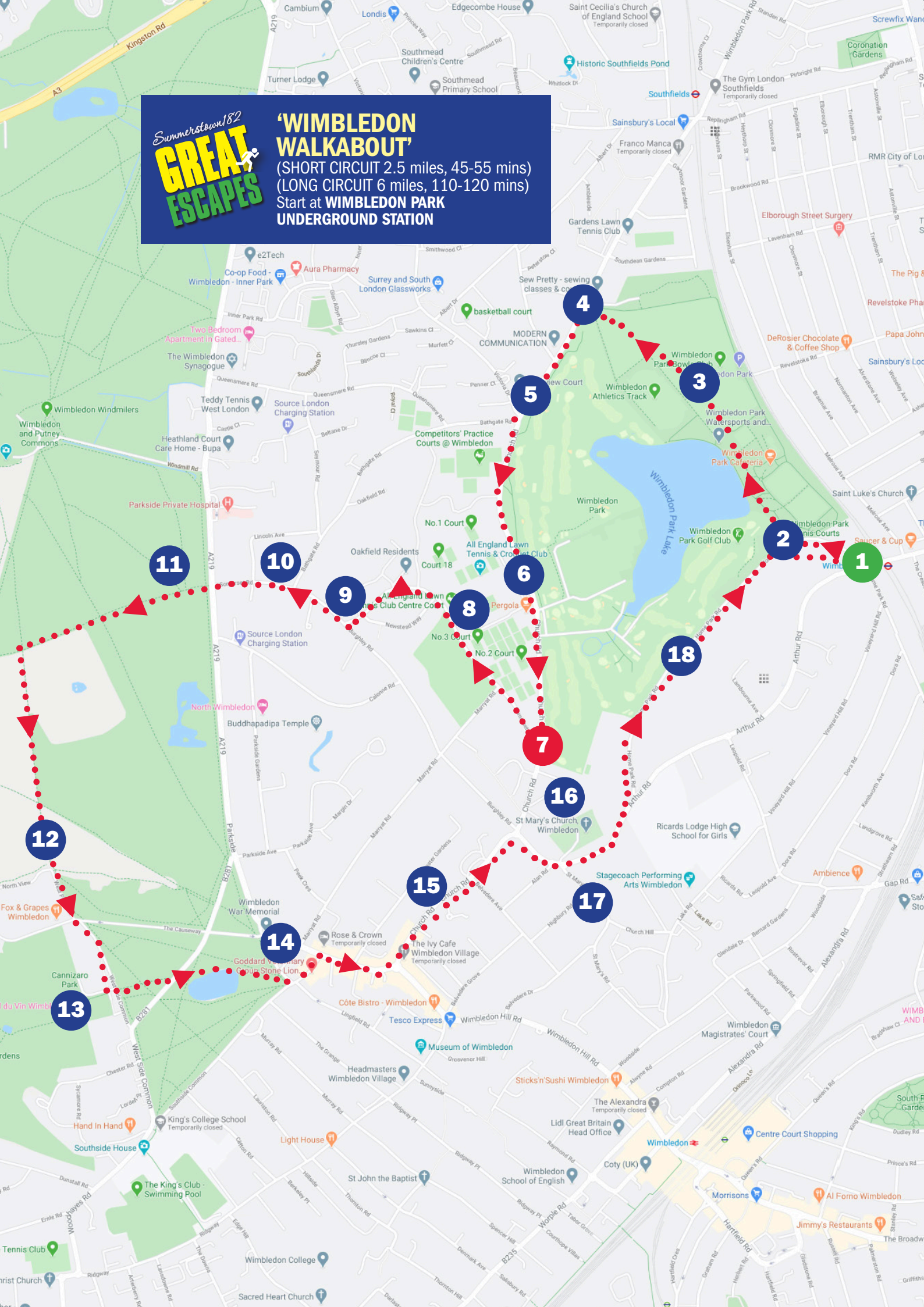


Summerstown 82  
**GREAT ESCAPES**  
**'WIMBLEDON WALKABOUT'**  
 (SHORT CIRCUIT 2.5 miles, 45-55 mins)  
 (LONG CIRCUIT 6 miles, 110-120 mins)  
 Start at **WIMBLEDON PARK UNDERGROUND STATION**





# WIMBLEDON WALKABOUT (double circuit option)

(SHORT CIRCUIT 2.5 miles, 45-55 mins, LONG CIRCUIT 6 miles, 110-120 mins)

Originally devised to help everybody through the lockdown, these great downloadable walks take in significant features of historical interest for you to enjoy in the **Tooting/Earlsfield/Wandsworth/Wimbledon** area. There are now multiple flavours of Summerstown182 'Great Escapes' to choose from, every one a winner! **Perfect for mind, body and spirit.**



**You can still get your fix of Wimbledon this year, thanks to this fantastic tour, a summer classic - in fact its two for the price of one! The first part focusing on the world's greatest tennis tournament - the second section gets a bit more rustic and takes you onto magical Wimbledon Common.**

**1 START WIMBLEDON PARK UNDERGROUND STATION** - The District Line came here on 3rd June 1889 turning this area upside down. Much of the development of [Southfields](#) dates from then. Before that, it was mainly open fields, a bit of market gardening, but very few inhabitants. Over the next twenty years much of the surrounding area was covered with houses. Start your tour by crossing Arthur Road and bearing left into Home Park Road, heading for Wimbledon Park.

**2** Enter the park and take a moment to enjoy the magnificent view from the pavilion. Wimbledon Park was home to the Spencer family who owned vast swathes of property in this area. During the 1760s, the park was landscaped by [Capability Brown](#), including the enlargement of an existing lake. John Augustus Beaumont bought the estate when the Spencers ran out of money and a lot of grand houses and mansions were built in the Parkside, West Hill area. The park features in Raymond Briggs' homage to his parents '[Ethel and Ernest](#)'.

**3** Cross the park, passing to the left of the tennis courts. You could divert further left to enjoy the lake or the Waterfall Garden, but the aim is to head for the gate in the north-east corner of the park. On the left hand side behind the trees is the athletics track, home of the Hercules Club. Next to this, the park becomes a mass of tents during Wimbledon Fortnight as people camp overnight to join the early morning queue for tickets. [The Championships](#) only came to their present location in 1922 when they moved from Worple Road where they had been held since 1877.

**4** Turn left into Wimbledon Park Road which becomes Church Road. This is the main gateway to the All England Lawn Tennis Club (AELTC). Picture the scene as thousands of fans throng down this road on their way to the Championships. House fronts are converted into money-making enterprises, from cakes and t-shirts to car-parking spaces. A procession of courtesy cars transporting the players, the officials, the great and the good of the international tennis circuit. Royalty flash past in limousines. In 1939 one of them taking Queen Mary famously overturned on Wimbledon Park Road after being struck by a lorry. Twenty years ago a colourful army of ticket touts offering to 'buy or sell' would have also been part of the pageant.

**5** After Bathgate Road the real action begins and it all happens on the right hand side for the moment. The AELTC has however bought the golf course on the left and will soon extend there. Pass Aorang Park where the players practice and the 'new' No1 Court built in 1997. Every year there is some new development, in recent times, a new No2 Court and retractable roofs. At Gate No4 peer in to see the statue of [Fred Perry](#). Prior to Andy Murray, he was the last Brit to win the men's singles, three times in the 1930s. [Virginia Wade](#) born in Bournemouth but raised in South Africa was the last homegrown women's champion in 1977. Gate No5 gives you a good view of the familiar ivy-clad walls of Centre Court.

**6** Along the perimeter of the complex you get a sense of the outside courts, an essential part of the first week when crowds jostle in the narrow spaces between them to see a big shot being beaten by an outsider. Court No13 was known as the 'Graveyard of Champions' after so many big names came a cropper there.

**7** At the bottom of the hill and junction of Somerset Road, look out for Andy Murray's gold post box. You can decide here whether to follow the full circuit of this walk to Wimbledon Common and the Village or continue up Church Road, past St Mary's Church and back to Wimbledon Park Station (or have a quick look round the other side and doubleback). If you want to do the full circuit, carry on sharp right into Somerset Road and round the perimeter. On another occasion a '[Village People](#)' Walk circles this area with more details about its fascinating history.

**8** Just past Marryat Road, the building of a new state of the art indoor tennis centre is underway. On the right have a peep through Gate No13. To the right of this was the popular old No1 Court with its lofty football style terrace. There was still some standing accommodation on Centre Court until the late eighties. Carry on up the hill and on your right is the main competitor's entrance. A high hedge has now sprouted protecting their privacy. This is the place where the TV cameras capture the players coming out, bundling their racquets into a courtesy car and disappearing to their hotel or rented house. I once spent a couple of years as the person who opened the car door and smiled at them as they went on their way. It was in this building that I was holding open a toilet door when Henry Kissinger stepped under my arm.

**9** Follow the road round up the hill passing Burghley Road, once known as 'Burglary Road' for its popularity with villains. Keep on Somerset Road bearing right. Many of the biggest names in tennis rent wysteria-drenched houses around here for the duration of the tournament. Many of the others stay in the Southfields Grid or at one of the cheaper hotels in places like [Colliers Wood](#), or at addresses all over London. All are entitled to a ride to the grounds and back home again.

**10** No4 Bathgate Road was the last home of superstar motor-racing World Champion, [James Hunt](#) who died here of a heart attack in 1993. He had 300 pet budgerigars and drove around the area in an old Austin van. The brightest feathers around here now are the yellow plumage on the '[Fantasy Cycle](#)' of local celebrity James Bond, AKA 'The King of Bling' - look out for him, a popular sight in this area.

**11** At the end of Somerset Road you reach Parkside, a grand avenue running alongside Wimbledon Common. From the era of the Spencer family, many great houses were built along here. Sir Edwin Saunders, Queen Victoria's dentist was one resident and [No54](#) is owned by The Vatican and where the Pope stays on his visits to this country. This is associated with two murders and was originally called Windfield Lodge after a horse which the owner famously backed, won him a small fortune.

**12** An Act of Parliament in 1871 secured the future of Wimbledon Common and scuppered the Spencer family's plans to sell it off for building. Its famous for its windmill and the place where Baden Powell began writing Scouting for Boys. There were early flying attempts, along with duels, various military drilling and shooting competitions. In the mid-70s [Elizabeth Beresford's 'Wombles'](#) of Wimbledon Common were made into a TV series and turned a generation on to recycling. They also had a string of catchy pop hits. Recent plans to put a bronze statue here of one of their number, Orinoco, have met with a mixed reception. [Wimbledon Common](#) is crossed by Somerset Road and its very easy to get lost. Cross Parkside directly opposite Somerset Road and keep straight, with the windmill visible through the tree line on your right. Take the second main wide path on your left (also a cycle path). Follow this straight and it should take you all the way back to civilisation and a little road called West Place. Pass the Fox and Grapes pub on your right and into West Side Common. A number of grand houses overlooking the Common in this area were connected with people involved in the slave trade. Lauriston House, on Southside is associated with [William Wilberforce](#) leader of the abolition movement. One of his anti-abolitionist opponents [Joseph Marryat](#), was a resident of Wimbledon House on Parkside.

**13** You may want to divert into the grounds of Cannizaro House. Its a luxury hotel but the [gardens](#) are open to the public. There are some beautiful spots for a picnic but the highlight in here is a stone plinth bearing a bust of [Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia](#). Good luck with finding him among the rhododendrons. He came to Wimbledon when he was exiled in the 1930s. Did Bob Marley ever visit here? I like to think so.

**14** Cross the Common past a small pond and into High Street on the corner of The Green. Follow this into Wimbledon Village and turn right. Packed with cafes, restaurants and high-end shops, there is plenty of interest. Across the road is [Eagle House](#) built for one of the founders of the East India Company with Horatio Nelson connections. Take a left opposite the Dog and Fox pub and turn into Church Road.

**15** There are so many beautiful buildings in this road and Brian May from Queen once lived in one of them, the Old Rectory House. At a mini-roundabout follow Church Road into St Mary's Road perhaps stopping to look at the landmark [St Mary's Church](#). You will know it from those dreamy midsummer scenes during the TV tennis coverage when at the end of the day they pan away from the courts to the spire on the hill.

**16** [Sir Joseph Bazalgette](#) the engineer whose drainage system fixed 'The Great Stink' is buried here. With his family of ten children he moved into a house opposite the Church in 1873. There are also memorials to Wimbledon champions Kitty Godfree and Lew Hoad. A masterstroke by a Vicar in the 50s was buying the field next door for £250 - it raises a fortune through car-parking during the tennis.

**17** Another famous resident in this area, living at No3 St Mary's Road, down the hill was [Air Chief Marshall Sir Hugh Dowding](#), the man credited with winning the Battle of Britain in 1940. 'Never has so much been owed by so many to so few'.

**18** Follow St Mary's Road round the church into Arthur Road, then just past the artesian well, another Spencer relic, go left into Home Park Road with splendid views over the golf course enjoyed by some of the most exclusive homes in south London. Next year this closes after 123 years and the Wimbledon Championships qualifying event currently held at the Bank of England Club in Roehampton will take place here. Follow this road back to Wimbledon Park Station.

**FOR INFORMATION AND MORE WALKS:** [summerstown182.wordpress.com](http://summerstown182.wordpress.com)  [@summerstown182](https://twitter.com/summerstown182)

**If you enjoy your walk, please consider making a donation to CriticalNHS, sustaining local business by keeping the St George's frontline staff fed [www.criticalnhs.org](http://www.criticalnhs.org)**