

Canal Walking Route

Birmingham City Centre Canal Walk : www.birminghamcanalmuseum.org.uk

The canals are a living museum dating from 1768, when construction of the Birmingham Canal started, through to 1850s, when all the canals in Birmingham and the Black Country were completed. Although this short walk only covers the canals of the city centre it includes four different canals.



You will see from the map that the route (marked in red) is mainly a circular route and can be started at any point on the route and extended or shortened as you may require. It also takes you past many places of interest. The following narrative explains these and the history and features relating to the canals.

The Symphony Hall & International Conference Centre (ICC)

This is probably a good place to start for visitors coming from New Street, past the civic centre and the new Library of Birmingham as they can walk through the ICC out onto the canal bank. Turn left and walk along the towpath and through the bridge under Broad Street, this is called “Broad Street Tunnel” and was once longer as it had more buildings over the canal. Once under the bridge you are in:-

Gas Street Basin dates from the opening of the Birmingham Canal in 1772. As you follow the towpath round the edge of the basin you will see a hump backed bridge that once led to the original canal terminus at Old Wharf. After crossing the bridge you can walk back across the basin on **Worcester Bar**, which separates the side of the basin belonging to the Birmingham Canal Company from the side of the Worcester & Birmingham Canal Company. Disputes between the two companies meant that for some years boats could not travel between the canals and goods were unloaded and reloaded across the bar. When you get across the bar you will cross a bridge over the stop lock that was later used to connect the two canals, now without gates.

Walking further along the Worcester & Birmingham Canal will bring you to the Mailbox complex with many restaurants, bars and the BBC public area but our walk heads back under “Broad Street Tunnel” on the opposite side

of the canal to the way we came This is another area with many restaurants and bars, including one on a narrowboat and even more up the steps into **Brindley Place**, which also has other attractions such as the Ikon Gallery and attractive public spaces.

Continuing along the towpath we come to the **National Sea Life Centre** and:-

Old Turn Junction a four way junction with a circular island in the middle. Looking across from the Sea Life Centre towards the island you can see the start of the **Birmingham & Fazeley Canal**, which goes down to Tamworth, where it joins the Coventry Canal. To the left is the **Birmingham Canal Main Line**, which we have just walked along, to the right it continues to Wolverhampton and behind, running under the bridge by the Sea Life Centre is the **Birmingham Canal Old Main Line**, which gives its name to the Old Turn Junction and represents the original course of the canal before Thomas Telford's new main line was built in the 1830s.

Crossing the bridge by the Sea Life Centre we continue along the Main Line until we come to a flight of steps up to Sheepcote Street, which we take and cross at the zebra crossing into **King Edward Drive**. Which is nearly opposite. This short road leads us to a bridge across the Old Main Line of the canal at **Sherbourne Wharf**. Having crossed the bridge turn right up the towpath, past this unique mixture of apartments and moorings, until you reach the junction with the New Main line where you will soon come to **Vincent Street Bridge**. Go under the bridge then up onto Vincent Street, across the road and down onto the opposite towpath, past the old Roundhouse building and Fiddle & Bone (no longer in use). There are usually a good selection of narrowboats moored from here back to the **Old Turn Junction**, where we turn left into the **Birmingham & Fazeley Canal** and along beside the **National Indoor Area (NIA)** until we come to **Cambrian Basin** at the top of the:-

Farmers Bridge Locks of which there are 13, although this route only takes us down four of them, If you do want to go further you can see the Assay Office and St Pauls Square (once the centre of the Jewellery Quarter) by leaving the canal immediately before lock 9 or go on to below the bottom lock where on joining the road you can visit St Chad's Cathedral.

This canal was opened in 1789 and although the surroundings have changed greatly since then the canal itself is much as it was built. By lock number 4 there is a ramp up to the road bridge where you can cross the canal and walk back on the other side or you can just retrace your steps to the **Old Turn Junction**.

If you cross the canal you can walk back up **Brindley Walk** named after James Brindley the pioneering canal builder. This brings you back to the other side of the moorings at **Cambrian Basin** where you can cross the bridge over the lock and retrace your steps to the **Old Turn Junction**. At the junction cross the bridge to the towpath by the **Malt House** pub and continue on to the **The Symphony Hall & International Conference Centre (ICC)** where the walk started.

Notes: This information is supplied free of charge by the Birmingham Canal Museum website and the members of the group advocating a permanent canal museum for the city.

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