

Main walk last checked	Short walk last checked	Stonor shortcut last checked	
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Henley via Stonor Circular

Hidden valleys of the southern Chilterns

Length:	Main walk	22.2km (13.8 miles)
	Via Stonor short cut	19.1km (11.9 miles)
	Short walk	14.4km (8.9 miles)

Toughness: 6 out of 10

Maps: OS Explorer 171, OS Landranger 175

Features

Henley is normally thought of as a riverside town but, as this walk demonstrates, it is also on the southern edge of the Chiltern Hills, a charming area of hidden valleys, mixed woodland and farmland, and largely gentle slopes (although the main walk does have one substantial steep hill after lunch). The walk takes you up one side and down the other of the long valley leading up to Stonor, with plenty of charming views en route. This is also a wonderful walk in which to see red kites, a bird of prey that has been successfully re-introduced here, and which can often be seen wheeling slowly overhead.

Lunch is at a pretty and quiet pub in the village of Pishill (with an earlier upmarket option in Stonor), and the return through fine beechwoods into Henley, with its excellent tearooms.

Walk options

- **Stonor short cut:** You can trim **3.1km (1.9 miles)** off the main walk by using this short cut at paragraph 30 of the walk directions on page 3, making the total walk **19.1km (11.9 miles)**. It also has the advantage of giving you a fine view of Stonor Park house which is not otherwise seen on this walk. This variation misses out the lunchtime pub, the Crown in Pishill, but has a fine picnic spot.

- **Short walk:** A short walk up country lanes from the Rainbow Inn in Middle Assendon allows you to shorten the route to **14.4km (8.9 miles)**. This short walk still takes in several of the best sections from the the main walk, and makes an excellent winter walk.

Transport

There are twice hourly connections from **London Paddington** to Henley-on-Thames, changing at Twyford; though later in the evening the trains revert to hourly. Journey time is about one hour. Take **the train nearest to 9am** if you want to get to the Crown in Pishill for lunch; for all other lunch and walk options the train nearest to 10am is sufficient.

Lunch and tea

Rainbow Inn Middle Assendon (01491 574879). This quiet rural pub with a small garden, 5km (3.1 miles) into the walk, serves pleasant home-cooked food from 12-2.15pm daily and every evening except Monday from 7pm: it is closed 3pm to 6pm (7pm on Sundays). This is the suggested lunch stop on the short walk, or an early lunch stop for the main walk. It is a husband and wife-run pub and so appreciates an advance call from groups. In winter, note that after lunch on the short walk, there is still 9.2km (5.7 miles) to go, so it is wise to leave the pub no later than 1.45pm.

Crown Inn Pishill (01491 638364). Located 10.9km (6.8 miles) into the main walk, this charming and friendly country pub has a peaceful garden and roaring log fires in winter. It serves food from 12-3pm Wednesdays to Saturday and 12-3.30pm Sundays: also on Wednesday to Saturday evenings from 6-11pm. Note that it is **closed Monday** and **Tuesday**. It welcomes walkers, but is quite popular – the publican appreciates it if groups of eight or more phone ahead. This is the suggested lunch stop on the main walk.

The Chocolate Cafe Henley-on-Thames (01491 411412). There are many tea options in Henley, but this café, situated on the waterfront by the bridge has a particularly fine selection of chocolate cakes. It is open till 5pm daily, but sometimes later on summer weekends. This is the suggested tea stop on all the walks. The **Angel Inn** more or less across the road is a pleasant pub stop.

Picnic: A fine spot on both the main and short walks (albeit rather early in the main walk) is the hill before Middle Assendon (paragraph 18 on page 3), which has a superb panorama up the valley towards Stonor. Equally good is the top of the hill on the Stonor short cut (paragraph 34 on page 4), where you have a view of Stonor Park house.

WALK DIRECTIONS

Henley to Middle Assendon **(5.2km/3.2 miles)**

1. Coming out of Henley Station turn right down the station approach road.
2. In 50 metres turn right at a T-junction, immediately in front of the Imperial Hotel.
3. In 120 metres, at the riverfront, follow the road around to the left, with the River Thames to your right.
4. In 100 metres ignore a road to your left (Friday Street) and keep on along the riverside.
5. In another 100 metres you pass the town bridge. Continue straight on along the riverside passing with the Red Lion Hotel on your left-hand side.
6. In 150 metres bend left with the road, away from the river.
7. In 200 metres turn right at a T-junction.
8. In 100 metres ignore a private road forking right (which in any case is a dead end) and keep to the main road.
9. In 300 metres, 40 metres after the houses end to the right, turn right on a footpath signposted Oxfordshire Way.
10. *You now follow the Oxfordshire Way until paragraph 21.* In more detail: Follow the footpath uphill between a chain link fence right and barbed-wire one on the left.
11. In 250 metres this path leads into some woods. Keep to the main path, as it bends left in 70 metres.
12. In another 200 metres pass through a metal kissing gate and continue straight on slightly uphill across an open field on a clear path.
13. Keep straight on through scattered trees. In 600 metres pass to the left of a rusted fieldgate (there is sometimes

temporary livestock fencing here), and carry on along a faint grassy track.

14. In 400 metres more, just after a large cedar tree on the left, pass through a kissing gate to the left of a fieldgate, and onto a tarmac driveway. Keep on up this, passing in 15 metres through a white fieldgate with 'Henley Park Private Road' on it.
15. In 150 metres the driveway becomes a gravel track and in another 900 metres it comes to a T-junction with a tarmac road. Cross over this road and across a stile to the left of a fieldgate, signposted 'Oxfordshire Way'. Follow the footpath it veers left across an open field, between wooden fences.
16. In 120 metres cross over another stile and continue onwards in the same direction across the next field.
17. In 120 metres cross over the next stile and walk along on a narrow path between two wooden fences.
18. In 50 metres cross a stile to emerge onto an open hillside with a fine view of Middle Assendon village below and the Stonor Valley to its right, an ideal **picnic** spot. Keep straight on downhill following a fence and a line of new trees.
19. In 350 metres cross a stile to carry on downhill on a tree-lined path.
20. In 200 metres you come to a junction with a tarmac lane. Turn left here, into the hamlet of **Middle Assendon**.
21. In 35 metres take the road to the right, merging in 50 metres with a larger road, the B480. On the left-hand side there is the **Rainbow Inn**, the lunch stop for the short walk.
22. Passing the Rainbow, continue walking up the B480. In 150 metres there are two roads off to the left.
 - **To continue with main walk**, ignore these two roads to the left, and carry on along the B480 and refer to paragraph 23.
 - For the **Short Walk** (the 14.4km/8.9 mile version of the walk) take the **second** road to the left, signposted to Bix Bottom and follow it gently uphill, turning sharp right with it in 500 metres. Another 450 metres of minor curves brings you to a road **T-junction**, where you go **right**. In 300 metres you pass two houses on your right and in another 350 metres you come to Valley End Farm, advertised by a

yellow sign to the left of the road. Ignore the concrete track into the farmyard immediately before this sign, but in another 50 metres, where the hedge to the left ends and just before a red brick farm building, **turn left** up a signposted public footpath. *Continue with paragraph 69 on page 5.*

Middle Assendon to Stonor **(3.3km/2.1 miles)**

23. In another 200 metres, take a signposted footpath off to the right, uphill along a track across an arable field, heading towards an opening in the trees.
24. In 200 metres more, on entering the trees at the top of the field, take the signposted footpath immediately to the left into the woods, following the direction of a yellow arrow on a post.
(A middle section of these woods was coppiced in 2013 and is thus currently scrub rather than woodland.)
25. In 500 metres cross over a stile into a field. Follow its edge uphill, with a hedge and barbed wire fence to your left.
26. In 70 metres turn left with the field edge. In 100 metres more veer left along a track with hedgerow to your left and a field to your right.
27. Continue along this track for 1.3km until you come to a farm complex and the track curves right to a double metal fieldgate. Pass through a kissing gate to the right of the fieldgates and turn left to pass through another kissing gate, also to the right of double metal fieldgates, into the farmyard.
28. In 100 metres, on the far side of the farmyard, follow the track, keeping the woods to your left-hand side, and ignoring the track off to the left at the start of the woods.
29. In 130 metres, where the track curves sharply round the right, turn left down a path. Continue downhill, keeping a chain-link fence to your right.
30. In 500 metres, pass through a gap onto a road.
 - At this point to follow the **Stonor short cut**, turn left on the road and continue with paragraph 31.
 - **For the main walk to Pishill**, turn right along the road into the village of **Stonor** and continue with paragraph 38.

Stonor to Lodge Farm **(1.4km/0.9 miles)**

This is the **Stonor short cut**, which reduces the main walk by **3.1km (1.9 miles)** but misses out the lunch pub in Pishill.

31. Having turned left on the road, in 20 metres turn right up a signposted footpath.
32. In 50 metres cross a stile into a field, and continue up a well-defined footpath, passing just to the left of a mini-pylon pole after 50 metres.
33. In a further 150 metres pass through a kissing gate into next field.
34. Continue uphill, heading to right of a fenced-in clump of trees, 70 metres ahead. After the clump of trees, carry on uphill in the same direction.

*If you turn around on this next section, there is a view of **Stonor Park** house. This field also makes a nice **picnic** spot.*

Stonor Park has been the home of the Stonor family for 850 years and the house dates back to the 12th century, though it also has plenty of Tudor and even Georgian features. It was one of the places where the 16th century Catholic martyr (and now a saint) Edmund Campion stayed and preached. The house and its gardens and cafe are open on selected days from Easter to October - see www.stonor.com.

35. In another 250 metres pass through a kissing gate into a wood, and continue along a well-defined path, with a white arrow on a tree confirming your route in 100 metres or so.
36. In another 350 metres emerge from the wood, and veer slightly left across a field, aiming to the right of houses that can just be seen on its far side.
37. In 250 metres, in the far corner of the field, turn left down a grass path. Continue with paragraph 62 on page 5.

Stonor to Pishill **(2.4km/1.5 miles)**

This is the **main walk** route.

38. In 400 metres you pass the entrance to **Stonor Park** on your right (see *panel*).
39. In another 200 metres ignore a road off to the right to Turville Heath and

North End and carry straight in the direction of Pishill.

40. In 350 metres fork right onto a tarmac track, signposted 'Byway to Christmas Common'. (*though you can if you wish stay on the road for a further 1km to get to the lunchtime pub slightly more quickly*).
41. Keep on this track, which climbs steadily uphill. In 700 metres as the gradient levels off, go left at a two-armed footpath sign, following a footpath downhill that is fenced off from the left-hand edge of a field.
42. In 200 metres, carry on through a rather overgrown area and on between wire fences with a pine wood to your right and later a garden hedge on your left.
43. In 150 metres pass through a gate, and turn left onto a track. In 40 metres, at a T-junction with a road, go right.
44. 250 metres along this road, you come to the **Crown Inn** in **Pishill**, the lunchtime stop.

Pishill to Lodge Farm **(2.1km/1.3 miles)**

45. After lunch come out of the pub, and turn left, retracing your steps along the road.
46. In 200 metres turn right up a tarmac lane, signposted Oxfordshire Way and Church. (*You now follow the Oxfordshire Way to paragraph 68.*)
47. In another 150 metres you pass the church on your right and the view opens out to the left.
48. In 100 metres, ignore a driveway to a house right and continue straight on up what is now a track.
49. In another 70 metres, where the track curves right, fork left off it. **Ignore a car-wide path going uphill to the right**, parallel to the track you have just left, but instead go through a fieldgate, and keep on down the left-hand side of the field beyond.
50. In 80 metres pass through another fieldgate and continue downhill.
51. In 200 metres you come to the bottom of a dip and carry on up the other side.
52. In another 120 metres you enter a wood. Here cross a track and keep uphill on a narrower path which climbs steeply uphill through the wood.

53. In 300 metres, at the top of the hill, there is an open area on your right, and you follow the white arrows on a clear path along the edge of the wood.
54. In 120 metres ignore a path merging from the left marked PS9, and keep straight on along the path marked OW PS17. In 50 metres ignore another path merging from the left.
55. 70 metres beyond this, where the path forks, follow OS PS17 to the left.
56. In 200 metres you come to a road. Cross straight over and carry straight on uphill on the Oxfordshire Way following a white arrow on a tree, ignoring a forest track slanting uphill to the left
57. In 150 metres, near the top of the hill, the way is obscured by holly. Ignore what looks like a broad fork to the left and keep on up a narrow path between holly bushes with the wood edge close by to the right.
58. In 100 metres more ignore a path into a field right (PS18) and keep straight on (PS17) to emerge into a field in 30 metres.
59. Carry on slightly to the right across the field, heading slightly to the right of a telegraph pole, which itself is to the right of a house roof.
60. In 150 metres, on the far side of the field, turn left along the field edge, curving right with it in 60 metres.
61. 50 metres further on, exit the field down a grass path between hedges left and a house garden right.

Lodge Farm to Valley End Farm (1.8km/1.1 miles)

62. In 50 metres, at a T-junction with another track, turn right.
63. In 20 metres more, at the start of a small grassy area to your left, turn left and then in ten metres sharp left down a gravel path.
64. Keep straight on, ignoring ways off. In 600 metres, where the path forks, go right, following SW26 OW (to the left is SW33).
65. This path goes steadily downhill for 700 metres until it meets a road at the bottom of the valley. Go left on this road.
66. In 100 metres you pass the ruins of **church of St James** on your right (*you can pass through a gap in the hedge for a closer look: though the ruins look ancient, the church was in fact only abandoned in 1875. It dated back to Norman times*).
67. Stay on the road, ignoring a signposted footpath up a track to the right in 50 metres.
68. In another 200 metres you come to **Valley End Farm**. Turn right into the farmyard, following the signposted footpath.

Valley End Farm to Bix (2.2km/1.4 miles)

69. Keep on through the farmyard to pass through a gap to the left of a wooden fieldgate 60 metres further on.
70. Beyond the fieldgate merge with a gravel track from the left and keep on up it along a field edge.
71. In 180 metres, roughly a third of the way along the field, **turn left through a kissing gate** onto a path that climbs steeply uphill to a line of trees.
72. In 100 metres, at the top of the hill, turn round for a fine view back over the valley.
73. Pass through the kissing gate at the top of the hill and in 20 metres curve right with the path along the wood edge, gently uphill.
74. In 250 metres this path merges with a track coming up from the field to the left.
75. Keep straight on along the track as it curves left and then right, climbing more steeply uphill.
76. In 200 metres, at the top of the hill, continue in the same direction through a wood, following white arrows on the trees.
77. In 200 metres, on the far side of the wood, the path gradually converges with the wood edge, with an open field to your right, still signposted by white arrows on the tree trunks.
78. In another 200 metres, at the end of the wood, follow the path straight out across the field, heading for a mini pylon pole (or alternatively the right-hand end of the line of the rightmost of the houses ahead).
79. In 300 metres, on the far side of the field, walk down a broad green passageway between wooden fences for 50 metres to a kissing gate. Pass through this and cross the busy A4130, veering slightly left towards a lay-by on its far side.

80. From the lay-by take the path, signposted 'Chiltern Way Extension', between garden fences. In 70 metres cross a stile and carry on up the left-hand edge of a field.
81. In 120 metres a wood starts to the left. In another 80 metres, and 15 metres before a stile ahead, **go left into the woods** over a stile. Go straight ahead through the woods, **at right angles to the fence you have just crossed**: note that there is **no clear path** here, and **the more obvious way to the right is not the correct one**.
82. In 100 metres **cross a stile that is hidden by trees** to leave the wood. Go straight ahead across a crossing in the wire fence ahead, and then half right across the field to a stile to the left end of a tile-roofed house.
83. In 100 metres cross this stile and turn left onto a lane.
84. In 150 metres you come to a T-junction and turn right.

From Bix through Lambridge Wood (2.1km/1.3 miles)

85. In 450 metres you pass through a small hamlet.
86. 150 metres further on at road and track crossroads, where the road to the right curves uphill into the trees, keep more or less straight on up a tarmac drive signposted as a bridleway.
87. In 20 metres you pass a "Lambridge Wood Strictly Private" sign, but this is a right of way. In another 60 metres the drive veers left. **20 metres after this point veer right off the drive** following a yellow arrow on a post.
88. This path is indistinct for the first 20 metres or so, but a white arrow on a tree to the right confirms your way in 10 metres. The path then becomes clearer, between low brambles and - later - bracken and holly bushes.
89. Keep straight on along this very clear path through the woods. In 400 metres you pass a footpath post marking a crosspaths and keep straight on, gently downhill. In 80 metres more another footpath post confirms your way.
90. In another 100 metres ignore a path to the left marked by a footpath post and instead go straight ahead, crossing a not very visible car-wide path

diagonally and then **in 20 metres forking right** at a footpath post with a "no cycling" symbol on it (the most downhill of all two options).

91. In 130 metres you come to the valley bottom and keep on along it on a car-wide path. In 40 metres this starts to climb a hill.
92. In 120 metres the path levels off at the top of the hill. In 450 metres more cross a stile and emerge onto a golf course.

To Henley and the station (3.1km/1.9 miles)

93. Veer very slightly right across the golf course (watching out for flying golf balls), heading to the left of a line of trees 60 metres ahead. When you get to the trees, keep along their left-hand side.
94. In 100 metres pass between golf course tees and keep straight on to the left of a row of much larger trees, following a yellow arrow and soon picking up a gravel track.
95. In 250 metres veer slightly right onto a sandy brown golf course path for 30 metres and then fork left off it again to follow a track to the left of another line of trees.
96. 120 metres after this, as the track curves right, keep straight across a stile with yellow arrows on it.
97. Keep straight on down a tarmac driveway between fences. In 120 metres you pass between white pillars with black gates (or cross a stile to the right of them if they are closed) and carry on down a road.
98. In 400 metres, where the road turns sharp right in front of a wooden fence topped with razor wire (the former home of Beatle George Harrison), go left down a signposted footpath with the wooden fence to your right.
99. In 200 metres this path turns left, to come to a suburban road 40 metres later. Turn right along this road.
100. In 180 metres go right uphill along Hop Gardens.
101. In 400 metres, 10 metres before you come to the main road, go left down a small, quiet back road.
102. In 300 metres cross a road and carry on for another 60 metres to the marketplace of **Henley**. Go straight on

across this and on down Hart Street towards the church.

- 103.** In 300 metres, just beyond the church, turn right along Thames Side, Henley's riverfront road, passing the **Angel Inn** on your left. **The Chocolate Cafe** is 60 metres further along on the right.
- 104.** After tea turn right out of the tea room (or keep on past it if you are not stopping there) following the road along the riverfront.
- 105.** In 50 metres ignore the road to the right (Friday Street), and keep along the riverside.
- 106.** In 100 metres more at the Boats for Hire kiosk, bend right with the road away from the river. In 30 metres ignore Meadow Road to the left.
- 107.** In 90 metres, opposite the Imperial Hotel, turn left up the approach road to **Henley station**.