

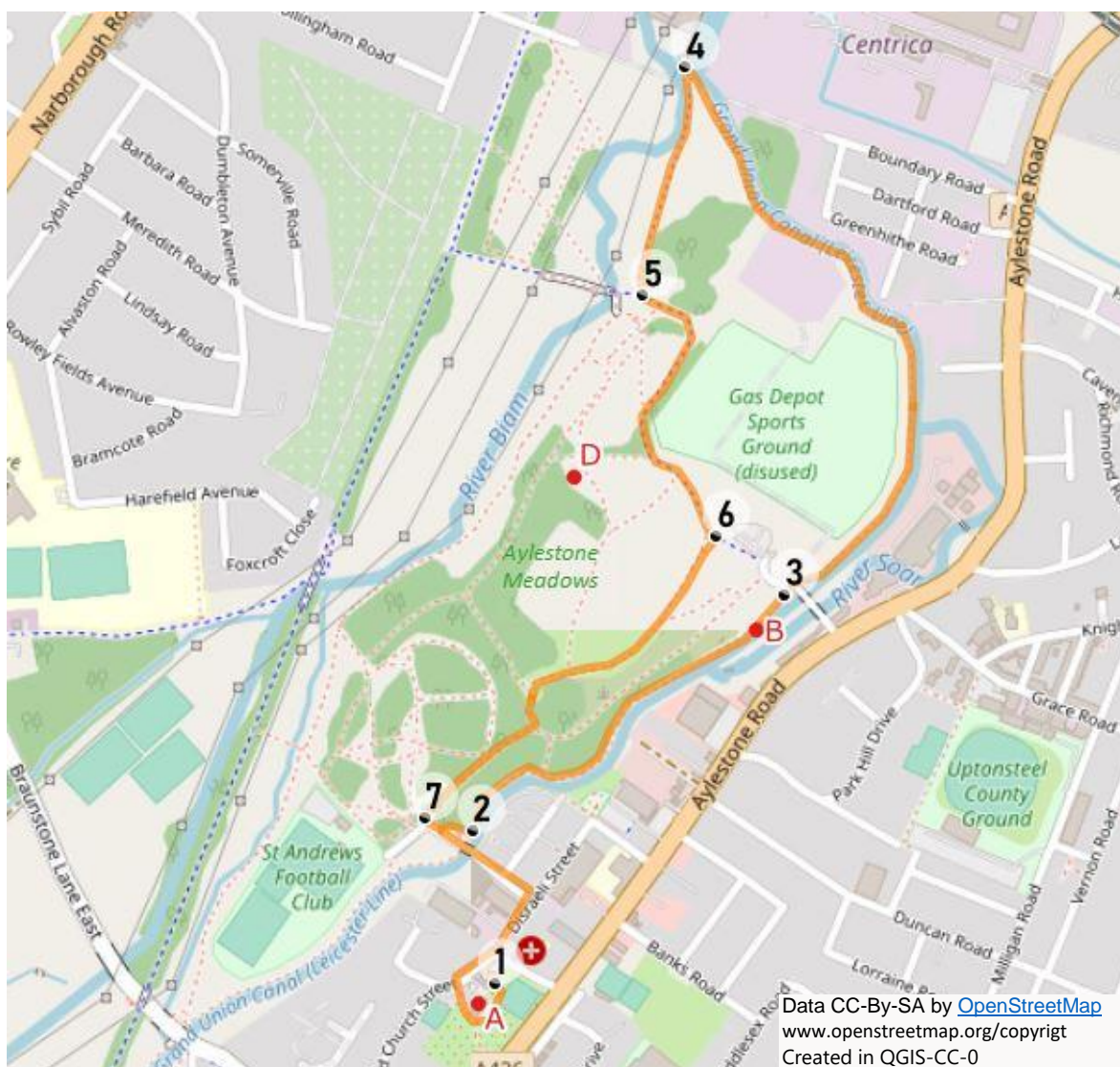
Aylestone Hall Gardens, Canal & Aylestone Meadows walk

Start location: Aylestone Hall Gardens car park, Hall Lane, off Aylestone Rd, Leicester

Time taken: 75 minutes (steady pace)* **Distance:** 2.5 miles, 4 km **Circular route**

Description:

Enjoy the city's blue and green spaces and explore Leicester's canal waterways with this self-guided walk along the Grand Union Canal. From Aylestone Hall Gardens we pass Aylestone Mill Lock and St Mary's Mill Lock, before returning via Aylestone Meadows. This is a lovely green walk - a great way to unwind with nature.



-  Main route
-  Alternative route
-  Stage / waypoint
-  Point of interest

*Time is calculated at a steady pace of 2mph, if walked without stopping. Allow extra time to look at points of interest and read the information.

This route was developed by staff and volunteers for Leicester City Council.

www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk/walks



Useful information

The start location is close to Aylestone Road which is served by buses. To plan your journey in Leicester check out: www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk

There are public toilets in Aylestone Hall Gardens.

Note: A shorter accessible alternative is available online, from the Aylestone Meadows car park.

[Aylestone Meadows & Aylestone Hall Gardens Accessible Walk](#)

Safety tips:

- Keep away from the water's edge while walking along the canal tow path.
- Watch out for cyclists along the canal and within Aylestone Meadows.
- The canal path and meadows can be prone to flood after heavy rain, usually in the wetter months. Paths are usually walkable from late spring to early autumn, but do take recent weather conditions into account when planning your walk.
- This route includes some uneven and unsurfaced paths through the meadows, unsuitable for wheelchairs.
- Take care crossing roads and watch for vehicles on the access roads to/from the car parks.

Walk starts: Aylestone Hall Gardens car park, Hall Lane, off Aylestone Road, Leicester

Route directions:

1. Start from Aylestone Hall Gardens car park. The low buildings here were once stables. Head towards then past the bowling greens. Pause by old Aylestone Hall **(A)** on your right and the information board then continue on the path, bearing right.

(A) Aylestone Hall & Gardens

Aylestone Hall Gardens is a small park in what was once the village of Aylestone. The Hall is thought to be one of the oldest inhabited buildings in Leicester, with the structure dating to the 14th Century. There have been significant alterations over the years. It is rumoured to be haunted. For most of its life the Hall was a private residence, with two exceptions. In the mid-19th century it was briefly used as a boarding school. In the 20th century, it was requisitioned by Civil Defence during World War II. Not much is known about its use during this time. The Leicester Corporation made a compulsory purchase order and transformed the gardens into a public park. The Hall fell into a poor state of repair and might have been demolished, but it proved useful as a leisure facility in the 1950s, when it was used as a cafe and as a changing room facility for sports. It is now a Grade II listed building. Most recently it has been converted into private flats.

Pass the tennis courts to exit through a brick archway to Old Church Street. Cross the road carefully and turn right along Old Church Street. At the junction continue ahead onto Disraeli Street. Soon, turn left onto Canal Street and cross the bridge. By the Aylestone Meadows sign take the path on the right down to the canal.

2. Turn left along the canal with the water and new housing to your right. Continue along the canal to Aylestone Mill Lock **(B)**.

3. Continue along the canal, passing the Aylestone Road bridge. From here on, the path is uneven in places and unsurfaced. Continue for some time until you reach the pedestrian bridge and weir where the River Soar meets the River Biam. You'll see the red-brick buildings beside St Mary's Mill Lock **(C)** come into view - but don't walk that far!
4. At the pedestrian bridge, don't cross. Instead, turn left on the path beside the River Biam which then heads across the beautiful green space of Aylestone Meadows **(D)**.

(D) Aylestone Meadows

Aylestone Meadows is Leicester's largest local nature reserve and its habitats support a rich diversity of plant and animal life. It's a mixture of pastures, trees, rivers and small ponds and is a green oasis in the city, a popular location for walking, cycling, fishing horse-riding and canoeing. Historically, this area has been traversed by different modes of transport. In the 12th century it was on the pack-horse route and Aylestone pack-horse bridge is located near the Marsden Lane entrance to the meadows. The river was made navigable during the canal heyday of the 17th and 18th centuries. In the late 19th century the Great Central Railway (from London to Sheffield) was built along the edge of the meadows. The railway closed in the 1960s and the Great Central Way cycleway and footpath was created in the 1980s, providing a car-free route from the south into the city.

Follow this path which is uneven and can be prone to flooding after heavy rain, especially in the winter months. It is usually walkable during the drier months from late spring through to early autumn.

5. At the junction of paths by the river, bear left away from the river to continue on the main surfaced pedestrian/cycle path (watch for cycles). Soon the path bends to the right. Continue on this path until you approach the Aylestone Road car park.
6. Take the first path on the right (opposite the car park) and continue on through the meadows, keeping to the main path. This can be a little tricky as there are several path junctions, so navigate these with care (easier done from the map than from directions, as one woodland path looks much like another!).
7. The path eventually brings you to the wooden bollards and metal gate at the Canal Street car park. Cross the bridge to retrace your steps along Canal Street, then Disraeli Street to Aylestone Hall Gardens.

Acknowledgements

Route developed in collaboration by staff and volunteers for Leicester City Council.