

The Colchester Orbital Walk

The Colchester Orbital is a 14-15-mile circular route around town, connecting some of our loveliest green spaces. The route is mapped in 3 sections (East, South and West). Route guides and information on route accessibility are downloadable from the Orbital website:

<https://www.walkcolchester.org.uk/the-colchester-orbital>

The Colchester Orbital Walk (East)

Clockwise from High Woods Country Park to Wivenhoe Park, via Welsh Wood (East A) or Churn Wood and Crockleford (East B), and Salary Brook Nature Reserve

About this route...

- ❖ Start point: High Woods Country Park (Visitor Centre), Turner Road
- ❖ Grid ref: TL 99900 27078
- ❖ End point: Meadows Café, Annan Road (University of Essex).
- ❖ Distance: East A: 5.4 miles; East B: 6.5 miles
- ❖ Bus routes to/from town centre: 8, 61, 65, 68
- ❖ Facilities at start: car park; café; toilets; children's play areas.

1. Take the main path into the woods heading east from the Visitor Centre, past the climbing wall & children's play areas. At the junction of woodland paths, just before Lake Field, head right along the edge of the woods, until the junction with the cycle path (National Route 1). Head left here across the valley. At the waymark at the top of the hill, signposted 'Chanterelle & Hillridge', go right. Continue until Chanterelle car park, then go left to leave the park.
2. Follow Chanterelle for 130m, then go right onto Myland Hall cycle path. Continue as it winds through the backs of houses to join the Ipswich Rd at the BP garage. Go right here, & cross at the traffic lights. On the far side, go right then head off almost immediately left onto a further footpath, signposted to 'St. John's'.
3. Continue, crossing Chalfont Rd & St Cyrus Rd. At St John's Rd, go left & cross over. After approx. 170m, go right onto Bullace Close. Follow until it merges with a footpath running through a short stretch of woodland ending at a grassy triangle. Go left & take the headland path around the field (hedgerow to the left). At a junction of footpaths at the end of the field, go right, & follow the farm track until it reaches the Harwich Rd at a small farmstead.
4. At the Harwich Rd look left for a lane entrance on the far side approx. 30m along, signposted 'Private Lane' & 'Public Footpath - Crockleford'. Cross carefully. Follow the lane over a railway bridge and along to a junction of footpaths at Shaw's Farm. Here the Orbital East A & B routes divide.

The Orbital East A (Shaw's Farm to Salary Brook, via Welsh Wood)

- 5a At Shaw's Farm, at the junction of paths, go right past the pond & along the headland (hedgerow to the right) to the end of the field. Just before the next field, take a short footpath (right) at a red litter bin, then go left onto Woodlands Rd. Follow it gently downhill, then at the right-hand bend at the bottom, go left into Welsh Wood Nature Reserve.
- 6a Follow the main path through Welsh Wood, finally exiting on to Barbel Rd. Bear left, following the road upwards, & left again at Salary Close. At the junction with the busy Bromley Road (initially Bromley Heights), go left & cross over. Head downhill, crossing Longridge, until the Beehive Pub (left). Take the footpath (right, opposite) signposted to Salary Brook Nature Reserve.

- 7a Follow the Salary Brook Trail along the full length of the valley at the foot of Greenstead (open greensward to the left & views of farmland). In the mid-section of the trail, the Orbital East A & B routes merge again, just before Pickford Walk (right).

The Orbital East B (Shaw's Farm to Salary Brook, via Churn Wood and Crockleford).

- 5b At Shaw's Farm, go left & at the farmyard, cross to the far-right corner & take the headland path around the field. Pass a waymark & short bridge leading to a kissing gate (left); do not take! At a 2nd waymark, just after the next right-hand corner, look for a gap in deep hedgerow (left) with a metal kissing gate. Take this and follow a foot-worn path across the next open field, sloping downwards to woodland on the far side. Enter via another kissing gate.
- 6b In the woods continue over a wooden footbridge and a decked area. Head straight on, as the path slopes upwards & finally opens into a yard with buildings, a gravel track ahead & gate marked 'Do not enter' (right). Look for a waymark on the right & take the headland footpath here. Continue to a wooden footbridge with guardrail. Cross and go right around the edge of the next field, until it meets the Bromley Rd. Go right & walk with caution (no pavement at first). Pass Colchester Cat Rescue & Blenheim Garden Centre. After approx. 400m, cross & take a footpath signposted left into the shared entrance to 2 fields with tree-line between them directly ahead. Take the path along the right side of the tree-line. At the far corner of the field, bear right & look for a wooden stile with a pull-up dog gate (left). Cross into woodland.
- 7b Follow a narrow path through woodland. At a wide gate with buildings beyond, continue straight on a shingle path and take a short grassy path coming out on to a field. Go right & follow the headland. At the corner of the field, head slightly right through trees downhill for approx. 100m to a wooden bridge. Cross and enter the field beyond via a gate. Continue uphill along the field's edge. At a gravel track, go right and follow as it meanders onwards (approx. 600m). The track slopes down to a farmhouse. Go left at the house & after approx. 100m, turn right on to a grassy path that runs between a meadow (left) & hedgerow (right). Shortly beyond is a wooden stile to a field on the right.
- 8b Cross into the field (may be grazed by cows) & turn left along the headland. At a further stile & gate, cross into the next field & continue along the path-line as it begins to head diagonally downhill towards the far right-hand corner. Cross a final stile onto a metaled path and then a footbridge. Continue straight on until a T-junction with the main footpath of the Salary Brook Trail, with walled back gardens directly ahead. Turn left here to rejoin the Orbital East A route.

The final section

- 9 The Orbital now continues again as a single route. At the end of the valley, at Clingoe Hill (A133), take the path bearing right just before the underpass, and head up to the road, Turn left on Clingoe Hill, continue to the traffic lights and cross over to enter the University of Essex (Wivenhoe Park) on Boundary Road. Shortly afterwards, at the roundabout, go right onto Capon Road. Head downhill, then turn left onto Annan Road at the bottom.
- 10 The Meadows Pavilion shop & café is immediately on your left.

The Orbital East ENDS HERE

The Colchester Orbital Walk (South)

Clockwise from Wivenhoe Park to Shrub End (Norman Way, South), via the Hythe, Bourne Valley, and Colchester Cemetery or Middlewick Ranges.

About this route...

- ❖ Start point: Meadows Café, Annan Road (University of Essex).
- ❖ Grid ref: TM 02272 24190
- ❖ End point: Norman Way (South), off Shrub End Road
- ❖ Distance: South A: 4.2 South B: 4.6 miles
- ❖ Bus routes to start point: 61, 62, 62B, 74B, 75B, 97, 98
- ❖ Facilities at start: general store with outdoor seating.

1. From Meadows Pavilion shop and café (University of Essex), head south on Annan Rd & over the ramped railway bridge. Continue straight on through the University 'Quays' until the path meets the Colne river. Go right along the quayside, until the path reaches a junction with Colne Causeway. Cross at the pedestrian crossing, go left along the Causeway & cross the river. At the roundabout beyond, go right on to Hythe Quay, signposted to the Town Centre, & almost immediately, cross with caution at the designated crossing point (mouth of the roundabout).
2. On Hythe Quay continue past 'Assembly Directmail' & (before the Spinnaker Inn) look for a left turn on to a footpath signposted (via yellow arrow) to Recreation Rd & Hythe Hill. The short section of the Orbital that follows has very steep gradients & mixed terrain. The lower end has been improved by a stretch of wooden boardwalk. Beyond this, the path begins a long, steep ascent. At a junction of footpaths at Parson's Lane (marked by a staggered barrier & red litter bin), go left & continue (metal fence to the left, steep bank of trees to the right).
3. The footpath ends as Recreation Rd (to the right) begins. Follow Recreation Rd for approximately 100m to Old Heath Recreation Ground (right), then go left on to Scarletts Rd (note, GO4's 'Café on the Rec', offering refreshments & public toilets here). Follow Scarletts Rd down to a T-junction with Old Heath Rd. Look leftwards for a black weather-boarded building (Butterfly Barns Day Nursery) a short distance along on the far side, with adjacent bus stop. Cross with caution.
4. Take the earthen footpath that runs along the right-hand side of the barn, towards Bourne Valley. A wooden chicane marks the entrance (& likewise exit at Bourne Pond). Access is in part via a raised wooden boardwalk that meanders for approx. 500m along the undulating, largely level, bottom of the valley, interspersed with some earthen sections. At the end of the valley, exit via the second chicane and take the footpath left, up to Stalin Road.

The Orbital South A (Bourne Valley to the Garrison, via Colchester Cemetery)

- 5a At Stalin Rd go right, keeping to the grass verge (there is no pavement). Walk around the back of the long parking bay ahead & look for a steep foot-worn path cutting a channel down into the woods. The terrain is earthen, & the path steep at first with a significant camber, but levels out & winds gently downhill to the exit at Mersea Rd. Exit the woods here, opposite the lower entrance to Colchester Cemetery. Cross with caution.
- 6a Enter the cemetery via the entrance on the far side of the Mersea Rd. From the entrance follow the main path straight ahead, past a red brick toilet block with accessible facility on the right. As the path heads gently upwards, pass a turning off to the left. Shortly afterwards, reach the Starlight Florists & Tea Room, housed in a chapel on the right as the path levels out. Beyond the chapel, continue, crossing over the first junction of paths. At the second, go right. Continue straight over the third & then go left at the keeper's cottage. At the next junction, go right and keep straight on to the exit gates on the far side of the cemetery.

7a At the exit, go left along the outer perimeter of the cemetery. Follow this footpath to the far outer corner of the cemetery (approx. 300m), & then around a sharp right turn at Willows allotment. After a short distance, a path on the left marks the point at which the Orbital South B (below) re-joins the South A. Continue straight on past.

The Orbital South B (alternative route from Bourne Valley to the Garrison, via Middlewick Ranges)

5b At Stalin Rd go left, and continue, crossing Roosevelt Way, to a T-junction with Churchill Way. Go right, cross, and shortly after, take a lane (left) towards garages. At the end, bear left on to Jackson Walk & continue until Abbot's Rd. Go left, cross & take the stile opposite on to Middlewick Ranges (Garrison land, occasionally used for army training). Follow a foot-worn path diagonally across the grassland to the tree line ahead. Continue through the trees & emerge onto further grassland, close to the Mersea Rd on the right. Shortly after, exit the Ranges at the main gate & go left on Mersea Rd. Cross over and continue for approx. 200m until open greensward on the right.

6b Heading away from the Mersea Rd, keep on straight across greensward for approx. 500m in total, crossing Queen Elizabeth Way and then School Rd (keeping school buildings to the right). Then continue onward via a metal barrier, and further greensward with blue outdoor courts (right), with high surround blue fencing. Immediately beyond, at the second school entrance, bear left towards a small roundabout (marking the entrance to the school site from Monkwick Avenue).

7b Instead of exiting here, go diagonally across the roundabout & take a footpath on the far side for a short distance through the tree line to a T-junction with a shared foot/cycle path, with the new Garrison buildings visible ahead. Go right, then follow path around the perimeter of the Garrison until a further T-junction of paths (approx. 450m). At this point the Orbital South A & B routes merge once again. Go left here (Cemetery to the right).

The final section

8. Head towards the flyover. Immediately in advance of it, a foot/cycle path merging from the right offers a mostly off-road route into town (via Abbey Field), & acts as one of the Orbital's 'spokes'. Go under the flyover & continue parallel to Berechurch Rd for approx. 350m to a junction with a foot/cycle path (signposted left to the Garrison's Physical & Recreational Training Area; straight ahead to Friday Woods). Go right, signposted 'Layer Rd' and continue for approx. 1 km on this off-road walk/cycle path, crossing Fallowfield Rd at Garrison entrance. Cross the Layer Rd at traffic lights & take Boadicea Way (opposite to the left).

9. Continue on Boadicea Way for approx. 800m, around the perimeter of Shrub End Playing Field & West End Sports Ground, until Shrub End Rd. Cross at the traffic lights & continue straight over on to Norman Way, which reaches a dead end shortly afterwards just past The Commons (left), at the entrance to Irvine Rd allotments & cut-through to adjacent greensward at Landseer Rd.

The Orbital South ENDS HERE

The Colchester Orbital Walk (West)

Clockwise from Shrub End (Norman Way, South) to High Woods Country Park, via Hilly Fields or Lexden Park, and Cymbeline Meadows

About this route...

- ❖ Start point: Norman Way (South), off Shrub End Road
- ❖ Grid ref: TL 97891 24054
- ❖ End point: High Woods Country Park Visitor Centre, Turner Road
- ❖ Distance: West A: 4.1 miles; West B: 4.4 miles
- ❖ Bus routes 1, 75, 79, 92
- ❖ Facilities at start: nearest cafés at Prettygate (approx. 1/3 mile along The Commons)

The Orbital West A (via Hilly Fields)

- 1 Take the cut-through at the end of Norman Way (South), by Irvine Road allotments, and continue across greensward to a T-junction of paths with playing fields beyond. Go right.
- 2a After approx. 70m, immediately before a staggered barrier, take a narrow footpath to the left leading into tree-line. Follow for approx. 650m, with playing fields either side, to a parking area. Exit straight ahead on to Park Road and continue to the T-junction with Lexden Road.
- 3a At Lexden Rd, cross and head right, then take the second left onto Sussex Road. Follow to its end at the entrance to Hilly Fields.
- 4a Head diagonally right across the open grassland of Hilly Fields, then wind downhill towards the long white buildings of Colchester Institute. At a T-junction of paths go left, then left again shortly afterwards on Sheepen Way.
- 5a At Cymbeline Way, head right to cross at the pelican crossing. Then double-back and enter Cymbeline Meadows after approx. 200m via a kissing gate (right) onto Water Lane. Follow northwards and cross the River Colne at Sheepen bridge. Water Lane then merges with The Chase Way.
- 6a Approx. 250m beyond the bridge, at a sharp left-hand bend, head right instead (effectively straight on), to take a grassy headland footpath. Follow this gently upwards towards a bank of trees ahead - this is Charter Wood. Here the Orbital West A & B routes merge again.

The Orbital West B (via Lexden Park and Spring Park)

- 2b At the T-junction of paths beyond Norman Way, go left instead. Cross the entrance to Philip Morant School on Rembrandt Way. Continue on the footpath opposite, which runs for approx. 400m, parallel to the Iron Age earthworks of Bluebottle Grove (left). At a triangular intersection, go left. Shortly afterward, at open greensward, take a foot-worn path hugging the tree-line to the right; then look for an A-frame barrier ahead, leading into Lexden Park woods and Local Nature Reserve.
- 3b Enter the woods, turn immediately left along the boundary, then right soon after to head into the woodland. At the bottom of a flight of wooden steps head left and onwards through the woods until a short section of boardwalk. Follow this to a further flight of steps leading down out of the woods and into the park's meadowland. Head right along the length of the park.
- 4b In the far diagonal corner, just beyond the lake, exit via a small car park onto Church Lane. Cross with care and go right. At the junction with Lexden Road, adjacent to St Leonard's Church, cross straight over onto Spring Lane (running between Spring Lane Park, left, and Lexden Springs Nature Reserve, right).

- 5b At Spring Lane roundabout, head right. At the mouth of the roundabout from the direction of Cymbeline Way, cross with great care, utilizing the central triangular island (with paved path and dropped kerbs). Take Spring Lane (north) heading away from the roundabout. This single lane has occasional fast traffic and some sections without pavement, so negotiate with care. Follow for approx. 370m, crossing the River Colne midway.
- 6b At a sharp left-hand bend, with cottages opposite, Spring Lane becomes Bakers Lane and continues left. Go right instead onto The Chase Way, signposted 'Cymbeline Meadows Farm Trail'. Follow past Spring Lane Tennis Club (right). Where the lane reaches some hard-standing and appears to divide, keep right. At a second parting of lanes, where The Chase Way continues right, go left and merge onto a farm track. Follow across the top of Cymbeline Meadows to Charter Wood, with arable land to either side and beautiful views across to Colchester's skyline. At the entrance to Charter Wood, rejoin the West A.

The final Section

- 7 In the woods, bear ahead and left to take the tunnel under the railway line. On the far side, turn right onto a footpath running parallel, then follow it away from the line with Bergholt Road allotment to the right. Where the footpath merges with Propelair Way, continue straight on for a short while and then take an off-road footpath (straight on again) as Propelair Way bears away left. Where it finally emerges at Tufnell Way, go right.
- 8 At Bergholt Road, cross and continue almost directly ahead onto a short tarmac drive between houses. At its end, go left onto a grassy farm track, which merges with a gravel access lane along the backs of houses.
- 9 At the end of the lane, take the footpath (right) and follow through trees before it opens out and runs gently upwards between hedgerow for approx. 480m. At the top, pass through a tree line onto open grassland and take the right-hand of two foot-worn paths heading diagonally away. On the far side, enter a short, wooded corridor and bear left.
- 10 Emerge onto Braiswick Lane, go right and continue to Mile End Road at the war memorial, opposite St Michael's Church. Cross and enter the churchyard. Take the main path through to the right of the church, and leave the churchyard via a footpath in its far corner. After a short stretch between high wooden fencing running between houses, emerge onto Bolsin Drive. Go right and follow to the junction with Dickenson Road. Cross and bear left. A short distance on, turn right between houses on to a foot/cycle path. Keep going straight, crossing two mini roundabouts.
- 11 Approx. 100m beyond the second (on Hakewill Way), turn left onto a short stretch of footpath leading to the Northern Approach Road. Cross at the lights. On the far side, a wide, off-road path sweeps downhill towards the hospital and merges with its road network. Follow the road as it bends around initially to the left, then bear right along the main exit road from the hospital.
- 12 At Turner Road, look across and right for a footpath on the far side. Cross over to follow the path as it runs between houses, off-road, for approx. 200m towards High Woods Country Park, whose trees are visible beyond. Enter the park via an opening immediately to the left of the furthest house.
- 13 Inside the park, follow the woodland path to the right for a further approx. 300m until it meets the Visitor Centre car park back at the main entrance. The Orbital West ends here.

The Orbital West ENDS HERE

We hope you enjoy your walk!