

# The George and Dragon Stour Valley and Canterbury Trail, Kent



Moderate Terrain

6 miles  
Circular  
2.5 to 3  
hours

170114



## Access Notes



1. There are several gradients throughout the walk and, whilst the first half of the route follows a solid cycle path, the second half follows grass and dirt paths, parts of which can be quite muddy in the winter and after periods of rain.
2. There are five stiles on route, four of which are on the optional stretch to Canterbury and all of which have open fencing which should allow medium-large dogs to pass through. You will also need to cross two cattle grids (again with gaps alongside suitable for dogs).
3. Allow 2.5 to 3 hours for the full walk (plus extra time to explore Canterbury and its attractions) or 1.5 hours for the shorter walk.

The George and Dragon is a beautiful 15th century pub which was the film set for the Hand of Glory pub in the 1944 film, A Canterbury Tale.

A 6 mile (can be shorted to 3 miles) circular pub walk from the George and Dragon in Fordwich, Kent. The walking route explores the adjacent Stour Valley with the chance to enjoy the pretty River Stour and extensive views from the woodland and open range paths. The full route also includes an additional stretch into the city of Canterbury where you'll have chance to see the famous cathedral and the city's other historical sites (if this optional arm to Canterbury is excluded the walk is reduced to just 3 miles).

## Getting there

Fordwich is located a few miles east of Canterbury and is accessed from the A28. The walk starts and finishes at the George and Dragon which is on King Street. The pub has its own large car park directly opposite.

Approximate post code **CT2 0DB**.

## Walk Sections



### Start to Woodland Section



Leave the main car park (opposite the pub) and turn left and left again to join the stone path which runs immediately to the left of the River Stour. On the right you'll see an ornate metal signpost which signifies this as part of National Cycle Route 1 which runs all the way from Dover to Shetland (but don't worry, we're not walking that far today!).

Follow the path ahead over a bridge and on, winding through the water meadows alongside the River Stour. The Stour was once a strategically important shipping route. Up to the Middle Ages the area of Thanet was an island and the estuary from its channel came up to Canterbury. The estuary was navigable as far as Fordwich, making it an important port. The river

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estuary silted up over time leaving just a small river and, today, Fordwich still marks the tidal limit of the river.

After some distance the cycle path crosses another bridge and leads you into a section of woodland.

## 1 → 2 Woodland Section to Lake Fork



Keep on the stone path as it winds through the pretty mixed woodland. Once the path emerges from the dense woodland, it continues on a long fairly straight stretch with woodland still to the left and the fenced Sturry Community Park to the right. Continue for some distance on the path which now forms part of the Stour Valley Walk, a 51 mile, long distance path which follows the Stour from its source at Lenham out to its estuary at Pegwell Bay.

On the left you'll pass a large fishing lake, known as Reed Pond. Soon after the lake you'll come to a major fork in the path. Fork left, leaving the national cycle network, onto a stone and sand public footpath through the woodland.

## 2 → 3 Lake Fork to St Martin's Church



Keep straight ahead at the first minor crossroads and further along the path swings left (with another path joining in from the right). Continue up to the brow of a small hill and then keep straight ahead on the most obvious path across the centre of the open heath (a military training facility and firing range). After just a short distance you'll reach a T-junction with a major stone track.

You have two choices here: For the shorter, 3 mile walk, turn left along this track and then skip to the instructions in the section called 'Training Ground Junction to Range Fork'. For the full 6 mile walk, with the stretch into Canterbury and back, turn right along this track and keep following the instructions in this section.

When you reach the wire fencing of the barracks ahead, turn right along the grass path following the fence on the left and after just a few yards you'll reach a stile on the left. Cross this and then turn right along the quiet tarmac road, Chaucer Road, heading away from the barracks gate.

Continue steadily downhill and after some distance look out for a footpath sign which marks the point at which the Stour Valley Walk footpath crosses the road. Turn left here over the stile and join the narrow tarmac footpath. Follow the path through a

staggered barrier and you will emerge to a block-paved residential road. Cross over this and take the tarmac footpath directly opposite.

Just a few paces further, look to your right to see St Augustine's Conduit House. Keep ahead as the tarmac path widens to a stone track and then continue straight on, onto St Martin's Avenue. Follow St Martin's Avenue all the way down to the T-junction. Swing left here, and follow the road with St Martin's Church on the left.

## 3 → 4 St Martin's Church to Canterbury Cathedral



As you reach the lych gate on the left, follow the road as it swings right, downhill, to reach a T-junction with the main road. Turn right along the pavement and, on the right, you'll pass the Old Sessions House, part of Canterbury Christchurch university. Further along on the right you'll pass the ruins of St Augustine's Abbey, which you can visit should you wish (the site is run by English Heritage, entrance fees apply, dogs on leads are welcome).

Augustine, a monk from Rome, was sent by Pope Gregory to bring Christianity to Britain, landing in Kent in AD 597. He set up his mission in Canterbury where he founded the monastery and then the cathedral. The cathedral was rebuilt on a grander scale after the Norman conquest and Canterbury remains the religious capital of England to this day.

At the end of the road swing right, passing the impressive old entrance gates to the abbey on the right. Immediately opposite these, cross over the road with care to turn left along Church Street. At the end, cross over the two pedestrian crossings ahead and each side you'll see the lines of the old city walls. Keep straight ahead along Burgate (signed City Centre and Cathedral) and continue as this becomes a pedestrian precinct.

At the end of this street you'll come to the small square, Butter Market, and on the right you'll see the entrance gates to Canterbury Cathedral which you can visit should you wish (entrance fees apply – dogs are welcome in the grounds but not inside the cathedral). You may also want to take some time exploring the city streets which are often packed with people from all over the world; the cathedral attracting more than one million tourists per year. An amazingly diverse range of well-known people were born in Canterbury ranging from the actor Orlando Bloom to the playwright Christopher Marlowe and the creator of Rupert Bear, Mary Tourtel.

## 4 → 5 Canterbury Cathedral to Training Ground Junction

When you're ready to continue, you need to retrace your steps back to the T-junction with the stone track, within the military training ground. To do this:

Head back along Burgate and, at the end, cross over the two pedestrian crossings. Keep ahead into Church Street, signed for St Martin's Church. At the end, cross over with care, turn right





along the pavement and follow it as it swings left. Continue past St Augustine's Abbey and then Old Sessions House both on the left.

Soon afterwards, turn left into North Holmes Road, signed again to St Martin's Church. At the bend in the road you'll see the lych gate of the church ahead. Follow the road as it swings left and then turn right down St Martin's Avenue, signed with a footpath sign for the Stour Valley Walk, with the church on the right.

As the main lane swings hard right, keep straight ahead onto the stone track and keep ahead as this narrows. Pass through the staggered barrier to the block-paved residential road, cross over and keep ahead on the tarmac path opposite. Keep straight ahead through another staggered barrier and at the top, cross a stile out onto Chaucer Road.

Turn right along Chaucer Road and as you reach the barrack gates, turn left over the stile and turn immediately right following the fence line. At the fence corner turn left along the stone track. Just before you reach the fenced assault course training ground, you'll see the path off to the left which is the one you came down earlier. For the return leg do NOT turn left, instead keep straight ahead.



Follow the stone track as it passes between the two fenced sections of the military assault course. When you reach the next junction keep straight ahead over the cattle grid. (Note: there is a gap in the fence to the right for dogs to avoid the cattle grid, but humans will have to pick their way over.)

Keep ahead on the wide grass track across the military range, taking time to enjoy the extensive views on clear days. At the next junction, go ahead again over another cattle grid (the same rules apply for humans and dogs, the dog sized gap being to the left this time). Continue to the point where the main track begins to swing hard left. Fork right here onto a smaller grass path.



About 80 yards in, ignore the stile leading through the gorse on the right, just keep ahead on the main path. Follow the path downhill and pass alongside a metal vehicle gate to join the narrow path through the wooded valley.

You'll come to a T-junction with a wider track, turn left along this. Where the track swings hard left, keep straight ahead onto a narrower grassy track between hedgerows. After just five or six paces, turn right through the staggered posts to join a marked public footpath, again between dense hedgerows. Skirt to the left of the large oak tree and you will come to the edge of the golf course.

Go straight ahead crossing two fairways and heading for the white and yellow posts at the far side. Please show consideration to the golfers (and your own safety) by allowing any players on the tees or fairways to take their shots before you cross. As you near the far side, pass to the right of the first white and yellow marker and to the left of the second one to reach a gap in the hedge.

Follow the narrow woodland path and cross a footbridge over a stream. The path then swings left and then right to cross a sleeper bridge and then emerges out into a crop field. Go straight ahead across the field, heading for the left-hand edge of the brick built cottage on the far boundary. As you reach this cottage, turn left down the stone track along the edge of the crop field.

Keep ahead through the open gateway and down the stone track to reach a stile. Cross this and keep straight down the gravel track which becomes a tarmac lane between cottages. You'll emerge to a T-junction with the road with the George and Dragon directly opposite 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.

