



Birmingham: Made by Migration Trail

A step-free walking trail through the city celebrating place and the people who came to our beloved Birmingham and made it home.

Distance 3.9 kilometers / 2.4 miles

Duration 1 hour and 15 minutes



Wheel friendly



Public loos



Refreshments



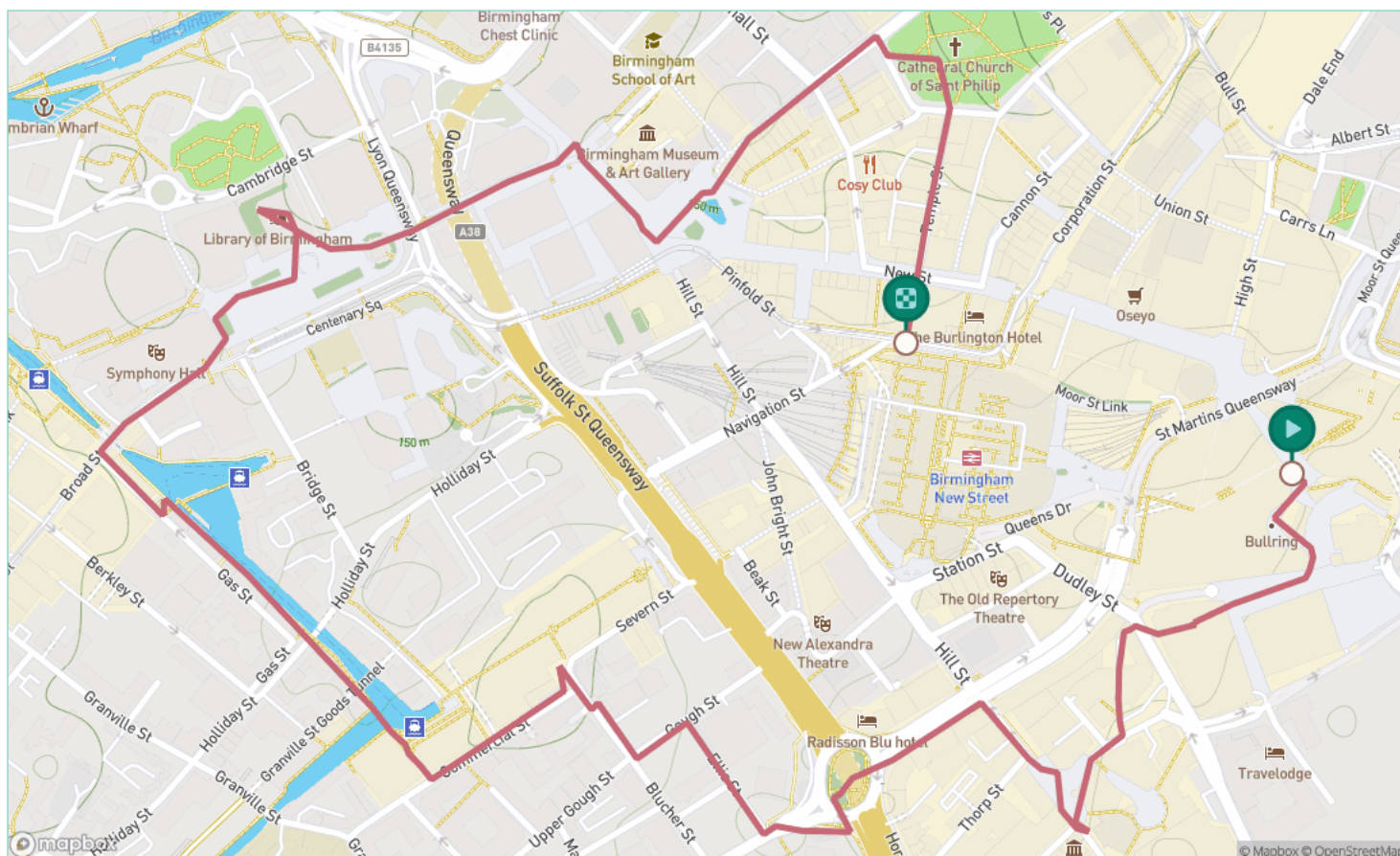
Public transport



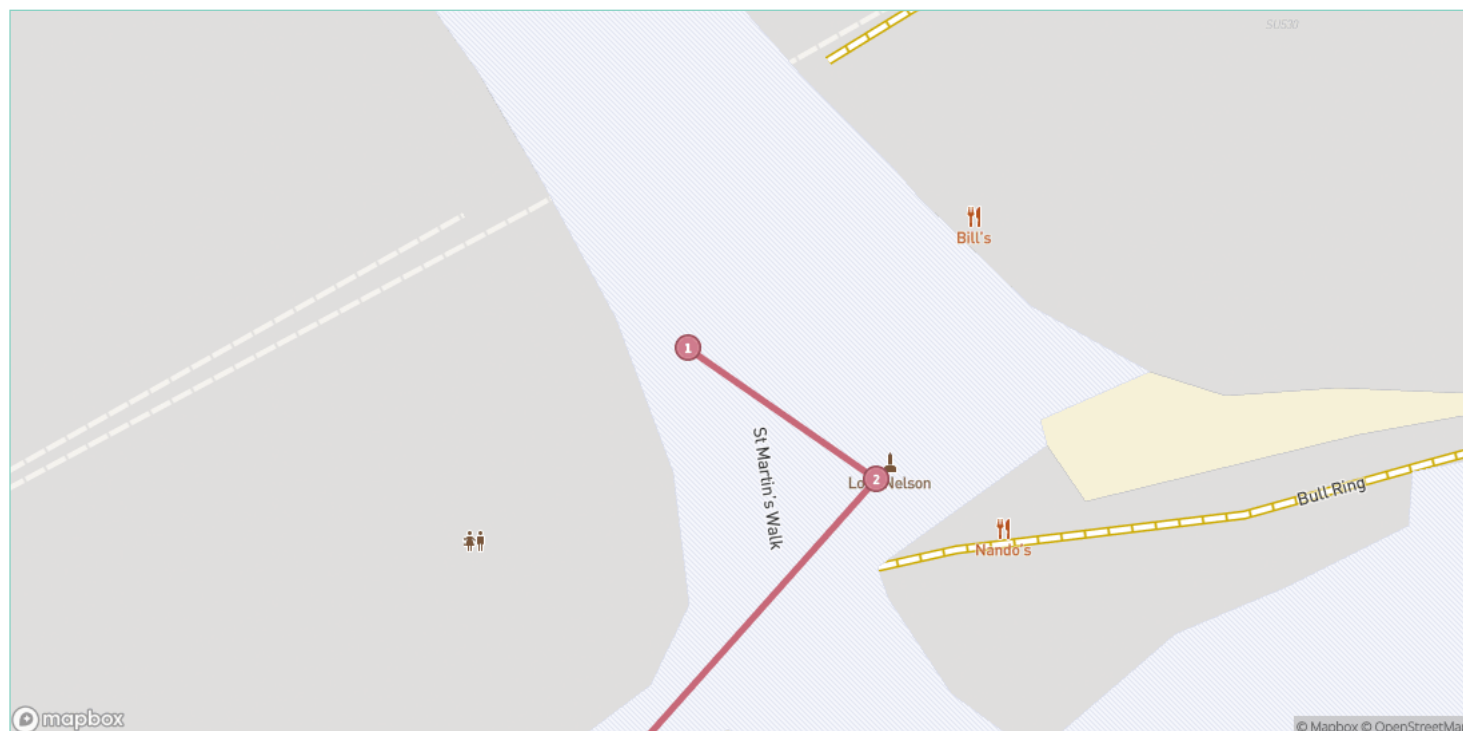
History



Paid-for attraction



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. Created by Go Jauntly Ltd © 2026. Last Updated: 31 July 2026.



Step 1: This Made by Migration Trail starts outside the Bullring shopping centre on Bull Ring road, near St Martin's Church. Tap 'Read More' below.

Made by Migration

Birmingham calls itself the city of a thousand trades. It could just as truthfully call itself the city of a thousand journeys. On this walk you'll trace the arrivals that built 'Brum': from centuries-old communities to the newest Brummies still making it home.

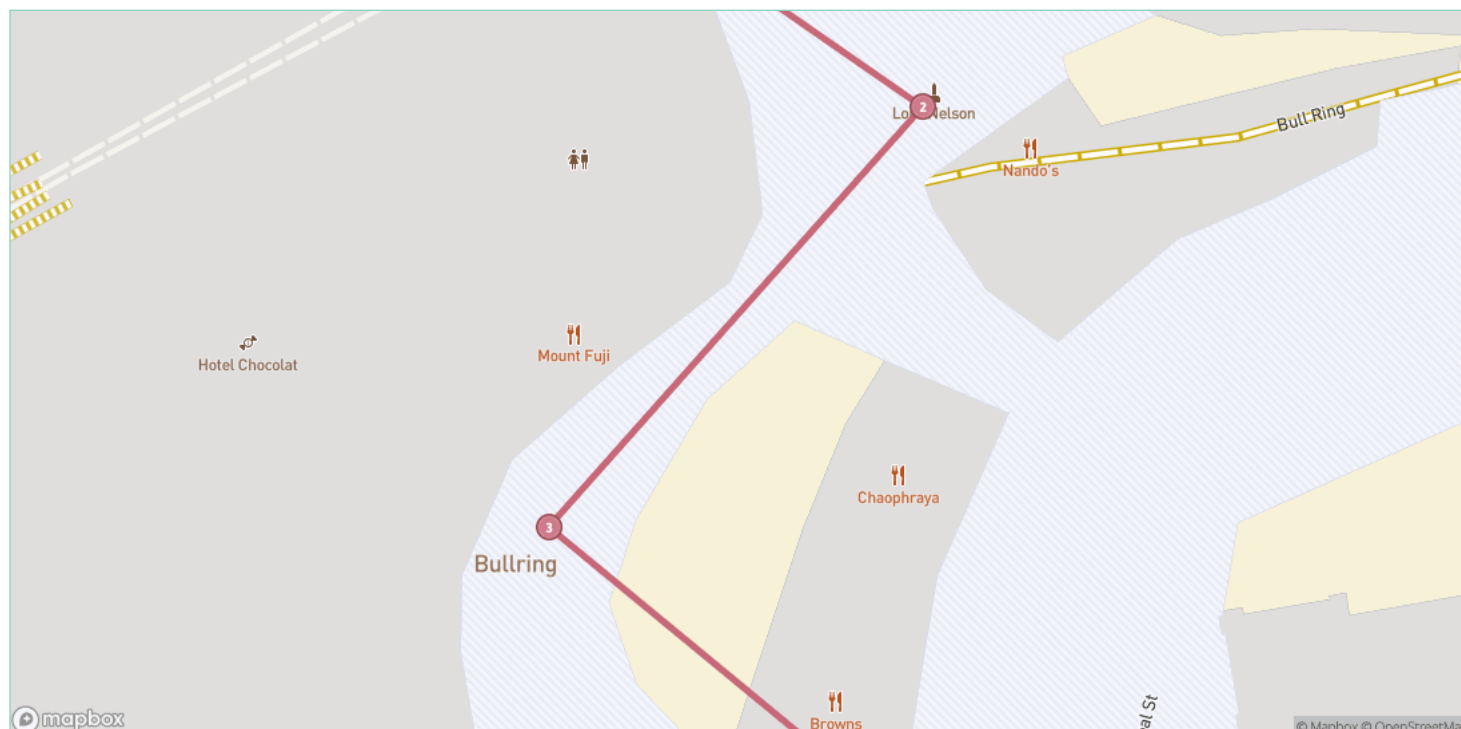
After the Second World War, Britain looked to its Commonwealth to help rebuild a battered country. The British Nationality Act of 1948 gave citizens across the Commonwealth the right to live and work here, and the call went out for workers: for the buses, the hospitals, the factories and the foundries.

Many of those who answered saw it not just as opportunity but as duty. They had been raised to think of Britain as the mother country; some had fought for it in the war. Coming here felt like a civic act, an answer to an invitation from the Crown.

Birmingham, with its endless factory floors and post-war labour shortage, became one of the great

destinations. Caribbean families settled in Handsworth, South Asian workers in Sparkbrook and Small Heath, Irish builders in Digbeth. But the story starts long before the 1940s and continues long after. For three centuries, people have arrived here from everywhere and made it theirs.

In this stroll around the city, you'll meet some of them: silversmiths and seamen, publicans and photographers, a supermarket king who arrived with a few pounds in his pocket, and a Nobel laureate who came here to be healed. Together, their stories are Birmingham's story. Let's begin.



Step 2: Ahead you will see a statue of the notorious British Naval Commander Horatio Nelson. Tap below to read more. 

Nelson's Statue

Birmingham's oldest public statue is also one of its most complicated.

When Admiral Lord Nelson visited Birmingham in August 1802, the town gave him a hero's welcome. He toured the workshops and manufactories, and Birmingham took him to its heart. After his death at Trafalgar three years later, ordinary Brummies raised £2,500 by public subscription for this bronze by Richard Westmacott. Unveiled in 1809, it was the first statue of Nelson in Britain and the first public statue Birmingham had ever raised. It says something that a landlocked town of metalworkers chose a naval hero: Birmingham's fortunes have always depended on the sea. Its guns, buckles, buttons and pans sailed on the trade routes Nelson's navy protected.

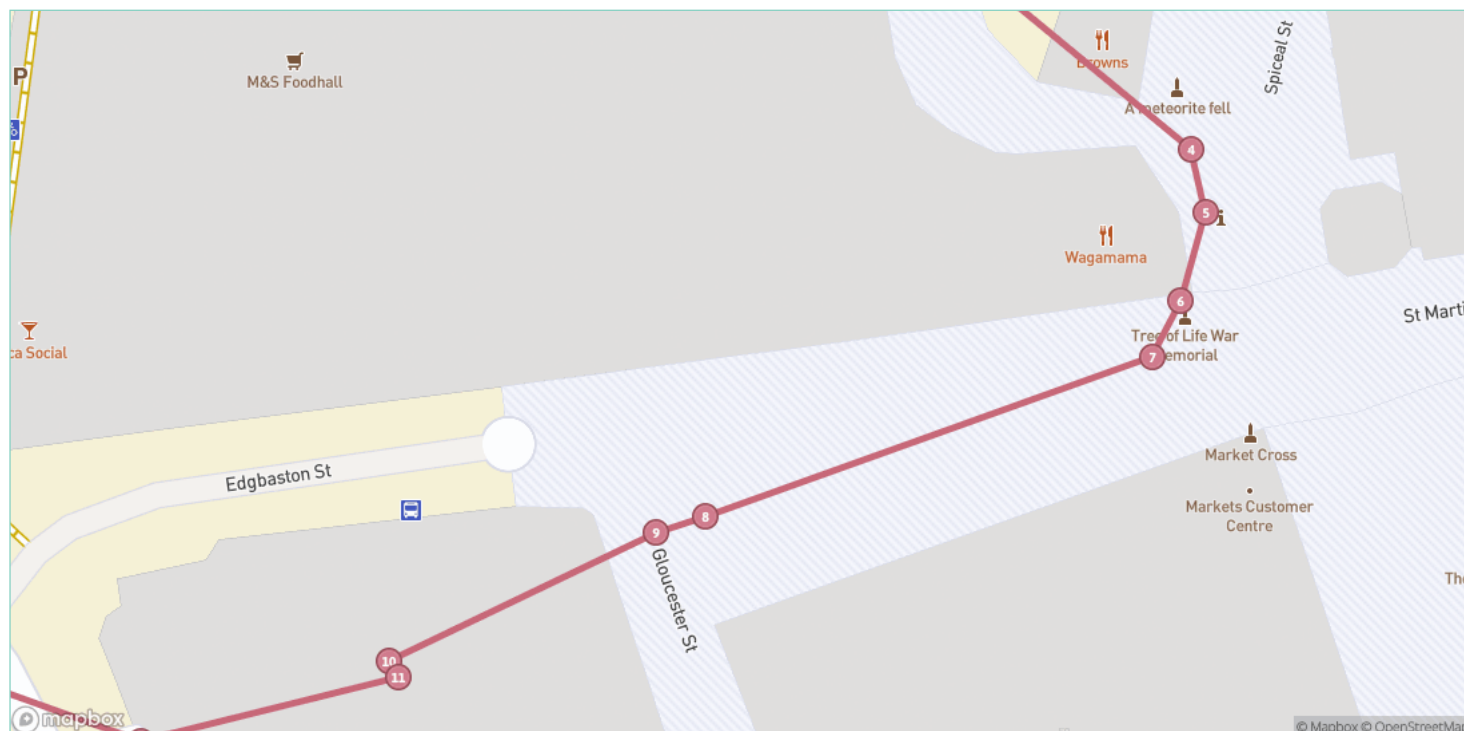
But those routes carried the wealth of the Empire and its cruelties too. Some of Birmingham's goods were traded for enslaved people on the West African coast and Nelson himself sided with Caribbean slave owners against the abolitionists. Westmacott made a twin of this statue for

Bridgetown, Barbados, where it stood for two centuries until years of protest and a petition of more than 10,000 signatures saw it removed to a museum in 2020, as Barbados prepared to become a republic.

That same summer, a petition by the Birmingham Anti-Racist Campaign called for this statue, too, to be taken down and placed in a museum as an educational piece whilst a counter-petition demanded it stayed.

For now, Nelson remains, gazing over St Martin's, largely unnoticed by shoppers hurrying past. His story is a fitting place to start this walk: a reminder that Birmingham has never been an island. The routes that made this city rich connected it to the whole world and in time, the whole world came here.

Step 3: To begin the walk, turn right down the Bullring. This is a sloped walkway.



Step 4: At the end of the walkway, you'll see St Martin's Church. This is Birmingham's oldest church, named after a migrant. Read more below.



St Martin's Church

Fittingly, Birmingham's oldest church is named after a migrant. St Martin was born in what's now Hungary and made his home in France. For 800 years this church has watched over a city of arrivals.

Step 5: Turn right, walking towards Edgbaston Street.

Step 6: On your right you'll see the 'Tree of Life' memorial by Italian sculptor Lorenzo Quinn. It was made in memory of Birmingham's Blitz victims.

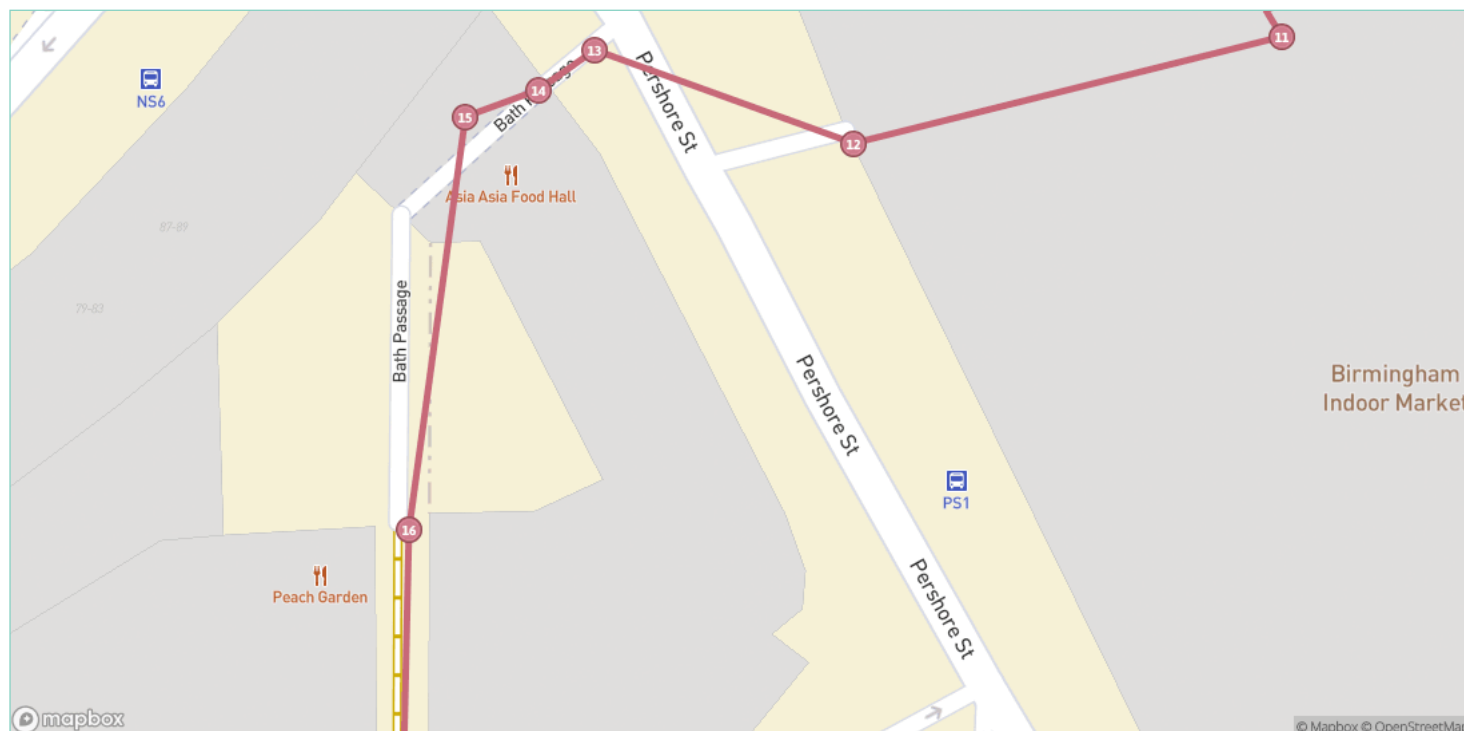
Step 7: You are now in the lively Bull Ring open market area. There have been bustling markets here since the Middle Ages.

Step 8: Continue towards the Bull Ring indoor market.

Step 9: The Bull Ring Indoor Market is renowned for abundant selections of fresh fish and global foods, reflecting Brum's multicultural population.

Step 10: Inside is one of the UK's largest fish markets.

Step 11: You can find all kinds of fruits and vegetables in here. Have a look around.



Step 12: Take the exit onto Pershore St and turn right.

Step 13: Cross over the road towards Bath Passage, the colourful alleyway up ahead.

Step 14: Continue through Bath Passage.

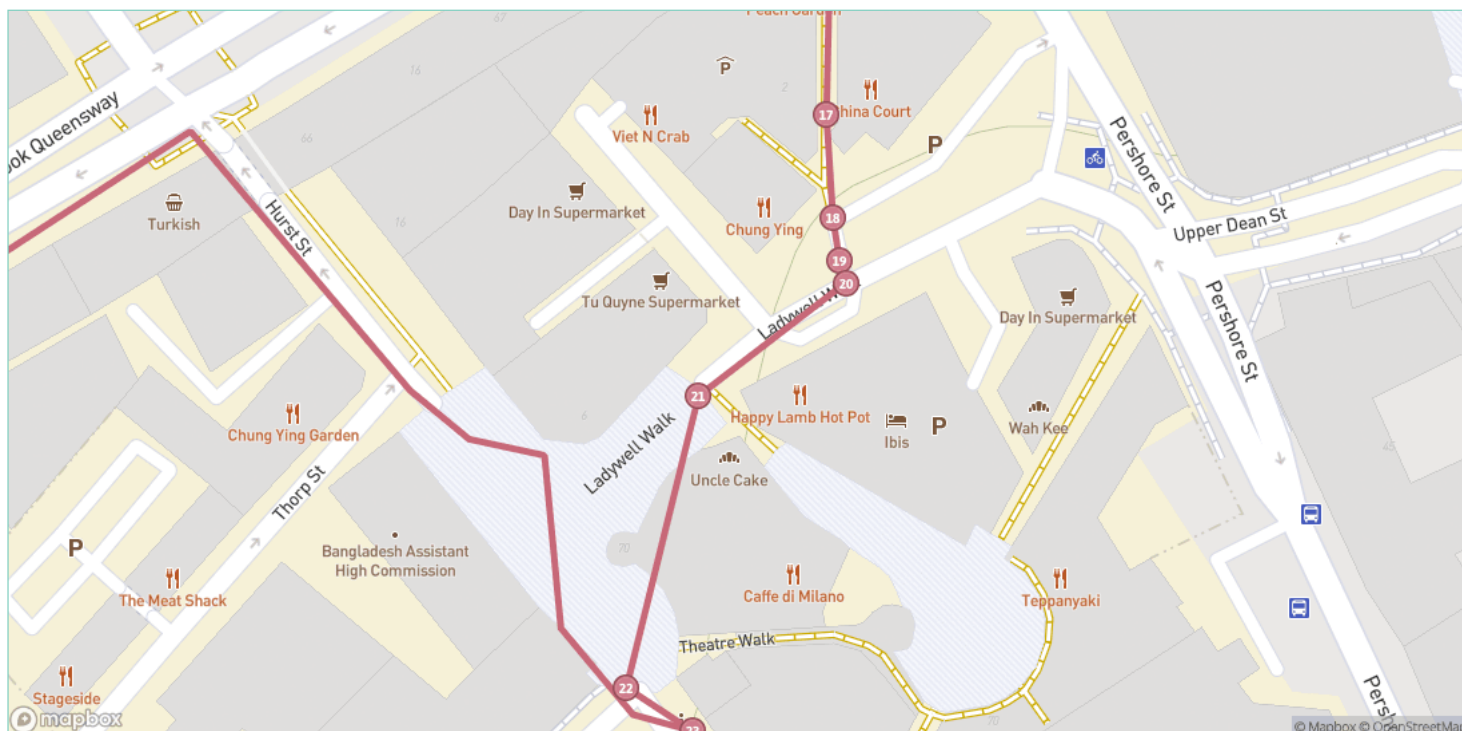
Step 15: Welcome to Birmingham's Chinese Quarter. Check out the vibrant street art here.

Step 16: Birmingham's Chinatown is a vibrant, compact district centered around Hurst Street, Ladywell Walk, and The Arcadian. [Read more](#)

Chinese Quarter

Bridging the gap between Grand Central and the Gay Village, the Chinese Quarter is one of the most vibrant corners of the city, built by generations of migrants who made Birmingham home. Chinese migration to Birmingham began in small numbers in the early twentieth century, when former seamen from southern China settled in British cities and often made their living running laundries.

The community grew rapidly after the Second World War, as families arrived from Hong Kong's rural New Territories in the 1950s and 60s, many drawn by work in the catering trade. Restaurants, grocers and family businesses clustered around Hurst Street, and by the 1980s the area was officially recognised as the Chinese Quarter. Landmarks followed, including the Chinese Community Centre, which has supported new arrivals for decades, and the restaurants that made the quarter a destination for the whole city. Today the area is overflowing with restaurants, supermarkets, bakeries and venues, and it comes



alive most spectacularly each Chinese New Year, when lion dancers and tens of thousands of visitors fill the streets.

Look up as you walk, and you'll spot the details: red lanterns, bilingual street signs and rooftops that nod to southern Chinese architecture.

Step 17: There are plenty of restaurants and shops here if you want to stop for lunch or a snack.

Step 18: Continue towards the end of Bath Passage. The drop curbs are a bit steep so you may have to stay on the road if you have wheels.

Step 19: Cross over Ladywell Walk and turn right.

Step 20: Continue on Ladywell Walk.

Step 21: You'll come to a square painted in rainbow colours. Cross diagonally towards Inge St and the Back to Backs museum.

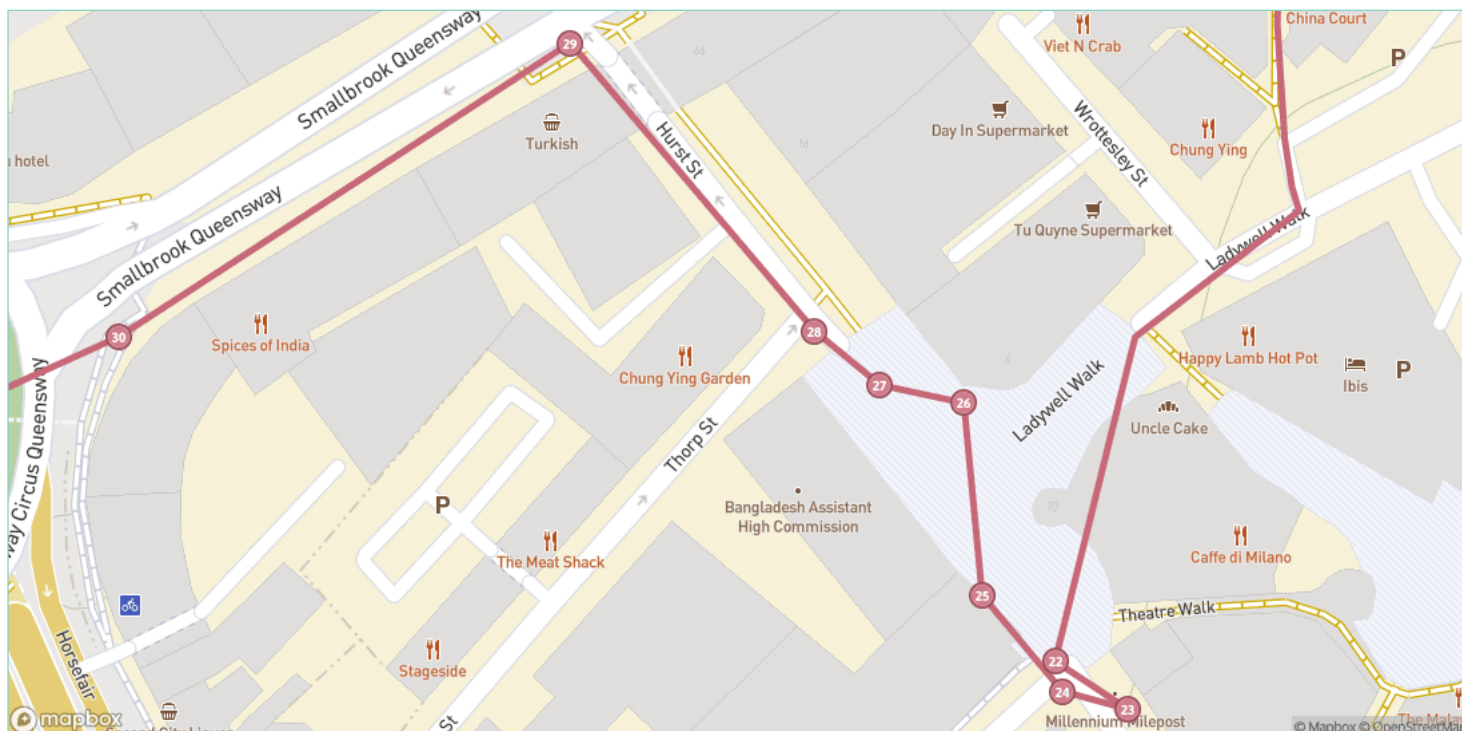
Step 22: If you would like to visit, the National Trust's Back to Backs Museum you can experience 200 years of working people's lives. More below 

Back to Backs Museum

The Birmingham Back to Backs, originally known as Court 15, are the last surviving example of a type of working-class housing which defined the Midlands' urban landscape in the 19th and 20th centuries. Both homes and places of work for people from all over the world who flocked to British cities, they are a unique social and architectural record, offering an invaluable glimpse into the lives of the people who helped make Birmingham the vibrant city it is today. It's run by the National Trust. Admission is by guided tour.

Visiting Info

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/birmingham-west-midlands/birmingham-back-to-backs>



Step 23: Along Hurst Street you can see the Millennium Walking Post painted in LGBTQ+ colours. This leads to Birmingham's Gay Village. Read more. 

Gay Village

Birmingham has a large LGBTQ+ community and the village is renowned for its lively, cosmopolitan environment and free-thinking attitude.

Not every migration crosses an ocean. For decades, LGBTQ+ people have made their way to Hurst Street from towns and villages across the Midlands and beyond, drawn to a place where they could be themselves.

What began in the 1970s around venues like the Nightingale grew into one of the UK's most vibrant gay villages, sitting happily shoulder-to-shoulder with the Chinese Quarter, two communities of arrival sharing the same streets.

Every May Bank Holiday weekend, Birmingham Pride fills Hurst Street, the largest two-day LGBTQ+ festival in the UK, a joyful reminder that Birmingham has always made room for people looking for home.

Step 24: Turn back towards the rainbow square. You'll see the Hippodrome in front of you.

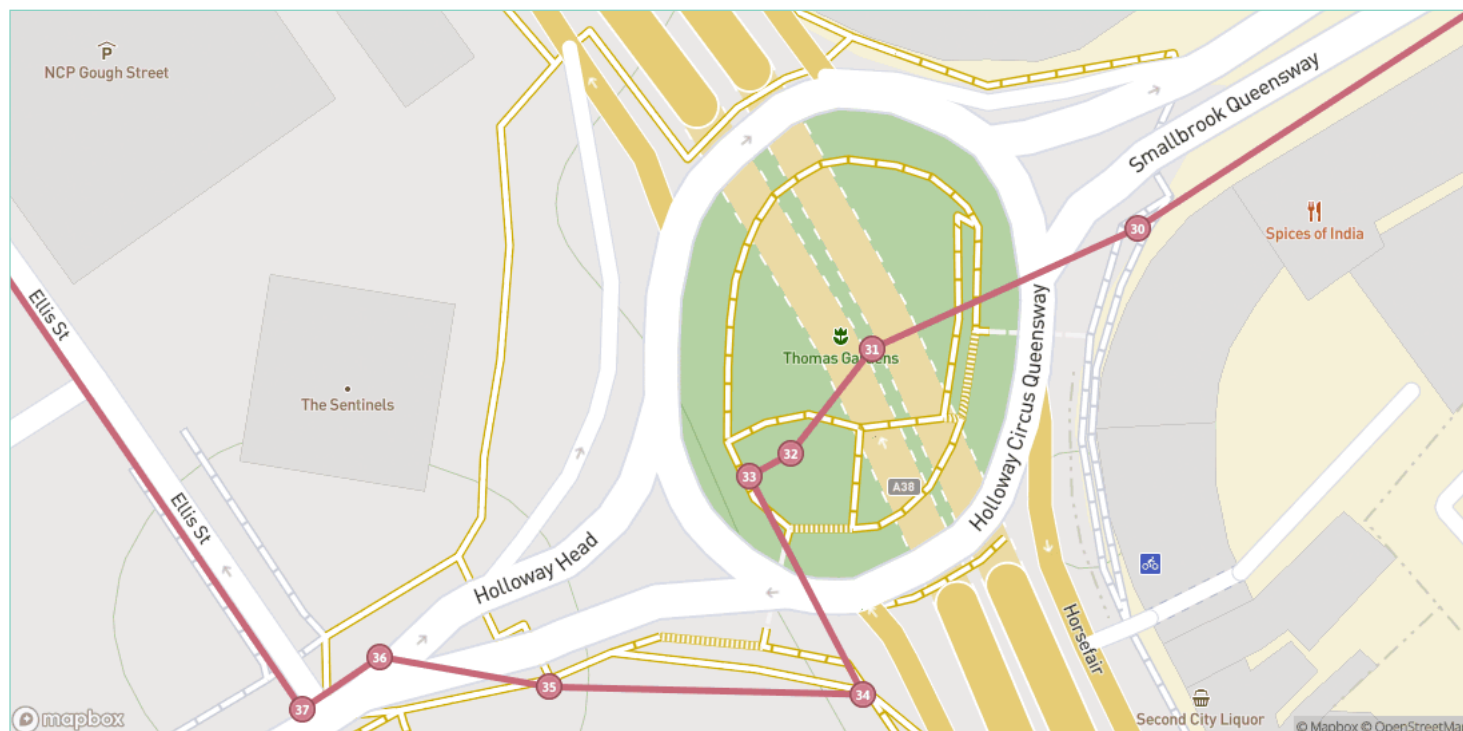
Step 25: Birmingham Hippodrome has been providing entertainment to audiences in and around Birmingham for over 125-years. Famous Brum residents such as Lenny Henry, Alison Hammond and Beverly Knight have all performed here.

Step 26: You can also see Birmingham's AIDS & HIV memorial for those who passed away from the virus. It was unveiled in 2022.

Step 27: Continue straight ahead on Hurst Street.

Step 28: On your left you'll pass the 'Inform Women, Transform Lives' mural by artist Melita Berg, which highlights help for domestic abuse victims.

Step 29: After the mural, turn left onto Smallbrook Queensway.



Step 30: At the end is a roundabout. To safely cross, take the underpass route into Thomas Gardens.

Step 31: In the gardens you'll see The Chinese Pagoda. This is a 12m hand-carved granite pagoda, gifted to the city in 1998. Read more below.

Pagoda

Rising from a traffic island at Holloway Circus, this hand-carved pagoda is Birmingham's migration story told in stone. It was gifted to the city in 1998 by Wing Yip, who arrived from Hong Kong in the late 1950s with just a few pounds in his pocket and went on to build one of Britain's best-known Chinese supermarket businesses, headquartered here in Birmingham.

Even the monument itself is a migrant. It was carved from granite in the Fujian province, China, then shipped across the world to its new home. Standing at the gateway to the Chinese Quarter, it's a thank-you note from one family to the city that took them in.

Step 32: Head towards the underpass on the other side. In front is a 1960s mosaic depicting the centuries-old custom of horse trading.

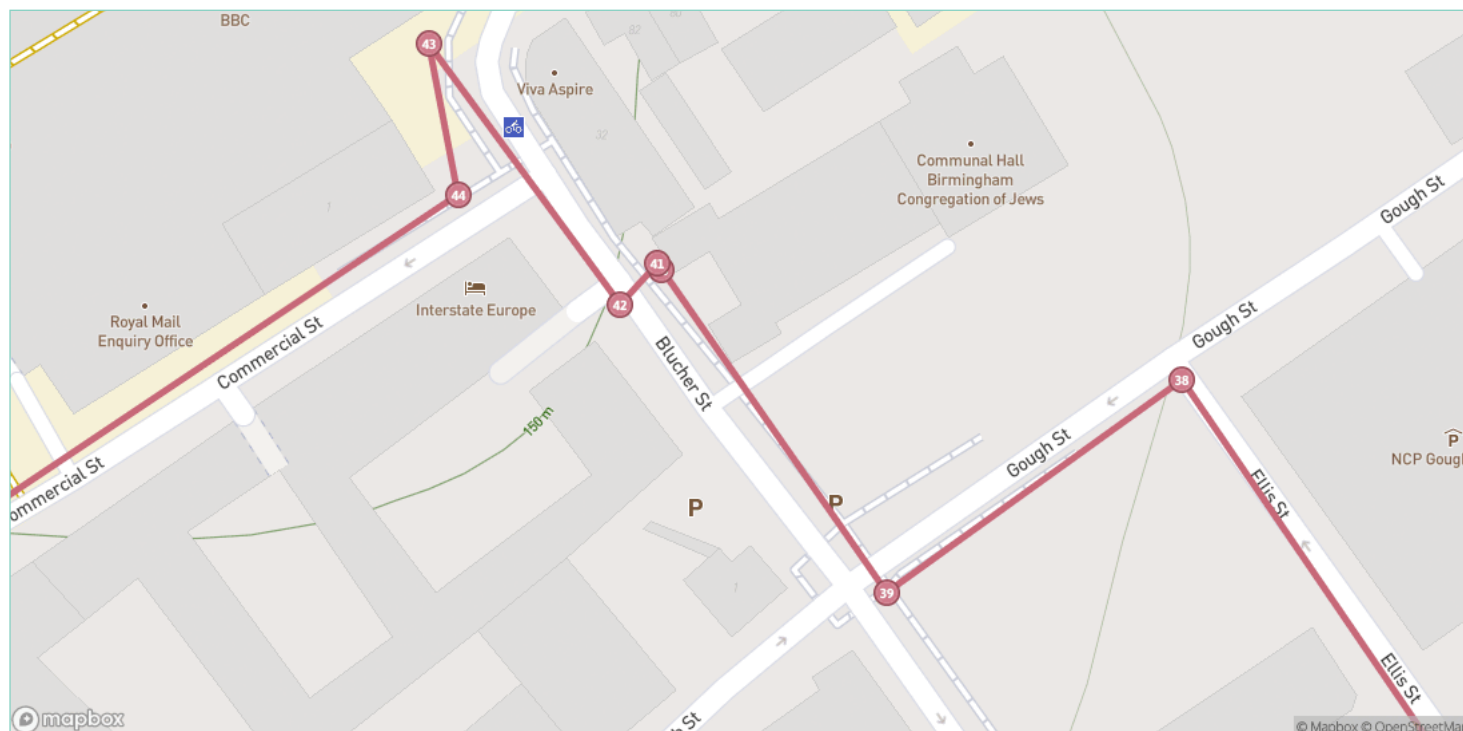
Step 33: Take the underpass toward Holloway Head.

Step 34: As you exit, turn right to cross the road.

Step 35: Cross both roads at the pedestrian crossing and turn left.

Step 36: Cross over Ellis St before turning right onto it.

Step 37: Continue along Ellis St and take the first left onto Gough St.



Step 38: Walk along Gough St and get ready to take the first right onto Blucher St.

Step 39: Cross the road before you turn right onto Blucher St.

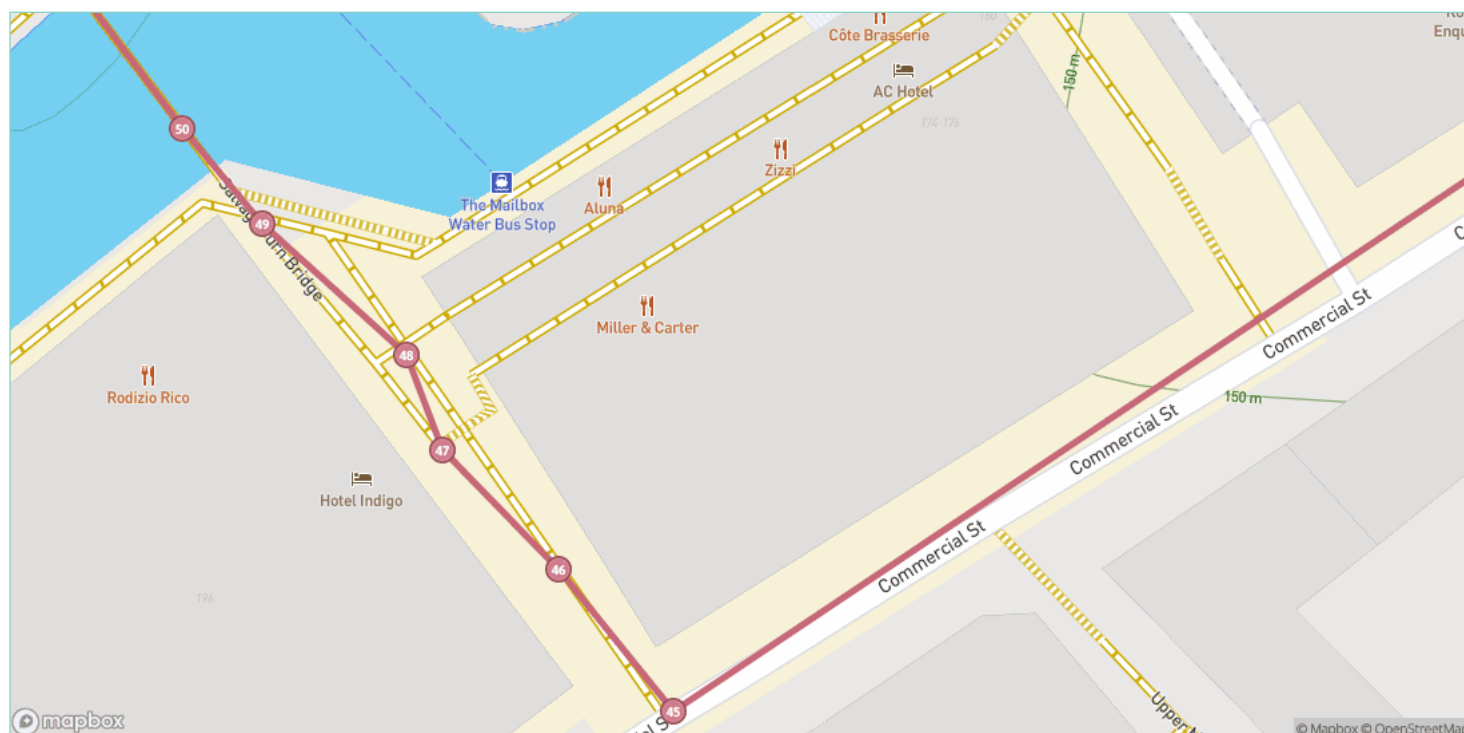
Step 40: After a few metres you'll see the Grade II listed Singers Hill Synagogue. Jewish migration to Birmingham dates back to the early 1700s.

Step 41: Cross Blucher St here and turn right.

Step 42: Continue walking towards the giant lamp sculpture up ahead.

Step 43: Take a closer look at the giant red desk lamp complete with plug socket. Designed by Holmes Wood and unveiled in 2014.

Step 44: From the lamp go left and then right onto Commercial St.



Step 45: Turn left through a passageway towards the canal.

Step 46: Need a break? Head into the mailbox and take the lift or escalators up one floor. There are public toilets and restaurants in here.

Step 47: Take the lift or escalators up to public toilets.

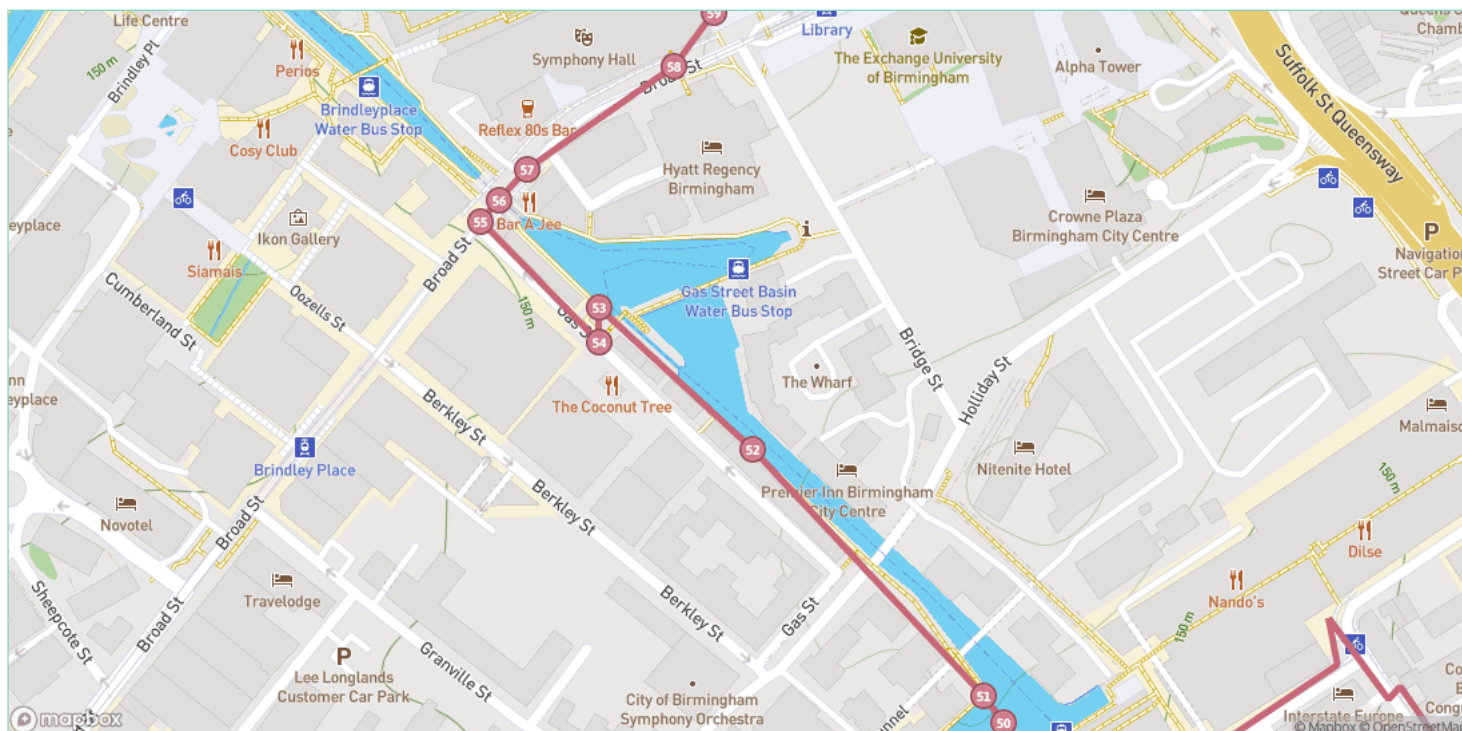
Step 48: Also look out for the 2010 'Meet the Lovely People' sculptures that immortalise inspiring people. Made by Brum artist Temper (Arron Bird).

Step 49: Back out on the passageway, head over Love Lock bridge.

Step 50: Opposite you can see the BBC studios. The BBC's Asian Network broadcasts from here. Read more below.  

BBC Asian Network

You're passing the home of the BBC Asian Network, the national station that broadcasts British Asian life to the whole country from right here in Birmingham. There's no better place for it: this is one of the most South Asian cities in Britain. South Asian migration has shaped Birmingham for over seventy years. From the 1950s onwards, men from Pakistan, India and what is now Bangladesh came to work in the city's factories, foundries and mills, filling the labour shortages of post-war Britain. Kashmiri and Punjabi workers settled in Sparkbrook, Small Heath and Handsworth. Sikh families built some of the country's largest gurdwaras here. Bengali migrants, many from Sylhet, put down roots in Small Heath, Aston and Lozells. Most intended to stay only a few years, but Birmingham became home. Families then followed and those early arrivals built institutions that anchored whole communities: mosques, temples and gurdwaras, welfare associations, language schools and businesses that turned quiet streets into thriving centres of life.



Their story is also one of activism and belonging, from campaigns for workers' rights in the 1970s to festivals that now fill the city's calendar, including Vaisakhi, Eid in the park and the Bengali New Year celebrations of Boishakhi Mela.

Today around one in three Brummies has South Asian heritage, and that story has a national stage. In 2022 the BBC Asian Network moved from London to Birmingham, a recognition that this city sits at the heart of British Asian life. The station is set to move again soon, though not far: the BBC is building a new Birmingham headquarters in Digbeth, at the old Typhoo tea factory, so the Asian Network's next chapter will still be written in this city.

Step 51: Continue over the bridge down the ramp and onto the tow path.

Step 52: You are now at Gas Street Basin. Birmingham's canals and Industrial Revolution boom attracted successive waves of migrant workers here.

Step 53: Turn left onto a slope to exit the towpath. It's a bit steep so take care.

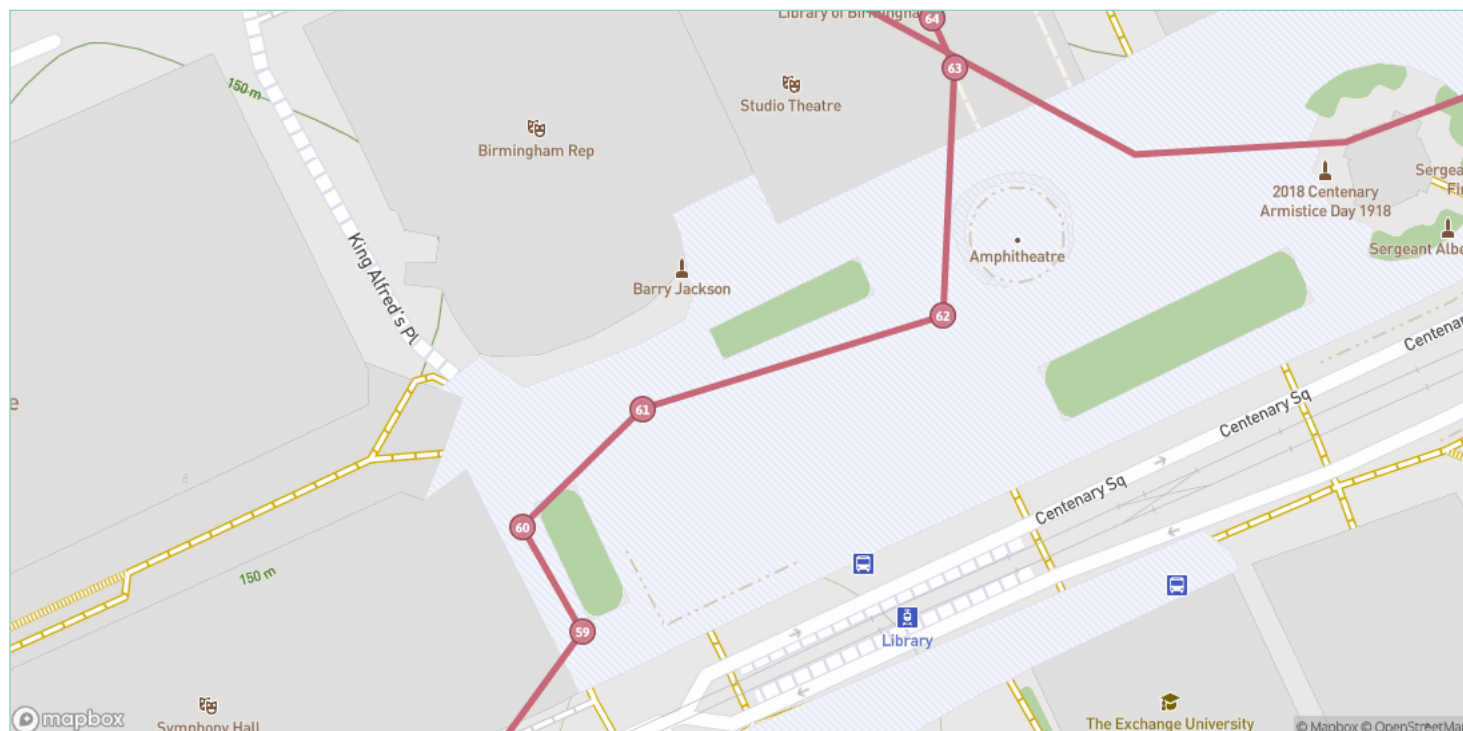
Step 54: Turn right onto Gas St.

Step 55: Cross over Broad St towards the Black Sabbath bench.

Step 56: Black Sabbath fans from all over the world travel to Birmingham, the birthplace of heavy metal.

Step 57: Continue right onto Broad St.

Step 58: Keep walking until you reach Centenary Sq.



Step 59: Ahead is Birmingham Library. It was opened in 2013 by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai, who went to high school in Brum.

Step 60: On the left of the square is Symphony Hall. Dionne Warwick was a guest of honour here for Brum's Black History Month in 2018.

Step 61: Let's head towards the library.

Step 62: In front of the library is "A Real Birmingham Family" a 2014 sculpture by Gillian Wearing, which challenges the traditional nuclear family.

Step 63: Step inside the library. Look out for the plaque commemorating the opening by Malala Yousafzai. Read more below.

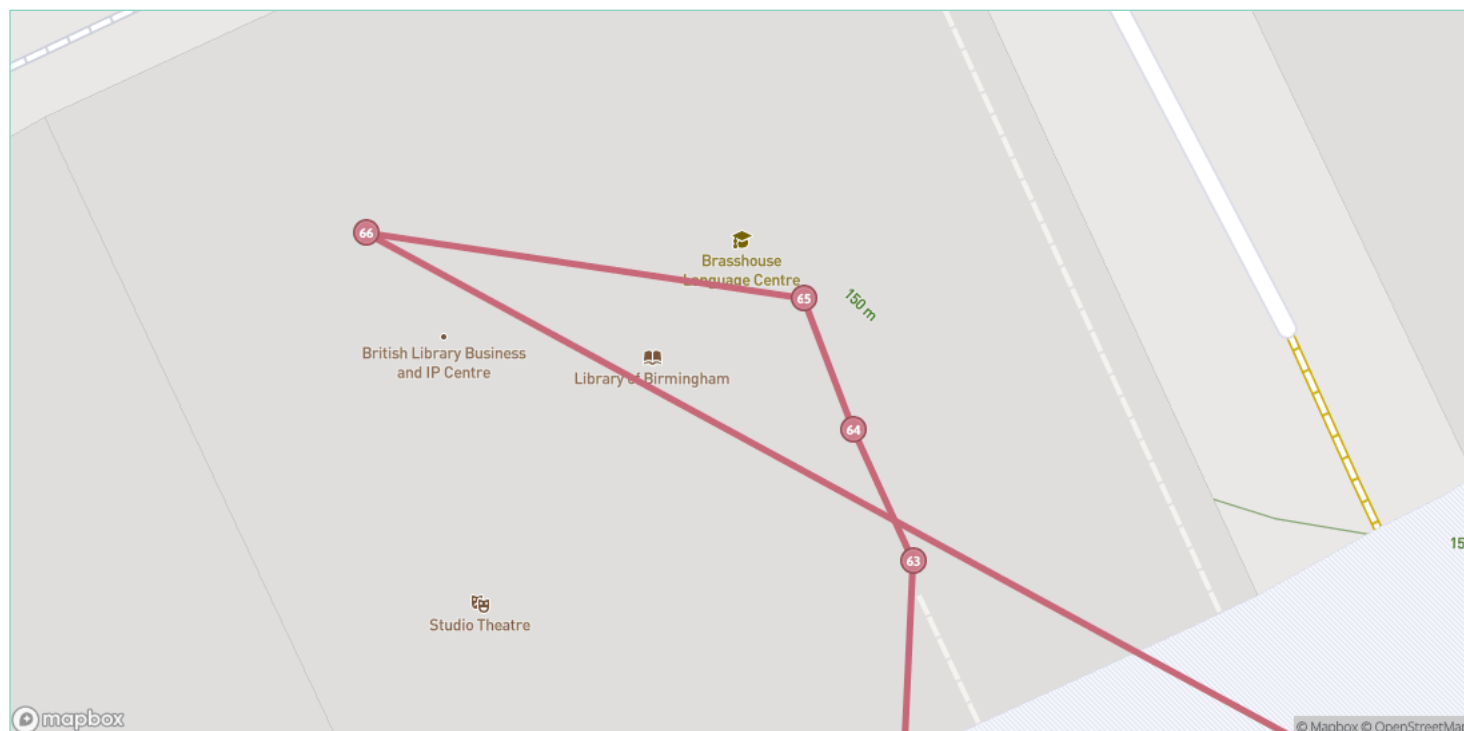
Malala Yousafzai

When the Library of Birmingham opened in 2013, the honour of cutting the ribbon went to a sixteen-year-old schoolgirl: Malala Yousafzai. She told the crowd that a city without a library is somewhere no one would want to live. For Malala, Birmingham was her new home.

Malala arrived in Birmingham in October 2012, flown to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital for life-saving treatment after being shot by the Taliban for campaigning for girls' education in Pakistan's Swat Valley.

What began as an emergency became a new life. Her family settled in the city, she enrolled at Edgbaston High School for Girls, and Birmingham took her in as one of its own.

She repaid the welcome quickly. At the library's opening ceremony in September 2013, she spoke about books as weapons against extremism and left the library a copy of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, a gift from Gordon Brown during her recovery. A year later, aged just seventeen, she became the youngest ever Nobel Peace Prize laureate and



Birmingham could claim a Nobel winner among its adopted daughters.

Her story is one of the city's most famous chapters of migration: someone who came here in crisis, was healed here, educated here, and went on to change the world from here. The gleaming, filigree-wrapped library she opened, at the time the largest public library in Europe, feels like a fitting monument to that.

Step 64: Take the lift or escalators to Floor 3 to find the Vanley Burke collection.

Step 65: Vanley Burke is often described as the 'Godfather of Black British photography'. Tap below to read more.

Vanley Burke Display Library

A display of work by photographer Vanley Burke tells the story of a community that built this city. Burke has spent over fifty years documenting Black life in Birmingham.

Vanley Burke arrived in Birmingham from Jamaica in 1965, a teenager joining parents who, like thousands of others from the Caribbean, had answered Britain's call for workers after the Second World War. From the late 1940s onwards, men and women from Jamaica, Barbados, St Kitts and beyond came to drive Birmingham's buses, nurse in its hospitals and work its factory floors, often in the face of open hostility. They stayed, and they built: churches, sound systems, barbershops, carnivals and communities, above all in Handsworth, the heart of Black Birmingham. Burke photographed it all, from weddings and front rooms to protests and street corners. Often called the Godfather of Black British Photography, his work is regarded as the greatest photographic record of African Caribbean people in post-war Britain.



Fittingly, his vast archive now lives here in the Library of Birmingham: decades of images, posters, records and everyday objects that hold the memory of a community.

Seek out the display inside, and take a moment with the faces looking back at you. Handsworth itself is a bus ride north of the centre, but through Burke's lens, its story is kept right here in the heart of the city.

Step 66: On Floor 7 you'll find the secret garden with incredible views of the city.

Step 67: Exit the library towards the Hall of Memory. It commemorates the 12,320 Birmingham citizens who died in WW1.

Step 68: The bronze statue of a woman represents the Women's Services.

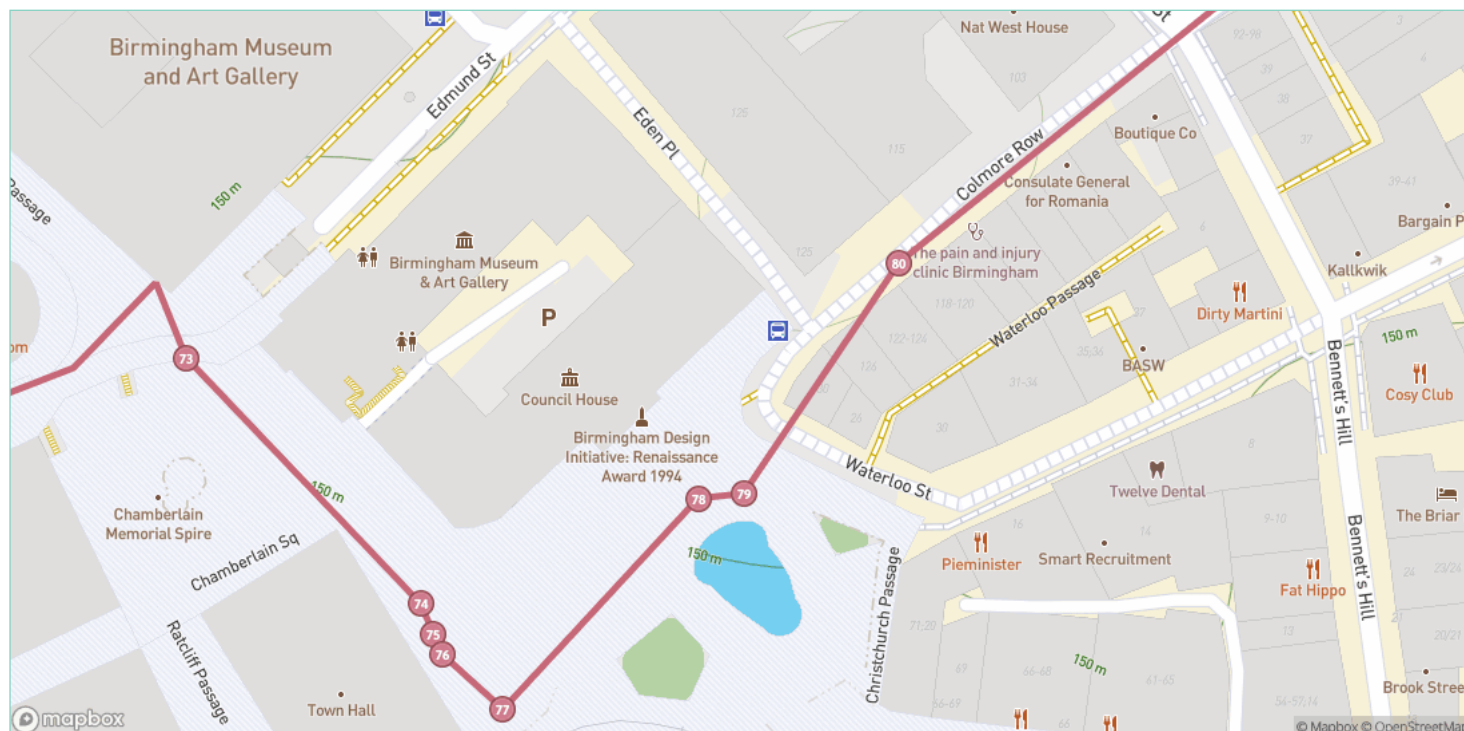
Step 69: Continue over Centenary Way, a bridge over a busy road.

Step 70: Continue towards Chamberlain Square.

Step 71: Ahead, the Grade II Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery showcases world-class art.

Step 72: Check out the free exhibition 'The Elephant in the Room'. A permanent, reflective global history gallery exploring the roots, routes, and colonial histories behind the city's vast collections.

Step 73: With the museum on your left, head towards the Town Hall.



Step 74: The Town Hall is a striking Grade II listed building, which has played host to musical performances from Elgar to Nina Simone.

Step 75: Check out the display boards to read about important movements and activists.

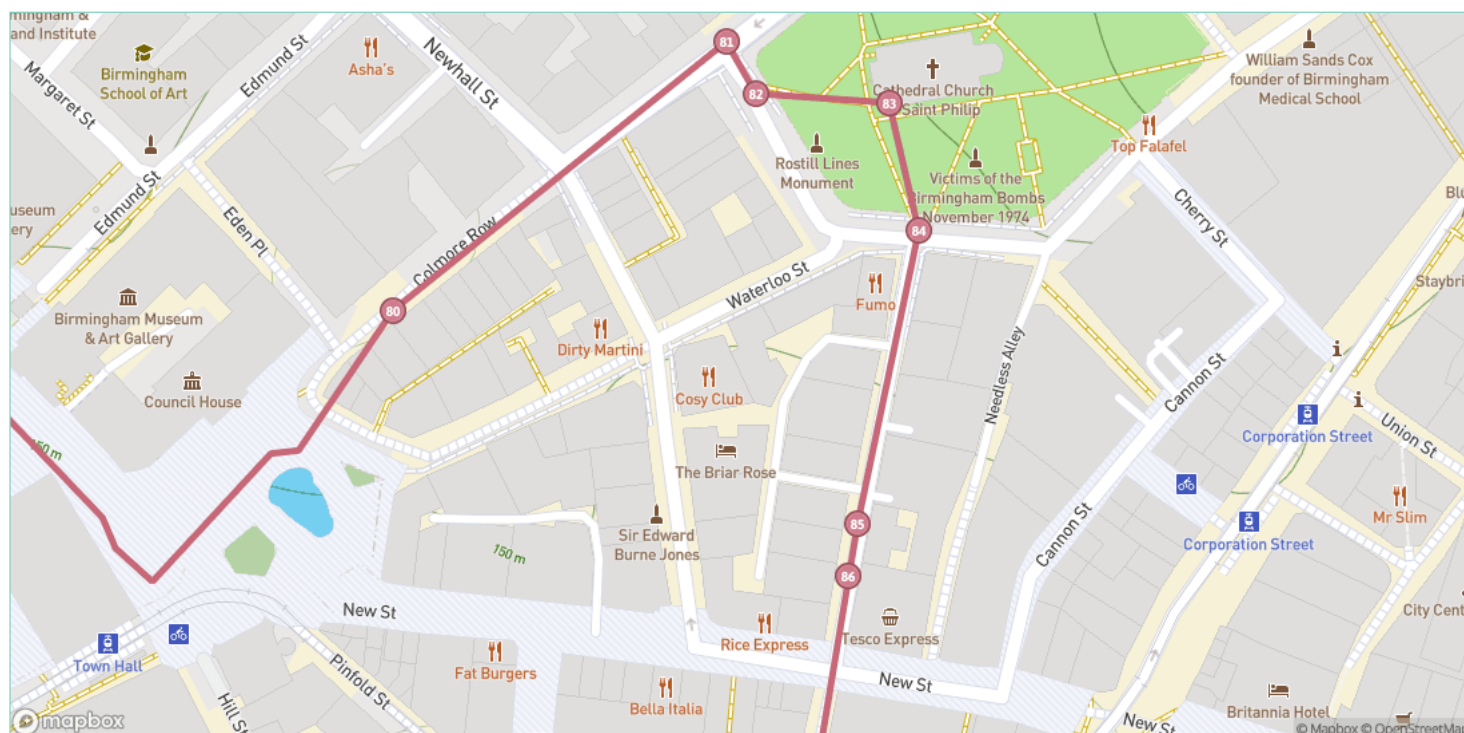
Step 76: The Town Hall played a pivotal role in the Women's Equality Movement.

Step 77: Head towards the Anthony Gormley sculpture, Iron:Man. It represents the traditional skills of Birmingham's Industrial Revolution.

Step 78: Head towards the fountain. Know locally as Floozy in the Jacuzzi, it was created by Indian sculptor Dhruva Mistry in 1994.

Step 79: Head off the square and onto Colmore Row.

Step 80: Continue on Colmore Row, heading towards Birmingham Cathedral.



Step 81: Cross the road to enter the cathedral gardens.

Step 82: Inside the Grade II listed cathedral are pre-Raphaelite stained-glass windows designed by Birmingham-born artist Sir Edward Burne-Jones.

Step 83: Exit the park onto Temple St.

Step 84: We are heading towards Grand Central station.

Step 85: You'll pass Katie O'Brien's tavern. Birmingham has deep, historic Irish roots, tracing back to the 1800s. Read more below. 

Katie O'Brien's Tavern

Birmingham is home to one of the largest Irish communities in Britain, and pubs like Katie O'Brien's are part of that long story. Irish migration to the city stretches back to the 1800s, when families fleeing famine and poverty arrived in search of work, but the biggest wave came in the 1950s and 60s, when thousands of Irish men and women helped rebuild post-war Birmingham. The heart of Irish Birmingham is Digbeth, the city's Irish Quarter, where the annual St Patrick's Day parade is one of the largest in the world outside Dublin. This walk doesn't take you into Digbeth itself, but it's only a five-minute walk from here if you have time to explore.

Step 86: Nearby is a former Fire Engine House turned pub called the Trocadero which has a Victorian ceramic tile facade.



Step 87: You'll soon reach Grand Central and Birmingham New Street station where the walk ends. You'll find plenty of public transport links.

Step 88: We hope you enjoyed this walk! If you did, please tap the 3 dots below and share with a friend who might enjoy this walk too. Come back soon and find your next wander with us.