




Dog Friendly Pub Walk Compton to Wightwick

 walk time 30-40 minutes
distance 1.6km / 1 mile



WALKING TIPS

-  Walking times are approx, measured on an average pace of two miles an hour.
-  Follow the water and enjoy walking at your own pace... but allow time to simply sit and stare along the way.
-  Walk one way and hop on a bus for your return, or turn around and walk back to discover a different view.

-  towpath
-  access point
-  pub
-  parking
-  bus stop
-  railway station

The Walk - Step by Step

Symphonies of birds from the hedgerows, big skies, pheasant-filled fields and a real sense of escape shape this walk. You can almost forget the city is so close as you amble along a leaf-green corridor that teems with wildlife and nature. Compton is where the very first sod of earth for the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal was dug in 1766. Now, lifetimes on, boats potter around the water for fun. And if you haven't had your fill of boats at the end of this walk you can always keep walking.



Head down the slope from the busy A454 to the leafy calm of the canal, and go straight ahead along the towpath a few yards to Compton Lock.

- 1 Compton Lock was the first of 43 locks to be built on the 46-mile Staffs & Worcs Canal. The Grade II-listed lock and bridge were designed by James Brindley, the great canal engineer known as the 'father of Britain's canals'. The lock is believed to be his first operational lock and therefore a prototype for narrow canal locks across the Midlands. Its distinctive circular side weir has a saucer-like sill funnelling water into a hole in the centre, and occupies far less space than a straight weir with the same capacity. These circular weirs are only found on the Staffs & Worcs. You'll also see cast-iron bollards alongside the lock, grooves worn into them from countless horses' ropes pulling boats through the lock.
- 2 Turn and head back towards Compton Bridge, going under it and follow the towpath away from the road. There are usually a few moored boats on both sides of the canal here as you pass the attractive building housing an Italian restaurant.
- 3 Hedgerows teeming with birds shelter the canal from houses along the Bridgnorth Road, and you feel you've stepped straight into the countryside, as the bustle of traffic soon disappears and is replaced by the gentle sounds of birdsong, quacking ducks, rippling water... The open space across the canal is bordered by trees, and gently slopes to join the water with reeds creating homes for moorhens, coots and ducks. And a stile seemingly to nowhere provides a handy seat for a moment to take it all in.
- 4 The canal curves gently then straightens again towards another of the canal's earliest locks, Wightwick Mill Lock. Also Grade II-listed, the lock has a fabulous example of Brindley's

circular weirs to the side, and a well-placed bench to watch the boat action. The Staffs & Worcs is one of the busiest waterways so there are usually boats whatever the time of year. Look closely and you'll see grooves worn into Wightwick Mill Lock Bridge by horses pulling boats through with ropes.

- 5 The bridge leads across to local playing fields and an entrance to Smestow Valley Local Nature Reserve. Smestow Valley is named after Smestow Brook which shadows the canal along this stretch, and the Reserve is a haven for wildlife (some of which of course roam the canal). There have been sightings of over 55 species of bird in the Reserve, so as you carry on along the towpath, keep your eyes peeled for glimpses of redwing, redstart, willow warbler, chiffchaff, swallow, goldcrest, goldfinch and maybe even a kingfisher.
 - 6 Another slight curve in the canal and you reach the Grade II-listed Wightwick Lock and bridge. Rather than the circular weirs at Compton and Wightwick Mill, this lock has a more common side weir and, as you follow the towpath below the lock, you'll see its outlet re-joining the canal. The force of water flowing down to the canal can be quite fierce so boats can sometimes even be pushed sideways if the person in charge of the tiller gets distracted.
- END** A few hundred yards further on, you can leave the canal on either side of Wightwick Bridge to explore Wightwick village and Wightwick Manor, a timber-framed Arts & Crafts house with an important pre-Raphaelite art collection now cared for by the National Trust. Then catch a bus back along the main road, or return to the towpath to make your way back to Compton along the greenery-lined canal.

CANAL: Staffordshire & Worcestershire

START: Compton Lock
OS Grid ref: SO883989 Postcode: WV3 9DL

FINISH: Wightwick Bridge
OS Grid ref: SO870983 Postcode: WV6 8EE

DISTANCE: 1.6km / 1 mile
(double if walk back to start)

APPROX TIME: 30-40 minutes

PUB: The Mermaid at Wightwick, a short walk from the canal, various in Compton

PARKING: Car park by The Oddfellows pub.
Postcode: WV6 8AA

TRAIN: Nearest train station - Wolverhampton
National Rail Enquiries
Tel: 03457 484950 www.nationalrail.co.uk

BUS: Traveline
Tel: 0871 2002233 www.traveline.info

