

Lancaster: City Country and Coast

The walk starts on North Road / Sugar House Alley. 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, passing through largely derelict buildings, including a large Brewery originally belonging to Yates & Jackson, but later bought out by Thwaites, and then Mitchells who brewed there until 1999. 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.

The canal now is typical of many city-centre canals – a welcome “green” artery offering a brief respite from the bustle of the city and a glimpse back to the industrial heritage that created them. 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, and there is a “turning bridge” – a canal structure designed such that horses towing the boats could swap sides without unhitching the tow line. We come off the towpath at this point & continue to follow the canal from Aldcliffe Road, noting the bridge where the West Coast Main Line railway crosses.

Just after the railway bridge, 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, and follow the path all round to eventually come back to the towpath.

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 and many helpful signs which ensure you don't accidentally transgress in any way.

We soon 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. 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. An interesting point to note

here is that if you go right instead, this alternate path takes us directly into the Fairfield Nature Reserve again.

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. We continue with our path which now 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.

Our next landmark is the cobbled lane down to the riverside on our left. Take care here as the cobbles and the steps that follow them can be tricky when wet. Once we arrive at the bottom of the cobbled lane we are on the main road (St George's Quay) along the riverfront which would once have been a series of bustling warehouses. These have of course since been repurposed as offices and dwellings, but much of the gritty industrial past is still clear. We headed left at this point to have good look at the buildings, and the numerous heritage plaques.

We continue along St George's Quay back into the city centre, and soon walk under the paths to the bridge to find a poignant memorial to the human costs of the vast wealth that once flowed through the port of Lancaster: This is ***Captured Africans*** - Lancaster's official and permanent memorial to the victims of the transatlantic slave trade, and Lancaster's grim role in the enslavement and transportation of an estimated 30,000 African people.

From here we cross and take the road up toward The Three Mariners: Dating from the 15th century it is the oldest pub in Lancaster.

We take the subway to the left of the Three Mariners back to the main road (Cable Street / A6) and go right, heading uphill toward the castle again, to enjoy a few more heritage opportunities. We soon see Castle Street on the right and head up there past the front of what were originally the Judges Lodgings, now repurposed as the Museum of Childhood.

We continue up castle street noting the premises once occupied as both offices and manufacturing space by Gillow and Co, before looking up to Castle Park where we see what must ne the highlight of our day – the hallowed premises of Paley and Austin, the architects behind the beautiful Victorian church on just about every walk in the Yorkshire Dales. Worth noting almost opposite is the glass works where Shrigley and Hunt would have created the windows for the builds completed by Paley and Austin.

We could wander around Lancaster all day and find further points of interest, and perhaps there's still enough left for iteration 3 of this walk. For now, though we head back down the main road to the bus station where we catch the Park and Ride bus back, to end a great walk.

- **Total distance 12.1 km (7.5 miles)**
- **Total Ascent 139 m**
- **Moderate walk**