

Lancaster: Town and Country

Starting a walk in the city centre raises questions about parking – ones that we solved by using the Park and Ride at J34 of the M6. Ample free parking is available at all times and the frequent bus service into Lancaster is cheaper and more convenient than parking in the centre. Take the city bound bus and get off at the first stop on North Road / Sugar House Alley where the walk starts.

Walk up Sugar House Alley, heading away from the A6. At the top of the Alley is St Leonard's Gate. Turn right, and cross St Leonard's Gate and walk uphill and diagonally across the car park to find Edward Street, which passes through largely derelict buildings.

At the end of Edward Street, we arrive at Moor Lane where we turn left and walk uphill to find the bridge over the Lancaster Canal. Take the footpath down to the towpath and turn right, to head south through the city centre – the Spire of the Cathedral will be ahead and on the left.

Continue along the canal towpath, and continue to head South. The towpath is initially on the West of the canal as it passes Lancaster Cathedral, also known as The Cathedral Church of St Peter.

At the next bridge, where Quarry Road crosses the canal, the towpath changes side - so make sure you swap over and walk along the frontage of the White Cross pub - the path on the other side reaches a dead end.

Follow the towpath further south, past the road bridge where the A6 crosses the canal, until a second waterside pub is reached – the Waterwitch.

At the next bridge the towpath again changes side - continue to follow the canal, noting the bridge where the West Coast Main Line railway crosses.

Just after the railway bridge, leave the canal and head to the adjacent main road. Cross over and continue in the same direction as before looking out for a side street called Cromwell Road. Turn Right down Cromwell Road to pick up the footpath through the Fairfield Nature Reserve

Follow the path through the nature reserve – navigation should not be a problem as the route is clear and well maintained, but in essence we loop round in a large circle and eventually come back to the canal a little further south than before.

Cross the road and turn right to follow the tow path – but only for a very short distance. Keep an eye open for a road on the right, adjacent to a lodge house.

This is Aldcliffe Hall Drive, and it leads through quiet roads and detached housing. The road soon ends, but the path continues past concrete bollards to arrive at a track, shown on the OS map as a minor road: We turn right here and head out toward the estuary. We eventually reach the Lancashire Coastal Way, and follow it to the right taking the path along the embankment at the side of the river Lune, heading upstream and back toward Lancaster.

To our left are the mudflats of the estuary, and to the right are marshes. Both are protected areas with much to offer bird spotters.

After a while the river curves round to our right and we see a white building opposite and here the Lancashire Coastal path meets a path heading inland at Freemans Wood. We take this path, now heading SE, following a drainage ditch on a clear and well surfaced path. This crosses a track and carries on as before along the side of the woodland to arrive back at the edge of the city – at Abrahams Heights.

The road that we arrive at is Willow Lane and we turn right here, crossing immediately and taking a left at the next junction to walk up Westbourne Road. We could follow Westbourne Road all the way back to the city centre, but instead, look out for “Piggy Lane” on the right – this provides a more interesting shortcut with reduced road traffic.

At Piggy Lane, walk to the left of the gates, then follow the path round - first to the right and then to the left - before joining the end of Sunnyside Drive, where we turn left.

We now follow Sunnyside Lane North until we arrive at back at Westbourne Road, where we turn right before crossing and taking Fairfield Road on the left. This ends at West Road where we turn right and cross immediately to take the path adjacent to the railway station.

This takes us through playing fields, whilst remaining parallel to the railway until we arrive at Long Marsh Lane where we take a right and pass underneath the railway, before crossing and taking a path immediately on the left which takes into the fields below the rather imposing Lancaster Priory Church of St Mary.

The path winds up the hill to the church, and as we climb, the castle comes into view.

From the Castle and Priory, we head downhill and down the Church Street steps into the city centre, with the walk ending in our case at the bus station where the bus back to the Park and Ride facility can be found.

- **Total distance 10.6 km (6.6 miles)**
- **Total Ascent 319 m**