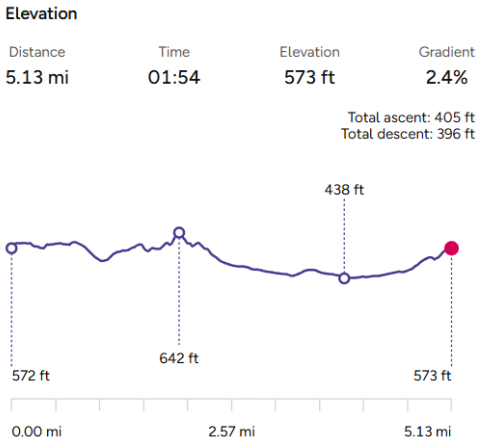
PUBS WORTH THE WALK

The Coach & Horses, Longborough Pub Walk

Longborough and Sezincote – looking beyond the Cotswolds Postcard, 5.1 miles

OVERVIEW



This is a wonderfully varied Cotswold walk, beginning and ending in the village of Longborough and taking a largely rural route to Bourton-on-the-Hill. The outward journey follows the Heart of England Way through the Sezincote estate, with well-maintained paths, tracks and field paths providing a particularly pleasant way of experiencing this corner of the Cotswolds.

The landscape is classic Cotswold countryside, but Sezincote provides an unexpected twist. I've included more about Sezincote in the Notes.

Bourton-on-the-Hill provides the destination for the outward leg. Take time to explore the village rather than simply turning around at the pub!

The return journey is rather different. Rather than retracing the outward route, the walk takes a more indirect course across fields and around field boundaries, eventually joining the Monarch's Way. There are a succession of gates, stiles, footbridges, small streams and hedgerows, with the route occasionally weaving around fields occupied by cattle. It is a little more adventurous than the straightforward outward leg, but the waymarkers and the distinctive landscape features described in the directions make it perfectly manageable.

Eventually the tower of St James' Church comes into view and provides a reassuring landmark for the final approach to Longborough. If the church is open, make time to go inside. It is one of those unexpected discoveries that can change your impression of a village, and I've given it a little more attention in the Notes.

Start/Finish	**Coach & Horses, Longborough**				
Parking	The Coach & Horses, Longborough, GL56 0QU				
Grid Reference	SP 179 296				
What3Words	///hoops.feelers.commands				
Distance	5.1 miles / 8.2 km	**Time**	2.5 hrs	**Ascent**	570 ft / 175 m
Paths/Terrain	Well defined footpaths, field paths and lanes. Numerous stiles and gates.				
Difficulty	Easy				

Public Transport	Bus services between Moreton-in-Marsh and Bourton-on-the-Water call at Longborough.
Toilets	At Coach & Horses; also available at the churches of Longborough and Bourton-on-the-Hill
Other Pubs Nearby	Horse & Groom, Bourton-on-the-Hill; and Fox Inn in Broadwell. Both Stow and Morton-in-Marsh are also nearby.

DIRECTIONS



1. Passing the Coach and Horses on your left, make your way uphill along the road through the village. Within a short distance, take turn right to follow a well-marked a public footpath sign onto the 'Heart of England Way'.
2. This path is well established, and well signposted all the way to Bourton-on-the-Hill, almost in a straight line. It covers some excellently prepared footpaths, tracks, and field paths, mostly managed by the Sezincote estate.
3. As well as the opportunity to explore the classic hillside Cotswold village of Bourton-on-the-Hill. The walk passes close to Sezincote and there are some particularly good views of the house from the fields. It is an unexpected sight in the middle of the Cotswolds: an Indian-style country house, complete with domes, minarets and elaborate detailing, sitting rather incongruously – and wonderfully – amongst the

Gloucestershire countryside. The design here was a forerunner to the Brighton Pavilion - an entirely different dimension from the usual village-and-stone cottage story. See Notes for added detail.

4. Cross the stream and ornamental ponds of Sezincote. There are four farms in the estate, and you'll see plenty of cattle in the fields around you on the walk. Thankfully, the footpath route keeps walker and cow apart.
5. Pass through a series of wooden footpath gates, and soon Bourton-on-the-Hill will become visible in front of you. A final wooden gate marks the departure from fields as you pass between stones walls and then the houses of the village. Take note of this moment – the return path drops you down this field to a gate in the corner, rather than back across it the way you came.
6. Take time to make a circuit of Bourton-on-the-Hill before returning to Longborough. The steep main road, St Lawrence's Church, the former school and the Tithe Barn give the village a character quite different from its better-known Cotswold neighbours. The Horse & Groom stands guard over the village at the top of the main road.
7. Return to the wooden gate described in #5. As you pass through, rather than taking the footpath across the field back in the direction of Longborough, here turn left to head past a metal water trough slightly downhill into the corner of the field.
8. Continue straight ahead along field tracks from here, passing through a number of fields and associated wooden gates. Pass through a final wooden gate – where it's clear that you can no longer continue straight ahead - and here seek out a path on your right, which is somewhat hidden, but the giant oak tree that marks the start of a hedge row is your guide. This is the start of a zig zag, somewhat indirect route back to Longborough, eventually via the Monarch's Way.
9. As you begin along this path, note that the footpaths from here run beside or are intended to help avoid fields of cattle, so they navigate around field boundaries, over small drainage ditches and through hedgerows and across or along driveways. Follow this initial path section as it winds through the hedgerow, straight ahead and then to the left, and then cross straight over the driveway.
10. Follow the public footpath over a stile and continue around the field within the specially fenced off area. Cross the footbridge into another short section of woodland, with a small stream running to your left, then continue to zigzag around the fields, crossing a little bridge along the way.
11. After one final stile, arrive on the driveway of Upper Ray Farm. Turn right and cross the cattle grid. Follow the footpath signs straight ahead, passing the farm on your right, and continuing towards some barns ahead.
12. Once beyond the barns, note that the goal is the copse of woodland to your left, with the footpath required passing around the copse on its left-hand side. To get there from beyond the barns, depending on the cattle situation, there are a couple of footpath routes through the fields heading left towards the woods. There are signs to support either route.
13. As you reach the copse, proceed to its left-hand side. Ignore a gated entrance into the woods to continue around the side of the copse, following its fence line to the

right. Up ahead you'll soon see footpath markers, and as you continue along the fence line, you'll see signs for Longborough (on the Monarch's Way).

14. The church of St James in Longborough becomes visible - use that as the guide for the route from here.
15. After a succession of fields, stiles, gates and footbridges, and getting close to the village now, pass through a metal gate into an arable field. The distinct path proceeds across the field towards the houses of the village.
16. Exit the field via a gate, onto a path between the houses. At the road, turn right towards the marvellous Church of St James. Please take time to visit the Church – I've included some notes about it below.
17. Follow the road past the church back to the village green and The Coach & Horses.

NOTES

SEZINCOTE – LITTLE INDIA IN THE COTSWOLDS

The walk passes through the Sezincote estate, and there are some particularly good views of the house from the fields below. It is an unexpected sight in the middle of the Cotswolds: an Indian-style country house, complete with domes, minarets and elaborate detailing, sitting rather incongruously – and wonderfully – amongst the Gloucestershire countryside.

Sezincote was created at the beginning of the 19th century by the Cockerell family, whose fortunes were made through the East India Company. Architect Samuel Pepys Cockerell designed the house for his brother Charles, drawing heavily on Mughal and Hindu architectural influences. The result is one of the most unusual country houses in England, and its appearance subsequently influenced the Prince Regent's development of the Royal Pavilion at Brighton.

There is a pleasing local connection here too. The Cockerells were important benefactors of Longborough Church, so their influence wasn't confined to this extraordinary estate a mile or so from the village. It is another reminder that the apparently timeless Cotswold landscape was shaped by families whose lives, fortunes and experiences often extended far beyond the immediate countryside.

I only saw Sezincote from the footpath on this walk, rather than having time to visit the house and gardens – which is something I would rectify on a return visit. Access isn't directly from the walking route, so a visit means making the short journey by car from Longborough. It would be well worth building into the day, particularly as the walk itself finishes at the Coach & Horses in Bourton-on-the-Hill. In other words, there is no shortage of good reasons to linger in this corner of the Cotswolds.

ST JAMES CHURCH AND THE HISTORY OF LONGBOROUGH

I always wanted to include Longborough in my Pubs Worth The Walk project because of my fond memories and association with the village as a fruit-picking schoolboy in the 1980s. Visiting St James' Church helped me to understand that there is rather more to this village than the Coach & Horses!

St James' seems to be an unusually impressive church for a village of Longborough's present size, and its appearance begins to make sense when you discover just how much history has accumulated here. Parts of the present church date from the 12th century, with additions through the 13th, early 14th and 15th centuries. The building retains substantial medieval ‘fabric’ - fragments of medieval stained glass and a remarkable 14th-century font. It is Grade I listed.

Longborough itself has a much older story. The village lies beneath Ganborough Hill, where evidence of a long barrow points to settlement here around 5,000 years ago, while a Romano-British settlement has also been identified elsewhere in the parish.

By the time of the Domesday Survey in 1086, Longborough was divided between several manors – substantial landholdings rather than simply farms – and its medieval story subsequently became entwined with some remarkably powerful people and institutions.

Among them were the Mortimers, one of the great aristocratic families of medieval England. Their power was centred on the Welsh Marches, particularly around Wigmore in Herefordshire,

and the family became increasingly influential in English affairs during the 13th and 14th centuries. Their association with Longborough is one indication that the village's importance extended beyond the immediate farming community.

By the 13th century Longborough also became connected with Richard, Earl of Cornwall. The title can sound slightly misleading: Richard wasn't a distant Cornish landowner. He was the second son of King John and younger brother of King Henry III, and therefore one of the most powerful men in medieval England.

He founded Hailes Abbey, a Cistercian monastery only a few miles from Longborough, in 1245/46. The abbey became an important pilgrimage centre after acquiring a relic believed to be a phial containing the blood of Christ, and by the late 13th century Hailes was one of the wealthier Cistercian houses in England.

That connection matters because St James' Church itself came under the ownership of Hailes Abbey in the 14th century. For several centuries Longborough was, therefore, part of the orbit of a substantial medieval monastery whose wealth and influence reached well beyond its own buildings. The remains of Hailes Abbey today give some idea of the scale of that institution.

The Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 16th century brought another change.

Hailes Abbey was dissolved in 1539 and its property was sold. Longborough's manor subsequently came into the hands of Thomas Leigh, a former Lord Mayor of London, and the Leigh family retained the estate for generations. Their presence can still be seen inside St James, particularly in the elaborate Leigh Aisle and monument to William Leigh, who died in 1631, his wife Elizabeth and their family.

And then comes the connection that links the church directly with the extraordinary building you can see from the fields on this walk: Sezincote.

The Cockerells brought a very different kind of wealth to Longborough. Their fortunes were closely associated with the East India Company, the powerful English trading company founded in 1600 to conduct commerce with Asia which, by the 18th century, had also acquired territory, maintained its own armies and become a major instrument of British power in India.

Colonel John Cockerell returned from Bengal in 1795 and bought the Sezincote estate. After his death, his brother Charles inherited it; Charles had himself served with the East India Company. Their brother Samuel Pepys Cockerell, an architect who had also worked for the Company, subsequently designed the extraordinary Indian-style house at Sezincote, drawing on the knowledge of the artists Thomas and William Daniell, who had travelled extensively in India.

The Cockerells also left their mark on St James'. In 1822–23, architect Charles Robert Cockerell designed a private chapel for the family, adding it to the north side of the medieval church. The chapel contains several Cockerell memorials, including the impressive monument to Sir Charles Cockerell by the celebrated sculptor Sir Richard Westmacott.

So, it would be easy to look at St James and assume that the Cockerells explain its impressive scale. They don't. They are really the latest chapter in a much longer story. The medieval church, the connection with Hailes Abbey, the Leigh family monuments and finally the Cockerell chapel represent successive generations of power, wealth and patronage leaving their mark on this village.

If St James' is open, go inside. What initially looks like an unusually grand village church turns out to be something rather more interesting: a physical record of Longborough's changing fortunes, stretching from medieval monastic power and landed families to the remarkable East India Company fortunes behind Sezincote.

And that makes those earlier views of Sezincote from the fields more meaningful too. The house isn't an isolated curiosity dropped into the Cotswold landscape. Its owners became part of the story of Longborough, just as Longborough's church had already been telling its story for centuries.