

The Cricketers and Chess Valley, Chilterns, Hertfordshire



Challenging Terrain

5 miles
Circular
2 to 2.5
hours

200114



Access Notes



1. The route includes several climbs and descents throughout.
2. The paths cross fields and woodlands and so can be quite muddy in winter and after periods of rain so robust footwear is recommended (plus a change of shoes for the pub!).
3. Several of the fields are likely to be holding cattle or horses so take care with dogs.
4. You will need to negotiate several gates/kissing gates plus 3 stiles (all of which have open fencing at the side that most dogs should be able to negotiate).

The Cricketers overlooks the green in the village of Sarratt and is a great place to sit with a pint on a sunny day, watching the world roll by.

A 5 mile circular pub walk from the Cricketers in Sarratt, Hertfordshire. The walking route takes in the surrounding classic Chiltern Hills, with peaceful rolling hills and valleys, the pretty River Chess, water meadows and plenty of wildlife to enjoy.

Getting there

Sarratt is located about 4 miles north of Rickmansworth in Hertfordshire. The walk starts and finishes from the Cricketers on The Green, which has its own car park.

Approximate post code **WD3 6AS**.

Walk Sections



Start to Chiltern Way



Standing with your back to the pub's front door, turn left to join the tarmac pavement which passes a sunken pond on the left. This pond, Cricketer's Pond, has an interesting history. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the landlord of the Cricketers pub was also the village wheelwright and undertaker. The pond was used to shrink the newly formed hot iron rims onto the wooden centres of the wheels.

Keep ahead on the pavement and, a little distance before you reach the Post Office ahead, turn left down the signed footpath to Church End (a tarmac driveway running to the right of Ivy Cottage). The driveway becomes gravel and, after passing Rosebush Cottage on the right, keep ahead through a kissing gate into an open field.

Keep straight ahead along the left hand edge of this plus two further fields and then a metal kissing gate leads

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you into woodland. Follow the fenced path which soon runs with garden fences on the left and you will emerge to a T-junction with a tarmac lane, with a beautiful ironwork gate opposite depicting an owl. If you glance left you'll see the junction signpost confirming that this path is part of the Chiltern Way.

1 ➔ 2 Chiltern Way to Sarratt Bottom



Cross the lane diagonally left to pass through the kissing gate/stile combination into a field (which is likely to be holding cattle). Keep straight ahead close to the left-hand field edge and, as the fence swings away to the left, keep straight ahead across the centre of the field, taking time to enjoy the views of the surrounding Chiltern Hills.

At the far side of the field pass through the double gate to reach the church yard. Keep ahead passing to the right of the church. The flint and brick-built Church of the Holy Cross was founded in 1190. More recently the church was used as one of the sets for the BAFTA winning 1994 film *Four Weddings and a Funeral*.

As you draw level with the church porch, bear right to follow the gravel path out to the road. Cross over the end of the tarmac road (with The Barn on the right) and bear right to join the footpath signed to Chorleywood. After just a few yards you'll come to a T-junction with another tarmac drive. Cross over to take the kissing gate opposite which leads you into a large hillside field.

Follow the path heading steadily downhill staying close to the right-hand boundary. Take time to enjoy the views ahead to the slopes on the opposite side of the Chess Valley. These sloped fields contain ridges which are part of an ancient terraced field system called Lynchets, thought to date from the 9th century. Some believe that the ridges were passively formed under the long-term action of gravity and weathering on the loosened soil of a ploughed slope, while others believe they may have been intentionally formed, to prevent erosion and slippage of the ploughed slope.

Towards the bottom of the field you'll reach a small gate ahead, pass through this and continue downhill for a short distance to reach a T-junction with a broad track (and a property on the right).

2 ➔ 3 Sarratt Bottom to Chess Footbridge

Turn right along the level broad track and keep left at the fork to reach a gate which leads you into the next field (again likely to be holding cattle). Keep straight ahead through this field, with the River Chess running down to the left.

At the end of the field you'll come to a crossroads of paths. Keep straight ahead through the kissing gate to join a section of footpath through woodland. The path widens out to a broader tarmac track, Moors Lane. Follow this lane for some distance, ignoring any turnings off to the right. You will eventually reach a T-junction (with a gravel track into a private property opposite).

Turn left here onto the public footpath signed to Latimer, part of the Chess Valley Walk. Follow this concrete track with hillside horse paddocks to the right and pretty water meadows to the left.



Further along on the left you'll pass a number of watercress beds. The clean, warm waters of the River Chess make ideal growing conditions for watercress.

At the end of the lane you will pass alongside the entrance to Crestyl Watercress Farm, keep ahead for a few paces to join the small footbridge over the River Chess. Note: The route does not continue in this direction but it's worth taking a moment here to appreciate the clarity and beauty of the chalk stream, that supports a whole range of wildlife including water voles, ospreys, water rails, kingfishers and brown trout.

3 ➔ 4 Chess Footbridge to Rose Hall Farm



When you've finished enjoying the river, retrace your steps to the entrance for the watercress farm (now on your right). Take the left-hand of the two branches of the lane to continue your walk. The lane leads you up to the entrance of a stables complex. Immediately before the first building on the right, fork right across the grass and pass through a gate to join a path running under a tunnel of trees.

As you emerge from the trees cross the stile (which has a lifting top bar to make it easier for people), cross over the small track and take the kissing gate opposite. Follow this fenced pretty path between coppiced trees heading steadily uphill. You'll notice lots of badger sets along the way, with plenty of fresh soil showing that the badgers are staying on top of their housekeeping!

A little way up, cross a stile and soon afterwards the path continues through a broader section of beech woodland, Hanging Lane Wood. Note: this area is used to rear game birds so take particular care with dogs. As you emerge from the woodland, keep straight ahead on the obvious path between fenced horse paddocks. At the top of the track you'll come to a T-junction with the fenced buildings of Rose Hall Farm ahead and to the left.



Rose Hall Farm to Woodland Crossroads



Turn right along the track and keep right at the small junction. Follow the access lane between horse paddocks and out through the farm's electronic gateway. As the access lane swings hard left, fork right through a gate alongside a disused stile (signed again as the Chiltern Way).

Keep ahead along the right-hand field boundary and at the far end pass through a pair of gates into the next field. (This field may be holding horses, but they may be fenced behind electric fencing). Cross the field at about 1 o'clock and the next kissing gate leads you onto a private driveway. Cross into the next field and continue in the same direction (heading diagonally across to the far corner).

You will emerge through the remains of a kissing gate and down a couple of steps to reach Moor Lane. Turn right for a couple of paces and then turn left up a couple of steps and through a kissing gate into the next field. Go ahead along the left-hand boundary (with more great views across to the right), go through the kissing gate and then cross the next field between 1 and 2 o'clock.

The next kissing gate leads you into a section of woodland. Keep straight ahead through the pretty woodland avenue with a line of conifers to the right and beech trees to the left. At the end of this avenue pass through the kissing gate and after a few paces you'll come to a crossroads of paths within the woodland.



Woodland Crossroads to End



Turn left here and soon you'll reach a metal kissing gate into an open field (note: this field is likely to be holding horses). Keep straight ahead, heading for the corner of the hedge line that cuts into the field. When you reach this hedge corner, bear right to follow the path along the right-hand edge of the remainder of the field.

At the far side you'll reach another kissing gate. Pass through this to join a pretty enclosed track running under a tunnel of trees. You

will emerge to a T-junction with the village road in Sarratt. Turn right along this, heading steadily uphill, with the village green to the left.

Sarratt holds a few literary claims to fame. It was the fictional location of an agent training school for the British intelligence service in some early novels of John le Carre. It was also the set for the 1964 film version of Agatha Christie's Miss Marple novel, *Murder Most Foul*.

Continue over the brow of the hill, crossing the side road Dawes Lane, and keep ahead on the pavement now heading steadily downhill. Continue past the Post Office and village stores and bear slightly left to pass by the village pond on the right. You will come to the Cricketers ahead for some well-earned hospitality.

Disclaimer

This walking route was walked and checked at the time of writing. We have taken care to make sure all our walks are safe for walkers of a reasonable level of experience and fitness. However, like all outdoor activities, walking carries a degree of risk and we accept no responsibility for any loss or damage to personal effects, personal accident, injury or public liability whilst following this walk. We cannot be held responsible for any inaccuracies that result from changes to the routes that occur over time. Please let us know of any changes to the routes so that we can correct the information.

Walking Safety

For your safety and comfort we recommend that you take the following with you on your walk: bottled water, snacks, a waterproof jacket, waterproof/sturdy boots, a woolly hat and fleece (in winter and cold weather), a fully-charged mobile phone, a whistle, a compass and an Ordnance Survey map of the area. Check the weather forecast before you leave, carry appropriate clothing and do not set out in fog or mist as these conditions can seriously affect your ability to navigate the route. Take particular care on cliff/mountain paths where steep drops can present a particular hazard. Some routes include sections along roads – take care to avoid any traffic at these points. Around farmland take care with children and dogs, particularly around machinery and livestock. If you are walking on the coast make sure you check the tide times before you set out.

