

WALKING THE EAST END'S CANALS



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Walking along East London's historic canal network unlocks a tranquil world only yards from the bustle of commercial life. This five mile walk captures parts of the Regent's Canal, Hertford Union Canal, Limehouse Cut and River Lee Navigation. Over the last 20 years, London's east end has undergone a dramatic transformation. This looks set to continue well into the early part of the 21st century with major regeneration of the area proposed.

HISTORY

London's canals were originally built to connect the great docks on the River Thames and the industrial Midlands. In its heyday, Limehouse Basin (formerly the Regent's Canal Dock), was a place of intense activity as exotic foreign cargoes were unloaded onto narrowboats to pass through London's waterways before continuing their journey to the major northern cities. Nowadays the canal banks are worlds apart from their hectic past, instead providing a peaceful haven for all. Colourful narrow boats linger as a fascinating reminder of our industrial heritage and provide a beautiful environment in which to enjoy wildlife, watersports, angling, boat trips, historic buildings and many waterside bars and restaurants.

Limehouse Basin to Bow Locks

Limehouse Basin has been transformed from a working dock to a charming marina, once again attracting boats from all over the world. It is the gateway from the River Thames to over 2000 miles of navigable canals. This area is rich in historical architecture. St Anne's Church, just off Newell Street, is now in the best condition of all Hawksmoor's churches following an intensive restoration project. The Accumulator Tower, next to the viaduct, dates back to 1869 and represents one of the earliest attempts to harness hydraulic power to work the

wharves of the Regent's Canal Dock. Start your walk north east along the Limehouse Cut towpath (sign posted Limehouse Cut and Lea Valley Walk). After about one and a half miles you will encounter the award winning and innovative floating towpath. Opened in July 2003, it provides a delightful and continuous route under the busy Blackwall Tunnel Approach Road. Just the other side you will find Bow Locks.

Bow Lock to Old Ford Locks

Walking North from Bow Locks you will arrive at Three Mills Island. Three Mills boasts hundreds of



years of industrial heritage and is mentioned in the Domesday book. Built in 1776, the House Mill is Britain's oldest standing mill and together with the Clock Mill, re-built in 1817, they remain two of the most elegant waterside buildings in London.

Further on you will cross the A11 - following the walkway signs in the footpath - and rejoin at the other side. Continue to walk northwards, crossing beneath the Greenway, a six mile green corridor linking Hackney and Beckton. Just ahead to your left is the old Bryant and May match factory. Built in 1911 it has now been converted into luxury flats. Shortly afterwards you will arrive at Old Ford Locks.

Old Ford Locks to Bow Wharf

Just beyond the locks at Old Ford, a footbridge crosses the junction of the River Lee Navigation and the Hertford Union Canal. Cross the bridge and join the towpath along the Hertford Union Canal. This stretch follows the perimeter

of Victoria Park, designed by James Pennethorne in 1842 making it London's oldest municipal park. This is an ideal place for a rest and refreshment stop. At the junction of the Regent's Canal and Hertford Union Canal you'll find Bow Wharf which was originally a glue factory. Today the warehouses are home to Jongleurs Comedy Club, a gym, restaurants, bars and shops. This is a lively and fun place to detour and have a look around.

Bow Wharf to Limehouse Basin

The area around Bow Wharf is rich with museums, art, history and shopping. The Museum of Childhood, Chisenhale Gallery and Roman Road Market are all worthy of a detour. From Bow Wharf you can turn northwards onto the Regent's Canal for Islington, Camden, Little Venice and eventually the Grand Union Canal but we are turning southwards back to Limehouse Basin. For most of this final stretch, the towpath follows Mile End Park.

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Every care has been taken to ensure the accuracy of all information given in this guide and British Waterways London does not accept responsibility for any changes that may have occurred since going to press. Walking alone in isolated areas is not recommended.

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This wonderful open space features an ecology park, terraced garden, adventure playground, sports stadium and climbing wall. On your journey southwards you can cross the unique Green Bridge which is covered with trees and shrubs and takes the park over Mile End road. Continuing in the same direction, you will come

across Jonson's Lock. Next to the Lock on Copperfield Road is the Ragged School Museum, formerly used by Doctor Barnardo to house the largest ragged school in London.

In 1876, the school was open to poor local children between the ages of five and ten. They

Start: Limehouse
Finish: Limehouse
Distance: 5 miles
Time: 3 hours
Transport: DLR
Parking: Bromley-by-Bow Tesco
Conditions: Flat, although some areas are unsuitable for wheelchairs

received food, an education and help finding their first job. Continue southwards along the canal, and under Commercial Road before you reach the Viaduct built in 1838. You have arrived back at the starting point at Limehouse Basin.

For those with energy to spare, the Thames path can take you eastwards to Canary Wharf about a mile away or westwards about two miles to St Katherine's Dock and Tower Bridge.

Other walks available in this series

- Little Venice to Camden
- Islington to Limehouse Walk
- Walking around Hanwell
- Walking in the Lea Valley
- Walking in Harlow
- Walking in Broxbourne

