

The Thames Path on the north bank...

TOWER BRIDGE TO TOWN OF RAMSGATE St Katharine Docks and Historic High Street

You join the Thames just beyond the Tower of London ① at Tower Bridge, enjoying superb views from the walkway of the Tower Bridge Exhibition ②. With the river to your right, pick up the Thames Path at St Katharine's Pier, at the foot of the bridge. Passing the water sculpture of Girl with a Dolphin, cross the footbridge at the entry to Thomas Telford's St Katharine Docks which opened in 1828. Laid waste and all but abandoned in World War II, the docks were revived in the 1970s to house restaurants and shops set around a lively marina - still home to traditional Thames sailing barges. Over the footbridge, bear right into Katharine's Way stopping to investigate Alderman Stairs - once busy with watermen and their passengers. Go through the gate leading to the riverside terrace of Tower Bridge Wharf and enjoy more magnificent views before rejoining the road amongst the chic restaurants of Cinnabar Wharf. You are now approaching Wapping High Street, a far cry from the modern thoroughfare its name suggests. It is an unhurried and historic route, with trees, cobbles and some particularly fine houses, such as Wapping Pierhead Houses built for officials of 19th-century Wapping Dock which has since been filled in. Next on your right comes a famous survivor of the 36 pubs which once served Wapping High Street: The Town of Ramsgate takes its name from the fishermen of Ramsgate who landed their catch at Wapping Old Stairs, down the alley beside the pub. Judge Jeffreys of the Bloody Assizes was captured in the pub after his "master" James II was overthrown by the Glorious Revolution of 1688.

TOWN OF RAMSGATE TO PROSPECT OF WHITBY More Pubs and Pirates

Walk on now through Oliver's Wharf, and look to your left down Scandrett Street. The 1760 old school of St John has been restored as town houses and the church tower, which survived the blitz, is built of stone and brick specially chosen to be visible through river mists. Next come the pleasant Waterside Gardens at Wapping New Stairs. This is the most likely site of Execution Dock, where pirates received the Grace of Wapping, tied to a stake until the tide had washed over them three times. Captain Kidd, naval officer turned pirate, shared this fate here in 1701. His name lives on in the Captain Kidd pub, housed in a converted warehouse and entered via a quaint courtyard. Next comes Wapping's only remaining working warehouse on King Henry's Wharf, with Wapping underground station hard on its heels. Some 40 yards beyond the station, a gated ramp leads back to the river to pass in front of apartments lining St Hilda's Wharf. Follow the walkway back onto the High Street, past New Crane Wharf and more warehouse conversions to Wapping Wall. Walk on now to the Prospect of Whitby, once a hotbed of cockfights and bare knuckle fights. The pub was also a favourite vantage point for Whistler and Turner, who painted some of their most famous riverside scenes from here. Look over the road to the London Hydraulic Pumping Station: now a restaurant, its décor still preserves parts of the machinery which powered the London Palladium safety curtain and the lifting engines at Tower Bridge.

PROSPECT OF WHITBY TO CANARY WHARF Limehouse, the Madhouse and Canary Wharf

From the Prospect of Whitby, follow the Thames Path along a river terrace passing in front of handsome apartments, with a little pebbly beach at low tide. The

red bascule bridge here marks the entry to Shadwell Basin, built when ships outgrew the London Dock and now an attractive setting for waterside housing and a watersports centre. Cross the bridge, skirt back to the waterfront and into King Edward VII Memorial Park; the rotunda on the edge of the park disguises the ventilation shaft for Brunel's Rotherhithe Tunnel, still in use today. There's more luxury housing ahead on Free Trade Wharf; built in the 1790s for the East India Company, the wharf was so hectic it was nicknamed the Madhouse. Rejoining Narrow Street, turn right just after Sun Wharf and back along the river to the panoramic viewpoint of the Narrow Street pub. This was the old Dockmaster's House at the entrance to Limehouse Basin, through which barges can still access the intricate network of England's inland waterways. After crossing the bridge at Limehouse Marina continue past 18th-century merchants' houses to the Grapes pub: The Six Jolly Fellowship Porters of Dickens' novel *Our Mutual Friend* still retains a wonderfully Dickensian feel. From Narrow Street, follow signage through the arched entry to the waterfront at Duke Shore Wharf. Keep following the Thames Path as it heads south along the distinctive U-bend which defines the Isle of Dogs, where an influx of lunch-time joggers announces the approach of Canary Wharf, so called because it handled produce arriving from the Canary Islands. Walk on towards the pier but be aware that the Path here may be closed whilst building works take place. If so, follow the signed temporary route. Take steps leading up from the waterfront bars and cafés to Westferry Circus and extensive designer shopping malls in the high-rise heart of Canary Wharf. From here, go on to the Museum in Docklands ③ at West India Quay: this was the old Blood Alley, where rough sugar sacks drew blood on the dockers' backs. Detour from the Thames Path once more at Heron Quay Roundabout to see the Traffic Light Tree sculpture by Pierre Vivant, before walking on along the river towards Greenwich.

The Thames Path on the south bank...

TOWER BRIDGE TO KING'S STAIRS

Butler's Wharf and the Angel

Leaving Tower Bridge with the river on your left, enter the narrow lane of Shad Thames, with cafés and small shops set into massive warehouses linked overhead by iron bridges. Turn left before the first bridge into the passageway of Maggie Blake's Cause and walk through to the river frontage of Butler's Wharf. This most imposing of London's Victorian warehouses was rescued in the 1980s by Sir Terence Conran, who turned it into stylish apartments and riverside restaurants. Walk on past Conran's Design Museum ⑤ to the stainless steel footbridge at the entrance to St Saviour's Dock, an atmospheric inlet of forbidding warehouses and tidal mud. You are now entering Concordia Wharf and Jacob's Island, the part of Bermondsey which Charles Dickens described as "the filthiest, strangest and most extraordinary of the many localities that are hidden in London". Pirates preyed on vessels awaiting entry to the docks: St Saviour's Dock displayed the bodies of those who were captured and hanged here. If building is in progress, the Thames Path may now divert along Chambers Street and back to the river via Fountain Green Square. The walkway broadens here as it approaches Cherry Garden Pier, with Diane Gorvin's charming three-piece sculpture of local MP and benefactor Dr Salter, his daughter and their cat. Skirt around the pier and walk on to the Angel pub; Judge Jeffries sat on the balcony here to watch the hangings across the river at Execution Dock and it was here that Turner was inspired to paint the Fighting Temeraire, as he watched the warship pass by on its final journey to the breaker's yard. Look to the right of the Angel, where a grassy space conceals the remains of the 14th-century manor house of Edward III. Just beyond it are the King's Stairs which served the palace, adopted by generations of watermen and by the mudlarks who scavenged along the river at low tide.

KING'S STAIRS TO ROTHERHITHE

Pilgrim Fathers and Brunel

From the pleasant grassy knoll of King's Stairs Gardens, walk between warehouses linked by little bridges decked with greenery to reach the historic heart of Rotherhithe's conservation area and the old-world Mayflower pub. The famous ship which carried the Pilgrim Fathers to America in 1620 began its epic journey from its mooring near here, returning to London the following year. The Last Will and Testament of the Mayflower crew is displayed in the bar and the passenger list is on show in the restaurant upstairs. Across the road, St Mary's church provides the burial place for four of the Mayflowers' owners, including Christopher Jones who captained the ship to the New World. Note its barrel roof, shaped like an upturned ship, and the communion table and chairs made of timbers from the Temeraire, which served alongside Nelson's ship the Victory at the Battle of Trafalgar. Walk onto the Brunel Museum ⑥ beyond the church: this is the engine house (which pumped out Brunel's Rotherhithe Tunnel, the first ever built under a navigable river. Designed by Sir Marc Brunel assisted by his son Isambard, this feat of engineering pioneered a tunnelling technique still in use today. Feasts and fairs were staged in the tunnel which attracted two million visitors in its first year.

ROTHERHITHE TO GREENLAND DOCK

Surrey Water and Surrey Dock Farm

Leaving Rotherhithe Street (the longest street in London) turn back to the river at Cumberland Wharf, with its bronze statue of a Bermondsey boy who is reading the story of the Mayflower. Walk on until the Thames Path crosses the lift-bridge at the entry to Surrey Water and turn left around the Spice Island pub. There are yet more superb views here as the path weaves along the riverside, skirting the old warehouse and rice mill of Globe Wharf,

ducking behind apartments and back to the river via Foreshore Steps. Once past the handsome houses of Sovereign Crescent, look to your right as you cross the inlet with the little footbridge to spot The Pumphouse Museum ⑦. It is housed in the old Pumphouse built to regulate water levels in the dock, which sits beside Lavender Pond and Nature Park. With Canary Wharf still towering over the far bank, walk on past the anonymous obelisk at Sovereign View and on to Rotherhithe Street and the Hilton Docklands – built on the site of Nelson's dry dock. From here follow a sweeping path back up to the river, bearing right to the gates of Surrey Docks Farm ⑧. Go through the farm to enjoy a wonderful parade of bronze animals on Barnard's Wharf or follow Rotherhithe Street around the edge to rejoin the river via Vaughan Street. The tented landing stage of Greenland Passage is straight ahead and the entrance to Greenland Dock a little further via Randell Rents. Walk on along the path or take a boat onto Greenwich or back to the Tower from Greenland Pier.

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CANARY WHARF TO ISLAND GARDENS

Millwall and the SS Great Eastern

Tearing yourself away from Canary Wharf you reach the striking apartments of the Cascades, with their porthole windows and waterfall silhouette – the first residential development of its kind on the Isle of Dogs. Next come the gardens named after Sir John McDougal, whose flower milling business based in Millwall Dock became a household name. This is the start of the Mill Wall embankment, where in the 17th and 18th centuries many flour mills flourished. Go on past the sprawling block of bright red brick apartments and turn inland

past Arnham school and right onto Westferry Road. Across the way are the print works which produce the Telegraph and Express titles with the Docklands Sailing and Watersports Centre 9 close by on the old Millwall Dock. Fifteen minutes walk along the main road brings you a café at the Space, a conversion of St Paul's church built in the 1850s for Scottish shipyard workers brought to Millwall to build Brunel's SS Great Eastern. Twice the length and five times the weight of any previous ship, with a hull of wrought iron, she was designed to carry passengers non-stop to India and Australia but was used instead to lay the first transatlantic telegraph cable. Walk on to Masthouse Terrace, which marks the site where the SS Great Eastern was launched sideways into the Thames. This is adjacent to Burrell's Wharf, which was taken over by Burrell & Company in 1888 to manufacture paints. Spurred on by glimpses of the Cutty Sark, follow the path to the far right of the car park beside the Elephant Royale, on past the Ferry House pub at the old ferry crossing and past Johnson Drawdock to Island Gardens. The gardens reward you with the classic view of Greenwich, as captured by Canaletto. Detour through Island Park to Mudchute Farm 10, Europe's largest urban farm, named after the mud chutes used in excavating Millwall Dock. Finish by taking the ten-minute walk under the Thames via the Greenwich Foot Tunnel, which has lifts at either end.

The Thames Path on the south bank...

GREENLAND DOCK TO GREENWICH St Francis Drake to Cutty Sark

Greenland Dock is an imposing stretch of water which is now a centre for watersports and leisure craft of every kind. Created in the 17th century to serve the Royal

Dockyards at Deptford, it later became a base for Arctic whalers – hence its name. By the 19th century Greenland was part of a 460-acre complex of docks known generally as the Surrey Docks. Go on now past Greenland Pier to neighbouring South Dock Marina, another well-used stretch of water with berths for over 200 vessels. This whole peninsula took the biggest pounding of any British docks in World War II, but it fought back: South Dock was pumped out and used to build the concrete caissons for the Mulberry Harbours, named after its Mulberry Quay. Follow the waterside past high-rise flats until you come to the Old Rum Stores on the site of the Tudor docks of Deptford. It was here at the steps between the two blocks that Sir Francis Drake was knighted by Queen Elizabeth onboard the Golden Hinde after he had circumnavigated the world. Turn inland now for the last leg to Greenwich. In Bowditch go left into Pepys Park and cross it diagonally to exit on Grove Street. From here, follow the signs past St Nicholas Church by Deptford Green weaving back to the river passing Peter the Great's statue and on to reach the Cutty Sark, part of Maritime Greenwich World Heritage Site 11 – 16. The fastest sailing ship of her day, the lovely Cutty Sark is undergoing restoration. Explore the quirky shops and markets of old-world Greenwich before walking on along the Thames Path or taking a boat back to St Katharine's Pier.

GREENWICH TO THE THAMES BARRIER Into the New Millennium

With the river on your left at Greenwich Pier, follow the Path past the Royal Naval College to the Trafalgar Tavern. Follow Crane Street (behind the tavern) back to the river and the "Strawberry Hill Gothick" façade of 17th-century Trinity Hospital, still in use as almshouses. Towering above it is Greenwich Power Station, built in 1906 to power trams and now a back up for London Underground – the Greenwich Meridian runs

under its massive jetty. Pause next at the Cutty Sark Tavern, with its Georgian bow windows and riverside terrace – your last chance of refreshment until North Greenwich Station. From here the waterside presents an intriguing mix of industry and dereliction with factories like Tate & Lyle's refinery (which processes a million tonnes of sugar a year) set amongst marine scrap-yards, slipways, warehouses and wharves. Information boards explain their various intriguing histories: Enderby's Wharf, for example, was where Brunel's Great Eastern loaded her Atlantic cables. Ignoring signs for the inland Cross Peninsula Route, venture between dusty yards piled high with aggregates and on to Victoria Deep Water Wharf, still active with shipping, with West India Docks across the river. At this point, you may find big changes under way. The O₂ (Millennium Dome) will host the gymnastics and the finals of the basketball during the London 2012 Olympic Games whilst from Victoria Deep Water Terminal to the Ecology Park, the whole peninsula will be transformed with 10,000 new homes. Follow the Thames Path along the waterside, around the edge of The O₂, past the public art and on past the Greenwich Peninsula Ecology Park 17 and the Greenwich Yacht Club. The Anchor & Hope pub marks the final half-mile stretch to the Thames Barrier 18, a symbol of London's 2012 Olympic bid. Return by bus or by train from Charlton Station or take the boat back to Greenwich.