

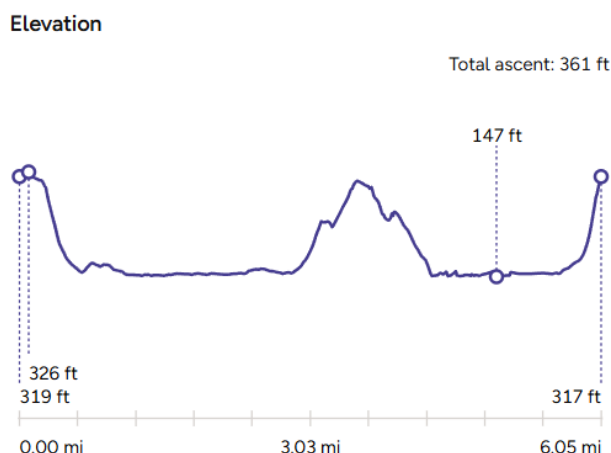
The New Inn, Blagdon

A circular walk along the lanes and fields surrounding Blagdon Lake, 6 miles

OVERVIEW

This is one of those walks where you can see the entirety of it laid out in front of you from the start. It's a circuit of Blagdon Lake, using a combination of Public Footpaths, farm tracks, fields and very quiet lanes to navigate the 6 mile loop that is visible almost entirely from the lovely garden of the New Inn at Blagdon. On the Southern side of the lake, the walk is near to the lake rather than along it. Direct access is limited by Bristol Water to those with a license to fish for trout. The route follows extremely quiet lanes on the northern shore with lake views.

Finally, there's safe public access to the shoreline at 'Butcombe Bay' in the North West corner of the Lake, then a shoreline path to the dam at the West end of the lake. There's been fishing here since the Lake opened, damming the River Yeo, in the early 1900's. Occasionally, the Victorian Pumping Station behind the dam is open to visitors, a Grade II listed building. Numerous online routes for this walk are brief, or mix up left and right! This is the definitive walk description as of July 2026.



Start/Finish	The New Inn, Park Lane, Blagdon, BS40 7SB			
Parking	Plenty of parking at The New Inn, some on street parking on Park Lane too.			
Grid Reference	ST 505 589			
What3Words	///boxing.character.decide			
Distance	6 miles / 10.8 km	Time	3 hrs	Ascent 360 ft /111 m
Paths/Terrain	Quiet lanes, grassy paths, gravel footpaths. At the start of the walk, below the New Inn, some livestock fields towards and around Halt Farm on the Southern side of the lake. From east end of Lake around lanes to West Town, routes are easy.			
Difficulty	Moderate. The final return to the village is the only strenuous hill, but I marked this as moderate since the fields covered in the first section are uneven ('ankle breakers' I call them – where ground from many sunken hooves has hardened in the sun), paths unclear through the fields on the southern part of the lake – a strimmer team would be			

	useful in parts. And if it's wet, trousers and boots would be soaked in long grass if the cattle haven't yet had their way. Some path diversions from OS route to navigate too.
Public Transport	Buses from Bristol and Weston-Super-Mare pass through Blagdon.
Toilets	At the New Inn.
Other Pubs Nearby	Plume of Feathers at Rickford is excellent. Further afield The Crown at Churchill is superb. You might also consider something different: Hedgers Cider at Redhill, or Barley Wood Orchard near Wrington.

DIRECTIONS



Blagdon Lake is a long, elegant ribbon of water tucked beneath the northern escarpment of the Mendip Hills, created in the early 1900s to supply **drinking water for the good people of Bristol** and still managed today by Bristol Water as part of the city's reservoir network. Though technically a working lake, it feels anything but industrial: wooded shores, quiet inlets, reedbeds alive with birds, and a necklace of farms and hamlets—West Town, Holt Farm, Butcombe—give it the character of a rural valley rather than a utility.

From the car park of the New Inn, take a moment to admire the view from the pub garden, and to get a feel for where you're heading. To the right-hand side on this side of the lake initially, then looping around at its eastern end, before returning on the other side and then over the dam before climbing back up to where you are.

1. Leave the New Inn and visit St Andrew's

Turn left out of the New Inn car park and walk up Park Lane towards Church Street. Almost immediately you see St Andrew's Parish Church to your right — well worth a brief detour (see Notes below).

2. Turn onto Grib Lane

Continue on Park Lane for 50 metres, then turn left onto Grib Lane, signed as a No Through Road. After 100 metres, a footpath sign directs you left onto a grassy track in front of houses with fine views over the lake.

3. Drop down into the first field

Continue for 50 metres and take the next footpath left, down concrete steps. The path meets a gate into a field — cattle were present when I visited — and you follow the right-hand boundary downhill. Underfoot it's tough going: sun-baked hoof prints make the descent uneven.

4. Navigate Holt Farm's diverted path

Exit the field through a gate and walk towards the farm track ahead. A footpath marker sends you right, then almost immediately left into another field. Although the OS map suggests the path goes through Holt Farm's farmyard, the waymarks divert walkers around a small wooded bank up ahead instead. The diagonal route now across rough, uncut grass is unestablished and would be soaked in wet weather. A series of footpath gates leads you through several cattle fields beyond.

5. Follow the hedge to the footbridge

Once beyond the bank, eventually the route aligns with a hedge on your right. Look for a footpath marker showing the exit near the end of the field: cross a short footbridge, then turn left onto the farm track.

6. More rough fields

Enter the next field and keep left. Again, the grass is long and the path indistinct — gaiters or waterproof trousers would be welcome on a wet day. Some sections clearly need strimming; I'll be contacting the council.

7. Walk beside Bristol Water's private lakeside drive

The route continues through a succession of fields and short wooded sections, always with a hedge or fence on your left. Beyond that hedge lies a wonderful gravel track — Bristol Water's private lakeside drive. It would make a superb walking route if access were permitted, but the company cites algae and water-quality concerns to justify restrictions.

8. Reach the lane

A wooden kissing gate brings you out onto a quiet lane. Turn left. The road isn't busy, but take care. Keep left at the first junction, and again at the next — gratefully ignoring Awkward Hill rising steeply on your right.

9. Start up Chapel Hill

Pass Grove Farm on your left and begin the ascent of Chapel Hill. Look for a footpath sign directing you left up the bank. In the field, head diagonally uphill to rejoin the lane, cutting off the corner of Chapel Hill and enjoying softer ground.

10. Enter West Town

Bear left on the lane and soon reach the hamlet of West Town. Walk past the multi-storey Bellevue House, turn left at the junction, then after 25 metres take the public footpath to the right, over a stone slab stile.

11. Cross the fields towards the woods

Follow the hedge immediately on your right and head straight across the field to a footpath gate. This leads into rough grassland and then shady woodland. Continue straight ahead.

12. Optional shoreline spur to Butcombe Bay

As you approach the first footbridge, take a moment to break left out of the woods to follow a grassy path through a field towards the lake shore. This is the north-west corner of Blagdon Lake — Butcombe Bay, the only true public access to the water. The views are excellent: the dam ahead, and on the hillside beyond, the striking Combe Lodge, designed by the same architect as Bristol University's Wills Building and once home to the Wills family.

Return to the footbridge to continue the circuit.

13. Cross the three footbridges

Cross the first footbridge, then two more in quick succession. The path becomes more established then, with gravel underfoot as you leave the wooded path and start to get closer to the dam. The lake is below you on the left all the way.

14. Reach the dam

The path meets the road at the dam. Turn left. The Victorian pumping station stands opposite — closed for repairs when I visited. Cross the dam to the far side.

15. Climb back to the New Inn

Once across, take the left-hand turn onto Park Lane. After a level start, the lane climbs steadily back to the New Inn. You've earned your drink.

NOTES – The Church of St Andrew and the Tale of Sir Lancelot.

St Andrew's Parish Church sits close to the New Inn, itself a "new church" in its current form. Inside is a striking stained-glass memorial to the men of Blagdon lost in the First World War: "*Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*" Augustus Toplady served as vicar here from 1762 to 1764; he is best known for the hymn *Rock of Ages*, said to have been inspired during a storm in nearby Burrington Combe.

The site has hosted several churches: a Saxon or Norman original, a second consecrated in 1317, a third built in 1821, and the present church of 1908, funded by W. H. Wills — later Lord Winterstoke — of Combe Lodge. So it could be that this is Church #4 or #5 on this site, showing the determination of the local community to Worship. It brings to mind Monty Python's *Holy Grail* and the tale of Sir Lancelot's father, who built castle after castle on a swamp until one finally stayed up.

NARRATOR: The Tale of Sir Lancelot.

FATHER: One day, lad, all this will be yours!

PRINCE HERBERT: What, the curtains?

FATHER: No. Not the curtains, lad. All that you can see, stretched out over the hills and valleys of this land! This'll be your kingdom, lad.

HERBERT: But Mother--

FATHER: Father, lad. Father.

HERBERT: B-- b-- but Father, I don't want any of that.

FATHER: Listen, lad. I built this kingdom up from nothing. When I started here, all there was was swamp. Other kings said I was daft to build a castle on a swamp, but I built it all the same, just to show 'em. It sank into the swamp. So, I built a second one. That sank into the swamp. So, I built a third one. That burned down, fell over, then sank into the swamp, but the fourth one... stayed up! And that's what you're gonna get, lad: the strongest castle in these islands.