



West Malling Circular Walk

Orchards and coppiced woodland in the Wealden Greensand around the River Medway



Length	<p>Main Walk, from West Malling: 20½ km (12.7 miles). Four hours 50 minutes walking time. For the whole excursion including trains, sights and meals, allow at least 9 hours.</p> <p>Shorter Walk, from East Malling: 18¼ km (11.3 miles). Four hours 15 minutes walking time.</p> <p>Alternative Circular Walk, from East Malling: 16 km (9.9 miles). Three hours 45 minutes walking time.</p> <p>Short Circular Walk, omitting the Medway: 11¾ km (7.3 miles). Two hours 35 minutes walking time.</p>
OS Map	Explorer 148. West Malling, map reference TQ687575, is in Kent, 7 km W of Maidstone.
Toughness	4 out of 10 (3 for the Alternative Circular Walk, 2 for the Short Circular Walk).
Features	<p>Near the start of this walk you can see the fields of the Horticultural Research Institute outside East Malling (pronounced <i>Mauling</i>), established in 1913 to support local fruit growers. Its research on plant culture led to the widely-adopted modern practice of using carefully selected dwarf rootstocks to produce a compact fruit-laden bush, as seen on the extensive orchards along the route: mainly apples but also pears, cherries and plums. Less appealingly there are also stretches through coppiced woodland which might be muddy, particularly if the ground has been churned up by recent tree work.</p> <p>After crossing the River Medway at Wateringbury the middle section of the walk goes through water meadows on its southern bank before climbing the low hills around Tutsham to an up-market lunch pub in West</p>

Farleigh. The return route recrosses the river on the medieval **Teston Bridge**, then goes through more coppiced woodland before crossing over the outward route on Red Hill.

The final section goes past sports pitches on the fringes of **Kings Hill** (a residential and business development on the site of the former **RAF West Malling** airfield) and through **Warren Woods Nature Park**. It takes in **Manor Park Country Park** (the remnants of an 18thC estate, with a possible detour to view **St Leonard's Tower**) before finishing through the small market town of **West Malling**.

Walk Options

The outward and return routes both go near the next station on the same line, allowing for both a **Shorter Walk** starting from **East Malling** and an **Alternative Circular Walk**. As the walk route is in the form of a Figure-of-8 a **Short Circular Walk** from West Malling is also possible, cutting out the entire southern loop. In addition to these walk options, several short cuts are included in the walk directions.

The outward route also goes past Watlingbury station on the Medway Valley branch line but variations starting or ending there have not been included because a set of shortish Medway Valley walks is already available in the Watlingbury Circular walk (#336).

Additional Note

All these walks finishing at West or East Malling were previously options in the East Malling to Maidstone walk (#337), which now just contains the Maidstone ending.

Transport

West Malling and East Malling are adjacent stations on the Kent Downs line, with hourly services towards Maidstone East and Ashford from both Victoria (daily) and Charing Cross (Mon-Sat). Both services take 50-55 minutes to West Malling, but only the Victoria trains call at East Malling, three minutes later. A **return to East Malling** would allow you to start or finish there, but a West Malling ticket might be slightly cheaper for those circular walks.

There is a half-hourly bus service along the A26 at Watlingbury and Teston. There is also an infrequent service (Mon-Sat) through West Farleigh, with the nearest bus stop on Ewell Lane being about 300m from the lunch pub.

If driving, the station car park at West Malling costs around £6 Mon-Fri, £4.50 Sat, £4 Sun & BH (2025). There is no car park at East Malling station but at weekends you can use the Village Field car park, off the High Street to the north of the station; on weekdays street parking is possible after 10.30am.

Suggested Train

Take the train nearest to **10:00** from **Victoria** or **Charing Cross** to **West (or East) Malling**.

Lunch




The first pub passed (and the suggested place after 5½ km on the **Short Circular Walk**) is a "traditional English freehouse pub and restaurant" on Red Hill, the **North Pole** (01622-812721).

On the longer walk options the suggested lunch place is the up-market **Tickled Trout** (01622-814717) in **West Farleigh**, after 11 km (8¾ km from East Malling). This refurbished pub/restaurant (owned by Balfour Winery) has an outdoor patio and beer garden and serves freshly-prepared seasonal food all day.

About half an hour before reaching this pub there are two cafés and a pub for a possible mid-morning refreshment break (or early lunch) near **Wateringbury** station. **The Railway** pub (01622-812911) is only open at lunchtime on weekends (and might not be serving food); **River Kitchen** (07983-577102) is currently open Fri-Sun. Across the river the **Ramblers Rest Café** (07736-990485) is usually open daily.

Tea On the route into **West Malling** there is a café in **Manor Park** (usually open to 4pm Mon-Fri, 5pm weekends). In the town itself there are several coffee shops, with a **Costa** (01732-522934; open to 6pm Mon-Sat, 5pm Sun) in the High Street more likely to be open at the end of a walk than **The Hungry Guest** café (01732-870766; open to 5pm Mon-Sat, 4pm Sun) next door or **Rose's Coffee & Juice** (07950-799137; open to 5pm Mon-Fri, 4pm weekends) in Swan Street. For stronger fare there are several large pubs: the **Five Pointed Star** (01732-842192) and the **Joiners Arms** (01732-840723) are in the High Street with **The Swan** (01732-521910) in Swan Street. Beer fans might like to search out the **Malling Jug** (01732-667832), a community micropub hidden away in Jug Alley, off the High Street opposite Swan Street.

In contrast the only convenient refreshment place on the **East Malling** ending is the “quintessentially English” **King & Queen** pub (01732-842752).

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**

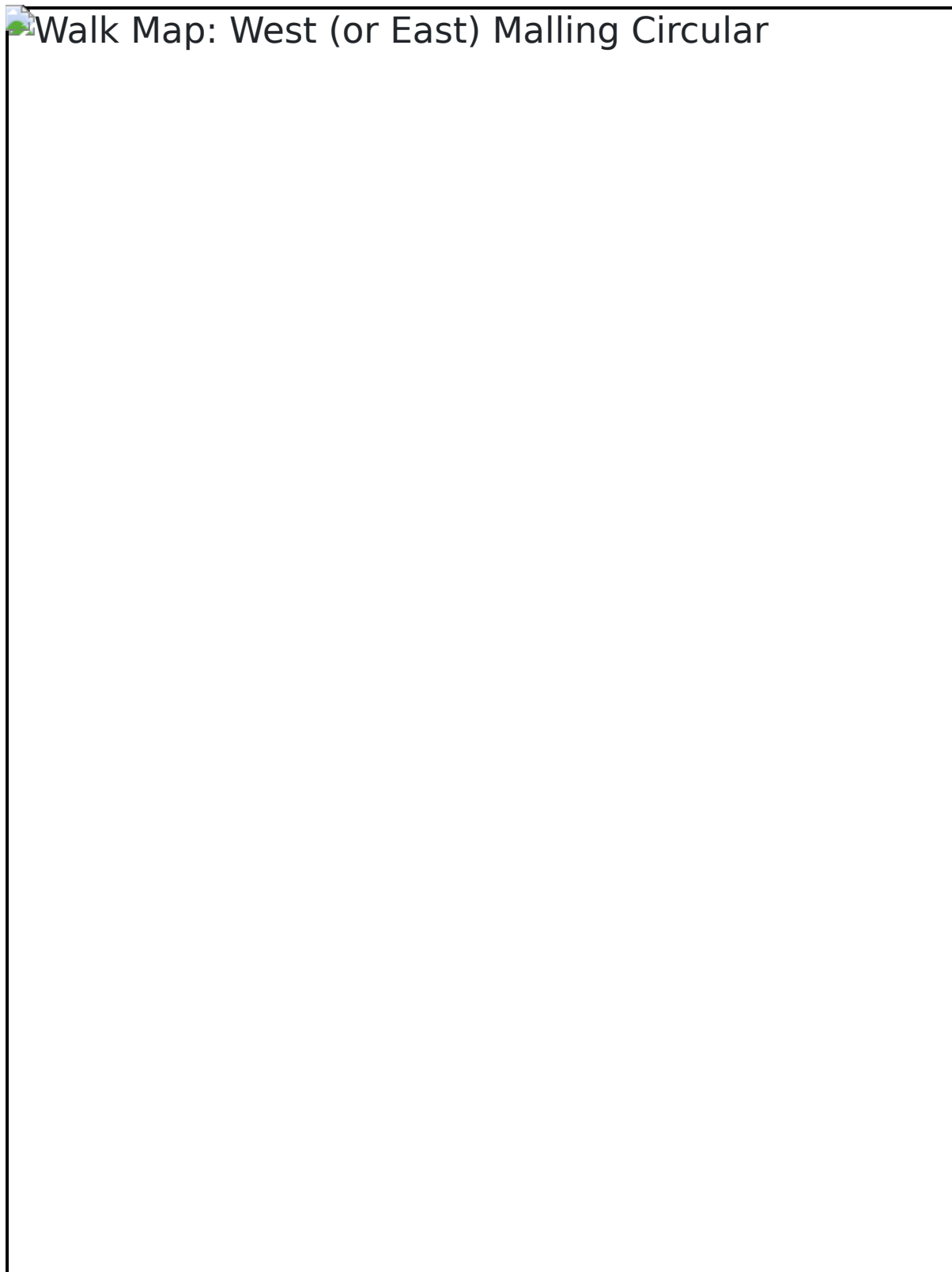
Help National Rail: 03457 48 49 50 • Traveline (bus times): 0871 200 22 33 (12p/min) • TFL (London) : 0343 222 1234

Version Oct-25 **Sean**

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

Walk Map



All maps © OpenStreetMap contributors

Walk Options

M. Main Walk, from West Malling (20½ km)

a. Shorter Walk, from East Malling (18¼ km)

b. Alternative Circular Walk, from East Malling (16 km)

c. Short Circular Walk, omitting the Medway (11¾ km)

Walk Directions

If you are doing the Shorter Walk or Alternative Circular Walk (from [East Malling station](#)), start at [7] in §B.

A. West Malling Station to East Malling Station (2¼ km)

1. Arriving from London, do **not** cross the footbridge but leave the station by an exit near the London end of Platform 2. Go down the short approach road and **turn right** at the bottom onto a road (Lucks Hill). Cross over carefully to use the pavement on its left-hand side, soon passing under the A228 dual carriageway.
2. Ignore a path branching off to the left. Shortly afterwards **go back across the road with great care** (there is restricted visibility on the inside of this left-hand bend) onto a side road, signposted as a public footpath. Make your way past a vehicle barrier and head towards a fieldgate. In front of the gate **turn left** onto a narrow tree-lined path, the continuation of the right of way.
When last checked the field beyond the gate looked as if it was being cleared for a future housing development, as on the other side of Lucks Hill.
3. After the footpath emerges into a second field continue along its edge to a lane (Broadwater Road). Cross over onto the continuation of the footpath, just off to the right. Follow this fenced path between farm fields for 400m, parallel to the railway off to the right. At the end keep ahead on a track leading out between houses to a lane (Mill Street).
4. Turn right and follow this street round a bend to the left, passing some attractive cottages. In 200m you pass a converted mill on the right and cross **East Malling Stream**¹. In a further 300m, now with a high brick wall on the left, you can avoid some road walking by **going through a gate in this wall** into East Malling's recreation ground.
 - For a slightly more direct route you could carry on to the crossroads at the end of Mill Street and go straight across New Road into Church Walk.
5. Inside the recreation ground turn half-right to head towards the left-hand end of some tennis courts. Skirt around them and continue past East Malling Institute's car park. Go through a gap to leave the recreation ground through a pub car park, passing its beer garden on the right. Cross New Road in front of the **King & Queen** pub onto a patch of grass containing the **War Memorial** and continue along Church Walk, the cul-de-sac opposite Mill Street.
6. At the end of this short street keep ahead on the path through the churchyard, passing to the right of **St James the Great** church². At the far end go past metal barriers and **immediately turn right** at a waymarked footpath junction. In 200m you reach a level crossing over the railway tracks, with the platforms of East Malling station just off to the right.

B. East Malling Station to the North Pole (pub) (3¼ km)

7. Starting from East Malling Station

- If arriving from London to start the walk here, the suggested route is to take the path at the [Maidstone](#) end of the platform to a level crossing over the railway tracks (ie. ignore the steps down to the road at the London end, the main exit).
 - If instead you do take the main exit, turn left onto the road to go under the railway bridge and **immediately turn left again** into The Rocks Road. In 300m **turn right** onto a signposted footpath and resume the directions at [9].

8. Go through a white-painted wooden gate and **cross the tracks carefully** (bearing in mind that non-stop trains will be speeding through the station). Continue on the enclosed footpath between houses and paddocks, heading **S**. At the end turn right onto a lane (The Rocks Road), briefly heading back towards East Malling. In 50m **turn sharp left** into a driveway, signposted as a footpath.
9. After passing the property (a pair of converted oast houses) keep right. Go past a wooden fieldgate onto a long straight path heading **S**, initially with a tall hedge on the right. Later the path switches to the other side of the hedge, swings right and left, and comes out onto a minor road (Sweets Lane).
10. Turn right and go along this quiet lane for 250m. Just before reaching a crossroads **turn sharp left** onto a track with a ground-level footpath waymarker, passing a concrete vehicle barrier and entering a large area of coppiced woodland.
In all the stretches of this walk through coppiced woodland, be aware that there might be path diversions when tree felling is taking place.
11. In 300m the path turns half-left in front of a boundary hedge, with park homes on the other side. Follow the path round to the right to continue alongside the properties. At the end of the development the path bears slightly left and resumes its long straight course through the coppice, heading **S**.
12. In 300m **turn right** at a signposted path crossing onto a new public footpath (not shown on older OS maps). This route takes you to the western edge of the wood, where some mature trees (standards) have been left amid the coppice. The path swings round to the left at the corner of the wood and soon straightens out. Keep ahead where the path meets the driveway from a house and follow this out to a lane (Barming Road).
13. **Turn right** onto the lane, ignoring the continuation of the new footpath opposite. In 200m turn left at the T-junction with a main road (Red Hill) and go along its grass verge for 100m, passing the beer garden of the **North Pole** pub³ on the left. This is the suggested lunch stop on the Short Circular Walk and a possible early stop on the others.
If you are doing the [Short Circular Walk \(omitting the entire Medway loop\)](#), go to §G.

C. The North Pole to Wateringbury (Mill Oast House) (2 km)

14. **Cross the main road carefully** and go along Teston Road, the cul-de-sac opposite the entrance to the pub's car park. In 250m, after the last house on the left, **turn left** at a footpath signpost onto another long straight path through coppiced woodland, heading **SW**.
15. In 300m bear left where another footpath merges from the right by the remains of a large fallen tree. Continue along the waymarked path, ignoring a side path to the left and another to the right. You then need to **fork left** at a Y-junction in front of a large tree to stay on the right of way. Follow this woodland path gently downhill, now heading **S**.
16. At the edge of the wood go past some low posts to continue on a fenced path, with an orchard on your right. In 150m the path veers right and goes around the outside of a copse, still descending. The path curves round to the left to reach a major path junction, with more orchards ahead on both sides.
At this junction a metal fieldgate in the copse reveals that there was in fact a narrow woodland path cutting through it. This might have been the original right of way but the OS map now shows it skirting around the outside, as described above.

17. Take the grassy path ahead between hedges, heading **S** again. At the end of the hedge continue down a long straight path with a chainlink fence on the right, behind which a thick belt of trees shields the extensive grounds of **Wateringbury Place**. At the end keep ahead past some houses to the A26, where there is a Local History Society plaque about **PLUTO**⁴ on the garden wall.

If you want to abandon the walk there are frequent buses to Maidstone or Tonbridge along the A26. The nearest stops are 250m away, on the left.

18. Cross the main road carefully and take the minor road opposite (Love Lane), which soon drops downhill. At the bottom of the dip it crosses a stream (coming from a waterfall in the garden on the right) in a culvert and comes to a cluster of converted oast houses at an old mill site.

D. Mill Oast House to Tutsham Hall (2½ km)

19. Opposite Mill Oast House **turn sharp left** off Love Lane onto a signposted byway, a path which curves round to the right above a picturesque valley containing an old orchard. At the end follow the path down to the left and climb up a lane on the other side of the valley to the B2015 (Bow Road). Turn right onto the road and follow it downhill.
20. Unless you are considering a refreshment break in **The Railway** pub (on the right-hand side at the bottom of the slope), use the pedestrian crossing to switch to the other side of the road. After passing the entrance to Wateringbury station **turn left** into the minor road (Bow Hill) opposite the pub, going over the level crossing and joining the **Medway Valley Walk**⁵ (MVW).
21. Unless you want a refreshment break in **River Kitchen** (down the slope to the right in the former Riverside Restaurant), cross the **River Medway** on **Bow Bridge**. The third possible refreshment place here is off to the right inside **Medway Wharf Marina**, the **Ramblers Rest Café**.
22. Just past the entrance to the marina **turn left** off the road by a MVW signpost. Go through a metal kissing gate and across a potentially muddy area to the corner of a fenced meadow. **Go through a small metal gate** into this water meadow and **veer left** onto a broad grassy path heading **E**, gradually moving away from the wire fence on your left.
23. On the far side go through a metal kissing gate in the tree boundary and continue across another meadow. In 200m a plank footbridge gets you across a boggy area. At the end of the meadow a boardwalk and another footbridge takes you into **Waregrave's Wood**, close to the river on your left. Follow the woodland path along its bottom edge, usually with one or two streams to negotiate along the way.
24. Leave the wood through a metal side gate and go up a small slope into a large field. Follow a faint grassy path curving gently up to the right, passing a footpath marker post by an isolated tree and with increasingly fine views of the river valley as you climb. On the far side go through a metal side gate and straight across a parking area in front of a barn conversion.
25. Follow a tarmac driveway over a small rise and then past some farm buildings and cottages. Opposite the ivied **Tutsham Hall**⁶ there is a footpath junction where the MVW veers off to the left, along the manor house's long driveway.

E. Tutsham Hall to Teston Bridge (1¾ • 1 km)

The main route goes up to the suggested lunch pub in West Farleigh, where there is also a convenient picnic spot. If you are not planning to visit this pub you could take the short cut in [27].

26. Main route, via the Tickled Trout (1¾ km)

- a. Ignore the gate and follow the drive round to the right in front of a large barn, leaving the MVW. At the end of a small parking area **turn left** onto a long straight grassy path between fences, signposted as a footpath. At the end go through a gate and carry on across a field (with no clear path), heading towards a footpath signpost on the far side.
- b. Keep ahead at the signpost, across another field. As the ground ahead drops away you will be able to see the exit, a small metal gate in the tree boundary. Follow a short grassy path through the undergrowth, curving round to the left and coming to a pair of metal gates.
- c. Go through the **right-hand gate** and up a slope into a meadow. There is a striking Queen Anne house ahead on the right and the OS map shows the right of way heading directly towards a gate in the boundary wall just to the left of this house, **Smiths Hall**⁷.
 - If this direct route is too awkward you could follow an unofficial grassy path curving around the right-hand side of the meadow to the same exit.
- d. Go through the gate and turn left onto the B2010 (Lower Road) to come to the **Tickled Trout**, the first building on the left-hand side.
There are benches on the small crescent-shaped patch of grass opposite Smiths Hall, making this a convenient picnic spot.
- e. To resume the walk retrace your steps through the gate into the meadow below Smiths Hall. Follow a clear grassy path gently downhill across two meadows, going through a wide gap in the tree boundary between them.
- f. At the bottom of the second meadow go out through a side gate and keep ahead on a lane, briefly rejoining the MVW. Follow it round a right-hand bend to a T-junction with the B2163.

27. Short cut, bypassing the pub (1 km)

- a. Turn left and go through a wooden gate next to the cattle grid, staying on the MVW. Follow the driveway across the grassland, curving round to the right with fine views across the river valley.
- b. You pass a WW II pill box and then have to negotiate another cattle grid. Carry on past the white-painted row of **Mill Cottages** and some more houses in a dip, with a large pond on the right.
- c. After crossing a stream flowing from the pond towards the ruins of **Tutsham Oil Mill**⁸ the lane winds its way back uphill past some large old trees. Follow it round a couple of bends to a T-junction with the B2163.

28. At the T-junction **cross the main road carefully** and go up a few steps in the bank opposite. Do not go through the gate ahead but **turn sharp left** onto a permissive path in the belt of trees beside the road. This avoids a bit of awkward road walking but you soon have to rejoin the B2163 in front of the medieval **Teston Bridge**⁹. Cross this narrow road bridge carefully, using the refuges when necessary to avoid the traffic.

F. Teston Bridge to the North Pole (pub) (2½ km)

29. As you cross the river there is a fine view of **Barham Court**¹⁰ ahead on the right, 500m away. The B2163 now has a pavement and the simplest route is to continue along it (leaving the MVW, which goes along the riverbank towards Maidstone), but for a brief respite you could go through the gate on the left into Bridge Meadow, entering **Teston Bridge Country Park**¹¹.
- There are picnic tables in the meadow, and a refreshment kiosk and toilets in the car park. If you take this small detour, return to the B2163 through the main vehicle entrance.

30. Go over the level crossing and turn left at the T-junction ahead onto the walkway alongside the A26. The continuation of the walk is a signposted footpath on the other side, 150m from this junction. If there is too much traffic to attempt a direct crossing of this wide main road, use the traffic island a little further on and double back along the pavement on the other side to the footpath.
If you want to abandon the walk there are frequent buses to Maidstone or Tonbridge along the A26. The nearest stops are 100m past the footpath turning, just beyond the road junction ahead.
31. Take the signposted footpath away from the A26, a narrow fenced path. In 50m go across a residential street onto its continuation, just off to the right. This brings you out onto Teston's small village green, with **Ss Peter and Paul** church¹² on the right.
32. Veer left across the grass to the street on the other side and follow it out to a crossroads, with **Teston Village Stores** on the left. Turn right onto the main road (Malling Road), steadily uphill and soon passing an elegantly converted property emblazoned with lettering proclaiming its former existence as the **Alfred Reader** factory¹³.
33. The turning off Malling Road is a further 400m away. After the pavement ends there is a slightly awkward stretch where you need to take care but in 75m you can escape into Fairlawn Close on the right, which runs parallel to the main road for 100m. Immediately after rejoining it **fork right** into Livesey Street.
34. Go along this "Unsuitable for Motors" lane for 450m, with a few houses on the left and woodland on the right. After climbing gently for most of the way it dips down and splits in front of a wooden fieldgate with a sign for North Lodge.
35. It looks as if you need to take the unappealing rutted track on the left (the continuation of Livesey Street, which *does* lead to the North Pole pub), but an inconspicuous blue waymarker confirms that you can **fork right** through the gate. Immediately after passing North Lodge **turn left** at a waymarker post onto a narrow path climbing through the trees, a new public footpath (not shown on older OS maps).
36. In 125m keep ahead where another path merges from the right. In a further 350m, at the bottom of a small dip, **turn left** at a three-way footpath junction. This narrow path drops down, bends right and comes to a T-junction where you turn right, rejoining Livesey Street.
37. Follow this track past an outbuilding and then the large gardens of some properties on the woodland edge. In 250m the track leads into the car park of the **North Pole** pub³, with the opportunity for a mid-afternoon refreshment stop before you repeat a short stretch of your outward route.

G. The North Pole to Well Street (2½ km)

38. **Cross the main road carefully** and go along Teston Road, the cul-de-sac opposite the entrance to the pub's car park. Go along this quiet lane for 600m, ignoring a footpath off to the left at the end of the houses. Shortly after passing another footpath signpost on the left, and before reaching a concrete vehicle barrier across the lane, **turn right** onto a signposted bridleway.
39. Go past a jumble of vehicle-blocking rocks onto a path between hedges, passing some football pitches and continuing between **Kings Hill Sports Park** pavilion and its car park. Go straight across an access road onto a path into trees, entering **Warren Woods Nature Park**¹⁴ by an information panel exhorting you to follow an Outdoor Trim Trail.
The walk route follows a permissive path shown on the Nature Park's information panel. You might come across some "Private Land" notices in the trees but these confirm that recreational access is permitted.

40. In 50m **fork left** off the bridleway onto one of these permissive paths. In 250m **turn left** at a T-junction, passing an information panel about the Nature Park and a small picnic area off to the left. The woodland path goes through a dip and climbs back up the other side. At the top go past a metal kissing gate and **turn right** at a T-junction onto a long straight path near the western edge of the wood.
41. The path comes out into the corner of a small open area, with wooden paling on the left marking the park boundary. Go around two sides of this area to the opposite corner. With a commercial orchard visible through a gap in the trees ahead, **turn right** onto a public footpath just inside the wood.
42. In 300m the footpath comes out at a road junction. Keep ahead on the "Unsuitable for HGVs" lane (Well Street) for a further 300m, passing some attractive properties on the right. Immediately after passing a large old house on the left there is an **easily-missed gap in the hedge** with a footpath signpost.
If you are doing the shorter ending (to [East Malling](#)), go to Sj.

H. Well Street to Manor Park Country Park (1½ km)

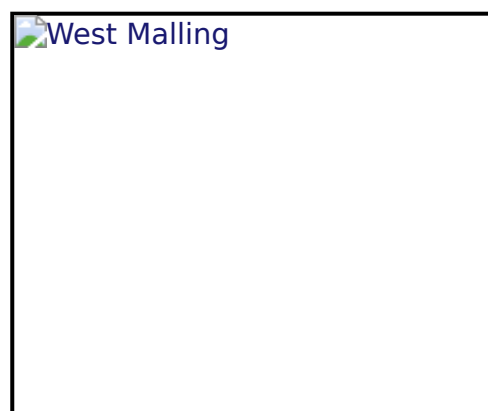
43. To head for West Malling **turn left** through the gap in the hedge. Follow a broad grassy path across a large farm field, heading towards the buildings of Broadwater Farm in the distance. In 200m **turn right** at a path crossing with a yellow waymarker post. The path turns left almost immediately to resume its previous direction (as a byway), with orchards off to the right.
44. The path goes past a row of tall trees screening the farm buildings and eventually joins a farm track leading out to a lane (Broadwater Road). Ignore the continuation of the track opposite and turn left onto the lane. In 75m, just after passing a house on the right, **turn right** through a gap in the trees (with an inconspicuous bridleway signpost).
45. Follow the path past the side of the property and then bear left onto a farm track across the middle of a field. On the far side go straight across another farm track and then **bear right** onto a path along the edge of the field, parallel to a lane on your left.
This is a rerouted public footpath, shown as going across the field on older OS maps. Previously you would have had to follow the bridleway out to the lane (Lavenders Road), with some additional road walking.
46. In 200m veer left through a gap in the field corner and zig-zag left and right on a tarmac path to join Lavenders Road. Cross the A228 on the road bridge and go along the lane for 150m, ignoring paths off to both sides. Where the lane bends right at a road junction **go straight ahead** through a side gate into **Manor Park Country Park**¹⁵.

I. Manor Park to West Malling Station (2¼ • 1¼ km)

The main route goes past the park café, then - unless you switch to the direct route - several more cafés and pubs in the town. If you are not stopping for refreshment you could take the direct route in [48].

47. Main route (2¼ km)

- a. Inside the park keep ahead on a broad grassy path near the left-hand edge of a meadow (Chestnut Paddock), with a wire fence on your left. In 300m go through a metal kissing gate into the corner of the overflow car park and cut across it to come to the **Manor Park Café**, a possible refreshment stop.



- b. Unless you want to detour to a Norman tower, head **N** away from the café on a surfaced path past picnic tables in Douce's Meadow. Take any of the paths through the trees on the left (one has a 'Lake Loop' waymarker) which go down to the **Lake** and **turn right** onto the lakeside path.
- c. Detour to St Leonard's Tower (+350m)**
- i. From the café go across the main car park and out along the park's driveway. In 100m **turn left** onto a waymarked footpath which curves round to the right and goes past a row of cottages to a road, with **St Leonard's Tower**¹⁶ atop the grassy knoll opposite.
 - ii. For a closer look go through a small wooden gate off to the right into a grassy area, where there is an information panel. You could then take a path up the slope and around the left-hand side of the tower, but the gate into its interior is kept locked.
 - iii. To resume the walk retrace your steps along the footpath past the cottages. Go straight across the driveway onto the start of the lakeside path, soon rejoining the main route.
- d. On the lakeside path there is a fine view of **Douce's Manor**¹⁷ across the water. Keep left at path junctions to stay alongside the lake. At its northern tip there is a plank bridge across the **Ewell Stream** which is the route into the town.
 - To bypass the town, follow the path alongside the stream and round to the right. Leave the park through a gate and turn right onto Water Lane. Turn left at its T-junction with Lavenders Road and switch to the direct route at [48:c] below.
- e. For the route via the town cross the stream, go up steps in the bank opposite and follow the tree-lined path along the edge of Ice House Meadow. Leave the park through a gate and turn right onto St Leonard's Street.
- f. Follow the street round a couple of bends, passing **St Mary's** church¹⁸ at the head of the wide High Street with its fine Georgian buildings. Some possible refreshment places are the **Five Pointed Star**, **Joiners Arms** and the **Malling Jug** on the left-hand side, plus a **Costa** and **The Hungry Guest** café on the right.
- g. Turn right into Swan Street. Two more places are **Rose's Coffee & Juice** on the right and **The Swan** pub/restaurant on the left. Further along this street you pass **St Mary's Abbey**¹⁹ on the right, then Lavenders Road at the corner of the abbey grounds.
- h. Continue along Swan Street for a further 150m. Just before the railway bridge **turn right** into the long approach road to West Malling station. At the left-hand end of the station building there is an entrance onto Platform 1, for trains to London.

48. Direct route (1¼ km)

- a. Inside the park **veer right** onto a grassy path near the right-hand edge of a meadow (Chestnut Paddock). In 150m go through a gate and continue along the perimeter path beside another meadow (Abbey Field), with Lavenders Road behind the tree boundary on your right.
- b. In 200m, shortly before reaching a wooden bench, **veer right onto an easily-missed narrow path** through the trees which drops down to Lavenders Road. Turn left onto the lane, taking care as there is no pavement until you pass Water Lane on the left after 50m.
 - If you miss this inconspicuous exit you can simply follow the perimeter path out to the main exit on Water Lane and turn right to get back to Lavenders Road.
- c. Follow Lavenders Road all the way to its T-junction with Swan Street, towards the end passing the grounds of **St Mary's Abbey**¹⁹ behind a high stone wall on the left.
- d. Turn right and go along Swan Street for 150m. Just before the railway bridge **turn right** into the long approach road to West Malling station. At the left-hand end of the station building there is an entrance onto Platform 1, for trains to London.

J. Well Street to East Malling Station (1½ • 1 km)

49. To head for East Malling ignore the footpath and carry on along Well Street for 50m. Where the lane curves left, **bear right** into a driveway (which is also a public footpath). Follow it down a slope and past a few cottages.
50. Continue past the right-hand side of a pond (at the head of **East Malling Stream**¹) into a wooded area. After climbing gently above a series of small ponds for 200m, and at the end of a wire fence on your right, there is a waymarker post at a footpath junction. *The main route goes past a pub on the way to the station, but if you are not stopping for refreshment you could take the direct route in [52].*

51. Main route (1½ km)

- Keep ahead at the path junction, now with an abandoned orchard on your right. In 200m the path comes to a junction in front of the railway line where you **turn sharp left**. Follow the path down a slope, under the railway and back up the other side.
- At the top go through a wooden kissing gate to continue on a wide fenced path between houses. In 75m go straight across a residential street and along the continuation of the footpath for a further 100m.
- At the end turn right onto Mill Street. In 100m, with a high brick wall on the left, you can avoid some road walking by **going through a gate in this wall** into East Malling's recreation ground.
 - For a slightly more direct route you could carry on to the crossroads at the end of Mill Street and turn left for the pub.
- Inside the recreation ground turn half-right to head towards the left-hand end of some tennis courts. Skirt around them and continue past East Malling Institute's car park. Go through a gap to leave the recreation ground through a pub car park, passing its beer garden on the right.
- To complete the walk turn right out of the **King & Queen** pub, cross Mill Street and go up the narrow High Street for 200m.
- After passing under the railway bridge **turn left** into a side road to find the steps leading up to Platform 1 of East Malling station, for trains to London.



52. Direct route (1 km)

- Turn right** at the junction onto a long straight fenced path between an abandoned orchard and a wood. In 300m the path emerges into the corner of a triangular field and you continue along its edge, now with a hedge on your right.
- In the far corner go through a wooden kissing gate and along a path between houses to a road (Chapel Street). Turn left and follow the road downhill.
- Just before it goes under the railway bridge at the bottom **veer right** across a side road to find the steps leading up to Platform 1 of East Malling station, for trains to London.

Walk Notes

- East Malling Stream** has its source in Well Street and flows into the River Medway at Aylesford. There used to be six watermills along this short river.
- St James the Great, East Malling** dates from the 11thC, with changes and additions made in the 14thC. It is listed Grade I.
- The **North Pole** pub dates back to 1826 and its name may reflect the contemporary interest in Arctic exploration. In that year the Admiralty sanctioned one of the earliest attempts to reach the pole; the expedition led by the British naval officer William Parry reached 82°45'N in 1827, a record for the northernmost latitude which stood for 49 years.

4. **Operation PLUTO** (Pipe Line Underwater Transportation of Oil, or Pipe Line Under The Ocean) was a World War II project to supply fuel to the Allied forces in Normandy after D-Day. The pipeline at Watlington was part of an additional route via Dungeness to Boulogne, added as the troops advanced. It was a major engineering feat at the time but only partly successful, supplying just 8% of the fuel used in 1944-45.
5. The **Medway Valley Walk** runs for 45 km, between Tonbridge and Rochester. The waymarked route leaves the river between Bow Bridge and Teston Bridge to go via Tutsham Hall, even though there is a public footpath along the riverbank.
6. **Tutsham Hall** is a Grade II listed manor house dating from the late 18thC or early 19thC, possibly incorporating part of an earlier house.
7. **Smiths Hall** (shown as **West Farleigh Hall** on older OS maps, its name during much of the 20thC) is a fine example of a Queen Anne country house, built in 1719. The gardens and grounds of this Grade I listed private house are open to the public twice a year on NGS Open Days.
8. **Tutsham Oil Mill** crushed flax to produce linseed oil and cake (cattle feed). It operated until it was partly destroyed by fire in the 1880s.
9. **Teston Bridge** was constructed out of local ragstone in the 14thC. The central arch was raised in 1793 to improve navigation for barges. It is a Grade I listed ancient monument.
10. **Barham Court** was described by the antiquarian Edward Hasted as "the greatest ornament of this part of Kent". William Wilberforce was a frequent house guest and Lady Barham is said to have inspired and supported his campaign to abolish slavery. It was refurbished after a major fire in 1932 and subsequently converted into offices and apartments.
11. **Teston Bridge Country Park** opened in 1978. It consists of 32 acres of meadow between the River Medway and the railway line.
12. **Ss Peter and Paul, Teston** was built in 1736, a complete replacement for a much older church. It is listed Grade II*.
13. The **Alfred Reader** factory manufactured cricket and hockey balls from 1928 to 2012, the last of several sites in Teston where these have been made since 1808. After the business was relocated the building was incorporated into a private housing development.
14. **Warren Woods Nature Park** is part of the Kings Hill development. These 46 acres of native woodland opened to the public in 2011.
15. **Manor Park Country Park** was originally part of the Douce's Manor estate, with the lake in its landscaped grounds created by widening the Ewell Stream. These 52 acres were bought by Kent County Council in 1973 and became a Country Park.
16. **St Leonard's Tower** is believed to be an 11thC Norman keep, but little is known about its history. The uppermost storey was demolished in the English Civil War to prevent the Royalists using it as a lookout post, and at some point the lower windows were blocked up. It is listed Grade I.
17. **Douce's Manor** is an 18thC manor house, listed Grade II. In World War II it was used as the Officers Mess for airmen based at RAF West Malling; a Heritage Centre in its wine cellar displays artefacts from that period.
18. **St Mary the Virgin, West Malling** dates from the 11thC. Its Norman tower remains but the rest of the church has been rebuilt several times over the centuries (and a spire added to the tower).
19. **St Mary's Abbey** was founded as a community of Benedictine nuns in the 11thC. It passed into secular hands after its dissolution by Henry VIII but the Anglican order was able to return to the site in 1916 after it was restored by a charitable trust. *St Mary's Abbey with the Cascade* (an ornamental waterfall flowing out of its stone wall on Swan Street) was painted by JMW Turner in c.1791, as commemorated on a blue plaque.

» *Last updated: October 23, 2025*

© Saturday Walkers Club. All Rights Reserved. No commercial use. No copying. No derivatives. Free with attribution for one time non-commercial use only.

saturdaywalkers@walkingclub.org.uk

No warranty, use at your own risk!

Saturday Walkers Club © 2025