

Abbey Park to Belgrave Hall, return

Start location: Outside the pavilion café, Abbey Park, Leicester

Time taken: 1 hour 22 minutes (steady pace); **Distance:** 2.8 miles 4.5 km **Circular**

At a medium pace (2.5mph) it can be done in around 1 hour 10 minutes.

Description:

This scenic walk takes the riverside path north of Abbey Park and passes familiar landmarks - National Space Centre, Abbey Pumping Station and returns past Belgrave Hall and a new residential estate on the site of the former Wolsey factory.



— 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



Walk starts:

Outside the pavilion café, Abbey Park, Leicester.

To help plan your journey visit: www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk

Safety tips:

Remember to keep a 2m social distance from others.

Watch out for cyclists, especially along the riverside path which is a cycle route.

Take care when crossing roads and use pedestrian crossings when available.

The riverside path near Ellis Meadows is occasionally flooded following extreme rainfall.

Route directions:

1. From outside the pavilion cafe walk towards the bridge (but do not cross). Turn left on the riverside path (care - cycle route) and continue until you reach Abbey Park Road.
2. Cross Abbey Park Road and continue on the riverside path, passing the National Space Centre.

(A) National Space Centre

The National Space Centre is a visitor attraction dedicated to space science and exploration. The building was designed by Nicholas Grimshaw and opened in 2001. The centre arose from a partnership between the University of Leicester and local government agencies. It provides education and features interactive museum galleries, planetarium and rocket tower.

(B) Abbey Pumping Station

Abbey Pumping Station opened in 1891 to pump sewage (at over one million litres per hour) to the treatment works in Beaumont Leys. The pumping station was a grand Victorian building containing large beam engines and it continued working until 1964, then underwent renovation. It opened as a museum in 1972. Today, Abbey Pumping Station is Leicester's Museum of Science and Technology.

After the Pumping Station, cross a small wooden footbridge over a brook, just before a path junction.

3. At the junction, turn right to continue on the riverside path. Pass a path to the left which enters Ellis Meadows and also pass the footbridge to Holden Street on your right. Continue along the river until Thurcaston Road.

(C) Belgrave Bridge, Thurcaston Road

The Thurcaston Road stone bridge (or 'Belgrave Bridge') has six arches and dates from around the 15th century. It is Grade II listed. Two arches have been rebuilt in brick and there are more recent additions, including the modern footbridge.

4. Turn right on Thurcaston Road, which crosses the river. Shortly, turn right to enter Belgrave Gardens (but first, you may wish to look at the information panel about old Belgrave on the opposite side of Thurcaston Road). Continue ahead through Belgrave Gardens then up a short steep slope (take care). Turn left at the path junction and follow the path to exit through the gates of Belgrave Gardens. Belgrave Hall is opposite.

(D) Belgrave Hall

When the Hall was first built Belgrave was a small village, 3 miles from the town of Leicester. The Hall is Queen Anne style and was completed between 1709-1713. It is a Grade II listed building. The gardens are a site of special historic interest and were created at about the same time. The Hall was built for Edmund Cradock, a wealthy hosiery merchant who died soon after its completion. Over the years the hall has passed to many owners including the Simons, the Vann and the Ellis families and lastly to Thomas Morley. Notably, local businessman John Ellis, who bought the hall in 1845, was responsible for bringing the first railway - the Leicester to Swannington Line - to Leicester in 1833. It is rumoured that ghostly apparitions have been seen in the Hall.

5. Turn right in front of the hall, along Church Road. Pass another grand house to your right then St Peter's Church to your left. Take the narrow path beside the churchyard to exit at the road.
6. Turn right on Vicarage Lane and continue as it becomes a pedestrian walkway. Follow this, which leads to the road, Holden Street.
7. Bear right on Holden Street and the road becomes Ross Walk. You have an alternative route option here (see below) or you can continue along Ross Walk and follow the main route from **8**.

Alternative Route

Where the footpath joins Holden Street/Ross walk, bear right on the footpath beside TS Tiger Sea Cadets. Cross the footbridge over the river. On the far side turn left and retrace your steps along the riverside path, back to Abbey Park.

8. **Main route.** From Ross Walk turn right on Charles Bennion Walk and follow the road ahead, then to the left. This is a relatively new residential area which is quite scenic.

(E) Former Wolsey factory

This new residential estate has been built on the site the former Wolsey factory. This area is locally known as 'Sock Island' reflecting the old knitwear company who built their Abbey Meadows factory here around 1910. The factory was mostly demolished in 2008 but one chimney and the iconic water tower have now been restored and incorporated into the modern development. Founded as a family business in 1755 the company first produced stockings, socks and vests and later sweaters and underwear. The trading name of Wolsey was established later, named for Cardinal Wolsey who was buried in Leicester Abbey nearby. Wolsey was one the region's largest knitwear companies and are still trading today. In 1912, the company famously provided Captain Scott with warm clothing for his attempt to reach the South Pole.

9. Cross Pearson Avenue then cross to the opposite side of Charles Bennion Walk. Pass through the gate in the fencing on your right to take the uneven footpath which leads towards the river. Cross the small footbridge (Swan's Nest bridge). On the far side go past the path to the canal. Keep ahead towards the new apartments, passing them on your left. Continue to the road, Abbey Meadows.

Shortly, cross the River Soar via the pedestrian/cycle bridge on the right. On the far side turn left to retrace your steps along the riverside path back to Abbey Park (cycle route - watch for cyclists).

Acknowledgements: Developed by Sara Coy.

References:

National Space Centre

<https://spacecentre.co.uk/>

Abbey Pumping Station

<http://www.abbeypumpingstation.org/>

<https://www.leicestermuseums.org/abbey-pumping-station/>

Belgrave Hall

<https://www.leicestermuseums.org/belgrave-hall/>

<https://www.visitleicester.info/see-and-do/belgrave-hall-p696521>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belgrave_Hall

Wolsey factory

<https://www.wolsey.com/pages/history>

<http://www.knittingtogether.org.uk/behind-the-scenes/the-companies/wolsey-ltd/>