

In an artist's footsteps... 4 miles Flatford and Constable Country

 THE NATIONAL TRUST

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Explore the picturesque Stour Valley and Dedham Vale made famous by the paintings of 18th century England's foremost landscape artist. John Constable painted many idyllic views of the area in his famous six-foot canvases, scenes which remain easily recognisable today.

How to get here & local facilities

Train: Regular service to Manningtree station – London Liverpool Street to Ipswich line

Buses: Services to Manningtree station and Dedham from Colchester and Ipswich

Cycling: The Painter's Trail cycle route passes through the Stour Valley to Manningtree station

Road: Car park at Manningtree station, Flatford and Dedham

Map & grid ref: OS Landranger 168, Explorer 196, TM 093 322

WC at Manningtree Station, Flatford and Dedham villages. National Trust riverside tea-room and shop at Flatford, other shops and pubs at Dedham. Flatford Bridge Cottage exhibition on Constable.

Things to look out for...

- **Cattawade marshes:** this is where the freshwater of the Stour meets the tidal estuary. The banks are protected from very high tides by a new barrier further downstream. Fifty Six Gates, is the original flood defence designed to stop salt water inundating the low-lying Dedham Vale.
- **Flatford:** this little riverside hamlet is the setting for some of Constable's most famous paintings, such as 'The Hay Wain', 'The Mill Stream', 'Boat-building near Flatford' and 'The White Horse'. The Bridge Cottage is now home to a small exhibition on Constable, a NT tearoom and shop. Flatford Mill and Willy Lott's house are owned by the National Trust but leased to the Field Studies Council which runs arts-based courses there.
- **A young Constable:** from his home in East Bergholt, a mile or so to the north, Constable used to walk across the riverside meadows to Dedham every day on his way to school.
- **Dedham:** pretty village with Church of St Mary the Virgin, home to an original Constable painting. 'The Ascension', is one of his religious works painted in the same year as the 'Hay Wain'.



The Cattawade Marshes are a great place to spot waterfowl and waders. The Little Egret can also be seen fishing in streams and ditches downstream of Flatford.

© NTPL / Chris Gomersall



Willy Lott's house and the mill pond at Flatford, immortalised by Constable in 'The Hay Wain' and other paintings.

© NTPL / John Miller



Panoramic views captured in 'Dedham Vale morn', look out for the landscape which inspired 'The Cornfield' when walking along Fen Lane towards Dedham

© NT / Martin Atkinson

"The sound of water escaping from Mill dams... Willows, Old rotten Banks, slimy posts, & brickwork. I love such things... As long as I do paint I shall never cease to paint such Places....."

John Constable's description of the Dedham Vale, in a letter to his close friend, John Fisher

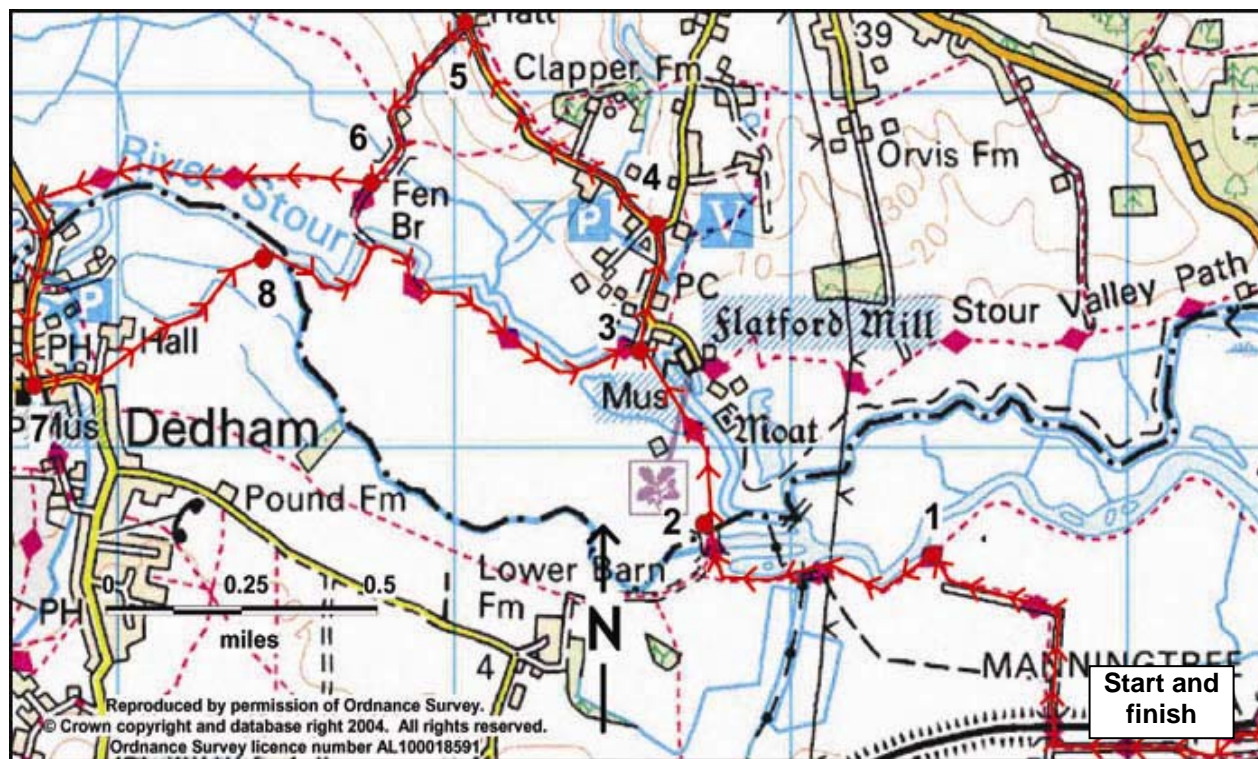
Route and directions

Leave Manningtree station exit and descend a ramp to the right. The footpath starts from the end of the ramp in the car park. After leaving the car park turn right along a track, then right again under a railway bridge.

1. Follow path until you reach the river and turn left along a streamside path taking you through the Cattawade Marshes.
2. Walk behind Fifty Six Gates, an old flood defence barrier and follow the path on the bank to the hamlet of Flatford.
3. You can take a short detour to see Flatford Mill, Willy Lott's House and the site of 'The Hay Wain' painting.

Return to Manningtree by the same route or continue on to Dedham...

4. Leave Flatford by walking up Tunnel Lane from Bridge Cottage. Turn left at the top of the lane and after 100m take the footpath running parallel to the road.
5. Panoramic views over the vale can be seen from the top of the hill. Turn left into Fen Lane.
6. Shortly after crossing a bridge, turn right along a tree-lined footpath. Cross riverside meadows, until reaching a bridge at Dedham.
7. Leave the village on a footpath after the drive to Dedham Hall. Follow this to Flatford, bearing left at NT sign to Dedham Hall Farm.
8. The river leads back to Bridge Cottage across water meadows. A kissing gate marks the site of an old stile featured in 'The Leaping Horse'.



Walk distance, terrain and accessibility

4 miles (6.4km) return from Manningtree to Flatford. Optional loop to Dedham adds another 3 miles. Generally flat grass and gravel paths with some moderate slopes. Can be muddy after wet weather - take care when walking on riverside sections of the route.

Contact us

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National Trust places to visit nearby

Bourne Mill, the Suffolk estuaries, Thorington Hall

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