

**7** After passing by the handful of houses of Upper Bush continue down the road. Where the road bears to the left take the footpath on your right taking you across fields towards Cuxton. When you reach the main road turn right and after 50 metres, cross over and take the footpath on your left into the woodland of Mill Hill. Take care along this stretch of road as there is no pavement.

**8** Go up the steps and continue uphill through Mill Hill until you get to a footpath on the left taking you over a railway bridge. Continue straight ahead through the kissing gate at the end and down the driveway onto Poplicans Road. Alternatively you can take the footpath across the railway bridge to explore Ranscombe Farm.

*Ranscombe Farm is a combined nature reserve and working farm occupying 560 acres (227 hectares). It lies within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty with much of the woodland being protected Ancient Woodland. With over 10 km of footpaths it offers a great opportunity to explore a classic landscape of woodland, arable fields and grassland with a rich diversity of wildlife. Its natural features have changed remarkably little since the 18th century and the site is nationally renowned for its arable wildflowers.*

**9** Turn left and follow Poplicans Road turning right at the end into White Leaves Rise. Cross over Charles Drive taking the footpath down the alleyway straight ahead. Cross over Ladywood Road and continue down the path until you reach the main road (Bush Road). Turn left and walk along the pavement for 500 metres until the road joins the A228 main road. Cross over at the traffic lights and take the next road on your left. Follow Station Road to the end of the road where Cuxton train station will be straight in front of you.

**Distance:** 6.2 miles / 9.9km.

**Time:** 3½ hours approximately.

**Terrain:** These paths can become muddy and there are some steep sections. Three stiles, two flights of steps (five and 32 steps) and some gates. A short stretch of road walking with no pavement.

**Start point:** Halling train station.

**End point:** Cuxton train station.

**OS Explorer Map:** 148.

# Farming & Ferries

## Halling

A 6.2 mile / 9.9km walk from Halling train station to Cuxton train station through marshland, rare beech and yew woodland on the top of the Downs and attractive farmland in the lower valley.



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This walk is endorsed by Explore Kent.

*Photo credits cover: Blue Lake, All Saints Church in Wouldham, Lower Bush, Halling Marsh (johnmillerphotography.com)*



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This walk takes you around Halling Marsh then up through the scarp-top woodlands of the Kent Downs then down into the beautiful farmland landscape of the lower valley. The stunning panoramic views make the uphill walking worthwhile!

**1** Turn left out of Halling train station along Station Approach. At the junction with the main road turn left and head over the railway bridge. Just after crossing the bridge you will see a footpath sign on the left into Marsh Road. Follow this track which takes you into Halling Marsh. When you reach the River Medway, go over the stile, turn right and follow the riverside path.

*Halling Marsh is actually made up of Halling Salt Marsh, Fresh Marsh and Common and covers an area of 19 hectares nestled alongside the River Medway. Cattle are often used to graze the area so please keep dogs under close control. Admire the beautiful All Saints Church in Wouldham on the opposite river bank which first dates back to 1058.*

**2** Cross over the stile to leave Halling Marsh and continue along the water's edge along Maximilian Drive. Follow the road round to the right heading away from the river and towards the High Street.

*You will see some steps here and also some on the Wouldham side of the river directly opposite. A ferry used to run here to take the cement workers to and fro. The ferry ran for over 600 years until 1964.*

*Stop to admire the remaining wall of the once grand Bishop's Palace. Built in 1086 by Bishop Gundulph, for many years it was the palace for the Bishops of Rochester with the last Bishop to reside at the palace leaving in 1535. More recently the site became part of a cement works, remains of which still run through the site today. The site was even used as a farm in the early nineteenth century before the creation of the cement works!*

**3** Turn right onto the High Street and after 50 metres turn left into Cemetery Road. Follow this all the way across the railway bridge and main road below.

Alternatively for a shorter walk instead of turning into Cemetery Road, continue along the High Street until you reach Halling train station on your right.

**4** After crossing the bridge turn left along the footpath parallel with the road below. After 200 metres you will reach a junction with another footpath. Turn right up this footpath to take you uphill towards the hills of the Kent Downs.

*You will see many old chalk quarries dotted around this area; a reminder of the industrial past of the cement industry that the Medway Valley was once so important for.*



The Bishop's Palace (John Miller)



Bush Valley (VOV)



Teasel (Andy Vidler)

**5** After 1km the footpath will become a road (Meadow Crescent). Follow this to the end and then cross over the road to continue straight ahead into Chapel Lane. You are now in Upper Halling. As the road bears to the left you will see a footpath straight ahead. Take this footpath uphill heading towards the scarp-top woodland. Continue along this path into Ten Acre Wood until you reach a junction with the North Downs Way. Turn right and follow the North Downs Way for almost 2km.

*Enjoy glimpses of the panoramic views over the valley below through breaks in the scarce beech and yew woodland including the stunning 'Blue Lake'.*

**6** When you reach a crossroads of footpaths take the left hand path to continue along the North Downs Way. Take care down the steps here as you head downhill. Go through the kissing gate at the edge of the woodland and into an open field. Follow the path across the field then go through the kissing gate and follow the path uphill into North Wood. Pass through the woodland and out into open fields on the other side. Continue along the path (still the North Downs Way) passing alongside woodland on your left and into Upper Bush.

*Up until around 1930 the hamlet of Upper and Lower Bush was a thriving baking, brewing, wheelwright and farming community. During the 1800s Upper Bush was the main settlement within the Parish of Cuxton with 22 dwellings whereas Cuxton village only had nine. Once Cuxton began to expand due to social and economic change, Upper and Lower Bush began to decline. Most of the houses at Upper Bush were demolished after 1945.*