



The Birkenhead Park Grand Tour

A scenic walk around the world's first publicly funded park - the green space that inspired NYC's Central Park! Perfect in every season.

Distance 5.5 kilometers / 3.4 miles

Duration 1 hour and 30 minutes



Wildlife



Water feature



Picnic spot



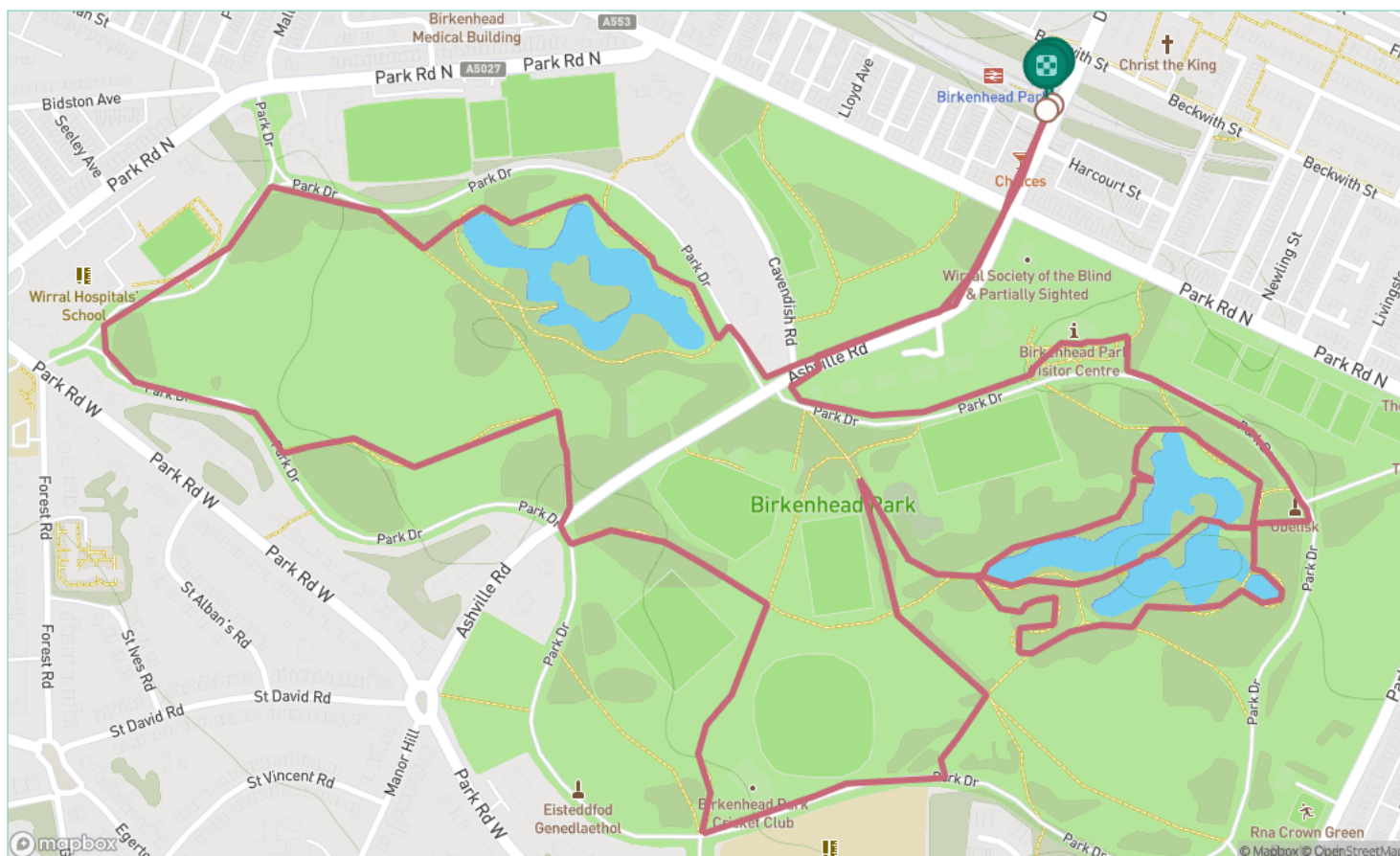
History



Dog friendly

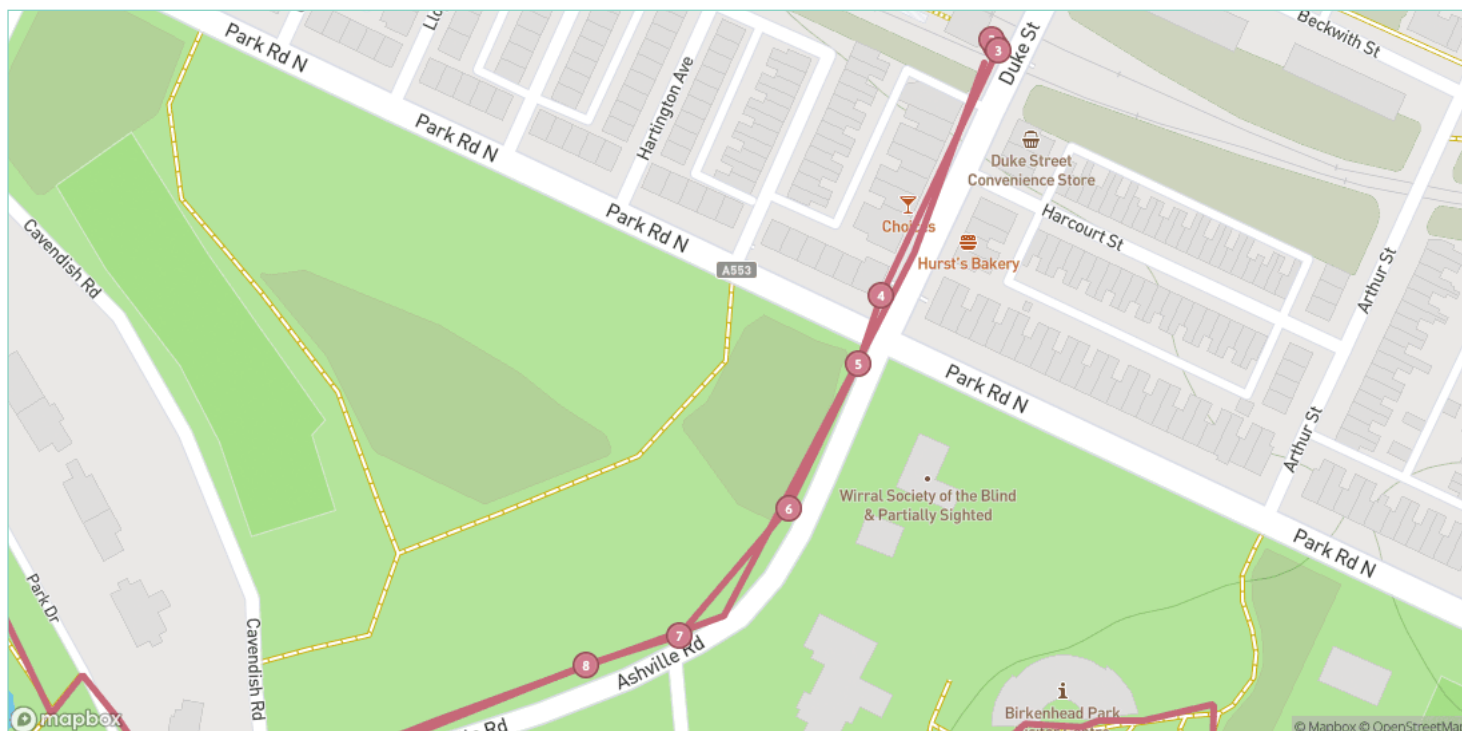


Botanics



Disclaimer: Directions are provided as guidance only. Weather, construction, closures or other factors may affect routes. Please take care when crossing roads and avoid private land. Always follow local signage and use common sense.

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Step 1: The walk begins at Birkenhead Park Merseyrail station.

Step 2: Exit through the station doors onto Duke Street and turn right.

Step 3: Stay on the pavement and follow it along to the next pedestrian crossing to take you over Park Road North.

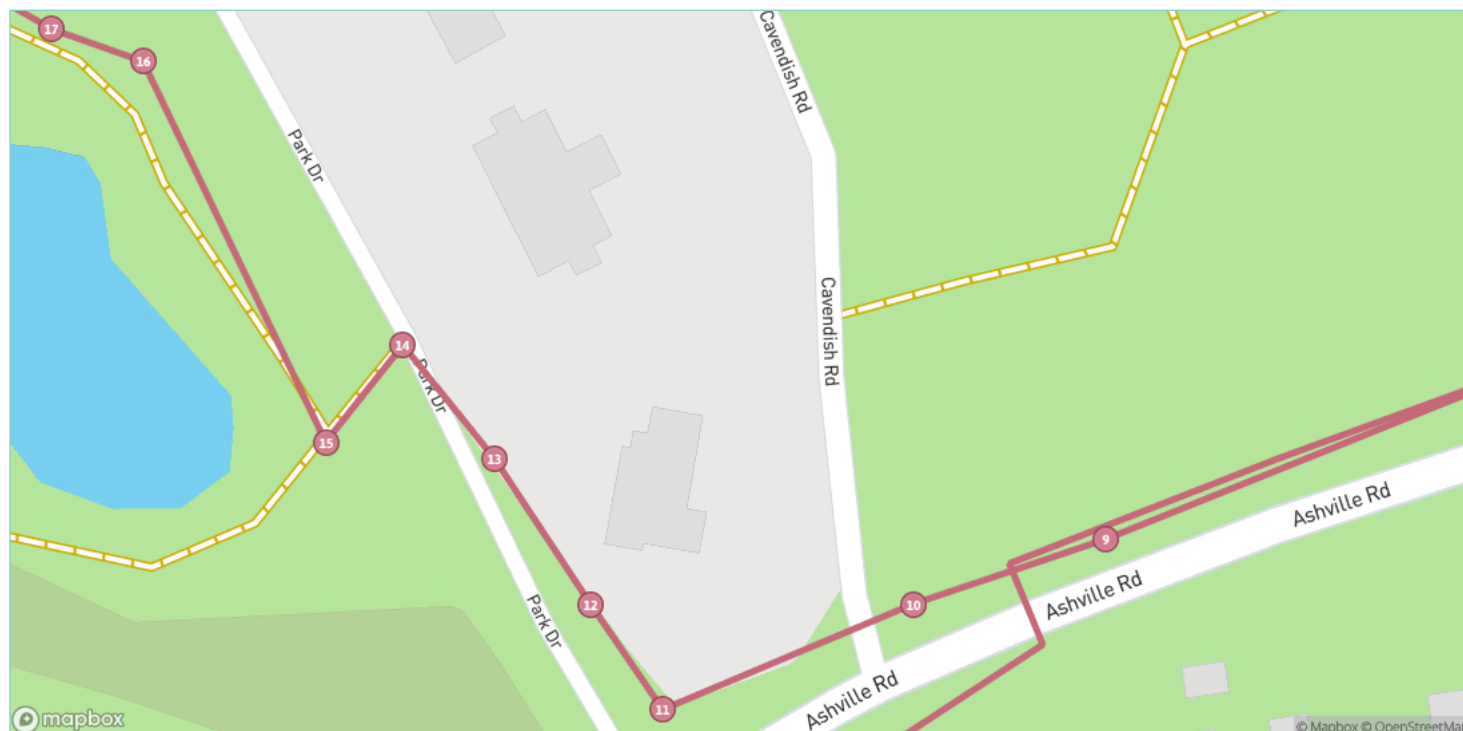
Step 4: Cross over Park Road North using the pelican crossing.

Step 5: Head straight on to continue along Ashville Road.

Step 6: Did you know that park railings are painted a tone of green called "Invisible Green" so that they blend into the surroundings.

Step 7: Carry on along the side of the railings. Look out for the details they have included, like the curvy supports and details points.

Step 8: This is the Sumac tree. You'll see some leaning through the railings. Berries from some varieties are used in Middle Eastern food.



Step 9: Carry on past the pillar.

Step 10: Carefully cross over Cavendish Road using the dropped kerb.

Step 11: At the next junction, turn right to make your way into Birkenhead Park through the gates.

Step 12: Pass through the tall pedestrian gates painted in “Invisible Green” with gold detailing.

Step 13: Welcome to Birkenhead Park. It was the world’s first publicly funded purpose-built civic park. It was opened on April 5th, 1847.

Step 14: Take the first path on your left and make your way up towards the lake.

Step 15: Take a moment to check out the birds enjoying the lake. How many types do you recognise?

Step 16: If you’re visiting in autumn, it’s a great time to be toadstool spotting. There are so many different colours, shapes and textures.



Step 17: Follow the path around the lake.

Step 18: Sometimes, if you're lucky, you might be able to spot a Kingfisher around the lakes.

Step 19: There are plenty of benches around the lake for taking a break and watching the life on the water.

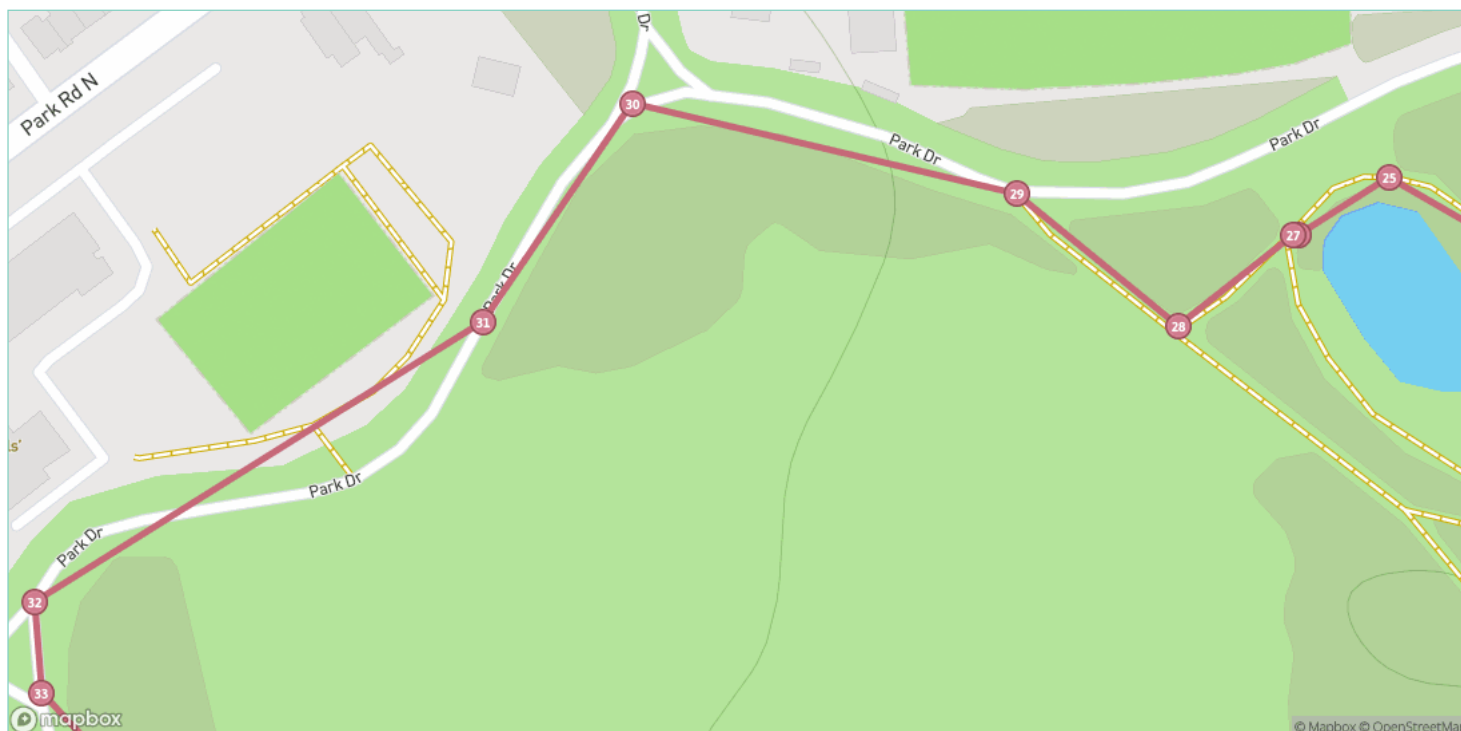
Step 20: Continue along the path to your left when you get to the fork.

Step 21: Continue around the lake on the left-hand fork of the path.

Step 22: Follow the path as it curves and winds through the trees and shrubs.

Step 23: You might spot the waxy leaves of the Rhododendron as you go. These will be awash with pretty flowers in the spring.

Step 24: Continue along the curve of the path.



Step 25: Take a moment to spot all the different leaves and flowers growing around the edge of the lake.

Step 32: At the fork in the path, take the left-hand fork to take you around the corner to rejoin the main path.

Step 26: As the path comes to a fork, take the path in front of you to carry on straight forwards.

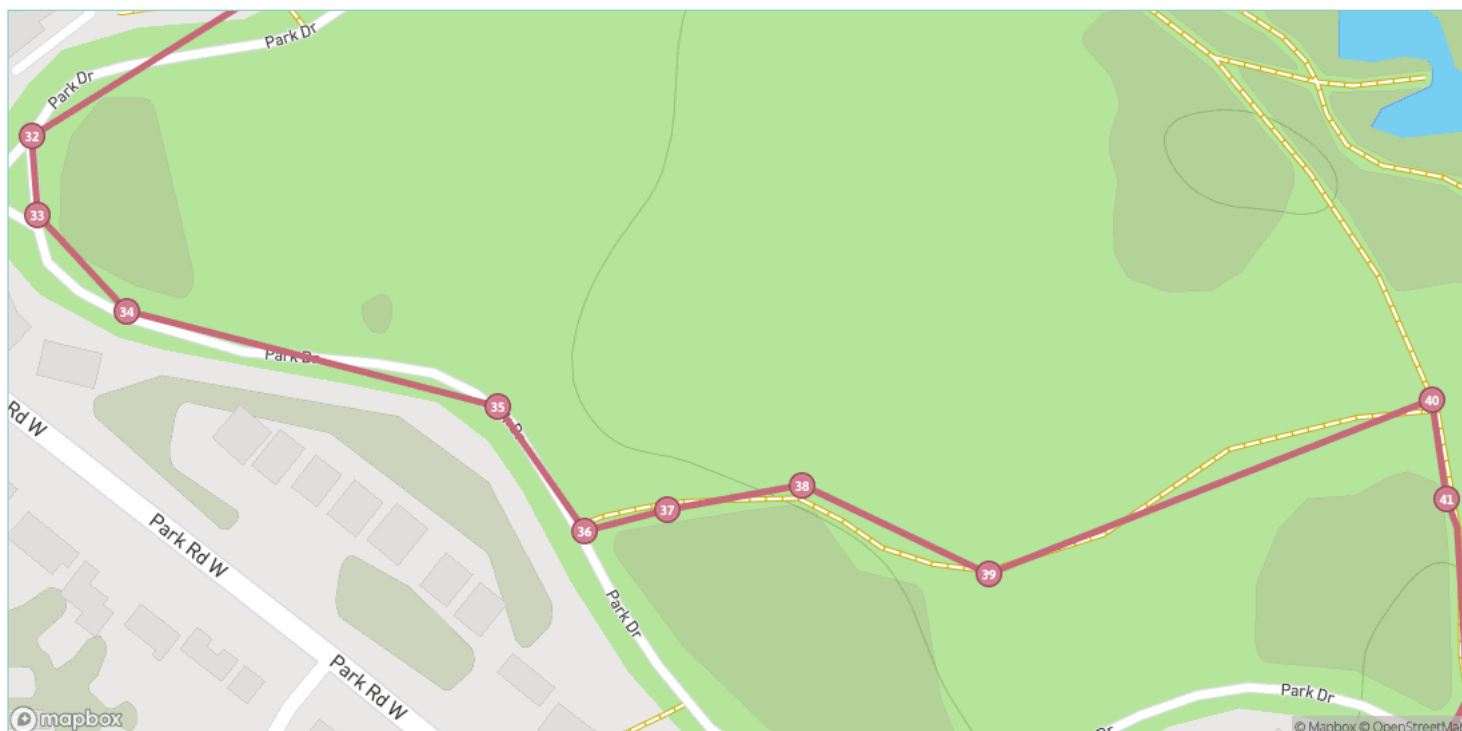
Step 27: The wonderful thing about a park as old as this is that you can find ancient trees with their gnarled trunks and branches.

Step 28: At the top of the path, turn to your right and carry on.

Step 29: Continue onto the main path and turn to your left.

Step 30: Birkenhead Park was designed by the famous architect and gardener Sir Joseph Paxton. He also designed London's Crystal Palace.

Step 31: Continue following the main path as it curves past the grassy area.



Step 33: The grand villa-style homes are built in a variety of styles from Gothic, Italianate, Neo-Classical and Elizabethan.

Step 34: Paxton designed the park as a mini “Grand Tour” so ordinary people could experience the highlights of Europe by walking in the park.

Step 35: Keep to the path as it curves around.

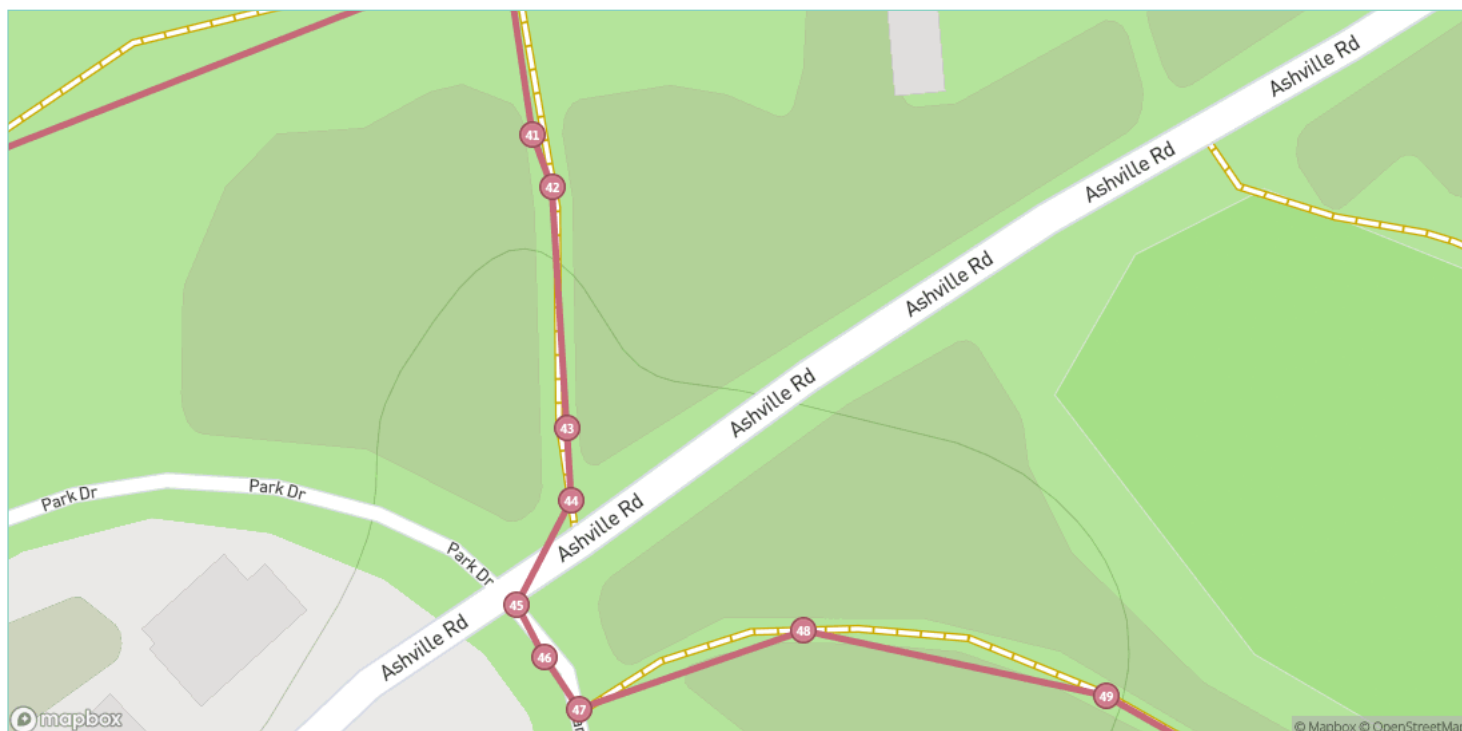
Step 36: Take the footpath to your left to walk between the grass and the trees.

Step 37: Continue along the path.

Step 38: Paxton designed the park with no specific focal point meaning that whether you lived in a villa or visited, you had the same experience.

Step 39: Keep to the path or why not go barefoot on the grass to enjoy some natural grounding.

Step 40: At the end of the path, turn to your right to continue making your way around the park.



Step 41: At the turn of the 19th Century, Rhododendrons (like this) were still considered rare, exotic novelties. Now we see them in gardens!

Step 48: The small pavilion in the distance is one of three in the park. There is also the ornate brick one, and the modern pavilion.

Step 42: Carry on straight along the path.

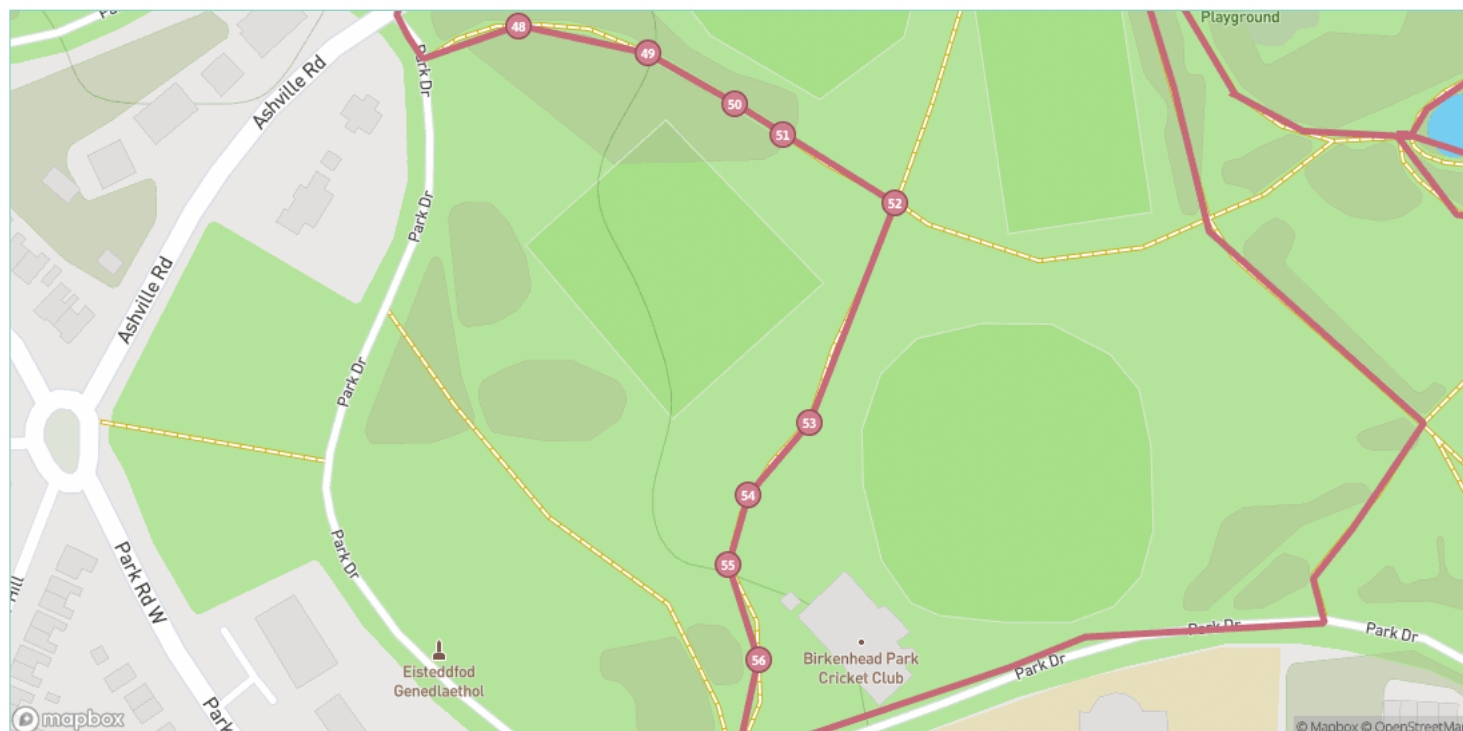
Step 43: Leave the park at the gated entrance. Very carefully cross over Asheville Road to reach the other side of a Birkenhead Park.

Step 44: Take care when crossing as traffic comes from both sides.

Step 45: Walk towards the right-hand side of the main gate to enter the park between the pillars.

Step 46: The park is built in two parts because Paxton and the town planners integrated an existing thoroughfare. It makes the lower and upper park.

Step 47: Take the path immediately to your left as you make your way into the park.



Step 49: Continue along the tree-lined path.

Step 50: Known as “The People’s Garden” the was open to everyone, from workers to the monarch, breaking tradition of private estate parks.

Step 51: Look out for the very old trees recognisable by their really thick trunks. See how far your arms can reach around them.

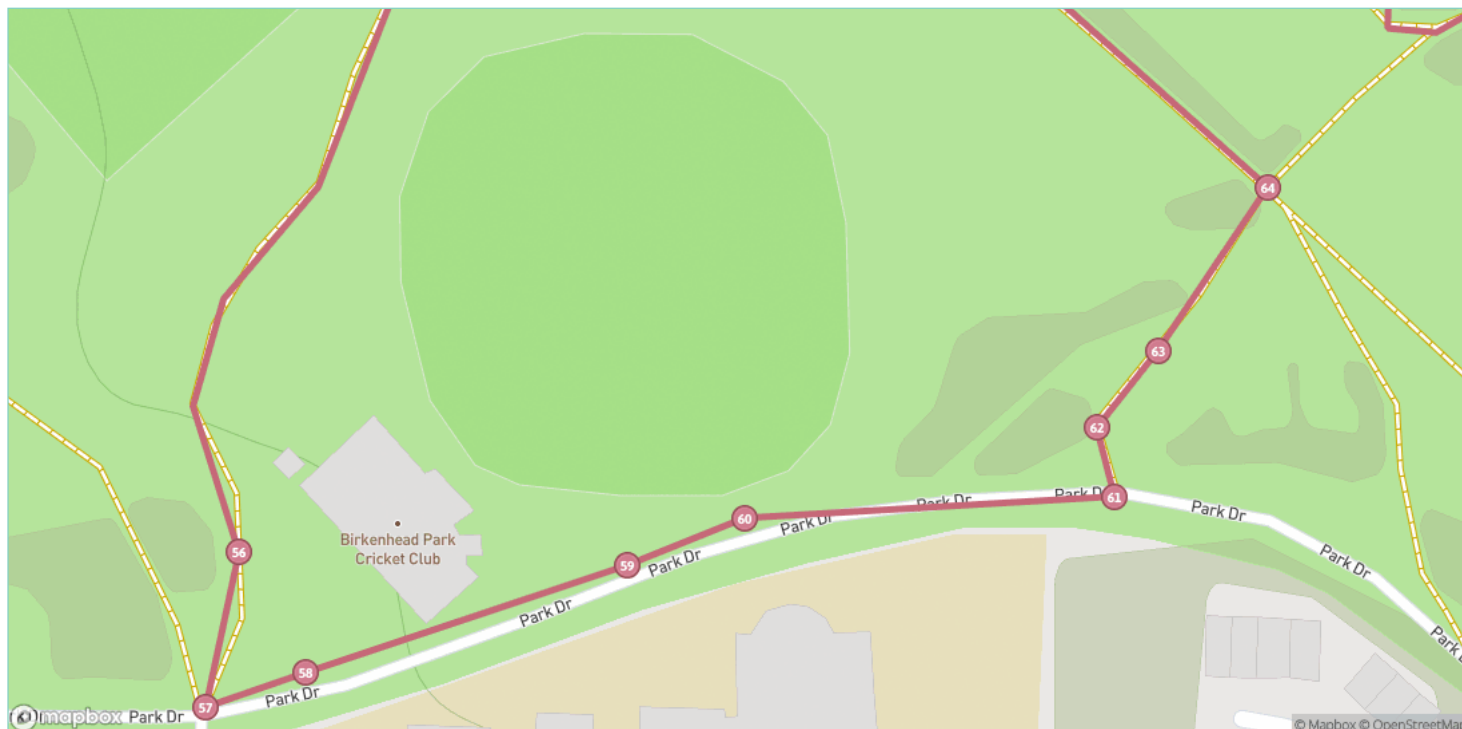
Step 52: At the path junction, take the path to your right.

Step 53: Follow the winding path as it goes between the trees.

Step 54: The cricket club at Birkenhead Park pre-dates the park itself, having been founded in 1846.

Step 55: The original pavilion, just around this corner. The modern tensile roof “hats” were added in 1994 providing indoor training facilities.

Step 56: Built with projecting gables on Corinthian cast-iron columns, Grade II listed and was built in 1949 and designed by Lewis Hornblower. It is recognised as one of the oldest surviving cricket pavilions in the world!



Step 57: Carry on along the main path beside the cricket ground.

Step 58: Keep an eye out for the interesting shapes of the seeds from the trees overhead.

Step 59: Continue making your way along Park Drive.

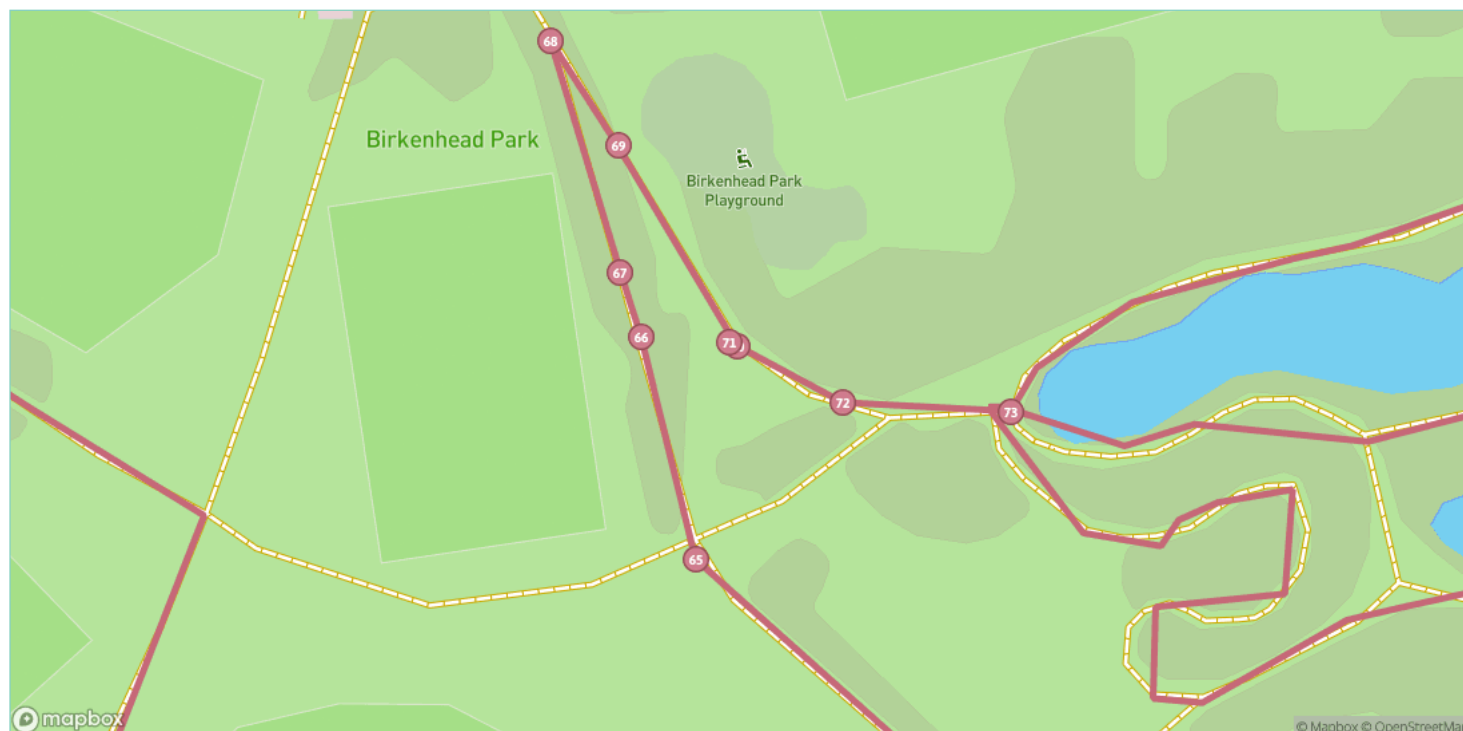
Step 60: Keep a look out for the cricket score board.

Step 61: Take the path to your left.

Step 62: Follow the path to the right, as you continue between the trees.

Step 63: There is a lot of ivy growing below the trees. They have some lovely shaped leaves and weave amongst the branches, trunks and fences.

Step 64: At the next junction, take the path on your left.



Step 65: Follow the path beneath the trees. If you look down on a sunny day, you'll notice the shadows of the leaves dancing in the breeze.

Step 72: The paths wind between the giant stones to give the illusion of a rugged, mountainous landscape.

Step 66: Continue going straight on the path.

Step 67: Now is the perfect time for an ice cream or pleat break at the play area. There are seats to enjoy a rest as well.

Step 68: At the top of the path, almost turn back on yourself. At the fork on the path, take the one to the left running alongside the part railings.

Step 69: Follow the path by the railings (or stop for a play break!)

Step 70: Keep going along the path as it curves to the left into a more wooded area.

Step 71: This is The Rockery. It was one of the original defining features of the park mimicking an alpine rockfall from European landscape.



Step 73: As you reach the lake, take the path to your left.

Step 74: Take a moment to look over the water through the branches of the trees. Listen to the breeze and the bird calls.

Step 75: Continue along the path to your left.

Step 76: In autumn, you'll see so many seeds on the floor. Throwing these sycamore seeds into the air, they fall like helicopter blades. Try it!

Step 77: Some of the wild-fowl that you'll see on the lakes include coots, mallard ducks, Canada geese and black-headed gulls.

Step 78: Remember if you want to feed the birds, buy some special from the visitor centre or provide seeds, sweetcorn or peas to keep them well.

Step 79: Continue along the path, listening to the choir of bird sounds as you go.

Step 80: If you look to your right, you'll notice an interesting building. This is the Roman Boathouse.



Step 81: The Roman Boathouse is a two story building with a boat storage area beneath and a bandstand in the upper section.

Step 82: It is made from local stone in. Roman style with Doric-style pillars and a pyramid o.a. tile roof.

Step 83: The pebble mosaic floor was added in 1990 during the restoration. It was created by mosaicist Maggie Howarth.

Step 84: Take a moment to look out through the ornate arched windows over the water.

Step 85: Back on the path, with the boathouse behind you, walk to your right.

Step 86: As you walk, you can see the different sides of the boathouse reveal as you go around the lake.

Step 87: Continue along the path around the lake.

Step 88: At the path junction, take the path to your right.



Step 89: Continue following the path.

Step 90: Look to your right as you make your way around. You'll be able to see the small arch beneath the boathouse where small boats were stored.

Step 91: Keep going straight along the path.

Step 92: Turn to your right to see the full front elevation of the Roman Boathouse.

Step 93: At the junction, take the path to your right.

Step 94: Make your way onto the wooden Rustic Bridge.

Step 95: Stop half way across to take in the lake on either side.

Step 96: Keep following the path on the other side.



Step 97: As it turns, you'll be able to see the Swiss Bridge coming into view.

Step 98: This historic pedestrian bridge is famous for being the only traditional covered bridge left in the UK.

Step 99: It was inspired by the Medieval covered bridges in Lucern, Switzerland and is now Grade II listed.

Step 100: On the other side of the Swiss Bridge, continue along the path.

Step 101: Keep an eye out for any plants and flowers popping up for the season. These Cyclamen show that to cooler months are on the way.

Step 102: Keep to the path as you carry on straight forward.

Step 103: At the junction, take the path to your right.

Step 104: These leaves are from the English Yew. These trees are capable of living to over 2,000 years!



Step 105: Continue along the path as it takes you around to the right.

Step 106: You'll recognise The Rockery from earlier in our walk.

Step 107: Take the path to your left between the railings and make your way up the small slope.

Step 108: Keep following the path.

Step 109: You'll find lots of cheeky squirrels in this part of the woods. If you stay still and quiet for long enough, you might get a nice photo.

Step 110: Continue up the slope and along the path.

Step 111: The canopy of trees is beautiful. Look up to see the branches high above your head.

Step 112: Follow the path beneath the trees.



Step 113: It continues to curve around, keep going.

Step 114: You'll see the park opening up again as you go down the curved slope.

Step 115: Keep going on the path to your left.

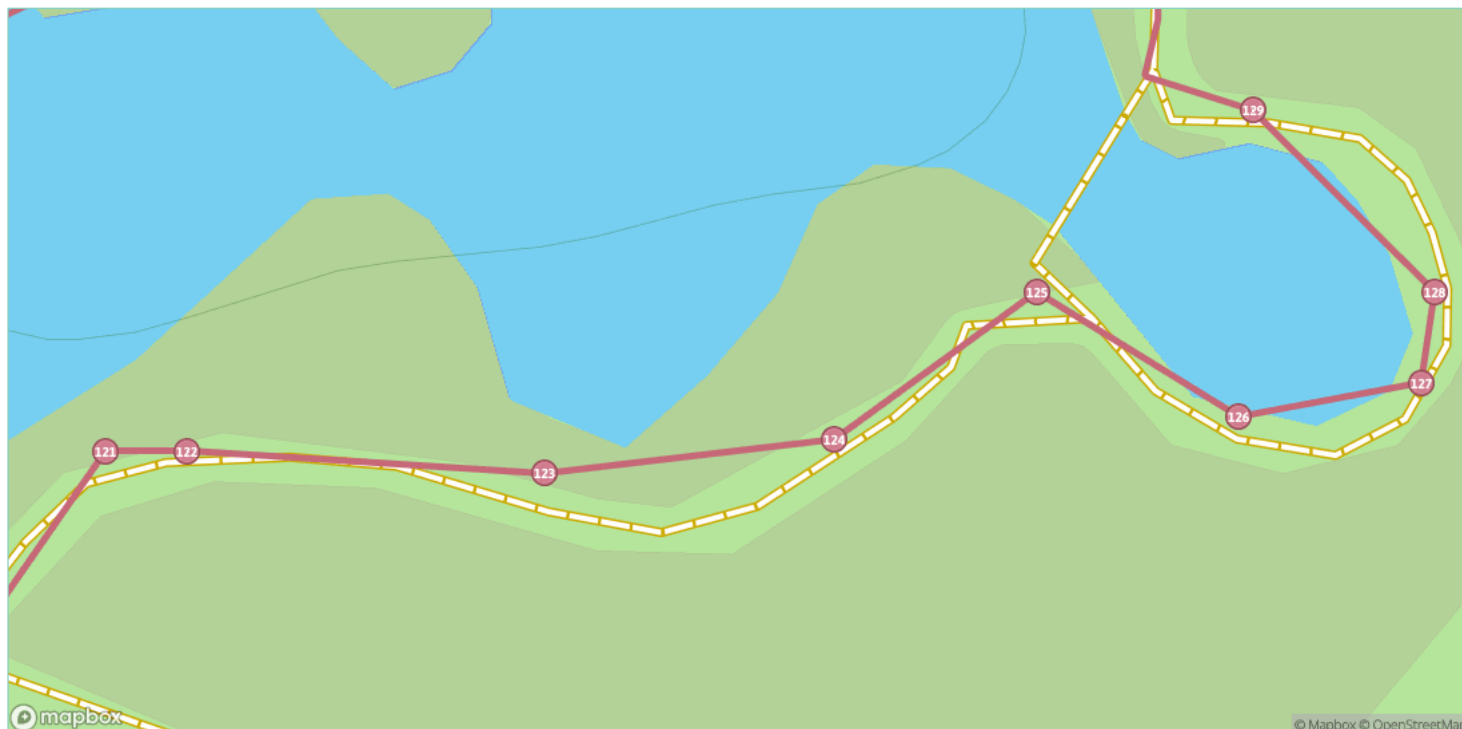
Step 116: At the junction, take the path to your left.

Step 117: The architect for New York City's Central Park visited Birkenhead Park in 1850.

Step 118: He was so taken by the democratic access (meaning everyone can use it), and naturalistic layout that he used it as his primary inspiration for the design of Central Park!

Step 119: Keep making your way along the path.

Step 120: At the junction, take the path to your left to make your way along the side of the lake.



Step 121: You'll now be able to see the full side of the Swiss Bridge and the beautiful colours along the railings.

Step 122: Keep going along the path.

Step 123: You'll spot workout equipment as you go. These are part of a fitness trail and are free for everyone to use as an outdoor gym.

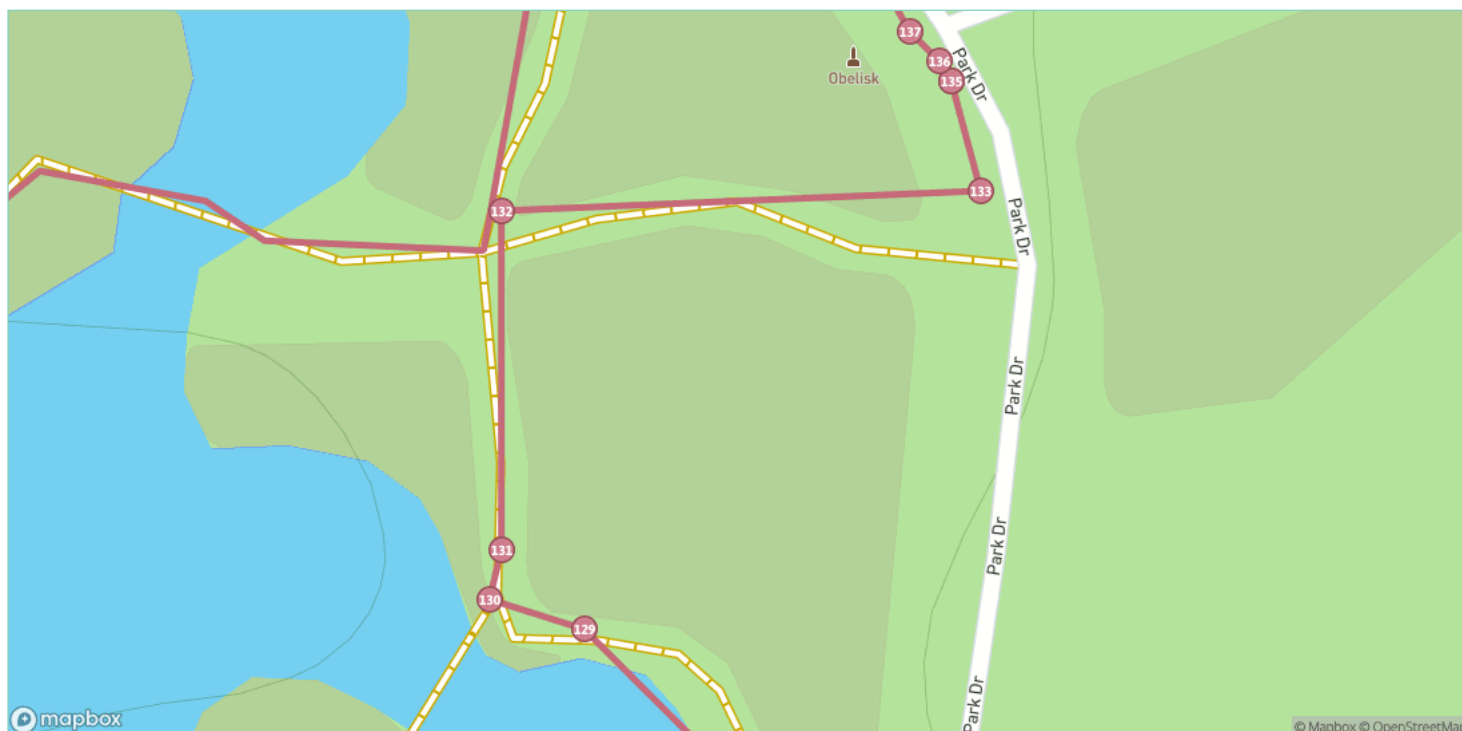
Step 124: Continue along the path.

Step 125: As you reach the lake, follow the curve of the path to take you around the edge.

Step 126: Listen out for the birds that are hiding in the rushes and reeds around the edge of the lake.

Step 127: You'll see some of the house that overlook the park. What a lovely view they have.

Step 128: Continue along the curve of the path to the left.



Step 129: As you make your way to the end of the loop, you'll spot the larger lake again.

Step 130: It's a perfect place to stop and watch the reflection of the streets in the water.

Step 131: With the big lake in front of you, take the path to your right.

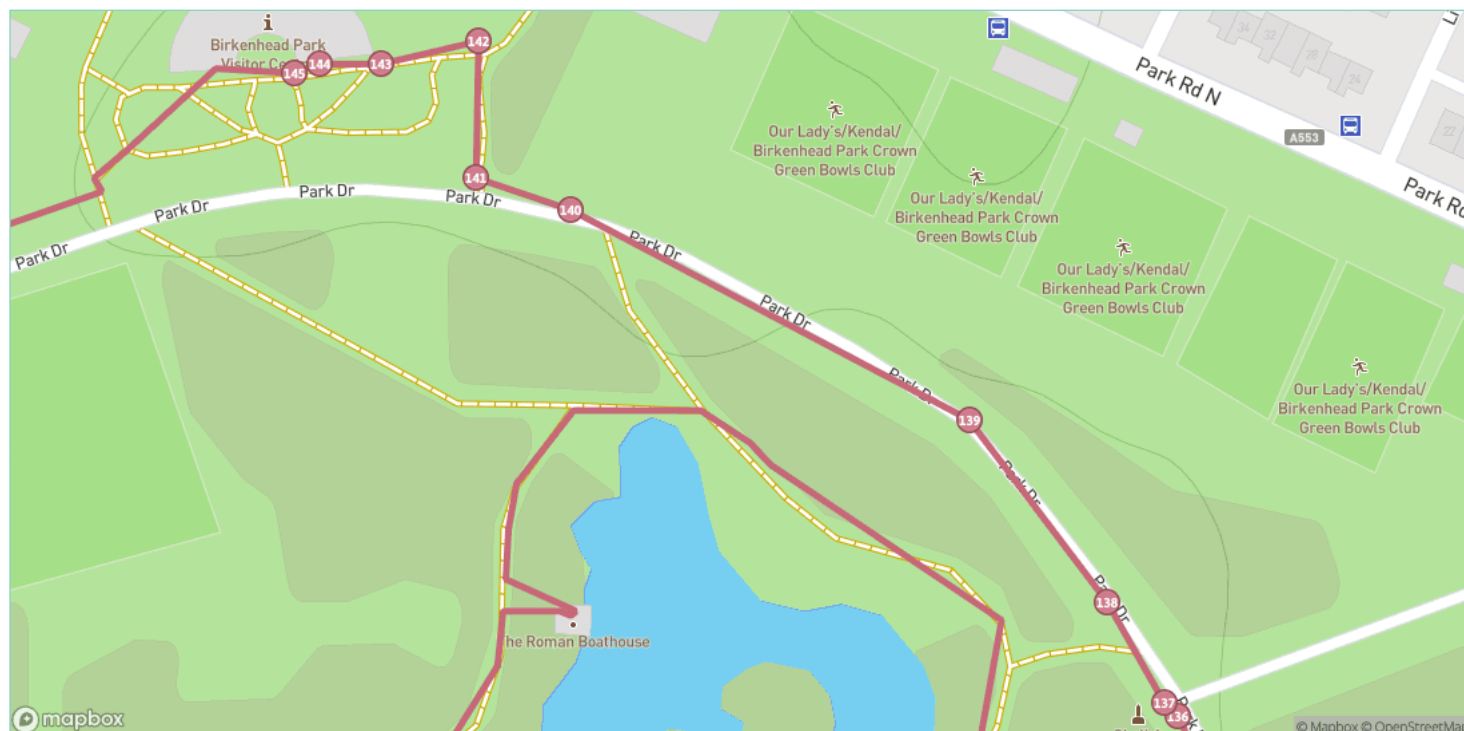
Step 132: Take the path to your right. We are making our way towards Park Drive.

Step 133: At the end of the path, join Park Drive and turn to your left.

Step 134: Looking to your right, you'll see the original grand entrance to the park. It is built in the Classical style from local sandstone.

Step 135: The entrance links the two lodges on either side. These used to house the park wardens who monitored the gates and the park grounds.

Step 136: This obelisk was built as a public water fountain. At the time, fresh drinking water was lacking for the Birkenhead working-class.



Step 137: The monument is dedicated to John Somerville Jackson who worked alongside his brother Sir William Jackson to authorise and finance the creation of Birkenhead Park.

Step 144: Birkenhead Park Visitor Centre and care are open 7 days per week from 9am to 4:30pm. A great spot for some refreshments after your walk.

Step 138: Make your way along Park Drive.

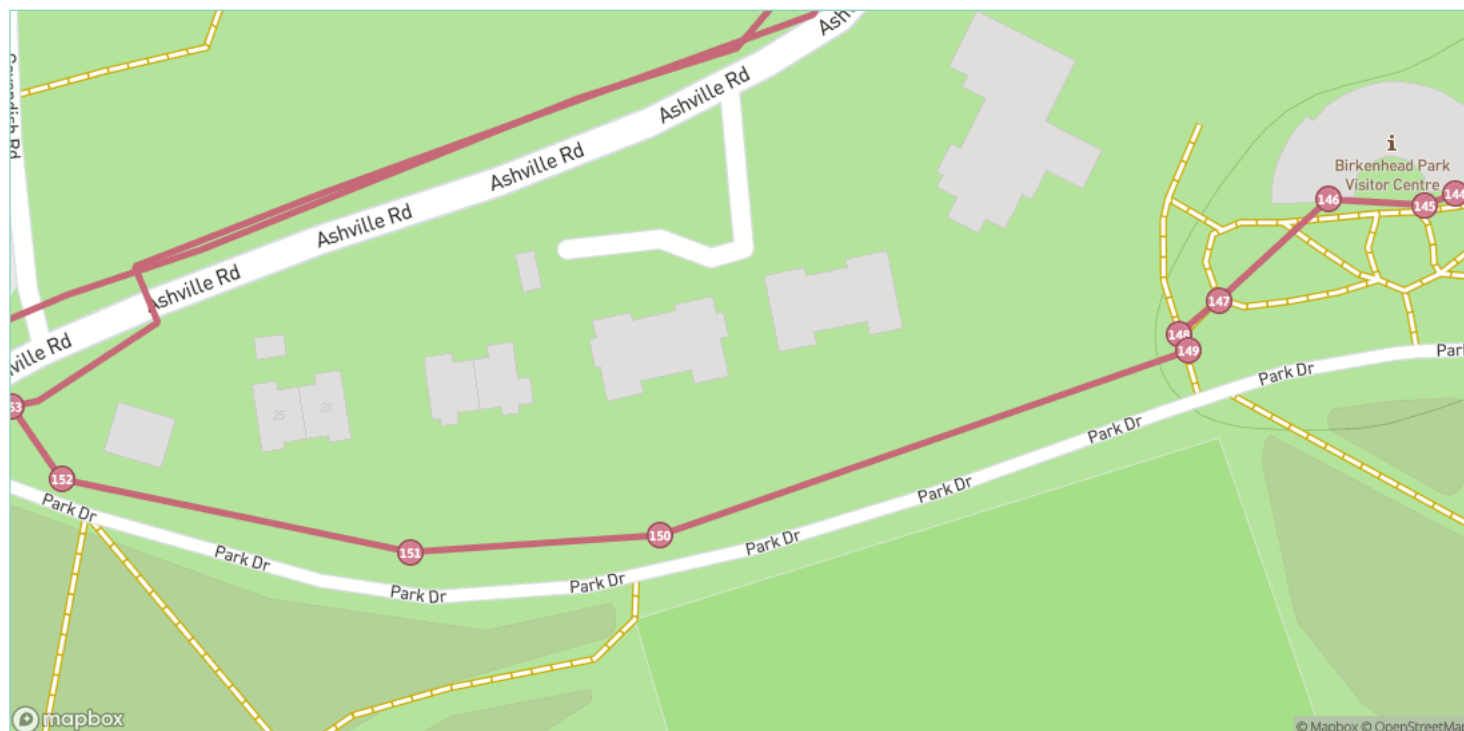
Step 139: To your right, beyond the railings are the park bowling greens.

Step 140: Continue along Park Drive, making your way towards the Visitor Centre.

Step 141: Take the path to the right, between the railings.

Step 142: Turn almost immediately left to enter the gardens in front of the centre.

Step 143: The gardens are well maintained and a lovely spot to enjoy a rest.



Step 145: Many of the borders are well cared for by the Friends of Birkenhead Park, which keeps them looking so beautiful.

Step 146: Once you're ready to go, walk through the garden with the Visitor Centre to your right.

Step 147: Head back forward the railings by Park Drive.

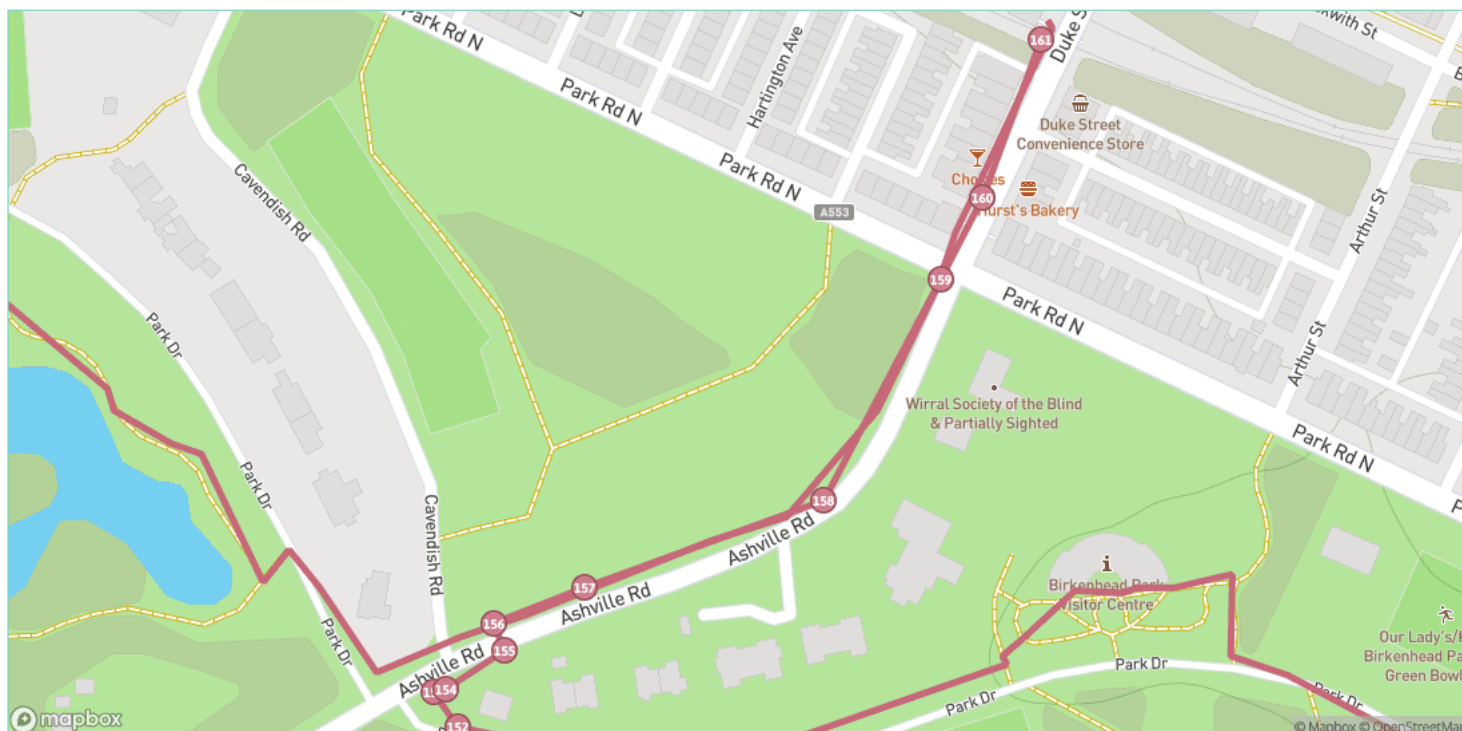
Step 148: Exit through the gate and turn to your right.

Step 149: Follow Park Drive as we make our way back to the exit.

Step 150: If you need another play break, now it the perfect time!

Step 151: Continue along the path.

Step 152: Exit the park through the gate by the pillar.



Step 153: Turn to your right and walk along Asheville Road.

Step 154: You'll notice another of the park lodges as you pass. This is Central Lodge built in the Italianate style.

Step 155: Cross over Ashville Road at the dropped kerb and island crossing.

Step 156: Take the pavement to your right to continue up Ashville Road.

Step 157: If you look through the railings, you'll see the ornate supports holding them in place.

Step 158: Keep going up Asheville Road.

Step 159: Cross over Park Road North at the pelican crossing.

Step 160: Continue along the side of the buildings on Duke Street as you make your way towards Birkenhead Park Merseyrail Station.

Step 161: This is the end of our walk around Birkenhead Park.