

The villages and hamlets of **Constable Country** are famous for their beautiful buildings and fascinating history. These communities are linked by the river **Stour**, which was once a major trade route into the heart of **Suffolk** and **north Essex**.



Highlights



1 The Dedham Vale National Landscape was designated in 1970 because of its landscape, natural beauty and history. In the Middle Ages, the combination of woodland and pasture was ideal for sheep rearing. This made the area wealthy through wool production, allowing for the construction of imposing churches and impressive village buildings. Later still, artists such as Thomas Gainsborough, John Constable and Sir Alfred Munnings immortalised the landscape in paint.

2 Flatford inspired many of John Constable's most familiar paintings, including *The Hay Wain* and *Flatford Mill*. When Constable painted at Flatford, over 200 years ago, it was a working grain mill and bustling riverside hamlet. The dry dock was used to repair barges, as depicted in the famous painting by Constable. Constable's family ran the milling business and owned barges on the river.

3 The River Stour is a peaceful waterway today, but 200 years ago, it was the main trade route into Suffolk and north Essex. Cargo, such as coal and bricks, was unloaded from sea going vessels at the estuary port of Mistley and transported 25 miles by barge to the inland port of Sudbury.



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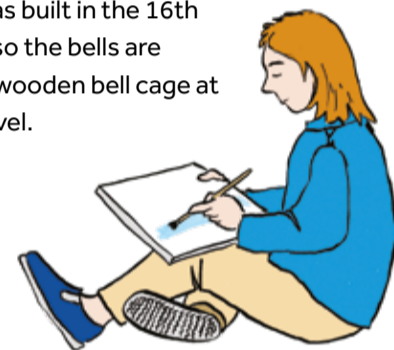
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4 Dedham has a history stretching back many centuries. The main street is flanked by beautiful buildings, some of which feature Georgian façades in front of Tudor timber frames. The Sun Inn is a beautiful survivor from the Tudor period and even features a covered carriage way from the days when it was a coaching inn. The magnificent church of St. Mary the Virgin has one of the tallest towers in the area.

5 East Bergholt has many links to the artist John Constable. The house where he was born, East Bergholt House, was demolished in the 1840s, but there is a plaque on the railings of the present house to indicate where it was located. Constable's first studio, Moss Cottage, is situated opposite The Red Lion pub. His parent's tomb is in the churchyard of St. Mary's, although he was buried in Hampstead. St. Mary's Church does not have a bell tower, probably due to lack of funds when the church was built in the 16th Century, so the bells are hung in a wooden bell cage at ground level.



The Dedham Vale National Landscape & Stour Valley

Picturesque villages, rolling farmland, rivers, meadows, ancient woodlands and a wide variety of local wildlife combine to create what many describe as the traditional English lowland landscape on the Suffolk-Essex border.

The National Landscape conserves and enhances the natural beauty of the area through landscape restoration, creating habitats for wildlife, volunteering activities such as hedge planting, and providing funding for community projects.



Scan the QR code to find out more about the Dedham Vale National Landscape & Stour Valley or you can visit dedhamvale-NL.org.uk. Get in touch on **01394 445225**.

Key to map

- National Landscape
- Stour Valley Project Area
- ⋯ Stour Valley Path
- 🌳 Country Parks and Picnic sites
- 🚣 Public canoe launching locations. Craft must have an appropriate licence www.riverstourtrust.org

Visiting Constable Country

Ordnance Survey Explorer Map No. 196: Sudbury, Hadleigh and the Dedham Vale

Car: East Bergholt and Flatford B1070 from A12 (junction 31). Stratford St. Mary and Dedham B1029 from A12 (junction 30)

Parking: Flatford car park - CO7 6UL; Dedham Mill car park - CO7 6DH; East Bergholt Red Lion car park - CO7 6TB; Manningtree Station car park - CO11 2HH

Bus: traveline.info or suffolконboard.com

Train: Nearest train station, Manningtree Station, approx. 2 miles from Flatford. Train timetable at nationalrail.co.uk

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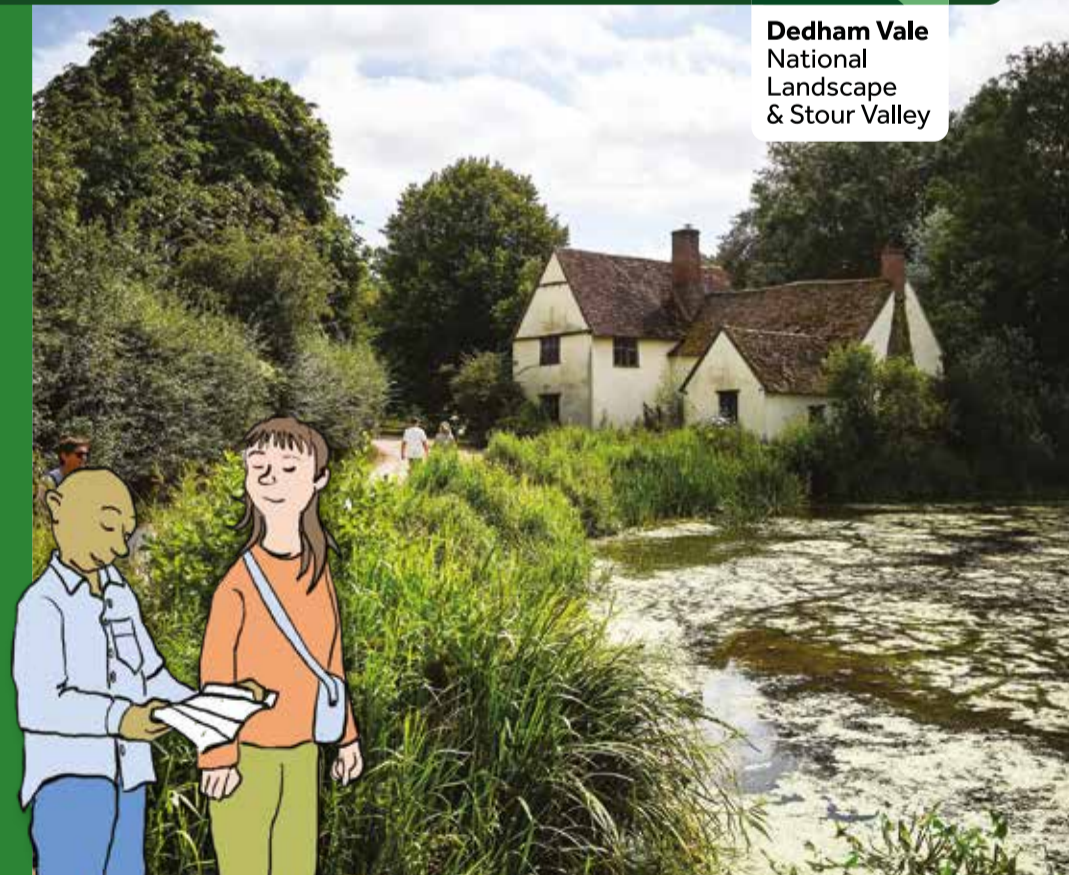


Dedham Vale National Landscape & Stour Valley

Constable Country Explorer Guide

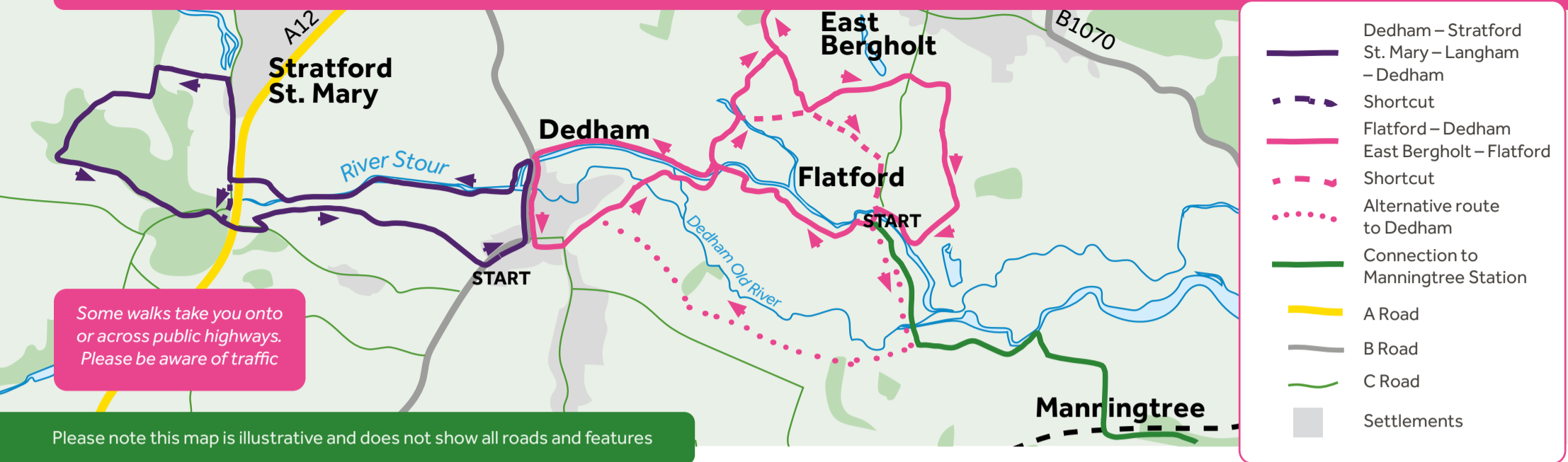


Dedham Vale National Landscape & Stour Valley



Explore the villages and landscape that inspired the artist **John Constable**

Constable Country Explorer Guide



Flatford – Dedham – East Bergholt – Flatford

The walk can be started at any of these places and short cuts can be taken to reduce the length of the walk. The purple route to Stratford St. Mary can be followed to extend this walk.

Walking distances and times: (not including stops)

Flatford-Dedham-East Bergholt-Flatford:

Distance: 4.7 miles/7.5 km **Time:** 1¾ hrs

Flatford-Dedham-Flatford:

Distance: 3.4 miles/5.5 km **Time:** 1¼ hrs

Flatford-Dedham-Flatford via alternative route:

Distance: 3.7 miles/6 km **Time:** 1½ hrs

Terrain: Paths and tracks, some minor roads and village roads. Route can be very muddy in places and flooded after heavy rain. Take care near areas of deep water.



Starting from Flatford (Bridge Cottage): cross bridge and turn right. Follow riverside path until Fen Bridge. Cross bridge and turn sharp left. Follow path across meadow and beside river until road. Turn left and follow road to reach Dedham main street.

Starting from Dedham (beside Marlborough Head Inn): turn left and follow main street until it bends to right. Continue ahead on track. Follow track and then path. Pass National Trust sign on right (turn right here for alternative route to Flatford as detailed below) and continue straight on footpath through trees and then across meadows. When river reached, bear right across small concrete bridge. Follow path beside river, bearing left to reach Fen Bridge. Cross bridge and follow track ahead. Continue on this winding track until lane.

Shortcut to Flatford: turn right here and follow path uphill to Flatford Lane. Cross lane and follow footpath right to reach Flatford car park.

Turn left to reach village of East Bergholt. At War Memorial, cross road and enter churchyard. Turn left and walk under arch. Exit churchyard and continue on pavement beside site of Constable's birthplace to reach village centre.

Starting from East Bergholt (Red Lion Pub): follow road through East Bergholt towards village centre and St. Mary's Church. Enter churchyard and turn left. Follow path around outside of church,



passing historic bell cage. Exit churchyard through gate opposite war memorial and continue straight across road down Flatford Lane (note oncoming traffic).

When junction reached with Fen Lane, continue straight, but use path that runs parallel with lane on left hand side.

When path junction reached, adjacent to sharp left bend in road, turn left across field. Follow path into wood and continue down hill, passing water treatment plant on right. Cross small stream and continue up hill to reach lane. This part of the walk features some of the finest views in the entire Stour Valley. Turn right and then immediately left into drive of Flatford Farm House. Follow drive between buildings and join path. Continue until junction, then turn right and follow path between paddocks. When gate and open meadow reached, continue straight down hill. Bear right at bottom and join track to Willy Lott's House. Continue on lane beside Flatford Mill to Bridge Cottage.

Alternative route from Flatford to Dedham (useful if the route described above is flooded).

Starting from Flatford (Bridge Cottage), cross bridge and turn left. Follow path beside river until gate beside flood barrier. Go through gate and bear right away from barrier. Cross concrete bridge and bear right along grassy track. Continue when this becomes concrete track. At sharp left bend near buildings, continue straight on path across field. Follow path for some distance beside fields, ignoring all left exits. At path T junction, turn left and follow track to Dedham, keeping left at entrance to business centre.



Dedham – Stratford St. Mary – Langham – Dedham

Paths and tracks, some minor roads. Gentle inclines.

Walking distance and time: (not including stops)

Dedham – Stratford St. Mary – Langham – Dedham:

Distance: 4 miles/6.4 km **Time:** 1½ hours

Terrain: Paths and tracks, some minor roads and village roads. Route can be very muddy in places and flooded after heavy rain. Take care near areas of deep water.

Starting from Dedham (opposite St. Mary's Church): almost immediately, turn left between the Essex Rose Tea Room and Marlborough Head Inn and follow road to river. Cross Bridge and turn left onto path beside mill pond. Follow path across meadows, keeping river to left.

Cross wooden footbridge. When A12 embankment reached, follow tunnel under dual carriageway to road. Cross road and turn right, following pavement into Stratford St. Mary. Take path on left across long narrow river bridge. Follow path ahead straight across meadow. On far side, turn left along track for short way.

At path sign, turn right and follow path beside field. At path junction bear left uphill towards house. Pass church and take sharp left bend in front of gateway. Follow surfaced drive to reach ornate gates and main road. Turn left along pavement and follow around to right, then cross road and bear right across A12 bridge. Follow pavement down hill and turn left into entrance to Milsoms Hotel.

Starting from Stratford St. Mary (Milsoms Hotel): take footpath opposite hotel building. Follow path downhill through trees to beside river. Continue across meadows, eventually joining track beside field. Follow track through the National Trust's Bridge Farm. At end of track, turn left into Dedham main street. Continue until opposite church.

Short cut to Milsoms Hotel and route to Dedham: turn left here and follow road as it bends to left across A12 bridge. Follow pavement down hill and turn left into entrance to Milsoms Hotel. Path to Dedham leaves opposite hotel.

Countryside Code

The Dedham Vale National Landscape & Stour Valley has a network of footpaths and bridleways. To protect you, other people, wildlife, and the landscape, please make sure you:

- Stick to marked footpaths
- Leave things as you find them
- Do not light fires or BBQs
- Take all litter home with you
- Please keep dogs under close control at all times and on lead as advised

Scan the QR code to find more advice and visitor guides, or visit

dedhamvale-nl.org.uk/visiting

