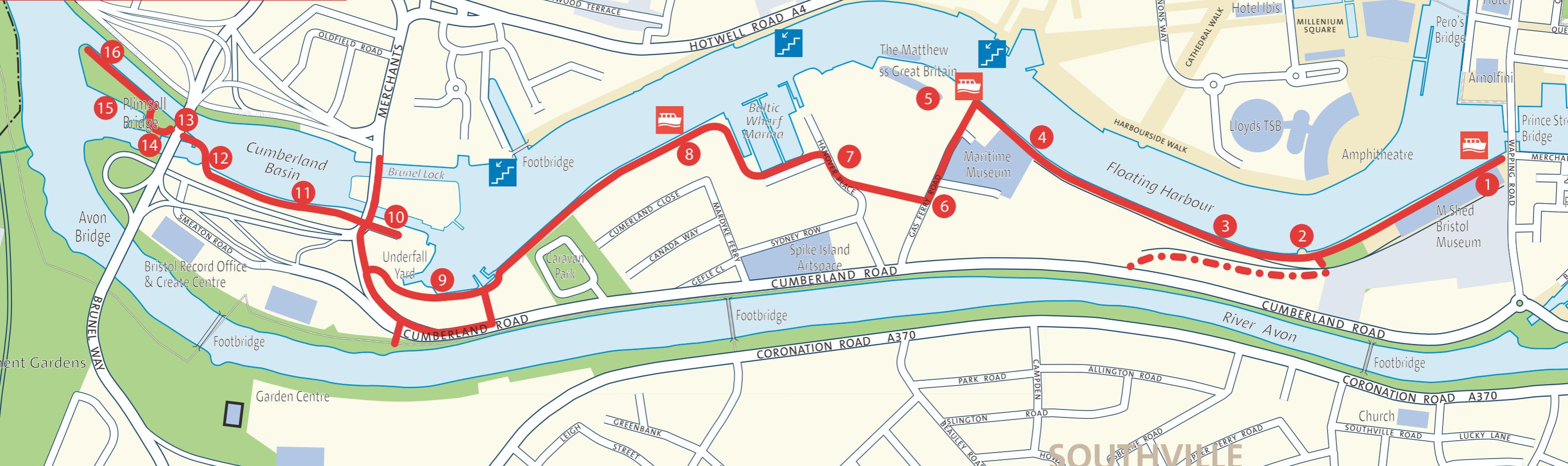


Along the Harbour - Prince Street to Cumberland Basin



Along the Harbour - Prince Street Bridge to Cumberland Basin

Starting on the south (Wapping Road) side of Prince Street Swing Bridge, travel westwards in front of L and M Sheds, the home of the new Museum of Bristol (due to open in 2011).



Be wary of the sunken railway lines if you are cycling – they are very slippery in the wet and it is advised that cyclists walk this stretch.

- 1 This is Princes Wharf. Before the wharf was built up in the 1860s, it had long been a shipbuilding area, and it's here that IK Brunel had his first ship, the Great Western built in 1837. The Great Western was one of the earliest steamships to cross the Atlantic. Later, the wharf was built up and a 7-storey granary erected on the site. Everything here was destroyed during the Blitz on Bristol and the wharf was remodelled in the early 1950s with new electric cranes, railways, flush roadways and transit sheds to handle general mixed cargo on ships from the Baltic and southern Ireland.

It was the last wharf to operate commercially when the Harbour closed in 1975. The transit sheds then became the home of Bristol Industrial Museum and now the new Museum of Bristol in M-Shed. The Museum service looks after the cranes and three historic vessels (the tugs Mayflower and John King and the fire boat Pyronaut) and operates a steam railway.

- 2 Further along Princes Wharf, you'll see the Fairbairn steam crane, finished in 1878. It was built to handle occasional heavy lifts up to 35 tons. It is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, but it still works and is demonstrated by the Museum on some weekends.

(Just by the steam crane on the left is a cycle path that will link you to the New Cut at 36.)

As you approach the brick building ahead, pedestrians can go to the right, onto the quay edge. Cyclists and wheelchair users must go to the left, into the roadway. TAKE GREAT CARE AT THIS POINT - CARS AND TRAINS CONVERGE HERE AND THE RAILS ARE PROUD OF THE ROAD SURFACE.

- 3 The steam crane marks the start of Wapping Railway Wharf. From the 1870s, this was open quayside with railway sidings where The Point residential development now stands. Brunel's Buttery has a citywide reputation for its bacon sandwiches!
- 4 At the end of Wapping Wharf is the Bristol Packet, from where you can take a tour of the Harbour or, when the tide is right, have a trip down the Avon Gorge.
- 5 Beyond is Brunel's s.s. Great Britain, the world's first iron passenger liner. This great ship was launched from here in 1843 and travelled the world's oceans, before returning to Bristol as a hulk in 1970. By extraordinary chance, she now lies in her original building dock, and both this and the ship have been restored to create a unique visitor experience.



At the s.s. Great Britain, turn left onto Gas Ferry Road and travel 100 metres.

- 6 On the left are the former main offices and studios of Aardman Animations, the Bristol-based company that has produced the Wallace and Gromit series of films and the Oscar-winning Chicken Run. It was built in the 1980s as a banana-ripening warehouse for Fyffe's. Aardman's later purpose-built offices and studios, completed in 2008, are further along the road on the left.

Just past the red brick warehouse on your right, there is a pathway that leads to the head of the Albion dry dock.

- 7 The dry dock on your right and the industrial buildings around you are the last remains of a shipyard that thrived on this site from 1820 until 1977. When they closed, Charles Hill & Sons were the oldest shipbuilding company in the UK, having been established in 1772. The Albion Dockyard extended across the whole of what is now Bristol Marina. Boatbuilding and repair still continues here on a smaller scale.

Beyond the building on the corner, turn right and head towards the gated entrance to the Albion Dockyard. You can make a diversion here to look around but this is a working area, and, whilst you are unlikely to be prevented from wandering amongst the craft under repair on dry land, you must exercise due care.

Continue to the left around the top of the Marina basin and to the right down the slipway, veering to the left onto the waterside walkway.

8 This area is Baltic Wharf, once the home of several timber yards where ships from the Baltic, Canada and Russia came to offload cargoes. The quayside was never built up, so that dockers had to run on planks laid across barges between ship and shore carrying long lengths of wood. The pub called the Cottage at the end of this stretch was once the office for one of the timber firms.



Continue straight ahead past the Cottage towards the Underfall Yard. This is another working area, and you should exercise due care.

(Note: if access through the Yard is closed for working operations, you can skirt around it by leaving through the green gate on the left onto Cumberland Road and following Avon Crescent. You can also access the New Cut at 40 by carefully crossing Cumberland Road here).

9 The Underfall Yard is named after the sluices ('underfalls') that control the level of water in the Harbour. This is where the tidal river Avon was originally dammed (the Overfall dam, a form of weir) to create the Floating Harbour in 1809, and remains the operational centre for maintenance and operation of all the lock gates, bridges and leisure activities today. JB Girdlestone, Docks Engineer, mostly installed the facilities that you can see today in the 1880s and the Yard is now a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Part of the Yard is operated by a Trust to encourage traditional boat-building and –repair skills. The haul-out slipway is in regular use to maintain vessels. There are interpretive panels to tell you more about the Yard.

At the far end of the Yard, turn left to the road. Turn right here and proceed towards the swing bridge. Turn right at the Nova Scotia pub.

10 The water to your left here is Jessop's original junction lock into the Harbour from Cumberland Basin. It was blocked after the new Junction Lock was built in the late 1860s. The row of cottages on the far side was built for its employees by the Dock Company in the 1830s and now houses a number of maritime organisations.

Retrace your steps to the bridge and cross the road carefully to a ramp leading down to the quayside at Cumberland Basin. Continue along the edge of the water towards the flyover.

(Note: some people will find it impossible to cross the locks at the far end of Cumberland Basin, although access up to them is good. Instead, cross the Harbour here on Junction Lock Bridge and continue to the Pumphouse at 17).

11 Cumberland Basin was one of the most expensive elements of the Harbour to build. It was designed as a half-tidal basin, enabling more ships to arrive and leave safely for some hours either side of high tide than could have been managed by locks alone.

12 As you approach the flyover, you'll notice a blocked branch to the left; this was the way in to the southern entrance lock, one of Jessop's two originals and later enlarged by IK Brunel. Under the flyover is another piece of 'Bruneliana', a wrought-iron swing bridge that originally crossed Brunel's lock. It uses tubular construction that Brunel later adopted for his major railway bridges at Chepstow and Saltash.

13 The flyover is part of a major road scheme built in the mid-1960s. It crosses the Harbour on the Plimsoll Bridge, named for Samuel Plimsoll, the shipping safety campaigner who was born in Bristol. The bridge can open and close in three minutes to allow shipping to pass.

Continue under the flyover onto the promontory alongside the lock. Take particular care here on the unfenced quaysides with very long drops and deep water. It is recommended that cyclists dismount to explore this area. Start on the left of the promontory, near the fixed wrought iron bridge.

14 From the fixed bridge (a copy of Brunel's swing bridge, which was originally positioned here) you will have good view of the remains of the southern entrance lock. This was the smaller of the two built by Jessop in 1809, and much enlarged in 1845 by IK Brunel. It had one large gate at each end, hinged on the left and designed to swing back into the curved recess that is usually visible. The right-hand side of the lock has a ledge that was intended to allow clearance for the paddle wheel on one side of the largest steamers at the time, saving the cost of making the entire lock to this width. You also get a good view of the Clifton Suspension Bridge from here.

(You can join the walk along the New Cut at 43 from here by continuing down the left side of Brunel's lock and heading to the left.)

15 To the right of this lock are the remains of Jessop's northern entrance lock. It was here that the s.s. Great Britain nearly came to grief as she left Bristol in 1844. At low tide you can see in the mud the gridiron, where ships could be dried out as the tide receded for minor repair or inspection work on their hulls.

16 The current entrance lock was opened in 1873, replacing the earlier two. It can accommodate the largest ships that can navigate the Avon. The lock gates were operated by the hydraulic system from the Underfall Yard, but by 2010 this will have been replaced. From here it is six miles by water to the mouth of the River Avon where it joins the Severn estuary. The tidal range there can be as much as 52 feet (16 metres), and even here at the lock the river rises as much as 37 feet (11.6 metres), covering the whole promontory on some spring tides.

Cross the lock gates on the walkway with care. Cyclists will need to wheel their bicycles. On the far side turn right and pass under the Plimsoll Bridge. There is a mark on the control cabin to record the highest ever tide - over 40 feet (12.4 metres). Continue down the side of the Basin to Junction Lock swing bridge and carefully cross the road towards the Pumphouse pub.



Then



Today



Then



Today



Then



Today



Then



Today



Then



Today