

SHORT WALKS

MADE EASY

# BIRMINGHAM

10 leisurely walks  
within easy reach of the city



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## WALK 1



# CENTRAL CANALS

Birmingham, Britain's largest city outside London, has a rich industrial and cultural heritage. This city-centre walk explores parts of two canals, including the picturesque Old Turn Junction and Gas Street Basin, and the historic Farmers Bridge Locks, which were once so busy they were powered by gas lights to enable them to operate 24 hours a day. It also passes the fabulous secret gardens of the Library and the Black Sabbath Bridge.

### OS information

 SP 063 867  
Explorer 220

### Distance

1.9 miles/3.1 km

### Time

1¼ hours

### Start/Finish

Library Metro stop,  
Centenary Square

### Parking

B5 4AF  
Town Hall car park  
(pay and display)

### Public toilets

Birmingham Library  
(when open)

### Cafés/pubs

Plenty, particularly  
near Brindley Place


### Terrain

Pavement and  
surfaced canal  
towpath; urban  
walkways; cobbles  
and some rough  
surfaces

### Hilliness

Mostly flat, but with  
some short, steep  
ramps (the steepest  
at **5**)

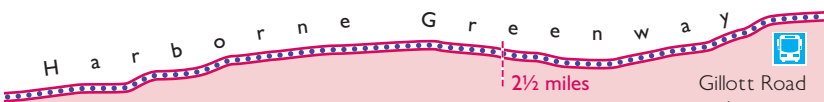
### Footwear

Year round 





Top left: coot  
 Above: ivy  
 Left: dunnock  
 Opposite page: black locust



Gillott Road  
 bus stop,  
 Hagley  
 Road

- 6** ➤ Turn **left** onto Gillott Road; cross over and then turn **right** up Selwyn Road.
  - Turn **right** through blue gates into Summerfield Park and continue for just under 100 yards to a path junction (start of the Harborne Greenway).

- 7** ➤ Fork sharp **right** on a tarmac path; continue **ahead** under three bridges (roughly  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile).
  - Just before the fourth bridge, fork **right** up a moderately sloping access path with barrier (wheelchair friendly) onto Hagley Road; the bus stop is immediately on the **left**.



# STORIES BEHIND THE WALK



★ **Forge Mill Lake** Although a former 'Forge Millpond' exists on a map from the 1890s, it was west of the current lake and had disappeared on later maps. Forge Mill Lake was initially constructed in 1981 (with more recent remodelling) to catch floodwater from the River Tame. While the area is a natural flood basin, previous channelling work to constrain the river had straightened it, leading to faster-flowing storm runoff and making downstream flooding more likely. Some impressively large flood gates can be seen from an access track off the RSPB driveway.

★ **Swan Pool and Colliery Baths** The clubhouse at Sandwell Valley Sailing Club near Swan Pool was the former bathhouse of the Jubilee Colliery, where workers would clean up after a hard day's mining underground. Meanwhile, Swan Pool itself was a groundwater drainage lake for water pumped away from the mining levels of the colliery.

## Forge Mill Rare Breeds Farm

★ Forge Mill Lake (left), River Tame (right)

End of the well-made path

1

2

Embankment Path ½ mile



- In the car park, put the Forge Mill Farm entrance to your left and take a constructed path **ahead** towards a small building by the river.
- Turn **left** onto a slipway access, pass red flood barriers and cross the River Tame.



### 1 The Forge Mill Lake loop

- Turn **right** onto the well-made lakeside path along an embankment.
- Follow it for almost ½ mile, past some great views over Forge Mill Lake, until the good surface ends at a rough stony grid.



# NATURE NOTES

In 2024, Walsall Arboretum became the Woodland Trust's first West Midland's 'ancient tree site', joining the ranks of Chatsworth (Derbyshire) and Richmond Park (London). This designation requires at least 100 veteran trees, with more than ten being classified as 'ancient'. The arboretum boasts 130 veteran and 17 ancient trees, including an alder with a girth of 23 feet near the Hoar Brook, and an exotic Indian bean tree near the Clocktower.

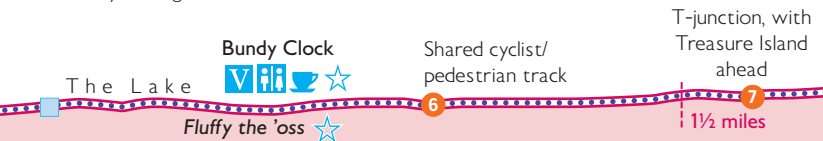
Roses, wisteria and cheeky grey squirrels grace the Rose Garden, while in summer, look out for tall spikes of purple and white flowers near the visitor centre; these bee-friendly flowers are bear's breeches. They belong to the acanthus

family of plants and are thought to be Mediterranean in origin, but have been cultivated in Britain for centuries.

Banded demoiselles like the shallow slow-flowing Hoar Brook, and unexpectedly, as you near the car park, you may encounter (or hear!) a flock of ring-necked parakeets inhabiting the trees near the brook.



Banded demoiselle



- 5** ➤ Go **left** and rejoin the lake path; pass the former boathouse.
- Turn **right**, following the lake-edge fencing down a tree-lined avenue.
- Go **left** by the large grassy circle then **right** in front of the visitor centre/café.



- 6** ➤ About 50 yards after the café (immediately before the stream crossing **3**), turn **left** onto a shared cycle/ pedestrian surfaced track.
- Stay on the main path **ahead**, passing a picnic area and tennis courts to reach a T-junction by Treasure Island.



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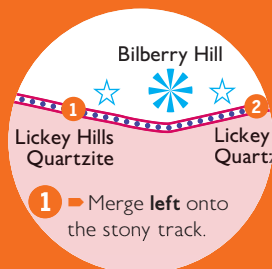
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Accessible routes  
for everyone



1 ➤ Merge **left** onto the stony track.

Easy-to-follow  
route profile



Easy-to-use  
walk maps

