

Victoria Park



Route description

This historic park which has become surrounded by modern infrastructure is an oasis for wildlife. The outer loop is on a flat surfaced path while the inner loop is on a grass path.

Distance

1 mile 1.6 km (per loop).

Average Time

35 - 45 mins per loop.

Access

By bus - Metro Services: 3, Inverary Avenue.

By car - Signposted from Holywood Road and Connsbrook Avenue, East Belfast. Car parking in the park through the underpass.

Trail Route

There are two possible circuits of the park, an inner and outer loop around the lake.

The outer loop path begins at the car park alongside the lake **(1)**. As you face the lake, follow the path to the right.

Continue along the path past the bowling green, a small rose garden, the children's playground and a BMX track. Follow this path round to your left.

Further on the path runs along an embankment between the lake and Connswater River **(2)**. Across the river are the Short's aircraft factories, which in turn are overshadowed by Samson and Goliath **(3)**. Continue round the lake to the starting point.

To walk the inner loop, return to the car park, cross the footbridge over the lake and turn right. The mown path meanders through the trees **(4)**, again following the line of the lake.

Trail 19



Things of Interest

The lake (1)

The lake boasts 2 islands, the larger of which is heavily wooded and offers sanctuary for nesting swans and ducks. Birdlife is abundant around the water, particularly in winter months when overwintering wildfowl and waders use the lake as a high-tide roost. Species include greylag goose, black-headed and herring gull, heron, mute swan, mallard, tufted duck and pied and grey wagtail.

Connswater River (2)

The tributaries of this river rise in the Castlereagh and Holywood hills and

meet to form the Connswater River running through East Belfast. The lower part of the river is a tidal estuary which supports rich birdlife.

Samson and Goliath (3)

These famous twin cranes of the Harland and Wolff shipyard dominate the Belfast cityscape. Samson standing at 106 metres was built in 1974, while Goliath is 96m tall and was built in 1969.

New woodland (4)

A mix of tree species was planted in the 1990s to create an attractive woodland walk. Many small birds including goldfinch and greenfinch use the excellent cover within this area for breeding.

History

In 1854 the Belfast Dock Act authorised the Belfast Harbour Commissioners to set aside land for the purpose of a public park to be called "Victoria Park". In 1886 Belfast Corporation was offered the land, but due to prolonged negotiations and difficulty of access the park was not opened until 15th September 1906.

For many years the lake was used for boating and there once was an outdoor swimming pool on the far side.

Look out for

- wading birds such as oystercatchers and redshanks feeding on the grass.
- herons standing by the lakeside on the islands or in the trees.
- unusual visitors to the lake, such as shoveller ducks and ornamental species.
- watch out for planes flying overhead to the adjacent airport.