



Wellingborough to Northampton walk

Urban and rural stretches of the River Nene and the villages of Cogenhoe and Little Houghton

Length 24.9 kilometres (15 1/2 miles)

OS Map OS Explorers 224 and either 207 or 223.

The entire walk is in Northamptonshire. Grid reference for Wellingborough station is SP903681. Grid reference for Northampton station is SP747605.

Toughness 3 out of 10. The only significant incline is the approach to Cogenhoe in Section 4 (and a steep embankment early in Section 1)!

Features The walk divides in to three distinct parts: two very different riverside stretches, separated by a rural section which visits two villages in search of food. From Wellingborough it follows the river Nene as far as Cogenhoe Mill (be sure to pronounce both the river and the village correctly). Sections 1-3 are identical with Walk 359, except for part of Section 2 between Wollaston Lock and Hardwater Road, which takes a more direct route, staying close to the river. The river is fully navigable and it often divides in to two or three channels before coming back together. It is also prone to flooding and in places the ground may be saturated, but it flows in a near constant direction (South-West, heading upstream).

Access to the river is not possible beyond Cogenhoe Mill. In Section 4 the route tackles a short sharp climb to Cogenhoe itself, with the Royal Oak conveniently just over halfway through the walk. Section 5 continues across fields to Little Houghton (and the Four Pears). Section 6 descends gently to rejoin the Nene, which is now an altogether more sedate river, thanks to Northampton's flood barriers. The ending is the same as Walk 356 (Wolverton to Northampton).

Flooding

Be warned that the Nene between Wellingborough and Cogenhoe Mill is prone to flooding. In winter or after very heavy rainfall it is worth checking if there are any warnings from the Flood Warning Information Service at <https://flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk/warnings>

A look at Walk 359 shows two alternative options for the early stages, which add to the distance but keep away from the river.

From Wellingborough station, you could follow sections 8 to 10 of Walk 359 in reverse, joining this walk just before Hardwater Road in Section 2 marked ** (paragraph 32 of Walk 359), via Castle Fields, Swanspool Brook, Wilby and Great Doddington. This option adds 1.5kms to the walk.

Alternatively, if you follow Section 1 of this walk to Wollaston Lock, you can then switch to Section 2 of Walk 359 via Summer Leys, Hardwater Road and Grendon Lakes, until just before Grendon Road. Turn left at the marble grave stone and follow section 3 of this walk. This option adds 1.4 kms to the walk.

From Wollaston Lock to Hardwater Road, it is also possible to take the old railway path which runs parallel with the river (this makes little difference to the distance). For this option, do not turn right at the start of Section 2, but continue ahead taking a bridge over the main river in 120 metres. In 35 metres go through the metal gate to the right, on to the railway path (rather than continuing ahead for the Summer Leys route as immediately above). If the river is flooded beyond Hardwater Road, turn left on the road until just after the car park, then right to follow the Grendon Lakes option as above.

Finally there is an alternative (more direct) route shown on the map, across fields from Whiston Lock to Cogenhoe, but the line is not always clear on the ground. The path comes out at the top end of Mill Lane – continue ahead to reach the junction with Church Street.

Walk Options

In addition to the above options, you could shorten the walk by leaving the Nene to the North, drawing on the directions in Walk 359 to end the walk at Earls Barton or Ecton, which both have good bus connections to either Northampton or Wellingborough (the X46, X47 or the faster X4 which serves Earls Barton but not Ecton). These are the options:

- Follow the Nene Way, which crosses the river at Earls Barton lock (section 2), continues up Mill Lane then turns left taking Doddington Road (B673) in to Earls Barton
- From the end of section 2 continue up Grendon Road and follow the route of Walk 359 (Section 7) in reverse in to Earls Barton
- Cross the river at Whiston Lock and follow Walk 359 (Section 4) to Earls Barton
- Cross the river at Whiston Lock and follow Walk 359 (Section 5) to Ecton

An obvious short cut would be to continue along Station Road, Cogenhoe, at the start of Section 5, then turn right on to The Causeway. This is the

route taken by the Nene Way but it involves a lengthy stretch on busy roads, then through a caravan park. Look for the Nene Way signs pointing left in to Billing Aquadrome, just after the river. The park made the national news on Christmas Day 2020, when floods caused an emergency evacuation. The main route rejoins you from the left at the start of Section 7, at the Weston Favell sluice gate.

Bus services from Cogenhoe and Little Houghton are negligible. Cogenhoe and Whiston Parish Council have partly filled the breach with their Village Hopper Bus. This leaves Cogenhoe (in early 2021) at 13.52 and 17.08 (Monday to Friday) and at 13.39 and 16.39 (Saturdays) for Northampton. All buses depart Little Houghton 8 minutes later and there are no buses on Sundays. On Saturdays only, buses also run in the opposite direction for Wellingborough, leaving Little Houghton at 14.54 and 18.24 and Cogenhoe 6 minutes later. Check the [Parish Council website](#) for up to date information

Stagecoach 41 runs seven days a week from Bedford to Northampton (every 4 hours on a Sunday)! Note that it does not leave the A428 at Little Houghton, so the best places to pick this bus up are on the approach to Little Houghton (near the end of Section 5), or alternatively after leaving the village (early in Section 6), as indicated in the text.

Travel

Northampton is served by trains from London Euston, but Wellingborough is served by trains from St Pancras. Northampton is within the Network Railcard region, but Wellingborough is not. Your cheapest option may be to buy Railcard singles to Bedford and from Northampton, together with a separate single from Bedford to Wellingborough, or alternatively to buy an advance single to Wellingborough, if you are willing to commit to a specific train.

If you wish to reduce costs, you could buy a Network Railcard return to Northampton, and begin the walk by catching a bus from Northampton to Wellingborough. To get from the railway station to the bus station in Northampton, turn left outside the station (on Marefair, later Black Lion Hill). Cross St Andrew's Road at the traffic lights. At the second set of traffic lights, just after Vue Cinema, cross over and turn left on Horsemarket. Turn right briefly on St Katherine's Street, but on reaching a stone wall, turn left (with the wall on your right) and go through a gateway to enter an unnamed pocket park (forever associated with the ladies of the night). Continue up to the far corner on tarmac and you should see the bus station ahead of you, to the right of Park Inn (hotel).

Buses X4, X46 and X47 take you from Northampton to Wellingborough. On weekdays and Saturdays, the X4 is much quicker, but it is difficult to start

the walk from Wellingborough bus station, which is a long way from the rail station. X46 and X47 take up to an hour, but crucially after leaving Wellingborough they take the A5193 and you can easily pick up the route part way through Section 1. From the X47, get off at Beefeater Dog and Duck (opposite Pizza Hut), then continue in the same direction, cross a busy roundabout and pick up the main walk in Section 1 at *, immediately before the river. From the X46, stay on to the next stop at Cottage Inn, Little Irchester (after going over the river and under the A45), then retrace your steps and join the main walk again at *, immediately after crossing back over the river.

If you do catch the X4, you would do better to follow Sections 8, 9 and 10 of Walk 359 in reverse, from Sheep Street to Swanspool Brook, Wilby and Great Doddington, joining the main walk in Section 2, just before Hardwater Road at ** (this is the first option suggested above under Flood Options). On Sundays the X4 takes the same route as the X47 to Wellingborough, but the X47 is still more convenient for starting the walk.

Points of interest

Wellingborough

The original name of Wendlingburgh means 'the fortified place of Waendel's People' and the Waendel walking festival is still staged every May. From the 1600s the town was famed for its remedial waters, the wells became its symbol and the name changed to Wellingborough. In the early 18th century the main industry was lace making, but in the 19th century this was overtaken by the boot and shoe industry, as with much of Northamptonshire.

River Nene

Pronounced 'Nen' in these parts but 'Neen' by the BBC, the Nene rises near Badby and flows 110 miles to the Wash. It has been navigable from Northampton since 1761. In 1815 it was connected with the main Grand Union via the Northampton Arm (the junction is passed late in this walk). The Nene Way runs through Northamptonshire for 67 miles from Badby to the Cambridgeshire boundary, then continues to Sutton Bridge.

Cogenhoe

Pronounced Cook-noe, settlements here date back to the Neolithic and Bronze Ages. There has been a church on the site since at least the 12th century. St Peter's is largely 13th century, built by Nicholas de Cogenhoe, whose effigy is in the south aisle. The church was restored in 1868-70. As well as agriculture, the village supported the woollen textiles industry until

the 19th century then, in common with much of Northamptonshire, it became a boot and shoe village, alongside the hand lace trade.

St Mary's, Little Houghton

Of the present church, the south door arch and the font are thought to date from about 1200. The original (13th century) three storey tower has an upper arcade of five openings on each face, while the fourth (belfry) storey was added in about 1425. The church was substantially rebuilt in the Gothic style in 1873-74, when the nave was heightened, the north aisle added and the tower arch was also restored. The chancel arch and a smaller arch in the south wall of the chancel are the only parts that remain from the 13th century. An extension to the west end of the north aisle was added in 2000 and the tower itself underwent a restoration in 2010.

Northampton Washlands

The reservoir was constructed between 1976 and 1979 to trap the river water when in flood, protecting residential estates to the South and East of Northampton. The walk passes the outlet sluice (by Weston Favell lock), which releases excess water at a controlled rate, and crosses the sluice gates at the Whitewater Centre, which allow flood water to enter the reservoir. The lake and surrounding grassland are part of a much larger protected area of lakes and wetlands, called the Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits Special Protection Area and Site of Special Scientific Interest. The area is of international importance as more than 20,000 wetland birds migrate here for the winter from Northern and Western Europe.

Nene Whitewater Centre

This is the UK's first pumped artificial whitewater course. The 300 metre course was designed and built in 1999. Water can be partially diverted around a weir via an automatically controlled sluice gate and electric pumps allow the centre to pump water from below the weir into the course.

Becket's Park

Thomas Becket (Henry II's 'turbulent priest') drank from a well on the edge of the park in 1164, en route to his trial in Northampton.

St Peter's Church, Marefair

Managed by the Churches Conservation Trust and described by them as "the most outstanding Norman church in the country". It is certainly a fine example of Norman architecture and the interior is also rich in carving and

decoration. It was completed in 1160, but built on the buried remains of a Saxon palace. The keys can be obtained from the Ibis hotel opposite.

National Lift Tower

Previously called the Express Lift Tower, this is a lift testing tower built by the world leading Express Lift Company. The tower was opened in 1982. Following extensive renovation and repairs, it re-opened in 2009. It is used by lift companies for development, but also for abseiling.

Northampton

The 11th century castle was used for Parliaments and Councils of State between 1154 and 1399, reflecting Northampton's status as one of the largest and wealthiest towns in England. Charles II 'punished' the town for its support of Parliament during the civil war by ordering the demolition of the castle in 1662. Like Wellingborough and the surrounding villages Northampton is synonymous with the boot and shoe industry, which still persists on a much smaller scale.

Lunch

The Royal Oak, Whiston Road, Cogenhoe. Tel: (01604) 890922. Reached after 13.4 kms. Open for food 12 to 2 (Wednesday, Thursday) or 2.30 (Friday, Saturday, Sunday). Also a Deli open from 10am Wednesday to Sunday for 'brunch, lunch and coffee'. Closed Monday and Tuesday.

The Four Pears Inn, Bedford Road, Little Houghton. Tel: (01604) 890900. Reached after 16.9 kms. Formerly the Red Lion, there has been a pub on this site since 1615. Open from at least 12 to 3pm, except Mondays (closed) and Tuesdays (evenings only).

Tea

Britannia Inn, Bedford Road, Northampton. Tel: (01604) 630437. popular waterside pub, reached after 20.8 kms (and 0.3 kms off route).

<https://www.chefandbrewer.com/pubs/northamptonshire/britannia/>

Waterside Cafe, Nene Whitewater Centre, Bedford Road, Northampton. Tel: (01604) 634040. Reached after 20.9 kms. Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm. Popular with water sports enthusiasts.

The Ark, Midsummer Meadow, Northampton. Reached after 22 kms. Open from 10am to 4pm (Thursday to Saturday) and 11am to 4pm (Sunday).

The Outpost, Midsummer Meadow, Northampton. Reached after 22 kms. Popular with skate boarders.

The following are off the main route, but alternative directions are provided which take you closer to Northampton town centre (all are within

400 metres of the end of the walk):

Café Coco, Gold Street, Northampton, opens 9-5 (10-4 on Sundays)

The Sandwich Bar, 5 Gold Street, Northampton. Open until 3pm Monday to Saturday, closed on Sundays.

Naicha Coffee, 36 Gold Street, Northampton.

Jenny's Café and Restaurant, Gold Street, Northampton, opens 8.30-6 (10-4 on Sundays)

All Saints Church coffee shop, George Row, Northampton

Coconut Grove Cafe, 9-10 Gold Street Mews, Northampton. This cafe opened in 2018, specialising in Jamaican cuisine. Open Tuesday to Saturday, 9-6.30.

Creative Cupcake Company, Gold Street Mews, Northampton. Open from 9.30 to 2.45 on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday and to 4pm on Saturday.

Ondrej's Breakfast Cafe, 21 Marefair, Northampton. Open to 4.30, seven days a week.

Ibis Northampton Centre, Sol Central, Marefair, Northampton. Open at all times.

Piccolos, Northampton station.

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By Car **Start** NN8 1NA **Finish** NN1 1SP

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

Section 1 Wellingborough station to Wollaston Lock (4.6 kms)

1. Northbound trains from St Pancras arrive on platform 1, by the station building. Southbound passengers arrive on platform 2 and will need to cross the bridge.

2. From the station building turn left and in 180 metres turn right past Royal Mail buildings, continuing on Midland Road (B572). In 125 metres turn left down Senwick Road. In 220 metres turn left in to Senwick Drive. When the road divides in 40 metres, turn right (South), then in 55 metres cross a metal bridge over Swanspool Brook. The road divides again in 70 metres and you turn right. At the end of the road in 50 metres continue on a tarmac path, with a telecommunications mast prominent ahead. In 45 metres continue on a minor road. In 30 metres turn left on to the B571 (Irthlingborough Road). Ignore Corn Mill Close on the left in 35 metres and pass the abutments of an old railway bridge in 60 metres.
3. Immediately climb the steep embankment on the right. You can either go to the left or to the right of a wooden barrier – either way it is a tricky manoeuvre. In 15 metres turn left and follow the old gravel railway line to the South (this is the old Northampton to Peterborough line, which provides a direct route to the River Nene but it is not maintained as a right of way and it is prone to litter – probably because of the industrial estate to the right). On nearing the river in 380 metres, go round a wooden barrier but do not continue on to the blue footbridge. Instead descend to your right on tarmac, passing a metal barrier in 35 metres and turn right after a second metal barrier in 30 metres, still on tarmac. You are now following the Nene Way, with the river on your left and several seats to your right. In 200 metres you have the busy B573 close by on your right. In 180 metres you go over a brick bridge and the river turns left (South), away from the road. Follow the river through a small park with toilets and moorings to the right in 80 metres. In 220 metres go under the A509 (London Road) by a colourful Nene Way logo – the route from bus X46 and X47 joins you here*. The tarmac ends here and you continue on a dirt path. In 140 metres take a footbridge over a stream to the right. In 40 metres go under the A45, still following the river and soon leaving the town behind.
4. In 30 metres take a metal bridge (over nothing in particular). In 45 metres the path turns left over a metal bridge, then right. In 45 metres you pass Wellingborough Upper Lock on the left. The path turns to the left and may be very overgrown with nettles, or muddy according to the season. In 320 metres go over a wooden footbridge, with another stream on the right. In 140 metres you pass under cylindrical piping.
5. In 350 metres you go through a wooden gate, leaving the nettles behind at last to continue on easy grass in a large field. Your views to the right are dominated by Wellingborough Prison, which was surrounded by cranes in 2019/20. In 120 metres follow the river round to the right (the path takes a slightly more direct line). In 400 metres the path and the river turn to the right, then back to the left. In 120 metres you enter the next field through a wooden kissing gate under a row of pylons. In 180 metres go through a kissing gate by a metal field gate, then the river turns back to the left. Continue in the next field, with a small lake visible to the left of the river. In 250 metres go through another wooden kissing gate, by a metal field gate and in 15 metres go under telegraph wires. In 60 metres the river divides. To your

left there is a narrow stream with sheds and moorings. In 180 metres ignore a path continuing ahead (which leads up to Great Doddington) and turn left through a wooden kissing gate, by a metal field gate. In 15 metres cross the stream by a brick bridge, with buildings on the right. In 50 metres you reach Wollaston Lock, the first of several 'guillotine locks' which are a distinctive feature of the River Nene and continue on a gravel track.

Section 2 Wollaston Lock to Grendon Road (4.7 kms)

1. Go through the field gate at Wollaston Lock and immediately turn right, leaving Walk 359. Step over a wooden barrier and continue alongside the navigable river (which is on your right). There is a pleasant well-used grassy path, though it is not a right of way and it is not marked on the map. In 30 metres you pass the lock gates. In 550 metres go over a stile and cross the first of two weirs, carrying another branch of the river from the left. In 50 metres step over a wooden barrier to cross the second weir (GR386642) and enter a field. In 500 metres turn right, through a gate then over a hump backed bridge which takes you over the river. In 50 metres, go through a gate. The right of way continues ahead, but for a more direct route, turn left on grass with sewage works to your right. In 120 metres, turn left on a concrete drive. On nearing a gate in 180 metres, leave the drive and in 10 metres go through a kissing gate (by a telegraph pole) to the left, rejoining the right of way (which is the Nene Way) and Walk 359 (in reverse). Note that the next short section can be overgrown in summer, so you may prefer to stay on the drive, picking up the directions by turning left on Hardwater Road at ** below.
2. Cross a footbridge and follow the path away from the fence on your right and back towards the river (ignore a possible path to the left which just leads to a berthing place), towards a fence on the left. In 300 metres, turn left on Hardwater Road** at a footpath sign. In 30 metres cross a road bridge and another in 45 metres. There are fine views of Hardwater Mill to the right here and there is also another guillotine lock, which is hard to spot from the road.
3. In 25 metres leave the road and go through a wooden kissing gate on the right. As you pass opposite the mill, look out for the hydro-electric power generator. Veer right and pass a Nene Way post, by a redundant kissing gate, in 180 metres. On your right the river comes together again at a weir. In 320 metres you pass a group of trees on your right and the river comes together again at a weir. The path cuts off bends in the Nene, running midway between river and lakes, then closer to the river again. In 280 metres you pass the next Nene Way post, taking more of a middle course between the river and the lakes to your left. In 200 metres you go through a wooden kissing gate to the left of a field gate. In 130 metres the river divides again and you turn to the left, continuing on a narrow section of land between the river and lakes. In 200 metres you pass under pylons. In 40 metres you pass Earl's Barton guillotine lock, where a footbridge leads to Mill Lane (the mill house was demolished and rebuilt in 2020/21). In 280 metres the river comes together again and you veer

left at an arrow sign on the bank (intended for the boats). In 140 metres you reach the end of the large lakes to your left and turn right with the river. Continue on a wide, often muddy grass path.

4. In 400 metres you go through a wooden kissing gate with a Nene Way sign, to the right of a metal gate (though the map shows the Nene Way going up Mill Lane). Keep to the right of all buildings (fenced off on your left). Continue ahead on a wide track with the River Nene close by on your right and quarry works to your left. In 470 metres go past a sign for an angling club. In 20 metres pass a marble grave stone and plaque, either side of two redundant grey posts, with a car park on your left. In 100 metres you reach Grendon Road.

Section 3 Grendon Road to Whiston Lock (1.5 kms)

1. Turn right on Grendon Road, by a traffic light, immediately crossing the first branch of the river by a brick bridge. Go past the anglers' entrance, then cross over a stone bridge in 65 metres. In another 65 metres you cross another bridge over the navigable river, with metal railings, then turn left on the Nene Way with White Mills Lock on your left, another guillotine lock, with an information board explaining how it works (White Mills Marina, which does light refreshments, is 215 metres further up the road).
2. Go through a kissing gate in 10 metres, with the marina berths to your right, then on to a long steel footbridge in 140 metres, crossing a channel which provides boat access to the marina. Return to terra firma in 60 metres and go through another kissing gate in 20 metres. Go through a wooden kissing gate in 180 metres as the river turns to the right. In 200 metres follow the river back to the left and go through another wooden gate in 50 metres. The quarry area is now fenced off on your right. Cross a footbridge in 200 metres and continue with the Nene now on your right. The river divides in 250 metres. In 80 metres go through a wooden gate by a field gate. In 80 metres the river divides again, so there are now three branches.
3. In 100 metres you reach a guillotine lock and footbridge at Whiston Lock, marked as a 'weak bridge' (GR847617).

Section 4 Whiston Lock to Cogenhoe (2.3 kms)

1. Continue along the South bank of the river, past Whiston Lock, as indicated by a Nene Way arrow on a post. You pass an information board and at the end of the mown grass ignore an unmarked path on the left, which follows a fence (this is a possible flood option). In 25 metres go through a gate, then continue with the river on your right. In 140 metres the two channels of the river come back together. Go through a probably muddy section and a wooden gate in 35 metres. The tower St Mary's, Whiston, is visible on the hill to your left. In 140 metres the river divides again. In 65 metres the path and the river turn to the right and in 90 metres the path turns to the left, slightly away from the river. In 100 metres the path turns back

- to the right and runs alongside an old fence. In 80 metres the path is alongside the river again. In 220 metres you continue in to the next field, with a Nene Way post and hinges suggesting an old gate. In 180 metres you turn to the right and go through a gap, where again there may once have been a gate, in to the next field. In 50 metres the path turns left, with fishing lakes visible across the river and a mobile caravan park ahead.
2. In 280 metres the river divides at navigation arrows and you turn sharply to the left. In 80 metres the river divides again; the caravans are immediately to your right but separated by a narrow water channel. In 280 metres go through a wooden kissing gate and in 30 metres turn left on Mill Lane (to the right is Cogenhoe Mill, which closed in 1950). In 25 metres take a path to the right, signed for the Nene Way and Northampton Round, but first read the quirky notices on Crossings Cottages on the left (the old railway line to Peterborough ran this way). In 5 metres go over a wooden footbridge and through a kissing gate, then climb very steeply up the right hand edge of a field towards houses, probably with horses in the next field. In 150 metres go through a wooden kissing gate with a Nene Way sign and continue between residential fences. In 25 metres turn right on paving stones, with houses on your right. In 40 metres veer left at Rectory Cottage. In 20 metres turn right on Mill Lane, but first look out for another reassuringly walker friendly quirky notice on your right.
 3. In 50 metres keep to the left of the war memorial (which would be a good spot for a picnic) with St Peter's Church, Cogenhoe, visible beyond. In 25 metres continue in to Church Street. In 140 metres there is a green footpath sign, on the left but pointing across the road to the right by a red post box, which is your way. *However for the Royal Oak continue to the junction of Church Street and Station Road in 250 metres. The pub is on the opposite corner; after lunch turn left on Station Road and join the main route below in 240 metres at the zebra crossing and village sign.*

Section 5 Cogenhoe to Little Houghton (3.8 kms)

1. Take the tarmac path past a barrier with a wooden fence on your right. In 150 metres turn right on The Piece, with modern houses. In 80 metres follow the road round to the left. In 100 metres cross Station Road at a zebra crossing and take the left fork, York Avenue, to the left of the village sign, depicting the inevitable shoemaker. In 100 metres take the signed footpath on the left. The path runs to the left of a line of trees, but you may prefer to walk on the right, at the edge of school playing fields (there are seats suitable for a picnic here). In 200 metres go through a wooden kissing gate in to a field. Veer half right (South then South-West on the map, though the path junction is less obvious on the ground), towards the grey metal buildings marked as Sewage Filter Tanks on the map. The tower of St Laurence, Brafield-on-the Green, dominates the horizon to the left.
2. In 320 metres go under two sets of wires and through a gap in the corner into the next field, still heading towards the filter tanks. In 150 metres you reach the left

hand edge of the field and ignore a gate and steps down to the left (this is signed as the path, but it is easier to continue along the field edge, to the right of the boundary). In 100 metres you go under wires and continue parallel with another line on your left. In 300 metres you draw level with the filter tanks, beyond a hedge. In 100 metres ignore a path leading directly towards the church on the left. In 90 metres turn right on a dirt track, opposite an Anglian Water building. In 25 metres keep right on a concrete drive. In 160 metres the drive turns left towards private property; you continue ahead on a grass path. In 80 metres cross the busy Billing Road and turn right.

3. In 35 metres take the signed bridleway to the left, keeping to the left edge of the field. Your direction for the next four fields is 250°. In 100 metres go through a gap by an old gate in to the next field. In 260 metres continue in to the next field, but this time keep the trees and hedge to your right. Continue in to the next field towards noisy traffic. In 600 metres pass a field gate and turn right on Bedford Road, near the junction with the A428 (but turn left and cross the main road for a 41 bus to Northampton). In 320 metres you pass a road sign for Little Houghton. In another 320 metres the road turns to the left and in 100 metres you reach a crossroads with Meadow Lane on the right and Lodge Road on the left. Just before the junction, note the village stocks and whipping post on your left, with an explanation of our forefathers' zero tolerance approach to domestic violence. Continue ahead with the Church of St Mary the Virgin on your right. In 100 metres you reach the Four Pears Inn on your left with a bus stop for the Village Hopper.

Section 6 Little Houghton to Weston Favell outward sluice gate (1.8 kms)

1. Continue on the road (or turn left from the pub). In 100 metres go through a wooden kissing gate to the right, by a seat, taking a footpath marked by a green sign (but for a 41 bus to Northampton continue along the road until after the junction with the A428, which you need to cross). There are fine views ahead, with the river and quarry pit lakes in the foreground. On the horizon to the left are the lights of Northamptonshire County Cricket Club and (much further left) the National Lift Tower. In 160 metres, ignore a path branching to the left and veer right with the main path. In 60 metres go through a wooden kissing gate and continue with a wire fence on your left. In 30 metres go through another wooden kissing gate and turn left downhill on grass with a stone wall to your right and houses beyond. Your way is marked with a yellow logo for Northamptonshire Leafleted Walks. In 75 metres you pass the corner of the residential wall. Go under telegraph wires and in 300 metres under pylons. In 55 metres go through a wooden kissing gate and turn left on a wide path (this is the old railway line which you last encountered on your way out of Wellingborough), with a quarry lake on your right.
2. In 140 metres, at the end of the lake, ignore a turning to the right. In 20 metres continue across a small stream to enter Northampton Washlands by an information

board. Continue parallel with the pylons on your left. In 180 metres ignore the path to the right (though this soon rejoins the main route and it would be a more sheltered option on a windy day). Your path climbs ahead and in 100 metres you turn right on the grass bank with lakes on both sides. In 450 metres you merge with the lower path on the right. There are views to the right of Weston Favell Lock and marina. In 80 metres do not cross the sluice gate on your right (GR 792604); instead continue ahead on a raised gravel embankment, now following the Nene Way again with the river to your right and a lake on your left. The A45 is audible to your right, but not too intrusive.

Section 7 Weston Favell outward sluice gate to Becket's Park (4.2 kms)

1. In 450 metres cross a sluice gate (GR 788603). Continue on a grassy path, lovingly maintained for your comfort by the resident sheep population. In 420 metres you pass the end of the lake on your left and continue ahead on a straight path.
2. In 360 metres the river divides and the path turns left (an arrow in the river points navigation this way). In 100 metres turn right at an information board. In 30 metres you cross the navigable channel by Abington Barrage Gate (GR 781599) and continue on gravel. In 150 metres there are office blocks away to your left. In 450 metres go through a wooden gate to the right of a metal gate. In 20 metres carefully cross the busy Bedford Road (A428) and turn left. In 30 metres turn right and enter the car park of the Earl Spencer Centre for Young People (alternatively, for the Britannia Inn, continue along the pavement for 100 metres, then cut through to the right in the same direction – the pub is the white building visible ahead and is reached in 200 metres after crossing a mini roundabout).
3. Keep to the right of the buildings of Nene Whitewater Centre and walk across the car park. The Waterside Cafe is at the far end of the building, but it is unlikely to be open at weekends. In 100 metres turn right, crossing a branch of the river by the sluice gate, then turn left on a cycle path to enter Barnes Meadow, a nature reserve managed by the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire. In 100 metres go over a wooden footbridge, with artificial pools used for water sports on your right. In 120 metres ignore another cycle path to the right and follow the path round to the right. In 30 metres the navigable channel rejoins the main river from the left. In 60 metres go under the busy A45 (Nene Valley Way) and continue on a tarmac cycle path with the river on your left, soon with a barbed wire fence to your left (but for a more interesting option, take the first gate on your right into Barnes Meadow in 100 metres, continue on a rough path, parallel with the fence on your left, past a stile and - on your right - a pylon and take the next gate in 600 metres by an information board, re-joining the cycle path and the main route).
4. In 500 metres you pass under pylons. In 200 metres turn right and in 40 metres cross a footbridge with a Nene Way sign. In 35 metres turn left and in 35 metres

pass the cafes The Outpost on the right and the Ark (a 'floating venue') on the left, then a skateboarding facility on the right. In 250 metres veer left with the river by a Midsummer Meadow information board (this was formerly the site of cooling towers and an outdoor swimming pool, which closed in 1983). It is more direct to cut across the grass here. In 180 metres pass under the elevated University Drive (not shown on older OS maps). In 150 metres cross Nunn Mill's Road and continue alongside the river with Becket's Park to your right. In 300 metres pass under the winding University Bridge with Northampton Lock on your left in 40 metres (Walk 356, Wolverton to Northampton, joins you here).

Section 8 Becket's Park to Northampton station (2 kms)

1. You pass the end of an islet, then continue past a pedestrian bridge on a paved riverside path with flats on your right. In 450 metres cross Bridge Street by the traffic lights to the huge Carlsberg brewery, which was opened in 1974 by Princess Benedicte, modelled on a Viking longboat and has won industrial architecture awards. Take the tarmac riverside path to the left of the brewery (signposted 'Nene Way Riverside Walk'). In 150 metres you pass the point where the river converges with the Northampton Arm of the Grand Union Canal (note the British Waterways sign). In 100 metres the path turns to the right, away from the river but with a tributary to your left and beery smells and some mournful weeping willows on your right. In 80 metres take a pedestrian bridge on your left and turn right on tarmac, signed to the town centre and railway station.
2. In 150 metres you reach a high metal gate on your left, slightly set back with an equally ugly modern stone arch overhead (no need to duck your head here).
3. **You now have four options to complete the walk**, depending on whether the gate (and a subsequent arcade) is open and on your refreshment needs (the writer has never known this gate to be closed):
4. **If you find the gate open AND you wish to proceed directly to Northampton station** (note that there is a Piccolos on the station), go through this formidable looking gate in to a retail park. Cut across the car park, keeping just to the left of Lidl supermarket and cross Towcester Road (A5123) at the traffic lights in 250 metres. Directly ahead on the horizon there is a curious tower structure, formerly used by the world-leading Express Lifts company for the purpose of testing lifts. Turn right on the road, leave the retail park behind, cross a branch of the Nene and at the next break in the metal fence to your left in 150 metres, take the unmarked tarmac path **[+]**, with branches of the Nene on both sides and a retail park to your left. This is Food Meadow (probably a corruption of 'flood'). In 350 metres go under a very low bridge carrying the railway line. When the path divides in 65 metres, take the left fork to reach Black Lion Hill (A428) in 80 metres. Turn right and cross the road at the lights in 160 metres opposite the University Innovation Centre (this has a cafe, but again do not expect it to be open at weekends) for Northampton station.

5. **If the gate is locked**, continue with a high metal fence on your left, crossing back over the stream in 15 metres, then between security fences. In 80 metres the blue security fence on the left ends and you continue on the approach drive to Carlsberg (Western Wharf). In 50 metres turn left on the very busy St Peter's Way. Ignore the first traffic lights to your right in 50 metres and cross the Towcester Road to your left at another set of traffic lights in 50 metres. Turn left, then in 150 metres at a break in the metal fence on the right take the unmarked tarmac path and follow the directions in the previous paragraph from +.
6. **For tea/coffee shops**, proceed as immediately above to St Peter's Way. Cross the road with great care then head half right up the large car park, aiming just to the right of Argos. In 120 metres, if it is open, continue up the arcade, St Peter's Walk (if it is closed, refer to the directions immediately below). You reach Café Coco on the right in 50 metres. Continue up the arcade and turn left in 50 metres on Gold Street directly opposite Naicha Coffee Bar 36 [++] (note that Jenny's Café and Restaurant is to your right on the opposite side of the road - which you need to cross anyway at some point - and The Sandwich Bar is further to the right on the same side; beyond you can just see All Saints Church on Northampton's central square - the church has a coffee shop and there are many other refreshment options around here). To continue the walk turn left. Coconut Grove Cafe and the Creative Cupcake Company are tucked away down Gold Street Mews on your left in 25 metres. At the traffic lights in 45 metres you cross the A508 (Horseshoe Street/Horsemarket). Continue ahead on Marefair passing Ondrej's Breakfast Cafe in 50 metres (Ibis Hotel opposite does refreshments in a ground floor bar), then Hazelrigg House (c1580) which survived the fire of Northampton (1675) in 30 metres, to reach St Peter's Church in 70 metres and a second set of traffic lights in 60 metres, just after the site of Northampton Castle opposite (if you have a few minutes to spare you can visit the site by turning up Chalk Lane). You need to cross the road at these lights (if you have not already done so), as the station is on your right in 80 metres.
7. **If you arrive outside business hours and St Peter's Walk is closed**, turn right and go under the arch in the corner of the car park (immediately to the right of a gym). Continue on Woolmonger Street, which turns to the left. Turn left on Kingswell Street to come out on Gold Street by Yorkshire Bank. Turn left to pass opposite Jenny's Café and Restaurant then resume the directions immediately above from ++.

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