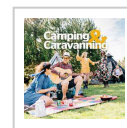


Theobalds Park Club Site

Waltham Abbey walk

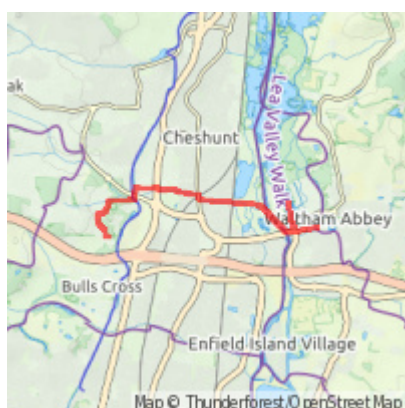
Camping and Caravanning



Route Summary

A linear walk from the Club Site at Theobalds Park taking you from the grounds of a Royal Palace through a modern town to the ruins of an Abbey pre-dating the Domesday Book and a Gunpowder Mill dating back to the 1600s. You can also take the opportunity to explore nature reserves in the area.

Route Overview



Category: Walking
 Rating: Unrated
 Surface: Smooth
 Date Published: 21st September 2018
 Difficulty: Easy
 Length: 6.160 km / 3.85 mi
 Last Modified: 21st September 2018

Description

From the moment you leave the Camping and Caravanning Club Site at Theobalds Park you step back in time, as the road outside was built by the Romans as their main route from Londinium to Eboracum (London to York). This leads immediately into an old Royal Palace estate, which is no longer in existence, but the parkland can still be enjoyed. The 'modern' Theobalds House, now a hotel, was built in 1763 and entertained royalty when Edward VII visited. The original palace had been home to James I and his son Charles I, but was destroyed by parliamentarians in 1651.

Although this route only passes a very short distance along the New River, this again has an interesting history. Being wholly man-made to bring fresh water to the increasing population of London, it was constructed in the early 1600s. The journey will take you along the course of a tributary to the New River, Theobalds Brook. This small waterway is often dry and passes through the northern section of the town of Waltham Cross.

The cross from which the town takes its name can be found in the town centre, a short detour from the planned route. It is one of the three remaining Eleanor Crosses that mark the resting place for the coffin of Eleanor of Castile. Her husband King Edward I commissioned the crosses to mark the route from Lincoln to Westminster Abbey after her death in 1290.

The Lea Valley Nature Reserve is a vast area of marshland, reedbeds, grassland, lakes and lagoons. It is a true oasis and home to some incredible wildlife. Due to the diverse nature of the habitats in the area, this has allowed a rich and varied range of insects, birds, mammals and other animals to survive. There are plenty of tracks and pathways to explore the area that extends both north and south of this walk.

The Royal Gunpowder Mill owes its existence to the monks Waltham Abbey who created a fulling mill on this site using the waters from the artificial Millhead Stream. The mill changed its use in the early 17th century to produce vegetable oils, then later the same century became a gunpowder mill. It became one of the first industrialised factory systems, helping it to become internationally recognised and assist Britain in becoming an international power.

In contrast, Waltham Abbey has had a more gentle existence, until the dissolution of the monasteries in 1536, ending 500 years of monastic influence in the area. The church was initially created after Harold Godwinson, later to become King Harold, was cured of paralysis after praying in front of the cross. The construction and completion of this church at Waltham pre-dates Westminster Abbey by five years.

Prior to travelling to Hastings, King Harold again came to pray at the church, and some legends say that he was later buried here as well. It was not until 1177 that Henry II – atoning for the murder of Thomas Beckett – established Augustinian canons, and shortly afterwards it was granted the title of Abbey. As with many other locations throughout Britain a town soon developed outside the abbey, given a charter by Richard I to hold a market. The area was visited by noblemen, clergy and monarchs to pray at the abbey and hunt in Waltham Forest (now Epping Forest).

Cornmill Meadows to the north of Waltham Abbey is a mosaic of rivers, ditches, pools, grassland, hay meadows and woodland, and is definitely worthy of a small detour. Waders such as Ruff, Bar-Tailed Godwits, Redshanks, and Sandpipers can be seen during Spring and Autumn, while in the summer months it is one of the best places to see dragonflies, with over half of the UK listed species being present. A Discovery Trail through various habitats is not to be missed – keep your eyes peeled for the elusive Water Voles and Kingfishers that live along the various watercourses.

Return to the Camping and Caravanning Club Site is via the same route.

Binoculars would be an advantage on this walk.

Waypoints

Start at Camping and Caravanning Club site Reception

(51.68618; -0.05742)



Leave the seclusion of Theobalds Park Camping and Caravanning Club Site to pass into a landscape that has been changed by our ancestors for over a thousand years. After leaving the Roman Road Ermine Street you will pass the site where Temple Cross stood for a number of years – a plaque marks the spot. Believed to be designed by Sir Christopher Wren, it used to be at the junction of Fleet Street and The Strand before being replaced by The City Dragon sculpture. Temple Bar has been reconstructed at the side of St Paul's Cathedral.

2 Cycle route bridge over the New River

(51.69393; -0.05055)



After passing under Lieutenant Ellis Way, turn right joining the cycle route over the Great Cambridge Road and towards Waltham Cross. Lieutenant Ellis was the pilot who navigated his stricken Liberator B-24 away from the town to crash in the field area near to where the school now stands, killing all on board but saving the town. Cedars Park will be on your right, and there are some relics from Theobalds Palace to be found within the park. After walking through the town, pass over the railway at the end of Trinity Lane.

3 Railway Bridge at end of Trinity Lane

(51.69153; -0.02544)



While the route takes you directly across the Lea Valley Nature Reserve, it is worth taking the opportunity to explore the many pathways and rides that cross the area, revealing a wide range of habitats and their accompanying wildlife. Whichever way you go, leave the area where Station Road crosses over the river and its overflow channel, turn left and under the electricity cables. Turn left into Beaulieu Drive, which is signed for the Royal Gunpowder Mill at the end of the road.

Royal Gunpowder Mills

(51.69142; -0.01130)



Having enjoyed the experience at The Mills return to Highbridge Street and turn towards Waltham Abbey town centre. The grounds and remains of the Abbey will be found behind the current church.

Church of The Holy Cross at Waltham Abbey

(51.68758; -0.00406)



Access to the glorious Cornmill Meadows will be found at the rear, northern side, of the Abbey Gardens. There are walks around these meadows that are well worth adding to your walk.

Retrace your steps to return to Theobalds Park Club Site.

