

Walk 1: Greensted Church

The oldest wooden church on the planet is not in the Middle East, or tucked away in one of the perfectly preserved medieval towns of central Europe. It's in Essex – and little more than a stone's throw from Colemans Farm.

Distance	2.5miles
Minimum time	1hr-ish
Level of Difficulty	*
Paths	Track and field paths prone to muddiness
Landscape	Rolling farmland, patches of woodland
Getting there	Walk straight from Colemans Farm. No car required.
Dog friendliness	Good
Amenities	Take a Packed Lunch and an empty bladder

The 51 timber planks that form the nave of tiny St Andrew's Church, in the village of Greensted-juxta-Ongar, were cut from English oaks in around 1060 – six years before the arrival of William the Conqueror. The building has been touched up since, of course. The brick chancel was added in the 16th century, its distinctive white tower dates back to the 17th century, while the stained glass windows are Victorian. But almost 1,000 years later those vertical planks remain in-situ, making St Andrew's the oldest timber church on Earth, and almost certainly the oldest wooden building anywhere in Europe.

In 1837 as a result of a public outcry against their harsh sentence of transportation to Australia, the famous Dorset farmers known as the 'Tolpuddle Martyrs' were returned to England where they were given tenancies in Greensted and High Laver. Still available for view in the church is the marriage entry of one of them, James Brine, who married Elizabeth Standfield, the daughter of another of the martyrs at Greensted Church in 1839.

Walk Directions

1. Walk to the end of Colemans Lane and turn left onto Toot Hill Road. Continue on the road for approximately 75mtrs and you will see a white semi-detached cottage (No. 5 Toot Hill Road). Cross the road and join the footpath next to the cottage boundary line. The footpath leads you along a path aside a large, open garden (recently converted from a field).
2. At the end of the garden path you will reach a gate leading to a farmer's field. Turn right and follow the footpath across the field to the boundary edge. Continue on the footpath with a woodland on your right. The woodland will break and you may see a further footpath sign to the right, which you should ignore. Continue with the field on your left and a hedgerow on your right until a wide break in the hedgerow appears. Turn right and enter the top of a large field which heads down towards a dry brook and a small bridge.
3. Continue across the bridge and into a final field. You will pass two ancient oaks on your left. Continue up past the oaks, up to the end of the footpath and continue through the path in the hedgerow which will lead you through the garden of an old farm-owned bungalow.
4. Once you have walked through the property you will reach Toot Hill Road. Turn right and walk alongside the road and past a small pond to a cross-road. Walk across Blake Hall Road into Pensons Lane and continue along the lane until it turns into a footpath.

5. Walk to the end of the road on Pensons Lane until it turns into a country path. Continue on the path, through a woodland and woodland ponds, until you reach a large converted house. Turn right and follow the path around the garden. The path will join you to a large field with sweeping views, including Greensted church.
6. Follow the straight footpath across to fields, through a gate and a further field which at certain times of the year is home to sheep. You will eventually join a country lane which will lead you past a cluster of cottages and then St Andrews, Greensted Church on your left.
7. Once you have taken in the church (see further notes below), re-trace your steps, back past the converted barn cottages and on the left you will see a footpath which will take you across three fields until you reach Greensted Road. Cross the road and follow the footpath along a field. Half-way up the field take the left-hand footpath which will take you through a number of small enclosed fields used for horses.
8. Turn right and follow the footpath into a woodland, past a fenced house (Widows). Once you have passed through the woodland turn left follow the path with the woodland on your left and the large field on your right. You will come back to the footpath at point 1 above. Retrace your steps back to Toot Hill Road and then Colemans Lane, and you are home!

While you're at Greensted Church:

- A perfect spot for a **Packed Lunch**, sit in the peaceful and well maintained garden grounds of the church and take a peek inside the church, which is generally open to the public.
- On the north-western side of the church a 'lepers squint' is built into the Saxon woodwork. This would have allowed lepers to receive a blessing from the priest with holy water.
- Look out for the oldest grave, lying adjacent to the entrance to the church is that of a twelfth century Crusader, thought to be a bowman.
- See the stained glass windows which depict the martyr of St Edmund, an East Anglian king killed by marauding Vikings in the 9th century for refusing to renounce his faith. In typical brutal fashion they tied him to a tree, filled his body with arrows and then removed his head. Poor Edmund's head was supposedly found by his followers thanks to the cries of a magical wolf. A shrine was built in his honour in Bury St Edmunds but in 1010, his remains were moved to London to protect them from another Viking raid. In 1013, when it was being returned to Bury St Edmunds, his body spent the night at Greensted Church.

Walk 2: Chipping Ongar

Rolling farmlands, big skies and a pretty Essex village where missionary David Livingstone lived and preached.

Distance	6.5 miles / 6.4 kms
Minimum time	3hrs 30 mins
Level of Difficulty	**
Paths	Track and field paths prone to muddiness, stretches of road, 5 stiles
Landscape	Rolling farmland, patches of woodland, village streets
Getting there	Walk straight from Colemans Farm. No car required.
Dog friendliness	Larger, or older, dogs may find stiles difficult
Amenities	Good choice of local cafes, pubs and restaurants on the High Street, Ongar

Chipping Ongar's most famous resident was once the explorer and missionary David Livingstone. In 1838 Livingstone moved to Ongar as part of his missionary training. He lived in a room near the United Reformed church in the High Street, Ongar, and in his spare time would preach at local churches as well as take long walks in the countryside. He was renowned for getting lost!

On this walk you take the Essex Way which is nicely waymarked, to Greensted and the oldest wooden church in the world. Livingstone would have walked around this delightful church discovering the crusader coffin in the churchyard and the original timbers which archaeologists confirm date back to 1066. After which you traverse farmlands to Stanford Rivers climbing to a fine ridge of ancient oaks at Kettlebury Spring and views of rolling countryside.

Walk Directions

1. From the rear of the car park beside the police station take the Essex Way towards Greensted. AS the path narrows, walk between the dwarf oaks, over the cross path and through the kissing gate and keep ahead, passing the pond of Greensted Hall on your right. Walk through the gate, passing Church Lodge on your left; Greensted church is on your right.
2. Keeping the church on your right, bear right towards a barn conversion and go through the waymarked gate. After 100 yds (91mtrs) turn left across the footbridge and follow the field-edge path keeping the hedgerow on your right. Maintain this direction through three fields, passing Greensted Wood on your right, until you reach Greensted Road. Turn left and pick up the footpath on your right. Continue along the field-edge path keeping hedgerows on your left for about 100yds, where you go through a kissing-gate so that the hedgerow is now on your right. Negotiate a series of stiles and squeezer stiles.
3. At the fifth stile turn right, pass to the right of Widows Farm and continue along an enclosed path of The Essex Way. At a Y-junction of paths take the left path diagonally across the field to a hedge. Keep the hedge on your left and continue ahead towards houses. Turn right along the lane and at T-Junction turn left towards Colemans Farm.
4. As the lane bears right into Colemans Farm, maintain direction on to the bridleway for 0.5mile (800m), ignoring paths left and right until you reach the tarmac lane. Just before the T-junction, turn right on to the cross-field path to Stanford Rivers. At the converted barn dwellings on your left, turn right on to the gravel path then left on to School Road with St Margaret's Church on your left.

5. Walk past the church to the crossroads and turn left. After 400 yds (366m) follow the right turn next to the house called Ambermead. Maintain direction on the uphill path for views of farmland and pass the ridge of oak trees at Kettlebury Spring. Follow the path past the school and turn right to reach The Borough. Continue to the T-junction passing the Two Brewers pub on the right. Turn left into the High Street and return to the car park.

While you're in Ongar

- Visit the site of the **Norman castle** just behind the High Street. Take the path beside the library and follow the signs to an impressive motte. An information board explains the layout of the castle.
- Behind Ongar's High Street seek out the 11th Century **St Martin's Church** with its narrow round headed windows.
- Food: There are plenty of cafes and restaurants that require no booking. They include The Kings Head (centre of the village), The Cock Tavern (next to the library) or the Two Brewers or Royal Oak for a pint and bag of pork scratchings..
- The cheesemonger: Head through the village, past the Budworth Hall and police station and just before you reach the Tesco petrol station there is a wonderful cheese shop with a good selection of cheeses. Address: Unit 5, Central House, Chipping Ongar, CM5 9AA
- Pick-up the Epping-Ongar Railway, a heritage railway that runs on a former part of the tube network. <https://www.eorailway.co.uk/>

Walk 3: Fyfield

Farming village with meandering footpaths, Constable Landscapes and our favourite country pub.

Distance	2.5 miles
Level of Difficulty	*
Paths	Good footpaths and country trails, and country lanes with little traffic
Landscape	Rolling farmland, patches of woodland, village streets
Getting there	Car required. 10 minute drive to Fyfield village, which lies on the B184 about 3 miles north of Chipping Ongar
Dog friendliness	Good
Amenities	For food and drink, The Queen's Head (our firm favourite) and The Black Horse (sturdy old-fashioned grub)

Walk Directions

1. At the road junction by the Queen's Head pub, turn right out of Queens Street onto the B184 and then almost immediately take the footpath on the left. Go diagonally across the field and at the fork in the middle of the field go right, taking you over wooden planks and into the next field. Continue on to the little lane and turn right. At the end of the lane, cross over the main road to the Black Bull pub.
2. Go round to the right of the pub and by the car park you will see a stile with a sign to Fyfield church. Take this path and proceed to the wooden bridge into the next field and then over a concrete bridge which crosses the stream. Go straight over along the footpath which soon ends at the farm track. Turn right and soon after look out for the arrow on the footpath post taking you through a line of conifer trees to your left. Then bear right to go alongside the conifers. At the end of the field the path takes you to the road and the parish church.
3. Go down Common Lane and proceed all the way past cottages to the end where you bear right down the public bridleway, part of the Essex Way. Proceed down a shaded path and at the end, where it opens out by the junction of paths veer left and go over the footbridge you see in front of you.
4. On the other side go straight on (leaving the Essex Way, which goes left), keeping the hedge to your right and joining the Three Forests Way. Then go slightly left down a path. After a few hundred yards, lookout on the right for a footpath post, the route going between two large wooden gates.
5. Continue along the Three Forests Way across an open field. At the end of this field cross the brook by the wooden sleepers and go straight on. Follow the yellow arrows straight ahead to the playing field and the children's corner of the playing field and turn right down an alley to the road. On the right are the grounds of Mill House (where there are some good leaves to collect) but the house itself is private. Turn left to return to the Queen's Head pub.

While you're in Fyfield

- Have a drink, or better still, a meal, at **The Queen's Head**. Its pretty garden overlooks a meandering river. The haunt of local farmers. The food, may take a while to appear, but is worth the wait – our favourite!

Walk 4: Kelvedon Hatch

A longer walk taking in a Cold War bunker

Distance	5.25 miles / 8.4 kms
Minimum time	3hrs
Level of Difficulty	**
Paths	Good footpaths and country trails, and country lanes with little traffic
Landscape	Rolling farmland, patches of woodland
Getting there	Walk straight from Colemans Farm. No car required.
Dog friendliness	Some stiles to navigate. Need to cross one busy road.
Amenities	Take a Hikers Lunch and an empty bladder

A few miles from Colemans Farm there is a quirky attraction, worthy of a visit: the deepest Cold War bunker in Britain that's open to the public. Fronted by an innocuous bungalow, it would have provided shelter for the great and the good when the ICBMs started flying. An amusing sign labelled "Secret Nuclear Bunker" now makes its location known. That is worth a photo at the very least. For further information go to: <https://secretnuclearbunker.com/>

If Cold War bunkers are not your thing, then don't be put off, this walk is well worth the journey for the countryside alone.

Walk Directions

1. After passing St Margaret's Church turn right at a public footpath sign. At a waymark sign, Point A, turn right and with the pond on your left, follow the path downhill. Just before a concrete bridge take the right-hand path with the brook on your left for 547yds (500m). Cross a plank footbridge at a hedge gap and keep ahead to a row of houses at Little End. Cross the A113 and the cattle grid. Just before a second cattle bridge climb a stile on the right and continue for 0.25mile (400m) then climb another stile on the left. Cross a concrete track and a footbridge over the River Roding. Follow the footpath for 1 mile (1.6km) to Germain's Farm, Point B, and keep ahead, and go through a gate on to a gravel track to reach Kelvedon Hall Lane.
2. Ignore the "private" sign and walk up to the entrance of the Kelvedon Hatch bunker. Built during the cold war, the three storeys were concealed 75ft (23m) below ground.
3. Retrace your steps to Kelvedon Hall Lane and turn right. Maintain direction along the road until you reach a T-junction, which emerges next to the grand Kelvedon Hall Lodge on the busy A128. Turn left, cross the road and turn right through the wide gap in the hedgerow. Walk ahead keeping Menageria Wood, Point C, on your right until you meet the cross path by three fishing lakes. From the red-brick bridge ahead there are pleasant views of the lakes and Great Myles Farm with its distinctive clock tower.
4. Do not cross the bridge but, keeping the lake on your right, follow the path for 0.5 mile (800m) to meet the A128 at Langford Bridge. Turn right and walk through a series of wooden gates over the bridge and, after 100yds (91 m) take the footpath right, keeping the river to your right until you reach Hallsford Bridge. Cross the road, go over the stile and take the cross-field path half left towards the church spire on the hill. Pass houses on your left then cross the stream via the concrete bridge. Bear left to the kissing gate, walk down past a row of cottages in Bushey Lea and re-join Walk 2 in Chipping Ongar High Street.

Walk 5: Matching

A short walk through farming hamlets within close proximity of two good country pubs.

Distance	3.5 miles / 5.7 kms
Minimum time	1 hr 30min
Level of Difficulty	*
Paths	Bridleways, grass and field-edge paths, 3 stiles
Landscape	Ponds, patches of woodland and grassy meadow
Getting there	Car required. Parking free at Matching Tye village hall
Dog friendliness	Notices warn of grazing stock.
Amenities	Fox Inn at Matching Tyre and The Chequers at Matching Green

Walk Directions

1. From Matching Tye village hall turn right. Directly opposite the Fox Inn take the lane, signposted for Sheering and Hatfield Heath. After 200yds (183m), turn right at the fingerpost for the Forest Way and follow the grassy field-edge path, turning right at the end along the bridleway to Matching church.
2. Pass the Marriage Feast House on your left and continue along the road to the right of the church. Take the footpath on your right, opposite the church, through the kissing gate and skirt the moat on your right. After 100yds (91m) cross the stile and walk half left on the cross-field path towards the edge of the line of trees. At the yellow waymark, turn left along the cross-field path.
3. At the mid-field fingerpost, turn right and walk to the line of trees, the boundary of Brick House. Turn left at the fingerpost, keeping the house and paddock on your right. After the paddock turn right across the field towards houses, maintaining direction along the field-edge path. After the playing field on your left, walk between houses into Harlow Road at Matching Green.
4. Turn left and immediately right, then right again, following the signposts for Ongar and Moreton. After 200yds (183m) turn right at the break in the hedge and go over two stiles in quick succession. Cross the meadow and maintain direction once over the footbridge. Take the cross-field path towards the line of trees. Keep the trees on your right passing the yellow waymark to cross a footbridge by another copse of trees.
5. Keep ahead and, soon after the footpath appears on your left, bear right on the field-edge path keeping the ditch and trees on your right-hand side. Continue until you reach Harlow Road opposite a house called Roundhouse. Turn left and walk with care along the busy Harlow Road for around 0.5mile (800m) to return to the village hall at Matching Tye. Here you can finish off with a well-earned rest at the nearby comfortable Fox Inn.