

CTC Cambridge Permanent: Eleanor Cross Waltham Cross 209km

In 1290, Queen Eleanor of Castile died whilst on a royal visit to Harby in Nottinghamshire. Although their marriage was (as was typical of the time) of strategic importance, King Edward I and Queen Eleanor were devoted to each other. Eleanor's funeral cortège headed south, and Edward I had a stone memorial erected in each place the cortège rested overnight. Of the original twelve, three remain; Geddington, Hardingstone and Waltham Cross. Today's visit is to the eponymous Waltham Cross, as the cortège rested at nearby Waltham Abbey before finishing at Westminster Abbey.

More info:

<https://bitaboutbritain.com/eleanors-cross-hardingstone/>

Route here: <https://ridewithgps.com/routes/53954324>



You can do this in either direction, or start somewhere on the route. The final leg back to Cambridge includes a couple of hills – use the outward route to avoid. You can adjust eBrevet to start at a different point, or just upload your track – either is fine although I prefer seeing the track as it's interesting to see what changes riders have made.

Controls:

0km Cambridge central railway station

24km Audley End house

42km Steeple Bumpstead

76km Great Waltham

98km Hook End / Stondon Massey

127km Chingford

135km Waltham Cross

178km Clavering

209km Cambridge central railway station

Useful train stations:

Cambridge north, central and south

Audley End

Chelmsford

Tottenham Hale

Harlow

Bishops Stortford

Things to watch out for:

66km Felsted: floods occasionally just before school, where road goes under old railway.

101.5km between Hook End and Marden Ash: can flood in spring, **avoid if so as it can be very deep and unpleasant.** Re-route via Kelvedon Hatch and past the secret nuclear bunker. Extra time given for diversions – no need for a photo, just upload your track and let me know.

128km Lea Valley Road/bridge between Chingford and Ponders End: busy and unpleasant, take care.

130km Hertford Road to Waltham Cross: busy, use cycle lane with care as it is shared use in places. I pretend I am a cool hipster cycling round London. Use NCN1 if you prefer, and control at Waltham Abbey.

135km At the Eleanor Cross, turn right and immediately join shared use cyclepath on left. Follow cyclepath to left just after taxi place and before KFC.

184km Route turns left and over Telegraph and Coploe Hills – to avoid these, go straight on through Wenden's Ambo. Past Audley End train station and left onto the B1383 to pick up the outbound route.

Cafes/toilets/water etc:

0km Cambridge central station: Supermarkets and food trucks outside station. Toilets and water refill on platform.

10km Sawston: cafes, Co-op, public toilets in Free Church and at parish council office on Link Road. Bike shop south of village. McDonalds soon after.

22km Littlebury: tap on left of church porch.

25km Saffron Walden: shops, public toilets, bike shop.

29km Swards End: tap on village hall, on L of main door.

42km Steeple Bumpstead: Petrol station just off route. Small Town (cafes in Sawston and Clare) coffee truck often in village hall car park (excellent sausage rolls).

52km Finchingfield: cafes, petrol station. Public toilets just off route in Steven Marshall Avenue.

54km Great Bardfield: Co-op, pubs. Blue Egg / Knead Food cafe just outside village (customer toilets at front, tap at back in hedge).

76km Great Waltham: village shop, cafe

86km Writtle: cafes just off route, public toilets in car park on The Green

90km Highwood: tap on side of village hall

95km Blackmore: cafes just off route, Co-op

103km Chipping Ongar: cafes and toilets just off route. Nerissa and Claire's cafe recommended.

121km Epping Forest: public toilets (tap inside loos), King's Oak cafe

126km Chingford: excellent Holly Trail cafe opposite golf course. Tap by bus station.

135km Waltham Cross: lots of cafes near the cross. I'm here for the baklava.

140km Fishers Green car park: toilets, no tap (unless there's one in the gents?).

177km Clavering: excellent village shop just south of the village (sadly no toilet). Pizza truck Thursday evenings, fish and chips on Friday evenings. The Cricketers pub, formerly run by Jamie Oliver's parents, serves food and is further along the route.

In-ride trivia guide:

23km Audley End House: the view provided by the Capability Brown landscaping is described by legendary LEL St Ives/Northstowe controller as "the finest view in England". During WWII, the house was requisitioned and used as a base for training Polish special forces soldiers.

36km Hempstead: birthplace of highwayman Dick Turpin.

76km Great Waltham. The name probably comes from Saxon – "walt" meaning wood, "ham" meaning home. So probably the same derivation as Waltham Cross and Abbey, but no relation.

104km Greensted church: the oldest wooden church in the world. Sells fridge magnets.

119km Epping Forest: A lovely jaunt through ancient woodland. The Forest has been common land, royal hunting ground and home to Dick Turpin's dastardly deeds. If the trees could talk... This section ends with a short bit of off-road which is a tiny bit muddy in spring, but doesn't seem to be too bad – certainly better than the horrible Epping New Road.

125km The 16th century Queen Elizabeth Hunting Lodge is just off-route – stay on the off-road path behind the Holly Trail cafe. Well worth a look.

137km On the other side of the river is the Royal Gunpowder Mills, which made explosives for 300 years.