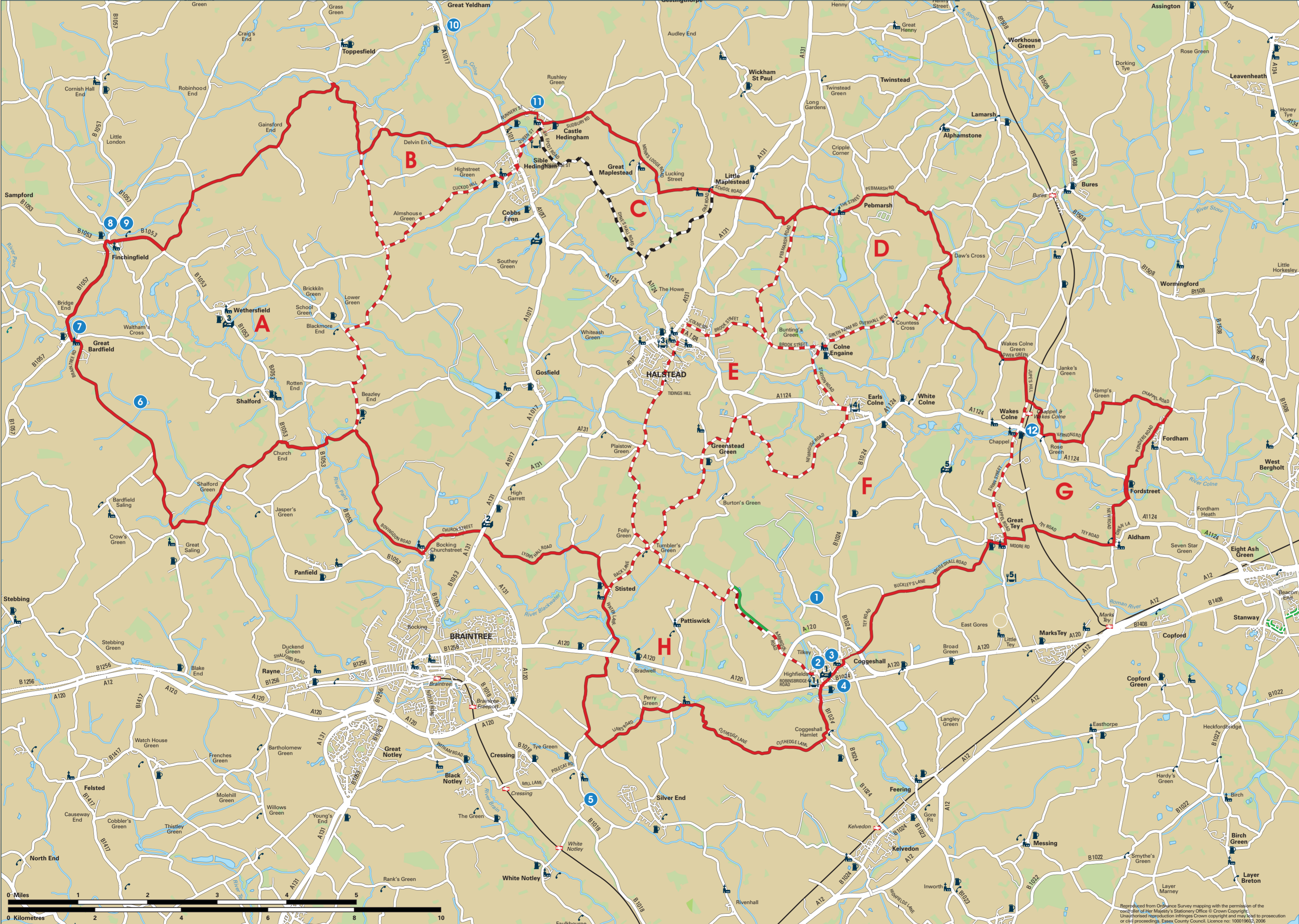


Picture-perfect villages

Coggeshall, Finchingfield and the Hedinghams routes

Total distance of main route is 87km/54miles



- Short rides**
- A 30.6km/19.1miles
 - B 12.7km/7.9miles
 - C 12.2km/7.6miles
 - D 14.7km/9.2miles
 - E 19.8km/12.3miles
 - F 33.7km/21.1miles
 - G 11.6km/7.2miles
 - H 19.7km/12.3miles

- Attractions along this route**
- 1 Marks Hall Estate
 - 2 Paycocke's House
 - 3 Coggeshall Grange Barn
 - 4 Coggeshall Museum & Heritage Centre
 - 5 Cressing Temple
 - 6 Bardfield Vineyard
 - 7 Bardfield
 - 8 Finchingfield Guildhall
 - 9 Finchingfield Post Mill
 - 10 Colne Valley Railway
 - 11 Hedingham Castle
 - 12 East Anglian Railway Museum

Key

- Cycle Route 3
- - - Short rides
- Traffic-free section
- Place of worship Public House National Rail
-

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There is plenty to see and do including the medieval barns of the Knights Templar, jousting knights at a Norman Keep, steam railways, magnificent houses with stunning gardens and listed windmills.



Finchingfield

A textbook example of the traditional English village, Finchingfield is described as the 'most photographed village in England.' Finchingfield has won awards for its traditional picturesque setting. The combination of duck pond, village green, hump-backed bridge and pub, overlooked by colour-washed cottages, a windmill and a medieval church, give it an unbeatable series of views, which are often found on calendars, chocolate boxes, tea towels, postcards and jigsaws.



Halstead

Halstead lies seven miles to the north of Braintree and is an attractive, traditional market town with a wealth of shops, restaurants and interesting walks. The town developed from pre-historic origins and a Roman settlement that included a villa complex. Wool and weaving provided the mainstay of business over the centuries.



Coggeshall

Coggeshall is a lovely little 'olde worlde' town with a lot to offer. Coggeshall's attractive centre is made up of nearly 200 listed buildings, many are timber-framed dating as far back as the 14th century. Paycocke's House is an exceptional example of a 16th century wealthy clothier's house. Like many of the towns in the area, Coggeshall had a wool and cloth trade and then subsequently industries of silk and velvet weaving, tambour lace making and brewing. Visit Coggeshall Museum and Heritage Centre and discover more about the town's history.



Bizarre and obscure events in the past have been attributed to ley lines crossing in the town. These powerful beams of energy linked to the earth's magnetic field have attracted the investigations of ghost hunters from across the country. Local people believe the stories are myths, but they certainly inspire the imagination.

Castle Hedingham

Castle Hedingham's 'real' history begins with the Normans. The village was granted to one of William, duke of Normandy's lords, one Aubrey de Vere. Although he and his descendants built a number of castles at various locations in their extensive lands, they chose Hedingham as their primary seat; by around 1140 the third Aubrey de Vere had built the stone keep that has been superbly preserved to this day.

Later in history, when industrialisation started, straw weaving and hop growing became important to local employers and Edward Bingham produced pottery from his workshops in what is now Pottery Lane. His work isn't always to everyone's taste but has become extremely collectable. Today the winding lanes of this medieval village are lined with timber-framed buildings and elegant Georgian houses, where through small streets and squares, you will catch occasional glimpses of the impressive castle.



Attractions along the route:

1. Markshall Estate

Enjoy the estate that includes the largest surviving ancient woodlands in Essex, ornamental lakes, walled gardens, cascades and mature avenues of oaks, limes and horse chestnuts. On the last Saturday of each month Marks Hall hosts the very popular Farmers' Market.

3. Coggeshall Grange Barn

A National Trust property, this magnificent timber-framed barn, dating from the 13th century, was constructed for the monks of the nearby Cistercian Abbey. Exhibition of history and collection of farm wagons and carts.

2. Paycocke's House

A merchant's house which dates from around 1500 and contains unusually rich panelling and wood carving. Coggeshall was famous for its lace, examples of which are displayed inside the house. There is also a very attractive cottage garden. T

4. Coggeshall Museum & Heritage Centre

This Museum and Heritage Centre displays local history including Coggeshall lace, supplemented by exhibitions relating to the past of this historic wool town. There is an authentic working wool loom. Town tours can also be organised with a local historian.

Getting to Braintree

Arriving by Road

Travel on the M11 if travelling from London or the south. Exit at junction 8 and take the A120. Alternatively take the A12 from the M25, exit at Chelmsford and take the A131 or continue towards Colchester and take the B1389 to Witham and the B1018 to Braintree. If travelling from the north arrive via the M11 taking the A120 from junction 8.



Arriving by Train

Braintree is served by a regular service directly from London Liverpool Street.



5. Cressing Temple

Cressing Temple was home to the elite warrior monks, The Knights Templar, founded in 1119 to protect pilgrims travelling to the Holy Land. They were granted the Cressing site in 1137 and it became the largest and most important estate in Essex. The Templars' were extremely powerful and acquired vast wealth, so it was here at Cressing they commissioned two of the most spectacular surviving medieval timber barns in Europe. Browse the plants and fresh produce on sale or grab a bit to eat in the Tiptree Tea Rooms

6. Bardfield Vineyard

Once in the ownership of Anne of Cleves, the present vineyard was planted in 1990. As the soil and climate are similar to those of Alsace, grape varieties of that region have been planted, which are capable of producing very fruity, aromatic wines of high quality. Tour the vineyard and walled garden, taste the wines and eat in the beautiful 17th century farmhouse.

7. Bardfield

Once the site of an important horse fair, traders would bring their horses from all across the country. The layout of the streets and wonderfully varied houses and cottages make it a place of enormous charm.

8. Finchingfield Guildhall

The Guildhall was built around 1470 by the Guild of the Holy Trinity to house a Guild of priests and to provide a schoolroom for the boys of the village. The Guildroom has been used for a place of learning for more than five centuries.

9. Finchingfield Windmill

A small post mill, dated 1755. It has 4 spring sails (without shutters), a tailpole and one pair of millstones. It is not working, because of its location among trees and cottages, but is opened once a month in the summer by the Finchingfield Society. Open 3rd Sunday each month Apr - Sept 2-5pm

10. Colne Valley Railway

A preserved heritage railway and museum housing the largest and most comprehensive collection of historic railway vehicles and locomotives in Essex. Steam and diesel operated rides in a most pleasant part of the upper Colne Valley. Special events all year round include a 'Day out with Thomas' and 'Santa Specials'.

11. Hedingham Castle

England's finest and best-preserved Norman Keep besieged by King John, visited by King Henry VII, VIII and Queen Elizabeth I, with views of the magnificent hall from the 'Minstrels Gallery' above, a Tudor bridge, a charming dovecote and ornamental lake in the grounds. History is made fun with medieval festivals and jousting tournaments.

12. East Anglian Railway Museum

A working museum representing 100 years of railway engineering and architecture in East Anglia. Working signal boxes, restoration shed, locomotives, passenger and freight vehicles, small exhibits museum. Regular Steam days and special events all year, including the Chappel Beer Festival.



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Picture-perfect villages



Coggeshall, Finchingfield and the Hedinghams