

TOP RMHT Stage 02: Wilmslow to Knutsford

↔ 10.8 mi

4:25 h

▲↑ 190ft

↓ 180ft

Difficulty

moderate



TOP RMHT Stage 02: Wilmslow to Knutsford

→ 10.8 mi | ⏰ 4:25 h | ↑ 190ft | ↓ 180ft | Difficulty | moderate



TOP RMHT Stage 02: Wilmslow to Knutsford

↔ 10.8 mi

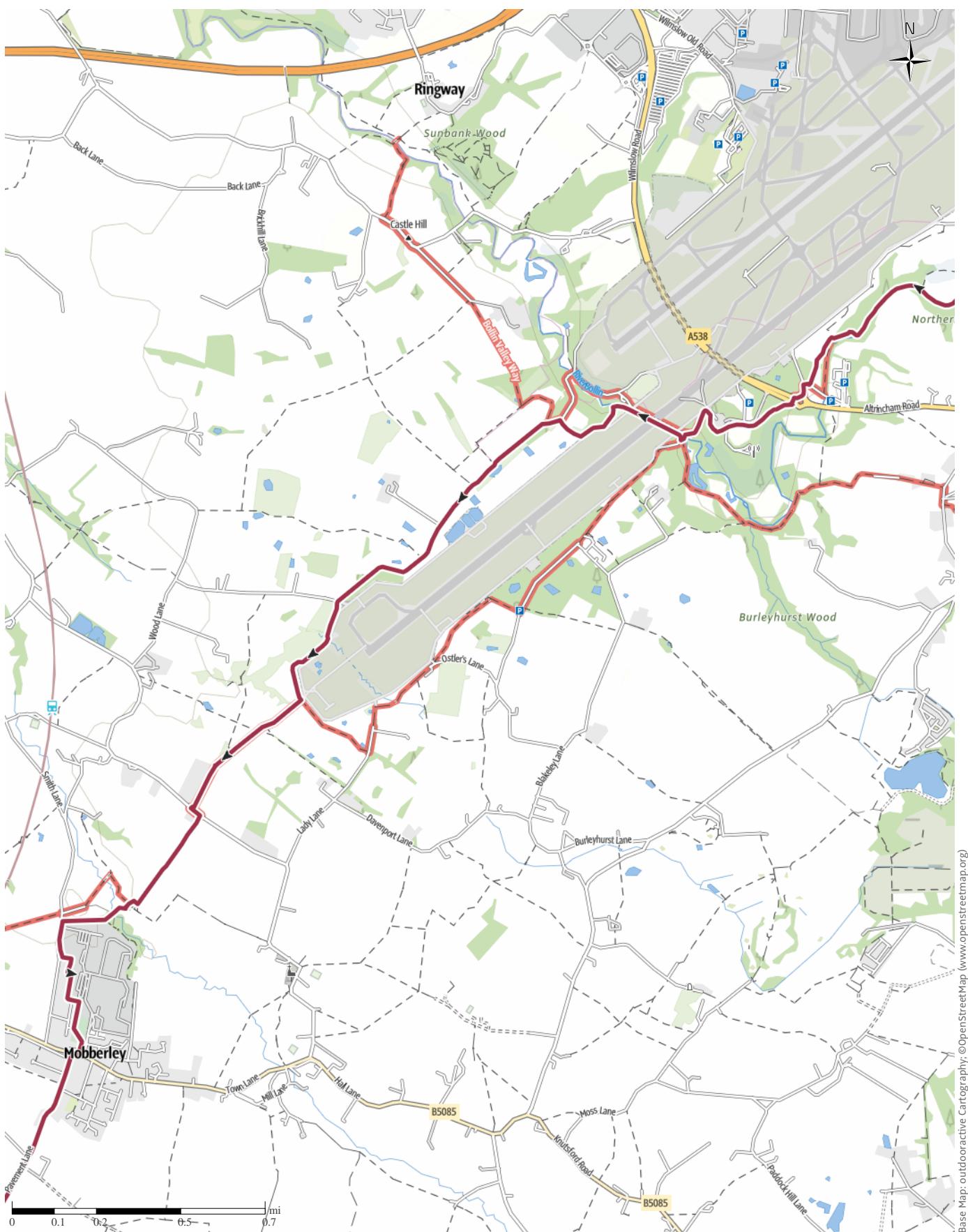
4:25 h

↑ 190ft

↓ 180ft

Difficulty

moderate



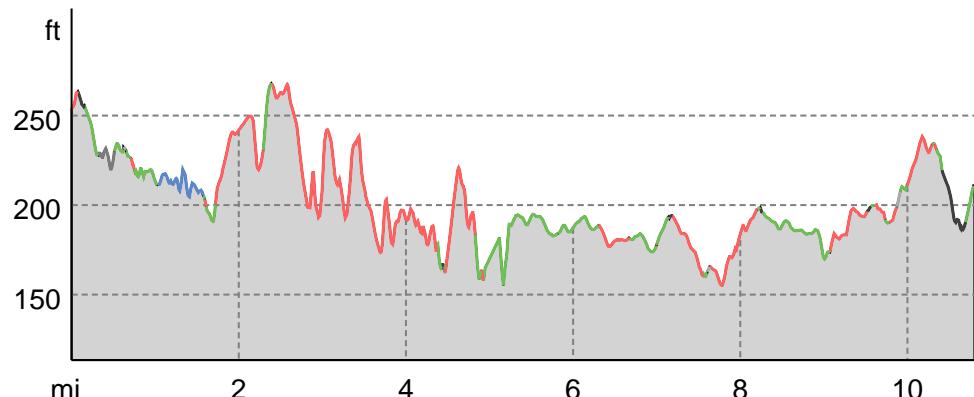
TOP RMHT Stage 02: Wilmslow to Knutsford



TOP RMHT Stage 02: Wilmslow to Knutsford

Road surface

Asphalt	0.2 mi
Dirt road	0.5 mi
Way	4.1 mi
Path	5.4 mi
Street	0.5 mi
Unknown	0.1 mi

Elevation profile

route data
Hiking route

Distance	↔ 10.8 mi
Duration	⌚ 4:25 h
Ascent	▲ 190 ft
Descent	▼ 180 ft

Difficulty moderate

Stamina ██████

Technique ████████████

Altitude 

Best time of year

JAN | FEB | MAR
APR | MAY | JUN
JUL | AUG | SEP
OCT | NOV | DEC

Ratings
Authors

Experience ██████████

Landscape ██████████

Community
More route data
Properties

Linear route

Multi-stage route

Scenic

Geological highlights



Matthew Ball

Update: September 16, 2021

through some more typical gently undulating Cheshire countryside before passing through the village of Mobberley (including its Kodak film works). Finally, we cut through the sleepy suburbs of Knutsford to our destination at the town's Railway Station.

Author's recommendation

This route was walked by Manchester Weekend Walkers (a branch of the Ramblers) on Saturday 30th November 2019.

As well as being a walking route in its own right, it is also Stage 2 of the Round Manchester Hiking Trail, a 13-stage long distance walk that completely encircles the city of Manchester. The Trail is designed to be accessible by public transport, and to take in a varied selection of the best scenery in the Manchester area. It is 157 miles long in total and has about 6,000m of ascent.

The Trail starts in Macclesfield, and then

Stage 2 of the Round Manchester Hiking Trail:
Wilmslow to Knutsford via Giant's Castle

Starting from Wilmslow Railway Station, we follow the North Cheshire Way through public parks and then along the River Bollin until we reach the picturesque Quarry Bank Mill, near Styal. We then follow the very leafy valley of the Bollin through various twists and turns towards Runway 2 of Manchester Airport, from where we can see the planes taking off every few minutes. After getting past the runway, we head

proceeds in a clockwise direction via the other twelve staging points (Wilmslow, Knutsford, Lymm, Leigh, Blackrod, Entwistle, Rawtenstall, Todmorden, Marsden, Hadfield, Edale, and Buxton) before the last stage takes it back to Macclesfield again to complete the loop.

Since 2019, Manchester Weekend Walkers (a branch of the Ramblers) have been walking each of the stages in order roughly once every four weeks (pandemic permitting), which results in the full loop being completed once every year. The first five stages cover mostly lowland territory, and so are walked in the winter months, leaving the sunnier parts of the year in which to tackle the hills that otherwise nearly surround Manchester on three sides.

As of the summer of 2021, it is intended that the Trail will at some point be registered with the Long Distance Walkers Association as an "official" long distance path, although this hasn't yet happened at the time of writing. However, all 13 stages are available on the Outdoor Active website and can be downloaded as GPX files.

Safety information

Obviously duck out of the way if an airoplane heads straight towards you, but other than that there are no significant safety considerations on this route.

Equipment

Decent walking boots and otherwise sensible hiking gear.

Additional information

Tips and hints

Assembly Points:

The bike sheds by the Station – and, at the end, the junction between King Street and the Station Approach, staying just inside the Station Approach.

Stiles:

10 on the route, but all in good condition.

Toilets:

At Wilmslow Station, the toilets are on Platform 3, which may involve a detour as trains from Manchester are likely to arrive at Platform 4. The facilities are quite spacious so are worth using if leading a group. The next toilets are the 20p pay facility next to the Azur Cafe at the entrance to The Carrs, about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile in to the walk. There are no facilities for the public at Quarry Bank Mill, so the next opportunities are in the woods after Giant's Castle, after which point the crowds thin out enough to make a toilet stop possible. Once we leave the woods and hit the runway, there are no further opportunities till the end of the walk in Knutsford, where one would have to call in at one of the pubs as there are no facilities at the station.

Obstructions:

Valewood Farm has a history of obstructing the North Cheshire Way, most recently (Dec 2020) a field planted with crops. The easiest way past the obstruction is to walk round the field to the left, where we join up with another footpath. From here the way is quite well signposted through the Farm, although sometimes accompanied by a yappy dog.

Timings:

0:20 - Azur Cafe

1:15 - Quarry Bank Mill Visitor Centre

2:20 - A538 crossing near runway

3:00 - Lunch stop at granite blocks

4:00 - Hobcroft Lane

4:45 - Town Lane, Mobberley

5:00 - Spring Wood

6:00 - Knutsford

Bail-Out Points:

The visitor centre at Quarry Bank Mill is about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile down a straight road from Styal rail station. The Airport Inn near the A538 is a place from which you could get picked up by a taxi. Finally, Hobcroft Lane will lead you straight to Mobberley Station after about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile.

Alternative Routes:

1. Through Quarry Bank Mill it is possible to take the gardens, if they are open to the public, rather than the NCW.

TOP RMHT Stage 02: Wilmslow to Knutsford

2. At the Kodak factory, you could go around to the east rather than the west (although this is muddier and has less good views owing to high hedgerows along the path).

Lunch Stop:

If it is raining then the tunnel under runway 2 will be the best place, as you can sit on the embankment facing the river. If not raining then the granite blocks shortly after coming out of the tunnel will be a good place.

Pub Stops En-Route:

There are no viable pub stops on this Stage. The Railway near Mobberley Station is too far off the route, and the Legh Arms in Knutsford is too close to the finish.

Post-Walk Refreshments:

I have had good experiences at the Cross Keys Inn on King Street, which has wooden floor and is quite spacious and just 7 mins from the platform at the station. The Rose & Crown nearby is mainly for diners and has a carpet. The Weatherspoons is much further down King Street, but there are plenty of other options. Lost & Found, up the hill from King Street and very near the station, is big enough to accommodate a large party.

Turn-by-turn directions

Starting point / trailhead

Wilmslow Railway Station

Coordinates:

DD: 53.327035, -2.225795

DMS: 53°19'37.3"N 2°13'32.9"W

UTM: 30U 551563 5908930

w3w: //member.outer.points

Point of arrival

Knutsford Railway Station

Turn-by-turn directions

From the railway station entrance in Wilmslow, head south past the bike sheds and then down the steps. At the bottom, turn left to follow Station Road, crossing under the railway line and then over the A34 dual carriageway. Immediately after crossing the A34, turn left again onto Wilmslow Park South. Here we go past some posh houses for a couple of hundred yards before turning left again, this time onto a footpath that leads us alongside the left bank of the River Bollin.

Shortly after we join the path there is a fork, at which we stay right to keep close to the river. The path then takes us back across the A34 near a roundabout - this time going under it - and then back to another main road, the A538, that we need to cross on foot before joining the residential road Bollin Walk on the southern side of the A538. We follow this road westwards for about 150 yards until we reach a roundabout of four main roads. We are heading straight on across the roundabout whilst keeping to the left hand side of the road, passing near the King William pub. On the other side, we join Mill Street, and cross the road to enjoy a view of the gardens on the other side whilst heading toward St Bartholemew's Church. Go through the church main gate and then take the path through the graveyard to come out on to Chancel Lane. Turn left and cross the River Bollin and after about 100 yards head left through a small car park towards the block at its south-western corner that houses the Azur Cafe.

The Azur Cafe sells coffee and sandwiches, and there is a toilet block attached too, which charges 20p for use. Once we pass into The Carrs Park, there are plenty of benches to sit on if you still need to change into your hiking boots.

We now join the North Cheshire Way (abbreviated on signposts as "NCW"), which we stay with, on and off, until we reach Mobberley, near the end of this route. Initially we follow the NCW through The Carrs Park, crossing the Bollin about 1 mile in to the route, and then immediately turning right to follow the river's left bank. We stay on this path for about half a mile before turning right to re-cross the Bollin, ignoring the misleading NCW signpost on the way that erroneously indicates a sharp left - we carry straight on. After the bridge turn immediately left to bear gradually towards Styall Road, which we join to cross the River Dean just before it flows in to the Bollin.

Immediately after crossing the Dean, we take the second footpath on the left towards Styall (ignore the permitted footpath with a National Trust sign). This path takes us uphill (this stretch can get muddy) which we the car park at Quarry Bank Mill. Take a sharp left and head downhill towards the Mill, and then right and head past the Mill, following the permitted path towards the Visitor Centre, outside which there is a major intersection of paths.

At the Visitor Centre we take a sharp left to re-join the NCW, which we temporarily left outside the car park. The path is not signposted NCW as such, but is instead signposted for "Gardens". The path keeps to the high ground and stays straight. Ignore a left turn into the grounds of the Mill and carry on till you reach a T-junction, at which you take the left turn (signposted to

Chapel Wood). Carry straight on over the Kingfisher Bridge and then follow the Bollin again, round a bend to the right until you reach Oxbow Bridge, which we cross before immediately turning left.

After the Oxbow Bridge, navigation becomes easier as there are fewer alternative paths to distract us. Essentially, from here we stay with the River Bollin until we reach the A538 again after about 2 miles. After turning left after crossing the Oxbow Bridge, the path first of all heads between two sections of the river flowing in opposite directions; it then heads steeply uphill as the river bends sharply to the right, only to drop down again to the river side after the steep bank is behind us. Then we come to the bridge known as Giant's Castle, and after this we are heading uphill again, this time on a picturesque wooden staircase. Again we don't stay at height for long before heading straight down another staircase and returning to valley floor level. We carry on following the river through dense woods for about another 3/4 mile after this until we reach a junction with a choice of paths taking us rightwards away from the river and out of the trees into a field that slopes uphill towards Runway 2.

As soon as we leave the woods we take a left turn to keep them near to us on the left as we head south-west, with views of the Airport Inn to our left, before hitting tarmac after about 400 yards. At this point we bear right across a small car park and head along a very quiet road towards a big roundabout (the road used to be busier, as before the second runway was built it connected this area with Altrincham). We cross the westward exit of the A538 from the roundabout, and pick up the NCW again on the other side of the road, climbing some steep steps up a small hill overlooking the runway. We then carry on past a fire station and a crash gate (it can get muddy on the downhill section here). Then we go really close up to the airport perimeter fence before coming to a tunnel that takes the River Bollin under the runway. Before passing through this tunnel take care to cross the footbridge so that we are following the left bank of the river through the tunnel. This is because we would otherwise have to take a detour to be able to cross the river the other side of the runway. Shortly after the tunnel we turn left and follow a paved path uphill that doubles back toward the perimeter fence on the north-west side of the runway. After following this parallel to the runway for about 350 yards we come to five rectangular concrete blocks that are an ideal height to sit down on in order to eat lunch.

After the five grey blocks, the path heads rightwards away from the runway, before turning left to head across flat countryside parallel to the runway along Wood Lane, which we follow for about 1 mile. We

should now make rapid progress across terrain that isn't muddy and is very straight and flat. Wood Lane gradually becomes more like a road than a path until we leave it at a point where it bears about 45 degrees right and there is a footpath signposted in the hedge opposite that bears slightly left instead. This takes us around the perimeter fence at the take-off end of the runway until we reach Crash Gate 10.

At Crash Gate 10 we leave the airport perimeter and bear right along the supply road that leads us past the landing lights in the fields to our left. Any planes that take off from runway 2 will pass straight over our heads at this point in the walk. We keep straight on this track for about half a mile until we reach Hobcroft Lane (by which time we will have re-joined the NCW). At Hobcroft Lane we turn left, and then immediately right again to follow the signposted path towards Valewood Farm. This path is quite faint, but starts off perpendicular to the road; the point to look for in the distance is a break in the next hedgerow that appears just to the left of two trees that line up - whereas the other trees that stand in front of the hedgerow are in ones. Having crossed this stile, we are now in the grounds of Valewood Farm, and they have a tendency to block this particular field off to walkers, even though the NCW does actually head straight across it to the main farm buildings. If the path is blocked (as it was last time I went there, by crops) then the best solution is to follow the edge of the field around to the left, joining another footpath that also leads to the main farm buildings. From the buildings, we follow the NCW again across a couple of stiles and then out of the farm from gate, before immediately turning left to climb a steep set of steps. These lead you to a path that you follow for about 50 yards before coming to a fork, at which we turn right.

We now head along a straight path heading for Smith Lane. This path can get very muddy but should be passable. Just before the Lane, a path turning is available 90 degrees left that follows the Lane separated from it only by a single line of trees. We now follow this path through a series of perpendicular zig-zags, keeping the Kodak factory to our left (the factory buildings tend to look very neat and well organised from this angle). After about half a mile we get to a playing field with football pitch markings, which we cross diagonally (provided no-one is playing at the time) to reach the exit to Town Lane, the main road through Mobberley Village. At this road, we turn right and then immediately left onto Pavement Lane, which we now follow straight on for about 3/4 of a mile.

Pavement Lane starts off passing newbuild houses, and then starts passing through fields, and then through Pavement Lane Farm. We then pass through more

TOP RMHT Stage 02: Wilmslow to Knutsford

fields before reaching a wooded hollow at which we cross a stream, Birkin Brook. Immediately after this we turn right to follow an indistinct footpath that heads uphill and westward, away from the clearer track that now falls away from us to the southwest. At this point you may have to climb over a wire to follow the path, but this should be very easy. Once you have spotted the gap in the next hedgerow towards the middle, head straight for that. Then do the same with the next field, although this time the stile to aim for is towards the top-left of the field. After this final stile we enter a recreational area with many footpaths through a wooded area where many people from Knutsford are out walking the dog and so on. From here it can help to use Google Maps to navigate, but essentially we are heading straight on from where we have come to the road, Longridge, that marks the boundary of the built-up area of Knutsford.

Having reached Longridge, we cross the road, turn left, and then immediately right again to head towards the Adelaide Health Centre. Just before we reach the centre, we turn left through a gap in the fence to follow a track through fields, skirting a line of trees to our right before heading past a litter bin to exit the field via another footpath that takes us between some newbuild houses and across a road to join Brookdale Avenue. Brookdale soon turns into another footpath, which we follow across Kenilworth Avenue (bearing slightly left as we cross it), before taking a 90 degree left after about another 50 yards. This takes us across Beechland, where we head straight on to reach Higher Downs near the junction with Yewlands Drive, before following the footpath westward along the southern side of Higher Downs. After about 100 yards we come to a 90 degree left turning that takes us between two houses, numbers 10 and 12 Higher Downs. From here the path is plain sailing back to Knutsford town centre. Just keep following the path, with a slight right after about 250 yards, until you reach the main road junction at which you will also find the Legh Arms. From this junction we follow the A537 (Brook Street) back to the town centre and King Street to find the best entrance to the railway station (turn left after going under the railway line) for trains towards Manchester.

Carry straight on down King Street for more pubs, cafes, bars and shops.

Takeaway route for iPhone and Android

Scan QR code, save this route offline, share with friends and more...

Website

<https://out.ac/IliLET>



The Bollin Tunnel under Runway 2

Photo: Matthew Ball, Community

Legend

Topography

	Wood, forest
	Moor, swamp, marsh
	Moorland
	Residential building area with single building
	Industrial real estate with single building
	Cemetery
	Golf course
	Sportsfield, stadium
	Stadium
	Open-air pool
	Vineyard
	Petrograph
	Country border
	State border
	District border
	Contour line
	Special use area
	Nature reserve

Topographic single signs

	Summit cross
	Elevation point
	Rock
	Cave
	Church
	Chapel
	Cemetery
	Palace/Castle
	Abbey
	Monument
	Ruin
	Mine
	Cairn
	Broadcasting tower
	Windwheel
	Water-/windmill
	Viewpoint

Streets and ways

	Freeway with number
	Highway with number
	State, country, district street
	Village road
	Main agricultural road
	Agricultural road
	Trail
	Via Ferrata

Lifts, Railway

	Ropeway lift
	Gondola lift
	Chairlift
	Ski-, draglift
	Aerial ropeways
	Railway
	Suburban train
	Subway
	Tram
	Railway station