

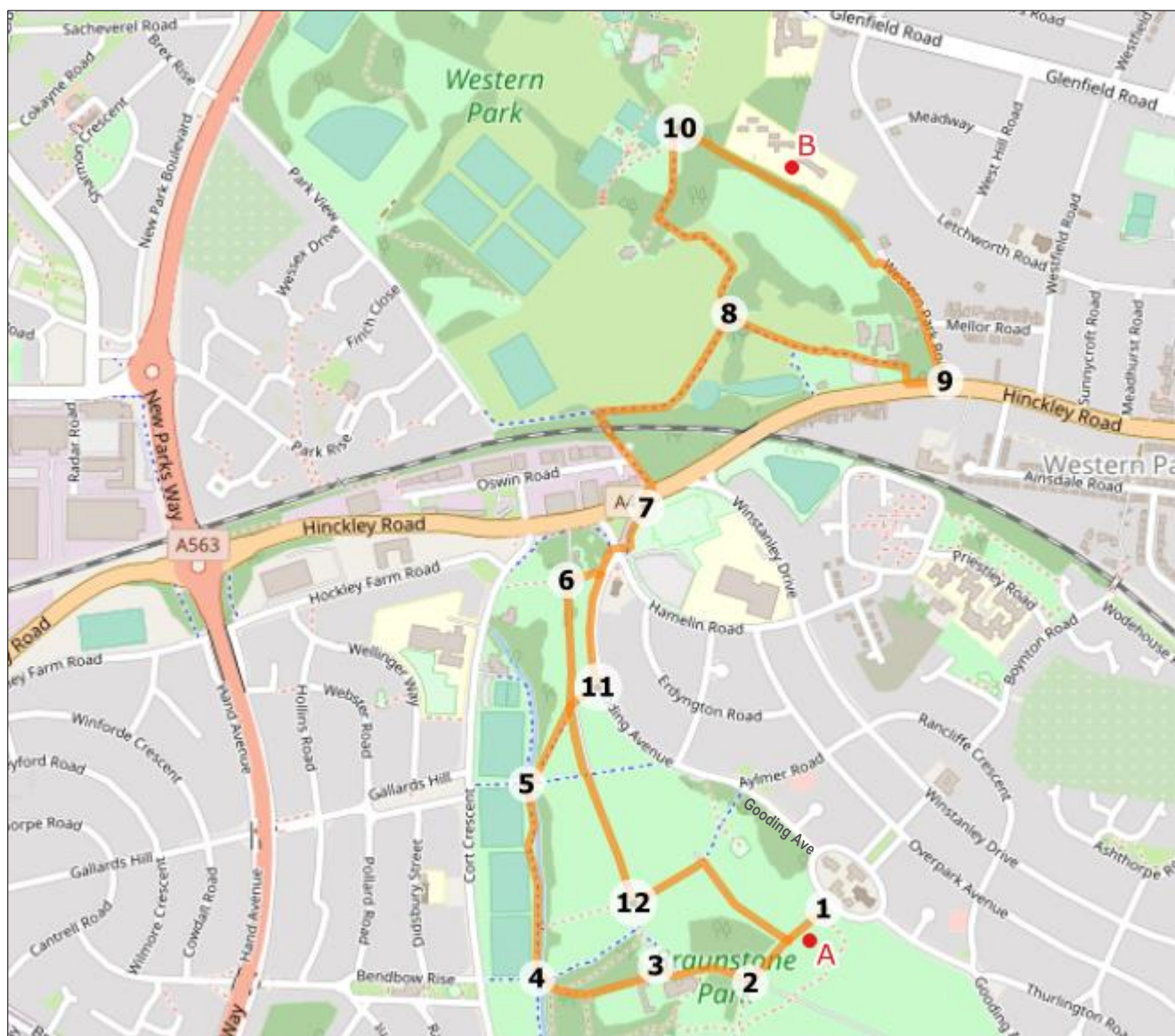
A green walk through Braunstone and Western Parks, Leicester

Start location: Braunstone Park, small car park off Gooding Avenue, Leicester, LE3 1JT

Time taken: 1 hour 30 minutes (steady, pace)* **Distance:** 3 miles 4.8 km **Circular route**
1 hour 15 minutes (medium pace)

Description:

This walk takes in the best of both Braunstone and Western Parks, passing Braunstone Hall (now Winstanley House) and the former Western Park Open Air School along the way.



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Alternative route



Stage / waypoint

● A Point of interest

*Tim Created in QGIS-CC-0

f 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

Walk starts: Braunstone Park, small car park off Gooding Avenue, Leicester, LE3 1JT

The start location is opposite the Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church. Hinckley Road nearby is served by buses and there is a bus stop outside Braunstone Leisure Centre. If traveling by bus you may prefer to start the route at waypoint 7.

Safety tips:

- Take care crossing roads. Use the pedestrian crossing across Hinckley Road.
- Be aware of vehicles entering Braunstone Park to access Winstanley House.
- Watch for cyclists in both parks (popular cycle routes) and on the shared pedestrian/cycle paths by Braunstone Leisure Centre.
- In some places paths are cracked or uneven, so tread carefully. The route is mostly on firm paths but there is one short unsurfaced section in Western Park, which can be muddy after rain.
- The path leading to Western Park at waypoint 7 can feel a bit isolated – some may prefer to do this walk accompanied.
- Remember to observe the guidance on social distancing.

Route directions:

1. From the small car park enter Braunstone Park via the park roadway (take care and watch for vehicles accessing Winstanley House, who share this entrance). A little way in, you may wish to pause at the information board (A) on the left.

(A) Braunstone Park during World War II

During WW2 Braunstone park was used as a military camp for both English and American personnel. Read more on the information panel.

Continue ahead on the roadway to the main path junction.

2. Turn right and continue past Winstanley House and the old stable block (now the parks office). The path sweeps right.

Braunstone Hall

Winstanley House was formerly Braunstone Hall. The park was once the estate of the Winstanley family who built Braunstone Hall in 1775 (now reputedly haunted). Leicester Corporation purchased the estate in 1925 and used much of it for a house building programme to create new housing estates. These surround the park today. The Hall was used as a school from 1932 until the mid-1990s and is now a Grade II listed building. It was renovated in 2017 by a private investor to become a boutique hotel with restaurant and renamed Winstanley House. Through the stable block there is public access to the walled garden (limited opening times). Braunstone Park has wooded areas, lakes, playgrounds and sporting facilities so it's worth exploring other areas of this park.

3. Take a path on the left, beside the old red-brick wall (the walled garden is on the far side). Continue through woodland. (If this path is too muddy, use the next path on the left - a cycle path). At a path junction, bear right then left to cross a footbridge.
4. Turn right at the path junction. Pass one path to the right and continue ahead beside the brook.

5. At the next path junction turn right over a footbridge. At the choice of paths, bear left. At the main path, turn left (Janet Setchfield Avenue).
6. At a cross path (just before the former gate house), turn right and continue onwards to exit on Gooding Avenue near the mini roundabout. Turn left. Cross Gooding Avenue just after the roundabout, towards the leisure centre. Head towards the pedestrian crossing on Hinckley Road.
7. Cross Hinckley Road and take the pedestrian footpath ahead over the railway bridge and into Western Park. At the path junction turn right along the perimeter of the park.

Western Park

Western Park was purchased for development as a park in 1897 and opened in 1899. To this day it is the largest park in Leicester, at 72 hectares. It was intended to be Leicester's premier park, but did not prove popular as it was too far from the town centre to be easily accessible to most people.

8. At the next path junction turn right. Continue ahead to reach the roadway through the park. Turn right to reach the gates on Hinckley Road. Exit the park and turn left, passing the old tram shelter.
9. Turn left into Western Park Road. Near the end, take the path on the left (which is unsurfaced) to re-enter Western Park. At the main park path, turn right. You'll pass (B) to your right.

(B) Former Western Park Open Air School

The Western Park Open Air School was built between 1928 and 1930, designed by J. O. Thompson. It is Grade II listed as a rare surviving example of an open air school, reflecting the progressive medical and educational ideas of the period. The Leicester authorities aimed to provide a suitable education for local children in poor health who were recovering from debilitating illnesses, particularly respiratory illness (city air quality was poor). The regime included moderate exercise, a nutritious diet, rest, and spending as much time as possible in the open air. The site is now available for development. At the time of writing (mid 2021) there has been an application for a change of use to an office and community building, including a café, but the decision is still pending.

10. At the cross paths before the bowling green, turn left then continue ahead. At the next path junction (where the path ahead goes to the house) bear left. At the next path junction turn right to skirt the edge of the park. Turn left to leave the main path and retrace your steps over the railway to Hinckley Road. Cross Hinckley Road at the pedestrian crossing. Pass the leisure centre. Cross Gooding Avenue by the mini roundabout and turn left on Gooding Avenue for a short way.
11. Leave the road via a path on the right to enter Braunstone Park. Turn left on the main park driveway and continue ahead, passing side paths to the left and right.
12. Leave the main driveway via a path to the left which heads towards the children's play area. Turn right just before it and continue to the junction with the park roadway by which you first entered. Turn left here to return to the car park on Gooding Avenue.

Acknowledgements

Route researched and developed by staff and volunteers for Leicester City Council.