



David Hampshire

# London's Village Walks

20 Walks Around the City's Most Beautiful Historic Villages

# LONDON'S VILLAGE WALKS

**20 Walks Around the City's Most  
Interesting Historic Villages**

**by David Hampshire**



**City Books • Bath • England**

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Last, but not least, a special thank you to the many photographers – the unsung heroes – whose beautiful images bring London to life.

### ACCESS

Most buildings and public spaces (e.g. parks) in London provide wheelchair access, but this doesn't apply to private buildings and gardens. Contact the relevant company or organisation if you have specific requirements. The Disabled Go website ([www.disabledgo.com](http://www.disabledgo.com)) provides more in-depth access information for many destinations.



# Author's Notes

Please note the following regarding the walks in this book.

- ◆ **Length & Duration:** The length of walks is approximate – shown to the nearest quarter mile – as is the time required to complete them, particularly if you make a lot of stops (coffee, lunch, museums, shopping, etc.). The average walking speed is around 3mph but we have allowed for a much slower pace of 2mph. (The idea isn't to get from the start to finish as quickly as possible.) You can, of course, start a walk from either end and combine a number of walks to make a longer walk, or alternatively, shorten a walk. Most walks are graded easy or moderate with relatively few hills or steps.
- ◆ **Opening Hours:** Most of the buildings and public spaces (e.g. parks) included in the walks are open seven days a week; opening times may vary for weekdays/weekends and by season. Almost all parks and gardens offer free access, unless otherwise indicated. The opening hours of many sights and museums (etc.) are listed, though these are liable to change. Where there's an entry fee, it's noted.
- ◆ **Transport:** All walks start and end at or near a tube or railway station. Most can also be reached by bus (routes aren't listed as there are simply too many to include them all) and sometimes by river ferry. The postcode of the starting point is shown should you wish to drive. However, the nearest car park or on-road parking may be some distance away, particularly in central London – and can be expensive.
- ◆ **Maps:** That maps aren't drawn to scale. Points of interest are numbered. An overall map of London is included on pages 8-9 showing the location of walks within the city.
- ◆ **Food & Drink:** Recommended 'pit stops' have been included in all walks – shown in **yellow** in the map key and in the text (other food and drink places are numbered as landmarks but aren't specifically recommended). When not listed, a pub/restaurant's meal times are usually the 'standard' hours, e.g. noon-2.30 or 3pm and 6-11pm, although some are open all day and may also serve food all day (as do cafés). Many pubs are also open in the mornings for coffee, etc. Telephone numbers are listed where bookings are advisable or necessary, otherwise booking isn't usually required or even possible. Note that in the City of London, many establishments are open only from Monday to Friday. A price guide is included (£ = inexpensive, ££ = moderate, £££ = expensive); most recommended places fall into the inexpensive category.

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Camden Passage, Islington

## Introduction

The largest city in Western Europe (west of Istanbul), Greater London covers an area of over 600mi<sup>2</sup> (ca. 1,600km<sup>2</sup>) and has a population of almost 9 million. Unlike more modern cities, London wasn't planned logically but grew organically. From its beginnings as a Roman trading port some 2,000 years ago, it has mushroomed into the metropolis we see today, swallowing up thousands of villages, hamlets and settlements in the process. Many former villages – like Bloomsbury and Notting Hill – are now bustling cosmopolitan neighbourhoods, while others, such as Barnes and Dulwich, retain much of their original rural charm and character.

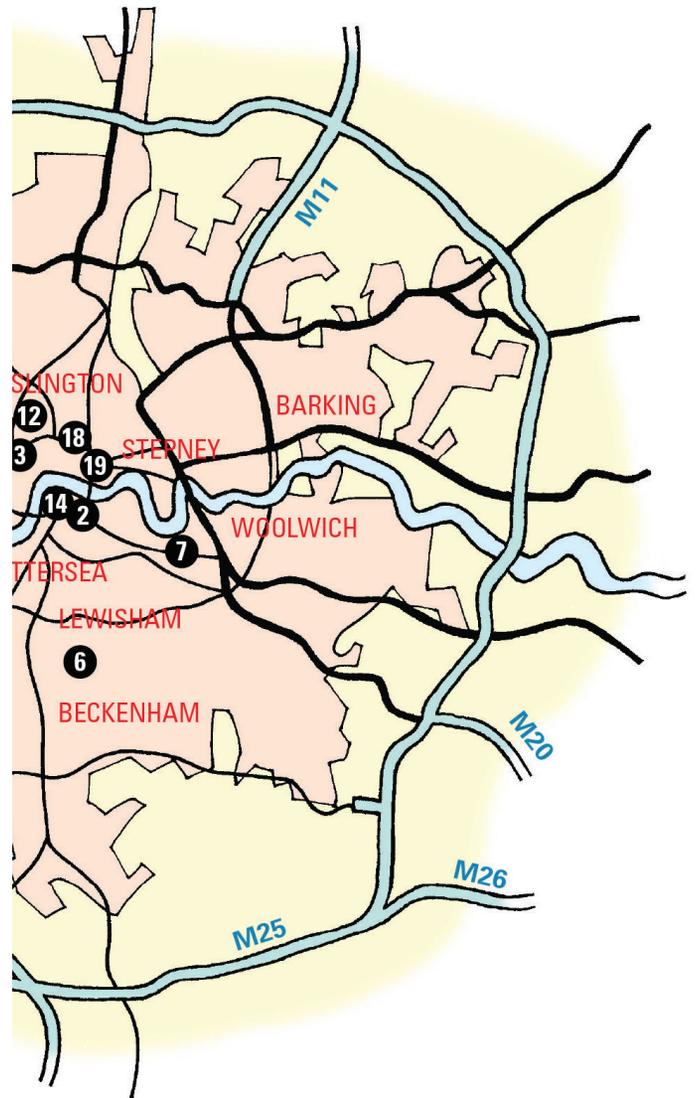
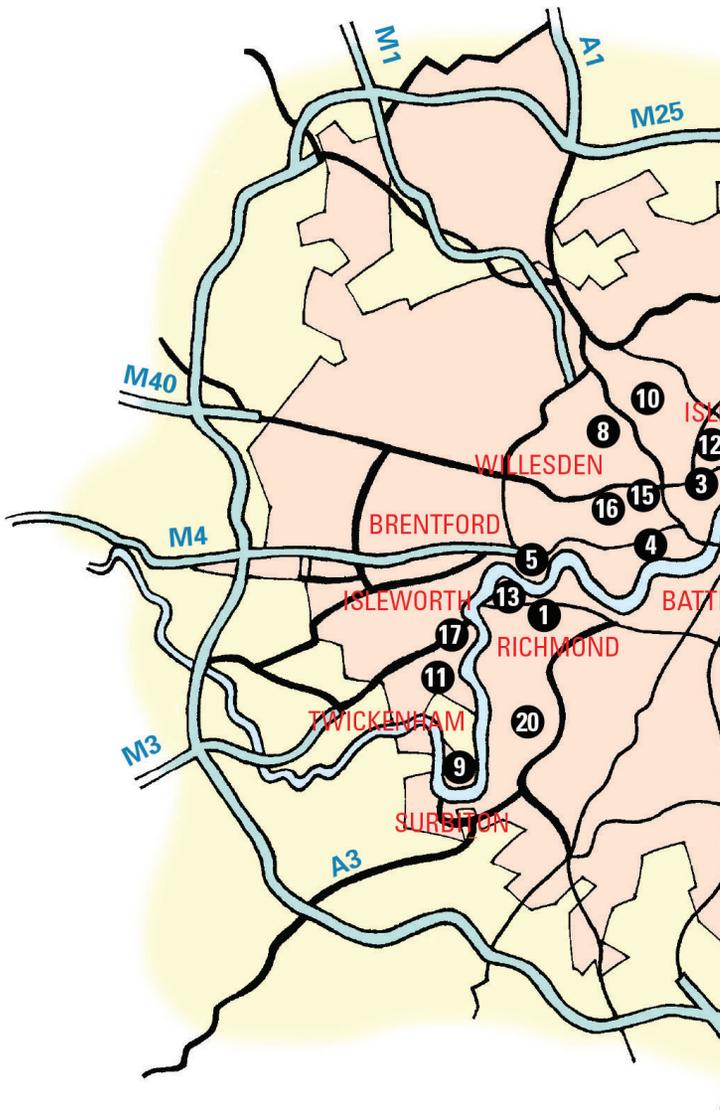
You might dispute some areas' village status nowadays, but back in the 18th and 19th centuries, people were farming in Islington, fishing in Chiswick and building country piles in Hoxton. Patronage from royalty and wealthy merchants helped to boost the profile of some villages, while new migrants set up home-from-home 'villages' in areas such as Spitalfields. The city began to grow in earnest in the late 18th and early 19th centuries and the pace increased ten-fold with the advent of the railways in the 1840s, which saw dozens of villages devoured by the advancing city. Between 1801 and 1891 the population increased from barely a million to over 5½ million.

Nevertheless, if you're seeking a village vibe – a green on which to watch cricket, lots of small independent shops, a market selling local farmers' produce, an ancient church and graveyard to explore, a pub with a warm welcome (and local ales and ducks paddling in the pond outside) – you can still find them if you know where to look. Scratch beneath the surface of modern London and you'll find a rich tapestry of ancient villages, just waiting to be rediscovered.

*London's Village Walks* explores 20 of the city's most interesting and best preserved 'villages', where – with a little imagination – it's still possible to picture yourself living in a bygone age. The walks are between two and 6½ miles in length, with the average around four miles. However, it's best to allow a half day for the shorter walks and as much as a full day for the longer walks – particularly if you plan to partake of the many excellent pubs, restaurants and cafés along the routes (for your author, a good lunch is a prerequisite of a good walk!) – not to mention the many diversions along the way, such as museums, galleries and churches. The aim is to take the 'scenic route', visiting as many interesting landmarks as possible, rather than simply getting from A to B as fast as possible.

Writing *London's Village Walks* has been a fascinating, educational and enjoyable journey of discovery. We hope that you enjoy these walks as much as we did; all you need is a comfortable pair of shoes, a sense of adventure – and this book!

**David Hampshire**  
April 2018



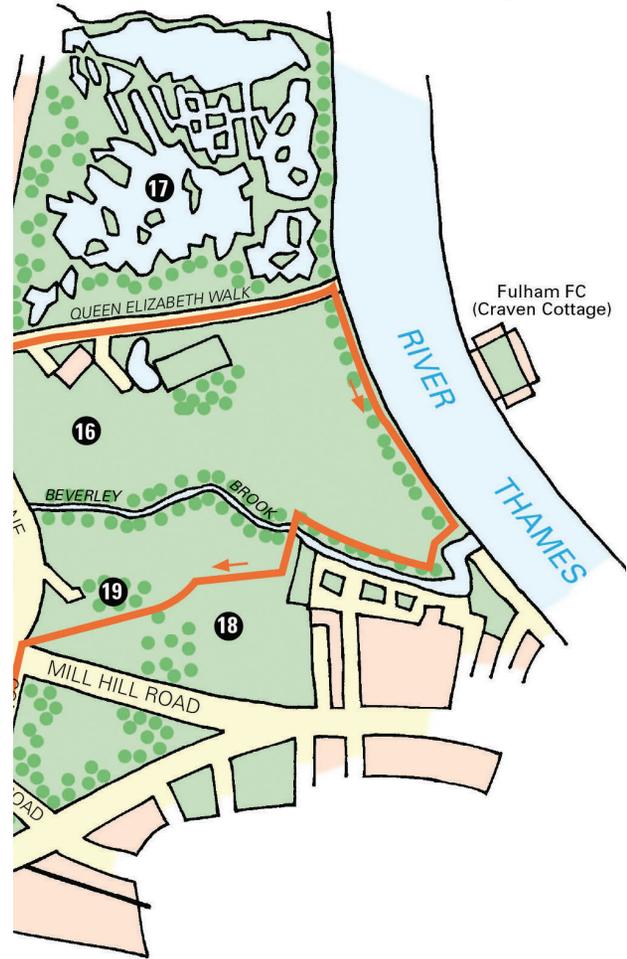
- 1 Barnes Common
- 2 Barnes Green
- 3 Old Sorting Office (OSO) Arts Centre
- 4 Milbourne House
- 5 Fresh Café
- 6 Bull's Head
- 7 The Terrace
- 8 Barnes Railway Bridge
- 9 White Hart
- 10 Orange Pekoe



**START & END**  
Barnes railway station

- 11 Rick Stein, Barnes
- 12 Beverley Path
- 13 The Grange
- 14 St Mary's, Barnes
- 15 Olympic Studios
- 16 Barn Elms Playing Fields
- 17 London Wetland Centre
- 18 Putney Lower Common
- 19 Barnes Old Cemetery

● Places of Interest ● Food & Drink



## Barnes



**Distance:** 4½ miles (7 km)

**Terrain:** easy, some moderate hills

**Duration:** 2½ hours

**Start & End:** Barnes rail

**Postcode:** SW13 0HT

**E**legant, affluent Barnes sits on the south bank of the River Thames – tucked into an upward loop of the river – with Chiswick to the west, Hammersmith to the north, Putney to the east and Mortlake/Roehampton to the south. One of the most well-heeled and desirable suburbs of southwest London, Barnes has the atmosphere of a quintessential country village and is noted for its strong sense of community, expansive green spaces and beautiful riverside walks.

This ancient rural enclave appears in the *Domesday Book* of 1086 as Berne (barn). Until the mid-19th century the village comprised just a few shops and inns, with some imposing houses around the green and common, but it grew rapidly after the construction of Hammersmith Bridge (1827) and the railway (1846). Although less than 6 miles (ca. 10km) from central London and located within the London borough of Richmond-upon-Thames, Barnes still feels like a country village – complete with village green and duck pond – much of which is protected as a conservation area. It has many handsome riverside pubs, fine restaurants and cosy cafés and a wealth of traditional independent stores (Barnes reportedly has the highest proportion of indie traders of any town in Britain).

Barnes is also noted for its abundance of beautiful architecture, predominantly from the 18th and 19th centuries, with areas characterised by certain styles. Of particular interest is The Terrace, which is lined with splendid early 18th-century waterfront properties overlooking the Thames; look out for its majestic ‘lion houses’ (dating from the late 1890s), with their fine detailing and proud lions peering down from their rooftop perches. ‘Little Chelsea’ offers quaint bijou Victorian terraced houses, in contrast to the sleek

luxurious apartments and townhouses that are emerging around the village.

Our walk traverses Barnes Common and Green, makes a tour of the village (and its most popular streets), explores sections of the Thames Path, and takes us around and across Putney Common and along the lovely Beverley Brook, before terminating back at Barnes railway station.

### Start Walking...

Leaving Barnes station, go left on Station Road across glorious **Barnes Common** ①, passing the cricket ground on your left. The Common covers around 124 acres (50ha) – one of the largest areas of unenclosed common land within easy reach of central London – and was mainly marshland until drained in the late 19th century. It’s now a Local Nature Reserve, comprising open grassland, trees and woodland, home to an abundance of flora and fauna; it’s noted for its grasses but has few mammals due to its open nature.

After around 300m you pass some houses on the left (after

### Barnes Green

At the heart of the community, the Green is a delightful tranquil spot with a large pond; it’s the venue for several open-air events (including Barnes Fair in July and the Barnes Food Fair in September) and regular covered markets. In former times the stocks were located here and during medieval fairs there were races around the pond. Today it’s a popular venue for ball games, picnics and feeding the ducks, and is home to the Barnes Green Social Centre, the Old Sorting Office Arts Centre and Barnes Methodist Church (1906).

Scarf Road) and soon after you cross over Beverley Brook just before **Barnes Green** ② (see box above). Beverley Brook is an 8-mile (13km) river rising in Worcester Park and entering the Thames near Leader’s Gardens on the Putney Embankment. (The Beverley Brook Walk follows much of the river’s course – see [www.merton.gov.uk/assets/Documents/beverly-brook-walk.pdf](http://www.merton.gov.uk/assets/Documents/beverly-brook-walk.pdf)).

Continue along the left edge of the Green and follow the path past the **Old Sorting Office (OSO) Arts Centre** ③ and the Wildwood restaurant (both good places for coffee or lunch). Opposite the



Barnes Green

The Terrace



Arts Centre, on the other side of Station Road, is 17th-century **Milbourne House** 4, former home of the author Henry Fielding (1707-54), creator of Tom Jones. Marked by a blue plaque, it's the oldest private residence in Barnes and incorporates parts of an earlier Tudor building, including an Elizabethan fireplace in the entrance hall. Next door is Essex House, now a doctors' surgery and the venue for Barnes weekly Farmers' Market which takes place in the car park (Sat, 10am-2pm). Just around the corner on Church Road, opposite the duck pond, is the 18th-century Sun Inn, a large rambling establishment occupying a striking whitewashed building with an expansive terrace. At the rear of the inn is Barnes Bowling Club, where Sir

### Thames Path

The Thames Path ([www.nationaltrail.co.uk/thames-path](http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/thames-path)) is a long-distance National Trail footpath running for 184 miles (296km) along the banks of the River Thames. From its source in the Cotswold hills to the Thames Flood Barrier at Woolwich in southeast London, it flows through peaceful water meadows, unspoilt rural villages, historic towns and cities, and finally through the heart of London.

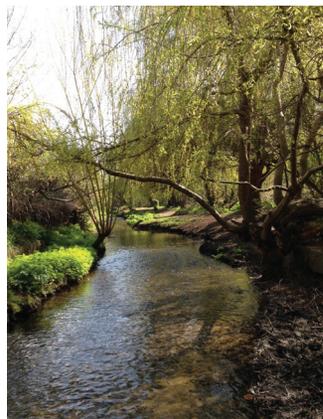
Francis Drake is said to have taught Elizabeth I to play bowls.

Turn left from Station Road along Barnes High Street where, on the right, the Barnes Community Organisation occupies 17th-century Rose House, formerly a tiny pub. The **Fresh Café** 5 at number 4 is a good place to get a caffeine fix. At the end of the street you arrive at the riverside – the **Bull's Head** 6 pub on the right, facing the Thames, has been one of the UK's premier jazz venues for the last 60 years – and head left along **The Terrace** 7. This handsome street is lined with elegant pastel-coloured Georgian houses overlooking a wide and peaceful stretch of the Thames. The houses date from 1720 and encompass a variety of architectural styles, many replete with porticos and verandas. Number 10 on the corner of Cleveland Gardens has a blue plaque to the composer Gustav Holst (1874-1934) who lived here from 1907-13 when he was head of music at St Paul's Girls' School. The house has a large music room on the top floor and a terrace where Holst and fellow composer Ralph Vaughan Williams would watch the University Boat Race.

Continue along the Thames Path (see box, left) under **Barnes Railway Bridge** 8 (1895, Grade II listed) – the original bridge built in 1849 still stands on the upstream side – opposite Barnes Bridge railway station. At the end of The Terrace is the **White Hart** 9, a historic Young's pub dating from the 1660s with a large bar, roaring fire and wonderful river views; it's a prime spot from which to watch the climax of the Boat Race as the crews from Oxford and Cambridge Universities push for the finish every spring, as they have done for almost 200 years (see [www.theboatrace.org](http://www.theboatrace.org)). Turn left past the White Hart into White Hart Lane passing **Orange Pekoe** 10 on your left (a temple to tea established in 2006), while opposite is **Rick Stein, Barnes** 11, an outpost of the eponymous TV chef's empire.

Continue along White Hart Lane – the area here is known as Little Chelsea – a popular street lined with shops and pretty terraced cottages, which marks the the boundary between Barnes and Mortlake. Among the many

Beverley Brook



businesses here are Annie's Barnes, a Bohemian restaurant at number 36, and Tobias & the Angel, a delightful home furnishings shop, at number 66. Opposite the China Chef restaurant, turn left into Westfields Avenue where you pass some allotments, the remnants of the former market gardens of Westfields. Just before the end of the street take the Long Walk footpath on the left and after 50m turn right along **Beverley Path** 12, an ancient route between Mortlake and Putney which crosses land known as the Goslings (recorded in 1464 as Geseland, where geese were reared). After around 150m go left into Brookwood Avenue, walk to the end and cross over Station Road and back to Barnes Green.

Follow the path along the right-hand side of the Green and turn right to pass between the pond (on your left) and the Barnes Green Social Centre. As you exit onto Church Road, turn right and some 50m along on the left, just past Nassau Road, is **The Grange** 13, an 18th-century house with attractive early 19th-century railings. Next door is St Osmund's Catholic Primary School, established around 1900 by French nuns.

Turn right along Church Road to browse one of Barnes' main shopping streets. Outlets here include Gail's Bakery, Ginger Pig (an excellent butcher) and a delightfully named greengrocer, Two Peas in a Pod. Just past Kitson Road is **St Mary's, Barnes** 14, a handsome medieval church

St Mary's, Barnes



with a fascinating history, lovely churchyard and a coffee shop. The church's oldest parts include the 12th-century Langton Chapel (named after Archbishop Stephen Langton, who dedicated the church in 1215) and the brick-built west tower constructed around 1485. Next door to the church is another fine Georgian building, Strawberry House, followed by **Olympic Studios 15**, one of London's best boutique art-house cinemas, complete with a café and restaurant. The building has had a chequered history as a village hall, concert hall, cinema, theatre and – most famously – a recording studio from 1966 to 2009. In its heyday it played host to many of rock and pop's greatest stars, including the Rolling Stones, Jimi Hendrix, the Beatles, David Bowie, Queen, Pink Floyd and Madonna.

Continue along Church Road to the busy junction with Rocks Lane and Castelnau – which means 'new castle' in the Occitan language – and cross over to Queen Elizabeth Walk. On the right are **Barn Elms Playing Fields 16**, on land that once

belonged to the Archbishop of Canterbury. A manor house on the site (Barn Elms) was once owned by Sir Francis Walsingham – Elizabeth I's spymaster – and later the Hoare banking family, who sold it in 1827; it was demolished in 1954, although one of the entrance lodges still survives. The reserve is now part of Putney Common, which stretches from the **London Wetland Centre 17** (see box, below) in the north to Barnes Common; it's a haven for rare flora and fauna (and people!) and has been a popular retreat for centuries.

#### London Wetland Centre

The WWT London Wetland Centre (entrance fee) covers an area of over 100 acres (40ha), an unexpectedly large wildlife habitat close to central London, and Europe's best urban wildlife-viewing area. The Centre was created by the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT) when four concrete reservoirs become redundant after the completion of the Thames Water Ring Main in the '90s. It took five years to establish the centre – during which 300,000 plants and 27,000 trees were planted – which opened in May 2000. (For more information, see [www.wwt.org.uk/wetland-centres/london](http://www.wwt.org.uk/wetland-centres/london).)

From the Wetland Centre walk along the path that runs parallel to Queen Elizabeth Walk to the river, where you turn right to re-join the Thames Path. On the opposite bank in Putney is Craven Cottage, home to Fulham Football Club, and Bishop's Park and Palace. After around 500m a small bridge crosses Beverley Brook. Take the path to the right just before the

#### Food & Drink



- 5 Fresh Café:** At number 4 Barnes High Street, Fresh is a good place to get your morning caffeine fix (8am-5pm. £).
- 6 Bull's Head:** Popular spot for a traditional pub lunch, particularly on a Sunday when there's live jazz (11am or noon-11/11.30pm, £).
- 10 Orange Pekoe:** Cosy venue for afternoon tea – or coffee (7.30am-5pm, 9am weekends, £).
- 11 Rick Stein, Barnes:** Lovely restaurant occupying former council stables, RSB offers superb fresh seafood (020-8878 9462, noon-3pm/6-10pm, ££).

On the southern edge of the common, close to where Gipsy Road meets Queen's Ride, is a memorial to the rock star Mark Bolan, who was killed in a car crash here in 1977.

and a number of distinguished Victorians are interred here, where an abundance of monuments and statues were erected to their memory. Today it's one of London's forgotten cemeteries, overgrown with trees and shrubs, with many monuments vandalised and statues decapitated. It's a sorry sight, but also hauntingly beautiful, atmospheric and evocative, with an air of gentle decay and quiet seclusion. (There's another historic cemetery – Putney Lower Common Cemetery – in the southeast corner of the common.)

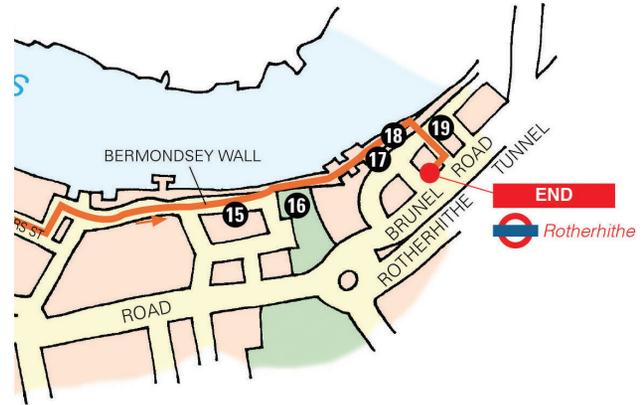
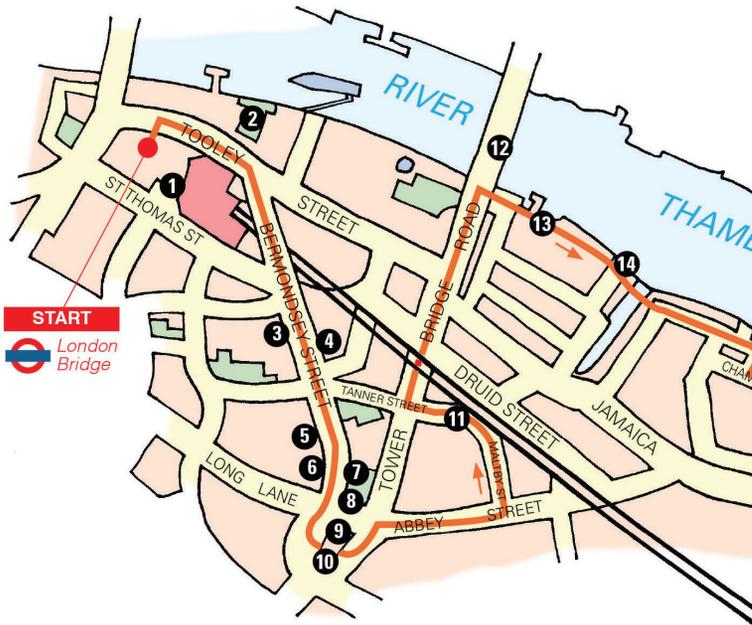
Walk southwest from the cemetery to reach the crossroads of Mill Hill Road and Rocks Lane, then continue along Rocks Lane to Station Road and follow it back to Barnes railway station and the end of the walk.

bridge, which follows the course of the brook for around 400m, after which you cross over a modern bridge on the left to **Putney Lower Common 18**. Take the second path on the right, which leads past **Barnes Old Cemetery 19** and Rocks Lane Barnes sports centre.

The cemetery was established in 1854 on 2 acres (0.8ha)



London Wetland Centre



- |    |                                      |    |                          |
|----|--------------------------------------|----|--------------------------|
| 1  | Shard                                | 11 | Maltby Street Market     |
| 2  | Hay's Galleria                       | 12 | Tower Bridge             |
| 3  | London Glassblowing Studio & Gallery | 13 | Shad Thames              |
| 4  | Fashion & Textile Museum             | 14 | Blueprint Café           |
| 5  | White Cube                           | 15 | Edward III's Manor House |
| 6  | Pizarro                              | 16 | King's Stairs Gardens    |
| 7  | St Mary Magdalen                     | 17 | St Mary's Rotherhithe    |
| 8  | Watch House                          | 18 | Mayflower                |
| 9  | Bermondsey Square                    | 19 | Brunel Museum            |
| 10 | Bermondsey Antiques Market           |    |                          |

● Places of Interest ● Food & Drink

## Bermondsey & Rotherhithe



**Distance:** 3 miles (5 km)  
**Terrain:** easy, mostly flat terrain  
**Duration:** 1½ hours  
**Start:** London Bridge tube  
**End:** Rotherhithe rail  
**Postcode:** SE1 3QX

**B**ermondsey is one of the oldest parts of Southwark – and London – with evidence of occupation going back to Roman times. It appears in the *Domesday Book* of 1086 as Bermundesey and Bermundesye, and is thought to be named after Beormund, the Saxon lord of the district. Its Thameside location made it an important transport hub for trade – the borough had the reputation for being the ‘Larder of London’ – and its riverbank was lined with wharves and warehouses. For many years Bermondsey was famous for its tanneries; by the end of the 18th century a third of all the country’s leather came from the area, and this left a legacy of fine industrial buildings.

Once one of London’s most insalubrious slums (it was the backdrop for Dickens’s *Oliver Twist*), Bermondsey has gone from bust to boom in a generation, its derelict warehouses converted in the ’80s into stylish lofts and commercial spaces, restaurants, bars, galleries and artists’ studios. The Bermondsey village area, centred on Bermondsey Street and Bermondsey Square, has also seen an upsurge in artistic and commercial activity in recent years. Uber trendy, oozing history and derelict chic – but still rough around the edges – it’s now one of the city’s most exciting and atmospheric areas and a honeypot for foodies and culture seekers.

The word Rotherhithe is Anglo Saxon in origin and means ‘landing place for cattle’. It was originally a low-lying area known as Redriff, with a tight-knit community of shipbuilders and sailors (until the docks closed in 1970). Rotherhithe Street is a rare complete 18th-century village, full of atmosphere and history, now a conservation area. To some, the contrast between original and more gentrified areas is jarring, but it gives the area a unique charm.

**Highlights of the walk include the Shard, Hay’s Galleria, Bermondsey Street and Square, Maltby Street Market, Tower Bridge, Shad Thames, Rotherhithe Street and the Brunel Museum, along with a wealth of historic buildings and churches, beautiful parks and gardens, and numerous outstanding cafés, bars, restaurants and pubs.**

### Start Walking...

The walk commences at London Bridge station, before going on to explore the ‘villages’ of Bermondsey and Rotherhithe. The station has its own claim to fame for train spotters, as the starting point for the London and Greenwich Railway, which opened in 1836 and was the first steam railway in the capital and the first built specifically to carry passengers.

Leave London Bridge tube and exit via London Bridge Walk onto Tooley Street and turn right. If you look to your right you’ll see (you can hardly miss it!) London’s newest skyscraper, the **Shard** ①, completed in 2012 and, at 1,016ft (309.6m), the tallest building not only in the UK but in Western Europe. Designed

by Italian architect and engineer Renzo Piano, it’s a building with multiple uses; a vertical city comprising offices, award-winning restaurants, the 5-star Shangri-La Hotel, exclusive residences, and the UK’s highest viewing gallery on the 72nd floor (802ft/245m).

### Hay’s Galleria

A riverside leisure and shopping complex on the south bank of the Thames, Hay’s Galleria opened in 1987 as part of the ‘London Bridge City’ development. Grade II listed, it’s a striking blend of historic and modern architecture and is named after its original owner, the merchant Alexander Hay, who acquired the property – then a brewhouse – in 1651. In around 1840, John Humphrey Jr obtained a lease on the property and commissioned William Cubitt to convert it into a ‘wharf’. The centrepiece of the Galleria is an acclaimed 60ft (18.3m) kinetic bronze sculpture of a ship, *The Navigators*, by David Kemp; weighing in at 14 tonnes, it’s a bizarre and captivating symphony of moving parts, water jets and fountains.

Opposite the station (near London Bridge) in Tooley Street is the London Bridge Experience. It’s an entertaining if macabre ‘immersive theatrical experience’ bringing together ‘history and horror, education and fun’ and is

based on the often gruesome history of London’s oldest river crossings. Turn right along Tooley Street and after some 200m take a left onto Battle

The Shard

