With a pub at the start and one half-way round there are endless excuses for lunch, dinner or just sampling the ale

A 4 mile circular walk taking in two Adnams pubs in Suffolk; The Bell Inn in Middleton and The White Horse in Westleton. Apologies if you were expecting a connection with the ‘Ride a Cock Horse to Banbury Cross’ nursery rhyme! The route follows the farmland and heath paths connecting the villages, taking in this peaceful stretch of the Suffolk countryside.

Getting there

Middleton village is located about 5 miles north-east of Saxmundham in Suffolk. The walk starts and finishes from The Bell Inn pub on The Street, which has its own car park.

Approximate post code IP17 3NN.

Walk Sections

Start to Vale House Farm

Leave the pub car park via the vehicle entrance and turn left along the village lane, taking care of any traffic. Follow the road, Rectory Road, as it bends right and on the right you’ll pass the village school with the village church behind. It is not unusual for schools, churches and pubs to be in close proximity within a village – an area at the centre of the village often described as providing education, salvation and damnation!

Just a few paces after the school, turn left onto the signed footpath which passes to the left of the Old Church Room cottage. The path continues through a (sometimes boggy!) area of scrub. Keep ahead and then cross a footbridge over a stream to continue on the rough grass path. You will

Access Notes

1. There are just a few gentle gradients and some of the unmade paths can become quite muddy after rain and in winter.
2. There is one kissing gate and one stile on route (the stile has an open fence surround for dogs to pass through), but both the gate and stile can be avoided if you need, with just a short diversion along the village road.
3. There are a couple of sections of walking along country lanes plus one section along the edge of a busier road – so take particular care of traffic at these points.
emerge out to a T-junction with a tarmac lane at Vale House Farm.

1⇒2 Vale House Farm to White Horse Inn

Turn right along the lane, passing a range of outbuildings and a converted barn on the left. About 100 yards later, turn left along the stone track, signed as a footpath. Follow this surfaced track steadily uphill with open fields to the left. Over the brow of the hill you’ll pass a small wind turbine on the right. Simply keep straight ahead on the obvious track as it winds between fields. The track will eventually lead you to a T-junction with Yoxford Road.

Turn right here along the road, taking care of any traffic. After passing the property The Grange on the left (and the adjacent track – Wash Lane), fork left over a stile into a field. (Note: if you wish to avoid this stile and the gate at the far side of the field, just keep ahead to the road junction, turn left and then continue until you see the gravel drive on the left up to the church. This is just before the war memorial. Now pick up the instructions from the last paragraph in this section).

If you’re following the field path, cross the field diagonally to the opposite corner and pass through the kissing gate into the church yard. The fourteenth-century thatched village church of St. Peter in Westleton was built by monks from Sibton Abbey near Saxmundham. It is Grade II listed. Keep right, passing the church to the left. Follow the gravel drive down to the road. Turn left along the road.

Follow the pavement, passing the village hall and war memorial on the right. On the right you’ll see the White Horse Inn, turn right down the stone driveway before it and you’ll come to the garden entrance on the left. Take time for a pit stop – you are almost half way round this walk.

2⇒3 White Horse Inn to King’s Farm

When you are ready to continue, return to the stone track between the pub and its car park. Standing with the pub to the left and the car park to the right, turn right along the village road and you will pass the village pond on the right.

You will reach the crossroads in the heart of the village. If you glance to the right you’ll see the village stores and also Chapel Books, the aptly named second-hand bookshop based in a converted chapel. Westleton is a thriving village and received national publicity after it was revealed that the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge had spent the night preceding their first wedding anniversary here.

3⇒4 King’s Farm to Treatment Works

Go straight ahead into Bakers Lane. Continue over the brow of a small hill and then, after passing Briar Cottage on the right, turn left onto the signed footpath into Westleton Common. After just a few yards you’ll reach a crossroads with another track, turn right along this through the mix of gorse, heather and grassland.

Soon the path swings left to leave the common and passes under a tunnel of hedgerow plants with fenced fields each side. With hawthorn, elder and brambles, this sort of ancient hedgerow is a favourite with foragers! Beyond this tunneled hedgerow you’ll come to King’s Farm on the left, with its converted barn topped with a cat and mouse weather vane.

Keep straight ahead along the gravel driveway. You will emerge out to a T-junction with a quiet lane. Turn right along this, taking care of any traffic. After just one field length, turn right again onto the signed bridleway, a pretty grass lane known as Hardpiece Lane.

You will come to a junction with Mill Road. Cross over and take the main grass path directly opposite. Keep ahead along this grass and stone track through another section of Westleton Common, lined each side with dense gorse. The grass track emerges from the common and continues with fenced fields each side. Note: the wire fencing is very open and the fields are likely to be holding cattle so take care that dogs don’t stray into the fields. On the left you’ll pass a sewerage treatment works.

4⇒5 Treatment Works to End

Keep straight ahead on the wide surfaced track continuing between fields. You’ll emerge to a T-junction with the main road, Reckford Road. (Note: this next section of the walk follows the edge of this busy road – take extreme care of the traffic, using
the grass verges where possible and crossing over where necessary to make yourself visible within the bends.)

Turn left along the road edge. Follow the road over the river at Reckford Bridge and a little further along you'll pass the 30mph speed restriction signs marking the start of Middleton village. Follow the left-hand grass verge until you reach the sharp left-hand bend in the road. Cross over with extreme care to take the side road signed to Middleton village. Follow the quiet village access lane ahead, keeping right at the fork to pass The Old Rectory on the right. The lane will lead you past the school and church and beyond this you'll come to The Bell Inn 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 woollen 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.