

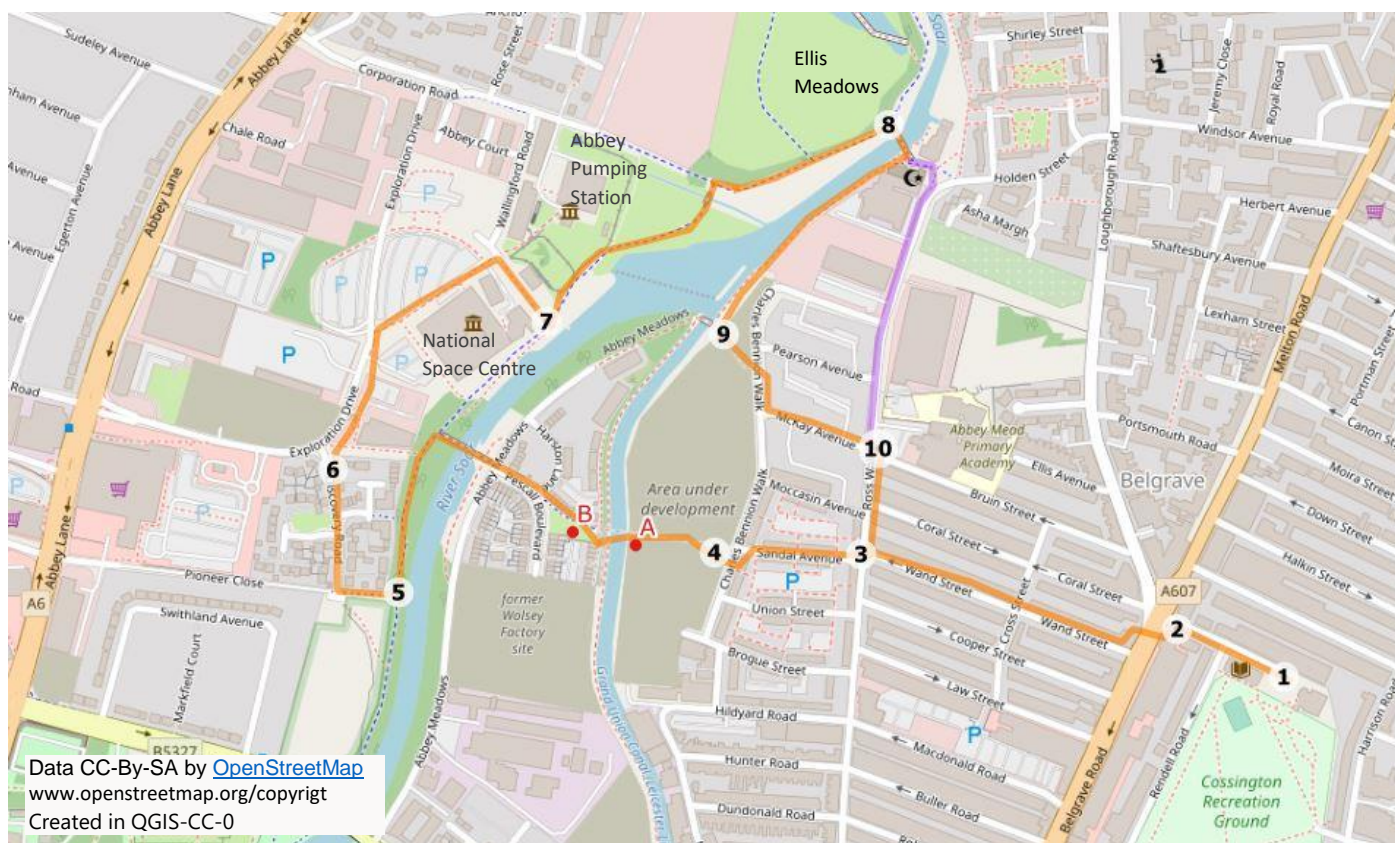
Bridges over the River Soar, Leicester

Start location: Belgrave Library, 24 Cossington Street, Leicester, LE4 6JD

Time taken: 1 hour (steady, pace)* **Distance:** 2 miles 3.2 km **Circular route**
50 minutes (medium pace)

Description:

This route heads from Belgrave to the National Space Centre via the new Charles Bennion footbridge and returns via the Holden Street footbridge. The route uses a combination of residential streets and pleasant riverside paths. The developing business area around the National Space Centre is known as Pioneer Park and the road names have a space exploration theme.



Data CC-BY-SA by [OpenStreetMap](https://www.openstreetmap.org/)
www.openstreetmap.org/copyright
Created in QGIS-CC-0

- Main route
- Alternative route
- 1 Stage / waypoint
- A 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



Walk starts:

Belgrave Library, 24 Cossington Street, Leicester, LE4 6JD.

Belgrave Library is a short distance from Belgrave Road, which is served by buses. To plan your journey visit: www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk.

Safety tips:

- Take care crossing roads. Use pedestrian crossings where present, especially at the major junctions.
- Watch for cyclists along the riverside paths as these are popular cycle routes.
- In some places paths may be cracked or uneven, so tread carefully. Some pavements may be narrowed due to parked cars.
- Be aware that the riverside path occasionally floods after very heavy rain. This tends to happen during the winter months. The old canal path between the Holden Street footbridge and Belgrave Lock is especially prone to winter flooding and an alternative detour is suggested, if needed.
- Remember to observe the guidance on social distancing.

Route directions:

1. With your back to Belgrave Library, turn left on Cossington Street. Cross over Rendell Road and continue to the main road.
2. Turn left on Belgrave Road to reach the pedestrian crossing. Cross Belgrave Road and turn left to pass The Balmoral. Shortly, turn right into Wand Street and continue ahead. Cross the side road (Cross Street) with care and continue to the end of the road.
3. Cross ahead over Ross Walk with care. Enter Sandal Avenue and continue ahead. At the next junction, cross Charles Bennion Walk. Turn left beside the railings. Continue until you reach a gate on your right.
4. Take the path between the railings through the open space. This is a cycle route – watch for cyclists. Cross the Charles Bennion footbridge (A).

A. Charles Bennion footbridge

The footbridge was completed in late 2020 and named after businessman and philanthropist Charles Bennion, owner of the British United Shoe Machinery empire (BUSM). The former BUSM factory site is now an area of new residential housing which you have just passed. Charles Bennion purchased Bradgate Park for the people of Leicestershire in 1928.

You have just crossed the Grand Union Canal. Now continue ahead past the houses to the right and the chimney (B) to your left. Continue ahead on Langton Way. Cross a side road and continue ahead. The road becomes Pescall Boulevard. Continue to the next road junction by the bollards. This road is Abbey Meadows.

B. Wolsey Factory

The island of land between the Grand Union Canal and the River Soar is locally known as 'Sock Island' because there was once a large knitwear factory here at Abbey Meadows. It was built in 1910 and belonged to the successful Wolsey knitwear company. Most of the factory has been demolished and only the chimney

and a water tower remain for their heritage interest (look to your right along Abbey Meadows road to spot the water tower). Sources indicate that the factory on this site included a dye works. Not far from here, during the 1920s, Wolsey built a hosiery factory on the corner of Abbey Park Lane and Ross Walk, a short distance from Abbey Park. It was referred to as Wolsey Mills or Abbey Park Mills. That building carries the Wolsey emblem at the top. It now provides accommodation. You can read more about the Wolsey company at the end.

Cross Abbey Meadows road with care and take the bridge over the River Soar. On the far side turn left and continue on the path beside the river. Watch out for cyclists, this is a popular cycle route. Pass a modern grey building and a path to your right and continue on the riverside path with the River Soar to your left.

5. Turn right off the main path where you see the metal bollards on the right. This path is an extension of Pioneer Close. Pass houses to your right. Soon you'll reach Discovery Road. Turn right here and continue. Cross Beagle Close and continue on Discovery Road to the junction with Exploration Drive.

Pioneer Park

This area is being developed as a business park. The road names nearby are associated with space exploration. Can you guess what the side roads Ariane Place and Beagle Close are named after?

6. Turn right here along Exploration Drive, passing the modern grey building called Dock. Continue a short way then bear right into the car park of the National Space Centre. Continue ahead on the pedestrian path. Check out the wall on the right, providing information about astronauts. Pass the entrance to the National Space Centre and the astronaut statue. Turn right on the path between the Abbey Pumping Station museum and National Space Centre and continue to the end.
7. At the junction, turn left on the riverside path. Pass the back of the Pumping Station and continue on, with a view of the River Soar to your right. Cross over a small footbridge. Turn right at the path junction marked by a signpost. Continue on the main path, passing the sign for Ellis Meadows.
8. Take the ramp on the right up to the footbridge. This is the Holden Street bridge, named after a road nearby. Cross the bridge towards TS Tiger, Leicester Sea Cadets. On the far side there are two options: the main route or the alternative route.

Alternative route (in purple on map): In the wetter months the canal path may flood so there is the option to exit via the cut-through path beside TS Tiger, which leads out onto Ross Walk and Holden Street. Turn right here to continue past businesses and houses. Pick up the directions just after the 'local store' in step **10**.

Main route: In the dry months, after crossing the Holden Street footbridge turn right and take the ramp beside the railings down to the canal path. Continue ahead. There are great views of the National Space Centre from here. Pass Belgrave Lock.

9. Near the Swan's Nest footbridge, leave the canal by the path to the left, passing through the gap in the railings. The path leads to Charles Bennion Walk, where you turn right. Cross Charles Bennion Walk to enter McKay Avenue. Continue ahead to reach the junction with Ross Walk.
10. Turn right on Ross Walk then cross with care to the opposite side. After the local store on the corner, turn left into Coral Street. Continue ahead, crossing side roads with care. Reach Belgrave Road. Turn right on Belgrave Road past the first pedestrian crossing. Stop at the second pedestrian crossing (by The Balmoral) and cross Belgrave Road here. Turn left on the far side. Turn right on Cossington Street to return to the library.

Additional Information

Wolsey

[Wolsey](#) is an old hosiery company that still thrives today. It was established under a different name in 1755 by husband and wife Henry and Ann Wood, working at knitting frames to produce garments. After her husband's death, it became the family firm Ann Wood and Sons which continued successfully. A Scottish hosier called Robert Walker joined the company and became a partner in 1842. He brought improvements to processes and established a steam-powered hosiery factory in 1859 – one of the very early powered knitwear factories in the city. By 1883 it was one of the largest hosiery manufacturers in the Leicester area. In 1897 the company adopted a new name and registered the "WOLSEY" trademark. In 1910 the company built a new factory at Abbey Meadows which became their new headquarters. Their former headquarters in the city centre – long since demolished – were on the corner of Welford Place (Leicester City Council's New Walk Centre office blocks were built there in the 1970s, but these too have now gone and the smart new Mattioli Woods building now stands there). In 1911 the Wolsey company famously provided underwear to Captain Scott and his team (and also to the Norwegian team) for their expedition and race to reach the South Pole. During the First World War 75% of Wolsey's production was devoted to supplying garments to British and allied troops. In 1919 the company ceased to trade through wholesale merchants and began to supply direct to the retailer. A public company was formed in 1920 adopting the title of 'Wolsey Ltd'. Their knitwear factory on Abbey Park Lane was completed in the early 1920s. Wolsey was sold to the Coultaulds Textiles Group in the 1960s which enabled the company to grow in Europe and Canada. The fox motif was adopted by the company in 1974 for golf sportswear. In 2004 the company moved headquarters to the north-east edge of the city, Thurmaston. In 2010 the company was taken over by the Hargreaves family (who built the Matalan empire). In 2017 the Thurmaston facility closed and they are now operate from Northamptonshire.

Space-exploration themed road names...

Pioneer Close

The United States' [Pioneer Programmes](#) began in 1958 and continued over subsequent decades, sending space orbiters and space probes to gather information about the moon and planets in our solar system.

Ariane Place

The [Ariane Project](#) was Western Europe's project to develop a rocket launcher. There have been a series of Ariane rocket projects since the late 1970s, right up to the present day.

Beagle Close

The [Beagle 2](#) was an unmanned British Mars lander deployed in 2003 with the purpose of searching for signs of life on Mars. Unfortunately, contact with the Beagle was lost. For over 10 years it was not known for certain whether or not it landed on the planet. Then in 2015 it was spotted on images taken by NASA's Reconnaissance Orbiter Camera. It is thought that Beagle 2 landed safely but that problems with its solar panel caused the communications antenna to be blocked. Beagle 2 was named after the 19th century ship HMS Beagle, which carried naturalist Charles Darwin on his voyage of scientific discovery in the 1830s, which improved understanding of life on Earth.

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