



An Arrow Meander

Distance: 5.8 miles (9.4 kilometres)

Start: Haydon Way Wood car park, Spernal Lane.

Grid reference: SP 08483 62206

<https://what3words.com/fame.ocean.crop>

The Arrow: there couldn't be a better name for a river that pierces the Heart of England Forest. We can't promise walkers on this varied route will be struck by Cupid's arrow, but it certainly passes through a romantic landscape. It includes the beautiful path along the twisting riverbank below Studley's curiously isolated parish church - the village moved up the hill, but no one knows why. A highlight is the turreted frontage of Coughton Court, home of the Throckmorton family since 1409. On open days (Wednesday to Sunday), walkers can pass along the front of the house and stop for lunch, tea or ice cream.

The Forest is returning an element of wildness to the area by planting woodland and creating a "wiggly waterway" and pond "scrapes" just north of Spernal Hall Farm, designed to mimic nature and attract wildlife such as water voles, wading birds, dragonflies and great crested newts.

There are toilets at Coughton Court and in Studley Church, where you can donate money towards the appeal to repair the 15th century tower.

The walk is described from our car park at Haydon Way Wood (donations welcome in the box by the information boards), but it can also be joined from Studley Castle or from Coughton Court. People in Studley can join the route by following one of the paths to the parish church.

Directions:

From Haydon Way Wood car park in Spernal Lane, walk through the barrier and turn right along the road, over the bridge (check for traffic) and immediately left up the straight driveway towards Spernal Hall Farm, using the gate beside the cattle grid.

Pass the farmhouse and barns, ahead through a metal kissing gate (Arden Way), then pass a fallen tree; pause to view work on the new wetland features.

Continue through a kissing gate on an enclosed footpath. Ignore the narrow path to the right. Through a fourth kissing gate, the path veers left across an indistinct track and over a footbridge. Cross it, and continue along the right hand edge of the field, passing a clump of rushes. Aim for a dead tree.

Just before the river, turn right through a kissing gate and continue north over open pasture, close to the riverbank. Approaching the church, visible among trees, aim for a gate immediately

left of the metal railings around the cemetery. Through the gate, turn left along the lane and into the churchyard.

There are toilets in the porch; if using them, please make a donation using the card reader just inside the church.

Head right through the churchyard along a gravel path, and turn left through the car park (ignore the public footpath through the cemetery) to pass through a small metal gate and briefly up a track.

Turn right through the first gap in the hedge and in 50 yards turn left on a narrow grassy path and over a footbridge. Follow the path right, with Studley Castle emerging on the hillside. The path continues ahead and then right, back into the woodland; at the first junction, turn left to go round three sides of a large pond (reeds are just visible behind the hedge).

At a T junction, follow the orange waymarker to the left. The path turns right and left, becoming stony. At the next five-way junction, ignore the orange marker and take the path straight ahead, soon turning left. At the next junction, turn right (white waymarker) over the new Morton Brook Bridge. Go ahead on a clear grassy path.

At the end of the field, ignore the footbridge (crossed earlier) and turn left through the metal gate (Arden Way) to retrace your steps past Spennall Hall Farm to the road (3.5 miles completed).

At the road, turn left and immediately right past the old rectory and the redundant St Leonard's Church (no public access), reputedly built with the villagers' own hands in the 13th century from stone gathered "barely 100 yards away". It was saved from destruction by the Ancient Monuments Society in 1980.

Immediately past the church, pass through a metal gate into a triangular field. Initially keep to the right hedge, then fork left past a clump of ornamental trees, aiming for the right-hand side of the garden ahead. Ignore the footbridge to the right and go through a metal gate (public footpath sign). Continue for half a mile, crossing three footbridges, to reach the gate into Coughton Court parkland.

During open days (Wednesdays to Sunday) you can take a shortcut over the concrete bridge to the right and then straight ahead to the cafe and toilets off the courtyard of the house. Walk through the arch to re-join the main route.

For those pressing on to the very attractive ford, keep ahead on the left path from the entrance gate, passing close to a line of mature oaks, to the far side of the park; through a gate, across a field, and then left along a track (one of Warwickshire's few "byways") to the ford. Cross the footbridge and continue up the road.

Eighty metres past the speed limit sign, turn right on to the driveway across the elegant frontage of Coughton Court (ONLY on open days, Weds-Sun) to reach the grand arch (cafe and toilets through the arch). Our route continues ahead to cross the car park and through a wooden gate, to cross a field and reach a kissing gate.

(On Mondays and Tuesdays, ignore the driveway across Coughton Court and continue ahead up the road; just before the main road, duck onto a short gravel path behind the cross that marks the traditional entrance to the ancient Forest of Arden, which once stretched as far as Coventry and parts of modern-day Birmingham. Turn right along the main road, past the car park approach road, over a bridge and immediately right on a track by a house; through the gate and across the field on a public footpath to the kissing gate mentioned above).

Go through the kissing gate to re-enter the Heart of England Forest, and continue along the left hand edge of field, planted with trees in 2024/5. The orange dots on the tree guards indicate trees that had to be replaced after the long drought of 2025 - one of the challenges of creating England's largest new forest. follow the path as it turns slightly right and then across a large open field.

At a metal kissing gate, enter Haydon Way Wood. Continue ahead, aiming for a pylon in the distance. At the path junction, fork right to stay close to the river, following orange waymarker. At the next path junction, with Lower Sernal Farm visible on the right, take the left fork, still following the orange waymarkers.

When the path meets another track, look ahead to see another wiggly waterway, created in April 2026, and turn right along the waymarked path to return to the car park.