

# Two Rivers Walk in Aylestone Meadows

**Start location:** Evesham Road entrance to Aylestone Meadows, Leicester, LE3 2DB.

**Time taken:** 1 hour 15 minutes (approximately, steady pace); **Distance:** 2.6 miles 4.1 km  
**Circular**

## Description:

A walk through Aylestone Meadows following sections of the River Biam and River Soar. The meadows are a green oasis in the city and a great location to spot wildlife, especially during spring and summer. Note: some paths in the meadows are soft and uneven so unsuitable for wheelchair users.



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

\*Time is calculated at a steady pace of 2mph

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

[www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk/walks](http://www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk/walks)



**Walk starts:** Evesham Road entrance to Aylestone Meadows, Leicester, LE3 2DB.

Evesham Road is accessed from Narborough Road, which is served by public transport. There is a very small car park near the entrance to the meadows or on-street parking is available a short distance away. To help plan your journey visit: [www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk](http://www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk)

**Safety tips:**

Parts of Aylestone Meadows can feel quite isolated and walkers may prefer to go there with company. At the start on Evesham Road, watch for both motor traffic and cycles; vehicles frequently access the nearby trading estate and the busy Great Central Way cycle path crosses Evesham Road. Some paths in the meadows are shared with cyclists – take care. The meadows include some soft and uneven paths so suitable footwear is recommended. In the wetter months, parts of the meadows are prone to flooding.

**Route directions:**

**1.** From Evesham Road enter Aylestone Meadows via the decorative metal gate (not along the Great Central cycleway or the road down to the factories). Take the path ahead and soon pass two paths to the right. Keep on ahead then follow the path that bears right. Take a side path on the left across a narrow metal bridge which leads to Pebble Beach and the River Biam.

(i) Aylestone Meadows is designated as a Local Nature Reserve. It has a range of habitats including flood meadows, woodland and marshy wetland, making it one of the most important local areas for wildlife, with a number of rare plants and trees. The meadows are grazed by Longhorn cattle in the summer. Kingfishers are regularly seen here and there have been reports of otters being spotted in the area.

**2.** Here at the river with a humped bridge across it, cross over the main path (watch out for cyclists) and step onto the raised boardwalk. Turn right a few paces then leave it by the ramp on the left that leads to the fields. Follow the mown grass path beside the river and pass through metal gates. Keeping the river to your left and go left where there is a fork so that you stay near the river. The meadow path passes pylons and telegraph posts before reaching the corner of a field.

**3.** Leave the River Biam just before the former railway bridge. Here, pass through a metal gate and take the path to the right which leads up a ramp to the raised Great Central Way cycle route. Turn left and follow the cycle way south about 150 yards. Leave the cycleway via a path to the left (opposite a litter bin) and descend steps to a gravel path. Continue ahead and cross a timber bridge with stone abutments to return to Aylestone Meadows. Continue ahead and after the information board turn right along a gravel path which follows the route of the River Biam (the river may not be visible in summer due to vegetation), which should be to your right. Continue until you near Braunstone Lane East/Middleton Street. Pass a path to the right (which leads to the road), then turn left onto the canal towpath to follow the route of the Grand Union Canal.

**Alternative route:** This option allows you to exit to the road. At [3] pass through a gate and continue to follow the River Biam as it passes under the Great Central Way railway bridge, now a cycle route. The path leaves the river and follows a leafy route past the back of Ellesmere College. Take care - this is also a cycle route. Exit at the main road, Braunstone Lane East. Turn left here and continue along the road for quite some time. Pass under the Great Central Way railway bridge. After the pylon enter Aylestone Meadows via the path on the left. Soon you arrive at a path junction. Turn right and soon turn left to walk along the Grand Union canal path. Pick up the route from [4].

(i) The Great Central Way is a modern footpath and cycleway which follows the line of the old Great Central Railway, which once ran from London Marylebone to Manchester. The railway line opened in 1899 and ran through Leicester on a brick viaduct and across a number of girder bridges. The viaduct was over 1 ½ miles long. The line closed in 1969. In the 1980s, part of the line south of Leicester was converted for use by pedestrians and cyclists. A short preserved section of railway operated by steam trains still exists to the north of Leicester.

**4.** Continue along the Grand Union canal for some distance (watch out for cyclists along here). Pass under the old red brick 'Parson's Bridge' at Canal Street (care here - narrow path and restricted view, watch for cyclists and other path users ahead). Continue to follow the waterway. Pass Aylestone Mill Lock.

(i) The Grand Union Canal. The canal passing through Leicester is a branch (known as the Leicester Line) of the Grand Union Canal which runs from London to Birmingham. The Leicester Line runs from Norton Junction through Foxton Locks to join the River Trent at Ratcliffe-on-Soar. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the canal enabled coal to be moved from the Leicestershire coalfields to market much cheaper than by horse, and helped to 'fire' up the Industrial Revolution. A number of industries deliberately located close to the canal, and old industrial buildings can still be seen today. Today's canal forms part of the City Council's award winning 12 mile long river park, running from Glen Parva in the south to Watermead in the north. This Leicester Riverside Walk can be walked by a combination of footpaths and towpaths.

**5.** Just after the lock, as you approach Aylestone Mill Bridge take the left (upper) path to exit the canal and turn left by the bollards to enter Aylestone Meadows. Continue on the main path ahead, passing the car park to your right. Continue ahead on the main surfaced path and watch for cyclists on this route. Follow the main path as it bends right, but as you come out of the bend leave via a footpath to the left which, after crossing another path, goes down steps onto a boardwalk to return to Pebble Beach.

Cross the River Biam then pick up a small path on the right, the same one you used on your outward journey. Reach a main path, turn right and retrace your steps to the Evesham Road entrance.

## **Acknowledgements**

Developed by: Dave Nicholls

Checked by: Jim McCallum

## **Route information:**

Information about Aylestone Meadows on the Leicester City Council's website:

[www.leicester.gov.uk/leisure-and-culture/parks-and-open-spaces/our-parks/castle-hill-country-park/](http://www.leicester.gov.uk/leisure-and-culture/parks-and-open-spaces/our-parks/castle-hill-country-park/)

Information about the Grand Union Canal:

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/enjoy-the-waterways/canal-and-river-network/leicester-line-grand-union-canal>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand\\_Union\\_Canal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Union_Canal)

Information about the Great Central Way:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great\\_Central\\_Railway](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Central_Railway)