

CHILTERN RAMBLING TRAIL

This route, including a section of the Ridgeway Long Distance Path, offers breathtaking views from the Chiltern ridge. It starts in the Ashridge Estate and returns to Tring via Tring Park, a distance of around 5 miles. You will need to arrange transport to the start.

The National Trust's Ashridge Estate covers six square miles of woodlands, commons, downland and farmland in Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire. It centres on a former monastery, where Queen Elizabeth I was held by her sister Queen Mary.



Largely rebuilt as a Gothic-style mansion for the Bridgewater (later Brownlow) family, the architects were James Wyatt and Jeffry Wyattville and the grounds were landscaped by both Brown and Repton; the house is now a management college, sometimes open to the public. Most of estate is accessible to the public and supports a considerable diversity of wildlife including goldcrest, lesser-spotted woodpecker, wild fallow deer, muntjac deer and badgers.

1. Start at Monument Drive, which runs through ancient woodland to the Monument.



Built in honour of the third Duke of Bridgewater, generally considered the 'father' of the canal network. It is sometimes possible to climb to the top to enjoy stunning views. The nearby tearooms provide a very enjoyable light lunch. Turn left at the monument in front of the tea shop



Keep right at first junction:



and walk through the beech woods,



down the steep escarpment to Aldbury, passing ancient flint pits on the way and enjoying views to the west. Aldbury is a picturesque village and a popular film location.



2. There are a number of places where different routes emerge into Aldbury – either on corner of Tom’s Hill Road – turn right and right again into Stocks Road. Next to the pond, note the ancient stocks in which malefactors were locked as a punishment. You may wish to stop for refreshments at the Greyhound. With the pub on your left, continue along Stocks Road, noting attractive cottages of all periods.

Alternatively you may come out at Stocks Road.

3. Take the second path on your left, just past the car park (a bridleway);



You may catch a glimpse of Stocks House, the home of Victorian novelist Mrs. Humphry Ward and later of Playboy boss Victor Lowndes, of whom she would not have approved. Continue to follow the bridleway, ignoring all diverging and crossing paths

4. You'll come out onto a road, bear right - shortly coming to Tring Station.

The London and Birmingham Railway reached Tring in 1837. To avoid a steep gradient in crossing the Chiltern summit it was necessary to have a huge cutting, which had to be dug by men with picks and shovels, using horses and pulleys to barrow one and a half million cubic yards of spoil up the sides. Directed by Robert Stephenson, the project was one of the greatest engineering achievements of the day.

5. Walk on to the canal bridge, from which you could take a circular detour along the Grand Union Canal to Marshcroft Lane and back. Follow the right hand towpath to the bridge, then cross the canal and return on the high path above the canal on the opposite side.

This will take you back to the Station Road bridge.



6. After the bridge, turn left down Beggars Lane and take the Ridgeway Path to the right.



Follow the path through the paddocks of Pendley Farm. You will catch glimpses of Pendley Manor, a Victorian country house, now a hotel. It was once in the family of the sports commentator Dorian Williams, who ran adult education courses for many years and started the renowned open-air Shakespeare Festival.

7. Continuing uphill, cross the old A41 and climb steeply to the edge of the cutting of the new A41, where there is an impressive vista to west and east from the walkers-only bridge. Over the bridge, continue uphill past ancient parkland chestnuts to a road - The Twist.



8. The path crosses the road to the right,



then moves on through woodland and open downland, with spectacular views of Ivinghoe Beacon.

9. Cross the next Road.



Passing to the north of Wigginton, enter the woodland of the upper level of Tring

Park at Ladderstile Cottage, designed in the Rothschild Estate manner by William Huckvale.



Nearby there are underground water tanks which used to operate lifts in the Mansion.

10. You have now covered about four miles. To return to Tring straight away, take the first turning on the right, passing the Summer House and the Obelisk.

The Summer House was probably designed by James Gibbs and is all that remains of a larger building. During the Second World War it was lived in by (Dame) Peggy Ashcroft, the famous actress, while her husband, Jeremy Hutchinson, was away at sea. His sister was married to Victor, 3rd Lord Rothschild, who lived in the nearby Ranger's Cottage at the time.



The Obelisk is also thought to have been designed by James Gibbs. Locals might tell you that it commemorates Nell Gwyn but there is no real basis to this idea. Walk round it backwards nine times with your eyes closed and an orange will appear!



11. Cross the parkland to the pedestrian bridge over the A41.
12. Continue down the path and across into the alley which will take you to Tring High Street.

Alternatively, to take in more of Tring Park, follow the Ridgeway path left along King Charles Ride.

13. You will soon reach the 'rondpoint' where carriages could turn round and return. To your right there are wonderful views over Tring and the countryside beyond, taking in Mentmore Towers and Ivinghoe Beacon.



After a while you will spot an intriguing wooden gateway on the left, leading to an area with timber sculptures and interesting activities for children.



14. Where this starts to bend left, take the path on the right through dense woodland (signed Woodland Walk).



This leads through dense woodland to a gate and out onto the open grassland, revealing a superb view. Pause to imagine the herd of deer which used to roam, or the emu, cassowaries and other creatures that Walter Rothschild kept here. Walk straight ahead downhill and then sharply uphill to the beginning of an avenue of lime trees, which give off a delicious scent in early summer. This will take you to the footbridge over the A41. Walk down the path to return to Park Street; the alley opposite will take you back to Tring High Street.