



## A Hull of a city

Discover how a river and an estuary  
have shaped Kingston-upon-Hull

**Time:** 1 hr

**Distance:** 1 ½ miles

**Landscape:** urban

Welcome to the city of Hull in the East Riding of Yorkshire.

On this trail we'll discover how the River Hull and the Humber Estuary have shaped the city, from its medieval roots to the aspiring City of Culture we see today.

We'll explore an invisible dock, a lightship and a bustling marina to find out how Hull has changed and what its hopes are for the future.

**Location:**

Kingston-upon-Hull, East Riding of Yorkshire

**Start:**

Millennium Footbridge (over the River Hull), HU1 1UU

**Finish:**

Millennium Footbridge (over the River Hull), HU1 1UU

**Grid reference:**

TA 10168 28315

**Keep an eye out for:**

Fish! Different kinds of fish have been set in tiles or inlaid on the pavement as part of a city-wide art project

**Directions**



To start the trail make your way to the Millennium Footbridge. It is located on the waterfront at the entrance to the Old Harbour, next to The Deep aquarium.



## Route and stopping points



- 01 Millennium Footbridge
- 02 Pacific Court, High Street
- 03 Wilberforce House
- 04 Queen's Gardens
- 05 Prince's Quay
- 06 Humber Street
- 07 Humber Estuary opposite The Deep
- 08 Back to the Millennium Footbridge

## 01 Millennium footbridge

Look over the railing at the muddy River Hull flowing beneath you. This may feel like an unassuming spot, but just beyond Hull's aquarium ('The Deep' – ahead and to our left), the river meets the Humber Estuary. This was the ideal place to start a settlement which went on to become Britain's third-largest port.

The Humber Estuary is a large body of water formed where several rivers (the Derwent, Ouse, Aire, Don and Trent) meet and flow into the sea. The River Hull joins the estuary from the north, on an outside bend, where the water is deeper. This means boats can sail right up to the land here, providing a natural harbour with protection from the sea.

From this spot, boats could travel east down the estuary to the North Sea and Europe, or west up the estuary to towns in North, South and West Yorkshire, Lincolnshire and the East Midlands. Finally, the River Hull provided access to the rest of East Yorkshire.

The first people who realised this location's potential were the monks of Meaux Abbey. They needed a port from which to export wool from their estates. Records dating from the late 12th century list a town called Wyke-on-Hull, and wyke is the old Norse word for a place on a shoreline where a boat can be landed. The monks exported wool, which was shipped to Holland and Belgium for weaving. The main import was wine, but also wood, iron, tar and furs from Scandinavia.

In 1293 King Edward I acquired the town and renamed it Kingston ('King's town') upon Hull. Edward needed a port in North East England to supply his army when fighting the Scots, so again, the town's river and location were key to its development.

### Directions

Walk over the bridge heading away from The Deep and at the end turn right. Walk just to the left of the tidal barrier (staying to right of the road) and pick up the riverside footpath. Follow this under a bridge and along the river until you reach a black bridge called Scale Lane Swing Bridge.

At the bridge turn left into Scale Lane Staith and walk down it to join the High Street and turn right. Walk up the High Street and past a pub called Ye Olde Black Boy until you reach a couple of red brick buildings called Pacific Court on the right.

## 02 Pacific Court, High Street

Stop and take a good look up at these buildings. Do you notice anything strange? Most striking are the large central windows with shelves protruding from their base. These are 'taking-in doorways' and 'taking-in shelves' and they give us a clue about how Hull developed.

From medieval beginnings the town grew along the River Hull.

By the 16th century, trade was booming so merchants built warehouses and homes backing onto the river here. Goods for export came to Hull from across Yorkshire by cart, and were unloaded directly into the warehouses through the large doors and shelves. On the other side of the building these goods (e.g. unspun wool) were loaded onto boats moored on the river.

As you continue along the High Street, look out for the alleyways, or 'staiths', leading down to the river. The word staith comes from Norse and means a landing stage for loading cargo boats. Warehouse development continued from the 17th to 19th centuries and this area became known as the Old Harbour.

Further up from Pacific Court on the left of the High Street you will see a blue plaque on the front of the Maister House. The Maister family made their wealth from shipping in 16th century Hull. By the late 17th century, Hull was the third-largest port in Britain, exporting lead and cloth and importing flax, hemp, iron and tar. A century later, whaling and fishing industries had also grown up here because of the direct access to the North Sea.

### Directions

Continue along the High Street and past a sign for the Museum Quarter, until you reach Wilberforce House on the right.

## 03 Wilberforce House

This was the home of another prominent Hull family that made its wealth from the port. In 1759 William Wilberforce

was born here. He became MP for Hull in 1821 and later led the movement to abolish Britain's slave trade.

The slave trade involved shipping and trading manufactured goods, West African slaves and cash crops between Britain, West Africa and the Americas. From the late 16th to 19th centuries many individuals and countries grew very wealthy from the trade. They also extracted a huge price from the black African slaves; 1.4 million died on the slave ships and many more on the American sugar, tobacco and cotton plantations.

Britain's slave trade was mostly based in west-coast port cities, like Liverpool and Bristol, but also in London. The Wilberforce family, based in Hull, traded with Europe instead of America and Africa. The wealth they generated gave William the economic independence to work for the abolition movement. Indirectly then, Hull's river and estuary played a part in one of the great moral and social movements of Britain.

### Directions

Retrace your steps back down the High Street for 100m then take the first right into Chapel Lane. At the end of Chapel Lane turn right into Lowgate Road. Walk ahead and cross the road at the traffic lights by a statue near the City Hotel.

Continue along Lowgate Road, which turns into Wilberforce Drive, until you reach the very tall monument – the Wilberforce Monument (behind which is Hull College). At the monument turn left, cross the pedestrian crossing and enter the Queen's Gardens. Take the steps down to the left into the gardens and walk around the edge of the pond to its mid-point. From here you will see a footpath leading down the centre of the gardens between avenues of trees.

## 04 Queen's Gardens

If you were here in 1930, you wouldn't be standing, but swimming! Queen's Gardens are on the site of what was the UK's largest dock; at 518 metres long and 75 metres wide it was the length of 52 double-decker buses!

The dock was built in the late 18th century to take pressure off the Old Harbour. Business was booming and the port was becoming too small. The dock connected to the river Hull via a lock (located where Hull College is now). Hull's new dock allowed trade to increase, with raw materials coming in from Europe and manufactured goods exported from Yorkshire, Lancashire and the Midlands. In 1854 it was named Queen's Dock after a visit from Queen Victoria.

Once the dock was built, new streets grew up around it. Some merchants moved here from their homes on the High Street and the town's old medieval core, as it provided more space and was a greater distance from the bustle of the port. Suburbs grew up to both the west and east of the old town.

By the 20th century, newer docks had opened to the east of the city centre and trade moved there. Queen's Dock became inactive and closed in 1930. It was filled in to create this city garden.

### Directions

Walk down the footpath through the centre of the garden. At the end bear left and walk up a ramp to the circular plaza with a fountain in the middle. The impressive building with three domes is the former Dock Office, from where Queen's Dock was managed.

Bear left to circle the fountain and cross the road at the first set of traffic lights heading towards Prince's Quay Shopping Centre. Once across the road, keep the bus shelter on your right) and continue until you reach a fenced off area called the Beverley Gate.

Walk around the Beverley Gate keeping the fencing on your right hand side. Then turn right into Prince's Dock Street and walk along it until you are level with Prince's Quay Shopping Centre.

## 05 Prince's Quay

Notice how the shopping centre stands on stilts over water - you have to use walkways to reach the shops as if you were boarding a ship! The centre has been built over another old dock.

Junction Dock was built in 1829 to join the Queen's Dock (where we have just been) to the Humber Dock in front of us. Junction Dock was renamed Prince's Dock in honour of Prince Albert who accompanied Queen Victoria on

her 1854 visit. In total four docks opened in Hull in the 19th century, creating a complete network of waterways around the city, boosting its reputation as a major port, and securing its city status.

By the 1920s and 1930s the city was undergoing industrial decline, exacerbated by overproduction in the fishing industry. After the Second World War the smaller, older docks began to close and bigger new ones opened to the east of the city. Queen Elizabeth Dock, for example, opened in 1969 to cater for container traffic and super ferries. In the 1970s the fishing industry finally collapsed due to overfishing and cuts to catch quotas set in Europe. These changes resulted in economic decline, high unemployment and a legacy of outdated infrastructure.

City planners tried to be creative with the old dock network and in 1991 Prince's Dock was used to create Prince's Quay, a brand new shopping centre. Shopping was seen as a way to attract businesses and people back to the city.

### Directions

Continue down Prince's Dock Street until you meet the busy A63, which can be crossed via a pedestrian crossing. On the other side of the road you will see a marina (formerly Humber Dock) and a large black boat, or Lightship (from 1927-1983 this was stationed off Spurn Point to warn other vessels of the sand banks).

Walk down the left-hand side of the marina and just before the end turn left into Humber Street.

## 06 Humber Street

Where you are standing is reclaimed land. It was constructed with the soil dug from Humber Dock, or what is now the marina. For 200 years this area hosted a fruit market, but as trade declined the area fell into disrepair.

A multimillion pound redevelopment plan was proposed in the early 2000s but this collapsed during the recession. Since then creative arts and retail ventures have been invited to take possession of the abandoned premises in the latest of many attempts to regenerate the area.

In 2013 Hull was chosen to be the UK City of Culture for 2017. This scheme was set up by the Government after Liverpool was European Capital of Culture in 2008 and enjoyed an influx of people and spending as a result. The aim is that by 2017, the old fruit market area will be one of the leading districts showcasing Hull's creativity and, according to the 2017 publicity, "re-establishing its reputation as a gateway that welcomes the world". Looking around today, do you think these hopes are on the way to realisation?

### Directions

Continue down Humber Dock Street towards the Estuary (the street turns into Humber Place). Pass a set of lock gates and a lock keeper's cottage off to the right and the Minerva Pub on your left. Just after the pub turn left and walk along Nelson Street towards The Deep (the aquarium). The River Hull prevents you off from reaching The Deep itself but stop by the waterfront here and look out to the estuary.

## 07 Humber Estuary opposite The Deep

Although today the old docks have closed, the Humber is still of central importance to Hull. If you look to your left (east) and beyond The Deep you can probably see brightly coloured container ships like huge moving pieces of lego. These are berthed at the larger newer docks, which opened after the Second World War.

These docks are automated, handling container traffic and super ferries travelling to Zeebrugge in Belgium and Rotterdam in the Netherlands. The container ships transport goods like agricultural products, gravel, chemicals and wood.

These larger docks are being developed further and in line with the times. Alexandra Dock is being rebranded as 'Green Port Hull', with plans that it will lead the way in servicing, manufacturing and transporting materials for providing green energy. The Siemens factory, which manufactures wind turbine blades, is relocating to the east of this dock to provide services to wind farms just up the Humber in the North Sea.

Once again the Humber is proving critical to Hull's continued development in the 21st century.

### Directions

On the riverbank by The Deep you can join a riverside footpath that leads you back up the River Hull and to the Millennium Footbridge where this walk started.

If this route is blocked for redevelopments then turn left from Nelson Street and walk down Queen Street instead. When Queen Street meets Humber Street turn right and walk down Humber Street until you reach the riverside footpath and Millennium Footbridge.

## 08 Back to the Millennium Footbridge

So here we are back at the meeting point of the River Hull and the Humber Estuary, the natural geographical feature that spawned the town of Wyke which went on to become Kingston-upon-Hull.

On this trail we have seen how the river and estuary have been key influences on the city's growth and development since medieval times. From its beginnings as an old harbour exporting wool it reached pre-eminence in the 19th century as a fishing and industrial port. Today Hull has emerged from 20th century decline to take on a more varied role as an international container and ferry port, a focus for green energy development and a potential cultural centre for the north-east.

By providing heritage attractions, an attractive waterside environment and mooring opportunities, the river and estuary are as central to this new vision as they were to the old. There is a long way to go, but winning City of Culture 2017 was a significant boost to people's hopes and there are signs that this could become 'a Hull of a city' again.

 Trail complete – we hope you have enjoyed it!