

The image shows the interior of a large, modern transit station. A prominent white, Y-shaped pillar stands in the foreground on the left. The ceiling is a complex, curved structure made of many thin, light-colored ribs that create a ribcage-like pattern. The floor is a dark, polished surface. In the background, many people are walking, and there are various signs and structures typical of a transit hub. The overall atmosphere is bright and modern.

# **Walk the Victoria Line**

**I G Liddell**

The text in this document is merely an indication of what might be possible ... or what might have been possible at the time of researching (2023) or later revision. All walking routes are subject to change, but the pace of urban change is greater than in rural areas.

Each reader must assess whether each part of the route qualifies as suitable or safe for public access. The author does not warrant any point of legality or safety in any part of the description of the route.

Thanks are due to many people who have helped me with route-finding and with intelligence local to a number of areas traversed by the route. Their contributions enrich the route and the stories along it. Clearly, any mistakes and misinterpretations remain with the author.

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Front cover photograph:  
King's Cross station

# Walk the Underground Victoria Line

Start	Brixton station — <b>SW9 8HE</b>
Finish	Walthamstow Central station — <b>E17 7LP</b>
Distance	24.0km
Duration	5 hours 00 minutes
Ascent	121m

## Introduction

The first suggestion of what would become the Victoria line was floated in 1943, and the Bill to build the line (between Victoria and Wood Street, east of Walthamstow Central) was placed before Parliament in 1955. The plan was to relieve congestion on the lines within the Circle Line in central London.

Several changes of termini (including Fulham Broadway and Woodford) were suggested by interested parties, and the long-held wish for a railway between Croydon and Finsbury Park (now met by Thameslink) was added to the mix. In the end, the eastern terminus was cut back from Wood Street to Walthamstow Central, the Wood Street extension (met by trains to and from Chingford) was axed after a cost-benefit analysis (the Victoria Line was the first to submit to such analysis).

The line opened in stages north of the River Thames during 1968 and 1969, and eventually reached Brixton in 1971. Each station on the line was an interchange station (until Pimlico was added in 1972), and fast links were made between Victoria and Euston, King's Cross and St Pancras mainline termini.

Today, the Victoria Line is the second-busiest line on the Underground. The Northern Line has about 10% more passenger journeys, but in terms of passengers per kilometre, the Victoria Line is the most intensively used line. The automatic train operation allows for a train every 100 seconds on the line.





# Brixton to Walthamstow Central

24.0km; 5hr 00min  
121m ascent

## Introduction

**1** Brixton Underground station opened in 1971 as the southern terminus of the Victoria Line. Brixton rail station, with Southeastern services to and from Victoria, is about 100m away on either Atlantic Road or Brixton Station Road. Loughborough Junction station (Thameslink) is 1km farther on to the east.

The familiar Underground roundel above the entrance is the largest on the network.

The Victoria Line is the only Underground line (apart from the short Waterloo and City Line) which is underground along its entire length.

All facilities are available in the vicinity of Brixton station.

## Route

### Brixton to Stockwell 1.2km

**2** Cross Brixton Road from the station entrance using the light-controlled pedestrian crossing and turn right. Follow the left-hand footway to pass beneath two railway bridges, and turn left onto Ferndale Road. Immediately, bear off to the right onto a path which leads to Stockwell Avenue, keeping the building advertised as *The Department Store* on your left.

Continue ahead along the left-hand footway of Stockwell Avenue, crossing over



*Brixton station*



*Brixton Road —  
the railway bridges*

Bellefields Road as you go, to reach the junction with Stockwell Road.

**3** Continue ahead onto Stockwell Road, crossing over Chantrey Road on your left. Follow the left-hand footway of Stockwell Road for 850m, all the way to the junction with Clapham Road.

Part-way along Stockwell Road, there are cafés and other establishments serving the local Portuguese community (though, of course, others may also enjoy the coffee and *pasteis de nata* which are to be found in the cafés).

Cross Clapham Road using the divided light-controlled pedestrian crossing to reach Stockwell station.

In the vicinity of the station, there is a café, a sandwich shop, and a convenience shop.

## Stockwell to Vauxhall 1.6km

**4** Turn right (or turn left if exiting the station) and immediately cross over Binfield Road ahead using the light-controlled pedestrian crossing. Immediately, bear left onto South Lambeth Road to keep the Stockwell War Memorial and the Violette Szabo memorial on your right.

Violette Szabo (1921-45) was a secret agent for the Allies during the Second World War. On her second overseas mission, she was captured, tortured, and removed to Ravensbruck concentration camp, where she was executed.

Follow the left-hand footway of South Lambeth Road, crossing to the right-hand footways at the junction with Lansdowne Way, using two of the collection of light-controlled pedestrian crossings. Cross over Aldebert Terrace to reach the junction of South Lambeth Road with Tradescant Road.

*Violette Szabo memorial and  
Stockwell War Memorial*



**5** Continue your journey along the right-hand footway of South Lambeth Road: you now move into Little Portugal (as you will note from the prevailing focus of the businesses).

Options for refreshment are numerous here, with anything from a coffee and *pastel de nata* up to a full meal.

Continue along the right-hand footway of South Lambeth Road, passing Vauxhall Park on your right (or, within the park, keeping close to the left-hand edge, and exiting back onto South Lambeth Road by the gate at the far end).

Just beyond the junction with Langley Lane on your right, cross over South Lambeth Road and take the right-hand footway through the railway tunnel, using multiple light-controlled pedestrian crossings. Turn right at the far end of the tunnel, noting the elephants looking down from the building on your left, to reach the entrance to Vauxhall station, with the bus station on your left.

## Vauxhall to Pimlico

### 0.8km

**6** Turn left to pass beneath the soaring steel canopy of Vauxhall bus station to reach Wandsworth Road and cross it using the divided light-controlled pedestrian crossing. Cross Wandsworth Bridge using the left-hand footway to reach Millbank on the north side of the River Thames.

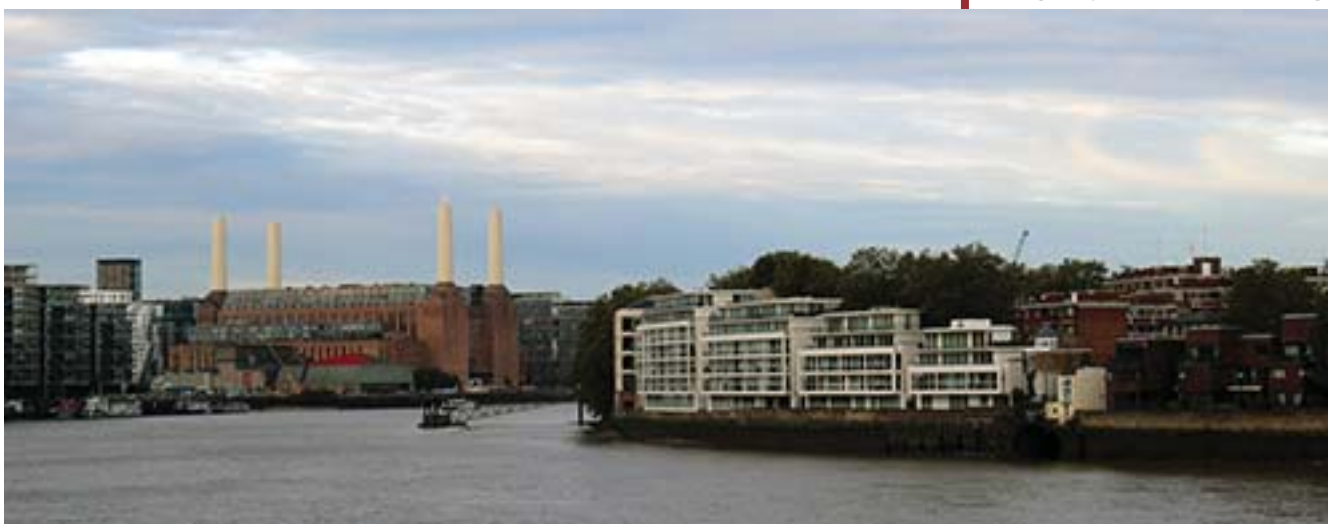
The current Vauxhall Bridge was opened in 1906, replacing a bridge of the early part of the nineteenth century. It is Grade II\* listed.

The earlier bridge was built to spur development of the area around the right bank of the River Thames. Originally a toll bridge (which was bought out in 1879 when all bridges in London became free), the toll income fell away when Doulton's stoneware factory was set up to make sewage pipes and sanitaryware and the hopes for prosperous incomers were buried, along with Vauxhall Pleasure



*MI6 headquarters behind the roof of Vauxhall bus station*

*Looking upstream from Vauxhall Bridge — the Tyburn's outflow is to the right of the white building*





Gardens, by streets of houses for lower-income workers. After slum clearance, the site of the Pleasure Gardens was reclaimed as a local park.

Look over to your left as you cross the bridge to spot the outflow of the Tyburn from its underground passage from Hampstead. Upstream is the iconic Battersea Power Station, now a shopping mall: to its left is the Embassy of the United States of America.

**7** Cross Millbank using the divided light-controlled pedestrian crossing and continue along the left-hand footway of Vauxhall Bridge Road. Cross over Bessborough Street and turn left to follow its right-hand footway to Pimlico station.

On the right-hand side of Bessborough Street, the artwork applied to the Tube's ventilation shaft is by Sir Eduardo Paolozzi (1924-2005).

Pimlico is the only station on the Victoria Line without interchange facilities. It was not included in the original list of stations, but came to be the primary access point for the Tate Gallery, now Tate Britain.

## Pimlico to Victoria 1.2km

*Ventilation shaft, Pimlico station, with Paolozzi art*



**8** Cross over the end of Rampayne Street and take Tachbrook Street ahead, following its right-hand footway to its junction with Warwick Way.

On Tachbrook Street, you will pass convenience shops and pubs. On the last block, between Churton Street and Warwick Way, you may find market stalls in the street.

Cross over Warwick Way using the pedestrian crossing, and turn left to follow its right-hand footway to the junction with Wilton Road.

There are small supermarkets on Warwick Way, one on each side.

**9** Turn right to follow the right-hand footway of Wilton Road as far as Neathouse Place, where cross to the left-hand footway of Wilton Road using the light-controlled pedestrian crossing. Follow the left-hand footway of Wilton Road to reach Victoria station on your left, with the bus station in front of the station entrance.

All the way along Wilton Road, there are many shops, cafés and restaurants.

London Victoria railway station was built in 1860, and was rebuilt at the turn of the twentieth



century, the new station opening in 1908. In reality, Victoria was two adjoining stations, one for the Sussex and Surrey services and the other for the Kent services. In 1924-25, following the bringing together of all services under the Southern Railway, the separating wall was knocked down and the platforms were re-numbered in a single sequence.

The original split in the station echoes down the years, with Southeastern services making use of the lower-numbered platforms and Southern services the higher.



*Victoria station*

Victoria station is served by the Circle, District and Victoria Lines. The bus station is a busy part of the public transport interchange, and Victoria coach station, the principal coach terminal for London, lies a short distance away to the south-west on Buckingham Palace Road.

Victoria mainline station has all the shops, cafés, toilets (a set at each side of the main concourse, with accessible toilets adjacent to each) and other facilities that you would expect to find in a station of this size.

## Victoria to Green Park 1.4km

**10** Turn left to pass across the frontage of the railway station, with the bus station on your right. At Buckingham Palace Road, cross by the light-controlled pedestrian crossing. Turn right to pass an equestrian statue of Maréchal Ferdinand Foch on your left, then cross Grosvenor Gardens ahead by the light-controlled pedestrian crossing.

Continue ahead on the left-hand footway of Buckingham Palace Road. Cross Lower Grosvenor Place by the divided light-controlled pedestrian crossing, and pass the Royal Mews on your left. Bear left to cross the frontage of Buckingham Palace, then cross Constitution Hill by the light-controlled pedestrian crossing.



*Maréchal Ferdinand Foch*



*Victoria memorial outside  
Buckingham Palace*

*Bruton Lane, with the  
Tyburn flowing beneath*



**11** Bear slightly right to follow a path across Green Park, gradually approaching the right-hand side of the park. You will reach the lower entrance to the Tube station, with a statue of Diana, the Roman goddess of hunting, in front of the entrance. Bear right at the statue, then left to exit the park onto Piccadilly, with the upper entrance to the station on your left.

Three Underground lines — Jubilee, Piccadilly and Victoria — serve Green Park station.

## Green Park to Oxford Circus 1.2km

**12** Turn right along the right-hand footway of Piccadilly towards the cloisters of the Ritz Hotel. Turn left to cross Piccadilly ahead using the light-controlled pedestrian crossing and turn right to cross Berkeley Street by another such crossing.

Turn left onto Berkeley Street and follow its right-hand footway, crossing over Hay Hill by the light-controlled pedestrian crossing. At the south-eastern corner of Berkeley Square, turn right onto Bruton Lane and follow its right-hand footway as it wends its way round bends to come out onto Bruton Street.

The reason why Bruton Lane does not conform to the rectilinear pattern of streets in the vicinity is because it follows the line of the River Tyburn, one of London's hidden (*i.e.*, culverted) rivers: Marylebone is a corruption of St Mary le Bourne, indicating the watercourse. The river rises on Fitzjohn's Avenue in Hampstead and empties into the River Thames just upstream from Vauxhall Bridge.

Turn right and follow Bruton Street to its junction with New Bond Street.

**13** Cross New Bond Street and follow the left-hand footway of Conduit Street ahead, all the way to Regent Street. Turn left to follow the left-hand footway of Regent Street to Oxford Circus.

Oxford Circus station is served by the Bakerloo, Central and Victoria Lines of the Underground.

Oxford Circus, where Oxford Street and Regent Street collide, is the "crossroads of the universe" of London's retail space ... at least, it was. The lure of weatherproofed malls in Stratford and Shepherd's Bush, and the increasing importance



of online retail (the change accelerated by the Covid pandemic) has left large gaps in the retail realm.

It is unlikely to regain its pre-eminence, given the major changes in retail customer behaviour, so plans are needed urgently to redefine these streets in terms of future best use, rather than trying to grasp the frayed remnants of the past to re-create a notion which has gone for ever.

## Oxford Circus to Warren Street

### 1.5km

**14** Using the diagonal option, cross Oxford Circus by the light-controlled pedestrian crossing and bear right along the left-hand footway of Oxford Street to cross Great Portland Street and reach the pedestrianised end of Great Titchfield Street. Turn left and follow the left-hand footway of Great Titchfield Street to the junction with New Cavendish Street.

Using the pedestrian crossing, cross Great Titchfield Street and continue along the right-hand footway of New Cavendish Street to reach Cleveland Street.

**15** Cross over Cleveland Street to continue along the right-hand footway of Howland Street to Tottenham Court Road, where turn left to follow its left-hand footway to reach the entrance to Warren Street station.

*Left — Warren Street  
station entrance*

*Right — London planes  
on Euston Road  
bow towards the traffic*





Warren Street is served by the Victoria Line, and by the Charing Cross branch of the Northern Line.

## Warren Street to Euston

### 0.7km

**16** Turn right at Warren Street station to cross over Tottenham Court Road and, passing University College Hospital on your right, reach Gower Street. Cross Gower Street to reach the southern entrance to Euston Square station.

Euston Square is served by the Circle, Hammersmith and City, and Metropolitan Lines.

**17** Go into the station, passing the ticketing gates on your right, to ascent to street level. Turn left and follow the left-hand footway of Euston Road to reach Melton Street. Cross over using the light-controlled pedestrian crossing, and follow the path with the garden on your left to reach Euston station.

Do not enter the main concourse (unless you have business in the station) but turn right just before the entrance to pass along the left-hand side of the forecourt piazza and reach the entrance to the Underground station on the left.

Euston contains all the facilities one expects to find at a major railway station, including shops, cafés, restaurants, and pubs, some of which are outside the main concourse on a forecourt piazza. This forecourt is usually awash with toxic tobacco smoke, so the air may be more pleasant inside the station. There are toilets in the station near Platform 1; ATMs are at the ticket office.

*Euston station —  
the Poisoners' Piazza*



Euston Tube station is served by the Charing Cross and Bank branches of the Northern Line, and by the Victoria Line. As well as mainline trains, Euston station also has services on the Overground line to Watford Junction.

Euston station was opened in 1837 by the London and Birmingham Railway Company, whose engineers were George and Robert Stephenson, and was the first of London's inter-city termini. The station was designed by Philip Hardwick (1792-1870) in a grand style to underline the importance of this brand-new means of transport. The design also included a massive portico which became known as the Euston Arch. The arch was demolished in 1961 as part of the complete renovation of the station, which was itself completed in 1968.

## Euston to King's Cross St Pancras

### 0.8km

**18** Continue along the piazza to the exit from the station concourse. Descend a flight of steps to reach Eversholt Street. Turn right to reach a light-controlled pedestrian crossing, and turn left to use it to cross Eversholt Street.

Follow the left-hand footway of Grafton Place ahead, then turn right onto Churchway. Pass the former Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital (now enveloped by a modern extension on the northern and eastern sides, the building has become corporate offices for a trade union) to reach Euston Road, where turn left.

Elizabeth Garrett Anderson (1836-1917) was the first woman to qualify as a surgeon, and was also the first woman to become a mayor (in Aldeburgh).

*The former Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital*

Follow the left-hand footway of Euston Road and cross over Chalton Street without the aid of a pedestrian crossing, then continue ahead to reach Ossulston Street, crossing it by its light-controlled pedestrian crossing.

Both Charles Dickens and Thomas Hardy knew Somers Town. Mary Wollstonecraft, author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, died in Somers Town, having just given birth to her daughter, who would become Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, author of *Frankenstein*. The British Library was built





*St Pancras station —  
Midland Grand Hotel  
in the morning light*

on the site of the goods yard of the Midland Railway.

**19** Pass the brick bulk of the British Library on your left, then cross over the end of Midland Road by its light-controlled pedestrian crossing, and pass the older brick edifice of St Pancras station, also on your left. Cross over Pancras Way by the light-controlled pedestrian crossing to reach King's Cross Square, with the entrance to the Underground station on your left.

St Pancras station opened in 1868, having been constructed by the Midland Railway Company (with William Barlow as the architect) as their own London terminus (having experienced congestion problems while sharing Euston station with the London and North Western Railway. Soon afterwards, the Midland Grand Hotel was built onto the Euston Road façade. The hotel was designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott in a flamboyant neo-Gothic style to impress customers and to cement the Midland railway's reputation. The tracks were built at first-floor level so that the Regent's Canal could be bridged (rather than tunnelled, as at King's Cross).

By the 1960s, St Pancras had become dark and dowdy, with Barlow's roof blackened by a century's accumulation of soot, and there were plans to demolish the building. After a long campaign, in which John Betjeman (later Poet Laureate) played a major part, the station was

saved. There is a statue of Betjeman looking upwards within the station today. The station was saved, but the hotel, which had been used as offices, was stagnant and was closed.

With the advent of Eurostar services, the entire station was refurbished, returning the Barlow roof to its pale blue original colour, and the hotel was refurbished in suitably grand style.

Freight had always been as important to the Midland Railway as passenger traffic, with beer from Burton-on-Trent a mainstay. The ground-floor undercroft of the station was built deliberately with pillars to maximise the capability for storage of beer and other goods, and there was an extensive goods yard to the west of the station. The British Library and the Francis Crick Institute now cover much of the land occupied by the goods yard. Today, the ground floor is given over to retail with little or no connection to railways, so much so that St Pancras is often called "a nice shopping mall with a station attached".



Among the shops, there are cafés, a pub, and two small supermarkets. On the first floor, there is a convenience shop, restaurants and a pub.

King's Cross Square was laid out as a public open space as part of the renovation of King's Cross station in 2012. Most of the time, though, this open space has been invaded by a commercial market, mainly of food to go, thus nullifying the intention to make the space public.

A statue of King George IV was erected at the junction over to your right (whence the name "King's Cross"). However, the statue proved to be as popular as the king, and was soon pulled down with no ceremony.

King's Cross St Pancras Tube station is served by no fewer than six Tube lines — the Circle, Hammersmith and City, Metropolitan, Northern, Piccadilly, and Victoria Lines. It is also an important hub for bus services.

King's Cross station was opened in 1852 in a style which was much more restrained than the flamboyant "noisy neighbour", St Pancras, which came along ten years later. The jewel in the King's Cross crown was the fast service to Edinburgh Waverley, with services such as the *Flying Scotsman* and iconic locomotives such as *Mallard*. The area to the west of the trainshed became the focal point of the station with its refurbishment in 2014.

The western concourse was designed by George Aslan. On the concourse, there is a statue of Sir Nigel Gresley (1876-1941), the engineer who designed, amongst other locomotives, the famed *Mallard*. In the original version of the statue, two mallard ducks were placed beside Gresley (in punning reference to the locomotive), but there were objections that the birds lowered the tone of the statue, and were disrespectful of the engineer's technical prowess.

The country's largest station pub is situated in the former Parcel Yard (and bears its name). on the main concourse, there are restaurants, sandwicheries, fast-food outlets and a small supermarket.



*King's Cross station — the original 1852 trainshed*



*King's Cross station — the 2014 western extension*

## King's Cross St Pancras to Highbury and Islington 3.3km

**20** Follow the right-hand footway of Pancras Way, with St Pancras station on your left and King's Cross station on your right. Pass the taxi rank to reach, on your right, the northern entrance to King's Cross station.

Bear right onto King's Boulevard ahead, keeping the brick building of the one-time German gymnasium (now a rather less healthy bar and restaurant with aspirations to the culture of *Mitteuropa*) on your left. Continue along King's Boulevard to Goods Way. Cross the road and take the Granary Square footbridge over the Regent's Canal.

The former goods yard has been turned into a major retail centre, with Central St Martin's, part of the University of the Arts London taking the bulk of the granary building ahead.

Turn right and descend to canal level by a flight of steps to the right of a pub. Follow the towpath, with the water on your right,

beneath York Way. Pass beneath Caledonian Road, and continue along the towpath until it rises to meet Muriel Street at the west portal of the 880m-long Islington canal tunnel.

Turn left onto Muriel Street to follow its left-hand footway to Carnegie Street. Cross over Carnegie Street and take a path opposite to reach Leirum Street. Follow the right-hand footway of Leirum Street ahead to reach its end at its junction with Copenhagen Street, where turn right.

Cross Copenhagen Street by the pedestrian crossing at its junction with Hemingford Road. Follow the left-hand footway of Hemingford Road up the hill to reach the junction with Richmond Avenue.

**21** Continue along the left-hand footway of Hemingford Road, ascending to its junction with Offord Road.

*Below — Regent's Canal  
east of Granary Square*

*Bottom — a former pub on  
Hemingford Road*



There is a convenience shop (and also a pub) on Offord Road.

Turn right to cross Hemingford Road and follow the right-hand footway of Offord Road to its end at Liverpool Road.

Cross Liverpool Road using the pedestrian crossing. Turn left to cross over Laycock Street, where turn right onto the left-hand footway. Turn left at the traffic barrier to enter Laycock Green, and follow the path across the green to its north-eastern corner, passing some fitness torture equipment on your left, and finally squeezing out of the green onto Highbury Station Road.

Turn right to pass the Laycock Centre on your right, and follow the road through a left-and-right zigzag to reach Highbury Corner. Turn left to pass a garden on your right, then turn left to reach Highbury and Islington station.

Highbury and Islington station is served by Overground trains on the Mildmay Line between Willesden Junction and Stratford, and on the Windrush Line to and from stations in south-east London via Brunel's Thames Tunnel.

All facilities are available in the vicinity of Highbury and Islington station.

## Highbury and Islington to Finsbury Park 2.3km

**22** With your back to the entrance to Highbury and Islington station, make your way across Holloway Road by the light-controlled pedestrian crossing.

If you look to your left, you will see the 1904 entrance to the station (created by the Great Northern and City Railway company), which was then named simply *Highbury*. The building does not seem to have fared well.

Continue ahead onto Highbury Place and follow its left-hand footway as far as the junction (on your right) with Calabria Road, where bear left to take a path which crosses Highbury Fields on the diagonal. At the far end of the path, you will reach Highbury Crescent at its junction with Ronalds Road.

If the path across the field is muddy, simply continue along Highbury Place to Highbury Crescent to reach the junction with Ronalds Road.

*Highbury station  
Great Northern Railway  
entrance (1904)*





Turn left onto Ronalds Road, crossing to the right-hand footway at a suitable location, and follow it downhill to the point where bollards force vehicular traffic to turn left. Turn right onto Arvon Road, and follow its left-hand footway to its end at the street named Drayton Park. Bear left, then cross Drayton Park using the pedestrian crossing. Turn right and follow the left-hand footway to reach Drayton Park station on the left.

Drayton Park station is on the line between Moorgate and Finsbury Park (and onwards to Stevenage).

Drayton Park station was opened in 1904 by the Great Northern and City Railway in its push north from Moorgate. It was later transferred to the Metropolitan Railway and became part of the Northern Heights network, which was planned during the 1930s but was never brought into service after the Second World War. It is now served by trains running between Moorgate and Stevenage.

**23** Follow the left-hand footway of Drayton Park round to the left to reach the overblown (hubristic?) entrance to Arsenal's stadium.

There is a traditional breakfast café on the left, opposite the enormous initial A of Arsenal.

Continue along the left-hand footway of Drayton Park, passing the junction with Martineau Road on the right. Pass modern flats on the left. Just before the right-hand bend in the road, turn left at the entrance to Gillespie Park.

Arsenal Tube station is just round the corner.

Arsenal station was originally named Gillespie Road (as seen on the platform tilework), but was renamed after the football club as the closest station to their Highbury Stadium. Now that the club has decamped, will the station revert to its original geographical name? Current thinking is that it will not, but it cannot really be ruled out.

Pass the Islington Ecology Centre on your right, and keep close to the railway on your left as you make your way through the park. At the end of the park, descend the steps to reach Seven Sisters Road.

Gillespie Park is a small (2.8ha) nature reserve with an impressive

range of plants, birds and butterflies. There is an Ecology Centre (open to the public) with educational materials. Note that the park is closed for the day if there is an event at the football stadium. Most of the park is out of bounds to dogs.

If the park is closed, reach Finsbury Park station by passing the station, turning left

*Hubris (and ugliness), N5*





*Gillespie Park  
Nature Reserve*

to walk the full length of St Thomas's Road, and crossing Seven Sisters Road as noted above.

Cross Seven Sisters Road by the light-controlled pedestrian crossing and continue ahead on Station Place to reach the entrance to Finsbury Park station on your left.

The station opened here in 1861, taking its present name in 1869. The forerunner of the Piccadilly Line (between Finsbury Park and Hammersmith) was opened in 1906 by David Lloyd George. Today, the station is served by the Piccadilly and Victoria Lines of the Tube, and by several National Rail services to and from Moorgate, King's Cross, and St Pancras.

All facilities are available in the area surrounding the station.

## **Finsbury Park to Seven Sisters**

### **3.3km**

**24** Continue along Station Place (that is to say, turning left if exiting Finsbury Park station). Cross Stroud Green Road by the light-controlled pedestrian crossing and continue ahead into Finsbury Park.

The park opened in 1869, one of the first of London's great municipal parks: it was almost called Albert Park, after the late Prince Consort (whose name is not remembered in nearly enough dedications — he was a great innovator and supported other innovators) — but the





*Finsbury Park*

local name stuck. Even before the creation of the park, the area (then known as Hornsey Wood) was a favourite retreat from London's smoke and grime, and as far back as the middle of the eighteenth century, a tea-room was established at what is now the highest point in the park.

The park now contains the usual municipal mix of neat lawns, children's play areas,

wilder land, and sports facilities, including London's prime public facilities for the transatlantic sports of softball, baseball and American football.

Walkers should note that large parts of the path may be cordoned off from the public, having been commandeered for private or fee-paying events. Diversions will be necessary, and the event staff may not be supremely helpful in directing the members of the public who are not connected with the event.

Follow the path which runs parallel to the railway as far as a footbridge on the left, passing some tennis courts on your right. Do not cross the bridge, but turn right to cross the park's peripheral road by the pedestrian crossing, and press on ahead until you see a café on your left.

If you are here in the earlier three-quarters of the morning, you will see a closed café on your right — it does not open until 0900, thus missing a lot of passing trade.

Bear left to pass the café (there are toilets beyond the café entrance on the left) and reach the lake. Turn right, with the lake now on your left, passing a children's play area on your right.

At the end of the play area, bear right then turn left to enter the Mackenzie Garden, named after one of the senior planners of the park, Alexander Mackenzie.

Pass the flower beds and bear right on a path which leads across the park's peripheral road to the impressive entrance gates on Green Lanes opposite Seven Sisters Road.

There is a café at the park entrance (which opens a hatch at 0700 each morning), and there is a pub and some shops on the other side of Green Lanes at the junction. There are toilets at the Finsbury Park gates. The café is situated in the lodge on the left just inside the park at the gates.

The main entrance to Manor Park station, on the Piccadilly Line, is just to the left of the gates, but the station may be accessed from any of the underpass entrances at the junction.



Green Lanes, with its curious plural form, is actually one of the longest streets in London, linking up a line of drovers' tracks for over ten kilometres through what is now the endless suburbia of north London. Along this route into the city, many drovers brought cattle from Hertfordshire, and indeed from as far away as North Wales and the Outer Hebrides (the cattle swimming the Minch) to the City's Smithfield Market, making use of trysting towns such as Falkirk and Towcester (where the Wesh and Scottish routes merged). Now a main road, there is not much green about it.

The Victoria Line runs beneath the Piccadilly Line at Manor House station, but the cost and inconvenience prompted the designers not to make an interchange station here. After all, there is an interchange between the two lines at Finsbury Park.

Cross over Green Lanes using the divided light-controlled pedestrian crossing to follow the left-hand footway of Seven Sisters Road to its junction with Woodberry Grove, with the brick flats of the Woodberry Down estate on your left and right — at least until they are demolished.

This large estate of about 2000 dwelling units was planned by the London County Council during the 1930s, drawing inspiration from the architectural styles which had become important in the planning of social housing in the Netherlands, Germany and Austria.

It will be no surprise to learn that the plans had to be redrawn after the Second World War, when the need for regeneration was more acute. It was decided at that time that the estate was now to contain uniform blocks of either five or eight storeys, in order to facilitate planning and maintenance.

At the same time, a deliberate decision was made (following the Germanic architectural principles which held sway at the time) that each of the blocks should be set on a north-south axis in order that each dwelling would benefit from natural sunlight (if the sun was shining, of course) during some part of the day — morning or afternoon, depending on whether the unit faced east or west.

In addition, the eight-storey blocks had little touches of *Mittleuropa* modernism throughout — in the intensity of their eaves, in the upper balconies which were cantilevered outwards, and in the pastel cream and blue of the walls. The smaller five-storey blocks, though, bore more clearly the pedigree of flats which had been built

*Woodberry Down —  
twentieth-century housing*





*The New River,  
Seven Sisters Road*

for London County Council, using the same plans as for blocks of flats across the capital.

The first tenants of the Woodberry Down estate took up residence in 1948. In a twenty-year programme (scheduled to be completed in 2031), all of these flats will be replaced by over 5000 new dwelling units, not all of which will be social housing.

It would be interesting — indeed, it would be clearly

of architectural importance— to see one of each type of block conserved (at least as far as the exterior is concerned) as a model of the mid-century *Mitteleuropa* grand design.

**25** Continue along the left-hand footway of Seven Sisters Road to a bridge across the New River.

The New River was dug between 1608 and 1613 to bring a supply of fresh water from the River Lea in Hertfordshire to serve London. The Lea was tapped at Amwell, near Ware, and flowed for about 60km. Though rather wider than the *levadas* on the island of Madeira, it serves the same function, moving water by gravity to where it is needed.

Despite the project's obvious potential, its financial position began so shakily that Myddelton had to gain assistance from King James I (actually, to be precise, King James VI and I) to ensure its completion. In places, there is little or no flow today.

Cross over Lake Road, and continue along the left-hand footway of Seven Sisters Road. Pass an enormous brick-barn church on the right, and continue to the junction with St Ann's Road, where the Goblin Line — the Overground line between Gospel Oak and Barking which is henceforth to be saddled with the name of the Suffragette Line — crosses the middle of the junction.

Pass beneath the railway and cross St Ann's Road using the divided light-controlled pedestrian crossing, then turn right to return to the left-hand footway of Seven Sisters Road. Continue ahead on Seven Sisters Road to reach, on your left, the southern entrance to Seven Sisters station.

Seven Sisters station is served by the Victoria Line, and the Overground lines to Cheshunt and Enfield Town (from Liverpool Street).

There is a coffee hatch at the station entrance, and other refreshment possibilities nearby.

## Seven Sisters to Tottenham Hale 1.5km

**26** Continue along the left-hand footway of Seven Sisters Road to the junction with High Road, where turn right to cross the outflow from Seven Sisters Road by a light-controlled pedestrian crossing, then turn left to cross High Road by a divided light-controlled pedestrian crossing. At the junction with Broad Lane, turn right to enter a little park parallel to Broad Lane. At the far end of the park, pick up the right-hand footway of Broad Lane, passing shops on the left (some of which are not hairdressers). Follow Broad Lane to the junction with Fountayne Road and take the bend to the left.



*Broad Lane Gardens,  
Seven Sisters*

**27** Continue along the right-hand footway of Broad Lane, passing a retail park on the right.

*There is a café in the retail park, accessible from Broad Lane.*

At the end of Broad Lane, cross over Ferry Lane using the light-controlled pedestrian crossing. Turn right to follow the left-hand footway of Ferry Lane to the bus station, crossing the road into and out of the bus station to reach Tottenham Hale station.

*Tottenham Hale station is served by the Victoria Line, by Greater Anglia services to and from Liverpool Street and Stratford, and by Stansted Express services.*

*There is a sandwich shop next to the station entrance.*

*Ferry Boat Inn,  
Forest Road*

## Tottenham Hale to Blackhorse Road 1.8km

**28** Continue along the left-hand footway of Ferry Lane (that is, turning left if exiting Tottenham Hale station). Cross over Mill Mead Road by the light-controlled pedestrian crossing. Just after you pass (or visit!) a pub on





the left, use the light-controlled pedestrian crossing to cross to the right-hand footway at a Thames Water facility.

The pub is right on the borough boundary, just inside what is today the London Borough of Waltham Forest. Does its situation derive from more forgiving licensing laws to the east of a previous boundary at this point?

**29** Continue along the right-hand footway (noting the change of street-name to Forest Road at the borough boundary) to reach Blackhorse Road station on your right.

Blackhorse Road station is served by the Victoria Line and by the Overground line which runs between Gospel Oak and Barking Riverside (the Goblin Line, now to be known as the Suffragette Line).

## Blackhorse Road to Walthamstow Central 2.0km

**30** From Blackhorse Road station, cross Blackhorse Road ahead by the light-controlled pedestrian crossing and continue along the right-hand footway of Forest Road as far as its junction with Palmerston Road.

On Forest Road, at the first bus stop after Blackhorse Road, you will come to a small supermarket on the right, set back from the road on the ground floor of a modern block of flats, and there is a café over to your left on the corner of Pembar Road. At the junction with Palmerston Road, there is a chain pub and (on the north side of the junction) a convenience shop.

*Forest Road at Pembar Road*



Cross Palmerston Road using the light-controlled pedestrian crossing and turn right to follow the left-hand footway to the junction on the left with Coleridge Road.

**31** Turn left to follow the right-hand footway of Coleridge Road almost to its end at Erskine Road, where turn right. Follow the left-hand footway of Erskine Road all the way to High Street, where turn left.

High Street is, as one would expect, full of shops of all kinds, including street market stalls on some days of the week.

Follow High Street to the end of the buildings on the right, where turn right to follow a path diagonally across Walthamstow Town Square to reach Selborne Road, with the bus station to your left (but do not enter the bus station unless you need to catch a bus).

Cross Selborne Road using the light-controlled pedestrian crossing, and turn left to reach the entrance to Walthamstow Central station.

Walthamstow Central station is at the northern end of the Victoria Line. Walthamstow Central station gradually came into being in the early 1870s, and the line between Chingford and London was established by 1873. The line was electrified, with services starting in 1960. The Victoria Line arrived in 1968, and the Overground took over the Chingford services in 2015.

Walthamstow Central has Victoria Line services to central London, and Overground services to Liverpool Street and Chingford.

There are all facilities in High Street and Selborne Road, with a shopping mall to the west of the station.

*Walthamstow Town Square*

