



Cambridge via Grantchester Circular walk

Cambridge and its Colleges, Grantchester, Trumpington and the University Botanic Gardens



Length 15 km (9.4 miles), 5 hours. For the whole outing, including trains, sights and meals, allow at least 10 hours.

OS Map OS Landranger Map 154, OS Explorer Map 209. Cambridge is in **Cambridgeshire**

Toughness 1 out of 10.

Features This walk starts with a City Centre tour of the University Colleges before you head out to Grantchester on a walk besides the River Cam. You stop for tea at the famous Orchard tearooms, and then you have a choice of a return walk to Cambridge, either via Trumpington or back beside the River Cam. Gardeners amongst you may like to visit the Cambridge University Botanic Gardens at walk end before taking the short walk which remains to Cambridge Railway Station.

Footwear: as most of this walk is on footpaths and paved paths you may prefer to wear stout walking shoes or well cushioned trainers instead of walking boots

Walk Options After reaching Grantchester, there are 2 endings. Option A is to return back the same way along the River Cam, option B), which involves a mile of

road walking, is via Trumpington

History

Perhaps Friends of the Earth should employ poets. Writing a famous poem must be as effective a way as any of ensuring that a place is preserved forever. Rupert Brooke's poem *The Old Vicarage* – he had rooms as a student at the Orchard, and later at the Old Vicarage, Grantchester – was written in a mood of nostalgia in a Berlin café, in May 1912. The poem celebrates not only **Grantchester** and the river ("Laughs the immortal river still/Under the mill, under the mill?"), but the surrounding countryside ("And sunset still a golden sea /From Haslingfield to Madingley"). Augustus John camped in Grantchester meadows with, as Keynes put it, his "two wives and ten naked children"; Brooke and Virginia Woolf (who dubbed his friends the "Neo-Pagans") swam naked by moonlight; EM Foster visited the Orchard; Wittgenstein would come there by canoe; AN Whitehead and Bertrand Russell worked on their *Principia Mathematica* at the Mill House, next to the Old Vicarage. As for the church clock ("Oh! Yet /Stands the Church clock at ten to three? / And is there honey for tea?"), in Brooke's first draft at half past three (the actual time it was stuck at for most of 1911).

The oldest surviving building in Cambridge is **St Bene't's Church**, which has a Saxon tower. **Cambridge University** was founded in the early thirteenth century by students and academics fleeing riots in Oxford, where the townsfolk felt imposed on by the academics. Within a couple of centuries, the university dominated the Cambridge townsfolk too: in 1440 Henry VI had a large part of medieval Cambridge demolished to make way for **King's College**, intended for students from his new Eton school; in 1496 a twelfth-century nunnery became **Jesus College**; in 1542 a Benedictine hostel was transformed into **Magdalene College**; and in 1596 **Trinity College** was endowed by Henry VIII, with funds from the monasteries he had vandalised.

The Orchard Tea Rooms date from 1897, although the orchard's apple trees were planted eleven years earlier. Soon after opening the tearooms became a favourite "up-river" café of college students. In the tearooms early years the owners took in lodgers to supplement their income, one being Rupert Brooke. Today college students punt up to the Orchard for tea – or a champagne breakfast after May Balls. During Cambridge's Fringe Festival summer evening performances of Shakespeare are held at the Orchard.

Visit

Visiting Cambridge University Colleges

On arrival in the city centre you might like to purchase a guide of the colleges and a city centre map from one of the bookshops. Some of the colleges are open to the public although most charge an entrance fee –

although often with free admission to evensong (a Church Service). You will not have time to visit many of the colleges, but if you want to visit just one of Cambridge's historic buildings, try **King's College Chapel**. Evensong is the time to visit the Chapel, if you get the opportunity. Colleges may well be closed to the public during exams, from late April to mid-June.

Cambridge University Botanic Gardens

The Gardens were established by one of Charles Darwin's teachers, John Henslow, Professor of Botany, and first opened in 1846. Today, the gardens extend to 40 acres with over 8,000 plant species. At the start of the 20th century Cambridge scientists pioneered work on plants at the Gardens and played a major part in the development of the branch of science known as genetics.

Opening times:

- April to September: 10am to 6pm
- February, March & October: 10am to 5pm
- January, November & December: 10am to 4pm

Entrance Fee (2023): £ 8.00 (including gift aid)

There is a garden café and garden shop within the grounds.

Travel Take the train nearest to **10 am** from London **King's Cross** to **Cambridge**. There are also trains from Liverpool Street, but they take much longer.

Trains back from Cambridge run about twice an hour to King's Cross.

Lunch Take lunch at any one of the numerous pubs and cafes in the City Centre after you have completed your tour of the colleges.

Tea *THE* tea stop on this walk is **The Orchard Tea Rooms** (tel.[01223-845788](tel:01223-845788)) in Grantchester. It is steeped in history and, although touristy, remains "real" and very popular with Cambridge and local residents as well as the many tourists who flock to it. Consequently, at weekends (particularly on Sundays) The Orchard is packed and you will have to queue to be served and wait for a table to become free under the orchard's apple trees. But be patient as the wait is worthwhile.

Help Us! After the walk, please leave a [comment](#), it really helps. Thanks!

You can also upload photos to the  [SWC Group on Flickr](#) ([upload your photos](#)) and [videos to](#)  [Youtube](#). This walk's tags are:

By Car **Start** CB1 2JW

Help National Rail: 03457 48 49 50 • Traveline (bus times): 0871 200 22 33
(12p/min) • TFL (London) : 0343 222 1234

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Walk Directions

1. Coming out of **Cambridge Railway Station** *keep ahead* on Station Approach, passing buses on your right, your direction 300 degrees. Ignore all ways off.
2. In 360 metres, at traffic lights and with a war memorial ahead, *turn right* onto Hills Road (A640). In 45 metres cross the pedestrian crossing on your left to go down Bateman Street, your direction 250 degrees. Ignore all ways off.
3. In 450 metres you pass an entrance to **Cambridge University Botanic Gardens** on your left (the main entrance with pay kiosk is 70 metres down the road at the main road junction). In 70 metres at this road junction, *turn left* onto Trumpington Road (A10) with **The Leys** opposite.
4. In 110 metres cross this busy road with care and *turn down* a paved path signposted to Newnham & West Cambridge, your direction 255 degrees. In 120 metres the path swings right and a path joins from the left.
5. In 190 metres at a path junction, *take the right, paved path*, signposted City Centre, on a bearing of 310 degrees. The path bends to the right and in 310 metres you cross the Fen Causeway by pedestrian traffic lights, to go through a swing gate with a small cattle grid to its side. *Keep ahead* on a grassy path to the left of a paved path, with a stream over to your left.
6. In 350 metres go through a swing gate with a small cattle grid to its left. The Hilton Double Tree Hotel is now on your left. *Continue ahead*, up Granta Place. In 70 metres *swing right* with Scudamore Boat Yard on your left. **[!]** In 5 metres *turn left* down Laundress Lane, with The Anchor pub on your left.
7. In 60 metres go through bollards and *turn left* on Silver Street, to go back past the Anchor pub to cross over a bridge over the river.
8. **The City Tour of Cambridge Colleges** Stop for lunch en route in the City Centre.
9. **[6C]** In 80 metres *fork right* following the signpost to "The Backs", your direction 290 degrees.

10. In 120 metres, having just gone past the white pyramid building on your right-hand side, go straight on away from the river, your direction 330 degrees. In a further 180 metres you come to the main road, where you *turn right*, your direction 345 degrees.
11. In 25 metres, do not go through the gates on your right-hand side into the grounds of **Kings College**, but keep to the wide path with the river on your right-hand side. In a further 150 metres you pass the gateway to **Clare College**. In 85 metres [7] *turn right* on to Garret Hostel Lane, eastwards, on a long tarmac lane between railings, with the **Wren Library** away to the left. *Go over the bridge* (with **Clare Bridge** visible to the right).
12. In 140 metres, at Trinity Lane T-junction, *turn right*, your direction 190 degrees.
13. In 40 metres, having passed **Trinity Hall** on your right-hand side, *turn left* into Senate House Passage, passing on your left the **Gate of Honour**, topped with sundials (the gateway through which undergraduates pass on their way to receiving their degrees).
14. At the main street (Trinity Street), *turn left*, your direction 5 degrees, passing an entrance to **Gonville and Caius College** on your left-hand side and **St. Michael's Church** on your right-hand side. In a further 100 metres you pass the gatehouse to **Trinity College** on your left-hand side.
15. In 55 metres you come to **St. Johns College** on your left-hand side. Here *turn right* on All Saints Passage, your direction 110 degrees. In 60 metres, at the T-junction, *go left*, your direction 50 degrees. In a further 45 metres, at the Bridge Street T-junction, *go right*, your direction 145 degrees. In 20 metres *continue straight on*, now on Sidney Street. In 70 metres you pass **Sidney Sussex College** on your left.
16. In 75 metres you pass Market Passage on your right-hand side. In a further 40 metres, *turn right* on Market Street, your direction 240 degrees. In 35 metres you pass **Holy Trinity Church** on your left-hand side. In 90 metres you come to the back of **Great St. Mary's Church**, where you *go left*, your direction 170 degrees, with market stalls on your left-hand side. In 35 metres, *go straight on*, along Peas Hill.
17. In 25 metres, at the end of the HSBC Bank building, *go right*, signposted to "G David Bookseller", your direction 290 degrees. In 50 metres you pass the front of the **Church of St. Edward**, and in 10 metres, at the T-junction, *go right*, on St. Edwards Passage.
18. In 30 metres you come on to the main Kings Parade, where you *go left*, with **Kings College** opposite.
19. Continuing south on Kings Parade, you pass in 30 metres the **Rainbow Café** on your left-hand side. In a further 55 metres, *turn left* on Bene't Street, your direction 85 degrees. In 35 metres you pass the **Eagle pub** on your left-hand side and **Saint Bene't's Church** on your right.

20. *Go right* on Free School Lane, your direction 150 degrees. **Corpus Christi College** is on your right-hand side and the **Old Cavendish Lab** is to your left.
21. In a further 65 metres, you come out on to the main road, Pembroke Street, with **Pembroke College** opposite, and you *go right*, your direction 245 degrees.
22. In 100 metres you come to Trumpington Street *where you go left*, your direction 150 degrees. In 15 metres you pass the entrance of Pembroke College. Almost opposite this college is **Peterhouse**, the oldest of Cambridge's colleges. In 35 metres go right on Little St. Mary's Lane, your direction 250 degrees, passing **Little St. Mary's Church** on your left-hand side.
23. **[7A] This is the end of the tour of Cambridge Colleges.** You now head out to **Grantchester**.
24. Retrace your steps to the junction with Trumpington Street. Here you *go left* down Mill Lane, your direction 250 degrees.
25. In 100 metres, by the river, opposite Scudamores Boat Yard, go ahead, through a metal barrier, to cross a bridge over a weir on a path signposted to Newnham. Bear left on a broad, surfaced path, your direction due south, with the boatyard on your left.
26. In 80 metres cross a weir. In a further 70 metres, at a path junction, with the Hilton Double Tree Hotel over to your left, *bear right*, your direction 200 degrees, and in 40 metres cross a bridge with white railings. In a further 70 metres cross another bridge with white railings, and with the Bella Italia restaurant directly ahead, *bear left* on a surfaced path.
27. In 100 metres go through a metal swing gate with a cattle grid to its left and in 10 metres, at pedestrian lights, cross the Fen Causeway, diagonally to your right, to cross a bridge and continue across **Lammas Land**, on a bearing of 240 degrees, on a surfaced cycle path.
28. In 240 metres just before you reach the road (Newnham Road) *bear left* with the cycle path, to cross a road and follow the footpath sign to Grantchester, down Grantchester Street, your direction 190 degrees. Ignore ways off and in 160 metres, at a road junction, *turn right* into Eltisley Avenue.
29. In 200 metres, at a road junction, ignore Marlowe Road on your right and **[!]** take the cul de sac on its left, your direction 230 degrees. In 115 metres you pass South Green Road on your right. *Keep ahead*, now on an unmade road, with **Skater's Meadow** on your left (a small nature reserve).
30. In 100 metres you pass Pembroke College sports ground on your right. The way ahead now becomes a surfaced path, with a wooden fence on your left and a hedge on your right, with Grantchester Meadow over to your left.
31. In 135 metres go through a metal kissing gate, with a small cattle grid to its right. **You now have a choice** of surfaced path or path besides the River Cam. In the wet or after recent rain, take the surfaced path: in the dry, the path besides the river is

recommended. **To follow the river**, bear left after going through the kissing gate, and reverse the directions between points 6B and 6A below, entering the Orchard's grounds at the end.

32. To follow the surfaced path: having gone through the kissing gate, take the surfaced path ahead, your direction 200 degrees. In 450 metres go through another metal kissing gate, with a small cattle grid to its right, and continue ahead on the surfaced path, your direction 205 degrees.
33. In 300 metres go through a metal kissing gate, with a small cattle grid and a metal fieldgate to its left, to continue ahead along the surfaced path, you bearing now 200 degrees.
34. In 150 metres go through a wooden kissing gate, with a small cattle grid to its right, and keep ahead on the surfaced path, your direction now 190 degrees. In a further 150 metres go through another wooden kissing gate, with a small cattle grid to its right.
35. The surfaced path ahead now narrows, with a wall to the left and allotments to the right, and passes the entrance to the gardens of the Green Man pub on your right.
36. In 70 metres the path swings to the right and in another 70 metres go through a wooden barrier and out onto a road (Grantchester's High Street), with Manor Farm opposite. To visit the **Church of St. Andrew and St. Mary**, Grantchester, *turn right* and in 60 metres go through the wooden swing gates into the churchyard. Coming out of the church, reverse your steps past the junction with the surfaced footpath, and in 40 metres, where the road swings right, keep ahead down a gravel path and into the garden of **The Orchard**, the de rigueur tea place.
37. After tea, you can *either* return to Cambridge via the River Cam (choosing the other path to the one you came on to Grantchester), *or* try a route via Trumpington: it involves a mile of road walking on busy roads at the beginning but then the route is over fields and beside a stream and is not devoid of interest.

38. Option A) Return via the River Cam

39. After tea in the Orchard's garden, it is worth your while to take a short detour to view the outside of the **Old Vicarage**, where Rupert Brooke used to lodge. Walk through the Orchard's car park (in a southerly direction) and pass the Rupert Brooke Museum buildings on your right, to exit the car park, back onto the main road, where you *turn left*. In 50 metres, the road swings to the right, and there is a footpath ahead between high walls. The Old Vicarage is the house on your left, with a post box in a wall. The property is now owned by Lord Jeffrey Archer and Lady Mary Archer. The large conservatory where Lord Archer wrote many of his novels is clearly visible. In the front garden of the house is a **statue of Rupert Brooke in military uniform**. *Retrace your steps*, through the Orchard's car park, to the entrance to the Orchard tearoom building.

40. **[6A] [!]** Here, on your right, is a low level sign "To the River". Go down this path, your direction 100 degrees, in 40 metres going through a metal kissing gate. *Keep ahead* over a field and in a further 100 metres go through another metal kissing gate, to the banks of the **River Cam**.
41. *Your onward route is more or less to follow the River Cam to the outskirts of Cambridge* but in more detail:
42. Bear left and in 80 metres go through a metal kissing gate. In a further 120 metres, go over a stream. In 110 metres go through a metal kissing gate No.19, and onwards, along the bank. In a further 200 metres, go through a metal kissing gate. In 80 metres go through a gate and over a wooden footbridge with wooden railings. In dry weather, follow the path to the right and along the banks of the River Cam: in the wet, take the tarmac path some 50 metres over to your left.
43. Continuing by the river, in 240 metres go over a wooden footbridge with wooden railings. In 130 metres go through a metal gate and over a wooden footbridge with wooden railings. In 150 metres go over another wooden footbridge with wooden railings, and in 55 metres another.
44. **[6B]** In 100 metres go over another wooden footbridge with wooden railings. The path now swings left and in 300 metres joins the upper (tarmac) path. *Turn right*, through a metal kissing gate to join the tarmac path, your direction 40 degrees .
45. In 200 metres, having passed Grantchester Meadow on your right, *keep ahead* along a badly maintained car road, your direction 65 degrees, with a car parking area on your left. In 100 metres your way becomes a tarmac road.
46. In 115 metres at a three-way road junction **[!]** ignore Marlowe Road on your left and *turn down* Eltisley Avenue (the middle junction), your direction 30 degrees. In 200 metres *turn left* to go northwards up Grantchester Street.
47. In 160 metres, you come to the junction with the A603.
48. *Turn right* at the junction with the A603, and head just south-of-east, on a surfaced path on the southern edge of Lammas Land, to cross a stream on a bridge after some 350 metres, and where a path joins you on your left, continue ahead.
49. **[8]** Continue ahead with a stream on your right. In 190 metres *fork left*, due east, with a wall on your left-hand side.
50. In 120 metres you come to the A10 (Trumpington Road) where you *go left*, your direction 350 degrees.
51. In 110 metres *turn right* on Bateman Street, due east. In 70 metres you pass the entrance to **Cambridge University Botanic Gardens** on your right-hand side. For the next 450 metres ignore all ways off.
52. You come to the A640 T-junction, *where you turn right*, your direction 155 degrees. In 55 metres, by the war memorial , *fork left on Station Road* your direction 105

degrees. Ignore all ways off and in 360 metres you come to **Cambridge Railway Station**.

53. Option B) Return via Trumpington

54. After tea, *walk ahead* through the Orchard's car park – in a southerly direction – and pass the Brooke Museum single storey buildings on your right. Go under a barrier and exit the car park back onto the road, where you *turn left*. In 50 metres, as the road swings right, keep ahead through wooden posts onto a signposted gravel footpath between high walls, your direction 100 degrees. The house on your left at this junction is **The Old Vicarage**. Note the statue in the front garden of **Rupert Brooke** in military uniform.
55. Go down the gravel footpath, which swings right and in 120 metres comes back out onto the road by **Mill Pool**. Turn left to cross a bridge and in 30 metres you cross another, smaller bridge. In 70 metres the road swings to the right and in a further 50 metres you go over a bridge with brick parapet walls over the River Cam.
56. In 120 metres you come to a public footpath sign on your right to **Byron's Pool**, a local beauty spot. Lord Byron was a pupil at Trinity College, Cambridge in 1805 and he used to enjoy an early morning dip on the river here by a weir. A detour of 400 metres takes you to the Pool, after which retrace your steps back to the road.
57. Back at the road, continue ahead. In 150 metres the road swings left, and in a further 50 metres, right. In 80 metres you pass **St. Mary and St. Michael's Church, Trumpington** on your right. Keep ahead on the road and in 100 metres, with a war memorial ahead, *turn left* on the main road. .
58. In 85 metres you pass the Green Man pub on your right and in 25 metres the former Coach & Horses pub on your left (now an oriental buffet restaurant). Cross a road junction and keep ahead on the pavement of this busy road, ignoring all ways off.
59. In 350 metres, at a road junction with traffic lights, *turn right* into Long Road. In 650 metres you pass Rutherford Road on your left. In a further 70 metres **!!** turn left off the road onto a footpath and head along the left-hand side of a grassy field, signposted to Brooklands Avenue, your direction 20 degrees, with **Vicar's Brook** over to your left.
60. In 300 metres the path swings left on a bridge over the brook, then right. Ignore a path to your left, and keep ahead, with the brook now on your right-hand side, your initial bearing 25 degrees. You now walk through a woodland section, with Clare College Sports Ground over to your right.
61. In 300 metres, at a path crossing, ignore the bridge on your right leading to the Sports Ground, and keep ahead. In 200 metres you cross a stream to the brook on a wooden footbridge with wooden railings, and keep ahead, the brook still on your right-hand side, now on a gravel path, your direction due north.

62. Keep ahead and ignore all ways off. In 350 metres you come to a large allotment site on your left. In 100 metres the path doglegs right then left with the brook. In a further 200 metres *go up 5 concrete steps* by the side of a bridge onto Brooklands Avenue.
63. *Cross over* Brooklands Avenue, slightly to your left, to go through metal posts and down 4 concrete steps, to continue on a path besides the brook, your direction 320 degrees, with the grounds of the University Botanic Gardens over to your right.
64. In 90 metres go through metal posts to come out onto the pavement of Trumpington Road. Keep ahead with the brook on your right and in 275 metres *turn right* into Bateman Street. The entrance kiosk to **Cambridge University Botanic Gardens** is at this road junction on your right-hand side.
65. Walk down Bateman Street and for the next 450 metres ignore all ways off. You now come to the A640 T-junction, where you *turn right*, your direction 155 degrees. In 55 metres, by the war memorial, *fork left on Station Road* your direction 105 degrees. Ignore all ways off and in 360 metres you come to **Cambridge Railway Station**

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