

Station Walks –
Manningtree
to Flatford



Walk in Constable's Footsteps...



Directions...

1

Exit **Manningtree** station, turn right down the car park ramp and at the bottom of the ramp, turn left onto a short grassy footpath. Immediately turn right onto the main track – signposted to **Flatford**.

Continue along this main track before turning right underneath the Railway Bridge.

2

Continue until reaching the river embankment, where you turn left, and follow the path along the river wall, overlooking **Cattawade Marshes**. The view across the marshes gives perhaps the first sense of being in the valley.

3

Meander along the path until reaching 56 Gates, an Environment Agency Flood Defence Barrier, historically used to separate the fresh water of the River Stour from the main estuary. At the National Trust sign turn right and walk alongside 56 Gates following the path to **Flatford**.

4

The path follows the riverside to bring you out at **Flatford**. At this point, you can simply return to Manningtree via the same route or there is the option to continue to the nearby village of Dedham. Allow around 40 minutes for a gentle stroll.

Discover...

The marshland, much of it owned by the RSPB, supports wintering waterbirds (a great spectacle of many hundreds of teal, wigeon, lapwing and black-tailed godwit), and breeding birds in the spring – it is the best site for breeding wetland birds (such as lapwing, redshank, shoveler and shelduck) in North Essex.

There is no public access directly onto the marsh, but excellent views of all the wildlife can be obtained from the public footpath.



Liz Cutting / RSPB



The charming hamlet of Flatford was the inspiration for some of Constable's most famous works including "The Mill Stream", "Boat-Building" and "The White Horse". Next to Flatford Mill, home of The Field Studies Council Field Centre, is Willy Lott's House and the site of one of Constable's best known paintings – "The Hay Wain".

Following the riverside footpath past the lock and over the bridge, to the right is National Trust Bridge Cottage. Here you can discover more about the artist, John Constable, in a fascinating exhibition about his life and works, or why not relax with a well-earned cream tea by the river in the National Trust Tea Room next door to Bridge Cottage?

Rowing boats can be hired at Flatford, or later on from Dedham.



5

After exploring **Flatford** return to **Flatford Bridge** and turn right following the path alongside the river until reaching **Fen Bridge**.

6

Cross **Fen Bridge** and continue along the path for 100 metres, before turning left along a tree-lined footpath, which opens out to the riverside meadows and follows the natural line of the river, until reaching **Dedham Bridge**.

7

At Dedham Bridge, turn left following the pavement, passing Dedham Mill, into the centre of **Dedham**.

Why not take time to explore the many interesting and individual shops Dedham has to offer, or take time to indulge in a gourmet lunch.

8

Leave Dedham with the Art and Craft Centre on your right and on the sharp right hand bend, take the footpath on your left signposted to **Flatford**. Follow this footpath until meeting the river. Continue alongside the river, passing Fen Bridge, until reaching Flatford Bridge. From here retrace original route back to Manningtree Station.

9

Optional route from Fen Bridge to visit East Bergholt, the birthplace of John Constable.

Cross Fen Bridge and continue straight on, following the hedge-lined track uphill to East Bergholt. At the end, turn left and follow Flatford Road to the Church. Return via same route.

Below: Whilst enjoying the riverside walk through the low-lying water meadows, take note of the Willow Pollards—an indicative feature of this part of the River Stour.



Right: Upon reaching Dedham Bridge, why not take out a rowing boat for an afternoon's relaxation on the River. Rowing boats can be hired from Dedham Boathouse, adjacent to Dedham Bridge.

Why not explore Dedham Art & Craft Centre, a converted church now housing three floors of local arts and crafts, as well as an enticing tearoom.



The village of East Bergholt is the birthplace of John Constable and a plaque indicating the site of his birthplace can be found on the black railings between the Church and the village shop. His studio can be found on Cemetery Lane, near to the village shop and tearooms, again indicated by a plaque.

East Bergholt Church is well-known for the absence of a tower or spire to house its bells. In 1531 a temporary bellcage was erected and still stands today. John Constable was baptised in the church, and his parents and Willy Lott are all buried here.



Left and above: The village of Dedham is mentioned in the Domesday Book in 1086 and today is home to a thriving community and a host of individual shops to tempt every budget.

St. Mary the Virgin Church is home to an original Constable – “The Ascension”, and the nearby Sir Alfred Munnings Art Museum is home to the largest collection of Munnings works.

Relax, unwind, get away from the car and enjoy...

Arriving by train in the heart of Constable Country, part of the stunning Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, is both simple and carefree. The characteristic lowland English landscape immortalised and made world-famous by artists such as Constable and Gainsborough is still instantly recognisable today.

Whether you are a seasoned rambler or a first-time walker who simply likes the idea of spending an indulgent few hours in the countryside, this area is steeped full of history, wildlife, culture and beauty.

This short, easily navigable route takes you deep into the heart of Constable Country, via Flatford and for those wanting a further taste, the walk can be continued into nearby Dedham and East Bergholt. These charming, quintessential English villages have changed little since Constable's time, but do now offer a tempting array of shops, places to visit and eateries to whet every appetite. Why not take a rowing boat out for a lazy afternoon basking on the river...

“The sound of water escaping from Mill dams ..., willows, old rotten banks, slimy posts and brickwork. I love such things ... as long as I do paint I shall never cease to paint such places.”

John Constable



“I associate my careless boyhood to all that lies on the banks of the Stour. These scenes made me a painter.”

John Constable

Dedham Vale

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



The Dedham Vale is one of 50 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England, Northern Ireland and Wales. AONB's are designated by Natural England and the Countryside Council for Wales, each one being designated for its special qualities, including an area's flora, fauna, historical and cultural associations as well as their scenic views.

The Dedham Vale and Stour Valley embraces one of our most cherished landscapes. Picturesque villages, rolling farmland, meadows, ancient woodlands and a wide variety of local wildlife combine to create what many describe as the traditional English Lowland Landscape.

The unique landscape of the Stour Valley, with its vibrant community and rich agricultural history, has inspired generations of artists, writers and painters. As well as these strong cultural connections, the valley has an abundance of wildlife living in the mosaic of habitats along the river valley.

Visitors are drawn to the area to appreciate and enjoy the beauty and tranquility of the countryside and explore its rich historical associations. The best way to do this is by foot, off the beaten track to discover the true natural beauty of this stunning area.

Routes:

- Manningtree to Flatford
- Dedham Loop
- East Bergholt Loop

Key:

- Visitor Information
- Toilets
- Parking
- Boat hire
- Wildlife spotting
- Church
- Public House
- Viewpoint



The route from Manningtree to Flatford and back is approximately 4 miles in total. The optional additional route on to the neighbouring village of Dedham adds a further 3 miles. The route is easily navigable, occupying predominantly flat grass and gravel paths, with occasional very moderate slopes. After particularly wet weather, parts of the route may be slightly muddy and care should, of course, always be taken on the riverside sections of the route.