

Freedom Pass Circuit

Section 1: Dartford to Swanley

Distance: 7.64 mi via Sutton at Hone, 6.79 mi via Swanley Village

Introduction.

This section has two alternatives: the longer route via Sutton at Hone is possibly more picturesque. This section as a whole falls into two parts: the first part proceeds roughly south along the River Darent; the second part proceeds roughly west or south-west (depending upon which alternative you select) across country.

There are a number of steps and stiles. Some paths are rather overgrown, so long trousers are advisable. And some paths may be muddy after rain.

There are cafes and pubs at the start and finish. There is a pub one hour from the start on the Sutton at Hone branch, and a pub in Swanley Village on the other branch.

Directions.

On coming out of Dartford station, turn left and walk towards the railway line. On reaching the railway, turn right. You come to a footbridge over the River Darent. Take this bridge, but do not go over the river. Instead take the steps down to the right to the path along the west bank of the river. You are now on the Darent Valley Path.

Follow this path to the next road. Do not cross the road, but go down the slope and through the tunnel under the road. On the other side, keep left alongside the river to the next road.

Turn right, round the church, then immediately left into the carpark. Pass to the right of the Mansion House, and turn right away from it, leaving the carpark.

Take the path left just before the museum into the formal garden.

Keep going in the same general direction through the garden. Eventually you pass a bandstand on the right.

At the T junction, turn left round a children's play area.

Keep going towards the bridge over the river.

When you reach the bridge, do not go over it but instead turn right, then fork left, and follow the path alongside the river.

Leave the park. At the next fork, keep left, and go through the tunnel under the road. Keep going in the same general direction with the lakes on your right and the river on your left.

At the far corner of the lake, keep straight on through a small carpark, then turn left over the river, then immediately right. Follow the path along the east bank of the river, and keep following after it crosses to the west bank.

At the T junction turn right. At the road turn left and go under the flyover.

Via Sutton at Hone:

Keep on past the waterworks and the business park on your left. Opposite Mill Road (on the right) take the narrow path on the left.

The path takes you across the river and then along its east bank. Go under the motorway. At the next fork, turn right, leaving the Darent Valley Path, and cross over two bridges to the west bank. (If instead you turn left at the fork, you will reach a pub after five minutes.) Follow the path along the west bank. At the brick wall, go over the footbridge, and then turn right onto the farm track.

Cross the road and keep going straight ahead, along the path between the lakes.

At the end of the lakes, follow the path to the right. Keep on the path, cross over a small meadow, and then turn right onto another farm track.

This takes you into Sutton at Hone, where you leave the Darent Valley.

Turn right along the main road, then left into Church Road.

Keep straight on past the school, onto the track. Then turn left, round the school.

At the next junction turn right.

Carry straight on for nearly a mile until you reach the road. At the end turn right along the edge of the field, parallel to the road.

About halfway to the motorway (opposite the white Sutton at Hone sign) turn left, cross the road, and carry on along the footpath.

Cross the railway line. Then immediately turn right into the wood. The way may be obscured by nettles.

Follow the path just inside the wood up towards the motorway.

As you approach the top of the slope, follow the path round to the left.

Via Swanley Village:

Climb over the gate on the right, opposite the waterworks, and go straight ahead between the fields.

At the next field, turn right and follow the edge of the field round to the left.

At the corner, go down the track on the right, then immediately take the narrow path on the left. This runs parallel to the edge of the field you were in previously. If it is too overgrown, you can instead walk along the edge of the field on the right.

When the path becomes a proper road, take the footpath on the left.

At the fork, turn right past the end of the brick wall.

At the road, take the first right, which is Saxon Road.

Go straight on at the crossroads, then turn left along Ethelbert Road.

At the end turn right.

At the right bend, bear left along the footpath.

Keep straight ahead on this path.

After a time, you will have a fence on the left and a hedge on the right, and then in due course you come to a stile on the left. Go over it, and bear diagonally to the right across the field, to a second stile.

Cross several more fields diagonally, still in the same direction, despite the absence of any visible path. You will encounter a third stile, a small metal gate, a fourth and fifth stile each in combination with another gate, and finally a kissing gate. The gates may be encumbered with an electrical coil, which you can unhook in order to pass (and reconnect afterwards).

At the road, go straight ahead up Gildenhill Road.

Just after Gildenhill Place, take the footpath on the right.

Cross a large field. On the far side,

Keep right at every fork, with a wooden fence and the motorway on your right, as the path descends steeply. Eventually you emerge into a meadow.

Follow the bottom edge of the meadow, alongside the motorway, to a road. Turn right at the road, and go under the motorway.

Almost immediately take the track on the left alongside the motorway.

Follow the track round to the right. Just beyond the brow of the hill, turn right then immediately left.

Keep straight on across a couple of fields to reach the railway. Keep going to the next road.

Turn left along the road. The road starts to descend and bend left. Go over the stile on the right, and cross the paddock to the gate opposite.

Carry on straight ahead, across a field and then alongside a green fence.

Keep straight ahead until the path emerges at the end of West View Road.

Walk the length of West View Road, and carry on straight ahead into St George's Road. Go under the railway line. The road gradually bends round to the right and degenerates into a footpath.

Just before the path bends left, turn right.

At the next road, turn left then right into Cranleigh Drive.

Take the second turning right, which is Court Crescent. Follow this road round to the left.

At the next left bend, take the path straight ahead, which then bends right.

At the end of this path, turn left into Goldsel Road.

Go straight across the main road, into Lila Place.

Turn left then carry straight on along Azalea Drive.

Turn right immediately after a small carpark with a small parade of shops, descend some steps and turn left. Swanley station is ahead of you.

carry straight on over the remains of a stile.

When you reach the right-hand edge of the next field, go over the stile on the right.

Cross the next field and go over another stile.

Carry on straight ahead along the path into the wood (not along the edge of the wood).

When you reach the road, turn right.

Take the footpath on the left, opposite the Red Lion.

After a stile bear left, then left again onto a farm track.

Turn right alongside the railway (do not cross it yet).

Cross the railway at the next crossing, and carry on across the field on the other side.

Bear right onto another path by a metal fence.