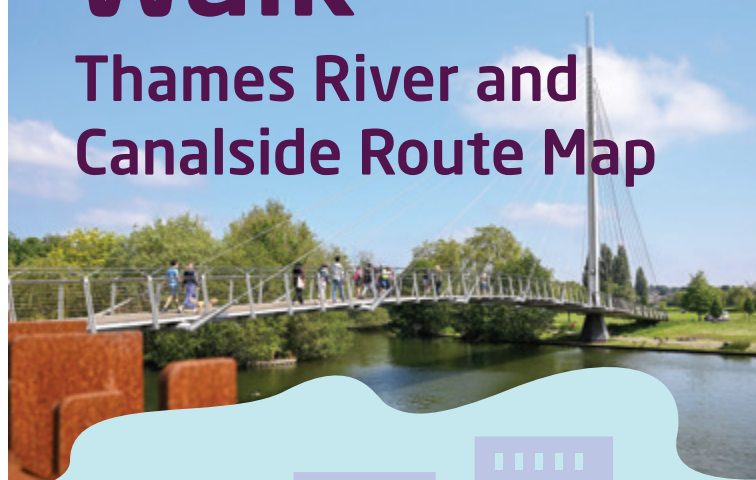


# Wellbeing Walk

## Thames River and Canalside Route Map




Reading  
Walking Routes

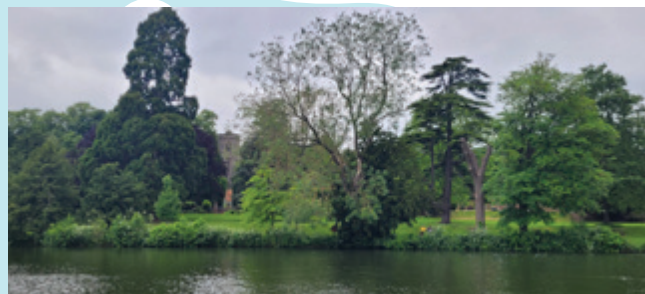


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## Directions and Details

**A** From Rivermead main entrance turn right and follow footpath around the building and towards River Thames. At the Thameside Promenade turn right and follow the footpath along the southern bank of the river past Reading Rowing Club.

 On the opposite bank of the Thames you will see the gardens of Caversham Court and the tower of St. Peter's Church, dating from 1162, as well as many private gardens and moorings. This stretch of the river is very popular with swans, geese, and ducks.




**B** Follow the riverside path under Caversham Bridge and continue past the offices and riverside homes until you reach a spectacular white structure, that is Christchurch Bridge - a traffic-free crossing over the Thames for pedestrians and cyclists.

 As you walk on from Caversham Bridge take a moment to look at Frys Island which is home to the Bohemian Bowls Club. This is also the location of a trial by combat in 1163 between Robert de Montfort and Henry of Essex, the standard bearer to King Henry II.



**C** Use the steps or ramp up onto the footbridge to cross into Christchurch Meadow. Turn right and walk past the paddling pool, playground and tennis courts towards Reading Bridge. Follow the path underneath Reading Bridge and through Hills Meadow.

 At weekends and during the summer there is a barge moored just after the bridge which doubles up as a tearoom. You can also find the river 'flowmeter' on your left as you come out from beneath the bridge measuring the amount of water flowing through the river.



**D** Before reaching the houses at the end of the footpath, turn right and cross the wooden bridge onto View Island. After the sluice, enter the nature reserve via a gate on the left. Follow the main footpath clockwise around the small island until you rejoin the footpath by the weir.

**i** View Island was once a boatyard but is now a peaceful woodland park with paths, benches and riverside views. It is home to a variety of trees, wildflowers and wildlife. It is also now the site of the Reading Hydro community-owned hydro-electric power plant. Take a moment to observe and listen to the impressive Archimedes Screws as they churn the river water!

**E** Take care when crossing the weir and Caversham lock as it may be slippery when wet. After crossing the lock turn left and follow the Thames Path along through Kings Meadow. Walking beside the Thames you will pass the colourful Sustrans NCN Milepost on your left. After approximately 250 metres you will get to a footpath on your right.

## Walk Information

This is an easy going 3 mile linear walk following the Thames Path from Rivermead before heading via Kennet Wharfs to Forbury Gardens and to Reading Town Hall. On this walk you take in both the River Thames and Kennet with plenty of scenery and wildlife as well as seeing how the river can be used for sustainable energy and walking through Victorian tunnels. There is the option to extend this route along the River Thames to take in more of both the Thames and Kennet via the Horseshoe bridge.

**Length** 3 miles (5km) walk or 4 miles (6.5km) longer walk.

**Duration** 1 to 1.5 hours (+30 minutes for longer walk).

**Difficulty** Easy going. A flat route without major obstacles.

**Suitability** Accessible for wheelchairs, pushchairs and scooters. The extended route includes stepped access, and so is not wheelchair accessible.

**Start** Rivermead Leisure Centre, Richfield Avenue, RG1 8EQ [///mile.legend.common](http://mile.legend.common).

**End** Reading Town Hall, Belgrave Street RG1 1QH [///kicks.prime.wins](http://kicks.prime.wins).

**Sustainable Transport** This is a linear walk from Rivermead to Reading Town Hall using public footpaths and shared paths. Rivermead can be reached using the Buzz 18 bus service from the Friar Street stop FE or is a 15-minute walk from the Railway Station. The walk ends at Reading Town Hall close to all local public transport services.


**Car Park** Rivermead Leisure Centre

**Toilet Facilities** Available at the start and finish as well as at various points on the walk route.

### Useful Links


[reading-buses.co.uk/services/RBUS/18](http://reading-buses.co.uk/services/RBUS/18)  
[what3words.com/about](http://what3words.com/about)

**F** After turning right on the footpath that heads towards Napier Road cross and enter a tunnel under the railway.

 This Victorian tunnel dates back to the late 1800s and is known as The Biscuit Tunnel as it was used to move wagons of biscuits from the Huntley and Palmer factories to railway sidings to be sent by train. Long after the closure of both the biscuit branch line and just under 40 years since the factory closed its doors, the tunnel was re-opened as a pedestrian and cycle path in 2015.




**G** Exit the tunnel and turn left and then immediately right onto Oscar Wilde Road and then right again onto Kenavon Drive. Walk past the site of the Riverside Museum at Blakes Lock and take the footpath on the right before the iron bridge on Gas Works Road.

 Riverside Museum at Blakes lock which tells the story of Reading's two rivers - the Kennet and the Thames. The site is open daily from April to September and admission is free.




Follow the path along the channel through the Huntley Wharf development and under the bridge under Forbury Road to bring you out on Chestnut Walk.

**H** Continue on Chestnut walk, which goes past the former Reading Gaol, and at the end of the road turn right and walk through the ruins of Reading Abbey and into Forbury Gardens.

 Reading Gaol, which officially closed in 2014, was made famous as the location for the imprisonment of Oscar Wilde. It is also the site of a Banksy mural 'The Great Escape'. This can be seen by taking a short diversion round the prison walls.



 Forbury Gardens gardens are listed as Grade II. The principal features are the Bandstand, the Maiwand Lion war memorial, the Forbury Hill, and the Rustic Fountain.



**I** Cross the gardens and leave via the middle exit and across Forbury Road. St Laurant Church cemetery is opposite. Walk through until you reach Reading Town Hall where the walk ends.





## For a Longer Walk

From here you can either choose to take the main route or extend your walk. For the extended walk continue along the Thames path, passing Tesco Superstore until reaching where the Thames meets the River Kennet. Cross using the Horseshoe Bridge then turn sharp left and walk back underneath and under the two Victorian railway bridges. Continue along the canal-side back to town and leave at the Watlington Street bridge. After crossing Kings Road continue towards Reading Gaol but turn left onto Chestnut walk to rejoin at point H.

This walk starts at the Rivermead Leisure Centre and heads along Thames Promenade with its thriving colony of ducks, geese and swans!

Walking beneath Caversham Bridge the walk then continues along Old Father Thames and across Christchurch Bridge before continuing to walk under Reading Bridge.

The walk continues alongside the river through Hill's Meadow to a small backwater, crossing a footbridge at Heron Island to the tranquil natural open space of View Island and the amazing Reading Hydro turbines at the weir. After crossing back over to the south bank of the Thames at Caversham Lock the walk continues along the Thames Path.

The walk heads under the Great Western Railway mainline via The Biscuit Tunnel, past the Riverside Museum at Blakes Lock, through the impressive new Huntley Wharf development and into town via Forbury Gardens where you can get an ice-cream or hot drink before continuing to finish outside the Town Hall.

At King's Meadow there is an option of a longer walk staying on the Thames Path to the Kennet mouth, over Horseshoe Bridge (which has steps) and back along the Kennet canal-side as far as Watlington Street where it rejoins the walk by Reading Gaol. The two walks meet up again at Chestnut Walk before going through the Forbury Gardens and finishing at Reading Town Hall.

