



# Banbury Fringe walk



Distance *up to 10 miles/16km*  
(shorter routes available)

Time *up to 4 hours*



**Cherwell**  
DISTRICT COUNCIL  
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

## Banbury Fringe Circular Walk

As its name suggests, the **Banbury Fringe Circular Walk** will take you on a ramble right around the urban fringe, where town meets countryside. Look in one direction and you can see the bustling market town of Banbury, look the other way and you can enjoy the beauty and diversity of its rural setting.

From its start in the town centre you can set out for the full 10 mile walk. However, if you would prefer a more manageable ramble there are shorter options to enjoy, going from and returning to one of the alternative starting points using the main roads of Banbury.

The shorter options include – Town Centre/Spiceball Park to Bodicote along the canal towpath (2.75 miles/4.5 km); Bodicote to Giant's Cave - through the village and along the Salt Way (2.5 miles/4 km); Giant's Cave to the Mineral Railway Path through fields, woodlands and along a farm track (2.5 miles/4 km); and Mineral Railway Path to Town Centre/Spiceball Park including a stretch of the canal towpath (2.25 miles/3.6 km).

You are advised to wear stout, waterproof footwear as walking in the countryside can be muddy and wet, even in the summer months. The route is clearly waymarked in a clockwise direction along its full length but it helps to follow the information in this leaflet as you go. Please take great care when crossing the busy roads.

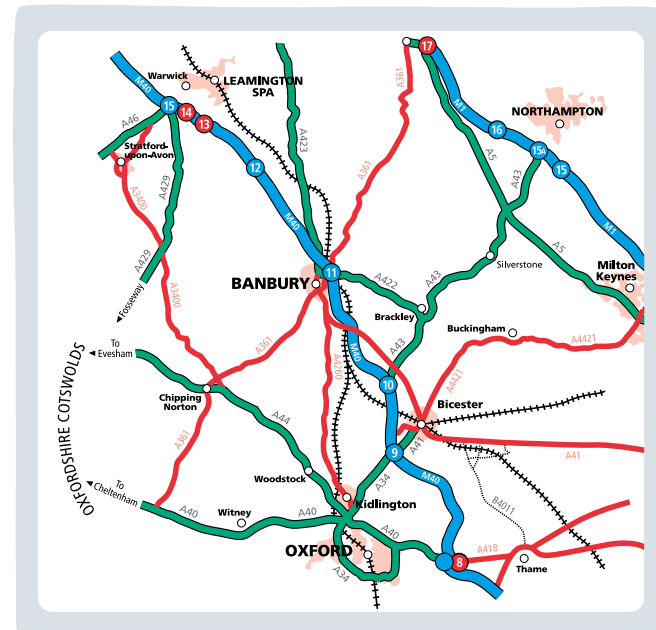
Town centre car parks are available close to the start of the walk. Alternative starting points on the route also have provision for cars: roadside parking along White Post Road in Bodicote; a small area for parking off the Broughton Road near Giant's Cave; and along Ferriston near the mineral railway path.

*\*Please check [www.cherwell.gov.uk/circular-walks-in-cherwell](http://www.cherwell.gov.uk/circular-walks-in-cherwell) to ensure you have the latest version of this leaflet including any temporary alterations.*



Oxford Canal towpath

## Getting there



### By train:

The nearest station is Banbury which links to Bicester and Oxford to the south and Birmingham to the north. The Oxford canal towpath where the walk begins is a short walk from the station.

### For bus services visit:

Banbury has good bus connections within the town and with other locations within Oxfordshire, Warwickshire and Northamptonshire. Coach services from further afield are also available.

### By car:

The walk starts in the town centre where car parking is available.

*The walks in this leaflet are based on roads in the town and official public rights of way (footpaths or bridleways). The publishers accept no responsibility for any loss, injury or inconvenience sustained by anyone using this leaflet.*

September 2020 edition



# Banbury

## Fringe walk

Distance **10 miles / 16 km**

Approximate time **4 hours**

**1 Start** Join the Oxford Canal towpath from Spiceball Park (near the play area). Pass under the road bridge and walk along the towpath and under the covered bridge (which links the Castle Quay shopping centre to Banbury Museum). Note Tooley's Boatyard across the canal on your right and the Mill Arts Centre further on to your left, close to the lock. Note the Poem Sculptures just after the lock.

**2** Continue along the towpath through Banbury and then alongside fields, for approximately 1.75 miles / 2.8 km, to 'Nadkey bridge', a brick arch bridge which is No 172. Come up from the towpath past the remains of a stile, turn right over the bridge, go through a field gate and then uphill along the field edge. Go through a pedestrian gate and follow the track straight ahead through the Longford Park housing estate, cross the road and continue walking straight ahead until you reach the Oxford Road.

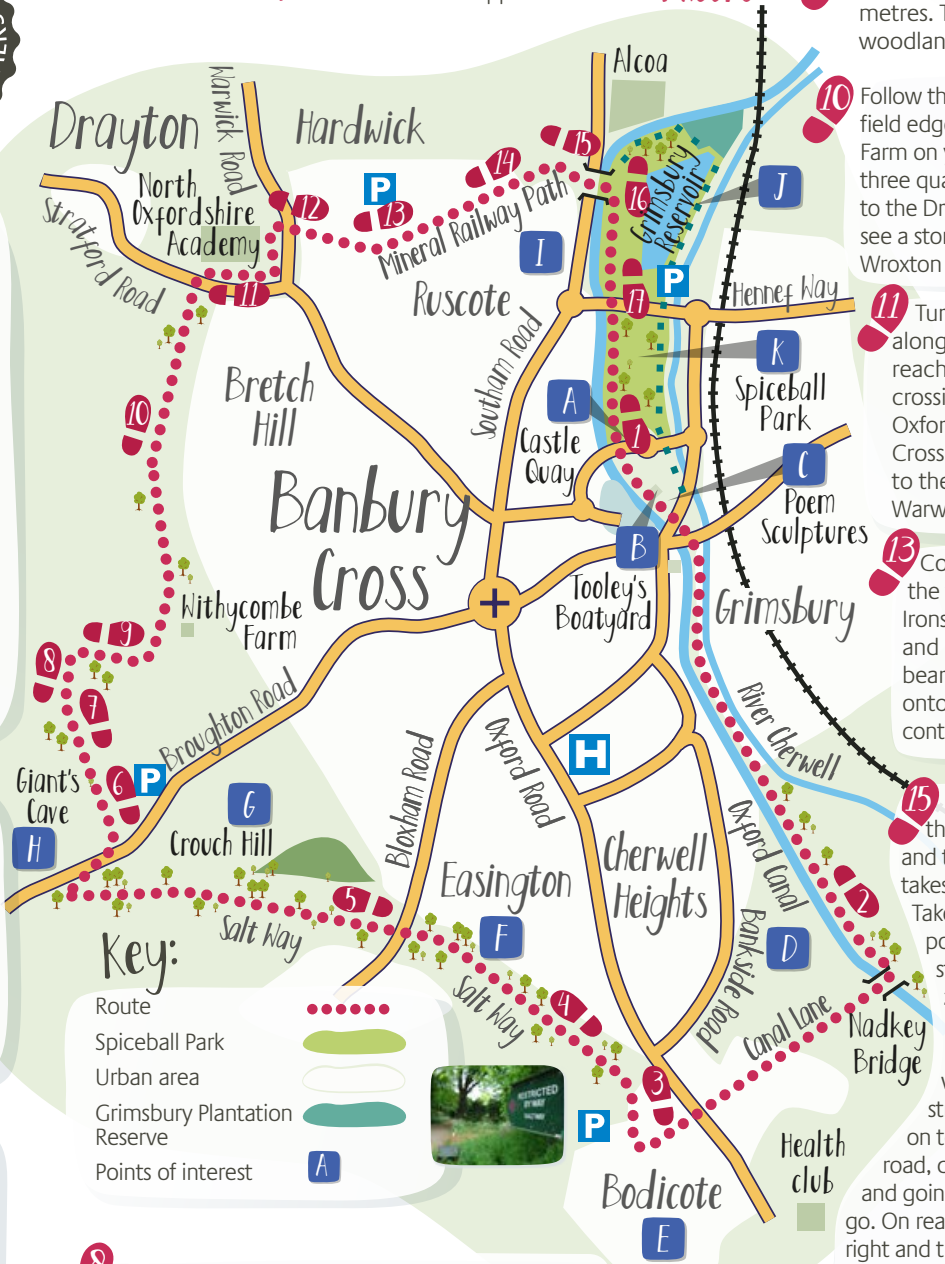
**3** Cross the road using the light controlled crossing and continue straight on along Broad Gap into Bodicote village. At the end turn right along High Street which becomes White Post Road. Pass the playing field on your left and the Council Offices and School on the right. Salt Way starts on the left, just before the roundabout.

**4** Follow Salt Way for about a mile, (passing the junction with the Bodicote Circular Walk on the left and the bridleway link to the main Oxford Road on the right as well as several other pathways) until you reach the junction with Bloxham Road. Cross with care.

**5** Rejoin Salt Way on the other side of the road and continue along the track for about another mile (note Crouch Hill through the trees over to the right) Follow the main path round to the right until you reach the Broughton road.

**6** Cross the road with care and take the wooden steps over the wall and into Giant's Cave park. Turn right and follow the path to the hardstanding area.

**7** *Permissive path* - Climb the steps straight ahead and follow the field edge immediately left and then right around the field corner. Continue uphill along the field edge.



**Key:**

- Route ●●●●●
- Spiceball Park ▬▬▬
- Urban area ▬▬▬
- Grimsbury Plantation Reserve ▬▬▬
- Points of interest A



**8** *Permissive path* - Walk steadily uphill until you reach the top of the field. Bear left and after a short distance bear right following the track steeply downhill through a belt of trees. On reaching the open field, turn right and walk downhill with the hedge on your right.

**9** At the bottom, turn right onto what is now a public footpath and go steadily uphill through woodland for approx. 400 metres. This path can be very wet and muddy. At the end of the woodland, where the path reaches an open field, turn left.

**10** Follow the path straight ahead out of the woodland, along the field edge and past fenced paddocks on your left. Pass Withycombe Farm on your right and continue the farm access road for about three quarters of a mile (passing new development on your right) to the Drayton/Stratford road. (Back over your left shoulder you can see a stone archway, part of the original landscape design of the Wroxton Abbey estate).

**11** Turn right and walk along the road until you reach the light controlled crossing opposite North Oxfordshire Academy. Cross over and continue to the junction with the Warwick Road.

**12** Turn left, pass Ludlow Drive and then cross the road using the light controlled crossing. Turn left and then right at the roundabout onto Highlands. After a short distance turn right in front of the houses onto a path which takes you down to join the Mineral Railway path.

**13** Continue along the tarmac path to Ironstones. Cross the road and almost immediately bear right off the path onto a grass track and continue straight ahead.

**14** Rejoin the tarmac path and a little further on, the route passes through a tunnel under Highlands. If you prefer not to use the tunnel you can come up to the road and cross over with care, rejoining the Mineral Railway path on the other side. Continue straight on past a play area on your left. Then bear left down a short slope and turn right. Follow the path straight on through a small open space area and then up along the top of an embankment (alongside an industrial area). The embankment path takes you through an area of trees and scrub.

**15** Carry straight on until the embankment ends and the path turns right and takes you steeply downhill. Take great care at this point as the path is very steep although is zig zagged to reduce the slope. Turn left at the bottom onto the path which runs alongside a stream and head straight on towards the Southam road, crossing an access road and going down steps as you go. On reaching the road turn right and then cross opposite the canal bridge. There is no controlled crossing point here and it is a busy road so take care.

**16** Go over the canal bridge, follow the walkway round to the left until you reach the canal towpath and turn left.

**17** Continue along the towpath which leads alongside Spiceball Park back to the start of the walk. Alternatively the park can be entered at an earlier point from the towpath.

# Banbury Points of interest

## A Castle Quay

The Castle Quay shopping centre was opened in 2000. The ground on which it is built includes the site of Banbury Castle, which was the subject of two intense and bloody sieges during the English civil war. Soon after the war the castle fell into disrepair and the stone was gradually carted away by local people for their own uses. You can find out more about Banbury Castle and Banbury's part in the civil war by visiting Banbury Museum (main entrance from Castle Quay shopping centre).



Castle Quay Shopping centre and Banbury Museum

## B Tooley's Boatyard

Tooley's Boatyard has been in use for repairing narrow boats since the 1790s. It is a rare survivor and now adjoins Banbury Museum and is protected by Scheduled Ancient Monument status. Today boats are still repaired at the boatyard as they have been for over 200 years. Go to [www.tooleysboatyard.co.uk](http://www.tooleysboatyard.co.uk) for further information.

## C Poem Sculptures

Sculptor Michael Fairfax and Oxfordshire poet Jamie McKendrick worked together on a series of artworks for the Oxford Canal funded by Cherwell District Council and Southern Arts. For the Banbury installation Michael has inscribed Jamie's poem 'Flow' on four black iron 'mileposts'. The tops represent hump backed bridges, immediately below are lock gate cogs, and under the inscriptions are ripples on the surface of the water.

'Flow' by Jamie McKendrick



**The Greek who said you can never**

**Step into the same river  
Twice hadn't dreamt of**

**The slow seepage of canals  
With their oil and graphite sheen**

**Liquid packed solid as a pencil lead**

**Where time is cased in a long cabinet**

**Stowed with the ownerless archives**

**Of two centuries of weather**

**The lump of coal from Warwickshire**

**The tipcat, the fender, the bleached horse's tail**

**Once tied to a painted tiller**



'Nadkey bridge'

## D Oxford Canal

Running from Coventry to Oxford, the Oxford Canal was a thriving commercial success from its completion in 1790 until the rise of competition from the railways in the late 19th century. It continued to carry commercial traffic up until the 1930s and now has a new lease of life as a recreational waterway. The vegetation alongside the towpath provides food and shelter for a wide variety of animals.

## E Bodicote

Bodicote is a large village with the original centre (now a conservation area) set amidst more recent development. Two village pubs provide the walker with an opportunity for refreshment. Bodicote House is Georgian, with modern extensions to house the administration headquarters of Cherwell District Council. Bodicote provides the focus for another circular walk which connects with the Fringe Walk along the Salt Way.

## F Salt Way

The Salt Way was once the main road from Droitwich to London and it is thought to have been for the carrying of salt to the South-East. From North Newington to the Broughton Road it is now a normal road but from there, right through to Bodicote, it has retained its green-lane character. A Salt Way nature trail is described in the **Bodicote Circular Walk leaflet**. Since 2000 Salt Way has been part of the National Cycle Network.



Salt Way

## G Crouch Hill

Crouch Hill, the highest point in the immediate area, has a Celtic name from 'crug', meaning hill, which possibly indicates that there was a British settlement here as early as 400 B.C. Its conical top is artificial and was raised for the purpose of communicating with the earliest settlements such as those at Madmarston and Tadmarton. During the English civil war Crouch Hill was strategically important. In June 1644 it was occupied by roundhead forces (under Sir William Waller) prior to the battle of Cropredy Bridge. In October of the same year Colonel Henry Gage's royalist cavalry used it as their base to relieve the besieged Banbury Castle.

## H Giant's Cave

Giant's Cave forms part of an area of old pasture known as the Bretch - *'a stony spot full of hills and hollows'*. Local legend has it that the "cave" was the secret entrance of a tunnel to Broughton Castle (nearly a mile away), used during the Civil War of the 1640s. An image on the flag flown at the Good Friday fair, held on this day until the 19th century, is thought to be "the Giant".

## I Mineral Railway

When operational, the Mineral Railway line formed part of the route serving ironstone quarries in the Wroxton area. It was constructed in 1917 by German prisoners of war to carry the ironstone to the main Great Western Railway line east of the Southam Road. Operations ceased in 1967 when rail transport became too costly but ironstone is still quarried in the area and transported by lorry. Roads on the Hardwick estate are reminders of this past industry (Ironstones, Ferriston). One of the exposed rock faces which can be seen has been designated as a geological Site of Special Scientific Interest.

## J Grimsbury Reservoir

A walk around two sides of the reservoir has been established linking up with the canal towpath. This extends the Spiceball Country Park land trail by approximately 1.5 miles/2.4km and also provides an alternative route back to the centre of town for those following the Banbury Fringe Circular Walk. During the building of the reservoir in the mid 1960s, the potential importance of the area to birds was recognised by the Banbury Ornithological Society which negotiated with Thames Water for a four hectare area to be set aside and developed as a wildlife sanctuary (the woodland area adjacent to the towpath known as Grimsbury Plantation Reserve). The Grimsbury complex has therefore become an ideal place for birdwatching. The reservoir is also used for sailing and fishing.



Spiceball Park

## K Spiceball Country Park

Spiceball Country Park is a 'green link' from the centre of Banbury to the open countryside. It offers easy access along a footpath circuit of about 1-2 miles/2-4km around a series of open fields with a fitness trail, children's play and activity areas and picnic site. Woodland and wild flora areas have been established as well as a nature trail; and fishing is available by permit in the River Cherwell and Oxford Canal.



Wild Banbury nature trails and Spiceball play area

## Preparation



- Wear appropriate clothing and strong, comfortable footwear. Trousers, strong boots or wellingtons are recommended as parts of the route can be very wet and muddy.
- Carry water and take a mobile phone if you have one but bear in mind that coverage can be patchy in rural areas. If you are walking alone it's sensible, as a simple precaution, to let someone know where you are and when you expect to return.



Tooley's Boatyard

## Things to remember

- Take great care when crossing or walking along the roads.
- Park your car responsibly. Do not obstruct gateways, narrow lanes and village facilities. Consider leaving valuables at home.
- Remember that the countryside is a working place - leave crops, buildings, machinery and livestock well alone. Leave gates and property as you find them and please keep to the line of the path.
- Respect plants and animals and take your litter home.
- Ground nesting birds can be disturbed by dogs, particularly in the Spring, so please keep them under close control.
- The walk in this leaflet is based on village streets and official public rights of way (footpaths or bridleways). The publishers accept no responsibility for any loss, injury or inconvenience sustained by anyone using this leaflet.