

CAR@FREE in The Chilterns

Grand Union Canal and Tring Reservoirs

ONE OF A SET OF
CAR FREE ITINERARIES
IN THE EAST OF
ENGLAND'S SPECIAL
LANDSCAPES



- Peaceful waterways around Tring
- Grand Union Canal; an engineering feat
- Wide variety of birds and wildlife
- Walking, bird watching, fishing and boating
- Easily reached by public transport

This itinerary is for visitors wishing to explore the waterways of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty around Tring and Berkhamsted. The serenity of the Grand Union Canal and the Tring Reservoirs provides an excellent aspect from which to appreciate the rolling chalk hills and quiet woodlands of the Chilterns. Whilst they are an engineering feat of significant historical importance the waterways are now a valuable habitat for birds and other wildlife.

There are a selection of walks in this itinerary of varying length which also incorporate some of the wonderful villages and hamlets along the waterways.



Grand Union Canal and Tring Reservoirs (source British Waterways)

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THE ITINERARY:

Walking is the ideal carefree way to appreciate the beauty of the Grand Union Canal and the surrounding Chiltern Hills. There are miles of tranquil waterways to be explored and the Canal and Reservoirs can be easily reached by train via Tring or Berkhamsted Stations.

This itinerary explores the Grand Union Canal between Berkhamsted and Tring Station, and then Tring Station to several circular routes around the Tring Reservoirs. Points of interest have been highlighted and you may start wherever you wish on the route.

Berkhamsted to Tring Station (4 ½ miles)

A short and easy walk along the tow path encountering seven locks (46 – 53) and seven bridges (135 – 141) and passing through Northchurch and Cow Roast. Points of Interest include Locks 51 and 52, known as Gas Two after Berkhamsted Gasworks which opened in 1849 and received regular deliveries of coal and oil by canal. At Northchurch there are several 15th and 16th century half timbered cottages and the church is the oldest in the area with the west wall dating from Saxon times.

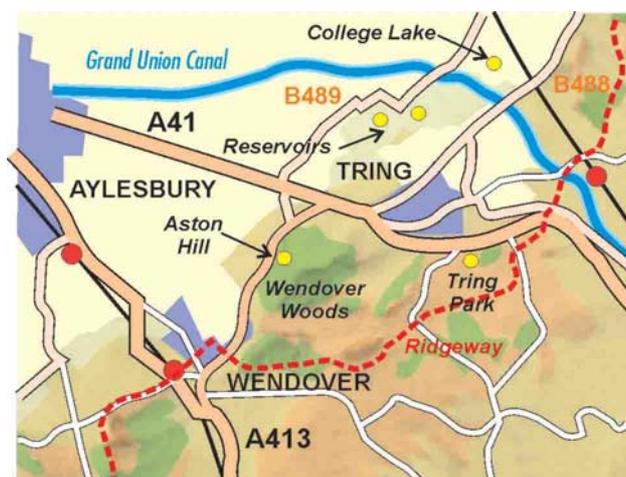
The **Cow Roast Inn**, on the other side of the A4251 from the Canal, provides an opportunity for an early break. Originally known as the “Cow Rest” it housed large cattle pens used to rest the animals on the way to the London markets. The pub has an in-house Thai restaurant which gets very busy at weekends when it is advisable to book a table.

The stretch of the canal from Tring Station to Bulbourne is known as the Tring Cutting and is the highest point of the Canal. It was a major feat of engineering when it was completed in 1797 and is 1 ½ miles long and 30ft deep. It was another two years before Tring Summit was connected with the canal at Berkhamsted.

Grand Union Canal

Constructed in the late 18th century, the Grand Junction Canal, as it was originally called, provided a valuable short cut from the Oxford Canal at Braunston to the Thames at Brentford. Built to a new, wide standard, it very quickly became a busy and profitable trunk route, linking London with the industrial Midlands and remained busy until the coming of the railways. For those on the water, crossing the three mile summit involves going up one set of locks and venturing down another.

The circular routes around the reservoirs can be easily reached by foot from Tring Station (1.6 miles) by walking west along the tow path to Bulbourne Junction where you can pick up a choice of two circular routes. The Wendover Arm of the canal leaves the main line at Bulbourne Junction, and passes to the north of Tring to Wendover. There was once a wharf serving Tring, and a boatbuilding business, at New Mill. The Arm's main purpose was (and is) to provide water to the summit level from springs at Wendover.



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There is a choice of two colour waymarked routes from Bulbourne Junction designed to guide you around the reservoirs. A good map of the routes is available from British Waterways: *An Illustrated Map of Tring Reservoirs on the Grand Union Canal*.

The longer yellow route of 5 ¾ miles is waymarked in both directions and includes the Wendover and Aylesbury arms of the Grand Union Canal, Wilstone Reservoir, as well as passing through Marsworth at the northern end of Startop's End Reservoir.

The shorter green route of 3 miles is waymarked in one direction only and passes through Little Tring and Marsworth around the Tringford, Startop's End and Marsworth Reservoirs.

A 2.5 miles stroll can also be found following a red waymarked route which can be joined approximately a mile from Tring town centre incorporating Tringford, Startop's End and Marsworth Reservoirs.

There are several opportunities for food and drink rest stops along this section of the itinerary. The **Grand Junction Arms** pub at Bulbourne which is 1.5 miles along the Canal from Tring Station, serves home cooked food and has a beer garden overlooking the Canal. At Marsworth, by the Startop's End Reservoir you are spoiled for choice with the **Bluebell Tea Rooms** and the **White Lion** pubs both overlooking the Canal and the **Anglers Retreat** with a beer garden just across the road from the reservoir.

Tring Reservoirs

The reservoirs were constructed in the early 1800s to store water to top up the Grand Union Canal at a time when it was a bustling artery between London and the Midlands. Even today, at the height of the summer approximately four million gallons of water are pumped daily from the reservoirs into the canal.

The reservoirs became a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest in 1987 and are now a valuable wildlife sanctuary. The four reservoirs, Wilstone, Tringford, Startop's End and Marsworth, sit at the highest level of the Canal and attract many visitors every year to explore the network of paths, to go fishing, bird watch or simply enjoy the tranquillity of this special man-made sanctuary. The reservoirs are abundant in bird life with bird hides and reed beds placed along the routes. The woodland at the southern side of Startop's End and Marsworth Reservoirs is predominantly ash and poplar with alder.

Shop, eat and stay.....

Berkhamsted is a lively medieval town steeped in history. It lies on the Roman Akeman Street linking Verulamium (St. Albans) with Akemancester (Bath) and the town's Saxon fort which later became Berkhamsted Castle was where William the Conqueror was finally handed the English crown in 1066. Henry II once held court there and the remains are well worth a visit (next to the Station, off Brownlow Road). Today the town hosts an interesting mix of shops and restaurants as well as a bustling Saturday market and a monthly farmers market.

Stay and eat at the **Kings Arms Hotel** on the High Street. It dates back to 1656 when it was first licensed as a wine tavern and was the setting for a romance between Louis XVIII of France and the Innkeeper's daughter. You can watch a film in style at the **Rex Cinema** which has a fine art-deco interior and was built in 1938. It was re-opened in 2004 following restoration works, with two bars and seating in the stalls placed around cocktail tables. For organic meats visit **Eastwoods** who specialise in free range and seasonal rare breeds' meat from small suppliers and was judged the best small store in the country in 2005, for the third time, by the Soil Association.

Tring is amongst the most attractive market towns in the Chilterns with a varied selection of shops, pubs and restaurants. It is also steeped in history and can be found at the junction of the ancient Icknield Way and the Roman Akeman Street. One of the main attractions is the **Walter Rothschild Zoological Museum** which hosts a free exhibition of birds, mammals and reptiles. The Museum covers a large site and has extensive facilities including a café, a gift shop, a discovery room, two outdoor picnic areas and free car

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parking including bicycle racks. The Museum is open every day of the year except 24-26 December between 10.00 – 17.00 Monday to Saturday and 14.00 -17.00 on Sundays.

There is a bi-monthly farmers market in Tring held at The Marketplace, Brook Street. For further information and dates contact 01442 842252.

Stay at the **Rose and Crown** on the High Street. The hotel was rebuilt in Tudor style by the Rothschild family at the turn of the century and aims to offer the friendliness of a country hotel, and provide the best of food, wine and present-day comfort.

Other Places of Interest

College Lake Wildlife Centre

Managed by the Berks, Bucks and Oxon Wildlife Trust, College Lake Wildlife Centre is a former chalk quarry which has been transformed into a haven for wildlife and provides a mixture of contrasting habitats - open water, marsh and woodland providing the conditions for a variety of wildlife and making it one of the top bird watching sites in the UK. For visitors there are a selection of trails, 14 bird hides, a farming museum and a visitor centre. There is also a wide range of plants, insects and other animals including rare breeds of sheep and cattle that graze as part of the maintenance programme.

The centre can be found on the Bulbourne Road (B488) some 100 metres north of the Grand Junction Arms pub (1 ½ miles from Tring Station and 2 miles Northeast of Tring). It is open Tuesday to Sunday 10:00-17:00. Closed Monday. Admission is by permit, £2 for a day pass available from the Wardens office.



College Lake (Roger Wilson)

On the water

If you don't feel like being too energetic **Grebe Canal Cruises** hires boats on a daily basis. Located at Pitstone Wharf, 9 miles from Berkhamsted and 4 miles from Tring, the canal boats offer a perfect for a day out on the water with family and friends. Boats are 30 ft long, easy to handle can accommodate up to 10 people with a galley kitchen and a toilet. There are three suggested routes: Travelling north from Pitstone away from civilisation with Dunstable Downs and the Whipsnade Lion as a backdrop. South of Pitstone the canal climbs via the villages of Marsworth and Bulbourne to the summit level of the canal near Tring; or you can head down the Aylesbury arm of the canal and enjoy the remote waters with its narrow locks and wildlife.

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The company also operate a 90 minute return cruise via Marsworth village as well as a three hour cream tea cruise via Marsworth reservoirs, Sunday lunch cruises, dinner cruises and quiz night cruises, as well as private charter for groups up to 60 people.

Pitstone Wharf has a lively atmosphere of a working boatyard and also hosts the Waterside Café which opens each day from 10am (9am at weekends) to 4.30pm serving all day breakfasts, teas, snacks, and light lunches and is popular with cyclists and walkers. The shop is also open for most of the year. Pitstone can be reached by bus via the 61 bus from Tring or the 64 bus from Tring Station and then the Wharf is about a ½ mile from Pitstone (15 minute walk).

Fishing

The reservoirs are also a fishery, managed by the Tring Park estate. Wilstone, Marsworth and Startop's End Reservoirs are fished for carp, roach, tench, pike, bream and catfish, whilst Tringford Reservoir is managed as a trout fishery. The whole length of the Grand Union Canal is available for fishing through membership of one of the many angling organisations. Most sections of canal are leased to established clubs who welcome non-members for a small daily fee.

ITINERARY LISTINGS

Things to do and see:

Berkhamsted Castle, English Heritage

0870 3331181, customers@english-heritage.org.uk, www.english-heritage.org.uk

College Lake Wildlife Centre (Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust)

College Lake Nature Reserve, Upper Icknield Way, Bulbourne, HP23 5QG
01865 775476, info@bbowt.org.uk, www.bbowt.org.uk/

Grebe Canal Cruises, Canal Cruises and Day Boat Hire

Pitstone Wharf, Cheddington Road, Pitstone, Bucks, LU7 9AD
01296 661920, enquiries@grebecanalcruises.co.uk, www.grebecanalcruises.co.uk,

The Rex Cinema, Art Deco cinema

The High Street (Three Corners Lane), Berkhamsted, Herts, HP4 2FG
01442 877759, www.therexcinema.com

The Walter Rothschild Zoological Museum

Akeman Street, Tring, Herts, HP23 6AP
020 7942 6171, tring-enquiries@nhm.ac.uk, www.nhm.ac.uk/museum/tring

Where to stay:

Kings Arms Hotel and Restaurant, ** RAC

Historic Inn with restaurant, room only
147 High Street, Berkhamsted, HP4 3HL
01442 866595, info@kingsarmshotel.com, www.kingsarmshotel.com

Rose and Crown Hotel and Restaurant *** AA

B&B/HB
High Street, Tring, Hertfordshire, HP23 5AH
01442 824071, sales.rose.crown@btconnect.com, www.roseandcrown-tring.co.uk

Where to eat and drink:

The Anglers Retreat, traditional home cooked food (lots of local produce)

Startops End, Marsworth, Tring, Hertfordshire, HP23 4LJ
01442 822250, jane@anglersretreatpub.co.uk, www.anglersretreatpub.co.uk

Bluebell Tea Rooms (British Waterways)

Lock 39. Startops End, Marsworth, Nr Tring, HP23 4LJ
01442 891708

Cow Roast Inn

London Road, Cow Roast, Nr Tring, HP23 5RF
01442 822287

The Grand Junction Arms, home cooked food with large canal side garden

Bulbourne Rd, Bulbourne, Tring, Hertfordshire, HP23 5QE
01442 890677, giles@grandjunctionarms.co.uk, www.grandjunctionarms.co.uk

White Lion Pub and Dining

Startops End, Marsworth, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 4LJ,
01442 822325, whitelionmarsworth@hotmail.com

ITINERARY LISTINGS

What to buy:

Eastwood Butchers, organic
15 Gravel Path, Berkhamsted, HP4 2EF
01442 865012

Farmers markets take place in both Tring and Berkhamsted
www.growninherts.org.uk

How to get around:

As an alternative to cycling, the **Chilterns Rambler 327** bus visits many of the local attractions. It runs three times on Sundays and Public Holidays from May – September along a circular (figure of eight) route from Hemel Hempstead up to Dunstable via Northchurch, Ashridge, Dagnall and Whipsnade and then back down south to Tring via Ivinghoe, Pitstone and Marsworth and back to Hemel Hempstead via Aldbury and Little and Great Gaddesden.

Tring, Marsworth and Pitstone are on the 61 bus route between Aylesbury and Luton while Whipsnade Wild Animal Park can be reached from Tring, Marsworth and Pitstone on the 161 route. Other local buses can be found at www.intalink.org.uk.

ADDITIONAL LISTINGS:

Tring Accommodation Guide, accommodation in Tring and the surrounding area.
01442 823347, www.tring.gov.uk

Premier Travel Inn
0870 242 8000, www.premiertravelinn.com

OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION

British Waterways, manage the Reservoirs and Canal
01908 302500, enquires.southeast@britishwaterways.co.uk, www.britishwaterways.co.uk

Buckinghamshire County Council, various leaflets for routes across the county
01296 383028, www.buckscc.gov.uk

Chilterns AONB, walking, cycling and attractions in the Chilterns
01844 355500, www.chilternsaonb.org/

Chilterns Conservation Board
01844 355500, office@chilternsaonb.org, www.chilternsaonb.org/

Dacorum Information Centre, for local tourist information
01442 234222, www.dacorum.gov.uk

National Trust, visiting hours and handbook
PO Box 39, Warrington, WA5 7WD
0870 458 4000 (minicom 0870 240 3207), www.nationaltrust.org.uk

Waterscape: for cycling and days out by the water
(British Waterways)
www.waterscape.com

HOW TO GET THERE:

Served by the West coast line Berkhamsted and Tring stations connect London (Euston) in under 40 minutes three times an hour and Birmingham to the north, with connections for long-distance express services further north at Watford or Milton Keynes.

Tring Station is two miles from Tring itself. There are only infrequent buses to the station, and none on Sundays. However, the Aylesbury to Hemel Hempstead and Watford bus route (numbers 500 and 501) has a good service, including Sundays, stopping a mile from the station. Get off at the junction of Station Road and Cow Lane.

Traveline for train and bus information
0870 6082608 (code 820), www.traveline.org.uk

Intalink, Herts and Southeast train and bus info
www.intalink.org.uk

24 hours a day, 7 days a week – 08457 484950
www.nationalrailenquires.co.uk

THE CAR@FREE PROJECT:

The *CAReFREE* itineraries are designed to encourage visitors to explore and enjoy the special landscapes of the East of England with minimal impact on the environment, while generating positive benefits for local people. The itineraries give visitors exciting ideas about what to do in the area, by leaving their car at home or at their accommodation, and exploring the area by bike, boat, bus, horse or train.



The itineraries for each area can be found at the following websites:

The Brecks

www.brecks.org

- Enjoy living on a working farm
- Horse riding breaks in and around Thetford Forest
- Biking and Brewing in Thetford Forest

The Broads

www.broads-authority.gov.uk

- Canoe Safaris
- Great ideas for discovering the best of the Broads by cycle
- Walks and sights of the Broads by train and bus

The Chilterns AONB

www.chilternsaonb.org

- Grand Union Canal and Tring Reservoirs
- North Chilterns Villages by Bicycle
- Walking and Cycling in the Northern Chilterns and Hitchin

Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley

www.dedhamvalestourvalley.org

- A day walking through Constable Country
- Days out cycling on the Painters' Trail
- Exploring the Stour Valley on foot

Norfolk Coast AONB

www.norfolkcoastaonb.org.uk

- Exploring the Norfolk Coast Cycleway
- See the wildlife wonders of North Norfolk by bus
- Great ideas for making the most of the area by bus and train

Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB

www.suffolkcoastandheaths.org

- A car free break in Southwold
- Exploring the Stour Estuary
- Woodbridge, Sutton Hoo and the Deben Estuary

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY: If you are business in the one of these areas and would like to write your own itinerary to show visitors how to enjoy the area near you without using their car to get around, you will find a blank itinerary template (a Word document) together with a toolkit explaining how to complete the itinerary, at the websites listed above.



For further information contact:

Chilterns Conservation Board

The Lodge

Station Road

Chinnor

Oxon OX39 4HA

Tel: 01844 355521

Fax: 01844 355501

www.chilternsaonb.org

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