



Royal
Geographical
Society
with IBG

Transforming the riverside

A self guided walk along the south bank of the River Thames in London



Explore one of the most vibrant areas of central London
Discover how derelict industrial sites became a cultural quarter
Uncover the historical and political stories behind regeneration

www.discoveringbritain.org

the stories of our landscapes
discovered through walks





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Cover image: Royal Festival Hall and the South Bank, Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Transforming the riverside

Discover stories behind the redevelopment of the south bank of the River Thames in London

A power station transformed into an art gallery. A tea warehouse converted into luxury apartments. These are just two examples of the dramatic changes that have taken place over the last few decades.

This stretch of the River Thames, known as the South Bank and Bankside, is now one of the most popular visitor areas of London. Each year an estimated 22 million people from around the world enjoy its sights and attractions.



The Royal National Theatre
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

This walk explores how the south side of the Thames has been regenerated since the Second World War. Derelict industrial sites and depressed neighbourhoods have been replaced with iconic buildings, office blocks, apartments and new cultural attractions.



The skate park under Queen Elizabeth Hall
Erica Pani © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

However, regeneration is not just about new buildings. Behind the scenes there is also a web of political decisions, public protest and power struggles.

Discover some of these stories behind the riverside's redevelopment. Find out how regeneration has both winners and losers.

Route overview



Start: Royal Festival Hall

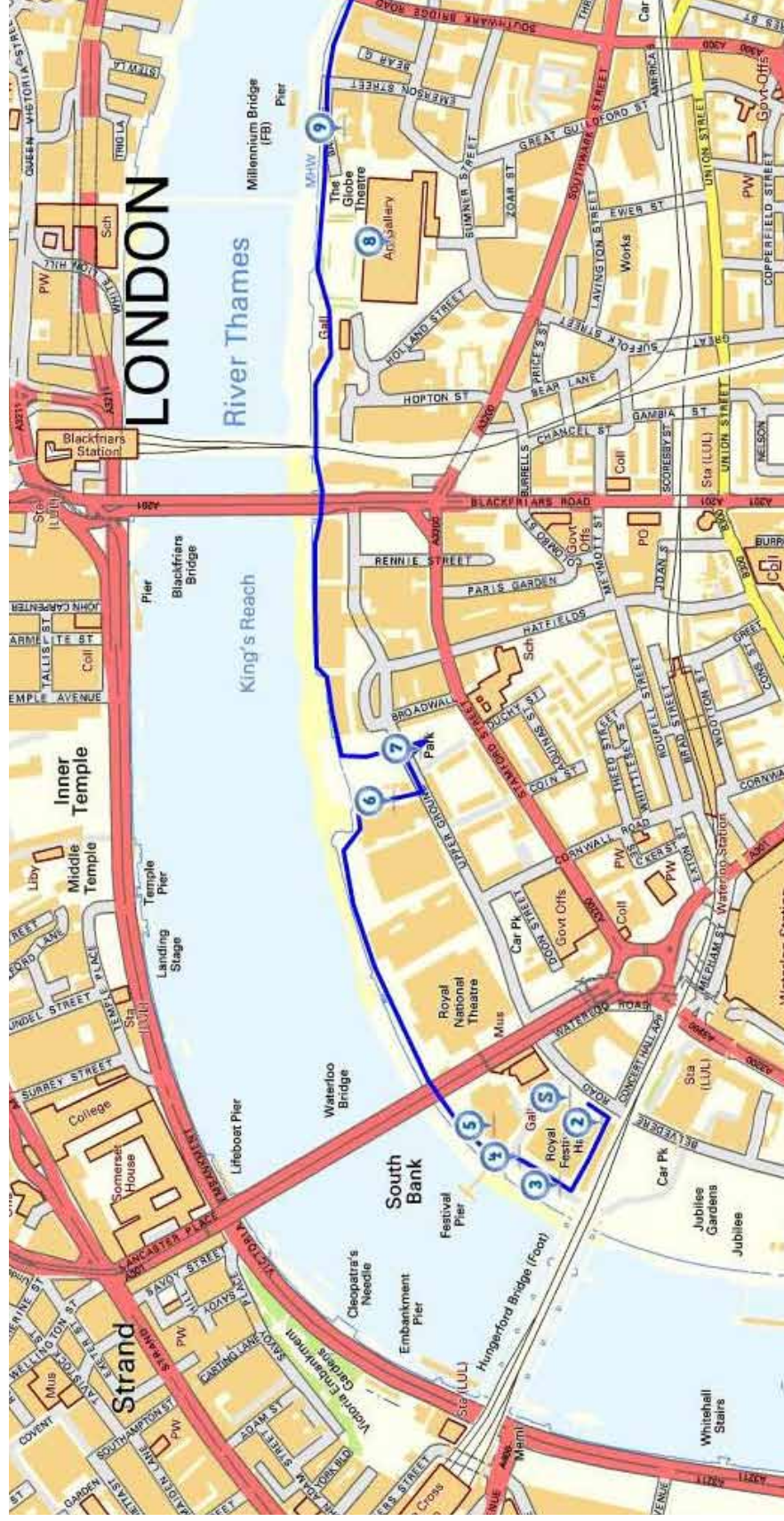
Finish: Jamaica Road

Practical information

Location	South Bank and Bankside, Central London
Getting there	<p>Train - The nearest station to the start of the route is London Waterloo. Waterloo East, Charing Cross, Blackfriars, London Bridge, Cannon Street and Fenchurch Street are all nearby.</p> <p>Underground - The nearest stations to the start of the route are Waterloo on the south bank and Embankment on the north bank,</p> <p>Bicycle - Plenty of Barclays Cycle Hire docking stations along the route including Waterloo Station, New Globe Walk, Shad Thames, and Tooley Street.</p> <p>Bus - Access from a wide range of local routes, most run via Victoria or London Bridge bus stations.</p> <p>Riverboat - The nearest Thames River Bus stops are at Embankment Pier and Bankside Pier.</p>
Start point	Royal Festival Hall, SE1 8XX
Finish point	Junction of Jamaica Road and Mill Street, SE1 2DE
Distance	3 miles
Directions from nearest stations to the start point	<p>From Waterloo railway and Underground station - cross York Road then go down Concert Hall Approach following signs to 'National Arts and Entertainment Centre'. Cross Belvedere Road to the plaza at the rear entrance to Royal Festival Hall.</p> <p>From Embankment Underground station - cross the river using Hungerford Bridge. Follow the walkway keeping Royal Festival Hall on your left Go down the steps to the rear of Royal Festival Hall.</p>
Level	Gentle - An easy walk along a pedestrianised riverside route.

Conditions	The route can be extremely busy, especially at weekends and during the summer months. Watch for cyclists, skateboarders and rollerbladers. Please be aware of your valuables as pick-pockets, unfortunately, operate in this area.
Suitable for	<p>Families - A busy but safe route with plenty to interest children.</p> <p>Dogs - Must be kept on a lead.</p> <p>Wheelchairs and pushchairs - A level and step-free route with alternate directions to Royal Festival Hall terrace (Stops 3 and 4).</p>
Refreshments	Plenty of cafés, refreshments stands and restaurants along the entire route. Expect London prices though.
Toilets	There are few public toilets en route but you can use ones inside attractions such as the Royal Festival Hall, Tate Modern and Southwark Cathedral. Most are free of charge.
Other info	<p>Many free festivals and events take place on the South Bank and Bankside throughout the year. Major events include the Southbank Centre Festival (May to September), the Mayor's Thames Festival (September) and Southbank Centre Christmas Market (November to December 24th).</p> <p>You can find more information about festivals and events at www.southbanklondon.com and www.betterbankside.co.uk</p> <p>Borough Market is open on Thursdays 11am to 5pm, Fridays from 12 noon to 6pm and Saturdays from 9am to 5pm.</p> <p>The Southbank Centre book market sells secondhand books, prints and maps. Open daily until 7pm under Waterloo Bridge.</p>
Tourist Information	Many of the attractions have their own visitor information points. The nearest tourist office is the City of London Information Centre at St Paul's Churchyard (across Blackfriars Bridge after Stop 7).

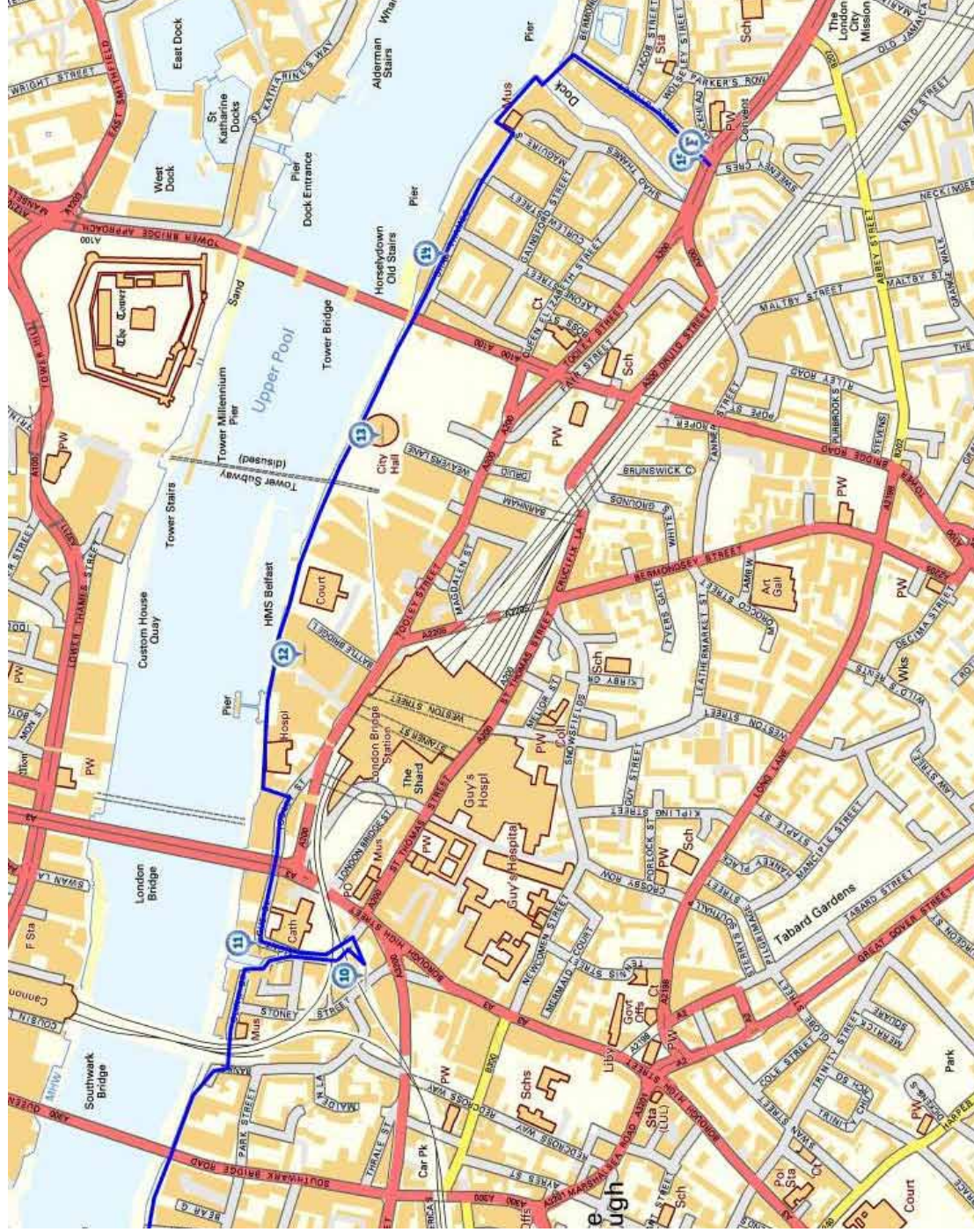
First part of the route



Stopping points

- 5.** Plaza at rear of Royal Festival Hall, Belvedere Road
- 2.** Plaza at rear of Royal Festival Hall, Belvedere Road
- 3.** Front terrace of Royal Festival Hall
- 4.** Terrace between Royal Festival Hall and Queen Elizabeth Hall
- 5.** Undercroft below Queen Elizabeth Hall
- 6.** Gabriel's Wharf
- 7.** Bernie Spain Gardens
- 8.** Tate Modern
- 9.** Shakespeare's Globe

Second part of the route



Stopping points

10. Borough Market
11. View of The Shard, corner of Montague Close
12. Hay's Galleria
13. City Hall
14. Shad Thames
15. Corner of Mill Street and Jamaica Road
- F. Corner of Mill Street and Jamaica Road

Directions

These directions are for use with the London South Bank audio commentary. Listen to each track then read the directions below to get to the next stop.

1. A story of regeneration

Plaza at rear of Royal Festival Hall, Belvedere Road

Directions 1

Remain in the plaza on Belvedere Road at the rear entrance to the Royal Festival Hall and listen to Track 2.

2. The ups and downs of the South Bank

Plaza at rear of Royal Festival Hall, Belvedere Road

Directions 2

Facing the Royal Festival Hall go up the steps to the left of the building. Pass the statue of Nelson Mandela and follow the walkway around to the front terrace of the Hall. Stop on the terrace overlooking the river and listen to Track 3.

3. A tonic to the nation

Front terrace of Royal Festival Hall

Directions 3

Continue along the terrace at the front of the Royal Festival Hall. Stop between the Royal Festival Hall and the Queen Elizabeth Hall and listen to Track 4.

4. A cultural quarter

Terrace between Royal Festival Hall and Queen Elizabeth Hall

Directions 4

Go down the steps from the Queen Elizabeth Hall and onto the river bank level. Stop by the undercroft with graffiti on the walls and listen to Track 5.

5. Class divides

Undercroft below Queen Elizabeth Hall

Directions 5

Continue along the riverside path. Pass the Royal National Theatre and BFI under Waterloo Bridge. Go past the IBM and ITV buildings then turn right and stop in Gabriel's Wharf, which is an outdoor area with small shops, stalls and cafes. Listen to Track 6.

6. Power to the people

Gabriel's Wharf

Directions 6

Walk all the way through Gabriel's Wharf and leave by the exit away from the river. Turn left onto the road (Upper Ground). At the corner with Duchy Street, go into Bernie Spain Gardens and listen to Track 7.

7. A space for everyone

Bernie Spain Gardens

Directions 7

Leave Bernie Spain Gardens and cross over Upper Ground. Make your way through the park area back towards the riverside. Turn right and follow the Thames Path past the OXO Tower and Sea Containers House. Go through Blackfriars station and stop outside the Tate Modern. Listen to Track 8.

8. From industry to art

Tate Modern

Directions 8

From the Tate Modern, continue along the Thames Path. Stop outside Shakespeare's Globe theatre and listen to Track 9.

9. Rotten tomatoes

Shakespeare's Globe

Directions 9

Continue along the Thames Path, which passes underneath Southwark Bridge. At Cannon Street railway bridge, the path moves away from the river bank along the cobbled Clink Street. Pass The Clink Prison Museum and the Golden Hinde. At Southwark Cathedral turn right into Cathedral Street. When you are underneath the railway bridge, turn right into Borough Market and listen to Track 10.

10. Middle class market

Borough Market

Directions 10

Retrace your steps out of the market and down Cathedral Street. Where the road splits at the cathedral, keep right on Montague Close and follow the road round to the right. Before going under the bridge ahead find a good vantage point for looking up at the enormous tower that rises behind the cathedral. Listen to Track 11.

11. Vertical city

View of The Shard from corner of Montague Close

Directions 11

Continue along Montague Close and under London Bridge. Follow the road to the junction with Tooley Street and turn left. After about 100 metres turn left into Hays Lane. Enter the second building on the right, Hay's Galleria. Stop inside the large open space and listen to Track 12.

12. Commercialising history

Hay's Galleria

Directions 12

When you are ready, leave Hay's Galleria and turn right along the riverside path. Go past HMS Belfast and stop outside the egg-shaped glass building. Listen to Track 13.

13. Planning and power

City Hall

Directions 13

Continue along the Thames Path, which goes underneath Tower Bridge. Stop on the cobbled street of Shad Thames, with brick warehouses on either side and small bridges overhead and listen to Track 14.

14. The largest tea warehouse in the world

Shad Thames

Directions 14

Continue along Shad Thames between the warehouse buildings. When you reach the Design Museum, turn left onto the riverside then right to continue on the Thames Path. Cross St Saviour's Dock then turn right at the arch and follow the walkway. Turn right onto Mill Street. Stop at the top of Mill Street by Jamaica Road and listen to Track 15.

15. The invisible Berlin Wall

Corner of Mill Street and Jamaica Road

Directions 15

Stay beside Jamaica Road and listen to Track 16.

16. The story of the South Bank

Corner of Mill Street and Jamaica Road

Directions 16

We hope you have enjoyed the walk. To return to Tower Bridge or London Bridge turn right along Jamaica Road. Alternatively, for the nearest Underground station (Bermondsey) turn left along Jamaica Road.

Credits

The RGS-IBG would like to thank the following people and organisations for their assistance in producing this Discovering Britain walk:

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