

SWC Walk 242

Cholsey to Goring via Wallingford and South Stoke.

This is a companion walk to the Cholsey to Goring walk SWC 49 but takes a completely different route. It starts with a 2km stretch through the village of **Cholsey** to reach the riverside Thames path where you turn left and continue all the way to the bustling market town of **Wallingford** and your riverside lunch-time pub the **Boat House**.

After lunch you leave the river Thames and take paths around and across fields in the gently rolling Oxfordshire countryside with some fine and expansive views before visiting the attractive village of **South Stoke** and some refreshments at the **Perch and Pike** pub.

From South Stoke the short, last leg of the walk is along the Ridgeway and Thames Path to **Goring** where if you arrive before 5pm tea and cakes await you at **Pierrepoints café**. Otherwise there are some excellent pubs in the village or you can rest by the river and enjoy the views before a short walk to the station.

The walk is best done in April to June or early autumn. It is a long, exposed walk so in hot, mid-summer weather, it could be fairly tiring.

Length	20.5 km (12.8m)
Maps	Explorer 1:25,000 maps 170 Abingdon, Wantage and White Horse and 171 Chiltern Hills West Landranger 1: 50,000 maps 174 Newbury and Wantage and 175 Reading and Windsor
Toughness	4/10, ascent 200m; descent 198m. This walk is stile-free.
Features	Wallingford A bustling riverside market town with a large open town square and three ancient churches. The town has a long history and was heavily fortified by Alfred the Great to help protect Wessex against the Vikings. After the Norman conquest the town became increasingly important and in the 1085 Domesday Book was recorded as one of just eighteen towns with a population over 2,000. For more information see the Town Council's web pages at http://www.wallingford.co.uk/ . Its Wikipedia pages also have much interesting history. Cholsey to Wallingford heritage railway. This 4km heritage steam or diesel rail service operates on specific days during the summer and autumn. You can find details about the service and when it is running at their web site here so you could organise a trip

	<p>on the train from Cholsey to Wallingford and then start your walk from there.</p> <p>South Stoke and Withymead Nature Reserve</p> <p>A small picturesque village on the Thames with many fine and expensive houses and a lovely pub, the Perch and Pike. There is a nature reserve on your route which may be worth a visit but it is only open by prior arrangement. Check out the website http://www.withymead.co.uk/ for further details. On weekday afternoons the Perch and Pike is likely to be closed between 3pm and 5.30pm so check the pub's web pages beforehand.</p>
<p>Walk options</p>	<p>Shortening the walk</p> <p>You could just do a short 6km walk to Wallingford, have lunch there and spend time strolling around this interesting market town visiting its churches and ruined castle or just relaxing by the river. Wallingford Castle has an interesting Wikipedia page which details its history.</p> <p>Wallingford is well served by weekend bus services linking you with the rail network. The X39/40 links you to Oxford or Reading. see here</p> <p>There is a limited Mon-Sat bus service to Goring (route 135) see here</p> <p>Lengthening the walk</p> <p>If you want to continue walking after reaching Goring you can take the Thames Path to Pangbourne. This is one of the loveliest stretches of the Thames Path National Trail and would make a fine summer evening coda to the main walk. You can pick up signposts for the Thames path opposite Pierrepoints café.</p> <p>It is 7.2km (4.5m) from Goring to Pangbourne so this would make a long walk of 27.9km (17.4m). You catch a train at Pangbourne for your return journey to London Paddington.</p> <p>There is a lovely hand-drawn map showing you the route from Goring to Pangbourne on the web pages for SWC 170 Pangbourne via Goring circular. See here for details</p>
<p>Transport</p>	<p>Cholsey and Goring stations are on the route to Oxford run by First Great Western out of London Paddington station. The direct service to Cholsey is a slow stopping service so your journey will be quicker if you take one of the express cross-country services to Reading and change there for a train to Cholsey.</p> <p>You may find also that if you return from Goring or Pangbourne you will</p>

	<p>get to London more quickly if you change at Reading for a fast direct train to Paddington.</p> <p>Buy a day return to Cholsey</p>
<p>Suggested trains</p>	<p>The suggested lunch options are reached early in the walk so you should take the nearest train to 10.15am from London Paddington. If you want to give yourself a reasonable chance of having tea and cakes at Pierreponts then take the nearest slow stopping train to 9.30am</p>
<p>Lunch and Tea</p>	<p><u>Lunch</u></p> <p>Wallingford has many options but the recommended lunch-time pub is the friendly riverside Boat House (103 High Street, 01491 834100) a large mock Tudor establishment refurbished in 2014 where you can eat in large conservatory spaces or on a riverside terrace. The food is classic “pub grub” for around £10. It describes itself as “the best local pub in the village”! .</p> <p>If this does not sound to your taste then on your route and before you reach the Boat House there are these other possible options:</p> <p>The Partridge Inn 32 St Mary’s Street (01491 839305);</p> <p>The Coachmakers Arms 37 St Mary’s Street (01491 832231)</p> <p>Bean and Brew café 57 St Mary’s Street (01491 520685) – light meals and snacks catering for vegetarians, vegans and people who require gluten-free meals.</p> <p>The Dolphin 2 St Mary’s Street (01491 837377)</p> <p>Check out these establishments’ web sites for menu details and user reviews.</p> <p>If you have an OS map or gps with appropriate mapping you can divert from the walk route to have lunch at the King William pub in Hailey. This is about half way through the walk and hardly adds any distance. Do check the pub’s web site for its opening times though. You can decide to divert to Hailey at the end of para 17 in the main walk instructions.</p> <p><u>Afternoon refreshments</u></p> <p>After your 10.4km (6.5m) ramble around the fields and gentle hills of South Oxfordshire the Perch and Pike pub (01491 872415) in South Stoke and directly on your route is a fine place to stop for a rest and a drink.(Note to weekday walkers – this pub closes in the afternoon from 3pm to 5.30pm.)</p> <p><u>Tea</u></p>

If you can make it before 4.30pm (it closes at 5pm) then **Pierrepoints café** (01491 874464) in Goring does delicious cakes, teas and light meals. (However on sunny Saturdays it is very popular so you could end up disappointed as all the cake may well have been consumed!) **It is not open on a Sunday,**

There are also a couple of excellent pub alternatives.

On your route to the station is the **Miller of Mansfield** (01491 872829). Across the two bridges to the other side of the river Thames in Streatley there is the **Swan** (01491 878800) a stylish riverside hotel, restaurant and bar.

A. Cholsey station to Boat House lunch pub, Wallingford. 6.6km (4.1m)

1. Coming off the platform take the pedestrian subway to the main entrance of the station. Leave the station and go through the car park and station approach road to meet a main road in 50m.
2. Turn left on this road and in 50m turn right along **Papist Way**, passing a Thames Path sign. You continue on this road, ignoring all ways until you reach **Reading Road**.
3. In 1km you reach a cross-roads with the busy **Reading Road**. Cross this road with care and continue straight ahead along **Ferry Lane**. After 130m you are walking in open countryside. You ignore all ways off. The tarmac lane becomes a dirt track and in a further 80m you reach the River Thames with a 3 armed footpath sign to your right. Here you turn **left** through a metal kissing gate onto the Thames Path passing a nature reserve sign on your left.
4. You continue on the Thames Path all the way to Wallingford (5km), the river just to your right. On your way you go through gates and cross bridges.
5. After about 3km you pass under a modern road bridge for the busy A4130 and you continue on the path. Soon after passing under the bridge you will see houses and substantial grounds to your left. The houses and gardens to your left are soon closer to the path and the river.
6. You pass the large, modern Oxford University boating club on your left, cross a bridge and continue on the path. Cross over a concrete driveway with a two-armed Thames footpath sign and continue on the now tarmac path.
7. The path merges with a lane (Lower Wharf Lane) to your left and you continue ahead along this lane as it swings sharply left. In 150m you reach a cross-roads where you turn right into St Mary's Street – a main thoroughfare for Wallingford. (You soon pass The Partridge Inn and The Coachmakers Arms, two possible lunch pubs.

8. Continue along St Mary's Street passing a church to your left and then the attractive town square away to your left. You continue ahead through a pedestrian precinct where there are two more possible lunch options – the Bean and Brew café and the Dolphin pub.
9. At the end of the short precinct at a T junction you cross the busy road to turn right along the High Street where there are more possible lunch places. Continue down this busy street where after 100m and just before a bridge over the Thames you reach your recommended lunch-time pub the **Boat House** on your left

B. Wallingford to Perch and Pike pub South Stoke 10.4km (6.5m)

10. On leaving the Boat House Inn turn left to cross the bridge over the river. Continue on this bridge until you reach some traffic lights on your right. ! 30m beyond the lights cross the road to a signed footpath post to Mongewell and take the onward path. Keep on this grassy path as it bears left crossing another path in a few metres. In 70m go through a metal kissing gate to the right of a metal field gate and take the left-hand path (ignoring one to your right) soon meeting a line of bushes and trees just to your left.
11. In 150m bear left on the path to go through a wooden kissing gate and turn right on an earth path, flanked by trees and a fence on either side and with open countryside beyond. You are soon in open countryside and you reach a tarmac lane with field gates to your left and right..
12. Turn left along the lane towards a large house, passing a footpath sign just before reaching the house to cross a minor tarmac road soon reaching the busy main road (**A4074**) ahead of you.
13. Cross this busy road to continue up the car-wide dirt track ahead of you going gently uphill. Ignore a track to your left with a car-blocking barrier. The path begins to narrow and you continue ahead. After 500m the path levels out. You soon reach a cross-roads with a sign for Lonesome Farm ahead of you.
14. ! You now take the clear path to your right following a footpath sign across a large
15. Here you turn left along the raised and winding **Ridgeway** path. Bushes and trees are to your left and right and open farm land beyond these. You pass a Triangulation point just to your right. 250m after the Trig point the path descends to a tarmac lane and you cross this to continue ahead along the narrow raised path immediately passing a 2 armed field. and heading towards a line of trees and bushes 500m ahead of you. You reach the line of trees and bushes and climb a short bank to a 3-armed footpath sign. footpath sign.
16. After 500m you reach a Ridgeway National Trail sign at a cross-roads. Here you leave the Ridgeway to turn right along a tarmac lane. In 80m take the permissive bridleway just to your right and which runs parallel to the lane.

17. In 200m you reach a cross-roads with a 4 armed footpath sign to your left. You continue ahead along a tarmac lane (or its permissive bridleway just to its right). You pass some houses on your left. In 150m beyond the houses you reach a further cross-roads and a steel footpath post with a number of directions on it .
18. Here you cross the lane to go up the car-wide earth track ahead of you signposted as a bridleway. In 50m ignore the wide track veering to the right to continue ahead along a narrow path with a fragmented line of bushes to your left and right which soon end and you are now in open rolling countryside.
19. You are heading for a clearly visible wide gap in a line of bushes. Pass through this and continue along the path with a bank to your right. There are huge fields all around you. You pass a 2.5 m tall pole on your right giving information about a gas pipeline.
20. 100m beyond the pole you pass a redundant stile to cross a tarmac lane to continue ahead along a signed grassy bridleway, a private driveway just to your right beyond a wooden fence. The path becomes enclosed and you pass a house to your right with a now larger wooden fence to your right and a line of trees to your left. Continue ahead along the narrow enclosed path.
21. You reach a further cross-roads with a narrow tarmac lane and a 2 armed bridleway sign. Continue ahead crossing a small wooden bridge over a ditch following the path which is soon reaches an open field. You continue in your previous direction across the open field heading **south** towards a line of bushes 180m away. A footpath post should soon become visible.
22. The path goes through the line of bushes and descends to a busy road (A4074). Cross this with care and head towards the grassy path bearing to the left and up a bank. Go through a gap in the fence passing a bridleway sign, the onward path clearly visible across a large open field with panoramic views of the open countryside.
23. 200m from the road you reach a cross-paths with a multiplicity of signs and here you turn right going gently uphill, a fence and line of bushes to your left. After 180m of gentle ascent you reach a small copse (Camerons copse) on your right and you continue on your path which has now levelled out.
24. ! 70m after you have met the copse you reach footpath post and a redundant stile on your left.! Here you turn left at the redundant stile following a clear but narrow path across a vast field. In 300m you reach a further redundant stile at a field edge and you continue ahead on what could be a fairly faint path to your left on a bearing of 230 degrees.
25. You continue on this path on the bearing of 230 degrees all the way to Woodcote Road. You are doing gently downhill soon reaching an old field boundary. The path should be clearly visible ahead of you and soon begins to descend a little

more steeply. You pass under some telegraph wires. (At this point a footpath post may just be visible far ahead of you.)

26. You start to go gently uphill and cross a car-wide track. Eventually you reach the footpath sign showing the direction you have come from and a tarmac road (Woodcote Road) where you turn right towards South Stoke. There is a cluster of houses (Freedom Cottages) ahead of you.
27. You reach a cross roads with the Wallingford Road and you continue ahead down Ferry Lane soon passing under a railway bridge. Continue down Ferry Lane ignoring a footpath sign to your right just after a bus-stop. At a road T junction take a sharp left passing a Ridgeway sign which you will follow all the way to Goring. To your left you pass a childrens play area and then a church .
28. You pass a lovely thatched cottage on your left and just beyond that you reach the **Perch and Pike** pub, a possible afternoon refreshments stop with a lovely garden before the final short leg into Goring. (Note this pub is closed after 3pm on weekdays and does not open again until 5.30pm. It is open at weekends)

C. South Stoke to Goring and Streatly Station 3.5km (2.2m)

29. Turn left after leaving the Perch and Pike or continue past it if not stopping there to continue along the Ridgeway ignoring any roads/lanes off. !When this road swings sharply to the left you continue ahead passing a Ridgeway bridleway sign saying 1.8km 1.1m to Goring. You are on a clear car-wide earth track which soon veers towards a railway line on a raised bank to your left.
30. The track swings gently to the right . In 60m cross an earth bridge over a ditch. You pass a house on your left and a number of notices about the Withymead Nature Reserve.
31. The Ridgeway soon becomes a gravel path and to your right you can glimpse the Thames. (The path on the other side of the Thames is the route to Goring for SWC 49, the other Cholsey to Goring walk.) The Ridgeway becomes a smooth tarmac path and you are passing through a wealthy riverside residential area.
32. As the tarmac track swings sharply to the left you go down a dirt path and continue ahead crossing over a tarmac lane which swings right sharply downhill. You pass a wooden farm gate and a 2 armed Ridgeway footpath sign. You are on a car-wide enclosed track, the river to your right and the railway line to your left. You pass a weir to your right and you continue on the now tarmac track.
33. At the bottom of a gentle descent you pass a 2 armed Ridgeway footpath sign to continue ahead up Cleeve Road. In 80m pass Pennypiece road to your left and continue along the pavement. ! At the top of a short rise there is a 2 armed footpath sign and a no cycling sign and you take the enclosed tarmac Ridgeway path to your right, passing flats to your left and soon going gently downhill between fences.

34. The narrow path soon merges with a footpath and you pass a Ridgeway footpath sign. You are in Thames Road. Continue past Glebe Ride to your left. In 80m you reach a T junction with a main road - the B4009, Goring High Street. Here you have two options:
35. **Direct route to station.** Turn left and go past the Miller of Mansfield pub in 80m, a possible refreshments stop. Continue past the pub and in 280m cross the road bridge over the railway line and turn right to reach Goring and Streatley Station in 180m.
36. **Further refreshment options or to walk on to Pangbourne.** Turn right to reach Pierrepoints café in 40m and signposts for the Thames Path to Pangbourne. Here is also an attractive spot to rest on the banks of the Thames. Beyond the café and over the two Thames bridges you reach the up-market Swan restaurant and bar with fine riverside views.