

Evington Park to Shady Lane Arboretum

Start location: Evington Park car park, The Common, Leicester, LE5 6DE

Time taken: 55 minutes (steady, pace)*
45 minutes (medium pace) **Distance:** 1.8 miles 2.9 km **Circular route**

Description:

This route heads from Evington Park to Shady Lane Arboretum on the south-east side of Leicester. You'll do a figure of eight through the arboretum, passing the medieval church of St Denys on the way. The arboretum has wildflower grassland, over 500 species of tree and is a good spot to unwind with nature. Discover some local history too, as you pass information boards en route. This route includes some soft, uneven paths which can be muddy after rain.



- Main route
- Alternative route
- 1 Stage / waypoint
- A Point of interest

*Time is calculated at a steady pace of 2mph, if walked without stopping. Allow extra time to look at points of interest and read the information.

This route was developed by staff and volunteers for Leicester City Council:
www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk/walks



Walk starts:

Evington Park car park, The Common, Leicester, LE5 6DE

There are public toilets in Evington Park near the bowling greens and tennis courts. Evington Village is served by buses. To plan your journey visit: www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk.

Safety tips:

- This route not accessible for wheelchairs or buggies. St Denys' churchyard has steps and the Arboretum has unsurfaced paths, uneven terrain, gates and a narrow bridge. Some paths can become muddy after rain.
- Take care crossing roads. Use pedestrian crossings where present, especially at the major junctions.
- Watch for cyclists, especially Evington Park where there is a cycle route.
- In some places paths may be cracked or uneven, so tread carefully. Some pavements may be narrowed due to parked cars.
- Be aware that Shady Lane Arboretum is a quiet location and can feel a little isolated. Walkers may prefer to visit in company.

Route directions:

1. From the car park there are two paths entering the park; take the one on the right beside the bollards. Soon at a path junction beside a black post, turn right. Follow this path to exit on Cordery Road.
2. Turn right on Cordery Road. The path soon bears right around a corner. At the dropped curb cross to the left-hand side. Use the pedestrian crossing nearby to cross Main Street towards the dry cleaners. Turn left on the far side to pass the shops.
3. Turn right into School Lane. At the end, ignore a footpath to the right. Instead take the footpath ahead of you, beside the house and fence, which leads into Shady Lane Arboretum.

A. Shady Lane Arboretum

Shady Lane was laid out in 1850 by the owner of Stoughton Grange, to give privacy to his house which once stood nearby (read more about Stoughton Grange at the end). In 1942, during World War II a camp was built in this area for American troops of the US 82nd Airborne Division. The parachute infantry personnel at the camp participated in the airborne assault on the Waal bridges in Holland in 1944. From 1944 to 1948 it became a Prisoner Of War camp to house Italian and German prisoners. After the war, the site was a riding school for some time. The City Council created the arboretum here in 1970. In 1996 three golden ash trees were planted by one of the former POWs, as a token of friendship between Britain and Germany.

Soon reach a path junction. Turn left here to follow the uneven grass path by the fence which heads in the direction of St Denys Church.

4. When you near a large 1970s-style building to your left (a residential care home, you'll reach a path fork – here bear right on the wide mown path. Keep right at the next path junction, past an orienteering post and continue to an information board about Piggy's Hollow.

B. Piggy's Hollow

There was once a medieval manor house here, surrounded by a moat. It belonged to an aristocratic family - the de Greys of Codnor, Derbyshire. In later centuries a local farmer called "Piggy" Wilson, kept his pigs on this land, hence the name.

5. Turn left at the information board to take the steps into the grounds of St Denys' Church. Take the path ahead to the church, then bear left around the building to the side entrance. Pass the doorway and lamp post then stay on the main path and head down the slope to reach the road. Looking back, there is a good view of the church from here.

C. St Denys' Church

St Denys' Church is one of the oldest surviving buildings in Evington, dating from the thirteenth century. Parts of the church have been rebuilt and restored but the original tower and spire still stand today. Two flags from the US Airborne Division are laid up in the church, left as a gift from soldiers billeted in a nearby camp on Shady Lane during WWII.

Turn right on Shady Lane. Pass the church. You may wish to pause at the information board about Evington.

D. The settlement at Evington

There has been a settlement in the Evington area for over 1,000 years, since Anglo-Saxon times. The village was called Aefa's Tun, which meant the settlement of Aefa's people. The name later became 'Avintone'. In the 11th century after the Norman Conquest, William the Conqueror granted the land here to Hugh de Grentemesnil (or Grandmesnil), who used the area as a deer park. Hugh was also given the city of Leicester to govern, where he built Leicester's first castle (of the motte and bailey type). There have been many subsequent landowners in this area, including Simon de Montfort in the 13th century.

6. Soon re-enter Shady Lane Arboretum via the gate on the right. Turn left on the path which runs parallel with Shady Lane. Cross a narrow bridge over the Evington Brook (there are a couple of steps up to and down from this bridge).
7. After the bridge, at the path junction turn right to follow the brook (part hidden by the hedgerow) for some time. At a main path junction (near a bench and noticeboard on the left and a footbridge on the right) continue on the path ahead, which still follows the line of the brook although you may not see it due to the trees.
8. Stay on the main (gravel) path, passing a black noticeboard, side path and small footbridge on your right. That path leads to the entrance gate to Leicestershire Golf Course.

Leicestershire Golf Course

There is a public right of way across the golf course which exits on Gartree Road and Stoughton Drive. It is popular with runners. If you choose to explore there, be aware that the route is not that easy to follow and remember to stay vigilant for flying golf balls!

Our route stays within Shady Lane Arboretum. Follow the main path as it bears left. Continue ahead, passing unsurfaced side paths until you reach the Shady Lane carpark and entrance gate.

9. Just before the gate, turn left on the path which runs parallel with Shady Lane. It eventually brings you to the path junction before the narrow bridge, which you crossed earlier. Turn left here to again follow the path beside the brook to the junction by the bench and noticeboard. This time turn right to cross the footbridge.
10. Continue ahead on the main path with trees and hedgerow to the left and grassland to the right.
11. At a path junction go left, then shortly keep left at a fork to use a section of boardwalk (the path is narrow here and in summer there are nettles on either side). The boardwalk ends and you ascend some steps. Then you have a choice of paths, although ultimately they re-join soon. Take the wider one for ease. This path is particularly uneven with dips. You are walking through the area known as Piggy's Hollow. Continue on and houses come into view ahead. At the path junction by a bin continue ahead towards a post and the fence. Take the path ahead beside the fence to return to School Lane.

Retrace your steps to Evington Park where this walk finishes.

Additional Information

Visit Leicester - Evington:

<https://www.visitleicester.info/explore/neighbourhoods/evington>

Shady Lane Arboretum:

Story of Parks: <https://storyofparksleicester.com/park-histories/shady-lane-arboretum/>

Stoughton Grange – history:

Located in the Evington/Stoughton area of Leicester, Stoughton Grange was a 15th century house built on farmland managed by Leicester Abbey. Following the dissolution of the monasteries the estate passed to the crown, then to gentry and was later sold to local wealthy families. Old pictures show it was a grand building. Henry Leycester Powys-Keck was the last member of the family to have full possession of the estate. Following his death in 1912 the estate was put up for sale. In 1926, for reasons unknown, the main house was demolished. You can read more about the history of the estate online.

<http://stoughtongrange.co.uk/about/>

Acknowledgements : Route researched and developed by staff and volunteers for Leicester City Council.