

STEPPING OUT: DUNSTON FEN CIRCULAR



Easy Terrain



A 4 mile (6.5km) easy-access circular walk from the Dunston Fen picnic site, close to the village of Dunston in Lincolnshire.

The walking route heads south to follow a circuit around the farmland of the fenlands, crossing the historic Roman Car Dyke, with big skies and plenty of wildlife to enjoy along the way. This walk is part of the Stepping Out network, published through a collaboration between iFootpath and North Kesteven District Council to inspire more people to enjoy the district's landscapes, ancient woodland, historic buildings and charming villages.

If you are looking for refreshments, The White Horse is located at the eastern end of Dunston Fen Lane (alongside the River Witham) or The Red Lion is located in Dunston village.

Getting there

The walk starts and finishes at the dedicated Dunston Fen Stepping Out car park and picnic site, about 1.5 miles east of Dunston village. Being a remote site, the car park does not have public transport access, nor does it have a dedicated post code.

Use the post code **LN4 2HB** to reach Fen Lane in the village of Dunston.

From this point, drive east along this lane (which becomes Dunston Fen Lane) for 1.5 miles. Stay with the lane as it swings left (with Nocton Wood on your left) and, where the lane swings right, fork left into the parking area (signed with a brown Stepping Out tourism sign).

Walk Sections

Go 1 Start to Hilltop Cottage

Leave the car park via the vehicle entrance fence gap and turn right for just a few metres to reach the T-junction with the road. Turn right to walk along Dunston Fen Lane (taking care of occasional traffic), which swings steadily right with Nocton Wood on your right. Ignore the first footpath signed to the left, instead continue on the lane. Immediately before a single property on your left, turn left onto the side lane signed to Metheringham Fen. You will notice a wide ditch running on your right, part of the 76-mile long Car Dyke which was constructed by the Romans. This impressive engineering feat controlled freshwater and tidal flows, allowing the fens to be drained.

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Access Notes

1. The walk is relatively flat and follows a mixture of quiet country roads, grass farm tracks and dirt farm tracks.
2. The tracks can get muddy after rain and are quite uneven and churned in parts, so would not be suitable for pushchairs.
3. For the main route, there are no obstacles (gates, stiles or steps) and you will not be sharing any of the paths with livestock.
4. There is an option to take a shortcut, but this route crosses several sheep pastures and includes multiple stiles (which have wire fence surrounds, so dogs would need a lift over).
5. Please remember the Countryside Code. Some paths are provided by kind permission of the landowner, please only use the waymarked paths. Where young stock may be present, please make sure your dog is under firm control in these areas.
6. OS Map Explorer 272



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This road leads you to a T-junction with Metheringham Fen Lane, with Fen Head Farm directly ahead. Turn right along the lane and, after 70 metres you will see a fingerpost on your left. At this point you have two choices.

If you wish to take a shortcut that follows Car Dyke through sheep pastures (with multiple stiles), turn left and cross the stile into the first pasture. Now follow the waymarked footpath over several stiles, running alongside Car Dyke, until you emerge at Waypoint 3, a tarmac farm track that forms a bridge across the dyke. Turn left onto the track and skip ahead to the section called Car Dyke Bridge to Fen Head Farm.

For the main route, simply continue along the lane, passing Hilltop Livery and then a single white property, Hilltop Cottage, both on your left.



through the wide hedge gap to enter a second field. Walk directly ahead along the left-hand field boundary, with the hedge on your left. At the end of this long, straight stretch, stay with the grass field edge as it bends right. About 30 metres later, turn left through the wide hedge gap (crossing a ditch), to reach a third crop field.

Walk straight ahead along the field boundary (signed as the restricted byway), with the hedge running on your right. You will come to a ford where the byway crosses a stream. Cross the stream via the footbridge and walk ahead for a further 90 metres to reach the end of a hedge on your left (with a large crop field ahead).

Pass the end of the hedge and turn immediately left along the narrow field edge path with the hedge running on your left (signed as a public footpath). Follow the footpath as it bends right and then left, leading you into a pretty tunnel of trees. The woodland slope up to your right is actually the bank of a reservoir.

As you emerge from the trees, keep ahead on the stone and grass track and you will emerge to a T-junction with a tarmac farm track. Turn left to cross the tarmac bridge over Car Dyke. (Straight after the bridge, you will notice a grass footpath running off to the left alongside the dyke, this is the path from which the shortcut re-joins the main route).

1 → 2 Hilltop Cottage to Field Corner Fingerpost



Continue ahead on the quiet lane between open fields, with far-reaching views all around. At the end of this stretch of road (with a road sign for Prior Lane ahead), follow the main lane as it bends left. Follow the lane just until it bends right. As you reach this right-hand bend, continue straight ahead to join a grassy track (signed as a restricted byway).

At the end of the grass track you will come to the edge of a crop field ahead, with a fingerpost on your right. Turn left along the field edge (a continuation of the byway) to reach the next fingerpost in the field corner.

2 → 3 Field Corner Fingerpost to Car Dyke Bridge

Ignore the bridleway signed to the right, instead go ahead

3 → 4 Car Dyke Bridge to Fen Head Farm



Standing on Car Dyke Bridge (with the grass footpath from which the shortcut emerged to your left), walk ahead for a few paces to reach a fork in the farm track. Take the left-hand branch and follow this dirt farm track as it swings left and then right, before continuing ahead between fields, running alongside power lines.

Within North Kesteven, Car Dyke is the dividing line between the limestone uplands of the west and the fenlands of the east. This narrow strip of fenland between Car Dyke and the River



Witham was once known as the Witham Peat Fen. Much of the peat has now been eroded due to intensive arable farming. Marsh Harriers can often be seen swooping across the fen skies or dipping in and out of the woodland. They have successfully adapted to breed in the farmed landscape.

Eventually you will emerge through the gap alongside a vehicle barrier to reach a T-junction with the road. Turn left along the road, taking care of any occasional traffic. Continue until you reach the first side road on your right, with Fen Head Farm on your left (which you should recognise from the outward leg).

4 → 5 Fen Head Farm to End



From this point we will be re-tracing our steps back to the car park. To do this, turn right onto the side road signed to Dunston. You will see Car Dyke running on your left once again. Continue to the T-junction and turn right, signed to Dunston Fen. Follow the lane as it swings steadily left, with Nocton Wood on your left. Where the lane swings right, fork left onto the stone track (marked with the brown Stepping Out sign). This track leads you directly to the car park on your left where the walk began.

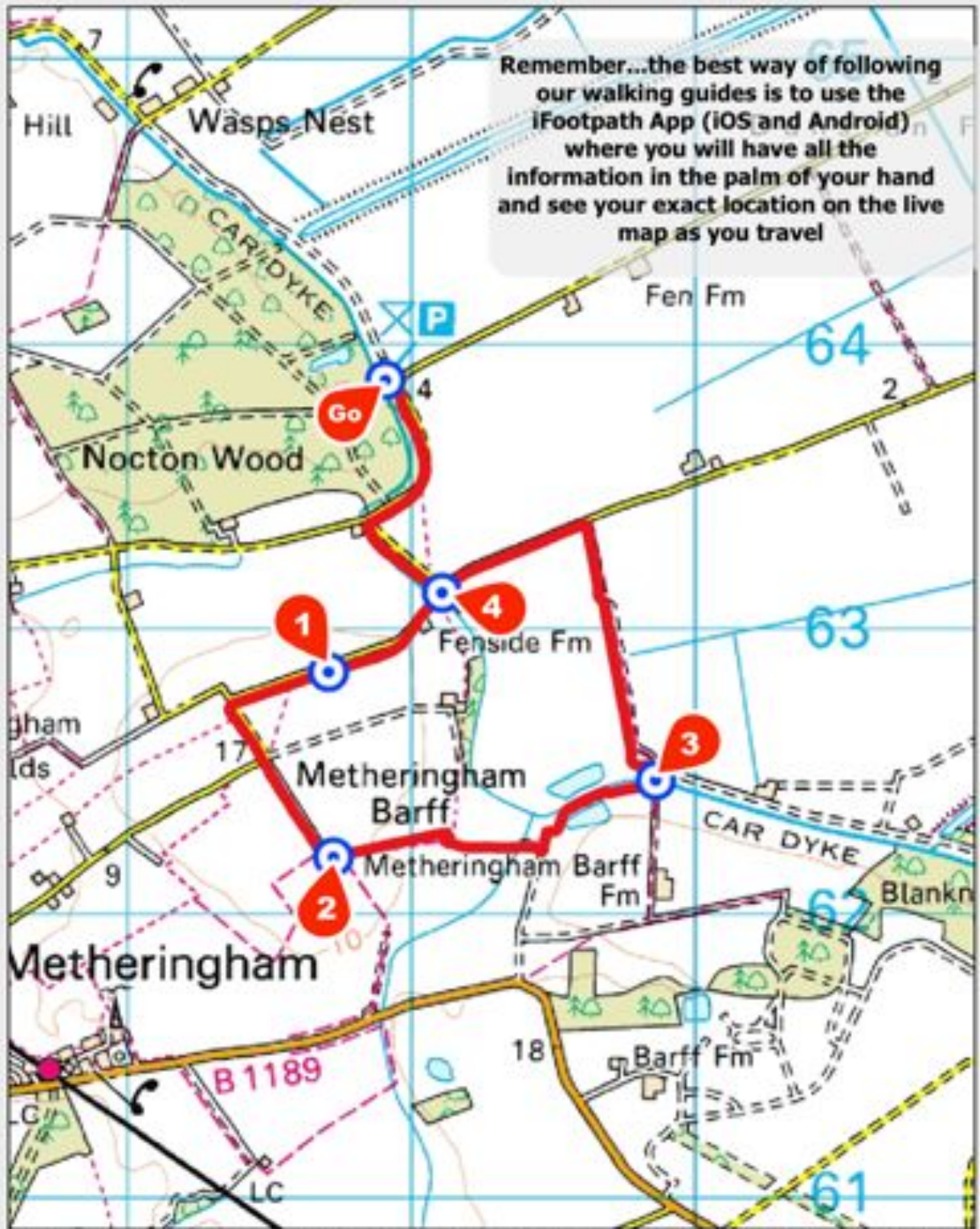
Disclaimer

This walking route was walked and checked at the time of writing. We have taken care to make sure all our walks are safe for walkers of a reasonable level of experience and fitness. However, like all outdoor activities, walking carries a degree of risk and we accept no responsibility for any loss or damage to personal effects, personal accident, injury or public liability whilst following this walk. We cannot be held responsible for any inaccuracies that result from changes to the routes that occur over time. Please let us know of any changes to the routes so that we can correct the information.

Walking Safety

For your safety and comfort we recommend that you take the following with you on your walk: bottled water, snacks, a waterproof jacket, waterproof/sturdy boots, a woolly hat and fleece (in winter and cold weather), a fully-charged mobile phone, a whistle, a compass and an Ordnance Survey map of the area. Check the weather forecast before you leave, carry appropriate clothing and do not set out in fog or mist as these conditions can seriously affect your ability to navigate the route. Take particular care on cliff/mountain paths where steep drops can present a particular hazard. Some routes include sections along roads – take care to avoid any traffic at these points. Around farmland take care with children and dogs, particularly around machinery and livestock. If you are walking on the coast make sure you check the tide times before you set out.





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