

Walk This Way
A Young Person's Guide

ABOVE THE THAMES



Westminster ● South Bank ● Bankside ● Tower Hill

The River Thames has been an important part of the creation, the growth and the character of London, which began long ago as a small Roman settlement built next to the very first London Bridge. Almost two thousand years later, the river still snakes its way through what has become a massive world city, spanned by many bridges and with great palaces, cathedrals and castles staring at each other across the water.

This guide is designed to introduce you to some aspects of this remarkable waterway as it passes through the centre of London, from South Bank to City.

ABOVE THE THAMES

Westminster Bridge

Opened in 1750, this was the first bridge to connect Westminster with South Bank. The replacement bridge was opened in 1862 and designed to match the style of the Houses of Parliament. In addition, the bridge is painted green, the same colour as the benches in the House of Commons.

HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT

The Palace of Westminster was built for the Kings of England and has remained the heart of government for a thousand years. When Henry VIII moved out in 1512, the palace became the two Houses of Parliament: the Upper House, or House of Lords and Lower House, or the House of Commons. The old buildings were destroyed by a fire in 1834 and were replaced by today's modern Parliament. This new building was bigger and included a large clock tower that contained "Big Ben", a 13.8 tonne bell probably named after the bulky Commissioner of Works, Sir Benjamin Hall.



SOMERSET HOUSE

Somerset House was a government building, on the edge of the river before the embankments were built. The Great Arch, facing the Thames, was originally built to allow boats to access the river directly. The building is now home to a number of visitor attractions, which include educational workshops and a fountain court.

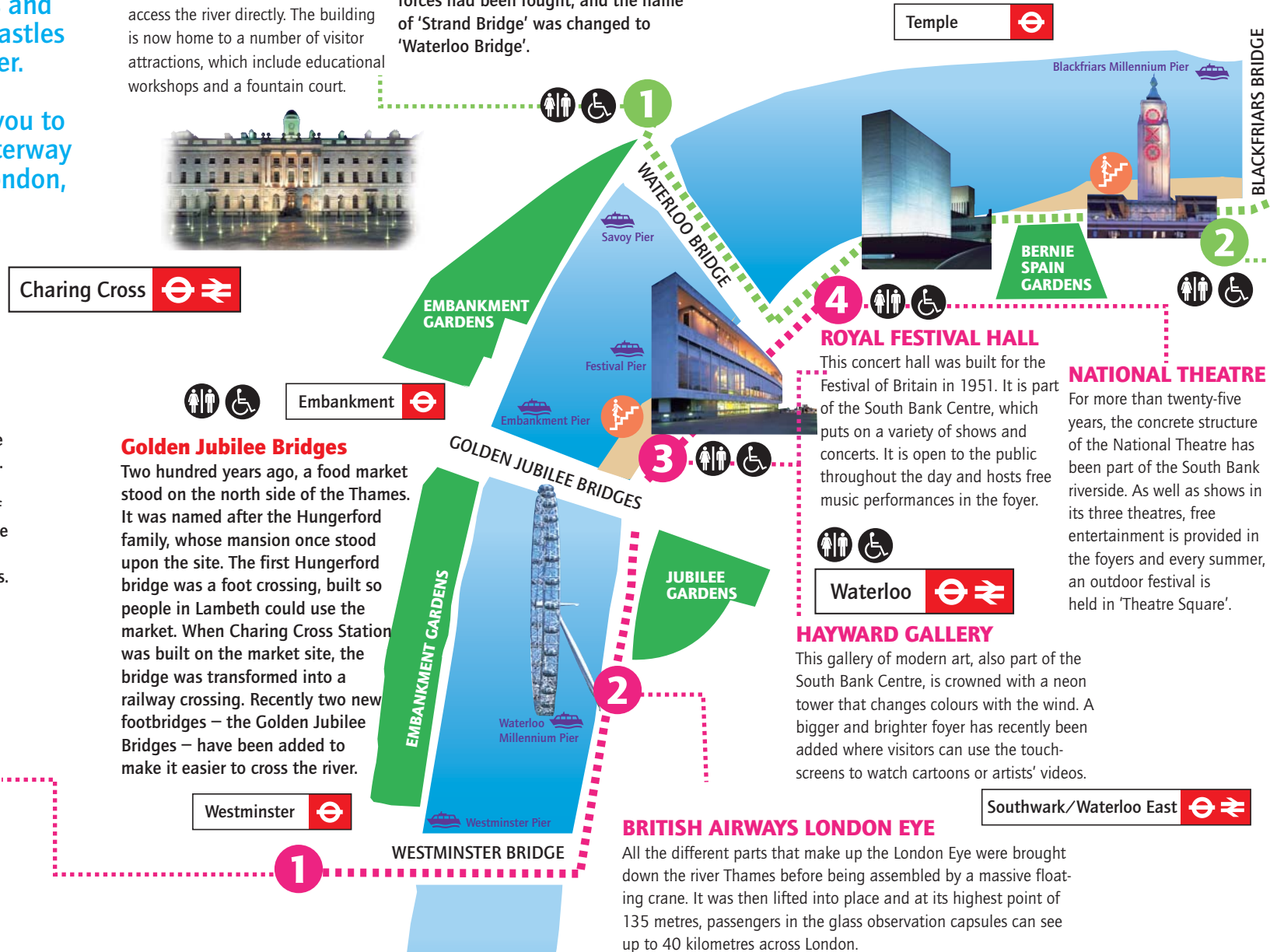


Waterloo Bridge

Work started on this bridge in 1811, four years before the Battle of Waterloo which would eventually give its name to the bridge, the railway station and the surrounding area. By the time it was finished in 1817, the final battle between Napoleon's French armies and the Duke of Wellington's Allied forces had been fought, and the name of 'Strand Bridge' was changed to 'Waterloo Bridge'.

Blackfriars Bridge

The Black Friars were monks who were named after the black robes they wore. They lived on the north side of the river during the Middle Ages and the bridge that was built in 1769 was named after them. This bridge was replaced a century later but pictures of the first bridge can be seen on the walls of the south underpass.



Golden Jubilee Bridges

Two hundred years ago, a food market stood on the north side of the Thames. It was named after the Hungerford family, whose mansion once stood upon the site. The first Hungerford bridge was a foot crossing, built so people in Lambeth could use the market. When Charing Cross Station was built on the market site, the bridge was transformed into a railway crossing. Recently two new footbridges – the Golden Jubilee Bridges – have been added to make it easier to cross the river.

ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL

This concert hall was built for the Festival of Britain in 1951. It is part of the South Bank Centre, which puts on a variety of shows and concerts. It is open to the public throughout the day and hosts free music performances in the foyer.

NATIONAL THEATRE

For more than twenty-five years, the concrete structure of the National Theatre has been part of the South Bank riverside. As well as shows in its three theatres, free entertainment is provided in the foyers and every summer, an outdoor festival is held in 'Theatre Square'.

HAYWARD GALLERY

This gallery of modern art, also part of the South Bank Centre, is crowned with a neon tower that changes colours with the wind. A bigger and brighter foyer has recently been added where visitors can use the touch-screens to watch cartoons or artists' videos.

BRITISH AIRWAYS LONDON EYE

All the different parts that make up the London Eye were brought down the river Thames before being assembled by a massive floating crane. It was then lifted into place and at its highest point of 135 metres, passengers in the glass observation capsules can see up to 40 kilometres across London.

ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

This cathedral was built by Sir Christopher Wren after the Great Fire of 1666 burnt down most of London. It is the fourth version of St Paul's the oldest one was built in 604AD. This well-known landmark dominates the skyline north of the Thames and the massive dome is even taller than the Tate Modern chimney.



Millennium Bridge

The Millennium Bridge had to be designed low enough not to hide the view of St Paul's Cathedral, yet high enough so that ships could pass beneath it. The solution was to design a suspension bridge with the support cables running along the sides of the bridge, rather than above it. When the bridge opened, it began to move as people walked across it. To cure this 'wobble', special shock absorbers were added to the bridge.

London Bridge

A thousand years ago, London was attacked by King Olaf and his Vikings. The fighting took place on London Bridge itself and ended when the Vikings destroyed the bridge and drowned the defenders. From this battle comes the nursery rhyme "London Bridge is Falling Down". The bridge is the oldest and most important in the history of the Thames and has been re-built many times. One version of the bridge was bought in 1968 by an American developer and shipped, stone by stone, to the American state of Arizona.

TOWER OF LONDON

Built by William the Conqueror, the Tower has been used as an arsenal, a fortress, a palace, a prison, and a place of execution. It has also served as a treasury, record office, observatory, royal mint, home to the crown jewels and zoo. It is guarded by thirtyeight Yeoman warders (called 'Beefeaters') and six ravens. Legend says that if the ravens were to fly away, it would be the end of the Tower and the kingdom. The ravens' wings are clipped to prevent this from happening.



Blackfriars

4



Mansion House

Cannon Street

Monument



TATE GARDEN

3

TATE MODERN

This massive landmark was built as a power station, made of four million bricks with a single chimney that climbs almost 100 metres into the sky. It was converted to a modern art gallery in the late 1990s and a new 'lightbeam' roof was added.

OXO TOWER WHARF

Built a century ago as a power station, this building had its 'Oxo' tower built in 1928 when it was used to make Oxo cubes. The stained glass windows in the tower were deliberately shaped to spell out the company name. When the factory and tower were in danger of being destroyed in the 1970s, they were saved by a public campaign. The wharf has now been rebuilt to include homes, shops, restaurants and galleries.

SHAKESPEARE'S GLOBE

This is a working reconstruction of the original playhouse used by Shakespeare four hundred years ago. It was built using Tudor craftsman techniques and has the first thatched roof in London since the Great Fire. The theatre performs open-air plays during the summer and runs exhibitions, workshops and educational tours throughout the year.

London Bridge

HMS BELFAST

Built for the Second World War, this cruiser saw service in the Battle of North Cape, D-Day and the Korean War. In 1971, after travelling over half a million miles, the warship was retired and moved to the Thames to become a floating naval museum and visitor attraction.

CITY HALL

The headquarters for the Mayor, the London Assembly and Greater London Authority is a glass-sided building that overlooks the Thames. It has an unusual round shape and has no obvious front or back. The building is open to the public during weekdays and occasional weekends.

KEY TO MAP

1

ROUTE 1 Walking time 25mins

Parliament to the National Theatre

2

ROUTE 2 Walking time 30mins

Somerset House to Tate Modern

3

ROUTE 3 Walking time 45mins

Shakespeare's Globe to Tower of London



Toilets



Disabled access toilets



Access to foreshore

If you visit the Thames foreshore, please ensure that you do so safely



Rail



Underground



Pier

For full information on London's transport, visit www.transportforlondon.gov.uk
Tel 020 7222 1234

see more... www.southbanklondon.com/childrens_guide

There are a number of food & drink outlets along the riverwalk

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BELOW THE THAMES

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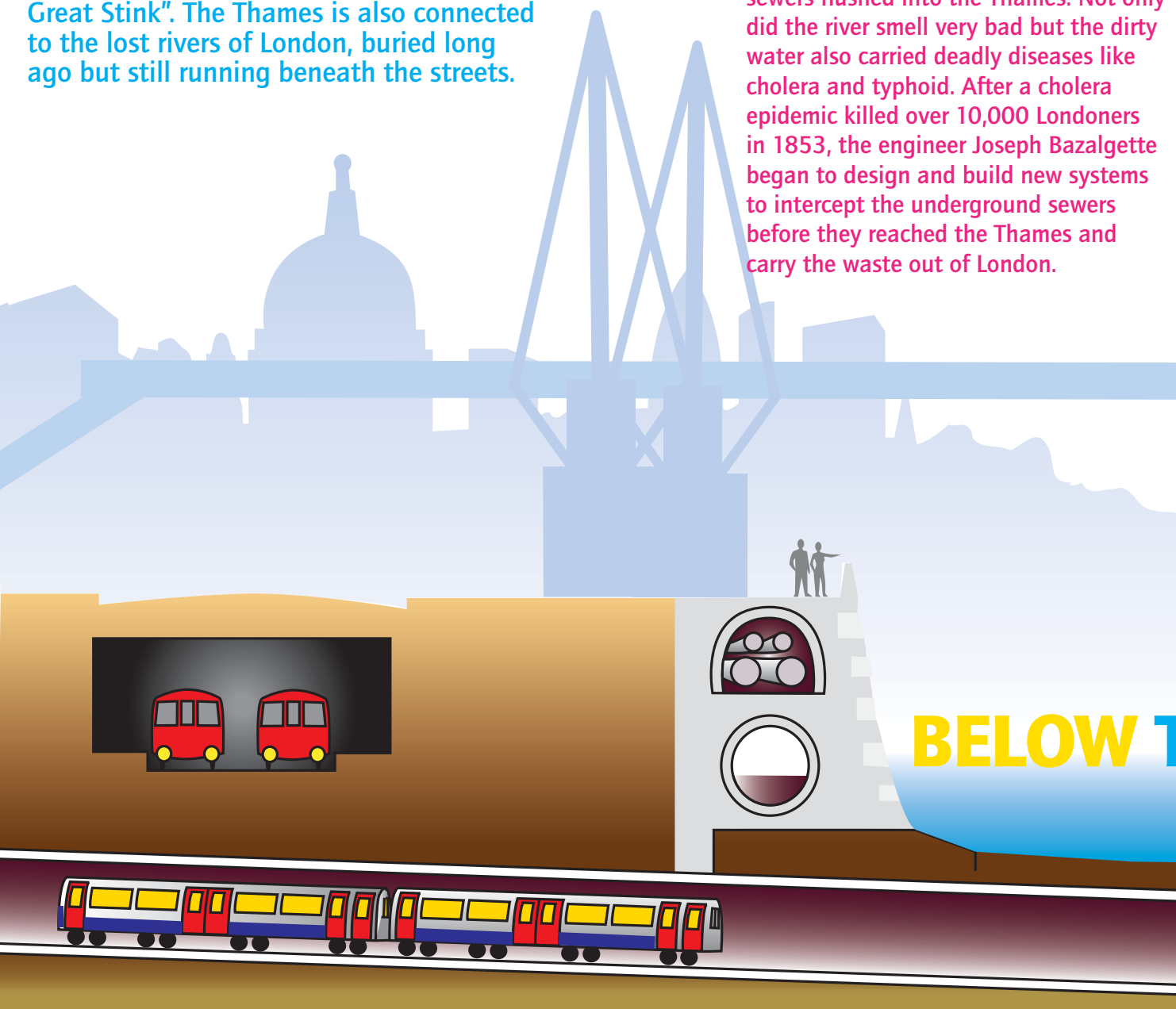
The story of the river runs deeper than its surface. Beneath the Thames are miles and miles of sewers and tunnels, built by the Victorians to cure the city of "The Great Stink". The Thames is also connected to the lost rivers of London, buried long ago but still running beneath the streets.

LONDON SEWERS

In the nineteenth century all of London's sewers flushed into the Thames. Not only did the river smell very bad but the dirty water also carried deadly diseases like cholera and typhoid. After a cholera epidemic killed over 10,000 Londoners in 1853, the engineer Joseph Bazalgette began to design and build new systems to intercept the underground sewers before they reached the Thames and carry the waste out of London.

- When Bazalgette's work was finished, he had used 318 million bricks to build 130 kilometres of sewers and dug up over 2.5 million cubic metres of earth.
- Two of these 'interceptor' sewers run along each bank of the Thames – the Victoria Embankment on the north side and the Albert Embankment on the south.
- The Victoria Embankment contains not only an interceptor sewer, but a service tunnel for gas, electricity and water; and the District and Circle underground railway lines.
- The Albert Embankment acts as a barrier to the continual flooding of Lambeth, which was originally marshlands.

BELOW THE THAMES



THAMES FACTS

- The Thames was called Tamesis by the Romans and its original name may have meant either "dark water" in Sanskrit (ancient Indian) or "wide water" in Latin.
- The Thames begins in the Cotswold Hills and, at 344 kilometres in length, is the second longest river in Britain.
- In very cold winters, the Thames used to freeze solid, allowing people to walk across the river. Huge festivals called "Frost Fairs" were held on the solid ice. The last Frost Fair was in 1814.
- 7.2 million people get their drinking water from the Thames. A drop of rain that falls into the source of the river will have been drunk by eight people before it reaches the sea.

More Walking Guides

If you have enjoyed this guide then please visit www.southbanklondon.com to discover the other titles in the series:

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From London Eye to the Imperial War Museum

Walk This Way – Riverside London
From Tate Britain to the Design Museum

Walk This Way – Golden Jubilee Bridges
From Soho & Covent Garden to South Bank

Walk This Way – Millennium Bridge
From St Paul's Cathedral to Borough Market

Acknowledgements

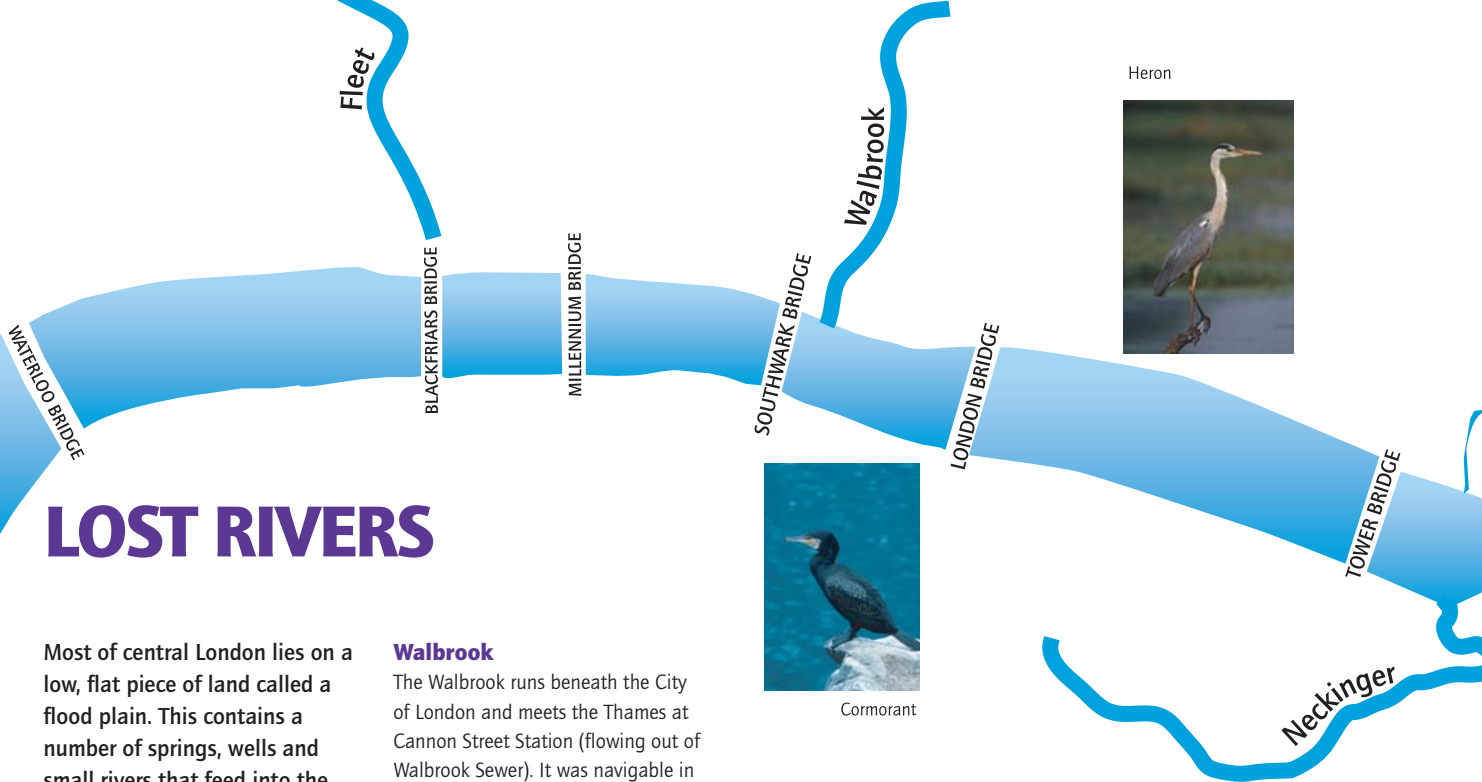
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For further information about *Walk This Way* or the South Bank, please see www.southbanklondon.com

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Heron



Cormorant

LOST RIVERS

Most of central London lies on a low, flat piece of land called a flood plain. This contains a number of springs, wells and small rivers that feed into the Thames. As the city of London grew in size, these waterways were buried in sewers and drains but many of the rivers still exist, flowing just beneath the surface.

Effra

Running beneath Brixton Road, this river was once used by Vikings to attack London Bridge in 1016AD.

Fleet

The Fleet divided Westminster from the City and people used a bridge at Holborn to travel between the two boroughs. In medieval times, the slaughterhouses and tanneries on the river banks turned the Fleet red. The river was completely built over from 1732-1765 and, when a pig went missing, a rumour spread that a whole family of underground swine were living in the sewers.

Walbrook

The Walbrook runs beneath the City of London and meets the Thames at Cannon Street Station (flowing out of Walbrook Sewer). It was navigable in Roman times and, at the furthest point a boat could travel, the Romans built a port and a temple to the god Mithras (recently found on Queen Victoria Street).

Neckinger

Named after Neckinger Wharf, where Thames pirates were hanged with a rope called the "Devil's Neckcloth" or "Devil's Neckinger". This river begins at the Imperial War Museum and travels eastwards through south London where it enters the river around Rotherhithe. It was used by many of Southwark's water mills to produce everything from paper to gunpowder.

WILDLIFE

Birds

The tidal Thames has brought many coastal birds into central London, such as gulls, guillemots and fulmar, as well as birds like cormorants and heron, who feed on small fish, an indication that the water is clean.

Fish

Over a hundred species of fish can be found in the Thames including sea bass, flounder and salmon which use the tributaries of the river for spawning.

Invertebrates

Chinese Mitten Crabs are so named because of the hairs on the end of their claws. They are not a native species to the Thames but were accidentally brought over in the last century in the water tanks of cargo ships returning from China.

Sea Bass

