

# ISLINGTON TO LIMEHOUSE

# W A L K



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## ISLINGTON TO LIMEHOUSE WALK

This four mile walk along the Regent's Canal seems a million miles away from the city streets that overflow with people and traffic nearby. Starting in Islington this walk arches gracefully past the green spaces of Victoria and Mile End Parks before entering the historic Limehouse Basin. If you are feeling energetic you can continue your walk from Limehouse to Three Mills along the Limehouse Cut to see Britain's oldest standing mill.

### HISTORY

Completed in 1820, the Regent's Canal is eight miles long and was originally built to create a trading link between the River Thames and the industrial Midlands. Horses were used to tow the boats up the canals to the various wharves where boats loaded and unloaded their cargoes. Evidence of this bygone age can still be seen along the route. Look closely at the edges of bridges where grooves have been worn from the towline of heavy horse drawn boats. Nowadays the canal banks are worlds apart from their industrial past, instead providing a peaceful haven for all. Colourful narrowboats linger as a fascinating reminder of our industrial and maritime heritage and our waterways today provide a beautiful environment in which to enjoy wildlife, watersports, angling, boat trips, historic buildings and many waterside bars and restaurants.

### Islington to Acton's Lock

As you begin your journey in Islington, the canal travels silently under the streets emerging above ground off Colebrooke Row. Starting at Angel Station, head north along Upper Street and turn right onto Duncan Street. At the end of Duncan Street cross Colebrooke Road and the canal emerges from the Islington tunnel underneath your feet. Pick up the towpath and begin your walk eastwards. You will soon pass under a bridge and emerge opposite City Road Basin, a unique

11½ acre waterspace. This area is set to undergo development over the next few years which will open up the space for everyone and make a vibrant location for business, residential and leisure users. At its height, the Basin served many wharves and factories. Pickford's Wharf at the southern end of the Basin was the biggest on the canal and, in 1840, it had a fleet of 120 boats and stables for over 100 horses. It had a reputation for speed and introduced non-stop or 'fly' boats, pulled at a trot by pairs of horses in relay - covering the usual four day trip to Birmingham in two and



a half days. Continue your journey eastwards and another bridge leads you to the smaller Wenlock Basin built in 1826. Approximately one mile from here another small basin lies to the left, Kingsland Basin. Carry on eastwards for approximately one and a half miles and you will trace the perimeter of Victoria Park, a 290 metre space designed by James Pennethorne in 1842 making it London's oldest municipal park. This is an ideal place for a rest and refreshment stop, maybe take a picnic into the park.

### Bow Wharf to Limehouse Basin

Continuing on the towpath you'll find Bow Wharf, which was originally a glue factory, at the junction of the Regent's Canal and Hertford Union Canal. 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. 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 visit. For most of this final stretch, the towpath follows Mile End Park. This newly re-vitalised open space now 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.

Next to Jonson's 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 received food, an education and help finding their first job. Today, the Ragged School Museum offers an amazing insight into the life of the ragged children and the local area. It also allows today's school children the chance to experience a Victorian classroom. Continue southwards along the canal, and under Commercial Road before you reach the

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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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**Start:** Angel  
**Finish:** Limehouse  
**Distance:** 4 miles  
**Time:** 2 hours  
**Transport:** Northern line to Angel. DLR from Limehouse  
**Parking:** Meter parking  
**Conditions:** Flat, some areas may be unsuitable for wheelchairs



Viaduct. Built at the start of Queen Victoria's reign in 1838, the viaduct was originally built to carry the London and Blackwall Railway and was the first railway in the world to be completely controlled by electronic telegraph. The Grade II listed viaduct now carries the Docklands Light Railway. You have arrived at Limehouse Basin (formerly the Regent's Canal Dock). In its heyday, this area was at the heart of the canal transport system and saw intense activity as exotic foreign cargoes were unloaded onto narrowboats to pass through London before continuing

their journey on to the industrial Midlands. Look out for the story of Limehouse on the yellow boards. Visit the Museum in Docklands at West India Quay or the London Canal Museum in King's Cross, London to discover more.

### Other walks available in this series

- Little Venice to Camden
- Walking the East Ends Canals
- Walking around Hanwell
- Walking in the Lea Valley
- Walking in Harlow
- Walking in Broxbourne

