

- 6 After walking approximately 1.8 miles / 3km along the Darent Valley Path, you will come to the Dartford Creek Barrier.

Built in 1981 to reduce flood risk from the Thames Estuary to Crayford and Dartford, the barrier comprises of two gates that move vertically, balanced by two water-filled counterweights. When lowered, the gates are placed one on top of the other to form a 10.12m high barrier.

- 7 Pass through the kissing gate and take the path on the right and follow it for approximately 240 metres until you come to a small crossroads. Turn right and head towards the green gate.

Along this stretch of the route, you should be able to see in the distance the Queen Elizabeth II bridge. It is a cable-stayed bridge, designed to withstand a strike from a ship weighing up to 65,000 tonnes and travelling up to 11mph!

- 8 Continue following this path and at the next green gate, cross over the stile. On your left you should see the Dartford Clay Shooting Range and the path here will join Joyce Green Lane. Please be aware of potential traffic using the road because there is no pavement along this stretch of the route. Follow the road until you come to a fork in the road just past Joyce Green Quarry. Continue down the fork that leads straight, past Ingrebourne Valley. 10 metres before the green barrier, take the small path on the right, marked by two black and white bollards.

On your right you will see the remains of the buildings that made up Wells Fireworks. Founded by Joseph Wells in 1837 and operating until the late 1970s, the factory produced high quality fireworks and quickly gained a reputation as the leading display company in the UK.

- 9 The path exits back onto Joyce Green Lane. Continue straight along the path until you come to a large busy roundabout. Take extra care crossing here as the traffic passes by very fast. Cross the roundabout on the right-hand side and then cross again on the left, making your way onto Central Road. Continue along

the road, passing allotments on your left and the primary school. Follow signs that say Railway Station and when the road forks, continue straight ahead along Central Road.

- 10 Eventually you will reach a pedestrian crossing (next to William Mundy Way) and use this to cross over to the right-hand side of Central Road. At the next set of traffic lights, turn right onto Mill Pond Road. Use the pedestrian crossing opposite Oldfield Place to cross to the other side of the road towards the railway bridge. Walk approximately 25 metres down the road until you find the footpath marked as the 125 National Cycle Network. Take this path and follow it as it passes under the bridge and along the River Darent.

Go up the wooden steps and turn left onto a wooden footbridge which will take you back onto Station Approach and Dartford station.



The Darent Valley Rail Trails have been created by the Darent Valley Landscape Partnership Scheme. DVLP is led by the Kent Downs AONB, working throughout the Darent Valley to conserve the area's rich heritage landscapes and encourage people to enjoy, explore and connect to them www.darent-valley.org.uk

A selection of the Rail Trails are available to use on the Darent Valley Trails app, available free of charge on the App Store and Google Play. With special thanks to the North West Kent Countryside Partnership (NWKCP) for devising the route.



EUROPEAN UNION



Co-financed by the European Union and the European Regional Development Fund

Darent Valley Rail Trails

WALK 1

DARTFORD

Creek and Marshes

A 5.7 mile circular walk around Dartford Marshes alongside the meandering River Darent, enjoying marshland wildlife and heritage ruins along the way.



Photo credits - johmillerphotography.com and Andy Walker

Start / end point: Dartford station

Length: 5.7 miles / 9.1km

Terrain: Mainly uneven terrain, can be muddy. Pavements in the town centre. Underpass at University Way can flood in wet weather

Accessibility: kissing gate, two stiles, two short sections of road walking, two flights of steps, road crossings (busy road with fast moving traffic)

Toilets / refreshments: Available at Dartford station (during opening hours)

What3Words: ///flags.fairly.fancy

OS Explorer map: 162

On The Way

- Follow the meandering River Darent to the Thames
- Look out for wading birds on Dartford Marshes
- Discover heritage ruins such as Wells Fireworks factory

1 At the exit of Dartford Station, turn right onto Station Approach and at the roundabout cross over the road. Turn left down Station Approach. After you pass the small collection of buildings, turn right and go down the steps. Cross over Hythe Street then turn right and follow the road under the railway bridge. Cross over the zebra crossing and go down Hythe Street towards the Huffer's Arms.

The Huffer's Arms pub receives its name from the profession of labourers who would manually haul barges along the nearby Dartford Creek. It was listed as a beer house as early as 1764 and used to be part of a collection of cottages until they were demolished. On the left is a small plaque 'Nelson Row 1806', referring to Admiral Horatio Nelson's funeral where his body was transported up the River Thames via barge towards Greenwich, before being laid to rest in St Paul's Cathedral.

2 Continue down Hythe Street for approximately 130 metres until you see a set of green signposts directing you onto the Darent Valley Path. Turn right onto Nelson's Row and cross over the footbridge.

The bridge you are standing on crosses over the River Darent and is called the Farningham-Lees footbridge. Dartford was a commercial port and the bridge was built in 1400 to allow boats to reach Dartford's Town Wharf from the Thames for the transportation of goods. It continued to be used until 1980 and machinery to raise the bridge to allow boats to pass can still be seen.

3 At the end of the footbridge, turn left and pass through the car park next to the bus depot to continue following the Darent Valley Path (DB1). Continue along the path until you reach a section with black railings and a signpost then turn left. The path follows the river and when the black railings end, continue straight towards the overhead bridge.

On the left you may see part of the wooden structure that formed Dartford Lock which would have been used to allow boats to navigate the River Darent. It is currently undergoing restoration by the Dartford and Crayford Creek Restoration Trust.

4 After about 870 metres, you will begin to approach University Way. Continue under the bridge.

Admire the view of the River Darent mudflats along this section and look out for various species of wildfowl such as moorhens, black-headed gulls and common sandpiper.

5 Follow the path, keeping University Way on your right and the marshes on your left. The path will begin to curve slightly to the left becoming the Thames Path/ England Coast Path and continue to follow it.

Looking to your left, you will see where the Cray meets the Darent, the largest of the River Darent's tributaries. On the right you will see evidence of gravel extraction pits which are now filled with water. You may be able to see wildfowl here such as mallards and cormorants.

