

Baker Way The extended Baker Way links the heart of Chester with Delamere Forest Park.

Grade	Long Distance
Distance	21km/13miles
Time	5-6 hours
Start	Chester Railway Station
Map	OS Explorer 266 & 267
Terrain	Generally flat with a few short rises, notably in Delamere Forest



Route Details

The extended Baker Way links the heart of Chester with Delamere Forest Park. The core of the route is provided by the original Baker Way - a long established route from Christleton to Brines Brow Picnic Area.

The original route was devised by members of the Mid Cheshire Footpaths Society and commemorates the life and work of Jack Baker, onetime footpaths officer for Cheshire County Council.

The extended Baker Way provides links to bus and train services at both ends, allowing the route to be walked in either direction without the use of a car.

Black Lake is one of the flooded hollows within Delamere Forest, believed to have been formed as the ice sheets wasted away at the end of the last Ice Age. Their original depth was often several metres but accumulation of sphagnum and leaf litter has led to them gradually becoming mosses rather than open water. They continue to provide important habitats for a wide range of wildlife - look out for dragonflies, sundew and cotton grass.

The Forestry commission bought 137 hectares of farmland at the Old Pale in 2000. Originally cleared of trees, it is now being returned to woodland with planting of a mix of 170,000 conifers and native broadleaved trees. New footpaths and bridleways have been developed across the area allowing visitors to enjoy the extensive views over Cheshire and beyond which are available from Pale Heights.

There will be benefits for wildlife too with an arboretum and wildflower meadow. There is also an amphitheatre for events. The oldest section of the Shropshire Union Canal was constructed between 1772 and 1779 as the 'Chester Canal' from Chester to Nantwich. However the full length of 'the Shroppie' (as it is often affectionately termed) from Ellesmere Port to Wolverhampton was not available to commercial traffic until the 1830's.

Most canal traffic nowadays is recreational but the old mills lining the canal testify to its former importance as a commercial waterway; the imposing steam mill belongs to the Frost family, corn-millers and dealers.

Also close to the route through Chester are Dee Valley Water's imposing water tower and the 200 year old, 168 foot high 'shot tower' of Leadworks Lane. Molten lead was dropped from the top and formed a perfect sphere dropping into water where it hardened. Off City Road is Tramway Street, and the former city tram depot.

Directions

1. Chester Station to Rowton Bridge From City Road. Cross the Shropshire Union Canal and turn left down the steps. Follow the towpath past the old steam mill for about 4.5km passing several locks. Pass a boatyard on the far bank then at the next bridge (120) take the ramp up to the black and white gate beside the bridge onto Rowton Bridge Road. (2 ½ miles/4km/1hour)

2. Rowton Bridge to Hockenhull Platts. Cross the canal and after 90m turn right down Skips Lane. At the end of the lane take a narrow path to the left of a driveway. Follow the waymarked path to the canal side. Continue beside the canal before you descend the bank. Keep left along the edge of two fields to Brown Heath Road. Cross the road, following the tarmac to a house. Walk to the right of the house and follow the fenced path into a field. Cross this field and three further fields until you cross a metalled track. After a few metres, bear left over a fifth field to a stile under an oak tree and turn right down Plough Lane. Where the road bends left, keep right down the cul-de-sac Platts Lane to cross the River Gowy by the old bridges at Hockenhull Platts. (5miles/8km/2hours)

3. Hockenhull Platts to Tarvin Bridge. Follow the track until, just after a large beech tree, you can take a track to the left which continues as a tarmac road to the busy Tarvin bypass. Cross with care into Hockenhull Lane, turning right onto High Street at its end. Keep left at the George & Dragon pub in the centre of Tarvin and you will soon arrive at the busy A54 Kelsall Road. (6 ½ miles/10.5km/ 2 ½ hours)

4. Tarvin Bridge to Brines Brow. Cross with care, turn right and then almost immediately take the right hand of two lanes which leave the A54. At the T-junction take the path opposite through two fields to a footbridge over Salter Brook. Head for an oak tree, keep the hedge on your left until the drive. Cross and continue with the hedge now on your right making for the spire of Ashton Church. At a narrow green lane turn left. From the end of the lane turn left. From the end of the lanes head for the far left corner of the field. Cross the brook and turn right along the field edge to a farm track. Turn left and follow it to Peel Hall Farm. Take the farm drive to Gongar Lane. Cross into the track and follow the valley of Ashton Brook, eventually bearing right at a hedge corner to the roadside. Turn left along Church Road and then shortly fork right up the narrow Grange Road (you can shorten the walk here by remaining on Church Road for a further 700m to reach Mouldsworth Station and the train back to Chester). After 1km join another road which comes from your left and follow it for 200m until, opposite Woodside Farm, you can turn left along a short track through woodland to the road at Brines Brow picnic area. (10¼ miles/16.5km/4 hours)

5. Brines Brow to Delamere Station. Cross the road and immediately beyond the barrier, turn left down steps and follow the path to the lower car park. Turn right onto Ashton Road and keep along the right hand side heading for Delamere Forest. Before the railway bridge, cross the road with caution and continue under the bridge. About 200m beyond Fox Howl outdoor education centre, turn right through a gap in the bank into the Forest and climb up through the trees towards the railway line. With the railway fence on your right, continue to a bridge. Cross the railway and bear left along the main track which twists about before reaching another wide forest track known as Battleaxe Road.

Turning left you shortly pass a marshy pool on your right - Black Lake. Walk on over a second railway bridge and continue along the main track as it bends right to meet another wide track which carries the Sandstone Trail. Turn right, back over the railway once again and follow the Sandstone Trail. Turn left at a wooden fence across the track and follow this narrower track, bearing down to the right 50m before another railway bridge. Cross the brook and continue to a major track (Forest Road) beyond which rise the newly wooded slopes of the Old Pale. Turn left and carry on to the Forest Visitor Centre and café. Continue along the tarmac road until, at a final railway bridge, you can take a chicaned path between the road and railway which leads to Linmere Picnic area and the Station Café at Delamere Railway Station (6). (13 miles/21km/5hours)