Circular Walk around Middle Pond and Black Pond on the Fairmile and Esher Commons

Walking Guide 5

A circuit round two picturesque lakes, among pines and bracken.

Parking: Parking is available at the Sandy Lane Car Park TQ125613 (i.e. car park near Miles Lane end NOT the one at Copsem Road end).

Length of the walk: Approx. 1hr. Distance – 2.4 miles/3.8 km in total.

The Map

The Walk

1. From the Sandy Lane car park, take the path furthest on the right. At a post, take the right fork. Ignore a path coming in from the left and continue ahead with a fence on the right for about 2-3 minutes until you reach a junction of 5 paths with a big log (approx. 250m from car park). Take the right-hand path here, signposted as a horse-ride to Esher Common, and continue for approx. 100m until a small wooden bridge can be seen.

2. Do NOT cross the bridge but instead take the path before the bridge on the left, which heads sharply back left. You are now at Middle Pond, though the lake is hard to see at this point. Ignore a path on the left and continue on past a ‘No Fishing’ post, with views of the lake then opening up on your right. Go past a second ‘No Fishing’ post, and you pass some railings on the left side and the ‘Lakewood’ apartment development, before the path swings round right, at the top of the lake (PHOTO 1), and past a bench. Enjoy the view here of Middle Pond, a man-made lake with water lilies in season, created by a dam at the southern end.
3. Leaving the lake behind, continue on approx. 50m to a junction of 4 paths. Take the second left and follow this path for approx. 250m. The path runs along inside the edge of the treeline (the A3 can be heard from here), bending uphill right and then left, and continuing to a T-junction where there is a private gate and small bridge opposite. Turn left here and follow the wide track for approx. 130m up to another T junction where you turn left over the pedestrian bridge (West Bridge) across the A3.

4. Once on the other side of the A3, you reach a T-junction of paths, where you turn left, signposted to Portsmouth Road. Continue on a tarmac, and later a well-made gravel track for approx. 250m until you reach a small clearing with a log pile, on the left. Turn half-right just after here at a path fork. The path shortly goes through a wooden barrier and reaches Black Pond (on the right), another man-made lake, built to once supply water to Claremont Landscape Gardens, and popular with dog-walkers.

5. The elevated path continues along the left side of the lake, going through a second wooden barrier to a small open area where there is a junction of paths and a bench. Continue straight on here, and you will pass a line of pylons. Ignore a right-hand path, and you will shortly reach another junction of paths, where you turn left along a horse-ride signposted to Portsmouth Road &
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Fairmile Common (NB if you continue straight on here you will emerge at a small car park on the Portsmouth Road – an alternative start point for the walk).

6. Continue along the horse-ride for approx. 230m, repassing the line of pylons. About 50m before reaching a metal barrier where the path emerges onto the Portsmouth Road, turn left along a horse-ride signed ‘West Bridge & Oxshott Heath’. Ignoring all side-turnings, follow this well-made gravel track through lovely fir and bracken scenery for approx. 650m, until you arrive again at the pedestrian bridge across the A3. (The last part of this track was covered in your outward direction).

7. Re-cross the A3 and take the right-hand path immediately on reaching the other side, signposted to Sandy Lane. Retrace your steps through the trees, ignoring a right turn and go slightly uphill to the junction you passed earlier with the private gate and small bridge.

8. Here continue straight on and then shortly at a fork, go right. Continue for approx. 200m, ignoring side paths - parts of this path are quite rutted and could be muddy in winter. At a T-junction with a bench on the right, turn left and continue past an embankment on the right with another bench. Middle Pond is now to the right of you, but mostly obscured by reeds and trees. Continue downhill on the path for approx. 60m, swinging right to the wooden bridge at the southern end of Middle Pond. Cross the bridge and continue ahead gently uphill to the junction of 5 paths with the big log, that you passed at the start of the walk.

9. Here take the left path, and following the fence on the left, continue on the main track, ignoring any side tracks, back the same way you came to the car park.

Photos: Sally Ollett