

Circular Cycle Caterpillar Route Directions (7km)

Everyone is welcome and everyone is responsible for themselves and their own safety. Parents and carers are responsible for children in their care. Each group will be self-led and is responsible for itself. For coronavirus safety, please keep distances as appropriate.

Start at Hermit Road Recreation Ground. (Place of Interest 1 – pic1) Go south along the path that goes through the middle of the park. At the park exit, turn right into Bethell Avenue. (pic2)
At end, straight across Hermit Road into Kimberly Road and ride up to Eastlea Community School.
Take left path (silver bollards) (pic3) and bear right until you reach another set of silver bollards (Exning Road sign on house here). (pic4)
Turn left into Exning Road and follow to the end. Cross Star Lane to enter Star Park. (Place of Interest 2 – pic5)
Go through the park past the basketball then table tennis areas (pic6). Turn right (pic7) and go past play area on your left. Exit park on Star Lane.
Turn left (pic8) and follow Star Lane to the station.
Take the lift! (pic9) (1 household only) – go to bridge level and then go right to the end of the bridge and take the last lift (of 3) to descend.
Cross the pedestrian crossing; turn right and then immediately left into Cody Road Business Park. (pic10)
Take left turn into South Crescent (pic11) and follow the road to the end where you will see Cody Dock (Place of Interest 3 - pic12) (café and toilets here).
Go through the dock (pic13), winding your way through to the River Lea (pic14) (CARE: high kerb as you leave the dock, dismount). You will see a large blue/green blackbird egg (pic15). Near this, turn right and follow the Leaway north. (Places of Interest: 4 Abigail Falls – pic16, 5 Leaway - pic17)
Path turns right (in front of stairs – pic18) to allow step free access to Twelvetrees Crescent. At the end of the path you will see 'Leaway North' written on the ground (pic19) – turn left (pic20) and you will be directed along the pavement and over the bridge – don't go all the way! – stop at the top and on your left you will see step free access signed 'Three Mills' (pic21 + 22) (CARE: steep slope, dismount). (There are roadworks here at the moment but the route is open, just difficult to see).
At the bottom of the slope, turn right under the bridge (pic23) and continue north along the Leaway. (Place of Interest 6 - Floating Reed Beds – pic24).
Turn right in front of Three Mills (Place of Interest 7 - pic25) , and then left in front of Three Mills studios. (Place of Interest 8 - pic26)
Head for a large orange brick which says 'Three Mills Green'. (pic27)
Follow the sandy path to the left of the sign (pic28), then bear left. Take first right across the bridge at Prescott Channel (pic29). Mill Meads. (Place of Interest 9 – pic30)
The path continues along the channel, and then turns through some woods (pic31) (CARE: path is gravel in parts). Follow the path, taking the left fork (pic32) as you exit the woods. Then take the step free access (yellow barriers) (pic33) which will lead you up to the Greenway. Abbey Mills pumping station (Place of Interest 10 – pic34) is on your left as you face the Greenway.
Turn right (pic35) and follow the Greenway (Place of Interest 11 - pic36) to Memorial Park sign.
From the Greenway, follow sign pointing right to "Memorial Rec Ground" (pic36) down the step-free walkway.
Follow sandy path across the park; at the junction keep straight ahead as you go through Memorial Park (Place of Interest 12 – pic37) and the path continues along edge of park; take south exit which is the first exit on your left. (pic38)
Bear left (blue cycle sign towards Excel – pic39) and turn left into Grange Road (pic40), and then almost immediately turn right opposite 'Grange Fish and Chips' (pic41) following a cycle cut-through along the pavement and between the houses. (pic42) (CARE: barriers).
At end of cut through, turn left into Ladysmith Road. (pic43)
At the end of the road, turn left into Hermit Road. After 100m there is a pedestrian crossing which leads into Hermit Park (pic44). Follow the path straight ahead through the park.

Cycle Caterpillar Route - Places of Interest

(1) HERMIT ROAD RECREATION GROUND AND (2) STAR PARK

Hermit Road Recreation Ground and Star Park are two of 26 parks in Newham, all featured in the Campaign for Rural England's Traffic Noise Map of Public Parks in Newham, available online. Many of these, such as Central Park and Canning Town Recreation Ground, suffer traffic noise at 65 DB and above. One third of London's parks are severely impacted by noise. Hermit Road where we start and finish is one of the quietest parks in Newham!

(3) CODY DOCK & BOW CREEK

Recent wildlife sightings there have included a crab spider (which changes its pigmentation to match the colour of its surroundings); striped Jersey tiger moths; damselflies and sand martins. Back down Bow Creek towards Canning Town is Bow Creek Ecology Park. Originally an Osier bed (a place where willows are grown for basket making), the site became an ironworks before being converted into a nature reserve. Kestrels hunt along the railway verges, and kingfisher nesting banks have been installed close by – watch for the flash of blue!

(4) ABIGAIL FALLIS - DNA DL90, 2003

This sculpture by British artist Abigail Fallis consists of 22 shopping trolleys in the shape of a double helix. Shopping trolley are often intertwined with river ecologies: in 2009 British Waterways revealed that more than 3,000 shopping trolleys are dumped in rivers every year in the UK, and called for supermarkets to take more responsibility for this environmental damage.

(5) LEAWAY

Much of the Leaway walk that you are now cycling on was made from salvaged materials: trees came from excess over-ordered for the Olympic park and paths were made with granite left over from repaving Stratford High Street. The circular economy in action!

(6) FLOATING REED BEDS

Look out for the 60 metre floating reed bed here, installed in 2016. Common reed and native flowering plants like marsh marigold and iris grow on a pontoon. Reed beds were once common along the River Lea. They create homes for invertebrates and wildfowl, providing hiding places for fish to spawn, and help to clean up pollution. There are now thousands of square metres of floating reed bed along the Lea, including 11 sites along the Limehouse Cut (just west of here).

(7) THREE MILLS

The House Mill at Three Mills was the largest tidal mill in the world, and harnessed the renewable energy of the waters at Bow Creek to grind grain used to distil alcohol, supplying the gin palaces of London.

(8) THREE MILLS STUDIOS

Next to the old mills is 3 Mills film and TV Studios. Danny Boyle has made many of his films there, and the Studios housed rehearsals for his 2012 Olympics opening ceremony. It has not suffered the same fate thankfully as the location of his 2000 film *The Beach*, Maya Bay on Ko Phi Phi Leh island in Thailand. Up to 5,000 visitors and 200 boats a day started to visit after the film's publicity. Due to pollution from litter, boats and sun cream, by 2018 80% of the bays' coral had been destroyed. It is currently closed to visitors for three years, to allow the ecosystem to recover.

(9) MILL MEADS

During World War 2, Mill Meads and Three Mills Green were home to over 100 allotments, of which nearly 40 remain. These green spaces provide a haven for wildlife with woodpeckers, wrens, sparrows, finches, kingfishers and foxes regularly being sighted.

(10) ABBEY MILLS PUMPING STATION

As you exit the woods, Abbey Mills Pumping Station is on your left. From here runs the Lee Tunnel, opened in 2016, which handles the 16 million tons of overflow sewage that was previously discharged into the River Lea *every year!* In 2019, Thames Water discharged raw sewage for more than 1,000 hours into the wetlands nature habitats at the Olympic Park, which feeds the River Lea.

(11) GREENWAY

The Greenway runs along the embankment containing the Joseph Bazalgette's Northern Outfall Sewer, running from Hackney Wick to Beckton. The walking and cycling route we use today was built on top of the sewer in the 1990s. Only a shallow layer of earth was used to cover the brickwork – this habitat wasn't suitable for trees, so was planted with grass and meadow plants in order to draw bees and insects. The Greenway's original signage was made from old sewerage pipes, and its seats are made of timbers salvaged from riverbanks.

(12) MEMORIAL RECREATION GROUND

Memorial Recreation Ground opened in 1897 and was the playing fields where West Ham United Football Club originated. This space used to host speedway and motorcycle racing, and had the longest swimming pool in Britain. It now includes an avenue of mature plane trees flanking the main north/south path, and Grassroots Resource Centre designed by Eger Architects with Ove Arup which is sunk into the parkland with a turf-covered roof. One of a number of re-greened spaces in Newham, with its complex history of industry, pollution, regeneration and fragile ecology somehow finding a way.