



# Alexandra Palace to Tottenham Hale Walk

Alexandra Palace, the Parkland Walk (a former railway line) and two restored Wetlands in north London.



<b>Length</b>	<p><b>Main Walk:</b> 15¾ km (9.8 miles). Three hours 35 minutes walking time. For the whole excursion including trains, sights and meals, allow at least 7 hours.</p> <p><b>Short Walk 1, from Highgate:</b> 11½ km (7.1 miles). Two hours 30 minutes walking time.</p> <p><b>Short Walk 2, to Manor House:</b> 11½ km (7.1 miles). Two hours 40 minutes walking time.</p>
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<b>OS Map</b>	Explorer 173. Alexandra Palace is in north London, 10 km <b>N</b> of Westminster.
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<b>Toughness</b>	3 out of 10 (2 for the short walks from Alexandra Palace, 1 for the others).
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<b>Features</b>	<p>This walk is essentially a merger of two short walks. The first part is the popular <b>Parkland Walk</b>, a linear nature reserve created along the trackbed of a disused railway line. The second part links two new nature reserves created from operational Thames Water reservoirs, using a waymarked cycle/pedestrian route along residential streets.</p> <p>The walk starts with a short climb through Alexandra Park to <b>Alexandra Palace</b>, with splendid views of the London skyline from its terrace. This entertainment venue was intended as the north London counterpart to the <b>Crystal Palace</b> and although it was destroyed by fire just two weeks after opening in 1873 it was promptly rebuilt. Its private owners tried to sell the site and parkland for development in 1900 but it was acquired by a group of local authorities for the benefit of the public. Parts of the site were leased to the BBC for production and transmission of their new television service in 1936. The palace is now used for exhibitions, concerts and the</p>
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like, and its original Victorian theatre has been restored after many decades of neglect.

Alexandra Palace had been provided with a rail link from Highgate station and there were plans to incorporate this branch line into the Underground network in the 1930s. However, development was thwarted by World War II and regular passenger services between Finsbury Park and Alexandra Palace eventually ceased in 1954. Thirty years later parts of the line were converted into the **Parkland Walk** and it was designated a Local Nature Reserve in 1990.

From Alexandra Park the walk route follows the course of this disused railway line through Muswell Hill to **Highgate Wood**. It curves through this ancient woodland to the underground station and continues on the longer southern section of the line to **Finsbury Park**. On the other side of the park a short section on the **New River Path** leads to the first of the two nature reserves run by the London Wildlife Trust, **Woodberry Wetlands** (free entry; open to 4pm, but may be closed for private events up to six days a year).

After a circuit of the East Reservoir the walk follows a link route through the quiet residential streets of Stamford Hill, home to a large community of ultra-Orthodox **Hasidic Jews**. It deviates from the waymarked route for a brief excursion into Springfield Park before descending to cross the **River Lea**. A short section across a corner of **Walthamstow Marshes Nature Reserve** then leads to the extensive **Walthamstow Wetlands** (free entry; open to 5pm Apr-Sep, 4pm Oct-Mar, although some of the paths are often closed for maintenance or to protect birdlife).

A café in the reserve's Engine House and a nearby pub with a riverside beer garden offer refreshment before a short stretch of road walking to a station for the journey home.

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### Walk Options

Two **Short Walks** which retain features from both parts of the Main Walk are suggested. The walk route deliberately goes past Highgate station, so you could skip the northern section of the Parkland Walk by starting from there. Alternatively, you could loop back to Manor House station after visiting Woodberry Wetlands.

More simply, you could do the **Parkland Walk** and the **Wetlands Walk** separately, by finishing at or starting from Finsbury Park station respectively.

There are plenty of local bus services if you want to abandon the walk aYou can connect with t any stage.

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### Transport

Alexandra Palace is on the suburban lines from King's Cross and Moorgate, with an off-peak service of five or six trains per hour taking just 10 minutes from King's Cross (22 minutes from Moorgate). You can connect with both lines at Finsbury Park, on the Victoria and Piccadilly lines. For the two Short Walks, Highgate is on the High Barnet branch of the Northern line and Manor House is on the Piccadilly line.

At the end of the full walk Walthamstow Wetlands is between two stations on the Victoria line. In general Tottenham Hale is more convenient (it is

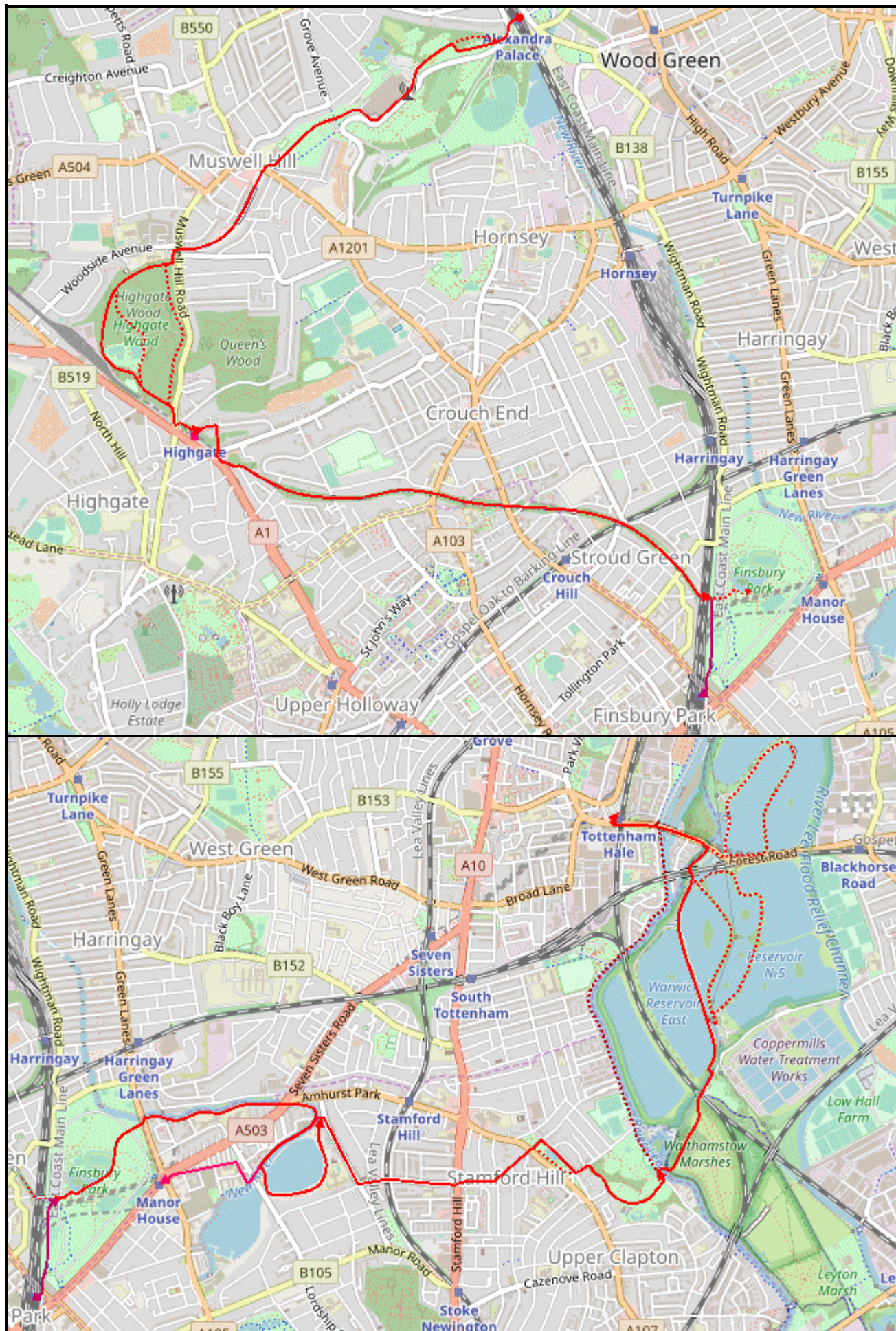
closer and also has frequent Greater Anglia trains to Liverpool Street and Stratford), but Blackhorse Road would suit anyone on the Gospel Oak-Barking Overground line.

All these stations are in TfL Zone 3 except Finsbury Park (Zone 2) and Manor House (Zones 2/3).

<b>Suggested Train</b>	The suggested starting time for the Main Walk is <b>10.45am</b> . You could start the shorter walks later, providing you leave enough time to pass through the two Wetlands sites before their closing times.	
<b>Lunch</b>	The most convenient places for refreshment are the many cafés passed along the way, with the ones in <b>Finsbury Park</b> and at <b>Woodberry Wetlands</b> being best placed for a lunch stop. The park café is larger and offers a greater range of food and drink, but the <b>Coal House Café</b> in the nature reserve has fine views over the reservoir, especially from its small rooftop terrace.	
<b>Tea</b>	Towards the end of the full walk there are cafés in <b>Springfield Park</b> and at <b>Walthamstow Wetlands</b> , although the <b>Engine House Café</b> in the nature reserve closes at 4pm. Directly opposite the reserve exit on Forest Road the <b>Ferry Boat Inn</b> (020-8808 4980) is a conveniently placed pub with a large beer garden alongside the Coppermill Stream.	
<b>Help Us!</b>	After the walk, please leave a comment, it really helps. Thanks! You can also upload photos to the   SWC Group on Flickr (upload your photos) and videos to  <a href="#">Youtube</a> . This walk's tags are:	
<b>By Car</b>	<b>Start</b>	<b>Finish</b>
<b>Help</b>	National Rail: 03457 48 49 50 • Traveline (bus times): 0871 200 22 33 (12p/min) • TFL (London) : 0343 222 1234	
<b>Version</b>	Nov-24 	
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# Walk Directions

# Walk Maps



All maps © OpenStreetMap contributors

# Walk Options

## M. Main Walk (15¾ km)

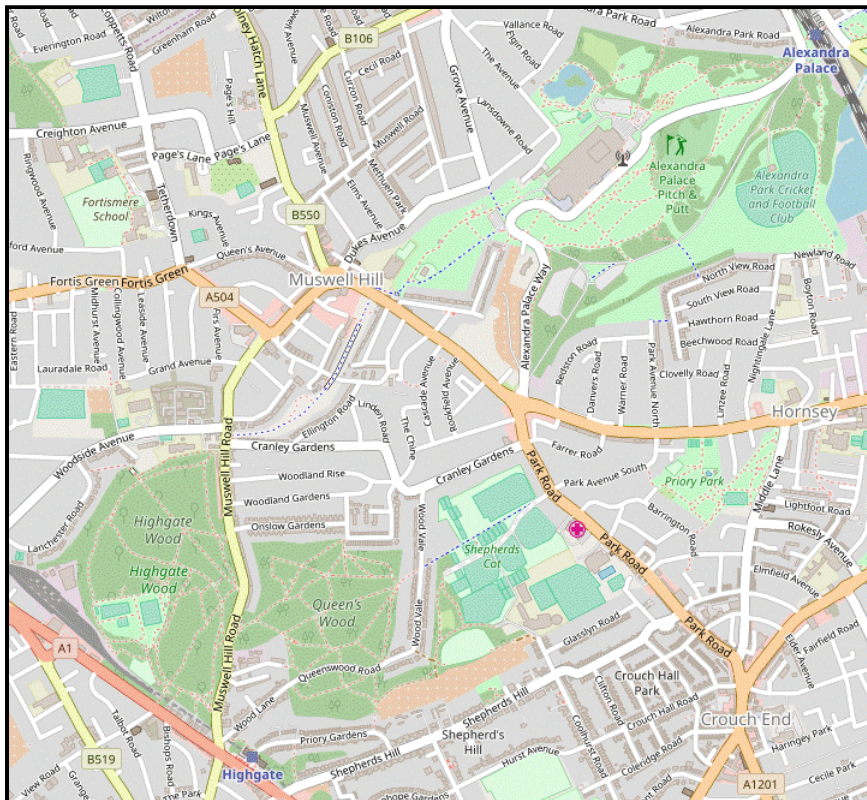
- a. Short Walk 1, from Highgate (11½ km)
- b. Short Walk 2, to Manor House (11½ km)
- p. The Parkland Walk, to Finsbury Park (8 km)
- w. The Wetlands Walk, from Finsbury Park (8¾ km)

## Walk Directions

*If you are doing Short Walk 1 (from Highgate), start at [14] in §B.*

*If you are doing the Wetlands Walk (from Finsbury Park), start at [21] in §C.*

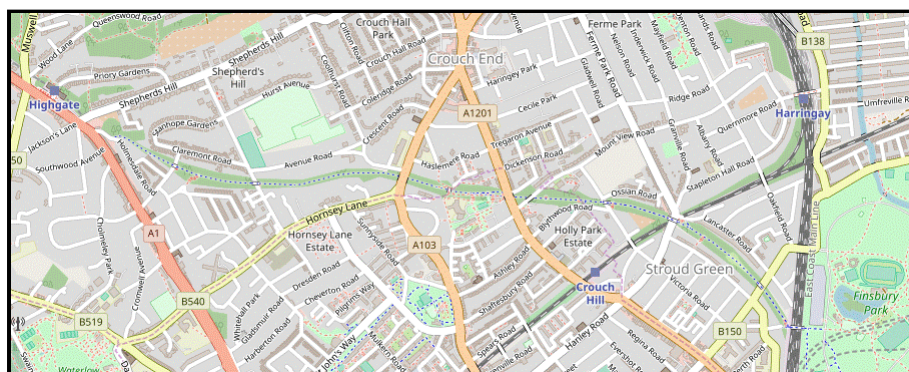
### A. Alexandra Palace Station to Highgate Station (4¼ km)



1. From the platform go up steps to the station footbridge. Alexandra Palace is on the hill to your left, but at most times you will have to go out through the ticket hall on the right and double back across the railway on the adjacent public footbridge.
2. At the end of the bridge go up a slope to a road, cross over and turn left. As the road bends right into **Alexandra Park** the pavement becomes a surfaced path climbing steadily above the level of the road.  
*The park opened to the public in 1863 and was named after the Princess of Wales (Alexandra of Denmark), who had married the future Edward VII earlier that year.*
3. The straightforward route is to stay on the surfaced path. In 250m turn right at a T-junction onto a broad path, then in 50m turn left onto a tarmac path climbing directly towards the Palace.
  - There is an alternative path which meanders through the woodland on the right and emerges opposite the tarmac path leading up to the Palace.
4. Go through the **Rose Garden** and make your way round to the long terrace on the left-hand side of **Alexandra Palace**, with fine views towards the city.  
*At the south-eastern corner there is a blue plaque and information panels "The Birthplace of Television" about the BBC's pioneering transmissions in 1936.*

5. Go all the way along the terrace and round to the right past outdoor seating for a bar. Go past the Palm Court entrance to the north-western corner and continue on an access road curving down to the left.
6. Before this joins the main road bear right onto a broad path into the trees. At the bottom of a slope go across a broad pedestrian walkway (slightly to the right) and back uphill, past a car park. Follow the surfaced path along the right-hand side of the park, passing the **Grove Café** along the way.
7. At the far end keep right to leave Alexandra Park on a footbridge. The path drops down and takes you under the A504 (Muswell Hill) to the start of the **Parkland Walk (North)**. Soon there are fine views off to the left as you cross a long viaduct over St James's Lane.
8. The path curves gently round to the right through woodland. At the far end go under the B550 (Muswell Hill Road) and follow the path up to the left. Continue briefly along the main road but almost immediately **turn right** through Cranley Gate into **Highgate Wood**.
9. You will eventually come back out onto Muswell Hill Road so the shortest route would be to stay close to it on paths near the left-hand side of the wood, but the suggested route is to take a long arc around the other side. For this route, **fork right** at the first path junction.
10. Follow the woodland path near the right-hand edge of the wood. After passing Bridge Gate the path dips down across a hollow where there are traces of an ancient **earthwork**. Unless you want to cut through the centre of the wood (where there is a café), keep right at the next fork to stay near the edge of the wood.
11. The path eventually comes out into the corner of a playing field. Keep ahead along its perimeter, curving round to the left on the far side. As you pass a children's playground **bear left** off the main path in order to switch to another broad path coming in from the left.
12. Carry on past a toilet block off to the right and keep ahead at path crossings, avoiding exits to Archway Gate. In 200m leave Highgate Wood at Gypsy Gate and turn right onto Muswell Hill Road.
13. At the traffic lights ahead cross the road and turn left briefly into Wood Lane, then almost immediately **turn right** onto a path going steeply downhill, signposted to Highgate station. This comes out by the Priory Gardens exit from the station, where there is a café.

## B. Highgate Station to Finsbury Park (3¼ • 3¾ km)



*Sections B & C broadly follow the **Capital Ring**, a circular walking route around inner London which was completed in 2005.*

## 14. Starting from Highgate Station

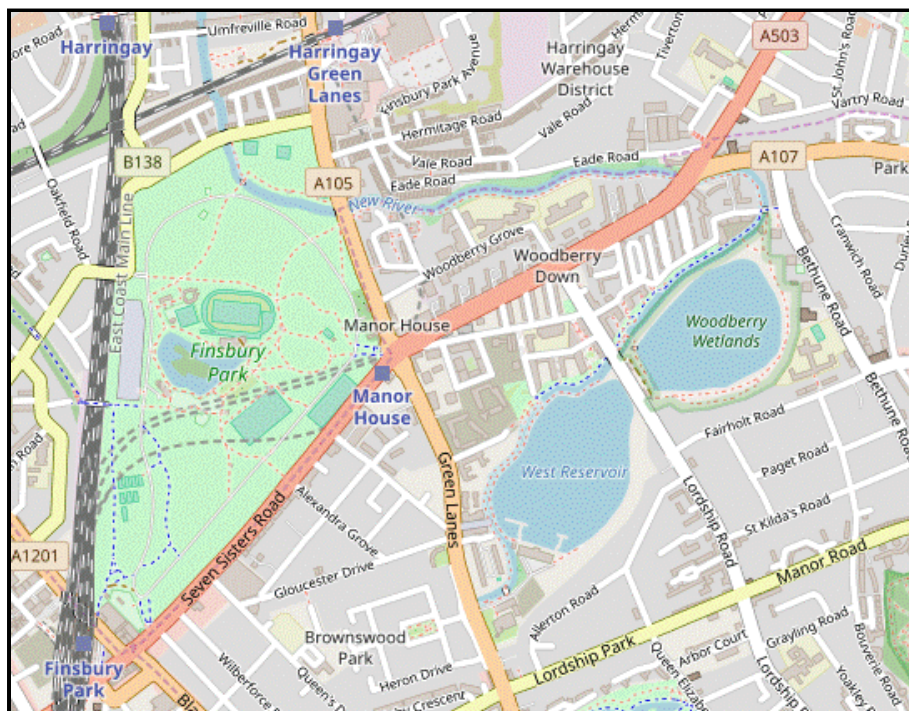
After going through the ticket barriers **turn left** to leave by Exit 2 (Priory Gardens), with Café Noir outside being the suggested meeting point for a group walk.

15. Go along Priory Gardens for 100m and then **turn right** onto a footpath between houses #63 & #65, climbing steadily. At the end of their gardens keep left on the main path up the edge of Highgate Spinney.
16. At the top turn right onto Shepherds Hill to come to its junction with the A1 (Archway Road). At the traffic lights turn left briefly onto the main road, then in 50m **turn left** into Holmesdale Road, signposted as the **Parkland Walk (South)**.
17. Go down this road for 100m, then **veer left** past a vehicle-blocking barrier and down a short slope to the old railway trackbed.  
*There are information panels about the fauna and flora to be seen on this linear nature reserve, plus others showing your location. There is a small **Wildlife Trail** opposite which you could loop around, and behind you are the old railway tunnels into Highgate station (not open to the public).*
18. To continue the walk simply follow the railway trackbed gently downhill for 2¾ km. Halfway along you pass the platforms of Crouch End station and later the site of Stroud Green station at Stapleton Hall Road bridge (where you also cross over the Gospel Oak-Barking line).  
*In the top of the graffiti-covered arches after Crouch End station you will see the figure of a **spriggan** (a kind of goblin) emerging from the brickwork.*
19. At the far end turn left to go across a long footbridge over the East Coast main line into **Finsbury Park**.

## 20. Finishing at Finsbury Park Station (+½ km)

- a. The park café is up ahead on your left if you want some refreshment, but to go directly to the station turn right onto the path going down the right-hand side of the park, parallel to the railway line.
- b. At the bottom leave Finsbury Park and go across the A1201 into Station Place. The underground and main line station entrances are on the right.

## C. Finsbury Park to Woodberry Wetlands [exit] (3 • 3½ • 4 km)



## 21. Starting from Finsbury Park Station (+½ km)

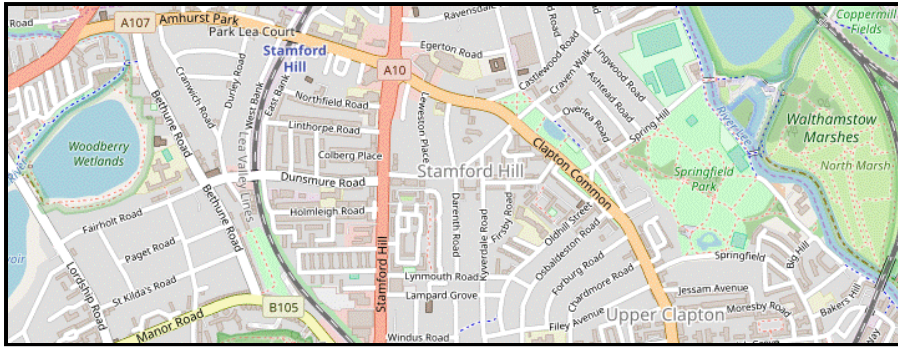
- a. Turn left out of the Station Place exit and cross the A1201. Enter Finsbury Park and continue up its left-hand side.
- b. After passing some tennis courts bear right onto a grassy path leading to the park café.

- 22. From the footbridge across the railway, keep ahead across the park's carriage drive and bear left up a short slope to the **Finsbury Park Café**, a possible refreshment stop.
- 23. From the front of the café go up to the **Boating Pond** and turn right to go alongside it, passing a children's playground on the right. At the end of the playground continue alongside the pond (or veer right onto a parallel path through the **McKenzie Flower Garden**). Either way, carry on past the pond and garden in the same direction, with a Sports Arena off to the left.
- 24. The paths merge by a small pavilion at a major path junction. Keep left to continue on the path alongside the Sports Arena, signposted to 'Clissold Park via New River'.
- 25. At the next junction keep ahead on the main path. This curves gently down to the right, crosses the carriage drive and leaves Finsbury Park through Green Lanes Gate.
- 26. Cross the road at the pedestrian lights. Ignore the path opposite into a block of flats, but go through a gate just off to the left onto the **New River Path**, with the waterway on your left.  
*The misleadingly-named New River is an aqueduct, constructed in the early 17<sup>th</sup>C to increase the supply of clean water to London (and still in use).*
- 27. Follow the serpentine riverside path (now a dirt track, so less muddy than it used to be) to reach the A503 (Seven Sisters Road) after 800m. Cross this major road carefully, using the pedestrian lights off to the left if necessary, onto the continuation of the New River Path.
- 28. The riverside path curves round to the right and in 250m comes out onto Newton Close. Ignore an entrance into Woodberry Wetlands just off to the left (this will be your exit) to continue on the New River Path for a further 400m, with the **East Reservoir** beyond the river.
- 29. 50m before reaching a road, **turn left** onto a footbridge across the river into **Woodberry Wetlands**. Follow the boardwalk around the reservoir and up to the **Coal House Café**, another possible refreshment stop.
- 30. Continue on the perimeter path around the southern and eastern sides of the East Reservoir (with the option of going down steps on the right and taking a parallel woodland path for part of the way). At the far end keep right to leave the reserve by the exit you saw earlier.

## 31. Finishing at Manor House Station (+1 km)

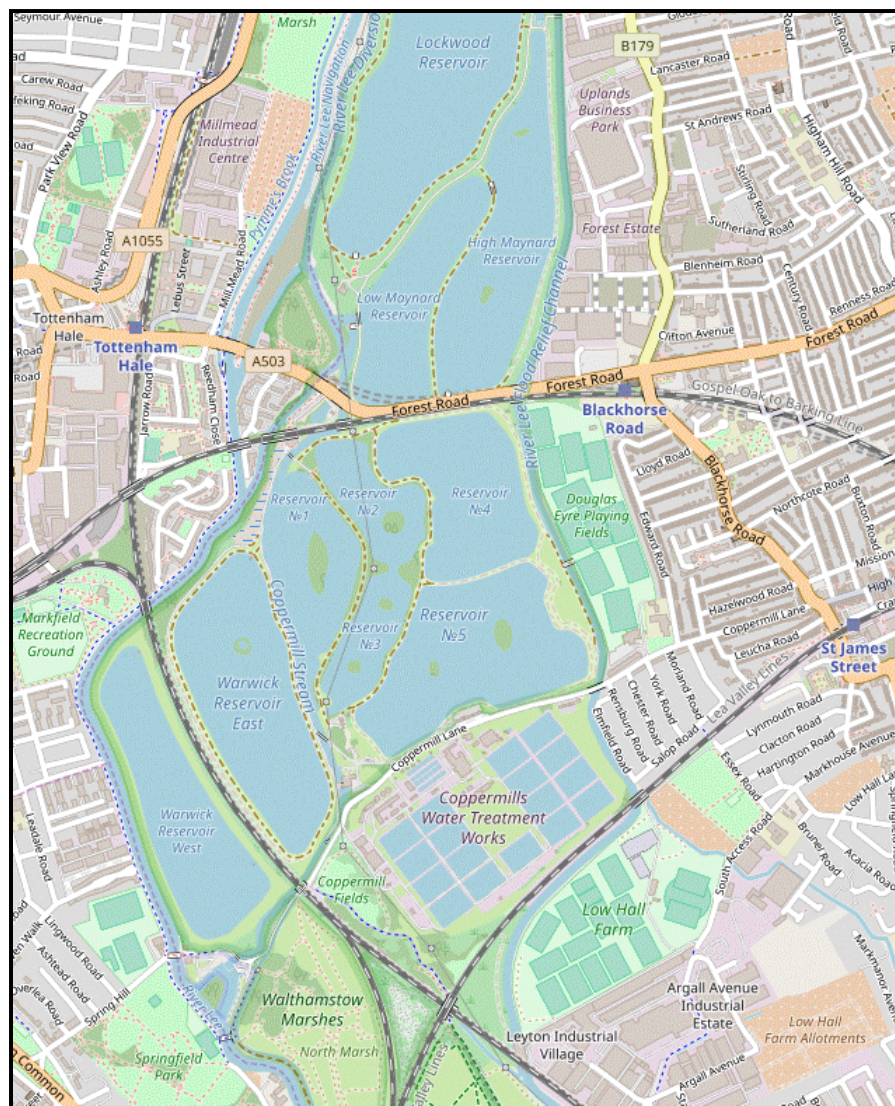
- a. Turn left out of the Wetlands and then immediately left again to repeat your previous route along the New River Path.
- b. Go past the main Wetlands entrance, cross over Lordship Road and turn right at a water sculpture into Riverside Walk.
- c. Go across a residential street and turn left at the end of Riverside Walk into Woodberry Down. The station is at the far end of this long street.

## D. Woodberry Wetlands to the River Lea (2½ km)



32. Turn right out of Woodberry Wetlands onto Newnton Close, then right again onto Bethune Road.  
*For the next 2 km you will be following a designated cycle/pedestrian route signposted to Walthamstow Wetlands. The route goes through an area sometimes referred to as the 'square mile of piety' because of the many devout Hasidic Jews to be seen in their distinctive clothes.*
33. In 400m **turn left** at a crossroads into Dunsmure Road, passing a parade of shops and crossing a railway line.  
*The woodland strips on either side of the tracks have been designated as the East & West Bank Nature Reserve but there is no public access to them.*
34. At the end of Dunsmure Road cross the A10 (Stamford Hill) at the traffic lights to continue on Portland Avenue, to the left of the library.
35. At the junction with Darenth Road stay on Portland Avenue as it turns half-left. At the end cross the A107 carefully onto a corner of Clapton Common, with a pond ahead on your right.  
*The ornate church with the tall spire behind the trees on the left was built in the 1890s as the 'Ark of the Covenant' for a mystical sect called the Agapemonites (Abode of Love). It declined after its leaders died and in 2010 the building was sold to the Georgian Orthodox Church.*
36. The signposted route to the opposite corner of the common is a new cycleway behind the pond, rather than the (slightly shorter) route starting along the tarmac path near the main road. Either way, **turn left** at the far corner into Spring Hill.
37. Follow this road downhill for 75m and then **turn right** into **Springfield Park**.  
*The walk route now leaves the designated cycle route, which takes a more direct route to Walthamstow Wetlands (continuing down Spring Hill and crossing the River Lea on New Bridge).*
38. You could take any route down to the bottom of the park (you will be crossing the River Lea on a footbridge beyond some tennis courts), but the suggested route takes a short loop around the park. For this route, **fork right** onto a path going up a short slope and through a wooded area at the top of the park.
39. After passing a small pavilion the path reaches a more open area, **The Knoll**. A little further ahead the perimeter path veers right and leads to the park café, but if you are not stopping for refreshment the suggested route is to bear slightly left across the grassland, aiming for some clipped yew hedges 150m away.  
*These hedges conceal park benches with fine views across the Lea valley to Walthamstow Marshes.*
40. From the yew hedges go straight down the hillside to a gate. Leave Springfield Park and **turn left** onto a path alongside the **River Lea**, which in 75m comes to **Horse Shoe Bridge** across the river.
  - If you know that Walthamstow Wetlands is closed you could carry on along the riverside path for just over 2 km to Tottenham Lock, with Tottenham Hale station a further 250m away along the A503. However, this route is only slightly shorter than the main route through the wetlands.

## E. The River Lea to Tottenham Hale Station (2¾ km)



41. Cross the river bridge (with **Springfield Marina** ahead on your left) and go down the right-hand path on the far side. Go straight across the broad riverside path and through a gate into **Walthamstow Marsh Nature Reserve**.  
*Part of the Lee Valley Park, this is one of the few areas of semi-natural wetland around London which has escaped both development and gravel extraction.*
42. Follow the main path through a picnic area and into **Horse Shoe Thicket** (there is an alternative path just off to the right, which swings round a pond via a short boardwalk to join the main path).  
*This area of wet woodland became established in the 1970s when the river was dredged for the marina and the mud deposited here.*
43. After the two paths rejoin by the fenced-off pond keep left at a path junction. At the next junctions fork right and then left to continue in the same direction, soon coming out into an open area. Follow a grassy path to a gate in its far left-hand corner.
44. Turn right onto a lane and duck under the very low railway bridge carrying the Greater Anglia line. Go along the lane for 150m and **turn left** into the Coppermill Lane entrance to **Walthamstow Wetlands**.
  - If you will not have enough time to get through the reserve before its displayed closing time you will have to use the map to complete the walk. Either continue along Coppermill Lane to St James Street station (1½ km away) or Blackhorse Road station (2 km), or make your way back to the River Lea and head north along its towpath to the A503 and Tottenham Hale station (3 km).

45. Cross the (stagnant) Coppermill Stream and follow the path through the reserve, with the bank of East Warwick Reservoir on your left. Soon after the path bends left you pass **Coppermill Tower** on your right, which is usually open: there is information inside about its long and varied history, and you can go upstairs to a fine **viewpoint**.  
*The water company bought the Coppermill in 1859 and converted it into a pumping station, adding the Italianate tower a few years later.*
46. The simplest route through the reserve is to follow the broad path heading **N** alongside the Coppermill Stream for 1 km, although it is usually possible to go up steps on the left and walk along the top of the bank. Alternatively, 150m after the Coppermill Tower there is a concrete bridge on the right leading to a couple of slightly longer 'seasonal routes' which might be open:
- A gorse-lined grassy path between Reservoirs 1 and 3 & 2.
  - A broad shingle path between Reservoirs 3 & 2 and 5 & 4.
47. All routes lead to the **Engine House**, which has a rear entrance leading to its small **Visitor Centre** and **Café**, and another viewing point from its **Turbine Room** at the top.  
*The Engine House was built in 1894. Its 54m tower has been specially built to house nesting swifts and bats.*
48. To complete the walk leave from the front of the building and follow the main path under a railway bridge carrying the Gospel Oak-Barking line. Continue as directed on the pedestrian walkway between the River Lea and the reserve's small car park.
49. The path comes out onto the A503 opposite a possible refreshment stop, the **Ferry Boat Inn**. Tottenham Hale station is 600m off to the left, Blackhorse Road station 900m to the right.
- If you want to explore the northern part of Walthamstow Wetlands before finishing the walk, its Maynard entrance is just off to the right. The main path through this part of the reserve leads to an exit on Lockwood Way (not convenient for any station), but there is a seasonal route looping back around the Low Maynard Reservoir, a circuit of 1¾ km.
50. Unless you want to finish at Blackhorse Road, head **W** on the A503. After crossing the River Lea you pass a couple of entrances to **The Paddock**, a small Community Nature Garden which you could loop around. You then cross the **River Lee Navigation** at Tottenham Lock. Keep ahead at the traffic lights, going up a slope and over the Greater Anglia line. Tottenham Hale station is on the right.  
*The Paddock is owned and managed by Haringey Council and opened to the public in 2000. Bounded by the road and two river channels, the site had been a company sports ground but reverted to this 'wilderness' when the factory closed.*

» *Last updated: November 24, 2024*

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