



Circular walking guide from Romsey

Take the train to Romsey for a superb walk along the River Test to the glorious gardens at Mottisfont Abbey

Why not hop on a train to Romsey for this delightful walk to Mottisfont Abbey? Famous for its national collection of heritage roses, Rex Whistler decorated a room here in fantasy style using optical illusion murals. Lunch at the Kitchen Café,

Mottisfont, which serves tasty, locally sourced food. Following the Test Way, the walk passes England's finest trout fishery, the River Test, and crosses the Dun. Romsey Abbey, a Norman parish church housing the grave of Admiral of the Fleet, Earl Mountbatten of Burma, is worth a visit. Mountbatten's former home, Broadlands, is a short walk from the town centre.

Leave Romsey station and walk downhill to cross Malmesbury Road and continue down Station Road, leading to Latimer Street. At the end, turn right and walk up Market Place. Pass the Town Hall on your left, and keeping Palmerston's statue on your right go under the archway, of Romsey Abbey (visit this on the return leg). Keep straight on to the Meads, leading to Memorial Park on your left and then a narrow lane ahead with fields on your right and cross a mill-race, Saddler's Mill. After the bridge follow the Test Way sign pointing right, and then turn hard right again, through one gate and then on to a second gate.

Ahead of you is Romsey Meadows and to your right is Romsey Abbey. Walk along the right-hand field edge, crossing stiles, and then head diagonally for a stile at the left-hand edge of Squabb Wood, nearly half a mile away. The path through the woods is clearly marked. Leave Squabb Wood by a wooden kissing gate and go left, slightly uphill along a defined track. Follow it to your right until it meets a tarmac lane and cross, following the green and white disc markers, until you reach a stile signed with directions on how to cross the next field. Keep straight on, passing Blue Haze house on your left and emerge on a quiet road. Go left and almost immediately pick up the Test Way sign on your right. Follow it behind the houses to emerge on a quiet tarmac lane and go right, passing Lakeside house. Follow signs left over fields and then head through woods (can be muddy) to exit at a T-junction after about half a mile. Go right on the B3084, passing the gates to Awbridge House on your right. Reach the entrance to Dummer Farm, about a quarter of a mile on your left and follow the Test Way sign into the woods on your right. When you emerge, turn right, then left, following signs before a level crossing.

Continue until you come to a finger-post junction and follow the Test Way right to come to a railway bridge and down through woods (muddy) to arrive at the banks of the River Test. Follow the well-defined path across the meadows to reach St Andrew's Church. There are bees in the east wall and bats in the belfry, according to the guide. With thatched cottages to your left and the church on the right, turn right at the road junction (ignoring Test Way sign to left) to reach the entrance of Mottisfont Abbey in about 250m. Formerly an Augustinian friary, Mottisfont was dissolved by Cromwell in 1536 and converted into a private house. It's famous for the summer display of roses in the box-edged walled garden laid out by Graham Stuart Thomas and is at its best in June. The return to Romsey retraces the Test Way. Before leaving Romsey visit the Abbey, founded in 907. A parish church since 1544, before the dissolution it was home to a Benedictine community. Inside there are Saxon crosses and 12th-century wall paintings. Across Church Street is a medieval merchant's house from the 13th century - the King John's House museum and tourist information.

Visitor information

Mottisfont Abbey (01794 340757): Garden open Mar-Oct; extended hours 1100-1800 (grounds open until 2030) 5-27 Jun from Mon-Sun (closed Thu and Fri off-peak).

Broadlands (01794 505010): Open 30 Jun-2 Sept, 2004, weekdays, pm only. Under 12s free.

Tourist Information Centre, Church Street, Romsey (01794 512987). Open 1000-1700.