

LONDON CANALS

1

The 'London Canals' as defined here are the Grand Union from Bulls Bridge Junction (Paddington Arm junction) to the Thames, the Paddington Arm of the Grand Union, the Regents Canal, the Hertford Canal, the Lea Navigation, the Limehouse Cut, and various bits of waterway around Stratford Marsh and the Olympic Park. Also the Thames embankment from where the Grand Union emerges (River Brent) to Limehouse. There are approximately 45 miles of canal and 17 miles of river, which can be cycled over 2 days with a bit of planning.

Rides are split into sections, so you can choose your own start, end and stopover points, combining sections as suits you. This is intended to be a solo cycle (i.e. no cars required at start/end points), using convenient railway stations to return to your base.

TRAIN STATIONS

The following overground stations provide good start and end points for your rides. TfL allow bikes on any train. If using other operators check first.

HAYES & HARTINGTON	For the Grand Union junction with the Paddington arm (Bulls Bridge Junction). Trains into Paddington.
BRENTFORD	For Brent locks, and the start of the Thames section (west). Trains into Waterloo.
PADDINGTON	For Grand Union Paddington Arm and Regents Canal (west)

BLACKFRIARS,
WATERLOO,
LONDON BRIDGE

for Thames section

LIMEHOUSE

for Thames section (east). Trains into Fenchurch Street.

HACKNEY WICK

for River Lea. Trains into Clapham and Stratford.

CAMBRIDGE HEATH

for Regents Canal (east). Trains into Liverpool Street.

KINGS CROSS / ST. PANCRAS for Regents Canal (central).

TRIP TYPE: SOLO CYCLE

OBJECTIVE: CYCLE THE LONDON CANALS, IN SECTIONS, OVER 2 DAYS

DISTANCE: 62 MILES CYCLING, PLUS TRAIN JOURNEYS

TIME: SEE INDIVIDUAL SECTIONS

NICHOLSON: GUIDE 1 pp 26-27, 30-31, 36-41, 112-113, 118-121, 182-183, 188-189, 192-193

COSTS: RAIL AND PARKING COSTS (IF ANY) ARE DEPENDENT ON THE ROUTES AND SECTIONS YOU CHOOSE

DIFFICULTY: SEE EACH SECTION

OVERVIEW: In the city the towpaths are generally concrete or paved but very busy with walkers and cyclists. Some sections (e.g. Camden to Paddington) have loose bricks and paving so take care.

The only compacted earth sections are up the River Lea, the Grand Union from Bulls Bridge Junction down to Brentford, and paths along the south bank of The Thames from Kew to Battersea.

It is generally good for cycling, but try to avoid rush hour (which seems to be most of the day).

There are many dedicated cycle routes in London to help you get safely back to your start point or station - see the TfL website for maps and information.

SECTION 1: JUNCTION OF REGENTS CANAL AND HERFORD UNION CANAL TO PADDINGTON BASIN (8 MILES)

TIME : 1.5 HOURS

Nearest station to start point: Cambridge Heath

Nearest station to end point: Paddington



Head west from the junction up the intermittent locks, looking out for occasional loose paving slabs. This section is very busy with pedestrians and cyclists most of the day.

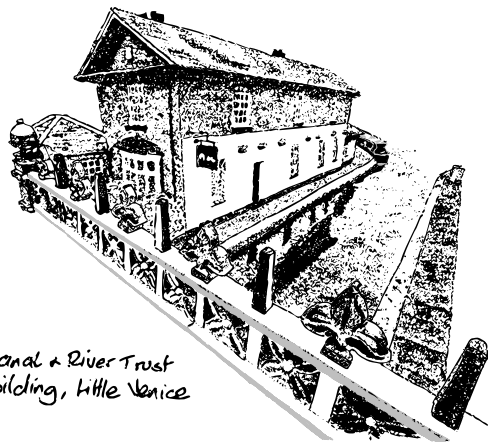
At Islington tunnel climb from the towpath to the road and continue up Duncan Street to Upper Street (the main road). Turn left then right at the lights onto Liverpool Road. Take the 2nd left onto Tolpiddle Street. Go straight on as the road drops into a community housing estate. At Muriel Street turn right, and the track back down to the canal is hidden in trees to your left.

There are more loose bricks and paving slabs along this section. Camden Town is very busy, and the towpath goes right round the small basin in which the market is situated. You will need to walk round here.

Once past Regents Park and London Zoo, the towpath changes sides where the waterways yard blocks it off - head up the zigzag slope and cross the footbridge.

Next comes Maida Vale tunnel. The path comes off some distance before the tunnel entrance (before the B507). Continue along Frampton Street to the A5, Edgeware Road. Turn right and ride 200m to Blomfield Road, which is on the left just over the tunnel entrance. Continue on Blomfield Rd. until you are past the private moorings at which point a narrow gateway returns you to the towpath.

You are now in Little Venice, a bustling hive of waterway activity, and the end of the Regents Canal.



Canal & River Trust Building, Little Venice

Continue round the basin to the bridge. Once over the bridge turn left (south) to Paddington Basin, which has been heavily redeveloped with restaurants, bars, shops and offices as well as the station, or turn right (north west) to continue on the Grand Union Paddington Arm.

SECTION 2 : PADDINGTON BASIN TO BULLS BRIDGE JUNCTION (13.5 MILES)

Nearest station to start point: Paddington

Nearest station to end point: Hayes & Harlington

TIME : 2 HOURS

From Paddington Basin head up the short stretch to Little Venice. Bear left and continue north west on the towpath. Gradually the scenery becomes less affluent and more industrial. It is fairly uninteresting, although you do catch a sight of Wembley Stadium in the distance. Eventually the canal turns south west with greenery in places. It is a relief to reach the Bulls Bridge Junction, where the Paddington Arm meets the Grand Union mainline.

Hayes & Harlington station is 1 mile west on the Grand Union (turn right at the junction).

SECTION 3 : BULLS BRIDGE JUNCTION TO RIVER THAMES / GRAND UNION JUNCTION AT BRENTFORD (5 MILES)

TIME : 1 HOUR

Nearest station to start point: Hayes & Harlington

Nearest station to end point: Brentford

From the junction of the Grand Union mainline and Paddington Arm head east towards Brentford. The towpath is typical Grand Union, i.e. pretty poor, compacted earth and gravel, and narrow. Stow going. At Southall Green use the road alongside to speed things up a bit.

Conditions are much better down the Hanwell Locks Flight, but the towpath then reverts to compacted earth and gravel.

There is a steep narrow footbridge at London Playing Fields where the towpath changes sides, and it is then on the right all the way to Brentford Gauging Lock, where boats used to be weighed in order to pay taxes. Follow the path up to High Street. Turn left on High Street, A315, and head east to Kew Bridge to cross the river. The junction by the bridge is very busy and you may prefer to dismount and walk across to the bridge.

SECTION 4: THAMES EMBANKMENT FROM GRAND UNION JUNCTION TO LIMEHOUSE (14.5 MILES)

TIME : 2 HOURS



Nearest station to start point: Brentford

Nearest station to end point: Limehouse

There are various major stations accessible along the route.

Cross the Thames at Kew Bridge. Continue 150m then turn sharp left and double back through the park to the river path. Join the Thames path to Putney. The path is wide compacted earth and gravel, generally easy to follow.

Occasionally it is narrow where it passes riverside roads and buildings. Sometimes the path disappears for a section and you have to navigate round - these stretches are usually signposted.

Where there are new building works the path can be temporarily closed with diversions marked (or not). This

applies especially from Wandsworth onwards where there is a bit of development.

At Clink Street the path ends. Continue down Clink Street, round the Golden Hind and Montague Close to London Bridge Station. Join Tooley Street and continue to Tower Bridge Road.

Cross Tower Bridge, cycle through St. Katherine's Dock and join Wapping High Street, then Glamis Road, into King Edward Memorial Park and rejoin the Thames Path to Limehouse Basin.

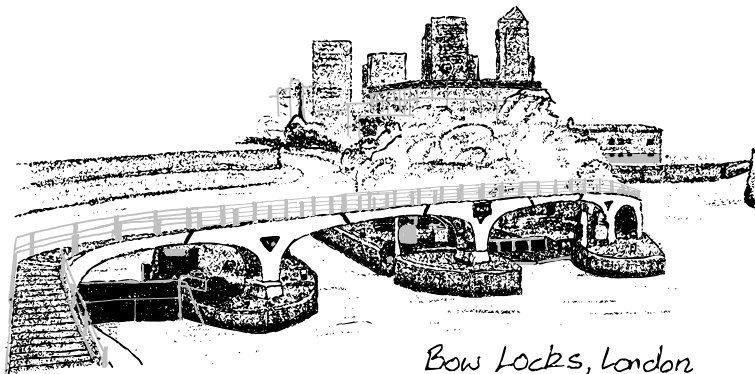
If you want to complete your circular ride it is a short cycle up Regents Canal back to the western end of the Hertford Union and Cambridge Heath station.

SECTION 5: JUNCTION OF REGENTS CANAL AND HERTFORD UNION TO THREE MILLS BRIDGE (RIVER LEA/LEE VIA LIMEHOUSE BASIN (2.5 MILES)

TIME : 20 MINS

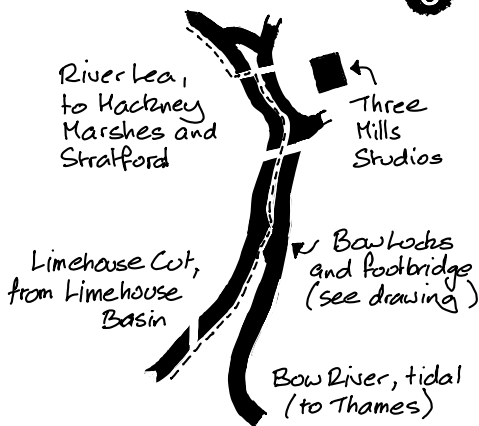
Nearest station to start point: Cambridge Heath

Nearest station to end point: Stratford (not very close)



Bow Locks, London

It is a straightforward ride down Regents Canal to Limehouse Basins which you can cycle round clockwise to find the Limehouse Cut. The towpath is then narrow and bumpy in places along the straight stretch. At Bow Creek cross the footbridge at the tidal lock, and the path continues between Bow Creek and the Lee Navigation to Three Mills Island (home of Masterchef).



SECTION 6 : QUEEN ELIZABETH PARK AND STRATFORD CANALS (3.5 MILES)

TIME : 30 MINS

Nearest station to start point: Stratford

Nearest station to end point: Stratford



From Three Mills Island continue north up the River Lea. Where the Lea Navigation fords north bear right on the River Lea past The London Stadium, then turn right down City Mill River. Climb the ramp to Sidings Street and cross the bridge heading west. Cross the road and join the Greenway. Head east (this involves dropping off the old railway for a short stretch). Head north up Waterworks Road back to the River Lea. Cross it and enter the park next to Marshgate Lane, use the bridge to cross Carpenters Road, continue to Waterden Road, and go straight across to Middlessex Way which eventually becomes the towpath. Continue to the A12.

SECTION 7: HACKNEY MARSHES, RIVER LEA AND HERTFORD UNION (4 MILES)

TIME : 40 MINS

Nearest station to start point: Stratford

Nearest station to end point: Cambridge Heath

Where the A12 crosses the River Lea the navigation ends, as does the towpath. Cross the busy road, and at the start of Homerton Road opposite take the good quality footpath / track to the right, which follows the river alongside football pitches (Hackney Marshes). At the footbridge near the filter beds turn left and cross the path to the Lee Navigation. Turn right if you want to ride up to the Princess of Wales to join up with the adjoining ride, otherwise turn left and head south on the wide towpath to Hackney Wick.

Crate Brewery and Howling Hops Brewery are next door to each other right by White Post Lane (bridge 11) and make a good lunch or early dinner stop. The Hertford Union junction is 200m further on. Turn right and continue a mile down the Hertford Union to the Regents Canal Junction.

