

Spend the day walking in magnificent Marlow



How long do I need? One day

Where is it? Marlow

Highlights

Like neighbouring Henley-on-Thames, Marlow combines impressive natural beauty with desirable, contemporary chic. Georgian buildings, an elegant 19th century suspension bridge and the gentle backdrop of the Chiltern Hills brought Edwardians by the boatload to their favourite riverside resort. Now prosperous shops, restaurants, pubs and bistros make Marlow a sought-after place to visit and live. Marlow's attractive Georgian-fronted High Street leads down to the green expanse of riverside Higginson Park, with its landing stage for passenger steamers and rowing boats for hire. The [Thames Path National Trail](#) follows the river through the park, which has a statue of the town's most famous son - Sir Steven Redgrave, who lives in Marlow Bottom, and took up rowing when he was a pupil at Great Marlow School. Just the other side of the suspension bridge is the superbly sited [Macdonald Compleat Angler Hotel](#), named after Izaak Walton's famous fishing book. From its waterside frontage the hotel looks back across Marlow Weir to where St Peter Street, Marlow's oldest street, ends in a slipway a few yards from the former ferry crossing and the historic Two Brewers pub. From here, it's a ten minute walk to Marlow Lock, which affords superb views of the weir, and of the more rural River Thames as it disappears amongst the greenery en route to Cookham.

Macdonald Compleat Angler

Marlow, Buckinghamshire, SL7 1RG

Opening hours: All year round

Costs: Room rates vary – see website or call for details

Tel: +44 (0)844 8799128

Web: <http://www.macdonaldhotels.co.uk/compleatangler>

The River Thames around Marlow is a top training ground for Britain's Olympic rowing heroes. Bisham Abbey National Sports Centre, just a little over a mile from Marlow, is the home of the British Olympic Institute and

a top training centre for international sports men and women. The centre, which incorporates part of the ancient abbey building, is not open to the public but the village of Bisham, and its pub and restaurant [The Bull](#), are well worth a visit.

Start your day with a browse around Marlow

Shopping is a relaxed affair in the boutiques and small shops of Marlow's compact town centre. When in the High Street head down towards the river for a mid morning treat at [Burgers Tea Room and Bakery](#) (+44 (0)1628 483389) on a left hand corner of The Causeway. This delightfully decadent bakery was founded by Swiss owners in 1942 and their descendants keep up the good work, serving continental cakes, pastries and chocolates made on the premises. Open: Monday – Saturday, 8.30 – 17.30 and occasional Sundays.

Enjoy a riverside walk to picturesque Cookham

Enjoy a level, scenic five-and-a-half mile walk through open meadows, following the [Thames Path National Trail](#) from Marlow to the picturesque village of Cookham. Allow approximately two hours for the walk. The route is well signed so you can't get lost! Pick up signs for the Thames Path in the churchyard of All Saints Church beside the bridge, built by the Victorians on the site of an older church. On the north side of the churchyard, look for the gravestone of showman John Richardson, buried with the partly albino child from the Caribbean, whom he exhibited as the 'The Spotted Boy'. Leave the churchyard with the river on your right, following the path through St Peter Street to Marlow Lock. Make a small detour over the footbridge to admire the classic Marlow view. Some 250 metres beyond the lock, the path turns right to join the river - follow it to Bourne End, where it threads between the gardens of riverside houses to cross the River Thames beside the railway bridge. You'll turn left on the far side to continue through attractive meadows all the way to Cookham. Approaching Cookham Bridge, the path heads away from the river and into Cookham Churchyard. As you emerge at the far end, follow the lane to the junction and turn right onto Cookham High Street.

A bite to eat With the river, the pretty streets around the church and an attractive little High Street which opens onto a green, Cookham is the sort of place where you'll want to linger over lunch. Turn left after the churchyard to find [The Ferry](#) (+44 (0)1628 525123) beside the river. It has a summer terrace beside the water and cosy fires in winter. The 15th century pub, [Bel and The Dragon](#) (+44 (0)1628 521263) is another popular choice in the High Street, with open fires and a secret garden and is said to be one of the oldest in England.

Visit the Stanley Spencer Gallery

"The small man with twinkling eyes and shaggy grey hair (often wearing his pyjamas under his suit if it was cold) became a familiar sight wandering the lanes of Cookham pushing the old pram in which he carried

his canvas and easel. He was also undoubtedly one of our greatest British artists."

The Stanley Spencer Gallery is dedicated to the life and work of Sir Stanley Spencer RA (1891 - 1959) who was born, lived and worked in this highly picturesque village which he regarded as "a sort of earthly paradise". Opened by Spencer's friends and supporters three years after his death, the gallery has a wonderful collection of over 100 of his paintings and drawings, including many depicting local characters and subjects. Spencer was particularly drawn to religious subjects, so be prepared for *Christ Preaching at Cookham Regatta* and other wonderfully quirky canvasses amongst the more conventional works. All are beautifully housed in a recently renovated chapel, together with a fine archive of photographs, books and other written material. The Summer Exhibition augments the collection with loans from other galleries and private owners.

The Stanley Spencer Gallery

The Kings Hall, High Street, Cookham, Berkshire SL6 9SJ

Opening hours: 1 April – 31 October, 10.30 – 17.30 daily. Early November – late March, Thursday – Sunday, 11.00 – 16.30

Costs: Adults £3, Children free, Concessions £2

Tel: +44 (0)1628 471885

Web: www.stanleyspencer.org.uk

Time to spare? Set aside an hour to follow the [Cookham Walk](#), which revisits many of the subjects of Stanley Spencer's paintings in and around the village. Download directions for the walk, together with images of the paintings, from the gallery website.

To return to Marlow: retrace your steps along the Thames Path or take the train from Cookham to Marlow. Cookham station is a ten minute level walk from the Stanley Spencer Gallery. There is a regular service from Cookham to Marlow, journey time 16 minutes. [National Rail Enquiries](#) (+44 (0)8457 484950) have the details.

From June to September: on Mondays and Fridays, make the return trip to Marlow by [Salters Steamers](#) (+44 (0)1865 243421) passenger boat service, which departs from the landing stage near the Church, approximately 100 metres from Cookham bridge. The boat leaves at 17.15, arriving at Higginson Park at 18.00.

Dinner in Marlow

Return to Marlow in time for a sundowner on the terrace beside the water at The [Macdonald Compleat Angler Hotel](#) (+44 (0)844 8799128). Dinner is served in the fine-dining Aubergine restaurant, the sister of the acclaimed Chelsea original, which offers award-winning European cuisine. A more casual menu is available in the hotel's Bowaters restaurant.

Time to spare? Hire a rowing boat by the hour from the landing stage in Higginson Park. Boats are available for hire from June to September.

- Pick up a free copy of the Marlow Mini Guide from the Marlow Information Centre to track down where Mary Shelley wrote Frankenstein and other snippets about the town.

Getting there

By Car: Marlow lies between the M4 and the M40 and is quickly and easily reached from either. Parking: for this itinerary, the most convenient of [Marlow's several car parks](#) is the short or long-stay pay-and-display car park in Pound Lane, which runs off the High Street down the side of Higginson Park. Charges apply 24 hours a day, every day.

By Train: [First Great Western](#) run services to Marlow on the London – Reading Line, via Maidenhead and Bourne End on “Marlow Donkey” branch line. [National Rail Enquiries](#) (+ 44 (0)8457 484950) have the details.

By Bus: [Carousel Buses](#) (+ 44 (0)1494 533436) and [Arriva](#) run a regular bus service between Marlow and High Wycombe; Arriva services also link Marlow with Reading.

More visitor information

Visit www.visitbuckinghamshire.org or call in at The Marlow Information Centre, 55A High Street, Marlow SL7 1BA (the entrance is down the side, in Institute Road). Open: Monday – Friday 9.00 – 17.00; Saturday 9.00 – 13.00. Tel: +44 (0)1628 483597.