

This walk offers a glimpse of the characteristic landscape and abundant wildlife of the Avon Valley. The locks and weirs visited along the way provide a fascinating insight into the maintenance of a navigable river. The route is fully waymarked and the terrain mostly very gentle.

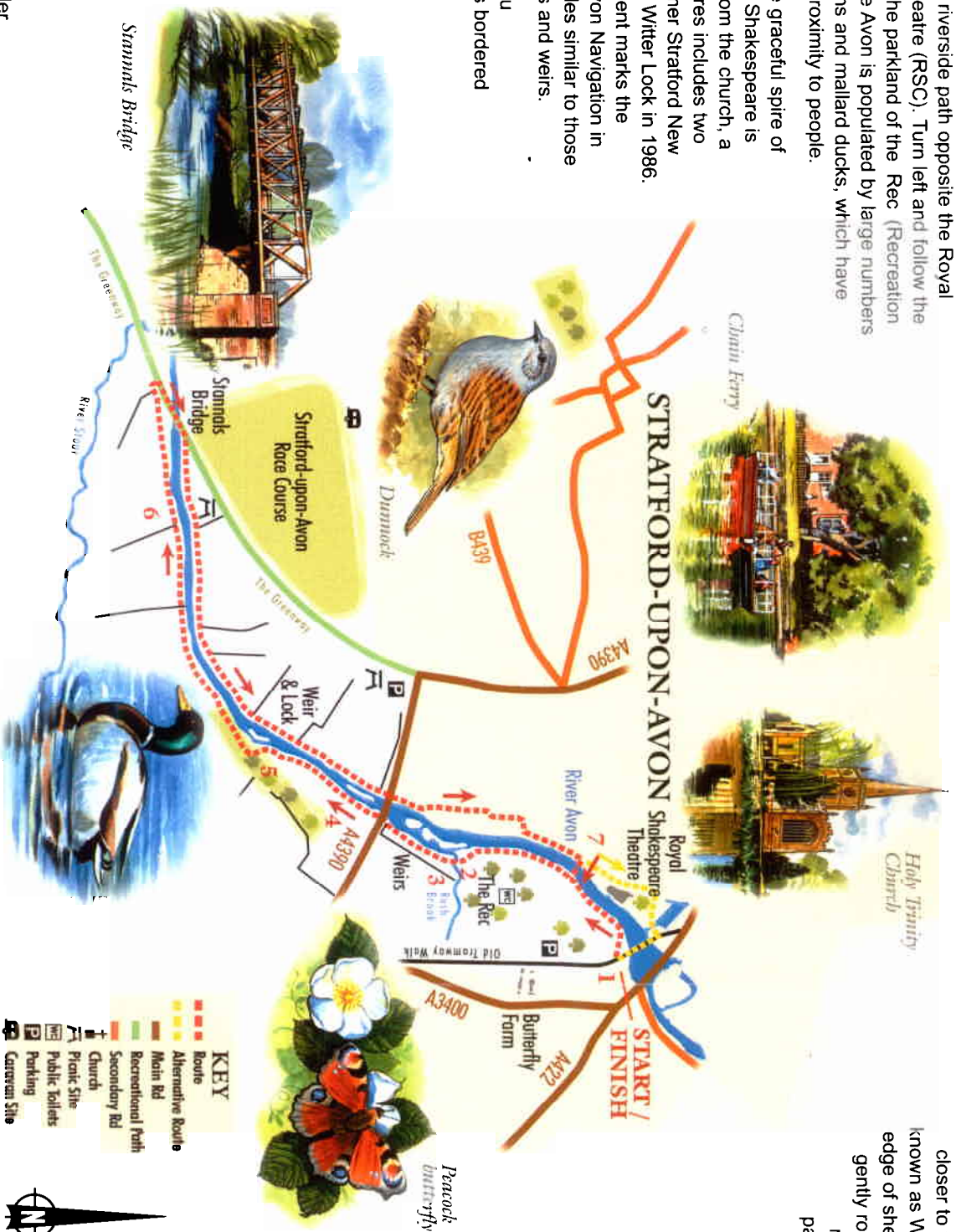
Species such as alder, willow, hawthorn and bramble line the riverbank. Ahead is another weir, next to Anonymous Lock, which is named for all those who donated funds towards the restoration of the Upper Avon in the 1970s. A fairly steep but very brief wooded slope rises behind the lock.

1 START Take the path which leads from the end of the Tramway Bridge to meet a riverside path opposite the Royal Shakespeare Company Theatre (RSC). Turn left and follow the river downstream through the parkland of the Rec (Recreation Ground). This stretch of the Avon is populated by large numbers of birds such as mute swans and mallard ducks, which have adapted to living in close proximity to people.

2 On the far bank rises the graceful spire of Holy Trinity Church, where Shakespeare is buried. Just downstream from the church, a group of navigational features includes two weirs, a sluice and the former Stratford New Lock, renamed the Colin P Witter Lock in 1986. Close to the lock a monument marks the re-opening of the Upper Avon Navigation in 1974. It is made of steel piles similar to those used to build the new locks and weirs.

3 After passing the lock you cross Rush Brook, which is bordered by pollarded willows. The willow is a characteristic waterside tree and pollarding a traditional method of management. By cutting the tree to about 2 metres every few years, a constant supply of small timber is produced and the tree's life prolonged indefinitely.

4 Once you've passed under Seven Meadows Road (A4390), nature begins to take over. There are fewer ducks, but more wild birds, and a flash of electric blue could be a kingfisher looking for lunch.



5 Climb the steps which lead up the slope. After a walk along the top, two further flights of steps take you down closer to the river. On leaving the wood, which is known as Weir Brake, the path continues along the edge of sheep pasture, with pleasant views across gently rolling land to distant hills. When the path returns to the river bank you'll see large patches of common reed, which provides food and shelter for many species of wildlife.

6 Before long Stannals Bridge comes into view on The Greenway, which was formerly the Stratford-upon-Avon to Cheltenham railway but is now a combined footpath and cycleway. Go through a gate beside the underpass to join The Greenway. Turn right across Stannals Bridge then descend to a picnic area. Once you have passed under Seven Meadows Road keep straight on to pass Holy Trinity Church.

At the RSC Gardens, join a path which leads to the ferry (Easter until the end of September only), which will take you across the river to your starting point. This hand-operated chain ferry, built in 1937, was the last of its type to be made for use in Britain. Alternatively, continue along the west bank and through Bancroft Gardens to cross the Avon at the Tramway Bridge. **FINISH**

Public Transport

Why not leave the car at home and get to the walk by bus?



Many transport operators and bus and rail routes converge on Stratford-upon-Avon and Guide Friday operate many buses around the town and area. Minibuses are available

with driver for group hire. Please call 01789 269430 for details.

For further public transport information call:

GUIDE FRIDAY 01789 294466

TRAVELINE 08706 582608

NATIONAL RAIL ENQUIRIES 08457 484950

or visit www.warwickshire.gov.uk/travel

Safe Walking

- During or following prolonged wet weather, check the river level by telephoning:
Environment Agency Floodline 0845 988 1188
- Plan your walk with care, especially if you are walking alone, and make sure someone knows where you are going and when you expect to be back.
- Take care during or following wet weather when paths can become slippery.
- Always wear suitable clothing and footwear.
- Keep children away from the water's edge.

Walking the way to health

Walking is a form of exercise that is free, fun, suitable for all ages and a great way for families and friends to get fit together. Just 30 minutes a day of brisk walking, on a regular basis, can have a positive effect on your health and quality of life.



Walk Fact File

START/FINISH Tramway Bridge, Stratford-upon-Avon or Recreation Ground Car Park. OS Grid Ref 205547.

LENGTH 3 1/2 miles, 5.7kms (approx. 2 hours).

TERRAIN Generally level with two flights of steps and two ramps — up and down from disused railway line. There may be muddy patches after heavy rain or flooding.

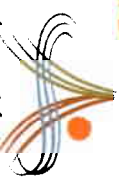
GATES 7 gates (no stiles).

FINDING YOUR WAY The circular walk is clearly indicated all the way round by waymark arrows.

Simply follow the arrow which is closely accompanied by the route logo and you won't get lost.

POINTS OF INTEREST Look out for numbered discs along the route which correspond to the numbered text inside the leaflet.

MAPS You won't need one to find your way but the OS map for the area is Explorer 205 — Stratford-upon-Avon & Evesham.



Avon Valley
CIRCULAR WALKS



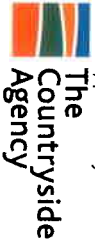
This circular walk is one of a series along the River Avon. Developed by a partnership between:
Warwickshire County Council



Worcestershire



ENVIRONMENT AGENCY



supported by:

This leaflet can be made available in alternative formats on request.
For further information contact:
WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
Tel: 01926 413427 Email: paths@warwickshire.gov.uk
www.warwickshire.gov.uk/countryside

Designed by **Creative Warehouse**, Worcester

DISCLAIMER

The route is subject to constant upgrading and improvement. At times the route may vary from the published map and text. Any variations in the route will be shown, at the appropriate point, by waymarkers and map boards advising walkers of the revised route. Although every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in this leaflet, the partnership cannot accept responsibility for any errors or omissions, nor any actions taken, or not taken, as a result of the information presented 2003

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STRATFORD AVON CIRCULAR WALK

A 3 1/2 mile, waymarked circular riverside walk in the Warwickshire countryside



The River Avon



The River Avon rises near the English Civil War battlefield of Naseby (1645) in Northamptonshire, and flows for 112 miles (179km) through Leicestershire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire before joining the River Severn at Tewkesbury in Gloucestershire. Its catchment is predominantly rural, but the Avon also enhances a number of towns, including Stratford-upon-Avon, Evesham and Pershore.

Though the Avon starts life as a small stream, its many tributaries ensure that by the time it reaches Stratford-upon-Avon it is already a substantial river. Flooding is an obvious natural hazard and, for centuries, river flows have been managed to protect people and property from inundation. A large river such as the Avon has a floodplain, a natural mechanism for the storage of excess water, but in recent years floodplains have increasingly been under pressure from developers. It is essential that floodplains are kept as free from development as possible and the Environment Agency advises local planning authorities on this matter. The Agency also provides a flood warning service.

The Avon is navigable from Alveston, near Stratford-upon-Avon, to Tewkesbury. In 1639 it became one of the first English rivers to benefit from a system of locks and weirs to control water levels. Today, it's a vital link in the Avon Ring, a popular cruising route which also incorporates parts of the River Severn and canals such as the Worcester and Birmingham, Grand Union and Stratford-upon-Avon.

The Avon supports other leisure activities too, such as canoeing, rowing, sailing, angling, birdwatching and walking. Riverside pubs and tea rooms draw visitors, while moorings and caravan sites occur at intervals along its banks. It also supplies water for drinking and irrigation, acts as a natural drainage system and plays a role in the dispersal of treated effluent.

Not only does the Avon have considerable landscape value, it also supports a huge variety of wildlife, including charismatic species such as otter and kingfisher. No fewer than 89 Sites of Special Scientific Interest are scattered across the river's catchment. Though much of the associated wetland habitat has been destroyed, a project is currently underway to recreate lost habitat wherever possible.

Countryside Code

- Use alternatives to your car whenever possible.
- When you do use your car, park responsibly, avoiding verges, gateways and passing places.
- Keep to public rights of way and designated areas of public access when crossing farmland.
- Use appropriate gates and stiles to cross field boundaries.
- Close all gates that you have opened.
- Avoid damaging or disturbing wildlife, including plants and trees.
- Keep dogs under close control and always clean up after them.
- Guard against all risk of fire.
- Make no unnecessary noise.
- Take your litter home and dispose of it responsibly.
- Support local businesses and services.
- Enjoy the countryside and respect its life and work.



Other Local Attractions



STRATFORD-UPON-AVON BUTTERFLY FARM
Europe's largest butterfly farm, set in an exotic rainforest. Tramway Walk, Swans Nest Lane, Stratford-upon-Avon. Tel 01789 299288. www.butterflyfarm.co.uk



COX'S YARD Former timber yard incorporating The Stratford Tales visitor attraction where the history of Stratford is brought to life, plus traditional pub, tea shop, gift shop, microbrewery and restaurant. Bridgefoot, Stratford-upon-Avon. Tel 01789 404600. www.coxsyard.co.uk



THE TEDDY BEAR MUSEUM Wonderful bears from around the world. Come to a picnic and meet Winnie the Pooh, Rupert and Paddington in the teddy bear Hall of Fame. 19 Greenhill Street, Stratford-upon-Avon. Tel 01789 293160. www.theteddymuseum.com



SHAKESPEARE BIRTHPLACE TRUST
Five beautifully preserved tudor homes all associated with William Shakespeare and his family. For further information tel 01789 204016.