

Beckenham Place Park (Ravensbourne to Beckenham Hill)		
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## Beckenham Place Park (Ravensbourne to Beckenham Hill)

**Start:** Ravensbourne Station

**Finish:** Beckenham Hill Station

**Length:** 4.9 km (3.0 mi)

**Ascent/Descent:** 70/82m

**Time:** 1 ¼ hours walking time

**Rating:** 1 out of 10

### Transport:

Ravensbourne and Beckenham Hill are stations on the Catford Loop Line, a branch line off the Chatham Main Line, providing a suburban stopping service from Central London via Elephant & Castle to Sevenoaks, operated by Thameslink. Both stations are located in Zone 4. Travel time to Ravensbourne is 31 minutes from Blackfriars. Beckenham Hill is one stop closer to Central London.

### Walk Notes:

This partly undulating route winds its way through an attractive park in South East London, partly on grounds formerly used for a public golf course. The park is bounded to the east by the Ravensbourne River and the route initially follows parts of the well-waymarked Waterlink Way along it through open meadows. You then cross the railway line into the more undulating westerly part of the park, famous for its bluebell displays in season. Recent major investments in the landscaping of the park have spawned some interesting new features: A Mounded Garden, a Wet Woodland, a Wild Swimming Lake and the replanted Ornamental Garden with its beautiful café in the former homestead of the mansion.

There is a late bar and another daytime café as well, both in the Palladian Beckenham Place Mansion.

Please keep to the main paths in the woods – especially during bluebell season – unless where stated. The route is walkable at all times of the day.

### Eat/Drink (details last updated 01/10/20)

**Beckenham Place Café** Beckenham Place Mansion, *Beckenham Place Park, Beckenham, BR3 1SY* (<https://www.beckenhamplace.org/at-the-mansion/cafe/>). Open 10.00-17.00 Mon, 10.00-20.00 Tue-Sat and 10.00-19.00 Sun.

**Basement Bar** Beckenham Place Mansion, *Beckenham Place Park, Beckenham, BR3 1SY* (<https://www.beckenhamplace.org/at-the-mansion/bar/>). Open 10.00-17.00 Mon, 10.00-20.00 Tue-Sat and 10.00-19.00 Sun.

**The Homestead Café** Beckenham Place Park, *Beckenham, BR3 1SY* (020 8658 0701, <https://www.thehomesteadcafe.co.uk/>). Open 08.30-19.00 daily.

**Notes:****Waterlink Way**

The Waterlink Way is a cycle-path and walking route in South East London, following the Pool and Ravensbourne rivers while connecting a number of parks and green spaces – including Ladywell Fields and Brookmill Park. A Beckenham Place Park spur from further up the Ravensbourne River starts at Ravensbourne station and leads across Beckenham Hill, the watershed to the Pool river, and on to Lower Sydenham. It is an established part of the National Cycle Network Route 21, linking Eastbourne to the Thames and well waymarked. The route was designed to be accessible, with a large number of railway and tram stations en route, in SE London including Kent House, Clock House, Lower Sydenham, Ladywell, Lewisham and Greenwich. In Cator Park, Beckenham it links with the Capital Ring and Green Chain Walk. Find a map here: <https://lewisham.gov.uk/inmyarea/sport/get-active/walking/waterlink-way>

**Ravensbourne River**

The River Ravensbourne is a 17 km (11 mi) long tributary of the Thames in south London. It flows through the Boroughs of Bromley, Lewisham and Greenwich and enters the tidal River Thames at Deptford, where its tidal reach is known as Deptford Creek. The Ravensbourne rises at Caesar's Well, Keston, 6 km south of Bromley town centre. For the initial third of its length the river flows across common land (including Hayes and Bromley Commons) until it reaches the southern outskirts of Bromley town where it is joined by the Ravensbourne South Branch and the Ravensbourne East Branch, which substantially increase the flow. Its main tributaries are the Pool (joining in Catford), and the Quaggy (joining in Loampit Vale, Lewisham).

**Beckenham Place Park**

Beckenham Place Park is Lewisham Borough's largest green space, extending to 96 hectares (237 acres) and including a wide range of facilities, including a lake, ball court, football pitches, tennis court and sensory garden. It was established between 1757/60 and 1785 by John Cator the Younger who had acquired the rights of the Manor of Beckenham. The park is named after Beckenham Place, a Palladian-style mansion which now serves as a community centre and café. A railway line splits the park into two distinct parts and the only routes from one part to the other are at the northerly and south easterly ends.

These days the park is a Local Nature Reserve and a Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation and the Green Chain Walk and Capital Ring run through it. It is considered one of the finest wildlife sites in the borough, containing bluebell-rich ancient woodland as well as a variety of other habitats. A wild swimming lake was opened in July 2019 after some large-scale landscaping works but shut down after just five days following a near-fatal incident. Following the erection of fencing, the lake is now run on a commercial basis.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beckenham\\_Place\\_Park](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beckenham_Place_Park)      <https://www.beckenhamplace.org/>

## WALK DIRECTIONS

Leave the station up a ramp or through the station building onto **Crab Hill** (road) and *turn down to the right* along it. In 80m at a T-junction with **Ravensbourne Avenue**, *turn left* and follow the Avenue gently downhill. In 150m enter **Beckenham Place Park** through a wooden barrier and past a map to follow a wide gravel path (a shared cycle- and footpath) with **The Ravensbourne River** away to the right and **Summerhouse Field** on the left. In 350m you go through a belt of trees and continue through another open space, **The Common**. In 300m ignore a right turning path and in another 100m, near the end of the park, *fork left*. In 50m at the park boundary *turn left* along a tarmac path at a T-junction by a signpost with the **Capital Ring** (CR) and (one of the branches of) the **Green Chain Walk** (GCW). In 180m *turn left* along a tarmac path with the CR and the GCW. In 75m *bear right* with the path, now gently ascending between rows of trees and in 100m cross the railway line on a bridge.

**In 75m at a T-junction with another path, you have a choice:**

**For a short diversion to the wild swimming pond** (with three lines of fencing for safety reasons), *turn right* along a wide gravel path and *curve to the left* with it. In 20m you emerge from the trees and continue through an open meadow. In 80m pass a picnic and barbecue site on the left and in 35m **[!]** *fork left* at a small triangular green and in 20m *turn left* towards the pond. In 50m at a T-junction *turn left* along the pond (currently fenced off along its entire length with high building site mesh fences due to a near-fatal incident in its first week of opening to the public). In 190m you reach a four-way junction. The Main Walk joins from the left. *Turn right* along the second right path, leading long the left-hand side of an area of **wet woodland**, on a bearing of 115°. Pick up the directions below at the asterisk \*).

**For the Main Walk**, *turn left* along a gravel-and-earth track. In 50m you pass an interesting viewpoint on a landscaped hillock 30m away on the left (the '**Mounded Garden**'), in another 60m you pass a GCW- and CR-marker post and in 55m – at a four-way junction - ignore the right turn, leading around the newly re-created lake, and take the furthest left path, leading long the left-hand side of an area of **wet woodland**, on a bearing of 115°.

**\*)** In 180m, with the railway line away on the left, *turn right* with the wide gravel path. In 30m ignore a faint path on the left and in 20m *turn left* by a signpost along an earthen path through **Ash Plantation** (195°) at a three-way junction by a GCW and CR marker post on the right. In 140m at a fork by a marker post, you *fork left* ('GCW Alternative Route avoiding steps') and in 20m *turn left* at a four-way junction. In 70m you get views on the left across a meadow (**Railway Field**) to the railway line below. In 80m ignore a right turn uphill into the wood and continue along its fringe and in 60m the path continues on tarmac, gently rising and curving to the right.

In 110m near the top of the rise, ignore a narrow path into the wood on the right (this is **worth exploring though in bluebell season**) and then a broad gravel path to the left (the direct route from Ravensbourne Station). Continue further uphill through trees for 30m and then you have another meadow on the left (**Crab Hill Field**), with houses visible on the far side of it. In 50m, near the top of the rise, *turn right* into the wood, initially still on tarmac. In 35m ignore faint paths off to the left and right and in another 90m *turn left* at a four-way junction (three gravel, one earthen ahead).

In 40m *fork right* at a staggered three-way junction of paths and in 20m *turn right* with a CR and GCW marker post. In 90m by a metal GCW signpost on the left, you *turn right* ('Verdant Lane 2m') and *immediately fork left* with a GCW marker post on the left. In 30m *curve to the left* with the path and start a gentle descent (ignore all faint paths off

the main gravel path along this stretch). In 120m at a four-way junction, you *turn left* by a GCW and CR marker post, gently uphill. In 30m a path joins from the right and in 5m you *turn left* to continue up some steps.

In 70m at a three-way signpost, *turn right* with the CR ('Crystal Palace Park 4m') and pass a map of the GCW section between Hither Green and Kent House. There is a fenced clearing on the right with some far views to houses on higher ground (foliage permitting) and in 75m you continue in the same direction ignoring a left turn (with fine views to Beckenham Place's homestead, passed later), and soon curve to the left between metal fences. In 70m pass an info panel on Beckenham Place Park **Ancient Woodland** and in 30m the path continues as tarmac where you emerge from the trees into open parkland. The path curves to the left and drops to the valley bottom where in 150m you cross a ditch with the lake now on your right.

Re-ascend the slope on the far side of the valley, in 20m ignoring a right turn along the lake shore. In 50m *turn left* with the path towards the Palladian **Beckenham Place Mansion** and in another 50m ignore a path on the right leading through a metal gate to the **Pleasure Grounds** but then *turn right* up some steps to the **Ornamental Gardens**. Explore the gardens at leisure but eventually leave through the gate in the left-hand corner (to the left of the homestead). Follow a tarmac path to a T-junction with another curving tarmac path and *turn right* along it towards **Beckenham Place Mansion**. Ignore several paths forking right and at the left-hand side of the mansion (open 08.00-22.00 daily) pass the entrance to the **Beckenham Place Café**.

Make your way through or around the mansion (in the latter case passing the **Basement Bar**) to the upper front entrance of it and *turn right* along the drive, with the mansion on the right. In 60m you continue along the pavement to the right of the access road and in 90m pass a right turn into the homestead to **The Homestead Café** in 50m. Continue in the same direction along the access road and in 70m continue in the same direction along a tarmac path, signed 'Link to Station', where the road veers away to the left. In 320m, after curving to the left with the path, you leave **Beckenham Place Park** through a usually open gate to the right of the car gate. Continue along the right-hand pavement of **Beckenham Hill Road** and in 60m *turn left* to cross the road at a pedestrian crossing and follow a sign for **Beckenham Hill Station** 90m away.