

ASTON MARINA CANAL AND COUNTRYSIDE TRAIL, STAFFORDSHIRE



Moderate Terrain

4.5 miles
Circular
2 hours

170119



Access Notes



1. The walk is relatively flat with only a few gentle slopes. It follows a mixture of grass towpaths, stone tracks and grass paths through wetland pastures and crop fields, with some parts that can be muddy after periods of rain and in winter.
2. There is one short stretch along the village roads within Aston-by-Stone.
3. You will need to negotiate a section of boardwalk, a couple of kissing gates, a footbridge (with squeeze gaps at each end) plus one stile (which has fence gaps alongside suitable for dogs up to Labrador-size).
4. Whilst most of the livestock pastures are fenced away from the paths, you will cross one wetland pasture. This was empty when we walked but may be holding livestock at other times.

Aston Marina makes a wonderful place to visit, an idyllic waterside haven teeming with colourful canal boats where you can enjoy a post-walk breakfast, lunch, or maybe just cake and coffee at the award-winning bistro.

A 4.5 mile circular walk from Aston Marina, near the market town of Stone in Staffordshire. The walking route leads you past the pretty marina before joining a peaceful stretch of the towpath alongside the Trent and Mersey Canal. Leaving the canal at Upper Burston Bridge, the route continues through the wetlands and fields of Aston Hall Farm which is managed specifically for wildlife with chance to see plenty of birds and maybe even an otter. On the final stretch there is chance to see the buildings of Aston Hall and the parish church.

Getting there

Aston Marina is located directly off the A51, approximately half a mile from its junction with the A34, and 5 miles from the M6 at Junction 14. There are brown tourism signs from the A51 marking the entrance gates. Park in the main car park (on your left at the end of the entrance drive). Approximate post code ST15 8QU. The post code alone is often misleading (so be sure to check your route), as the marina shares it with another road that leads to Stone. Remember that the marina is accessed from the A51 itself, and not the B5027.

Walk Sections

Go  1 Start to Canal Towpath



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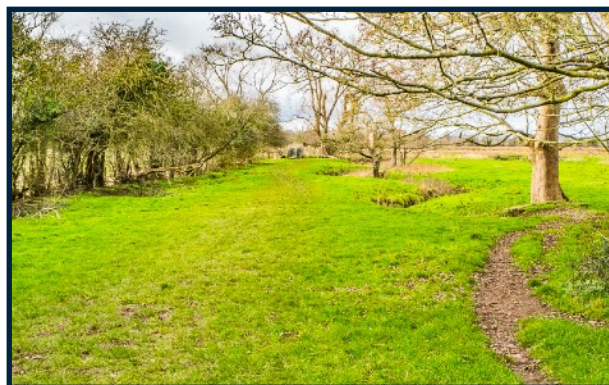
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From the main car park, head back towards the entrance drive and main buildings of the No.26 Restaurant and Bar. Turn left to follow the paved walkway, with the terrace and bar building on your right. Bear right to stay alongside the buildings, passing the circular waterside deck on your left.

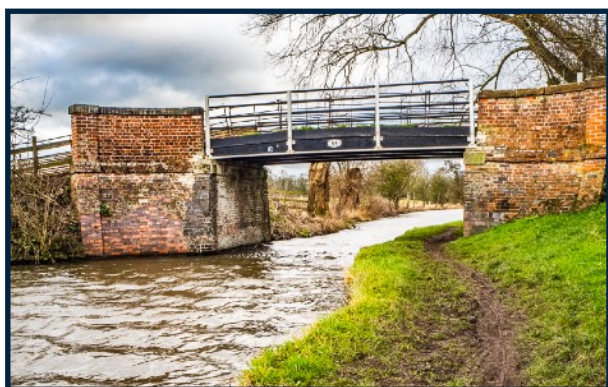
Bear left to continue on the tarmac walkway between fences, with The Boathouse (an events and wedding venue) on your right and the marina on your left. The marina has 200 berths which are used for both long-term and temporary moorings, usually a wonderful colourful display of traditional canal boats.

Stay with the path as it swings right to continue with the canal on your left and fenced fields on your right. At the end of this path, pass through the Aston Marina gates to reach a junction with the village lane. Turn left to cross the canal bridge and then turn immediately left again to join the canal towpath.



metal footbridge over the River Trent. Cross the footbridge (which has squeeze gaps each end) to enter the wetland pasture which is part of Aston Hall Farm.

1 → 2 Canal Towpath to Upper Burston Bridge



Walk ahead along the canal towpath with the canal running on your left. The towpath soon leads you past Aston Lock and Aston Lock Cottage. Aston Lock is Lock Number 26 on the canal, which was the inspiration for the marina restaurant's name.

The Trent and Mersey Canal runs for 93 miles from the Bridgewater Canal at Preston Brook to Shardlow and the Trent Navigation. As its name suggests, it was designed to link the River Trent to the River Mersey and it was completed in 1777. Josiah Wedgwood was one of the main promoters of this canal, as waterways allowed fragile porcelain and china to be transported without breaking on bumpy roads. Potteries are still to be found along the Trent and Mersey Canal in Stoke. Canal traffic was heavy and freight movement was still considerable into the 1950s, with cargoes including coal, salt, beer and, of course, pottery. Nowadays the canal is primarily used for recreation.

The towpath continues ahead, now simply a grassy canal-side bank which can be muddy in parts. You will pass the marina across to your left, on the far bank. Stay with the canal towpath for about a further 1.2 miles, passing under Carr House Bridge (Bridge 89), Iron Bridge, (Bridge 88) and Long Meadow Bridge (Bridge 87) to reach Upper Burston Bridge (Bridge 86).

2 → 3 Upper Burston Bridge to Oak Tree

We leave the canal at this point, so turn right across the stile immediately before Upper Burston Bridge (Bridge 86). Keep ahead to follow the tree-lined grass track which leads you to a

This farmland alongside the River Trent is owned by Severn Trent Water and managed for the benefit of wildlife. The biodiversity enhancement scheme launched in 2001 and work was completed to improve the hedgerows, floodplain grazing marshes, riverbanks and field habitats. Plenty of wildlife has benefited so look out for wading birds (such as lapwing and curlew), waterfowl and you might even be lucky enough to glimpse the elusive water voles and otters.

Ignore a footpath signed to the left, instead keep ahead on the main path with a fence running on your right. Join a stretch of boardwalk, passing the large wetland scrape (shallow lake) on your right. Beyond the boardwalk, keep ahead and pass through a kissing gate to enter a crop field. Keep ahead on the obvious path, leading you between two sections of crop. This stretch of slightly elevated path gives you beautiful far-reaching views. At the end of this first long crop field, you will reach a wide hedge gap alongside a beautiful old oak tree.

3 → 4 Oak Tree to Aston Hall



Go ahead to join the grass farm track with fields each side. You may have noticed waymark symbols showing that we are currently following part of The Two Saints Way, a 92-mile walking route that links Chester Cathedral to Litchfield Cathedral, the resting places of St Werburgh and St Chad respectively.

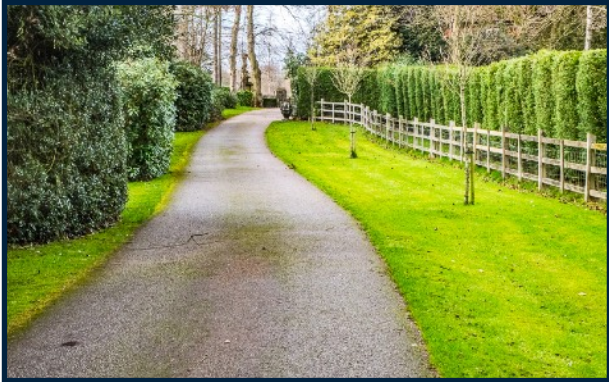
At the end of the fields, simply keep ahead on the farm track (which can be muddy). This leads you past a new property on your right, dog-legs right then left and leads you out to a T-junction with the village road in Aston-by-Stone. On your right you will see a tree set within a grass circle, planted in 1911 to mark the coronation of King George V.

Bear diagonally right to follow the village road, leading you

between houses. At the end of the road, you will see a choice of two paths. Ignore the kissing gate on your left, instead turn right to follow the stone track. Pass a couple of properties on your left and then keep ahead to join a section of grass track between fences.

Follow the track as it swings left, now with fenced fields on your right and the converted buildings within the complex of Aston Hall on your left. Notice the beautiful old brick wall on your left and you will have a glimpse of the lead-topped turret of the present main hall (dating from 1855) above this.

4 → 5 Aston Hall to End



Keep straight ahead to join a tarmac access drive. Pass Aston Hall's Catholic Chapel on your left and keep ahead through the stone gateposts to exit Aston Grange (with the entrance gates for Aston Hall and its church on your left). Turn immediately right to enter the grounds of the Church of England St Saviour's Parish Church and follow this access drive which leads you just to the left of this large stone church.

Continue on the access drive as it swings left and you will emerge through more gates to reach a junction of lanes. Turn right onto Aston Bridge Lane and follow this, taking care of any occasional traffic, as it leads you over the River Trent and then over the canal. From this point we will be retracing our steps back to the marina.

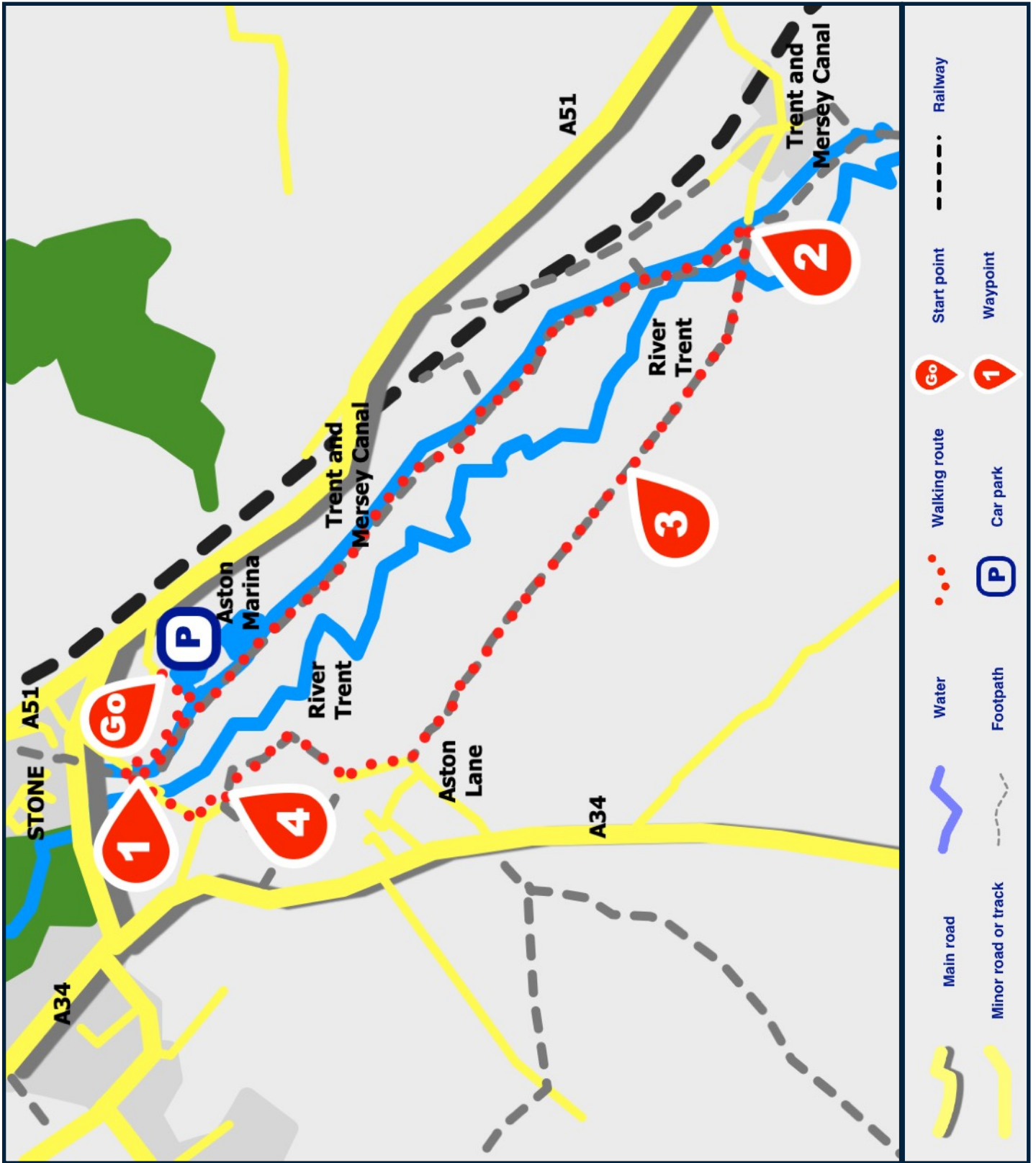
Immediately after the canal bridge, turn right through the marina gates and follow the marina path leading you ahead and then turning left. This path will lead you directly back to the No.26 Bar and Restaurant for some well-earned hospitality.







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 woolly 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.



-  Main road
-  Minor road or track
-  Water
-  Footpath
-  Walking route
-  Car park
-  Start point
-  Waypoint
-  Railway