

## Crowthorne Rail to Trail circular

A varied 8 mile walk with a local nature reserve, golf course, mixed woodland, heathland areas and fields around Crowthorne. See the map for parking options.

1. From the station platform, go up to the main road and turn right. Turn first left into Ravenswood Avenue. Continue straight on into the East Berkshire Golf Centre and stay on the road passing the clubhouse. Pass a few buildings in a tree-lined area and emerge onto the golf course. Continue on the lane. Turn right still on the lane and look for a footpath sign going left after about 100 m.
2. Turn left and continue through the gate and onto the next lane still going forward. At the junction, keep right and continue on the next lane. To your right, is the boggy woodland at the back of the Heathlake nature reserve. Reach the traffic lights at the junction with Heathlands Road.
3. Immediately before the lights turn right along the footpath. The rhododendrons make this a pretty sight in spring. When you see the car park, appearing in front of you look for a narrow path on your right, through the rhododendrons, into the woodland. Now follow the main path through these big trees to the water's edge. Keep to the right-hand side. Here you should see lots of bird life, including swans, grey heron, coot, moorhen, mallard, and great crested grebe. Canada geese will always be there. Don't ignore the woodland birds, chiffchaff, black cap and other common bird species will all be present. It would be unusual not to see black-headed gulls flying around here waiting for local people to bring bread and other food. Continue around the lake, listening for Goldcrest high up in the canopy. eventually you will reach a platform with a large bench. Rest here if you wish to.
4. After the platform, do not continue over the bridge, turn right alongside the compound on a gravel path. Turn left immediately before the houses and follow this tidy path with the back gardens on your right until you meet the main road junction. Turn right along the main road, and immediately turn left into The Brackens.
5. Stay on The Brackens until you reach Leith Close and turn right. At the T junction continue straight onto the footpath and reach a Byway/bridlepath.
6. Turn left. Pass the school on your left and turn right into the cul-de-sac with the 30 mph signs. Keep left, around the bend and turn right at the T junction and follow this road until you meet the main road.
7. Turn right along the roadside path. You will pass some traffic lights and Bucklers Park housing on your left and soon reach Woodcote Green. Here you will see the car park for Bucklers Forest SANG, it can be a very busy place. There are many ponds, ideal for dragonflies, it has quite a reputation for them. This is an optional stop-off point. There is only one official way in and out.
8. Continue along the footpath/cycle path now on the left-hand side of the main road towards Crowthorne. Cross Brookers Row and take the narrow footpath you see on the left inside the woodland. Turn left again on the wider woodland path after a few yards. Follow this across the path crossroads until you almost reach the edge of the main road and turn right still on the woodland track. You soon meet a path across the front of you, turn left and carefully cross the road to the woodland opposite.

9. Turn left down the wide track watching for birdlife, straight over the top of what's known as Round Hill, and down the other side to the pond on the right where you may find wetland plants and possibly dragonflies. At the grey crossroads (you'll see what I mean) turn right. At the next angled crossroads, continue on the main track slightly right to the T-junction
10. Turn left and immediately right onto a narrower path dropping downhill. At the end join the main trail going left and turn right at the public footpath sign before the bridge.
11. You're now on the Three Castles Path. Continue on this path past some sweet chestnut trees then down to the lake behind the fence and scan the lake for water lilies, before emerging at a road. Cross straight over and up the steps onto the path. Continue along the lane in front of you still on the Three Castles Path. At the road junction continue straight on through the pedestrian gate. Continue, turning left at the big fallen tree still on the footpath. After a few turns and a metal stile you reach a lane.
12. Although the sign in front of you says that the site is private property, it is a public path so continue straight over and up the rise, step over another stile and continue straight on. Wildmoor Heath is on your left. At the end of the path cross the wooden footbridge to the track in front of you.
13. Turn left and through the gate. Continue on this path until you meet gates in front of you. Now turn right. This is a long straight path with a lot of the heathland nature reserve on your left. Go straight on passing the metal gate. You are still on the Three Castles path. On passing a second metal gate, you reach the main road with Wellington College grounds ahead of you.
14. Cross the road carefully and follow the main path with the fencing on your right-hand side. This is Edgbarrow Heath, a good wildlife and nature site, owned, I believe, by Wellington College. The path reaches an open area under the powerlines at the second junction, turn right with the tall trees on your left and continue under the powerlines with some nice heath, insect and birdlife. Keep following this path under the powerlines only until it veers sharply left away from them.
15. Here, you will find a narrower track continuing in roughly the same direction as before. Take this one. The path drops a little steeply into the woodland edge which you should now follow on the best path you find. It can be wet after prolonged rain. When you leave the tall woodland and emerge into the scrub, keep to the right-hand side, and this path crosses a scrubby area under the power lines reaching the fence on the other side. Keep going. This will lead you to a T junction with the railway line up the bank in front of you.
16. Turn right. You are now on a more or less straight path to Crowthorne station. You will pass the old level crossing gate to Ambarrow and then pass an avenue of lime trees planted as a memorial to Wellington College's 150th anniversary of its Charter. You will reach a kink in the path that leads across a railway bridge. Do not cross the railway bridge. Take the path to the right-hand side when the bridge is in view, staying the same side of the railway line all the way back to the station.

Now, it's a case of waiting for the train or popping into a café for a welcome drink or tasty food.