



Under starter's orders

No need to crack the whip for this short and easy stroll near Uttoxeter Racecourse – Jody Vaughan finds the going good to soft



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Landranger Map 128

The Club site at Uttoxeter Racecourse is within easy walking distance of some good eateries, a large supermarket and the historic market town's centre. It's quiet too as a general rule, but on race days you'll be in a prime position to see all the action – as a caravanner you get free entry to the racecourse. At other times, golfers will appreciate the adjacent course while, for thrillseekers and families, the call of nearby Alton Towers is difficult to ignore. Back to quieter and more sedate interests, this month's walk is not only very easy but it isn't too long either – although it can get muddy in the fields where the cows are resident. Organise your day so that you return around lunchtime and you can pop in for a bite to eat at Dovedales Retail Park.

DIRECTIONS

1 Leave the site by walking to the children's play area and turning left (heading towards the grandstand and

away from the site's main entrance road). Then turn left again towards the flags. Walk across the track and through the white gates before turning left to pass under the 'Thank You for Visiting Uttoxeter Racecourse' sign.

2 Continue along the entrance road and, when you get to the public road, turn right and walk to the roundabout, crossing the entrance to Bridge Court. Continue ahead to the bigger roundabout. Here, turn right up Bridge Street, immediately passing over a bridge in the rough direction of the distant church spire.

3 At the next roundabout with a sculpture in the centre (where you'd turn left to head into the town centre if you were going shopping), turn right down Brookside Road (past the sign for the station entrance). Pass the entrance to M J Barrett and keep ahead with the river on your right (passing a pallet company on your left).

4 Pass through some green gates (signposted 'Public Footpath' and

yellow arrow). This takes you along the gravel footpath. Now we are walking along the back of the racecourse with the river between us and it. Soon, where the route forks, turn left following another footpath sign with a man upon it. But where the road bends to the left (next to another 'Thank You for Visiting' sign), continue straight ahead keeping the metal fence to your left, heading towards a stile at the corner of the field.

5 Cross this stile and continue ahead towards the farmhouse. Cross another stile just to the left of the house and turn right (signposted 'Staffordshire Way' and yellow arrow) over a small bridge. Look out for the Willows Watermeadows sign just before you reach the house, which provides interesting local information.

6 Continue past the house, but before you get to the gate turn left, again following the arrows, heading over a stile and along the left side of the next field. Walk around the animal pen and over the stile at its inside corner – being careful as



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this section can be very muddy where the cows have walked.

7 Cross the next field, bearing diagonally to the left, passing slightly to the left of the electricity pylon. Then continue towards the corner of the field. About a hundred yards before the field's corner, you'll see a stile to your left – cross this and go across the farmer's track before crossing another smaller stile. Here, you'll reach a tarmac cycling path – turn left and follow this path for a short distance.

8 Soon, at the next public footpath sign, turn left over two stiles – re-crossing the farmer's track. Follow the direction of the yellow arrow along the trodden route, which is partially stoned for easy access. Cross the stile and continue ahead over the wooden bridge. Go past the derelict kissing gate and continue over the tarmac bridge and through a kissing gate.

9 Go through another kissing gate as you arrive at the houses. Continue straight ahead down the small road with houses on the left until you reach the mini-

roundabout. Here, turn left, following the road 'Dovefields', back into the industrial estate. But, opposite a big warehouse marked with 'The Hotspot.co.uk', turn right along a small (partially hidden) footpath marked with a sign (just before the 'Stihl' warehouse). Walk along this path which is fenced on both sides. At the roundabout, turn left (signposted 'Racecourse and Station'). Continue along the main road (The Dapple Grey pub and other eateries are on your left).

10 When you get to the next roundabout (the one with the sculpted centaur), continue straight on to re-cross the road bridge. Turn left at the next roundabout, now following the sign for the racecourse. Once again, cross the entrance to Bridge Court and continue ahead down Wood Lane (signposted 'Racecourse'). Turn left at the racecourse's main gates to retrace your steps back to the site. If these gates are locked, go through the pedestrian gate, which isn't immediately obvious.

