

This walking and cycling route follows the River Soar and Grand Union Canal out of Leicester, north through Watermead Country Park to Cossington.



sustrans



# Route 1

GREEN

## Key

- Shops and other services nearby
- Bike parking
- Bike shop or bike mechanic nearby
- Rest area or picnic spot
- Public house
- Café or place to eat

### 1 Leicester City Centre

Leicester is a city of arts, culture, history, festivals, attractions, shopping and food and drink. Explore the past at the city's museums, including the **Guildhall**, built in the 1300s or stay in the 21st century with a shopping trip to **Highcross Leicester**.

There is bike parking throughout the city, and a secure **'Bike Park'** with shower facilities in the **Town Hall Square**.

[www.goleicestershire.com](http://www.goleicestershire.com)  
 ☎ 0844 888 5181 (Visitor Information)



### 2 The Rally Park

**The Rally** is a wedge of parkland which is skirted by terraced back gardens and the **Grand Union Canal**. Once part of the historic Leicester and Swannington Railway, it now features a BMX trail, football pitch and children's play area.

The Rally is a 'crossroads' for Leicester's cycle network, with routes to the north towards Watermead Country Park, and south along the **Great Central Way** towards Blaby and beyond. Other routes lead to the **City Centre**, **Beaumont Leys** and **Leicester's West End**.

[www.leicester.gov.uk/parks](http://www.leicester.gov.uk/parks)  
 ☎ 0116 252 7003



### 3 Abbey Park

**Abbey Park** lies approximately a mile north of the City Centre. The **River Soar** divides this beautiful park into two distinct areas. To the east of the river lies the Victorian part of the park with its evergreen shrubberies, trees, boating lake, Chinese themed friendship garden, sensory garden and flower displays.

West of the river lies the fascinating Abbey Grounds with remains of the twelfth century Leicester Abbey and the ruins of a seventeenth century mansion, as well as the popular Pets Corner and a children's play area.

[www.leicester.gov.uk/parks](http://www.leicester.gov.uk/parks)  
 ☎ 0116 252 7003



### 4 National Space Centre

The **National Space Centre** is the largest attraction dedicated to space in the UK. Home to a 360° planetarium, the National Space Centre features hands-on, interactive exhibits across six galleries. Highlights include the Rocket Tower, and a 3D simulated space ride.

[www.spacecentre.co.uk](http://www.spacecentre.co.uk)  
 ☎ 0845 605 2001



### 5 Abbey Pumping Station

**Abbey Pumping Station**, is the Space Centre's historic but equally innovative neighbour. Together, the two attractions tell the story of 200 years of science and technology.

Opened in 1891, the Pumping Station pumped Leicester's sewage to the treatment works at **Beaumont Leys**. The grand Victorian building and beautifully decorated beam engines were a cause of great civic pride. When it closed in 1964, the site was preserved because of the four magnificent beam steam engines that were used to pump the sewage.

[www.leicester.gov.uk/museums](http://www.leicester.gov.uk/museums)  
 ☎ 0116 299 5111



### 6 Leicester Outdoor Pursuits Centre

15 acres of adventure in the heart of Leicester. Leicester Outdoor Pursuits Centre provides adventurous outdoor activity experiences from abseiling and canoeing to team-building and ziplines.

The Centre offers educational and developmental courses in a challenging and safe environment.

[www.lopc.co.uk](http://www.lopc.co.uk)  
 ☎ 0116 268 1426

### 7 Belgrave

**Belgrave Hall** is in the conservation area of the former village of **Belgrave**, now a bustling suburb of Leicester. The hall was built in the 18th century, and is open to the public, an oasis of peace and quiet in a busy city. **Belgrave** is today known for its vibrant Asian community, including the jewellers of the 'Golden Mile' and the largest Diwali celebrations outside of India.

[www.leicester.gov.uk/museums](http://www.leicester.gov.uk/museums)  
 ☎ Belgrave Hall, 0116 266 6590



### 8 Mowmacre Hill (for Great Central Railway)

Mowmacre Hill is home to one of Leicester's hidden gems – the Leicester North Station of the **Great Central Railway** (a popular preserved steam railway). Trains run throughout the year, and dining cars offer excellent food and views across the Charnwood countryside.

[www.gcrailway.co.uk](http://www.gcrailway.co.uk)  
 ☎ 01509 632323



### 9 Watermead Country Park (South)

This is the southern end of the park which stretches from **Belgrave** up to **Syston**. **Watermead** was created in the 1980s by Leicester City Council, Leicestershire County Council, and Charnwood Borough Council, using land reclaimed from former gravel pits.

It is a haven for wildlife and a peaceful stretch of countryside, easily accessible for many people. One of **Watermead Country Park South's** best known features is a life size replica of a **Mammoth**, sitting atop a hill with great views of the park.

The park is largely a wetland area with two lakes and a Climate Play Trail. Running through the Park are the River Soar and Grand Union Canal which provide an essential corridor for wildlife.

Cycling and walking paths (including National Cycle Route 6) run throughout the park.

[www.leicester.gov.uk/parks](http://www.leicester.gov.uk/parks)  
 ☎ 0116 252 7003



### 10 Birstall

A short walk or cycle ride from the **Mammoth** finds you at **Birstall Lock**. The bridge at the lock is now fully accessible to cyclists, people using wheelchairs and parents with buggies. The bridge was revamped as part of **Sustrans' Connect2** project.

On the other side of the bridge sits the scenic **White Horse** pub, and it's only a short walk from here to the shops and services of **Birstall**.



### 11 Thurmaston

**Thurmaston** village is linked to **Birstall** by one of the many **Connect2** routes. It is only a mile across **Watermead Country Park** from village to village using the new route.

The bridges at **Thurmaston Lock** (improved as part of the **Sustrans Connect2** project) lead you out through Mill Lane to Melton Road - home to village shops and pubs. Across the A607 (road bridges help pedestrians and cyclists cross the dual carriageway) is **Thurmaston Shopping Centre**, including shops, places to eat and a superstore.



### 12 Watermead Country Park (North)

The northern end of **Watermead Country Park**, much like the southern, is an area of wetlands. The largest lake is **King Lear's Lake**, a popular fishing spot, also used by several clubs and societies including triathletes, open water swimming clubs, Newfoundland dog teams and model boaters. The lake's edge is home to a **dinosaur play trail** and close-by is a bird hide and wild flower meadow.

Close to **Thurmaston Lock Bridge**, a short walk from King Lear's Lake is a 'portrait bench' depicting a Bronze Age man and woman and an **Aurochs** (an extinct wild ox). Bronze Age human remains and those of an Aurochs were found in the park's former life as a gravel pit. The bench commemorates **Sustrans' Connect2** project and was installed in 2011.

[www.leics.gov.uk/watermead](http://www.leics.gov.uk/watermead)  
 ☎ 0116 305 5000



### 13 Syston

**Syston** town centre lies to the north east of **Watermead Country Park**. The town features a large shopping area and has a railway station with links to Leicester, Loughborough, Nottingham and beyond.

Just across Wanlip Lane from the northern entrance is the Hope and Anchor pub, popular with canal boaters. This is one of several pubs and places to eat in the area.



### 14 Cossington

**Cossington** is a small village to the north of **Watermead Country Park**. The village is home to two garden centres and a public house, The Royal Oak.





# Shared paths

- Most of the paths on this route are for the shared use of pedestrians and cyclists.
- Cyclists should ride considerately on these paths, slowing down and alerting pedestrians to their presence as early as possible.
- Pedestrians should be aware of cyclists' presence in this area, and that there is no designated part of the path for a cyclist to ride, so they may be passed on either side.
- A shared path means exactly that, it is for use by **everyone**, so using it in a safe and courteous manner is important.

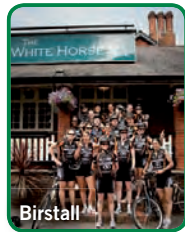


Watermead Country Park



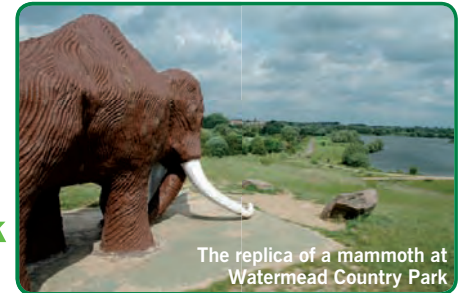
Thurmaston

## Thurmaston



Birstall

## Birstall



The replica of a mammoth at Watermead Country Park

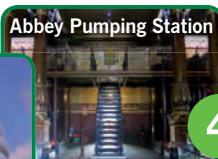
## Watermead Country Park (South)



Great Central Railway at Mowmacre Hill

## Mowmacre Hill (for Great Central Railway)

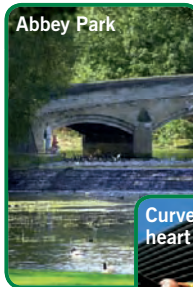
## Outdoor Pursuits Centre



National Space Centre



Abbey Pumping Station



Abbey Park



Belgrave Hall

## Belgrave



Curve theatre in the heart of Leicester

## Abbey Park



Rally Park

## Rally Park

## Leicester City Centre



For more maps and information on cycling and walking in Leicester and Leicestershire visit:

[www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk](http://www.choosehowyoumove.co.uk)  
[www.leicester.gov.uk/cycle-city](http://www.leicester.gov.uk/cycle-city)