

## Enjoying the Green Spaces in Saffron Walden.

One of the qualities of the market town of Saffron Walden is its important history. However there are also many other characteristics of the town that might be overlooked, such as its many green spaces, which are a major attribute. Using a little imagination there are many possibilities for lots of outdoor activities.

### The Common.

This large green space is perfect for walking thanks to the newly refurbished perimeter pathway as well as the path diagonally running from the top corner of Chaters Hill to Common Hill near to the car park. There is an information board at the roundabout of Ashdon Road which also includes a map of the WWII trail around the town. Immediately to your right there is an avenue of trees, if you look carefully there is one tree standing alone in the middle. Check out the plaque next to it and read of the young, brave, Saffron Walden man who died in Northern Ireland serving his country.

On Chaters Hill side there is the Labyrinth or Turf Maze. Timed attempts to complete it can create a great sense of competitiveness!

The Common is perfect for running, ball games, races and bike and (foot)scooter riding as well as dog walking.

What could be more perfect than a picnic on the grass seeing who can spot the most roof tops/ chimneys with different designs?

### Castle Mound.

Entering the grounds through the gate on Church Street the incline to the existing base of the ruins immediately gives a clue as to its position. There is view that originally a wooden fort was built on the site during the Roman era to defend Great Chesterford from the advancing Roman army. There is certainly a very clear view all around and it is not difficult to imagine.

Walking past The Museum immediately to the left of its entrance is the Listening Bench. Sit and enjoy listening to the voices of the past.

### Dorset House Garden.

Off Church Street next to the path leading up to the Parish Church is a small garden which now replaces a once large brick house of the same name. In the centre of the garden is the sculpture known as "The Children of Calais." Looking at their faces, what story could be told? How many of the children have shoes on?

The surrounding benches offer a quiet spot for a coffee or a well-earned snack.

### Jubilee Garden.

This can be entered either via Hill Street or through a small tunnel from Waitrose car park. What creatures can you see engraved on the inside and around the entrances of the tunnel and what story do you think may be told? How many ammonites can you spot?

From the benches in the garden admire the bandstand which has a labyrinth/ maze on its floor, which can be followed.

### The Close Garden.

With the main church doors behind you walk down the path towards the High Street. Before reaching the road, on your right, is the above named garden.

This is another small, formal garden offering benches for weary feet.

You will notice a small memorial stone at the edge of one of the flower beds. It is in memory of a certain naval boat. What bird was it named after?

### Bridge End Garden.

(Please be aware that at various times the hedge maze, visitor centre and public conveniences will be closed, whilst the main garden remains open. For the most up to date information contact Saffron Walden Tourist Information Centre via the website [www.visitsaffronwalden.gov.uk](http://www.visitsaffronwalden.gov.uk), or by calling 01799 524003).

There are three points of entry to the garden, one from Bridge Street and two from Castle Street. The garden renovation programme is continuous, resulting in an increasingly accessible and picturesque setting.

The newly completed pathways are all suitable for child buggies and wheelchairs.  
However neither bikes nor dogs are allowed.

Initially familiarise yourself with the layout and many 'rooms' of the garden. The Information Board at the approach from Castle Street may be helpful to consult.

The two ponds (one in the Dutch Garden and one in the Walled Kitchen Garden) are excellent habitats for amphibians such as frogs, toads, newts, and also invertebrates such as water snails and dragonflies.

If the Hedge Maze is open when you visit, enjoy following the paths until you reach the viewing platform in the centre. Look carefully and you might just see a small snail cast into the iron supports.

If the Walled Kitchen Garden is open, marvel at the different varieties of fruit trees and vegetable plants. Look for the 'Auricula theatre', a kind of shelved display unit where the first 'roses' of spring (Auriculas or primroses) are traditionally displayed in pots.

Can you spot at least 5 different bird or animal sculptures?

#### Silent Sardines Game.

Rules: no running, no noise and no stepping on or through flowerbeds.

Two people creep away as quietly as possible and hide together while everyone else counts in whispers to an agreed amount. They then silently start searching. Once the original pair are found they silently hide with them and so on until everyone is assembled. The bonus points are gained by noticing and creating a list of the wildlife spotted in the garden during this activity. The winner or winners are the ones who spot the greatest variety of birds or animals.

Please check the number of children you enter the garden with, tallies with the number you leave with!

#### Anglo American Playing Fields.

Exiting from Bridge End Gardens at its most south east gate cross the tree lined avenue to your left arriving at another open space. This again is suitable for ball and racing games as well as a little break. Take a short while to look at the Anglo American Memorial on which many USA Air Force personnel, based in the locality and lost in WWII, are commemorated.

Once energies have been replenished return to the uphill avenue of trees and walk towards Castle Street. Turn right until you reach Bridge Street, turn right again until you see Freshwell Street on your left and walk down it to reach Swan Meadow.

#### Swan Meadow.

The original pond has been refurbished and is a pleasant place to visit the wild ducks. There is an information board highlighting other wildlife possibilities you might see.

Behind the pond to the left is another labyrinth maze. The newest one in the town, ready to be solved. Leaving this behind you, follow Park Lane to the High Street. Turn right to Abbey Lane then follow that to the end until you reach Audley Park.

#### Audley Park.

Please note cycling is not allowed once you enter via the metal gates.

The Park is a popular destination for walking. There is a well-trodden path around its perimeter as well as a stone-based path that crosses it through the middle up to Audley End Road.

The perimeter path offers a great opportunity for using 'Go Find It' cards or similar home-made versions. Travel sticks can be made. One stick per person, sticky tape or similar to affix found, natural objects to record your walk.

Bark and texture rubbings can be made taking the sheets home as a basis for collage card making. It can also be quite surprising the variety of wildlife that can be spotted living and flying over the Park. Walking the middle path there are a number of large tree stumps, perfect for sitting on and spotting Audley End House, the Golf Course and the Victorian Water Tower.

#### Battle Ditches.

At the corner of Margaret Way is a noticeboard explaining the history of the Great Ditch or more commonly known Battle Ditches. There is a map showing where they originally were thought to exist with this section being the most accessible today. Before you follow the path look back to the town and once again notice the church appreciating as to why it is known to have the tallest spire in Essex.

Follow the path to the junction. At present only the first part of the left turning is accessible as far as Saxon Way. Works are being carried out to complete the final stage of renovation which would finally lead onto Audley End Road. However turn right and the path leads back to Abbey Lane. While on this path keep your eyes open because in one of the brick walls is a bricked-over archway. Does it give us a clue to the past? Look at the names of the two properties closest to the arch - do they help solve the mystery or do they create a further question?

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Apart from the above there are also allocated children's playground areas which are regularly monitored for safety and enjoyment by Saffron Walden Town Council's Operations Team.

The Common (here there is also some adult outdoor fitness equipment)

Anglo American Playing Fields

Golden Acre

Geocaching is another popular outdoor activity, if you have an enabled mobile phone. Download an appropriate geocaching app and search for Saffron Walden caches!

And one last little challenge!

Saffron Walden Market Town is also famous for its twice weekly market as well as its wide variety of independent shops and businesses.

By walking through the town and using great powers of observation can you spell out 'Saffron Walden Market?'

Like this: taking the word 'Town': find each letter in order from anywhere in the names displayed by the independent shops or businesses. For example:

T = Tourist Information Centre

O = Burtons

W = Walden Cabs

N = Newdales

And to make it even more tricky, can you identify what could be bought from these shops or what service they provide?

Good luck!

**Saffron Walden Tourist Information Centre**  
**1 Market Place, Saffron Walden, Essex, CB10 1HR**  
**Tel: 01799 524003**  
[www.visitsaffronwalden.gov.uk](http://www.visitsaffronwalden.gov.uk)

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