

Thames Path: Rainham to Purfleet via RSPB Rainham Marshes walk

An easy birdwatching walk in Outer East London along an atmospheric section of the Thames Path via the RSPB reserve at Rainham marshes.



Length 12.8km (8 miles) which includes a 4km (2.5 miles) circuit of the RSPB reserve at Rainham marshes. Allow 5 hours for walking and visiting the reserve and 7 hours for the whole excursion including trains and meals.

Maps OS Explorer 162, Greenwich and Gravesend. OS Landranger 177, East London

Toughness 1 out of 10. This easy walk is completely flat, well sign-posted and on tarmac or other hard surfaces. The circuit of the RSPB reserve is on boardwalks or hard surface tracks. Trainers or stout shoes are fine for this walk.

Features This walk is best done in autumn or winter. It is **not** a countryside walk and, although the scenery has some industrial units dotted about, the route to the reserve is evocative and atmospheric with fine views across the river Thames and the marshes. There are good bird-watching opportunities along the path by the Thames particularly if the tide is in. The medieval marshes of Rainham, Wennington and Aveley are one of the very few ancient landscapes remaining in London. The marshes were formerly a Ministry of Defence firing range and you will see evidence of this when you walk round the RSPB reserve.

Along the riverside path to the reserve there are some abandoned landing craft used in the 1944 “D” Day Normandy landings. Near the craft you will also see “the Diver”, a large public work of art designed by the sculptor John Kaufman (1941-2002) who was inspired by the stories told to him by his grandfather who worked as a diver in the London Docks at the turn of the 19th/20th century .

At the end of the riverside path by the Royal Hotel at Purfleet you can look back and see all of London’s modern iconic buildings (the Shard, the Gherkin, Canary Wharf) lined up on the horizon.

The [RSPB Reserve at Rainham Marshes](#) has an excellent visitor centre, with a café, shop and toilet facilities and superb “picture window” views across the marshes and the Thames. As well as a wide diversity of bird life the reserve has one of the highest densities of water voles in the UK.

If you are a resident of either the London Borough of Havering or Thurrock or a member of the RSPB then entry to the reserve is free. For all others there is a £3 entry charge.

If you can’t face any more muddy autumn or winter walks then this is a pleasant alternative and even if you are not a bird watcher it is an interesting and worthwhile day out.

Walk options

If you do not want to do the 8km walk from Rainham station to the RSPB reserve then you can stay on the train to Purfleet. On leaving Purfleet station turn right along London Road and continue for 500m until, just before the Royal Hotel, you turn left on the sign-posted riverside path and continue on this until you reach the reserve in a further 400m. The walk from the station to the reserve should take about 15 minutes.

Transport

Trains, London Underground and London Overground

Rainham station is on a branch of the Fenchurch Street to Shoeburyness line operated by c2c. Fenchurch Street station is not on the Tube network but is only 100m from Tower Hill underground station which is served by the District and Circle lines.

On weekdays there are 3 to 4 trains an hour from Fenchurch Street. This reduces to 2 trains an hour on a Saturday and 1 train an hour on a Sunday. The journey takes about 30 mins.

You can pick up the train at Barking station in East London which is served by the District and Hammersmith and City underground lines. Barking is also on the London Overground Gospel Oak to Barking line.

Rainham station is in London Travel Zone 6 and Purfleet is one stop beyond this so you need a day return to Purfleet although if you have a travel pass an extension ticket may be the best option. Purfleet station has a yellow card reader for your pay-as-you-go Oyster card.

By Car

There is an NCP car park at Rainham station with over 200 spaces. The weekend daily rate is £2.10.(March 2013).There is limited car-parking at Purfleet Station with a £2 off peak charge (March 2013).

Suggested Train

Take the train nearest to **10.15** from London Fenchurch Street to Rainham. You should get to Rainham around 11.00 and a leisurely pace should mean you arrive at the RSPB centre before 13.00 allowing you plenty of time for lunch and to do a circuit of the reserve and its bird hides before the centre closes at **16.30** (1 November to 31 March) or **17.00** (1 April to 31 October.)

Lunch and Tea

The RSPB reserve has an excellent café serving light lunches (soups, baked potatoes with various fillings, sandwiches and hot and cold drinks.) It also does a range of cakes which makes it ideal for tea after you have done a circuit of the reserve. The café closes at **16.30**.

If you want a more substantial lunch or a drink after visiting the reserve you can continue along the riverside path for 400m to the [Royal Hotel Purfleet](#). This is en route to Purfleet Station. You should allow 10 minutes to walk from the hotel to Purfleet Station.

Status

Last Update: March 2013

Help Us!

After the walk, we would love to get your [feedback](#)

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



By Car

Start RM13 9JA **Finish** RM19 1PP

Help

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

Version

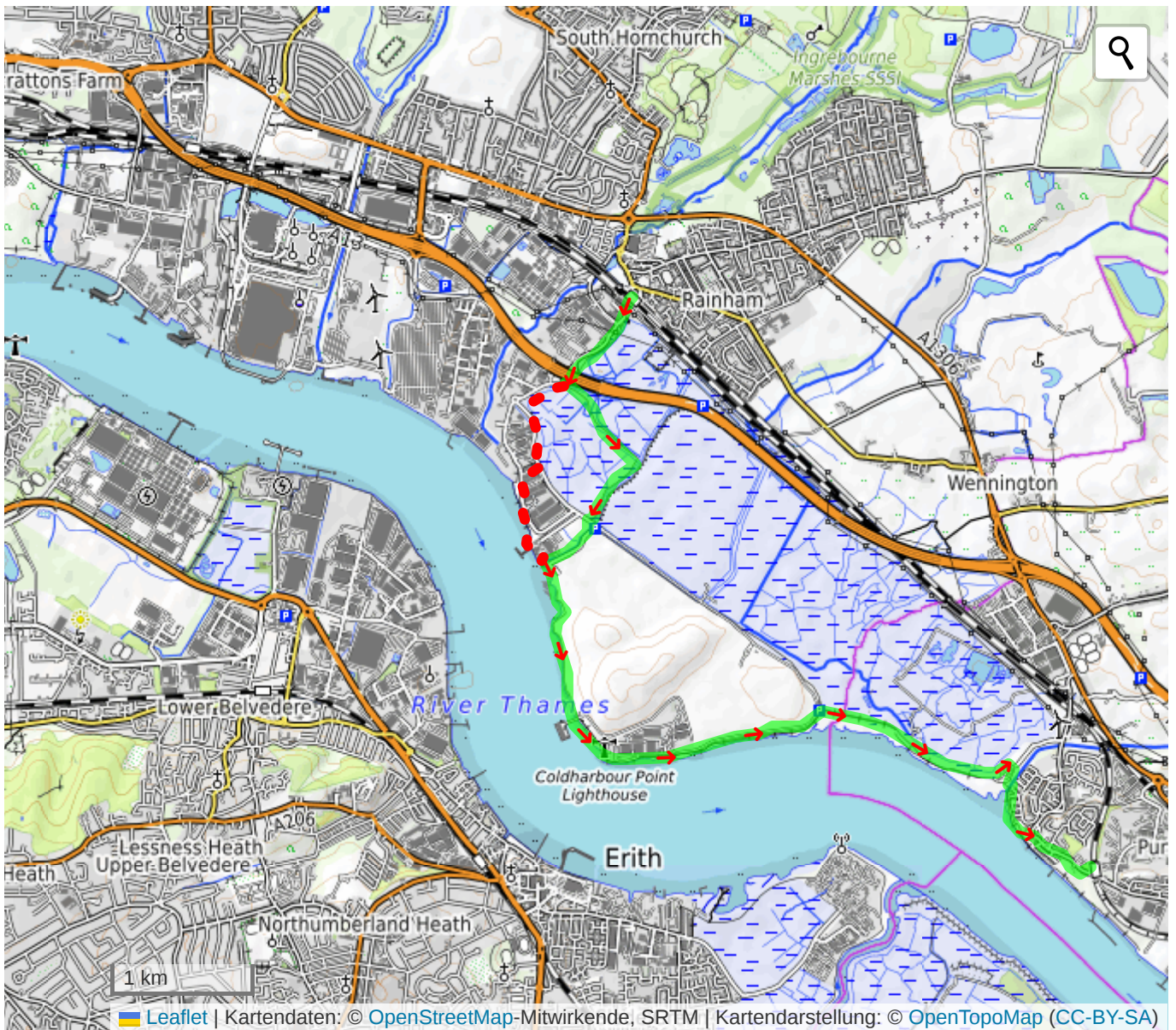
Apr-17 [PeterB](#)

Copyright © [Saturday Walkers Club](#). All Rights Reserved. No commercial use. No copying. No derivatives. Free with attribution for one time non-commercial use only. www.walkingclub.org.uk/site/license.shtml

Walk Directions

OpenStreetMap (not OS) mapping is used in the PDF for licence reasons.

Map 1



1. This is a simple and well sign-posted walk and follows part of [Section 24 of the London Loop](#) and part of the National Cycle Network, [NCN Route 13](#)
2. On leaving Rainham station turn right on Ferry Lane to cross the railway tracks and go up the bridge steps, turn left and then down the ramped access to a tarmac path. Continue on this path with Rainham Marshes on your left, Ferry lane to your right and the noisy A13 on a road bridge ahead of you.
3. On reaching the A13 use the pedestrian crossings to navigate the roundabout under the A13 to rejoin the tarmac path with a three-armed signpost.
4. **You have a choice of routes here.**
5. **Option 1 : Thames Path**
6. Turn right on a narrow dirt path following a sign saying "RSPB and Purfleet 4 miles and Three Crowns 1/2 mile". This path which may be a little overgrown in places runs parallel to Ferry Lane just away to your right. In 300m pass a rust coloured two-way footpath sign on your left. Continue on the path as it curves to the left with the road

still just away to you right. In 500m cross a concrete and steel bridge to reach a two-armed footpath sign and a road.

7. Cross the road to continue in the direction of the footpath sign to go along a rough gravel path with a large industrial unit on your left. In 80m cross another road and continue up a concrete slab path bearing up to your left. At the top of the short slope continue along the path to go towards some large cylindrical containers ahead of you. At these containers bear right to cross a bridge. There are fine views of the Thames to your right. You pass a large jetty on your right and the path narrows to a rough gravel track. After 70m the path widens and becomes tarmac again. In 60m you pass a 2 armed footpath sign and just after that an information board. Continue on the path to re-join the main walk route below.

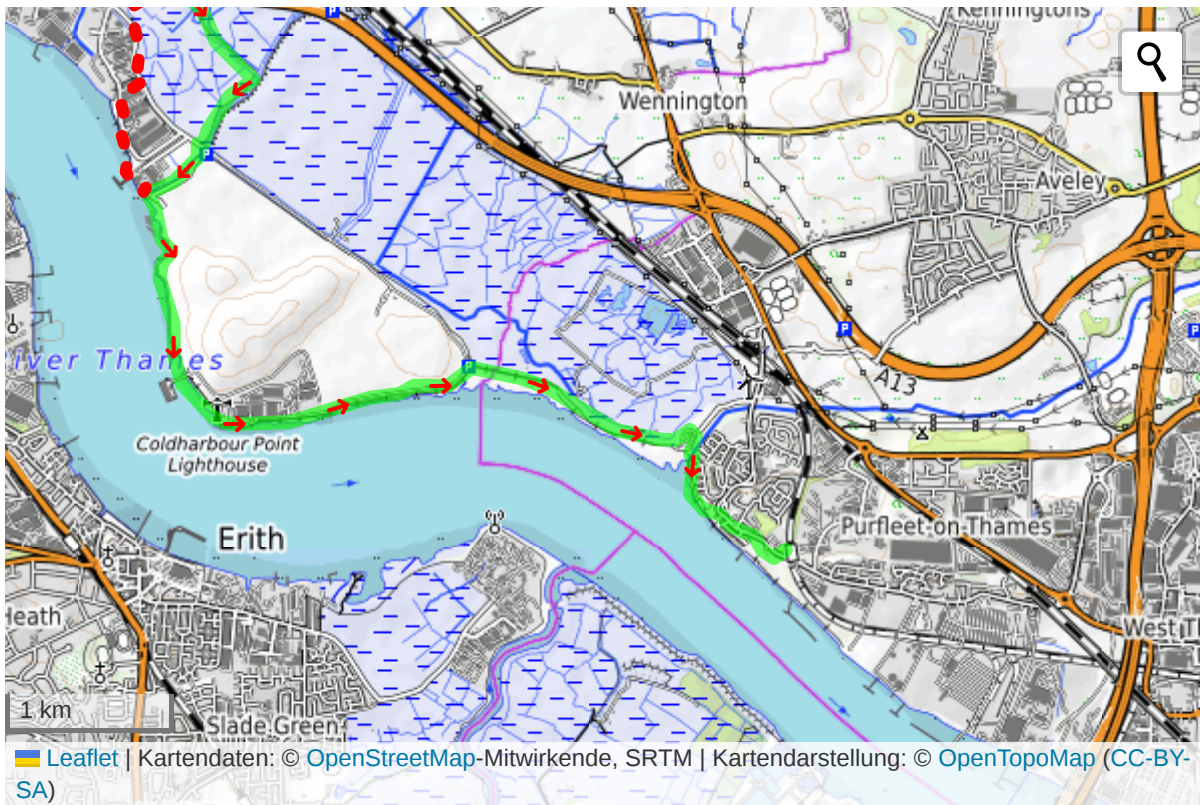
8. Option 2. Main route through Rainham Marshes

9. Take the signposted tarmac cycle path to the left (SE) through the reed beds and marshes and follow this meandering route, crossing several bridges, for 800m until you reach a road. Cross the road and turn left. In 30 metres turn right on a wide tarmac path. Continue on this for 400 metres to where it bears left to go up to a car park .The Thames is now in view to your right. You go through the car park and then bear right with the path to meet the Thames-side path ahead of you. (Here you will see the D Day landing craft and the Diver statue.)

10. Both options continue.

11. Turn left on the wide tarmac path with fine views over the Thames to your right. Later you pass Coldharbour Point with its beacon used by ships navigating the Thames. Continue along the tarmac path until it eventually swings to the left to reach a small car-park. Here you can either follow the London Loop along the lower cycle-way **or** if you would like fine views of both the river to your right and the marshes to your left you can take the raised rough surfaced path which later joins the cycle way.

Map 2



- L2. Continue on the raised path with the RSPB visitor centre visible ahead of you until it joins the cycle-way and in a short distance further on you reach the centre.
- L3. On leaving the visitor centre turn left on the path and follow it for a further 400 metres until you reach the riverside Royal Hotel. Here there are good views back to London and its iconic modern buildings. The path bears left at the hotel to leave the riverside and meets London Road. Turn right on this road and in 500 metres you reach Purfleet station on your left.

© Saturday Walkers Club. All Rights Reserved. No commercial use. No copying. No derivatives. Free with attribution for one time non-commercial use only.
www.walkingclub.org.uk/site/license.shtml

Created with all the love in the world by the [Saturday Walkers Club](http://www.walkingclub.org.uk) with the help of our contributors.

saturdaywalkers@walkingclub.org.uk

[Contact Us](#)



By using our website, you agree to our [legal policy](#), including: no warranty, use at your own risk.

[Saturday Walkers Club](#) © 2022

