



The Hundred Parishes

An introductory article about WALKING IN THE HUNDRED PARISHES

The Society's website includes an extensive range of walk descriptions that can be downloaded and printed, free of charge.

There are more than a hundred routes, with at least one passing through each parish. The routes range from 1 mile to 17 miles. The descriptions include route instructions and information about the places you will pass. The routes have been designed to take you through interesting places and lovely countryside. 21 routes are from rail stations, either returning to the same station at the end of the walk or ending at a different station. Other routes start and finish where there is a suitable parking spot.

The Society's aim is to help residents and visitors to easily enjoy the area. The routes are planned so as to use good paths and quiet lanes, and to achieve an interesting mix of scenery. The descriptions seek to ensure that nobody will get lost and also to provide sufficient information along the way to make the outing interesting. The area's abundance of public rights of way, its gentle natural beauty and wealth of listed buildings make this possible. Many walks pass or finish near a pub or tea room.



Our approach is to provide information alongside route instructions. This is consistent with the first of the Society's charitable objectives: "To advance the education of the public in the character and history of the geographic area comprising The Hundred Parishes."

For many people, passing through the area at walking pace is the ideal way to appreciate it.

During school holidays, the routes might provide a framework for family outings and also a slightly structured opportunity for older children who like an adventure on their own or with friends.

If you are unable to walk the routes, you might find some of the descriptions of interest as they are more than just details of how to find the way.

It's always a good time of year for walking in our unique part of the country, no matter what the weather. Here are a few tips to help you maximize the enjoyment . . .

One essential we would recommend is an Ordnance Survey map, ideally the orange Explorer map which has a scale of 1 to 25,000 and shows many detailed features including footpaths and field boundaries. Just four OS maps cover most of the Hundred Parishes. They can be purchased from good stationers or online from www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/leisure



Investment in a good pair of walking boots, probably for less than £100, will be paid back over many years and hundreds of miles, especially if you look after them.

If you don't like walking about in socks, please pack a light pair of shoes or slip-on boot covers or plastic bags – to wear as overshoes in churches, pubs or tea rooms.

Before setting off, you might like to check the relevant parish introductions on the website; there, you will find details of local tea rooms and pubs, etc. It's best to check with the venue to see if it will be open on the day and time that you will need it.

Our area has an extensive network of generally well-maintained public rights of way – footpaths for walkers and bridleways that may also be used by horse riders and cyclists. Do try out new routes, planning before you set off. Bear in mind that a path that runs beside a field edge is less likely to get muddy than one that crosses a field. The detail on Explorer maps makes it possible to see whether the public path follows the edge of the field or goes across it.

Try to plan longer routes so that the sun follows you. This is good practice at any time of the year, but especially so in winter with the low sun. For a lengthy, circular walk, try to start near the southeast corner and head clockwise. The sun will follow you, keeping the glare from your eyes and giving you the best views. Most of the walks on the Hundred Parishes website follow this principle where possible.



Whether or not you are using one of the Society's routes, please be sure to follow the Countryside Code. Here, we offer an abbreviated summary; it is mainly common sense:

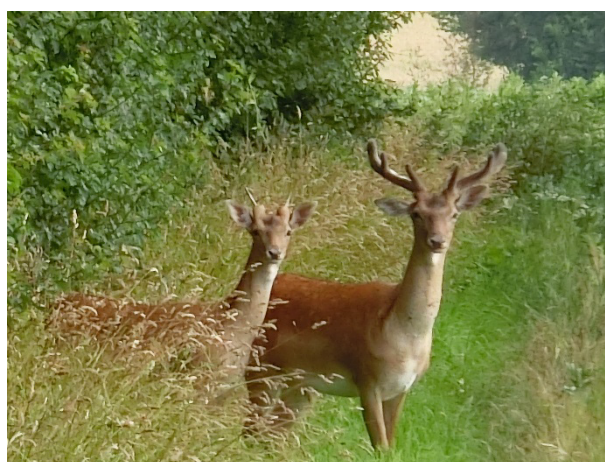
Respect everyone • be considerate to those living in, working in and enjoying the countryside • leave gates and property as you find them • do not block access to gateways or driveways when parking • be nice, say hello • keep to marked paths.

Protect the environment • take your litter home • do not light fires • always keep dogs under control and in sight • pick up your dog's poo • do not cause damage or disturb wildlife.

The full Countryside Code, most recently updated by Natural England in 2023, may be downloaded from the following website . . .

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code>

While the Hundred Parishes routes are designed to pass through attractive countryside and villages, we can't predict what pleasures nature may have in store: perhaps majestic cloud formations, the sights and sounds of birds, the variety of butterflies and insects, the scale of badger diggings, deer prints, even a glimpse of a hare or fox or herd of deer.



The seasons bring changes to trees, crops, wayside flowers and fruits. With such potential, each walk can be an adventure. We encourage you to carry a camera.

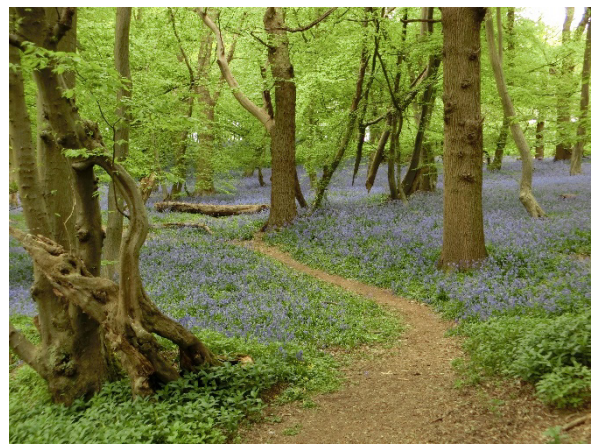


Almost every walk will pass a church. You are encouraged to take a look inside, leaving muddy boots outside of course. Some are kept locked, but around two-thirds are usually open during the daytime.



The Hundred Parishes has an abundance of ancient churches. Most are listed buildings, with no less than 58 listed at Grade I. Each church is individual and most are rewarding places to visit, not just in a spiritual sense but also for their diverse architecture, decoration and memorials.

Public Rights of Way come in many varieties. Some of the diversity within the Hundred Parishes is illustrated on this page . . .





Be prepared for the weather: that might mean wrapping up warm with double-thickness woolly hat and gloves, a scarf and layers of clothing; or using sunglasses, suncream and sun hat. Preparation at any time should probably include rainwear.

The Hundred Parishes walks are certainly not the only routes available; the area is particularly rich in footpaths and bridleways and anyone with an Ordnance

Survey Explorer map can devise their own routes. A number of long-distance trails offer challenges that will take more than a single day. These trails knit together established rights of way and are often well signposted, with maps or descriptions available from Tourist Information Centres, bookshops or online.

The Walks section of www.hundredparishes.org.uk provides links to other walk routes and walking groups; some specific organized walks appear in the What's On section of the website.

While the Society encourages and facilitates walking within the Hundred Parishes, we are not alone.

Peter Aylmer is a dedicated walker and has published a number of booklets describing local long-distance routes. They include The Three Forests Way, The Forest Way and The Stort Valley Way. You can find details of all these publications at <https://www.trailman.co.uk/buy-my-books/>

Peter Cooper has published a book of circular walks in Uttlesford. This can be purchased at Saffron Walden Tourist Information Centre or online from <https://www.visitsaffronwalden.gov.uk/product/discover-uttlesford-circular-walks-along-the-uttlesford-way-in-essex-by-peter-cooper/>

The Bartlow Three Counties Walk, usually organized at the end of April, offers distances from 1 mile to 13 miles - the What's On page of www.hundredparishes.org.uk should have details.



Whatever may inspire you to get out and about, enjoy!

This article, last updated 24 October 2023, was downloaded from www.hundredparishes.org.uk. Copyright rests with The Hundred Parishes Society. The article may be copied and passed on freely but may not be reproduced for commercial purposes.

Any comments or suggestions for improvement may be submitted by using the Feedback form on the website. The website has many short articles on various aspects of The Hundred Parishes, as well as introductions to individual parishes and to a number of local celebrities, and an extensive What's On section. More than a hundred walk route descriptions can be freely downloaded, with each of the hundred parishes featuring in at least one walk.