

Escape the Fringe – Burdiehouse Burn Valley Park

The Edinburgh Festival Fringe can be divisive, with many locals resenting the way it impedes their journeys.

Particular pinch points in the Old Town, especially on and around South Bridge, can be very difficult to navigate through at this time of year.

Even for those who embrace the Fringe, the desire to escape the centre can be strong. Fringe performers and Fringe goers all need to find balance. Luckily, Edinburgh is groaning with ways of getting away from it all. Usually you are not many metres from relative quiet and peace. But to *truly* escape, take one of the fantastic pathways that Edinburgh is blessed with.

Many of these are relatively flat, following the lines of waterways and disused railways. Most of these are easy to access via below the Lothian bus network. Many of these are heralded, such as the **Water of Leith Walkway**, the **Union Canal**, paths through **Holyrood Park**, and the wonderful railway path network in the north of the city. After a wet early summer, the vegetation along these walkways is impressively thick this year, adding to the sense of being enclosed in nature.



Innocent Railway

Other well-known parts include the **Innocent Railway Path**. One of the glories of this particular path is the way this allows you to enter the city almost unseen. You start either just

past Portobello or perhaps at the Jewel and work your way through Bingham and Duddingston before emerging, through the long tunnel (518 metres), at St. Leonards. Here you are just a couple of hundred metres from the Southside and the Pleasance; key hubs for the Fringe. You can even extend your walk by taking the heavily wooded St. Leonard's Bank Path around the fringes of Holyood Park, and end up at the Parliament and Palace – or even skirt round further to Abbeyhill.

Burdiehouse Burn Valley Park

Among the unheralded paths in Edinburgh is that which meanders through the **Burdiehouse Burn Valley Park** in the South East of the city. This 2 mile walk can be accessed in a number of places, but the easiest starting point is near the Aldi on Gilmerton Road. The bus stop here is served by the 3, 8, 29 Lothian buses. The nearby Robin's Nest pub could provide you with a pre-walk watering hole and loo stop.

The substantial iron gates correctly give you the impression that you are in for a bit of a treat. Even for many who live in the city, this walkway has a low profile. On a recent Saturday walk (in early August), the pathway was generally quiet, with just a few joggers, dog walkers and people heading off for their supermarket shop.

From there the path goes to a heavily wooded area, Moredun Wood, reminiscent of more well known places such as the Hermitage of Braid. You pass through the picturesque little village area of Ellen's Glen. In some ways its traditional buildings and waterside location give it a similar vibe to Dean Village; but without the groups of tourists and Instagramers. In contrast the place is hushed; offers a deeply peaceful spot on the walk.



Ellen's Glen



Moredun Wood

After that, the valley opens out, with the burn gurgling next to you as you walk. The tarmacked path here is smooth and easy on the feet. The floor and fauna covers the gently sloping valley. The feeling here is very rural, with the busy city centre distant geographically and also far from your mind.



To describe it as a hidden gem might give the sense that it's something small, but this area is substantial (the park covers 28) and provides a great sense of freedom to those who walk and cycle along it. The valley is surrounded by largely quiet residential areas. The locals have a fantastic amenity right on the doorsteps; there are at least 20 access points to the path. Stepping along the path, you feel you are leaving the city at speed, with very little evidence of traffic or congestion.



The park ends at Burdiehouse Road, where buses 37 and 47 can ferry you back into the city centre. The 47 could take you back into Bristo Square; back into the heart of the Fringe, with your mind and body refreshed from time spent in this calming green corridor.