

## Description:

From Reading this walk will take you downstream walking towards Sonning, and on to Shiplake on a section of the Thames Path that takes us through some lush woodlands and beautiful rural countryside. Along the way you will pass you'll pass Horseshoe bridge which crosses the mouth of the Kennet and Avon Canal as it joins the river Thames - The horseshoe bridge dates back to 1892 and is attached to Brunel's adjoining brick railway bridge, which opened in 1839.

**Distance:** 7.5miles (11.5 km)    **Duration:** 3.5 hours    **Difficulty:** Moderate

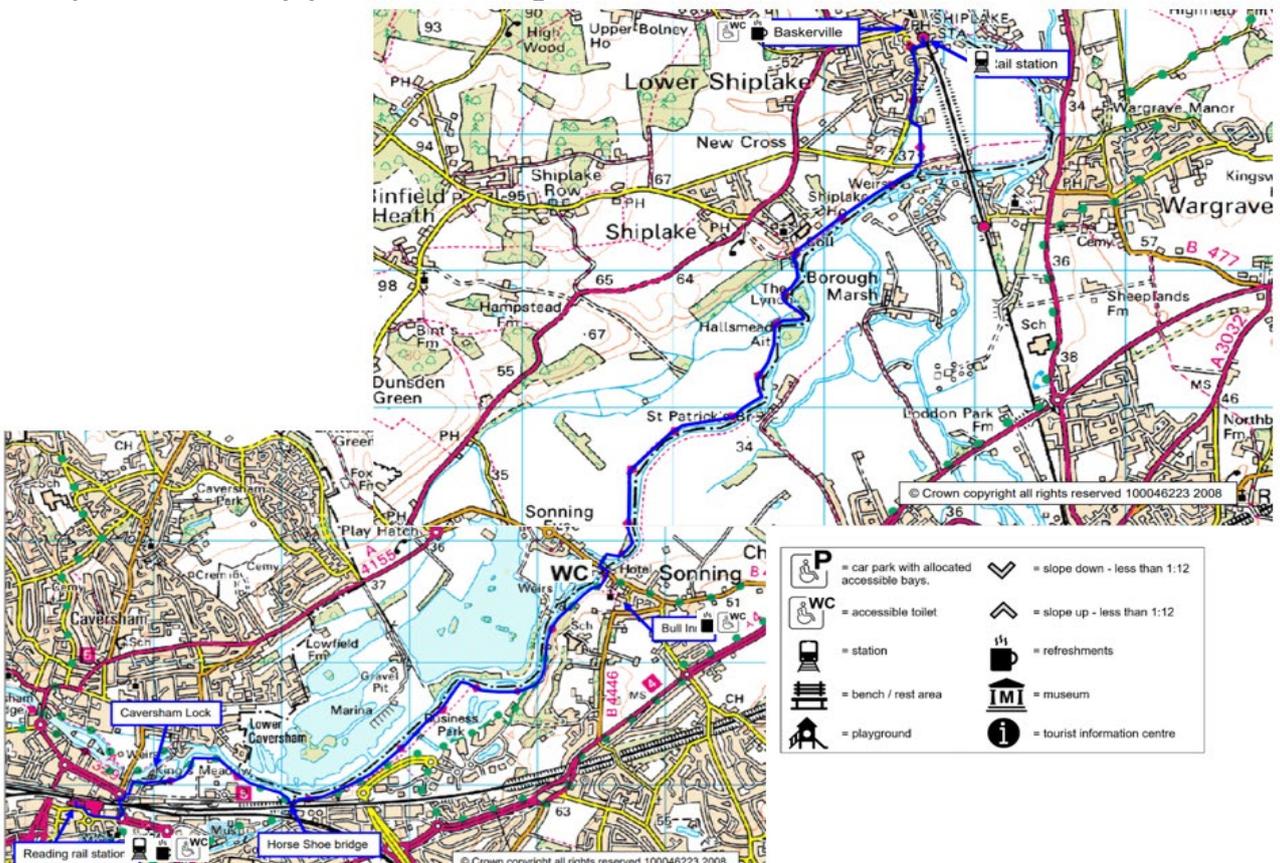
This walk is relatively flat for its entirety but has been given the 'moderate' rating due to length.

**Stations:** Reading and Shiplake

*The River Thames at Sonning*



**Refreshments, and toilets:** This walk has plenty of options for toilets and refreshments at the start and end points, however the central section is rural, with limited options, so be sure to plan ahead. The Bull Inn in Sonning (marked on map) is roughly halfway, and makes for a lovely stop, but be sure to call ahead and make sure they are open on the day you are walking.



**Full Route Description:**

Start at Reading Train Station. The best starting point is the rear of the station. The what3words address for the start point is [///vital.stays.hunt](https://www.what3words.com/vital.stays.hunt)

From here we use the station road to walk a short distance to the Vastern Road (the large main road). Make use of the pedestrian crossing point to cross the road, and the slightly to your right you will see a small side road called Norman Place.

Turn onto Norman Place and follow it for a short distance until you see a cut through next to the river Thames.

As we emerge onto the bank of the river you can look left and see Christchurch Bridge - this is a pedestrian and cycle bridge built in 2015.

Turn right and start walking. Shortly after joining the Thames Path, you will pass under a large concrete bridge – Reading Bridge. This is the first bridge to be built on the site, built in 1923 – when it was claimed that it was the longest span of its type. Before being opened for traffic, it was tested by driving 27 steam traction engines, rollers & wagons onto it!

Keep walking and you will come to Caversham Lock. This is a lock and weir on the river Thames, first built in 1778. Shortly after the lock you can look left across the river and see the twin spiral turbines of an Archimedes Screw – part of the Reading Hydrology system, which has been generating electricity for Reading since 2021.

Keep walking along the Thames Path and as you leave Reading you will enter the Thames Valley Park as you make your way towards Sonning. This is 80 acres of tranquil beauty and wetland habitat. The park is built on the former site of the site had formerly been Earley Power Station, which was operational from the early 1940s until the early 1970s.

After several miles of lovely riverside walking shaded by trees you will reach Sonning lock. The first pound lock here was built by the Thames Navigation Commission in 1773 and it has been rebuilt three times since then. If you can spot the lock keeper, you can request to use the public toilet in the lock keepers cottage. If there is no lock keeper on duty the toilet will be unavailable.

Shortly after the lock you will need to go up onto the bridge to follow the Thames Path. You have two choices here: If you wanted to stop for refreshments in Sonning turn right - the Bull Inn is located just near the church. Or, to continue your walk, turn left across the bridge and then cross the road to follow signs pointing you to rejoin the Thames Path.

**Route Description (cont.):**

This next section of the Thames Path has a lovely feeling of remoteness about it. You may see the odd boat moored up at the banks as you walk, but your main company will be the sounds of the birds and insects.

You'll be walking for several miles through idyllic countryside until you will reach civilisation again, when you pass Shiplake rugby club and Shiplake College Boat Houses.

Keep following signs for the Thames Path until you reach Shiplake Lock. Here the Thames Path turns left and briefly diverts from the river's edge, but you can follow the signs which will take you along a Restricted By-way underneath the railway bridge where you can then turn onto the Wargrave bend – where the Thames Path follows the large curve in the river.

Shortly before you arrive in Shiplake the Thames Path again leaves the rivers edge, turning you left across two fields. There are signs here, so keep your eye out for them. You'll end up popping out onto Mill Road in Lower Shiplake. Turn right onto this road and after a short distance you'll reach a junction with Station Road. On your right here is The Baskerville, a lovely pub for a well-earned stop!

If you want to head straight for the station for your return trip, turn right onto Station Road and after several hundred meters the station will be on your right-hand side.