

REGENTS CANAL: ISLINGTON TO LIMEHOUSE

About 5.25 miles

Very easy, level and paved throughout. The path is used by walkers, joggers and cyclists, so keep to the land side of the path so it is the cyclists and joggers who run the risk of falling in! There are entrances to the towpath at most bridges.

Islington to Victoria Park

1 To get to the Canal take the southbound Northern Line one stop from Kings Cross to Angel. Alternatively travel to Highbury and Islington station (train from Bowes Park Monday-Friday or Victoria Line from Finsbury Park) and take a 4, 19, 30 or 43 bus a few stops to Upper Street near the Angel tube station.

2 Turn right out of Angel station and walk north for a short distance before turning right into Duncan Street. Underneath the T-junction at the end of this road the canal emerges from the tunnel which has carried it under Islington. Walk down the slope to the towpath. Once barges would have been hauled through the tunnel by a towing boat which pulled itself along by a chain on the canal bed while the horses walked over the top.

3 After a short distance there is the first of eight locks on the walk. Shortly after this on the right are the City Road Basin and the Wenlock Basin, once both busy with boats loading and unloading cargoes.



4 The next major road to cross the canal is the New North Road which is on the 141 bus route from Palmers Green, Wood Green and Manor House, so is an alternative way of starting or leaving this walk. Formerly located by the bridge were the Gainsborough film studios. These had some success in the immediate post-war period and the new development here commemorates this name.

5 The next major road to cross the canal is the very busy Kingsland Road. Just before it, the towpath crosses the entrance to the Kingsland basin on a hump-backed bridge. Normally a number of boats may be seen tied up here. Shortly after Kingsland Road is a futuristic looking railway bridge that has recently been completed. From 2010 this will carry the newly rebuilt and extended East London Line that will form part of the London Overground network.

6 The second road bridge after this carries Broadway Market over the canal. This area is now quite fashionable, and the market (if open – it's certainly there on Saturdays) has stalls selling some quite exotic goods. The old East End is not forgotten though as there is a pie and mash shop. The 'Dove' pub is recommended.

7 Pressing on, the canal passes under Mare Street and goes alongside Victoria Park. This park was developed in Victorian times and has been a welcome respite from the bricks and mortar for generations of Eastenders. There are a café and toilets by the lake or, just past Victoria Park, there may be a narrowboat selling refreshments.

Opened in 1820, the Canal links the Grand Union Canal at Paddington and the River Thames at Limehouse. It was built to take 14 foot wide barges, unlike much of the British Canal system which could only handle 7 foot wide 'narrow' boats. It remained busy into the 1950's, with horses pulling most barges at least until the 1930's. Throughout the walk you will see reminders of the industry that once lined the canal bank. Nowadays there isn't much boat traffic on this canal, but one Walking Group member has seen a pair of narrow boats engaged in carrying domestic fuel. For more information see <http://www.hackney.gov.uk/ep-regents-canal-caa>.

Victoria Park to Limehouse

- 1** Shortly after the park the towpath crosses the start of the Hertford Union Canal by another hump-backed bridge. This canal provides a short cut to the River Lea Navigation (to Hertford and Bishops Stortford).
- 2** Heading roughly south-eastwards the canal reaches Mile End Road. Mile End Station (Central and District Lines) is nearby for those wanting to end the walk here.
- 3** It is worth leaving the towpath for a short distance in order to experience the remarkable 'green bridge' that crosses Mile End Road a short distance eastwards. This carries a footpath linking two open spaces either side of the road. It is literally green as it has grass, trees and shrubs growing on it. On Sundays there may be a Farmers Market on the way to the green bridge.
- 4** Beyond Mile End Road on the left, backing on to the canal and facing onto Copperfield Road, is the Ragged School Museum. This group of buildings formerly housed the largest 'Ragged', or free, school in London. It was established by Dr Barnardo and finally closed in 1908 when enough state schools had opened. In

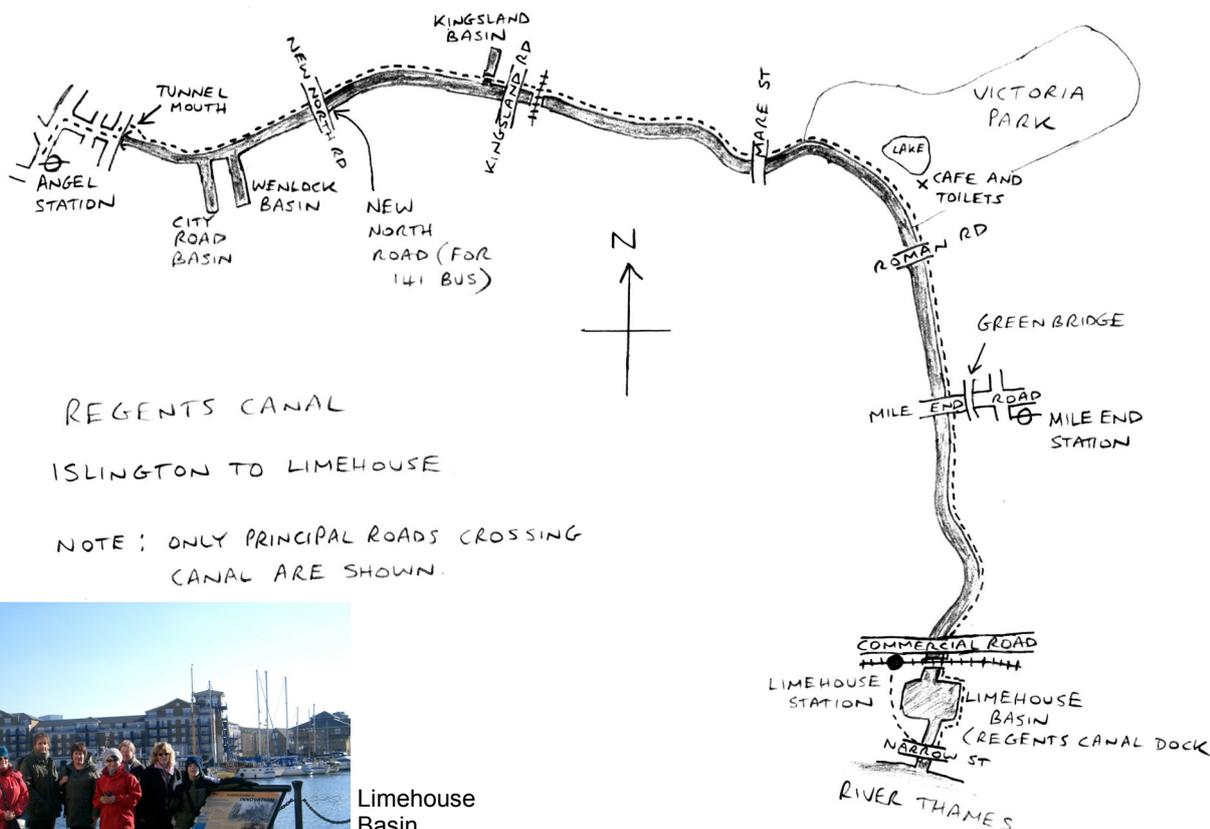
it, amongst other things, you can see a reconstructed Victorian classroom. It only has restricted opening hours, so phone 8980 6485 or see www.raggedschoolmuseum.org.uk.

5 The canal passes under two railway bridges, the second one quite ornate and opened in 1840 to carry the Blackwall Railway. Nowadays, after many years of disuse it carries the Docklands Light Railway. When first opened, trains were pulled by ropes from stationary winding engines. This was due to fear of sparks from locomotives, as the railway was on a viaduct above numerous wooden sailing ships in the many docks below.

6 The walk ends at Limehouse Basin, formerly the Regents Canal Dock. Limehouse station is on your right to return by the Docklands Light Railway to Bank, for the Northern Line back to Kings Cross.

7 It is worth walking round the dock which is smaller than formerly, surrounded by yuppie flats and full of boats that access the River Thames via a large lock. There is also the entrance to another canal, the Limehouse Cut, an alternative way to the Lea.

Continuing down to the Thames, there are some pubs overlooking the river.



Limehouse Basin