



Leatherhead Ashtead Village, Stane Street, River Mole

Distance: 12½ km=8 miles or 9½ km=6 miles easy walking

Region: Surrey

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Refreshments: Leatherhead

Map: Explorer 146 (Dorking) *but the map in this guide should be sufficient*

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Green pastures, woodland, historic country town, river, stockbroker village

In Brief

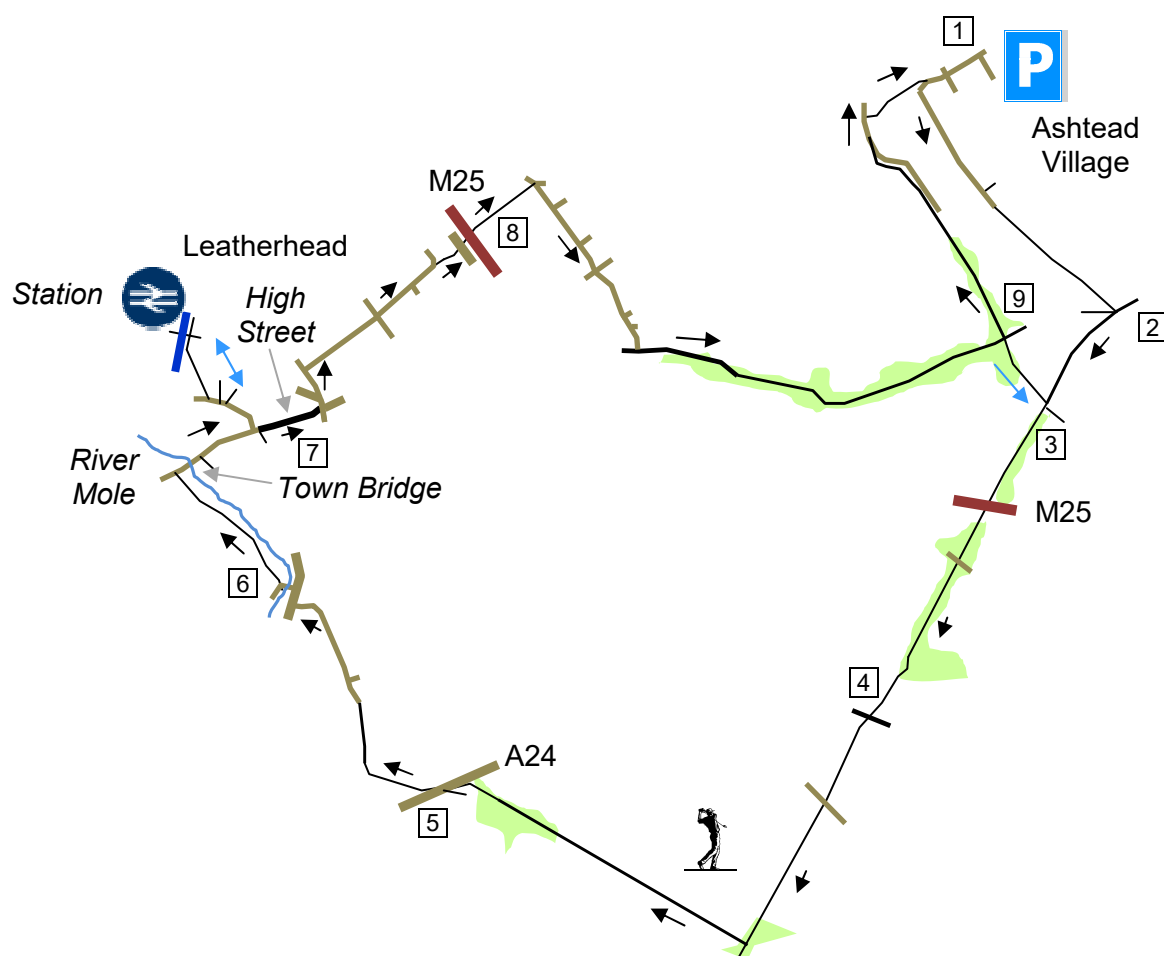
This is a “marmite” walk. With two bridges over the M25 motorway, one hairy crossing of the A24 road, a longish section through town, paths surrounded by golf links – you might not like it. But marmite lovers will enjoy some rare treasures (and some scored it a “ten”). The motorway bridges can be exhilarating. There’s always a gap in the traffic if you wait patiently. The golf links are hidden by avenues of trees. And the town – Leatherhead? you say – well, trust this guide, it’s a charmer with the Town Bridge, the traffic-free centre, a pub dating from 1403. The big revelation is Ashtead village (if you take the long route), a garden commuterland, no house numbers (just names), a chance to see how we posh folks live.



All the paths on this walk are wide and free of undergrowth, so clothing is your choice. In a wet season, there will be quite a few muddy patches and you need to be booted up. In the drier seasons, if you wear clean boots, there’s a good chance they will finish up clean. Because of the chicken run, your dog is best left at home with the children.


The walk begins at **Leatherhead Station** (daily regular service from Waterloo) or on the roadside at the end of **Oaken Coppice**, Ashtead, Surrey, **KT21 1DL**, www.w3w.co/hips.jolly.launch. This very exact location is quite deliberate because there’s simply oodles of space and many dog walkers park there. It is at a junction with Chalk Lane, a private road, but Oaken Coppice is *not* private. Starting in Leatherhead station, you will probably choose the shorter 6-mile walk, omitting Ashtead Village: start at the section called **Station Stretch** near the end of this text. You can also park somewhere along the shorter route, such as at the end of Ermyn Way. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk



- 1 From the corner of Oaken Coppice, turn **left** on Chalk Lane. In 100m or so ignore Ralliwood Road and continue 100m to a junction by a little green. Turn **left** on a long residential road (unsigned Gray's Lane). After 500m of very swish housing, the road comes to an end at a little turning space with a silver birch in the middle. Go straight ahead between posts on a narrow bridleyway with good views of horse pastures on your left. (Yes - this is a bridleyway but with little space to pass if you meet a horse.)
- 2 In nearly 600m your path ends at a T-junction in front of a house with a clock bearing the name *Thirty Acre Barn*. Turn **right** and immediately take the **left** fork by a little patch of green, on a track signed *Stane Street, Mickleham*. You are on a Roman road. In 400m, where you meet a signposted junction on the right, keep straight ahead.

The shorter walk, omitting Ashted, joins the main walk here.

- 3  Immediately ignore a signposted junction left and continue on Stane Street, with bluebells abundant in the woods in late spring. *Stane Street ran from London Bridge to Chichester and you meet it on several of these walks (Okewood-Hill, Slinfold, Bignor)*. You are also on part of the Thamesdown Link, a route linking the Thames Path in Kingston to the North Downs Way in Westhumble. In 400m you go over the noisy M25 by a bridge. When you meet a tarmac road, cross straight over. Ignore a 3-arm fingerpost and keep ahead on the



track. Soon a view opens out on your right with horse pastures sweeping into the distance. You have a garden fence on your right as your path comes out to another tarmac lane. On your left is the redbrick mansion of the Tyrrells Wood Golf Club. Cross straight over to a narrow path opposite.

- 4 The track runs down to meet another road. Again, cross straight over onto a track uphill. Your path goes between golf links but well shielded by lines of trees. In 500m, ignore a small golfer's gate and turn **right** at a 4-way fingerpost in the direction *Givons Grove* and onto a path between wire fences. You cross over a driveway leading to the Beaverbrook Hotel & Spa by a cream gatehouse. Your path is now a narrow avenue through birch and oak as it gradually descends between distant golf links, You cross a signed footpath and come down through ivy-clad beeches. You pass a house on your left by an indoor pool. A track joins from the right and a tarmac drive from the left as you meet the A24 road, which you need to cross *very carefully* to the bridleway opposite, a fraction left.



A bridleway crossing a fast two-way main road with no traffic island – this is potentially quite hazardous. But for a couple of factors, this crossing would not feature in a walking guide. First, you have a *clear distant* view in both directions. Second, the single-file traffic tends to bunch up, so there are always gaps. You need to wait for a gap at the same time in both directions. The answer is: be patient! Be prepared to wait a minute or so. At 3pm on a weekday, the author crossed immediately with no problem.

- 5 Follow the bridleway diagonally uphill and, when you reach a long white cottage, continue on a rough drive which becomes tarmac as you pass some of the interesting houses of Leatherhead. Ignore a bridleway and later a footpath, both on your right, as you continue downhill on this quiet lane. The lane finally bends left to meet a major road (the B2450 Dorking Road). *The "dove" in the dovecote is not real unfortunately.* Turn **right** and, in 50m, turn **left** on Thorncroft Drive, going over the River Mole.
- 6 Turn immediately **right** on a footpath that runs beside the river. *You are in part of the River Mole Local Nature Reserve. The large white building on your left is Thorncroft Manor. There are several bench seats where you can take a rest, the first of which is opposite an old stone bridge.* Continue past a green metal fence on your left to reach the main Guildford Road. Turn right over the long Town Bridge.

Medieval Leatherhead Bridge was rebuilt and enlarged in 1782-3 by George Gwilt. The long structure of fourteen arches is made of red brick in Flemish bond, with details in Portland stone. If you stand in one of the semicircular refuges, you can gaze at the river here at its widest point and perhaps spot a white heron or two.

Leatherhead's name is supposedly Anglo-Saxon "Leodridan" from words for "a way" and "ride", i.e. across the river, but note that "rhyd" is also Welsh for "ford". In the Domesday Book it's known as "Leret".

Continue to reach the *Running Horse* pub on the other side.

Dating from 1403, the "Running Horse" is Leatherhead's oldest pub. Beers are Shepherd Neame and the long menu includes pub favourites, bites and sandwiches. The pub was once called "Rummyings House", when it served strong "nopyy ale" brewed by the celebrated alewife Elynour Rummyng, originator of the expression "to make no bones about". Lines from the poem "The Tunnyng of Elynour Rummyng" by John Skelton, Henry VIII's Poet Laureate, are displayed on the pub's walls. According to legend, Elizabeth I once spent a night at The Running Horse when the river was in flood.

Follow the road to a crossroads in the centre of town where a pedestrianised area begins.

If you are returning by train, turn **left** with the road and follow the "Station Stretch" in reverse direction, back to the station where the walk began.
Otherwise ...

Cross straight over, past a new ornate terrazza, onto the pedestrianised High Street.

7 *Leatherhead has been successful in reviving the high street in competition from out-of-town sites and this motor-free shopping street is a real delight.* You have several opportunities for nourishment and at least one more pub. Walk the whole length of the High Street. At the end, cross over by the lights and turn **left** on Leret Way. Shortly, as the main road curves left, fork **right** on a minor residential road (later revealed to be Linden Road). In 100m, turn **right** by a signpost on a private road, Linden Pit Path. You pass between the buildings of St John's School and their playing fields. At a junction, cross the road to a cul-de-sac road on the other side. Where the road bends left, stay close to the fence on your **right** and follow the tarmac path, forking **right** up shallow steps to cross the main road by a footbridge, continuing over the M25 motorway.

8 Keep straight ahead on a path, passing another school. Finally, your path comes out, via a metal barrier, to a road junction. Turn **right** and follow Grange Road, past another school, to traffic lights. Cross straight over on Ermyn Way. On reaching a junction, keep to the left-hand side and turn **left** with the major road, joining a minor road coming from your right. You pass a care home and the vast *ExxonMobil* building on your left. Finally, the road gives way to a dirt track and you are alone with nature. Where the campus ends, ignore a permissive path on your left and continue through woodland of birch and young beech, passing a mobile 'phone tower. Just after another mobile 'phone tower, you reach a 4-way fingerpost at a major crossing.

Decision point. If you are doing the shorter 6-mile walk, omitting Ashted Village, turn **right** in the direction *Headley Road*, follow the wide path (or the narrower parallel path through trees) for 300m, to a T-junction, turn **right** and re-join the main walk at section 3. Otherwise ...

9 Turn **left** at the fingerpost in the direction *Ashted*, shortly going between posts, on a pleasant wide woodland path. After about 500m you have a garden fence on your left and a tarmac lane is visible on your right. You will be staying on the path for another 500m, unless you prefer the quiet lane. Where the path splits, keep **right**, staying near the lane. You pass a little green on your right as your route curves left, crossing several driveways. Finally you join the lane by a red pillarbox. Switch to the tarmac footway on your right and turn **right** on a narrow path immediately before some timber-cladded cottages. *They are known as the "White Cottages" and are well-known for their dainty garden ornaments.* At a road junction by a green, keep ahead on Chalk Lane to reach the road junction where the walk began.

Station Stretch ½ km=1/3 mile

This is your route from arriving at the railway station, into the centre of Leatherhead to join the walk.

Come out on the east side of the station and follow the approach road to a junction. (Or, if you come out on the west side, opposite the Wates building, follow the approach road and turn **left** and **right** under the railway bridge.) Cross by the pedestrian lights and take a path through the park, marked *Town Centre*. Fork **left** shortly, still for *Town Centre*, across the park and across a main road by the crossing lights. Turn **left**, curling round right, passing Lidl and the *Penny Black* heritage Youngs pub. At the central road junction, turn **left** on the pedestrianised High Street and join the walk at section 7.

On returning to the station, follow the same route in reverse direction.

Getting there

By car: Chalk Lane is off Park Lane which is off the A24 (Epsom Road). Coming from Epsom, it's on the left just before you enter the shopping area of Ashted. Coming from Leatherhead, its on the right immediately after you come through the street of shops. In 250 yds, go **right** and immediately **left** next to the gates of St Giles to keep direction. In 300 yds or so, look for a little triangular green on your right (just before the entrance to the big Freeman's School). Turn **right** here on a private road, Chalk Lane. In 150 yds, turn **left** on Oaken Coppice by some white gates and park here.

By train: begin at **Leatherhead station**. Use the section called **Station Stretch** to join the walk.

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