

North Thames Path to Greenwich view – use map link to see a map

Starting point: Westferry DLR Station

Finishing point: Island Gardens DLR Station

Estimate time: 1.5 hours

1. Limekiln Dock
2. Canary Riverside
3. Westferry Circus
4. Traffic Light Tree
5. Cascades
6. The Blacksmiths Arms
7. Sir John McDougall Gardens
8. Westferry Printers
9. Docklands Sailing and Watersports Centre
10. Former lock onto Millwall Dock
11. St Paul's Presbyterian Church
12. Launching site of 'The Great Eastern'
13. Burrells Wharf
14. Millwall Fire Station
15. Johnson's Draw Dock
16. Island Gardens
17. Greenwich Foot Tunnel

The Thames Path is a national trail extending 180 miles from the river's source in Gloucestershire to the Thames Barrier in London. This section of the path, just under 3 miles long, runs on the north side of the Thames from Limekiln Dock to Island Gardens, taking in some of the most interesting riverside in London.

From Westferry DLR Station, turn left into Limehouse Causeway, and left into Three Colt Street. Turn right before Limekiln Wharf to bring you into Limekiln Dock (1). Limekiln Wharf is built on the site of England's first soft paste porcelain factory, dating from the 1740s. The first passengers for Australia left from Dunbar Wharf nearby. The charming old warehouses here give an impression of how many of the old London docks and wharves once looked.

The contrasting modern footbridge was built in 1996 to provide a riverside pedestrian link between Canary Wharf and Limehouse. Turn left to follow the river down to Canary Riverside (2).

Make your way up some steps to Westferry Circus (3). The railings and gates surrounding this peaceful garden were designed by Guiseppe Lund and symbolise the seasons.

Return to the river. From Canary Wharf Pier, various ferry services stop here on their way up, down and across the river. On the opposite bank you can see Columbia Wharf, now part of the Hilton London Docklands.

Continue on round the old dock entrance to see on your left the Traffic Light Tree by Pierre Vivant (4) that stands in the middle of Heron Quay roundabout. Continue back round to the river, past Cascades (5), a building whose style reflects its nautical surroundings with turrets and portholes. It was the first residential development of its kind on the Isle of Dogs.

Turn left into Cuba Street. This street was opened in 1812 and was once the main road into the heart of the Isle of Dogs, which until then was almost totally uninhabited. A former landlord reputedly haunts The Blacksmiths Arms (6), the oldest pub on the Island at the end.

Turn right into Westferry Road and past Sir John McDougall Gardens (7). As the road bends to the left you will pass Westferry Printers (8). The Daily Telegraph and The Guardian are amongst the newspapers printed here. The Docklands Sailing and Watersports Centre (9) is next door.

Opposite the Sailing Centre is the former lock onto Millwall Dock (10). Built between 1865 – 1867, this was at the time the largest lock in London. It was 80 ft wide, and had two chambers of 247 and 198 ft. Badly damaged in the War, it was dammed up in 1956, but has recently undergone major refurbishment.

Continue along Westferry Road to a small brick Italianette chapel on your left, St Paul's Presbyterian Church (11). Thomas Knightly built this charming little chapel in 1856. John Scott Russell who was building Isambard Kingdom Brunel's ship 'The Great Eastern' nearby, laid the Foundation Stone. The church was built for the Scottish shipyard workers. It is now an arts centre, The Space, and hosts a variety of events from classical music recitals to contemporary art exhibitions. The small, relaxed café upstairs is good for a cup of tea.

Turn right after St Edmunds Primary School and into Napier Avenue to return to the riverside and the Thames Path to reach the launching site of 'The Great Eastern' (12) - Brunel's magnificent and ill-fated ship. Her great size, at 680 ft long and 18,915 tons gross, meant she had to be launched sideways. Several of the original timber bunks forming the slipway can still be seen.

The building on the right forms part of Burrells Wharf (13), a former shipyard built in 1885 specialising in building iron ships. The most famous of which was the Great Eastern. Inside Burrell's Wharf there are several unusual and listed buildings; an octagonal chimney and the Gantry House and Mast House, both Grade 2 listed Victorian Buildings.

As you continue walking along the riverside, the view of Greenwich and the Cutty Sark comes into view. The path once more turns away from the river into Rainbow Avenue. Turn right and immediately left to bring you back to Westferry Road. At the junction with East Ferry Road is Millwall Fire Station (14), built in 1904-05 in the Queen Anne style characteristic of fire stations of that period; the original stables for horses were converted into a mess room and offices in 1925. Turn right here into Ferry Street. The Ferry House pub once served the needs of people like Samuel Pepys crossing to and from Greenwich by ferry.

At the end of Ferry Street is Johnson's Draw Dock (15). Much of the area close by was occupied by industries that required access to the river, which was extremely limited and mainly provided by Johnson's Drawdock. Later used as a scrapyard, it was refurbished in 1988.

Continue on into Saunders Ness Road and Island Gardens (16). This area was originally a dump and became known as 'Scrap Iron Park' in the early 19th century. The pollution and growth of industrial developments on the Island caused concern at Greenwich hospital across the river and the area was cleared and laid out as a much-needed riverside park space in 1895. Today, it is the Canaletto style view across the Thames to Greenwich, the Royal Observatory and the Cutty Sark which makes Island Gardens such a pleasant place to visit.

The Greenwich Foot Tunnel (17) was built between 1900-02 by the London County Council the tunnel replaced the ferry service between the Isle of Dogs and Greenwich. The walk under the river takes about 10 minutes, including rides in both lifts, or return to Saunders Ness Road and turn right to Island Gardens DLR station.

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