

The Physician and Birmingham's Waterside, Edgbaston, West Midlands



Easy Terrain

5.5 miles
Circular
2.5 hours

23116



Access Notes



1. The walk is almost entirely flat, with just a couple of very gentle gradients.
2. The paths are all surfaced, but the canal towpath can have some surface mud after wet weather.
3. There are no kissing gates, stiles or livestock on route but you will need to negotiate some simple park gates and two flights of steps.
4. There are a couple of road crossings that need care.

The Physician is a fabulous pub and restaurant housed in the former British Medical Institute building and today boasting beautiful indoor dining areas as well as a courtyard garden and orangery.

A 5.5 mile circular pub walk from The Physician in Edgbaston, Birmingham. The walking route takes you on a journey of discovery through residential streets, the waterside paths of Edgbaston Reservoir and Birmingham's Canals, the heart of Birmingham's entertainment district and the tree-lined avenues of Summerfield Park. Along the way there is even chance to call into the National Sea Life Centre.

Getting there

The walk starts and finishes at The Physician pub on the corner of Harborne Road and Highfield Road in Edgbaston.

Approximate post code **B15 3DH**.

There are bus stops just a short walk from the pub, (Bus Stop Names: before Harborne Rd and adj Highfield Rd). If you are coming by car, there is pay and display street parking and a car park heading south on Highfield Road. At peak times it will be easier to park in the free car park at Edgbaston Reservoir (Waypoint 1). You can then adjust the walk to start at this point, walk 4.5 miles of the route, call at The Physician for refreshments and then walk the final mile back to your car. The car park is accessed from the end of Reservoir Road.

Approximate post code **B16 9DS**.

Walk Sections



Start to Edgbaston
Reservoir



Begin your walk by standing on the pavement outside The Physician, at the crossroads between Harborne Road and Highfield Road. Cross over Harborne Road with

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care, to join Highfield Road heading north, passing Chamber of Commerce House on your right. Continue on the right-hand pavement and, at the end of the road, cross the dual carriageway ahead. NOTE: There is a designated crossing point here and the traffic is controlled by lights, but there is no pedestrian light so take care.

Turn left along the far pavement of Hagley Road and then take the first right turn into Plough and Harrow Road. This leads you past the Oratory building on your left, with its distinctive green copper dome. Stay with right-hand pavement to reach the crossroads at the end of the road. Cross over with care and go straight ahead into Waterworks Road.

You will pass the beautiful old red brick tower, Perrott's Folly, on your right. Built in 1758, there are many stories as to why the tower was built. Perhaps it was a viewing tower for hunting, an attraction for entertaining guests or maybe built so that John Perrott could see his wife's grave 15 miles away.

Take the first right turn into Harold Road. On your left are the waterworks, dating to the 1870s and still in use today. Despite the proximity of these works to Edgbaston Reservoir (which you will appreciate in a moment), they are unrelated. These waterworks manage domestic supply, whereas the reservoir is connected to the canal network. Just behind the waterworks building is another tall ornate red brick tower (you will see it on your left just after the waterworks), this one being the old chimney for the works. The two distinct towers give the skyline an unusual character. It is said (but not proven!) that these towers were the inspiration for JRR Tolkien, who lived nearby as a child, to write *The Two Towers* in *Lord of the Rings*.

Swap to the left-hand pavement of Harold Road and continue to the T-junction at the end. Turn left along Reservoir Road and follow this ahead, all the way to its end. Walk under the tall archway and follow the left-hand pavement which swings left to reach a zebra crossing. Cross over and you will see railings ahead and the water of Edgbaston Reservoir beyond.

1 → 2 Edgbaston Reservoir to Summerfield Park



Turn left and follow the surfaced walkway with the railings and Edgbaston Reservoir on your right. Originally a small pool named Roach Pool, this body of water was enlarged by Thomas Telford in the 1820s to create Edgbaston Reservoir. The reservoir was used to supply water to the Birmingham Canals. In 1873, the French acrobat Charles Blondin crossed the reservoir on a tightrope. Today the reservoir is the city's principal angling facility as well as being a popular venue for walking, sailing, rowing and running. It supports a large number of birds as well as newts and bats.

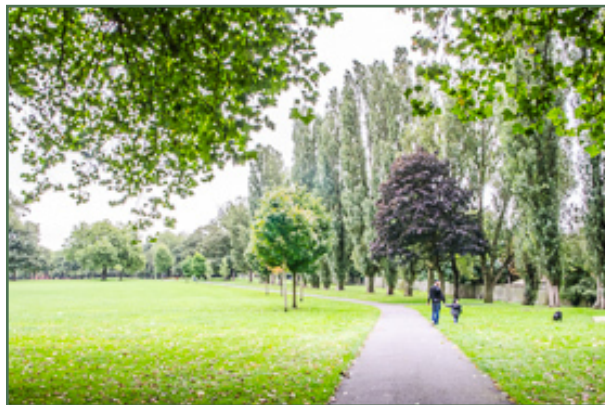
The walkway leads you along the right-hand edge of the reservoir car park before swinging right to pass the boathouse on your left. The boathouse is home to the city's Rowing Club and the University Boat Club.

Further along, just as the path enters trees, you will come to a fork. Take the right-hand branch, staying on the main surfaced path close to the reservoir edge. At the next junction (at the south-western point) take the right-hand branch, continuing along the reservoir edge. Across to the right you will be able to see the car park (from where you have just walked) as well as several

towers within the Birmingham skyline.

The path swings steadily left, passing an outdoor gym on your left. Cross the brick bridge over the inlet stream and then turn immediately left (leaving the reservoir edge path). Climb the flight of steps and go through the gates to reach a T-junction with a residential road, Gillott Road. Cross over to the far pavement, turn left along this and then take the first right turn into Selwyn Road. About 100 metres along, turn right through the blue metal gate to enter Summerfield Park.

2 → 3 Summerfield Park to Towpath



Follow the tarmac park path straight ahead, with a beautiful line of tall poplar trees running on your right. At the first crossroads, go straight ahead. As you approach the next junction, a path merges in from your left and you reach a fork. Take the left-hand branch (away from the park gates) and, just a few paces later you will reach a small crossroads. Take the right-hand path which runs parallel with the boundary fence across to your right.

Across to your left you will see a red brick building, which looks derelict. In fact, this is the park's bandstand and the red brick front is simply an ornate facade with a stage hidden at the rear. Summerfield Park was founded in 1876 and reached its present size 15 years later. It takes its name from Summerfield House, a large country house dating from the late 1600s which became the home of the Chance family, famous as glassmakers. The house was demolished in 1886 and the bandstand was built in its place.

At the corner of the park, fork right to join the shared walkway and cycleway, which exits the park via a gate to reach the road and a pedestrian crossing. Cross this and continue ahead on the shared walkway and cycleway, passing Barford Primary School on your right. At the junction with the road, cross over to the far pavement, turn right and then immediately left to join the path signed to the city centre and canal path.

You will emerge at the junction between Coplow Street and Northbrook Street. Cross over Coplow Street and walk ahead along Northbrook Street for just a few metres, then turn left through the colourful ornate metal gateway, marking the canal entrance. Follow the flight of steps down and, at the bottom, turn right down the slope to join the canal towpath.

3 → 4 Towpath to Sea Life Centre

Follow this canal towpath with the canal running on your left. If you are lucky, as we were, you may see the resident heron fishing for his lunch on this stretch. This is the Birmingham New Main Line, built by Thomas Telford to create a straighter canal, which reduced the distance between Birmingham and Wolverhampton by a third.

Pass under one footbridge (Lea Bridge) and continue ahead on the towpath which leads you over two arched bridges crossing two canal side branches, the Icknield Port Loop. This loop was the original line of the canal, dating to the 1700s. The new line, which the towpath follows, was built in 1827 to bypass this loop.

Continue your journey along the towpath of the main canal, passing under two road bridges and then leading you over a



footbridge over a canal inlet (which today sits between blocks of residential apartments). The towpath then leads you under Sheepcote Street Bridge and a smaller footbridge, before heading up a ramp to reach a crossroads, level with the National Sea Life Centre on your right. This vast aquarium is home to an enormous range of aquatic creatures from sharks and turtles to otters and penguins.

4 → 5 Sea Life Centre to University Campus



This point marks a junction between the Birmingham New Main Line Canal and the Birmingham and Fazeley Canal. This hub reminds you of the importance of canals in the city's development and you are informed by the signage that Birmingham has more canals than Venice!

From the crossroads in the towpath (with the Sea Life Centre across to your right), go straight ahead to join the towpath (which soon swings right) alongside the branch of the canal signed to Worcester. Pass under Brewmasters Bridge and then under three further bridges, passing the Gas Street Basin on your left.

This area is regarded as the entertainment centre of the city with theatres, music and event venues, restaurants, pubs, exhibition venues and an art gallery. The International Convention Centre and National Indoor Arena are well established landmarks alongside the canal and have hosted numerous international events ranging from the G8 Summit to the Eurovision Song Contest and the World Indoor Athletic Championships.

As you approach the Mailbox building ahead, keep left (on the path closest to the canal on your left) and follow this as it swings hard right (passing under Salvage Turn Bridge). Continue your canal-side journey, now heading south-west, with the canal (this stretch being the Worcester and Birmingham Canal) running on your left. Stay with this towpath, leading you out of the city centre, for about one mile to reach the Edgbaston Tunnel.

Pass through this tunnel (it does have lighting) and continue on the towpath as it swings left. Pass under Bridge 84a and then turn immediately sharp right up the slope or steps and cross the bridge over the canal. At the far side you will emerge to the University Campus.

5 → 6

University Campus to End



Walk straight ahead across the parking area and then bear left to join the one-way access road, leading you uphill (with a piece of grass parkland to your right and accommodation blocks to your left). At the end of this access road you will come to a T-junction with the B4217, Church Road. Turn left along the pavement and this leads you over the Edgbaston Tunnel that you passed through earlier (although there are no signs of this from above).

Stay with the left-hand pavement and it will lead you to a major road junction, with the large stone Church of St George at its centre. Stay with the left-hand pavement as it swings hard left (passing the church on your right). Just beyond the church, use the pedestrian crossing to turn right into Westbourne Crescent (passing the front of the church on your right). As the road forks, stay with the left-hand pavement which swings left (signed to city centre).

Just before the crossroads with traffic lights, you will come to The Physician on your right for some well-earned hospitality.

Disclaimer

This walking route was walked and checked at the time of writing. We have taken care to make sure all our walks are safe for walkers of a reasonable level of experience and fitness. However, like all outdoor activities, walking carries a degree of risk and we accept no responsibility for any loss or damage to personal effects, personal accident, injury or public liability whilst following this walk. We cannot be held responsible for any inaccuracies that result from changes to the routes that occur over time. Please let us know of any changes to the routes so that we can correct the information.

Walking Safety

For your safety and comfort we recommend that you take the following with you on your walk: bottled water, snacks, a waterproof jacket, waterproof/sturdy boots, a woolly hat and fleece (in winter and cold weather), a fully-charged mobile phone, a whistle, a compass and an Ordnance Survey map of the area. Check the weather forecast before you leave, carry appropriate clothing and do not set out in fog or mist as these conditions can seriously affect your ability to navigate the route. Take particular care on cliff/mountain paths where steep drops can present a particular hazard. Some routes include sections along roads – take care to avoid any traffic at these points. Around farmland take care with children and dogs, particularly around machinery and livestock. If you are walking on the coast make sure you check the tide times before you set out.

