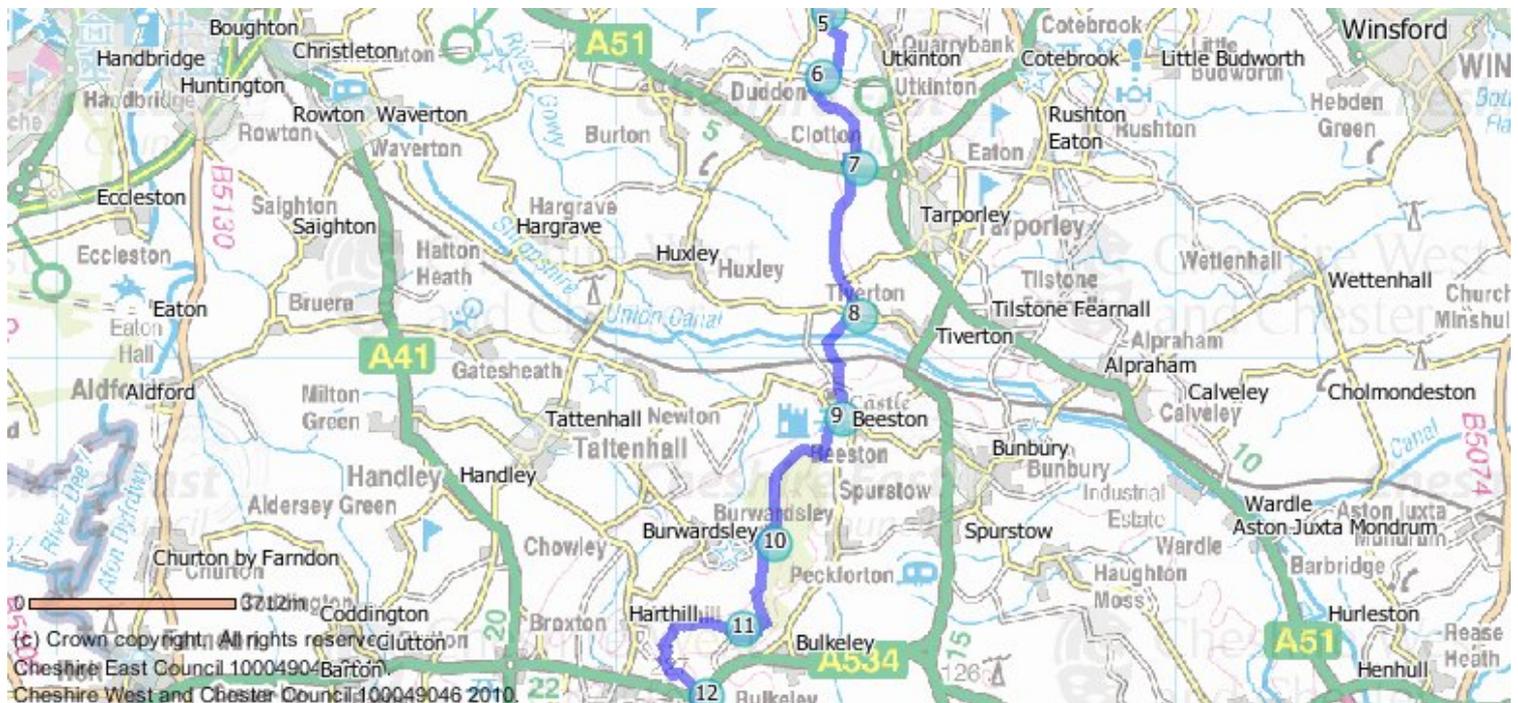


Sandstone Trail Central

The central section of the Sandstone Trail takes you through the heart of Cheshires fruit farming and dairy country.

Grade	Long distance
Distance	18km/11 ¼ miles
Time	5-6 hours
Start	Willington Village
Map	OS Explorers 267, 257
Terrain	Varies from minor roads to field-edge/cross-field paths and unsurfaced tracks. Some steps and steep gradients to be negotiated. Parts of some paths will be less than 90cm wide.
Barriers	Several stiles and gates
Toilets	Shady Oak PH, Tiverton; Pheasant Inn PH, Higher Burwardsley
Contact	Cheshire West and Chester Council Tel: 01606 271736



Route Details

Sandstone Trail Walkers Guide – Central Section

Willington to Bickerton: 18km/11 ¼ miles

The central section of the Sandstone Trail takes you through the heart of Cheshire's fruit farming and dairy country, taking in the unique Beeston Castle and beautiful Peckforton Hills along the way.

Kelsall and Willington are at the heart of Cheshire's fruit farming country. Soft fruits flourish in the light, sandy soils while the ridge protects the plants from the chill, easterly winds.

From Willington Road the Trail heads south with splendid views towards the Peckforton Hills. Beyond Wood Lane is Old Gypsy Lane, one of many green lanes worn by farm workers and traders from the surrounding towns. Often the hedges are centuries old and incredibly rich in wildlife, providing food and shelter for butterflies, bird and other creatures.

Fishersgreen is a small hamlet dating back to the seventeenth century. This is the start of Cheshire's dairy country where rich grassland on heavy soils produces fine quality milk and cheese. The farmhouse, like many in Cheshire, had a cheese parlour on the cool, north side. The Nantwich Show, held every July, hosts one of the largest cheese displays in Europe.

The Trail crosses the Shropshire Union Canal at Wharton's Lock. Originally the Chester Canal, it was built in the 1770's to link the manufacturing towns in the Midlands with the ports on the River Mersey.

Soon Beeston Castle looms large. This is one of the most distinctive landmarks in Cheshire, perched on a crag almost 100m high. It was built in 1337 by Ranulf, Earl of Chester to defend the Welsh border. Today peregrine and raven make the most of its natural defences nesting in safety.

Peckforton Castle, modeled on a Norman castle, was built in the 1840s for Admiral Tollemarche using sandstone quarried on the Estate. Listen out for tiny wrens and goldcrests searching for insects as you walk through the woodlands.

A gentle climb from Peckforton Gap up to Bulkeley Hill is rewarded with excellent views eastwards to the Peak District and Cannock Chase. Huge sweet chestnut trees spiral skywards, casting a welcome shade in summer.

The Trail swings west to Rawhead, the highest point on the route at 227m (746'). The red cliffs, sculpted by the wind and the rain, are spectacular while the views to the west on a clear day are equally stunning.

The chimney of the copper mine just by the A534 is a rare, industrial relic in this rural landscape. The mine was worked intermittently for over 200 years but the copper return was poor and the mine has been idle for many years.

Directions

Sandstone Trail Walkers Guide – Central Section

5. Go left along Willington Road for 250m, then over a stile on the right. Follow field edges and turn right down a sunken track. Turn right along the brook, go over the bridge and around the field edge to Wood Lane.
6. Take the track opposite. Cross the stile on the left, then follow field edges. From the stile part way along the woodland, strike out diagonally right across the field to the lane end at Fishersgreen. Continue on the track ahead signposted to Beeston. Go around a field and into Road Street (A51).
7. Cross with care. Go over the stile on the left and carry on through the fields. Turn right along the green lane, then cross the fields. In the first field continue straight ahead where the hedge turns sharply left. Otherwise look for stiles ahead or keep to field edges to reach Crib Lane. Go down Pudding Lane opposite and over the stile on the right before the house. Cross three fields to Huxley Lane.
8. Go over the stile opposite. Head just to the right of the trees in the field to the canal bridge at Wharton's lock. Cross the canal, then go under the railway and up the fields to the road. Turn left along the road, past Beeston Castle, and follow the path alongside the castle wall. Go through the woodland to Tattenhall Lane.
9. Follow the path through three field via a small bridge to Horsley Lane. Turn right then left up the next track. After a major track crossroads take the steps on the left. Climb through woodland and cross two fields to Rock Lane. Turn left then left again into Hill Lane.
10. Cross a stile on the right and follow the path to the lane. Turn left, then right along the track. Go up the stone steps on the left and carry on through the woodland around Bulkeley Hill. Head down to a kissing gate. Cross the field diagonally right to another kissing gate into Coppermine Lane.
11. Cross the lane and take the track opposite. Bear left near the cottage through a kissing gate. Follow the path around the hill, past the trig point at Rawhead. From Chiflik Farm follow the track down to Wrexham Road (A534).