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West Byfleet to Hampton Court Walk

The Wey Navigation and the Thames Path via several pubs.

Length	10.7 miles / 17.2 km (with no ascent) The Extension to Kingston adds 2.5 miles / 4.1 km (with no ascent)
Toughness	1 out of 10 (easy walking along tarmaced paths)
Maps	OS Explorers: 160 and 161
Features	This easy walk is very close to London. It follows the Wey Navigation (a canal), and then joins the Thames, which it follows it to Hampton Court. Navigation is simple, and there are many pubs along the walk. The entire route is marked with red chevrons on OS maps, though waymarking along the canal is poor. While the walk is flat, the path along the Wey Navigation is a bit rough in spots. While it is passable for bikes, it is narrow in places, and so not really suitable for wheelchairs or baby buggies. The Thames Path is wide, paved, and suitable for both Along the navigations is Coxes Lock, and Mill Pond. The Mill is now housing. Just after reaching the Thames you pass D'Oyle Carte Island, reached via a pedestrian bridge, which now has an (outside seating only) cafe on it. Between Walton and Hampton Court is a place where you can feed Swans (its marked) - bring stale bread - while not their ideal diet, it encourages them to stay in a specific area and much better than nothing.

Hampton Court Palace gardens are no longer free (a crazy £29 including entrance to the large palace), but there is free access to the deer park from the Thames Path (past the Palace). The gardens have occasional 'free' days - see the palace website, and check the gardens page

Flooding : The canal doesn't flood (the adjacent River Wey does instead), but the River Thames path may very exceptionally flood - see flood levels below.

Swimming

Use extreme caution, and take local advise. Although the river seems calm, there are drownings in the Thames each year. Beware of currents, underwater inlets, being entangled, and river traffic.

At a swim event near Hampton Court in 2012, a third of the 1,000 people who took part had gastrointestinal illness ('food poisoning'). In 2019, the Environment Agency stated that "the River Thames at Hurst Park is not bathing water quality, and that swimming in it comes with risks ... Human waste matter is likely ... from unauthorised live-aboard and stay-aboard vessels in the Molesey Reach ... Reports of gastro-enteritis suffered by dogs who have been in the river here suggests there may be an issue. If you have contact with river water and are ill in the days following, please let [the Environment Agency] know." "Water in the Thames .. contain[s] high levels of antibiotics from the large number of wastewater treatment works ... This result is an increasing number of antibiotic-resistant bacteria, which means if you get an infection after swimming in the river it might be ... difficult to treat.

Walk Options

- You could carry on along the Thames Path to Kingston.
- A better choice is to walk through Hampton Court Park to Kingston
- You could also walk through Bushy Park (take a London A-Z).
- You can do the walk in reverse.

The station before West Byfleet is Byfleet and New Haw. The walk passes very close to it - you can even see the canal from the platforms. However, I haven't checked a 'footpath' route to the canal from this station.

Credit

The idea for this walk came from the Inner London Rambler's website

Transport

Catch a train from London Waterloo to West Byfleet (not Byfleet and New Haw). There are 4 trains an hour (2 fast taking about 30 mins). Buy a return to West Byfleet.

Hampton Court is in Zone 6. There are 2 trains an hour taking about 30 mins to Waterloo. You may have to buy a single (or Oyster) from the 2 stops from Hampton Court to Surbiton.

Suggested train: For the normal walk, the train nearest to 10:30 (summer) 10.00 (winter) from Waterloo.

If you miss the train, catch the next one to Byfleet and New Haw, turn right out of the station, and walk along the road for 1km, and join the canal by a road bridge (see map for details)

Notes

Hampton Court is a large Royal Palace with gardens and a maze, but you will arrive too late to do it justice. If you do go in, an audio guide is recommended

The Wey Navigation opened in 1653 and was one of the first navigable rivers in the country. It survived the railway era, and was donated to the National Trust. The Basingstoke Canal (first 2 km of the walk) was built 150 years later, in 1796.

The River Thames is significantly, older, dating to the late Palaeocene Period. Desborough Island, however, is artificial. It was created in the 1930's to improve the river's flow

Lunch and Tea

The suggested itinerary is Elevenses at D'Oyle Carte Island, a picnic, then tea and cake at 8 on the river (Molesey Boat Club)

- West Byfleet : The Station (by the station)
- New Haw Lock : The White Hart pub (canalside seating)
- Weybridge : The Old Crown (01932 842844, recommended, on Ship Street, where the canal joins the Thames)
- D'Oyle Carte Island : D'Oyle's cafe on the island - best for tea or coffee - highly recommended for the view
- Walton : The Anglers (01932 223996, nice but expensive, can sit by the river) and The Swan (01932 225964, recommended, view of the river)
- Between Walton and West Molesey : The Weir (01932 784530, large terrace overlooking the river)
- West Molesey: Miss Poly cafe (@ Molesey Cricket Club). Coffee, wine, breakfast and sandwiches.
- West Molesey: Eight on the River (@ Molesey Rowing Club). Highly recommended river cafe with high ceiling, veranda and large rooftop terrace at Molesey Rowing Club (coffee, cakes, sandwiches, beer). 8am - 4pm
- Hampton Court : The Mitre (over the bridge, opposite the Palace, has a bar overlooking the river), or the Cardinal Wolsey (just round the corner from the Mitre), which is the best of a poor bunch

Save any spare bread for feeding the Swans

Thames Path

This walk is part of the Thames Path [wikipedia] [National Trails] - a 184 mile national long distance path - that follows the Thames from its source in Kemble to the Thames Barrier at Charlton in SE London. There is an unofficial 10 mile south bank extension on to Crayford Ness.

It follows the river's historic towpath where possible. In a few places, nearby paths are used instead as towpath sections do not match up where former "horse ferry"

	crossing have been lost. Through London, and on to the sea, there are north and south bank paths.

Open Days	Hampton Court Palace Garden Open Days. Free entry to the formal gardens (not the Palace) on these dates.
	
	`2026`
	`12 and 13 September`
	`10 and 11 October`
	`21 and 22 November`
	`26 December (The Wilderness garden only)`

River Levels	River Thames from Weybridge to Hampton Court : current status
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** **Finish**
Map Walk	This walk **requires** an OS map and a compass or GPS for navigation. You can print out OS maps using the link above.
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

This walk is a very easy, just follow the canal, then the river, the only bit that needs directions is the bit in the middle through Weybridge!

West Byfleet to Weybridge via the Wey Navigation (canal)

1. Take the north exit from **West Byfleet Station** (The Station pub side), and *turn left,* and follow the road round. When the road turns left, *continue straight on,* to the right of a car park, and

continue to the lock (about 250m in total).

2. *Turn right (east)* along the canal. Continue for 2km.
3. At the canal junction (by the M25), *cross the bridge, and turn left (north)*
4. > In theory you could start from **Byfleet and New Haw Station** - you can see the canal from the platforms, about 200m away! If you head north, along the road from the station for 800m, you meet the canal at a road bridge, about 800m away as the canal and the road converge. It might be possible to walk directly to the canal (which is adjacent to open land at this point), and avoid any road walking, by walking parallel to the tracks to the canal junction, but I haven't checked to see if it possible.
5. Continue along the canal for 3km to the outskirts of **Weybridge,** passing New Haw lock (with the White Hart pub on the opposite bank) and Coxes Lock (with an old mill building and a picturesque mill pond on the opposite bank).

Weybridge

6. You come to a 'canal junction'. **!** *Turn left, and cross a road parallel to the canal,* to continue along the canal. **[!]** Ignore the public footpath sign. Do not go straight on and cross the '1 way traffic' road bridge.
7. > Aross the '1 way' bridge is Weybridge town centre, and 1km along a busy road (pavement) is **Weybridge Station**
8. > This section ('Weybridge') is all a bit narrow for cyclists, who need to do a slightly longer inland route, crossing the '1 way' bridge (see the OS map for details).
9. Pass some new flats, and go under the large road bridge.
10. Continue along the canal to the lock with a 'National Trust' hut and some NT information panels.
11. *Cross the lock bridge* to the other side of the canal, and follow the path (with streetlights). Cross a small road, and continue along the unlit path, over another bridge, and come to houses and a lane.
12. *Turn left on narrow Church Walk,* cross a narrow road, and continue along the lane (now a path, not a lane) to come out on Thames Street by the **Old Crown** pub (recommended).

Weybridge to Walton to Molsey to Hampton Court via the Thames

13. *Follow the Thames east* (towards London), passing D'Oyle Carte island (and recommended cafe), 2 small bridges to Desborough Island, and eventually, the larger **Walton** Bridge (2km)
14. Continue, passing **The Swan** (recommended) and **The Anglers** (riverside location), and 1km further, **The Weir** (riverside terrace) pubs (2km total)
15. Continue. Pass a reservoir, and eventually come to a park with a sign allowing the feeding of swans (bring bread!). Pass an island with houseboats, a boathouse (the 8 on the River cafe),

and eventually reach **Hampton Court** Bridge (5.5 km)

Hampton Court

16. **Hampton Court Station** is the other side of the road.
17. Across the bridge is the **The Mitre Hotel** pub for tea, as is **Hampton Court Palace** (gardens free in winter). Just round the corner from The Mitre, is the **Cardinal Wolsey**

Hampton Court to Kingston (Optional Extension)

18. To continue to Kingston, *cross Hampton Court bridge, turn right* and follow the towpath along the other (north) bank.
19. After 400m, enter the grounds of Hampton Court park, and head north east through the deer park. (This is much shorter and nicer route than just following the towpath)
20. Exit the north east corner of the park, *turn right*, and in 100 metres, cross Kingston Bridge.
21. Follow the high street (pedestrianised) to **Kingston Station**

In Reverse

Hampton Court to West Byfleet

If you do the walk in reverse, the route is as follows.

1. Walk from Hampton Court (west) along the south bank of the Thames to Weybridge.
2. **Weybridge**
3. When you reach the Old Crown pub, take the path to its right (river side)
4. Continue along the path, cross the first small road, continue along what is now a small road for 10m, then turn right along a path
5. Cross the small bridge, then shortly a road, and continue on the path with street lights to the right of a park.
6. Soon you reach a canal, cross the lock bridge and turn left along the canal past the National Trust hut.
7. After a km, just after passing under a road bridge, at a road junction, cross the road and turn right along the canal (do no not turn left across the "1-way" bridge)
8. **Weybridge to West Byfleet**
9. After 2km, at a canal junction, turn right over a canal bridge
10. By a lock, turn left for 250m to West Byfleet station

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