

About the walk

The walk has been designed to allow you to choose the most appropriate route for you - depending on how much time you have, how far you want to walk, if you have a mobility restriction, such as a pushchair or wheelchair, or if you wish to combine the walk with a boat or bus trip. The shortest route is 2½ miles and the longest one is 7½ miles.

The walk offers fantastic views of the Thames Valley and Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty with wonderful countryside and picturesque villages. Along the way you may see birds such as red kites, buzzards, herons, kingfishers and pheasants and animals such as deer.

Historical features along the walk include Henley town, Fawley Court, Hambleden Mill & Lock, Temple Island and Hambleden village. You can also watch boats and rowers on the River Thames or people canoeing in the weir at Hambleden Lock.

There are refreshments/toilets in Hambleden and the pub in Aston.

How to get to the start

Picturesque Henley-on-Thames is located on the banks of the River Thames in Oxfordshire, 6 miles north of Reading.

By Train: Henley is easily reached by rail and the station is in the centre of town; First Great Western run direct hourly services from Reading taking about 30 minutes, services from London Paddington, Slough and Oxford require a simple change at Reading. For train times and fares call National Rail Enquiries on 08457 48 49 50.

By Bus: A regular bus service 328/329 operates between Reading-Henley-Mill End-Marlow-High Wycombe 7 days a week. You can catch this service either to get to Hambleden Lock or return to Henley. Bus shelters are located on the main road at Mill End. For timetables call 08701 201088.

By Cycle: There is cycle parking at Henley rail station, car parks and market place.

Parking: Pay & display car parking is available in the town centre.


Walking gets you fit and keeps you healthy!



This is one of a series of walks through the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It mainly follows rights of way, most of which are waymarked as follows:

Path waymarking

 'yellow arrow' Footpaths (walkers only)

 'blue arrow' Bridleways (horseriders, cyclists and walkers)

Please be considerate in the countryside

- keep to footpaths, especially through crops, and leave farm gates as you find them.
- please keep dogs on leads when walking through fields with livestock
- please do not paddle or allow dogs into the river.

If you have enjoyed this walk there are many other wonderful walks in the Thames & Chilterns area - including a similar circular walk from Marlow www.buckscc.gov.uk; the Thames Path National Trail www.nationaltrails.co.uk; Walks around Henley www.oxfordshire.gov.uk; walks in the Chilterns www.chilternsaonb.org. Or call 01491 578034 or 01628 483597.

The Chiltern Hills were designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1965. This is in recognition that the Chilterns countryside is amongst the finest in England and Wales. Visit www.chilternsaonb.org for more information.

The Chilterns Conservation Board cares for the Chilterns AONB and promotes walking in the countryside: Tel 01844 355504 e-mail office@chilternsaonb.org

If you, or a member of your community, would like this leaflet produced in another language or format (large print or audio cassette), please contact the Chilterns Conservation Board.

This leaflet could not have been produced without the support of the following organisations:



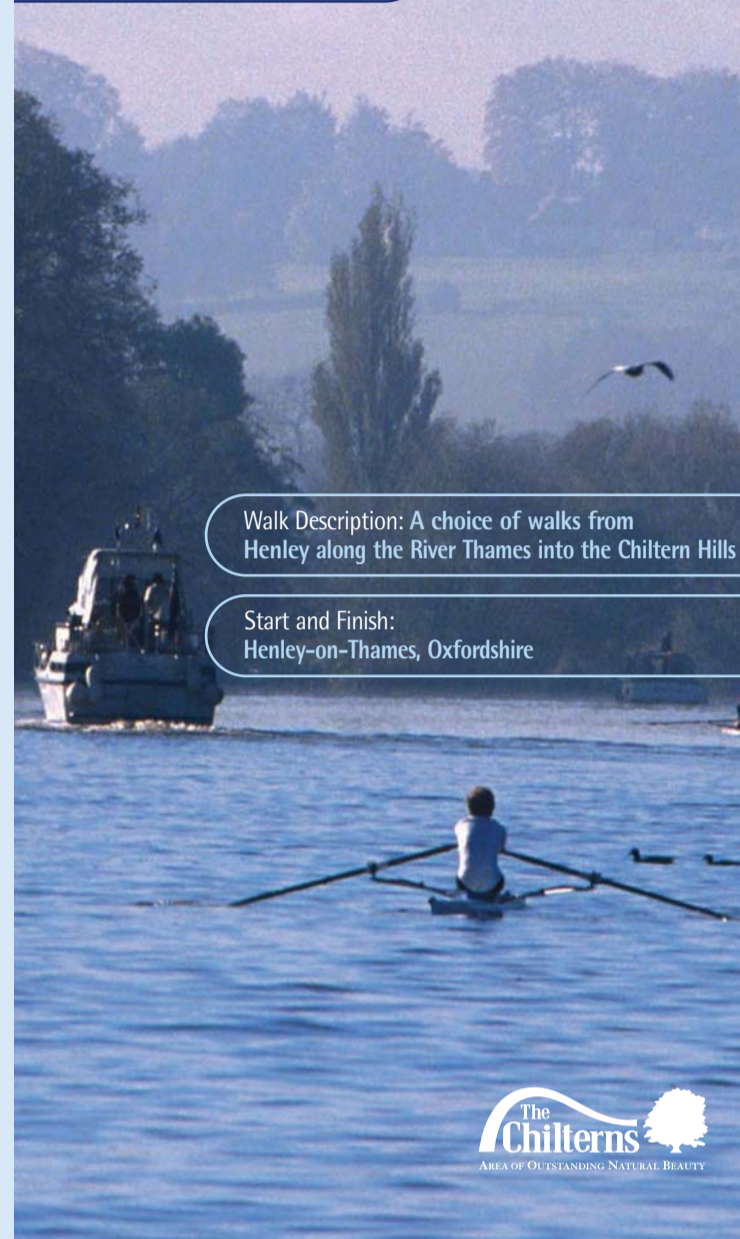
Photographs kindly provided by © Environment Agency, Chilterns Conservation Board, Sue Milton, Sandy Watson and Gerry Whitlow.

Chilterns Country

Thames & Chilterns Walk

Walk Description: A choice of walks from Henley along the River Thames into the Chiltern Hills

Start and Finish: Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire



Visitor information

Henley is a historic market town with a wide range of shops, cafes and restaurants to suit most tastes and budgets. Henley Tourist Information Centre can advise you on accommodation, local attractions and events and other walks in the area, call 01491 578034 or www.visit-henley.org.uk



Thames & Chilterns Walk

Start: Henley-on-Thames, Hart Street

From Henley you walk 2½ miles along the Thames Path to Hambleden Lock. Alternatively, during April to September you can catch a Hobbs & Sons boat down the river to near Hambleden Lock. From Hambleden Lock you can either:

- Walk 2½ miles back to Henley along the Thames Path (this is suitable for some people with limited mobility, eg pushchairs)
- Do a 2½ mile circular walk from Hambleden Lock to Hambleden village and back to the Lock - you can return to Henley by bus, or by walking 2½ miles back along the Thames Path;
- Do a 2½ mile walk from Hambleden Lock to Aston village and then back to Henley via footpaths in Remenham Parish.

Difficulty: From Henley to Hambleden Lock the route is flat. The routes to Hambleden and Aston involve some gentle hills.

Seasonal: During wet periods some paths can be muddy and slippery, during winter the Thames Path may not be passable due to flooding, call Floodline 0845 988 1188 to check.

Henley Regatta/Festival

Please note that **it is not possible to do this walk during Henley Regatta and Festival - which generally take place during the first 2 weeks in July.** For more information about these events call 01491 578034.

Boat Services

During April to September, Hobbs & Sons Ltd operate a boat service on the River Thames which leaves from Henley travelling upriver to Marsh Lock and then downriver to Hambleden Lock at Mill End. The boat will drop off walkers at the point indicated on the map but is not able to pick up passengers - **please inform the captain that you wish to be dropped off, as the boat does not automatically stop.** A 40% reduction in fares is available for those wishing to walk. The boat journey from Henley to the drop off point is approx 40mins. Passengers with disabilities contact Hobbs for information about accessibility.

April, May, June and Sept sailing 3pm, July and August sailing 2.30pm and 3.45pm.

During busy periods there may be additional sailings. Please note that you can only buy tickets on the day and that all trips are subject to river conditions. For more details call 01491 572035.

If you are walking on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday (May - Sept) then Salter Bros also has sailings, call 01753 865832 for times.



Henley River & Rowing Museum is a modern award winning museum and café offering information and exhibitions about the River Thames, Henley and rowing and has a combined entrance, parking and boat trip ticket. Call 01491 415600 for details.

Access Information



From Henley to the boat drop the Thames Path is flat with a hard path and no steps or stiles. For the first ¼ mile the path is wide and tarmac. After this the path is not as smooth and much narrower (55cm for a short stretch), though the path is through short grass on firm ground. At about ½ mile there is a 10 metre long arched bridge with a gradient of > 1:12 with which some wheelchair users may need assistance. At 2 miles there is a kissing gate that is accessible for wheelchairs but not mobility scooters. For ¼ mile between the boat drop and the Lock the path is not surfaced, it is grass/earth (though compacted). There are benches at regular intervals along the path. There is a wide tarmac path from the Lock to Aston village which slopes gently uphill. All the other routes described in this leaflet are restricted by stiles/steps. Henley, Reading, Slough, Oxford and London Paddington stations are all accessible for people with wheelchairs and push chairs.



Notes on the walks

Henley to Hambleden Lock

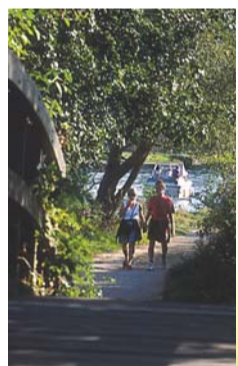
- From Henley Hart Street cross the bridge over the River Thames on the left hand side. Once over the bridge turn left, following the signs for the Thames Path to Hambleden Lock, the path between the buildings will take you onto the side of the River. Follow the path for 2½ miles until you reach Hambleden Lock.
- You can divert to Remenham village to see the traditional brick and flint Church of St Nicholas Remenham.

Circular walk to Hambleden

- At Hambleden Lock cross over the river Thames on a series of bridges and then follow the driveway to the main road. Bus stops here.
- Take care crossing the road, then turn right and follow the path/road to the left towards Hambleden.
- At the T-junction with the road to Rotten Row enter the field through the kissing gate (NB There are toilets in the car park 50m further along the Hambleden road). Follow the path towards the village, crossing a footpath half way.
- Rejoin the road, turn right over the stream and walk into the village.
- Hambleden has a village store and the Stag & Huntsman pub serves meals 12-2 and evenings and offers B&B. Call 01491 571227.
- Continue past the pub and private road sign and up the hill.
- Turn right into the unsurfaced farm track before the buildings. You are now walking back along the valley towards the River Thames.
- After ¼ mile the track forms a T-junction with another track. Turn left here following public footpath signs uphill.
- Follow the footpath which turns right along the hedge.
- Enter the wood over the stile and then follow the foot path to the right, through the kissing gate and across the field, parallel to the wood. Follow this path until you reach the road.
- Turn right and follow the road down the hill to the junction. Turn left and walk back to Hambleden Lock.

Walk from Lock to Aston village and then Henley

- From Hambleden Lock continue along the Thames Path downriver towards Hurley following the tarmac road. Follow the road away from the River to the village of Aston.



- Turn left to go to The Flower Pot pub which serves meals 12-2pm and evenings and offers B&B. Call 01491 574721. Otherwise turn right and follow the road for 50 metres, then turn left at the permitted footpath sign and follow the track up the slope (The Copas Partnership has kindly given permission to use this section of path which is not a public right of way). Then turn right and follow the public footpath for ½ mile.
- At the road turn left and walk for about 200m, then turn right and follow the footpath across the field.
- Follow the footpath through Remenham Wood.
- Leave the wood over the stile and cross the field to the signpost. Follow the path through the trees, continue over the stiles and fields until you reach the outskirts of Henley.
- Turn left and follow the road past the cricket pitch until you reach the main road and the Little Angel pub. Turn right along the main road and cross the River Thames back into Henley.



Red Kites

Red kites are magnificent birds of prey with a distinctive forked tail, reddish plumage and up to six-foot wingspan. Human persecution drove these once common birds to extinction in England by the end of the 19th century. People thought they were a threat to game rearing and sheep farming, but in fact they usually scavenge on carrion, or feed on insects, earthworms or small mammals. A re-introduction project led by the RSPB and English Nature saw over 90 birds re-introduced to the Chilterns from Spain, and now over 250 pairs are breeding here. Look out for them, particularly when walking in the Hambleden valley.



Key

Route of the walk from Henley to Hambleden Lock 2½ miles

Route of the circular walk from the Lock to Hambleden village 2½ miles

Route of the walk from the Lock to Aston village and back to Henley 2¼ miles

Chalk Streams

The Hamble Brook is a chalk stream – a globally rare habitat. With their clear waters and stable conditions, chalk streams are able to support a rich diversity of plants and animals.

Chalk streams are fed from 'groundwater'. This is stored in the 'aquifer' – layers of chalk which soak up water like a sponge. At various points the water emerges as springs which feed the streams.



Like most chalk streams, the Hamble Brook dries up along parts of its course, particularly in its upper reaches near Skirmett. This section is called a 'winterbourne' and only flows after heavy winter rainfall causes the water level in the aquifer to rise, bringing the springs high up the valley back to life.

We take our water supply from the aquifer; we can help protect the Hambleden Brook and its wildlife by using water wisely in our homes.

Features of interest

1. The original Henley Bridge was damaged in the Civil War and finally swept away in a flood in 1774. The current bridge was built 1776–1786 by Thomas Hayward who died before the bridge was finished, supposedly after catching a cold giving up his place inside a coach to a lady. The heads on the centre arch, Isis & Old Father Thames, were made by Anne Damer – one of the first professional women sculptors and supposedly the first woman in England to wear black silk stockings!

2. The Leander Club is the clubhouse of the Britain's oldest and world famous rowing club, founded in London in 1818 and moved to Henley in 1896. It is said that the club's emblem, a hippo, was chosen as the only other aquatic creature apart from members to keep its nose permanently in the air! Britain's top rowers including Stephen Redgrave and Matthew Pinsent row and train at the club.

3. Phyllis Court on the opposite bank of the river on the edge of Henley was built in 1870 and is a club owned by its members since 1906. It was previously the site of a Manor house, which was held in the 1300's by John de Moleyns from Edward III on tenure of 1 red rose a year!

4. Fawley Court, opposite from Remenham village was designed by Sir Christopher Wren in 1684, to replace an earlier house that was badly damaged by Royalists troops during the Civil War. www.civilwaroxon.org for more information.



Thames Path National Trail follows England's best known river for 184 miles as it meanders from its source in Gloucestershire through several rural counties and on into the bustle of the City of London.

5. The temple on Temple Island was built as a summerhouse/fishing lodge for Fawley Court in 1771, designed by James Wyatt. Inside it is covered in Etruscan scenes. This is also the start of the Regatta course, chosen because it is a straight stretch of river!

6. Greenlands, now Henley Management College, was built for WH Smith, Viscount Hambleden (founder of the WH Smiths chain). This replaced an earlier house that was destroyed in the Civil War – the house had been fortified by its Royalist owner Sir John Byron, and a parliamentary force with cannons was sent to where the boat now stops to pound it into submission.

7. Boat stop. Hobbs & Sons boats drop walkers here by kind permission of the landowner, The Copas Partnership, who also provides public access to the Henley Regatta course at the Barn Bar. Call 01628 474678 www.copas.co.uk.

8. Hambleden Lock. The former lock keeper (Cabel Gould, 1777-1836) lived to be 92 and is supposed to have eaten a bowl of onion porridge every night! He is buried in Remenham church. The weir is a popular venue for white-water canoeing.

8. Hambleden Mill is mentioned in the Domesday Book (1086) and was closed in 1995. It is said that at one time there were 20,000 watermills in England, mainly milling wheat to make flour. Today the mill contains private apartments.



The picturesque **Hambleden Valley** has been much used in film and TV, including Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, The Vicar of Dibley, Midsomer Murders, The New Avengers and Sleepy Hollow. St Thomas de Cantelupe, the last pre-Reformation saint, was born here in 1218.

The treble and Sanctus bells in **Hambleden Church** are thought to have been cast from the bells at Fingest church, lost by the rector in a game of cards.