stretch through open meadows. In the afternoon, the walk more or less reverses the book one afternoon route over Winter Hill (though with a few twists). Alternatively, you could do the morning of the book one, to end up in Bisham, and then walk into Marlow.

The optional extension via Temple Lock can be affected by traffic noise from the A404 if the wind is in the wrong direction, and has a bit of walking along a busy road (on a pavement) towards the start: otherwise it is very pleasant.

SUGGESTED TRAIN

Take **the nearest train to 10am** from Paddington to Marlow

LUNCH AND TEA PLACES

There are several lunch options in **Cookham**. The oddly named **Bel and the Dragon** (01628 521263 www.belandthedragon.co.uk), which describes itself as a “country pub and eating house”, is more like a restaurant in that it has table service. But it still retains a gastro-pub feel, and the food is well worth the £12-16 main course prices.

Walkers also have good reports of the **Kings Arms** across the street, saying it does imaginative food at cheaper prices than Bel and the Dragon. A more ordinary pub is the **Crown** (01628 520163) on the right just where the high street opens out onto Cookham Moor. Some reports say this does cheap food, others that it is a “mainly locals” kind of place.

On the short cut, the **Bounty Inn** on the river opposite **Bourne End** is a possible lunch stop, but it gets very busy on sunny days. It serves food 12-8pm from Easter to the end of September, but at other times of the year is open on Sundays only.

In **Marlow**, the fanciest choice, if you can get there in time (it closes at 5.15pm) is **Burgers**. Despite its unfortunate name, this is a very pleasant patisserie with a wide choice of cakes. It is closed on Sundays.

Otherwise, Marlow high street has lots of tea options, including the **Natural Cafe** (open till 6pm daily, except Sundays when it is open till 7pm) and **Starbucks** open till 7pm daily.

On the extension, are the **Temple Lock Tea Gardens**, open till 5.30 pm “weather permitting”

WALK DIRECTIONS

From the single platform at Marlow station, walk forward, and up the approach road. Cross Lock Road, to pass The Marlow Donkey pub on your left, and carry on down Station Road.

In 180 metres ignore Station Rise, a cul du sac, to your left, but shortly afterwards *turn left down Mill Road.*

Follow this road to reach the River Thames just by **Marlow Weir**. *Turn left along the road along the river.* Ignore a turning to Marlow Lock to the right (unless you want to have a look at it) but carry on along the road.

In 250 metres *look out for a grassy area to the right, where the Thames Path* (signposted but not very clearly) *turns right to the river bank. When you get to the river bank, turn left along it.*

You now stay on the Thames Path all the way to Cookham. The way is never in doubt, and passes first in about 350 metres under the A404 road bridge, then past sport fields into open meadows, with the railway line to your left. In 3.5 kilometres you come to **Bourne End**. Here the path threads between the gardens of riverside houses *to the railway bridge, where you cross over the river.*

On the far side, **to take the short cut:** saving 4.5km or 2.8 miles, turn right along the far river bank, and see directions at end of main text.

Otherwise, **to continue to Cookham,** *turn left on the far side of the railway bridge.* Follow the river path for just over 2.2km (there is more detail towards the end of the walk directions in book one) until, *100 metres before the Cookham road bridge* (the next bridge you come to), *the Thames Path turns right away from the river into Cookham Churchyard.*

Coming out of the Churchyard at its far end, follow the lane to the main A4094 in about 50 metres, and turn right on it. This is **Cookham High Street**, where there are several lunch options.

To continue the walk after lunch, carry on down the High Street and out across **Cookham Moor** (a grassy open space).

To do the morning part of the Cookham Round walk in book one as the afternoon of your walk, keep straight on along the road for 400 metres to get to Cookham railway station, and follow the directions in the book. However, if taking this option, note that one paragraph after point [4] in the book text, you should turn RIGHT on the "substantial bridleway" not left, following it for 750 metres until you see a path across a new footbridge to your left: this gives a **safe crossing of the A404** under the storm drain tunnels: see point [**] in the text below for directions onwards from this point to Marlow.

Otherwise to reverse the afternoon route from Cookham over Winter Hill to Marlow, *once on Cookham Moor, leave the road, and follow its right hand edge.* In 100 metres, ignore a path through a gate to the right.

In another 100 metres, *in the far corner of the open space, cross a car-car wide gravel track coming from the car park to the left, and go straight on up a narrow signposted footpath.* In 30 metres cross a footbridge and go through a kissing gate.

Stay on this path, ignoring all side paths, as it curves right along the base of a gentle hill, ignoring paths to the left and right. You soon see the riverside meadows you passed through

in the morning to your right, beyond a ditch.

In 1km the path passes under the railway: beyond this, fork right through a kissing gate and up a short rise to carry on along the base of the hill, with a line of trees to the right.

In 200 metres, there is another kissing gate, and *you are now out in the open meadows* (actually National Trust-owned **Cock Marsh**), with the hill rising steeply to your left. In another 200 metres, *there is a causeway out across the meadows to your right. 20 metres beyond this, take a steep narrow path slanting up the hill to your left*, signposted by an arrow on a post.

(This path can be a little slippery in wet weather: if you find it too steep, stay on the path along the base of the hill and in 300 metres or so you will find a wider track slanting up the hill: this is the track mentioned in the next paragraph: but if you go this way, you miss some fine views....)

Having climbed the hill on the steep narrow path and admired the view, **[*]** keep on along the the line of the summit ridge, heading roughly west (that is, with the view to your right).

In 750 metres, *the path enters a wooded area, and descends for 150 metres to merge with a car wide track rising up from the right. Follow this very gently uphill for 300 metres to a road.*

Turn right along the road. In 80 metres, ignore two lanes to the right (Gibraltar Lane and Stonehouse Lane). Stay on the road, ignoring side paths. In 300 metres, there is **an open space on the right**. This is the National Trust-owned. **Winter Hill**. Keep along the edge of this, passing car parking spaces.

In 300 metres *at the far end of the open space*, you pass a road turning on the left, and 10 metres beyond this, *just before the gates of Dial Place, turn right downhill on a car wide track*. In 50 metres, just before the gates of another house, veer right onto a footpath.

Follow this path along the contour of the hill, with the wall and later chain-link fence of the house to your left. In 250 metres, *at a fork, go right, slightly downhill*.

In another 250 metres, *you come to a road. Do not cross the road, but take the path to the right, downhill on steps*. Follow this for 300 metres to another road. *Cross the road and carry on up a bridleway on the far side into Bisham Woods*.

In 250 metres, *turn right across a new footbridge* to go down the right hand edge of a field and *pass under the A404 through the flood tunnels*. **[**]** Beyond the tunnels, pass through a gate and *veer slightly left across a field* in the direction of the yellow arrow.

(The path across this field is sometimes indistinct or obscured by crops, but the official footpath route is as described)

In 300 metres, exit this field by a gate just short of its far left hand corner, and cross the corner of another field to pass through a gate.

Beyond the gate, *cross a car-wide track* at a three-armed footpath sign, *and carry on through another gate. Go straight across the next field* towards the left hand end of the houses. **[***]**

When you get to the road, **to do the extension to Temple Lock** (adding 6.6km or 4 miles to the walk), turn left and follow the directions at the end of the main walk directions

Otherwise, *turn right on the road*. In 300 metres you come to **Marlow Bridge**. Cross this, passing the church on right and a park on your left.

Marlow High Street, with its tea options, is straight on: eg **Burgers** patisserie on the corner, **Fego Cafe** on the right 100 metres beyond it on the right, the **Natural Cafe** metres further on on the right, and **Starbucks** 50 metres further on on the left.

To get to Marlow station, *turn right up the road level with the end of the park* (and with Burgers patisserie on the corner) – *Station Road*. (**If coming from Marlow High Street after tea**, turn left up this road, just before the park and patisserie).

In 70 metres ignore St Peter Street to the right, and in 200 metres ignore Mill Street to the right and Station Rise to the left. 180 metres beyond this you come to a five way road junction, with the Marlow Donkey pub on your right.

The way to the station is half right into an industrial park. In 70 metres ignore a fork left into the industrial park, and in 40 metres more, you come to Marlow station's single platform

SHORT CUT AT BOURNE END

At the end of the railway bridge, turn right along the far river bank, reversing your route. In 200 metres you pass a ramshackle riverside pub, the **Bounty Inn** and in 300 metres, the houses end and you are in an open field.

Follow the river's edge for another 400 metres, and then veer inland with the path behind more riverside houses. Here ignore the track behind the houses, but instead slant left on the footpath.

In 200 metres follow the footpath as it turns right, away from the river, towards the escarpment. In 200 metres, cross a stile to get to the foot of the escarpment. Ignore the wide track slanting up to the right, but take a narrower, steeper path that slants up to the left. Follow this to the top of the hill, and then turn right, and resume the main directions at the point marked [*]

EXTENSION VIA TEMPLE LOCK

Having turned left on the road just after point [***] in the main directions above, carry on along it. *In 400 metres, follow the road around to the left*, but first where it turns left, do not miss the chance to visit **Bisham Church** up the road to the right. This has a pretty churchyard, with benches facing right onto the river, and is a tranquil oasis from the traffic noise.

Returning to the main road and carrying on up it, *in 250 metres it turns right*, and in 100 metres you pass the **Bull Inn** on your left.

150 metres beyond the Inn, leave the main road as it turns left to *take the dead end road forking right*, signposted to Temple.

Keep on this road, bending right with it in 200 metres and left with it in another 220 metres. In 600 metres more *this brings you to the hamlet of Temple*. Ignore Bradenham Lane left to *keep straight on between houses*.

In 130 metres, *where the road ends, keep straight on up a path to Hurley*, passing to the left of the entrance to Temple Weir House onto a path with a brick wall to the right.

In 200 metres this passes under a tunnel and at its far end merges with a gravel track to the left. In 250 metres more you pass a large Tudor-style

house to the right, and in 200 metres a smaller house, also on the right.

In another 200 metres, *pass through a rusted metal gate to the left of a metal fieldgate. 10 metres beyond this, go right up a path through a metal kissing gate.*

In 150 metres, *you come to the river Thames and go right. In 100 metres, cross the Thames on the large wooden footbridge, and on the far side turn right* along the path towards Marlow.

In 150 metres you come to Temple Lock. The **Temple Lock Tea Gardens**, if they are open, are in the garden of the house on the far side of the lock.

*Beyond the lock, follow the riverside path for 2.3 kilometres to Marlow, passing through a succession of gates and fields (once open: these days fenced off from the riverside path). Two thirds of the way along you can see the battlements of **Bisham Abbey** (given by Henry VIII to Anne of Cleves as part of her divorce settlement) on the other side of the river, and later **Bisham Church**, which you might have visited earlier.*

Once Marlow Bridge comes into view ahead, *you enter the town park over a footbridge. Keep on the riverside for 100 metres and then fork left up a car-wide tarmac path, passing a refreshment kiosk on the left in 60 metres. Keep on this path for 200 metres to the gates of the park and a road.*

For tea, *turn left* up Marlow High Street: see main walk directions for details of tea options. **To get to the station**, *go straight across the road from the park and pass to the right of Burger's patisserie up Station Road.*

In 70 metres ignore St Peter Street to the right, and in 200 metres ignore

Mill Street to the right and Station Rise to the left. 180 metres beyond this you come to a five way road junction, with the Marlow Donkey pub on your right.

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