

The footpath goes through the orchard towards a majestic veteran cedar tree often with starlings gathered on it. Between the fruit trees you can find plants like clover, fat hen, buttercup and cranesbill.

*A crumbly ragstone wall to your left is home to many creatures and wild strawberries grow by the remains of the ruined shed.*

**7** Cross Rectory Road at the cedar tree and follow the track straight on through the orchards. The high hedges contain hazel, oak, beech and hops. Follow the path to the left of the ragstone outhouse and turn left into South Street past the old cottages and go under the railway bridge.

**8** Turn left onto the riverside towpath before Barming Bridge. Wrens, jays, herons, cormorants and moles can be found here along with Ramsons, comfrey, horsetail and cobnuts.

**9** Continue along the river (with the river on your right) for 1km. Eventually when near the boat yard you'll see East Farleigh bridge ahead of you. Said to be the finest medieval bridge in the South of England.

**10** Turn left at the end of the picket fence and follow the footpath to East Farleigh Lane. Turn left and you will see East Farleigh train station.

For an extension to this walk, why not follow the **Kettles & Crossings** rail trail from East Farleigh train station.

**Distance:** 4.2 miles / 6.8km.

**Time:** 2 hours approximately.

**Terrain:** The walk is slightly hilly and paths may become muddy. No stiles and two short flights of steps (two and three steps).

**Start point:** Maidstone West train station.

**End point:** East Farleigh train station.

**OS Explorer Map:** 148.

# West to East

## Maidstone West

A 4.2 mile / 6.8km walk from Maidstone West train station to East Farleigh train station along the beautiful River Medway.



River Medway at East Farleigh (MVCP)



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This walk is endorsed by Explore Kent.

*Photo credits cover: Travellers Joy and Female Blackbird (Andy Vidler www.andyvidler.co.uk) Archbishop's Palace and Wetland Landscape (Medway Valley Countryside Partnership – MVCP)*



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This walk takes you from the bustle of Maidstone town centre past the magnificent Archbishop's Palace and out into the tranquil countryside alongside the River Medway.

**1** Turn right as you leave Maidstone West train station and walk diagonally across the car park, exiting through the tall iron gates then walk straight ahead. When you get to the end of Hart Street turn right into Barker Road past the 1970s County Court building on the left. Continue towards the cinema until you see a paved footpath across the road to your left just after the court property ends. Turn down this path towards the river.

*On the opposite bank you will see the Archbishop's Palace. The land was owned by the Archbishops of Canterbury from the 8th century but the buildings seen today date from the 13th and 14th centuries.*

**2** Turn right on the towpath keeping the river on your left. Follow it round the back of the cinema (where a market is held twice a week) and beyond the new flats. Pass under the old bridge. Follow the river until you reach a tunnel under the railway on your right. Turn right into Unicomes Lane.

*Look out for plants including vetch, meadowsweet, fool's watercress and comfrey that you may see along this stretch. The entrance to the tunnel is covered with traveller's joy and bramble, both good hiding places for birds or small mammals as well as being a source of food for many insects.*

**3** There's a stream to your left and the path itself is stony and rutted. Fant Nature Reserve is on your right but continue up the path past the allotments until you reach the main road. Turn immediately left down the track between the orchards and a red brick wall. There are good views across the valley from here.

Blackbirds and fieldfares amongst other birds thrive on the hedgerows that provide them with food and shelter.

**4** Take the right hand fork at the concrete trough and enter the leafy hawthorn tunnel. When you emerge take an immediate left turn into an open field with views past an oast house to the countryside beyond.

**5** Continue ahead keeping close to the hedge on your right and turn right at the first row of apple trees on your left. Go between the two posts and turn left following the path until you reach Farleigh Lane.



Wild Strawberry (Andy Vidler)

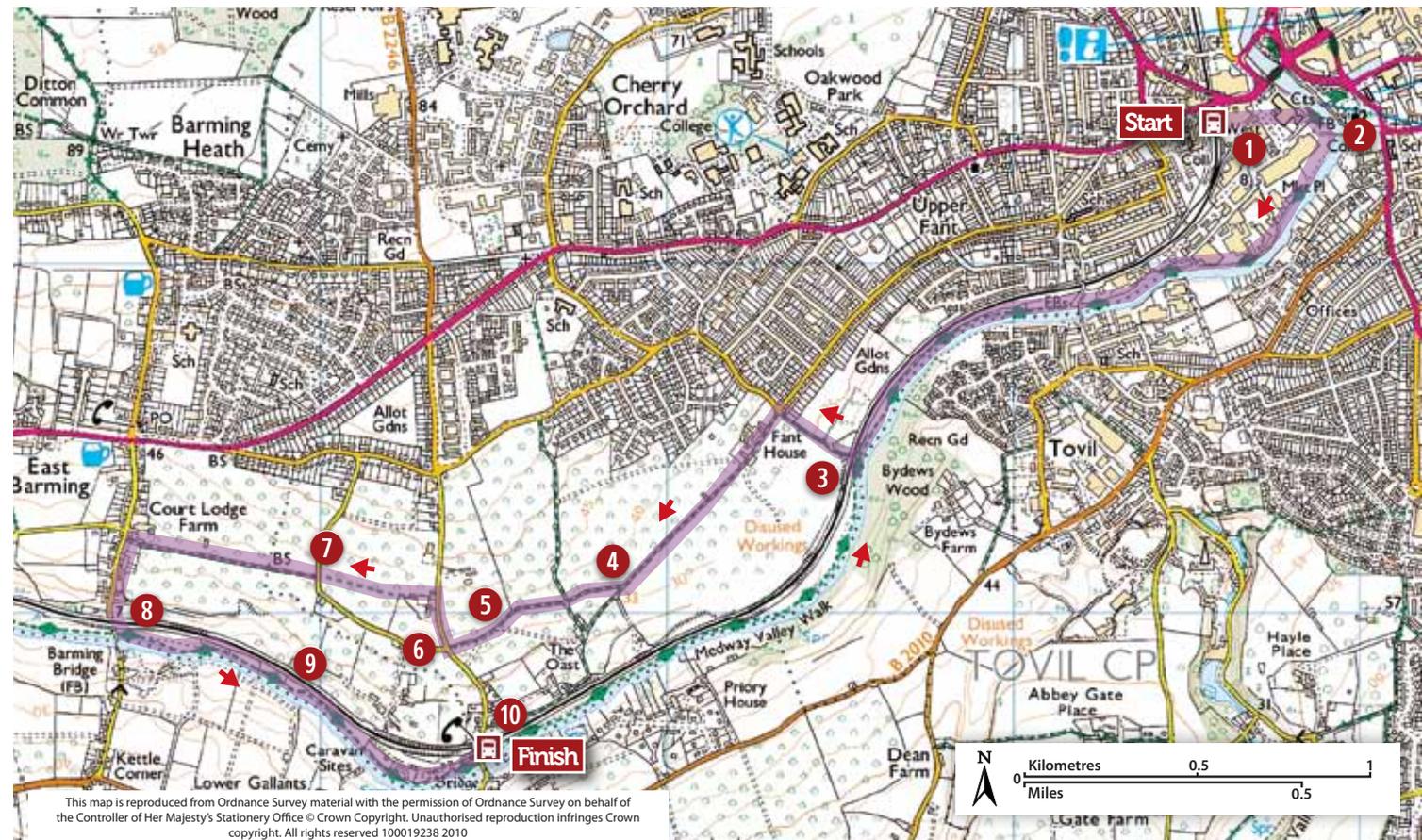


Hazel Catkins (Andy Vidler)



Starling (Andy Vidler)

**6** Turn right and walk along the pavement alongside the road. Goldcrests and long-tailed tits can be found in the hedgerow. Cross the road at The Old Rectory and a little further up the hill turn left into open orchards again.



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