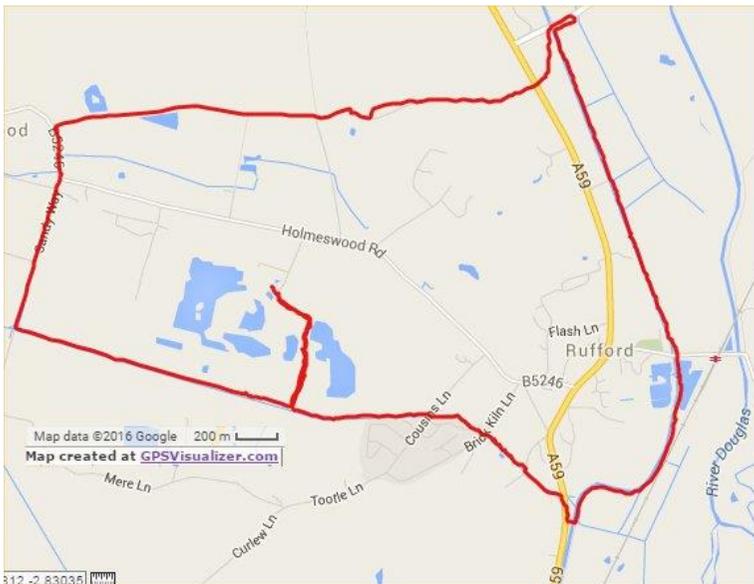


Mere Sands Wood to Rufford

This is about a 6 mile walk (depending on route through Mere Sands) from Mere Sands Wood car park to Rufford by country paths and along the Leeds & Liverpool canal returning via farm tracks, some road walking and country paths. The area is completely flat and walking surfaces are generally good although can be affected by bad weather. If a shorter walk is preferred see Notes 14 and 15 for some options.

As described here the walk starts at the Mere Sands car park (SD447159, L40 0BT) for which there is a £2 fee and automatic car registration recognition is now in use, but you don't need to get a ticket, just pay before exiting. It is also possible to start the walk at a number of other places such as on Spark Lane near the junction of A69 & A581 (SD460169). Mere Sands visitor centre then becomes a convenient refreshment stop optionally under shelter.

There are few café's or pubs directly on the route though there is a café between the canal and the station and only a short distance off the route (see Note 9) and there is a substantial Pub the Rufford Arms about halfway around (see Note 12).



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1: SD448159 There are many routes through the woods and for this walk you can use any that take you to the South East exit. One route is to take the path in the corner of the car park by the sign saying "Meadow Entrance". Follow this as it turns left and passes various artefacts to reach a road junction at a large wooden gate.



2: SD449158 At the junction turn right and follow the path for 240 yards as it passes viewing platforms and left and right turns. After this distance the main path turns right beside a sign showing "9" while the path straight ahead notes it is not suited to wheelchair use. Continue ahead until reaching the edge of the wood.



3: SD448155 At the wood edge turn left and follow the path for 360 yards ignoring a footbridge on the right. You come to a kissing gate at the corner of the woods that leads to a field and cricket ground. Go through the gate and follow the path to a road beside a bridge.



4: SD454154 Cross the bridge diagonally to locate a less than obvious path that now passes houses on the right and a boundary sluice on the left. After a couple of boardwalks another road is reached beside a bridge.

5: SD457153 Cross the bridge diagonally to find a footpath now with the sluice on your right and an old Church on your left with it's 1961 extension. Take care on this path as it is narrow and the hedge tries to push you into the water! After 220 yds another road and bridge are reached.



6: SD458152 Again cross the bridge diagonally to another footpath now on the other side of the sluice. After 120 yds the path reaches a field and you continue along and round the edge to reach some steps.



7: SD460150 Go up the steps onto the A59. Turn right for 200ft to find a track leading to the canal on the other side of the (very busy) road.



8: SD460149 Go over the swing bridge and turn left along the towpath. This is followed for a bit over ½ mile and passes a lock and goes over a bridge between two parts of a marina. It then meets the B5246 near the station.





9: SD465156 The route crosses the road onto a managed towpath. However, to the right along the road is the station and before that a good café should you wish a refreshment stop. The restaurant to the left on the road is also well known. The route continues on the towpath over the road for nearly 1 mile.



10: SD464160 On the other side of the canal there are views of Old Rufford Hall and gardens, a NT property. Further along is another swing bridge shortly after which the towpath degrades back to a country path. As you reach bridge 8A there are picnic tables.



11: SD460170 This bridge is about halfway around the walk so the picnic tables are a convenient refreshment stop. To continue it is best to go under the bridge and immediately climb some steps up onto the A581 road.



12: SD460170 Once on the road look right across the bridge towards the large road sign and the road on the opposite side on the A581. This is Spark Lane and is the alternative start point as cars can be left on the quiet side road. Go on down Spark Lane until it reaches the A59 beside the Rufford Arms, a possible refreshment stop.

13: SD459168 Cross the very busy A59 and walk up the driveway opposite. After about ½ mile at the entrance to Woodbank you are guided to the right of a substantial building subdivided into a number of homes. At the end of this path you meet another driveway.



14: SD452167 Turn right and follow the driveway as it curves left. Shortly when the driveway turns sharp left, you continue straight on.

NOTE: if you follow the driveway to a road and turn right for a short distance you reach the entrance to Mere Sands reducing the walk by 1.75 miles.



15: SD450167 Continue ahead on the farm track. This track is followed for more than ½ mile to a road. Even in winter this track is usually ok. There are a couple of tracks of to the left. These lead to the road to Mere Sands on either side of it's North West entrance and so offer a shorter route.



16: SD439166 At the road turn left and follow it for 200yds to where it curves sharp left with another road opposite.





17: SD439164 At the very corner there is reasonable visibility in both directions. Cross over to walk down Sandy Way for less than 1/2 mile. Look for a small bridge over the boundary sluice with a signpost to both Mere Sands and Martin Mere.



18: SD437158 Turn left along the narrow path beside the sluice to meet the corner of Mere Sands Wood after 1/2 mile or so. Shortly after entering the wood you find an information board showing some local routes. A little further on there is a junction and signboard.



19: SD447155 At this junction you have a choice. Turn left at the junction and follow the signs clockwise around the wood back to the visitor centre. Alternately continue straight on for 600 ft. to find the shorter route to the visitor centre (part of the route you took out of the wood.)

Don't forget the parking fee!

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Eric Crichton 1 June 2016.