



Title: Essex Way: Chipping Ongar to Epping

Distance: 7.5 miles

Time taken: 3 hours

Start Point: Ongar Car Park, by the library

OS Explorer Map: 183, 174

Grid Ref.: TL 552 032

Transport to Ongar: Arriva Bus 501: hourly service from Brentwood, Epping and Harlow

SM Coaches No 20: 2 per hour from Harlow and Epping

Imperial Bus Company: No 339 hourly service from Brentwood

Transport from Epping: Epping Station is on the London Underground Central Line, and bus services to Harlow and Brentwood operate from outside the station.

Refreshment: The Green Man in Toot Hill

The Theydon Oak in Coopersale Street

For pubs and restaurants in Epping, continue up Bower Hill then along Station Road to the High Street.

## Walk Description

This is a beautiful route with which to finish the Essex Way.

From Ongar, you walk through wide open farmland to the tiny village of Greensted with its historic and beautiful church, then through more fields to Toot Hill. From here, all the way to Epping Forest, there are superb views across Essex. Once in the forest itself the mood changes, with the sweeping views replaced by a much more intimate aural landscape; the rustling of invisible wildlife, the chorus of birdsong, the creak of the trees and the crunch of twigs underfoot.

Then across the M11, the natural birch, beech and oak trees continue up to Coopersale cricket pitch, after which the path goes through an area of strangely mysterious pollarded trees, before coming out into farmland with more stunning views across Essex. A stroll down into the valley brings you to another tiny village, Coopersale Street, and then finally there is a brief walk along a green lane and a last field edge walk to take you to Epping Station.

Epping Station is on the Central line, or there are bus services to Harlow and Brentwood from just outside the station.

## Directions

A. From Ongar Library, cross the High Street and walk west along Basons Lane (directly opposite the library), passing to the right of Sainsbury's (1). Cross over the bridge and continue west across the field (2). There is a line of trees on the left, not always adjacent to the track, and an open field on the right.

B. After half a mile you will come to a small copse; turn slightly left, cross over a driveway and continue west between a fence on the left and a line of trees on the right (3).

C. Follow the well walked path as it bears left again to go through a hedge gap and then continues west, initially with a hedge on the right, to a small wooden gate leading onto another driveway (4). Go through the gate and continue west to Church Lane.

D. Turn right to walk past Greensted Church (the oldest wooden church in the world, well worth a visit if it is open) and follow a farm track north, veering slightly to the left to avoid a private car park. Look for a footbridge through the hedge on the left (5), about 50 yards before the stream.

E. Walk west along the hedge line for just over half a mile (6), until you come to Greensted Road. At the roadside turn left for a few yards then cross the road into the field opposite, just to the right of some trees. Walk south, uphill, with the trees on your left.

Look for a wooden kissing gate on the left taking you into what looks like a small farm (7).

F. Turn right as you exit the wooden kissing gate to continue south, with the trees now on your right. You will pass through a succession of stockproof metal gates called 'Rambler Gates' – push them apart to get through (8). As you pass through the final metal gate, and the small wood on the right comes to an end, turn right to walk west along the field edge.

G. Continue heading roughly west with the hedge on the right, for about two thirds of a mile. Mid-way through this section you will come to a large gap in the hedge. Carry straight on, keeping the hedge on your right (9).

H. As you approach Toot Hill cross the footbridge on your right, then continue west, with the hedge on your left. After about 50 yards you will see a gap on the left, leading to a driveway (10). Walk through here to Toot Hill Road. Turn left on the road, walking south.

I. Continue south along the road for about a third of a mile, past the Green Man pub on the right. A few yards after the pub, there is a footpath on the right adjacent to the last house in the row. Climb over the stile and walk west, alongside a garden (11). Bear right to follow the fence line north west towards the top right corner of the field. Cross another stile and walk between 2 hedges, then go over a final stile into a field.

J. Follow the hedge line going north west, for about 300 yards. The views here, and all the way from here to Epping Forest, are lovely! When you come to the facing hedge, cross through and you are on the edge of a long, narrow field. Cross this in a diagonal, heading west. You will see two gaps in the hedge to the west, go for the one on the left (12).

K. As you emerge from this hedge you will see a wide farm track heading west. Walk along this. The views to the south are lovely, but the field on your right, to the north, has its own special beauty too (13). Continue along this path for two thirds of a mile, to the woods.

L. Go into the woods, still walking west. The path meanders here and there and becomes narrower (14) but continues in roughly the same direction through the forest for almost a mile. Towards the end, as the track gets close to the M11, the path bears right to head north west, and the trees on the right disappear in favour of farmland.

M. Cross over the M11 via the footbridge. This takes you into the Gernon Bushes SSSI. A few yards after the bridge, bear left by the waymarker, walk along the boardwalk (15) and follow the path through the trees.

N. After a couple of hundred yards you will see Coopersale cricket field on the right. Go up the steps, and walk along the southern edge of the cricket field, to the right of a wooden fence (16). Go through the kissing gate at the far end of the field and back into the woods. Follow the path through the pollarded trees, for about 200 yards, almost to the road.

O. Just before you get to the park entrance, turn sharp left immediately past the park information sign. Walk down the slope, heading south east. There are a few steps to go down, then two footbridges to cross. Look out for a waymarker after the second footbridge directing you to the right, over another footbridge and out of the woods (17).

P. As you emerge from the woods there is a lovely view ahead of you, and a carved bench just to the left of the footbridge making a pleasant spot to stop for a moment and take in the view. There are a number of fields ahead of you leading down into the valley. With one exception, walk along the right edge of each field, heading roughly south.

Q. The exception occurs about half way down the slope, at roughly a quarter of a mile from the tree line. Here you will find a waymarker on the right, directing you to bear left, cutting off the corner of the field (18). After this, bear right though the hedge and continue walking downhill with a hedge on your right.

R. When the slope levels out and you are about 100 yards from the road, the hedge on your right stops. Carry straight on into some trees, between a couple of posts, to the roadside.

S. Turn right on Stonards Hill to walk towards the village of Coopersale Street. You will pass the Theydon Oak pub on your right. Continue walking until, almost opposite the junction with Houblons Hill, you see a bridleway on the left heading south (19). This is Steward's Green Lane.

T. Walk the length of Steward's Green Lane as it wanders in a roughly south-westerly direction for about half a mile to Steward's Green. You will come out onto a track between two houses, and then onto Steward's Green Road.

U. Turn right on the road for about 30 yards, then right again just past the house, to enter a field (20). You can see Epping from here. Walk uphill through the field keeping to the right edge, as it curves round to the left.

V. When you come to a large gap in the hedge, cross through and cut across the corner of the next field to walk north west, aiming directly for the northern corner of the farthest bungalow (21).

W. As you reach the corner of the bungalow, you will see a footpath running along the north edge of the property (22). Walk along this to Bower Hill in Epping. Turn right to go up the hill, and after about 30 yards turn left into Hillcrest Way (23). Go north west to the end of the road, cross the railway using the footbridge, and turn left towards the station.

X. The plaque commemorating the start (or for us, the end) of the Essex Way is on the wall of the station, just to the left of the ticket office (24). Congratulations!

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