CyanLines

100 miles of nature in the city

CL4 / ROUTE GUIDE

Irwell & Castlefield Loop

Romans, rivers and a park in the sky

The route begins from the Science and Industry Museum, just a short hop from Deansgate Station. It's well worth spending some time exploring the museum before heading to Castlefield Viaduct and its new sky garden, developed by the National Trust. A stroll through the docklands and across the Manchester Ship Canal brings you into Salford.

You'll venture north through rapidly redeveloping areas to join the River Irwell, which the route follows for a stretch along its southern bank. There's a little detour to the modern Greengate Park, before you cross the Irwell at Blackfriars Bridge.

Salford's newest waterfront neighbourhood makes for a pleasant amble. After this you'll cross the river once more via the Ordsall footbridge by Aviva Studios. This impressive, £110 million building hosts the Manchester International Festival and represents the city's continued investment in art and performance. From here, it's a short walk back to the start point.

Practical information

Distance	Start point	End point
8.6 km	Science and Industry Museum M3 4FP	Science and Industry Museum
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Notices

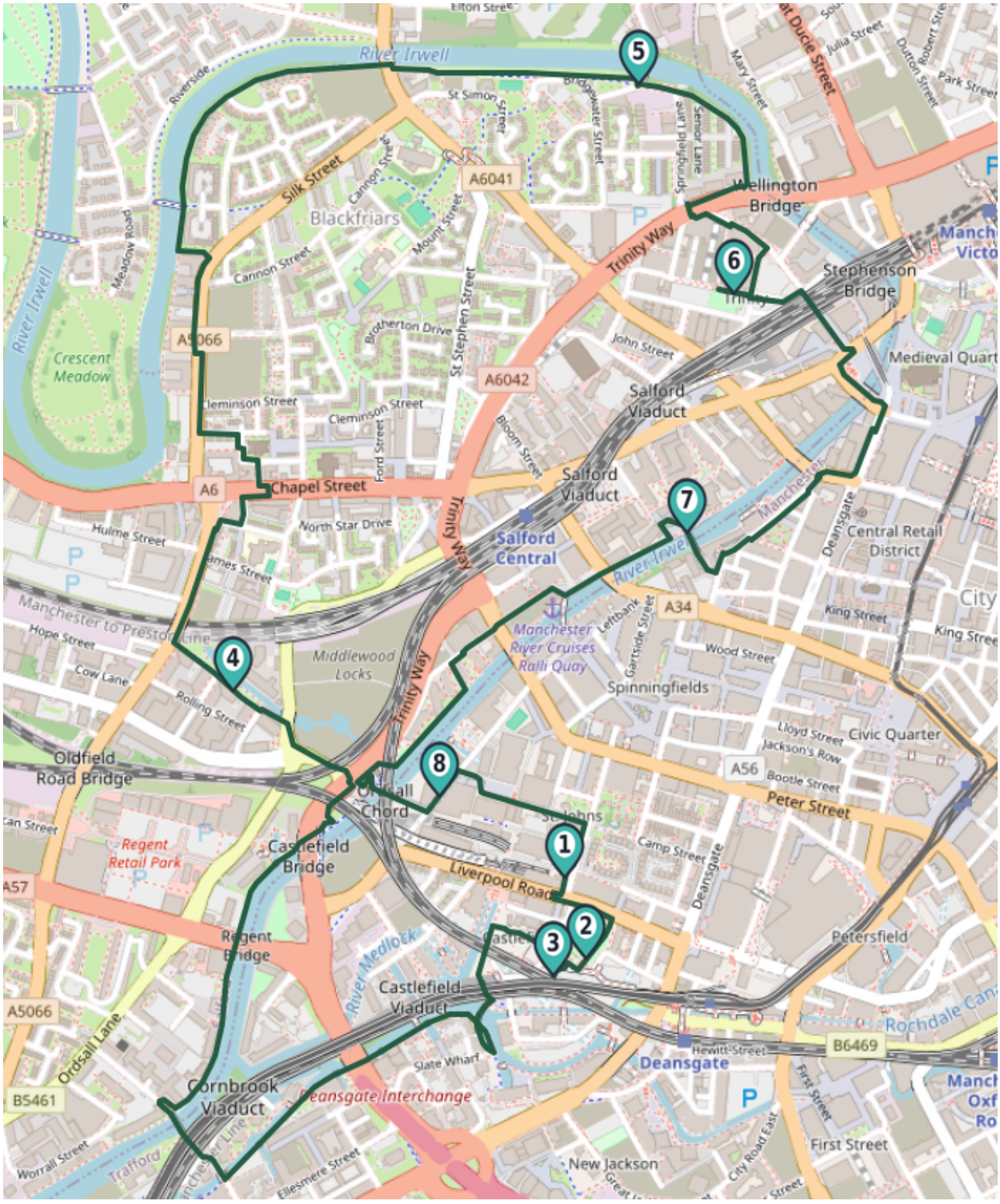
The route is as accessible as currently possible for a wide variety of users.

Accessibility

The route has been designed to be step and barrier free where possible. It's worth noting that:

- Narrow or restrictive access points
- A number of surfaces remain uneven, slippery or degraded
- There are a number of gradients on the route

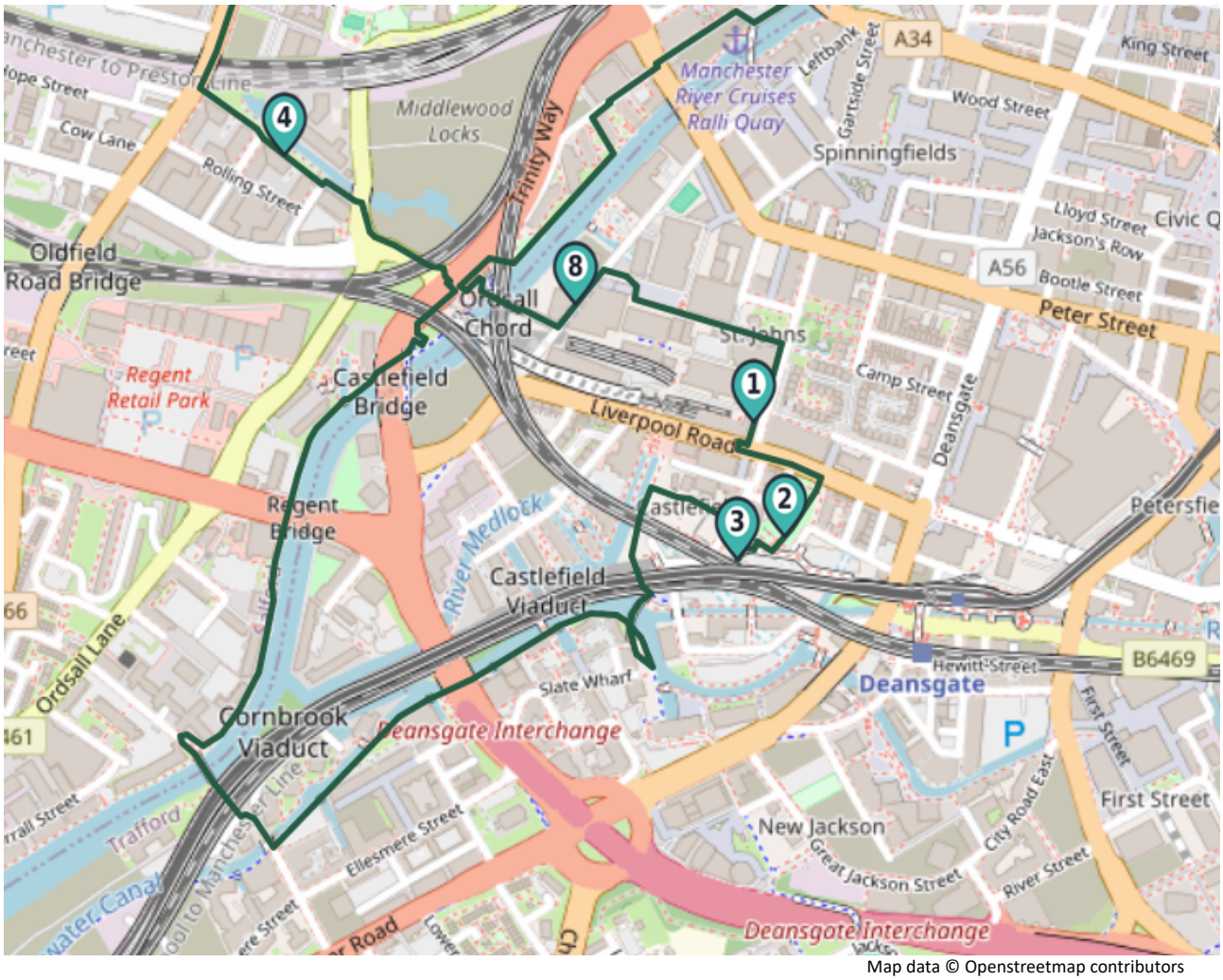
Route map



Map data © Openstreetmap contributors

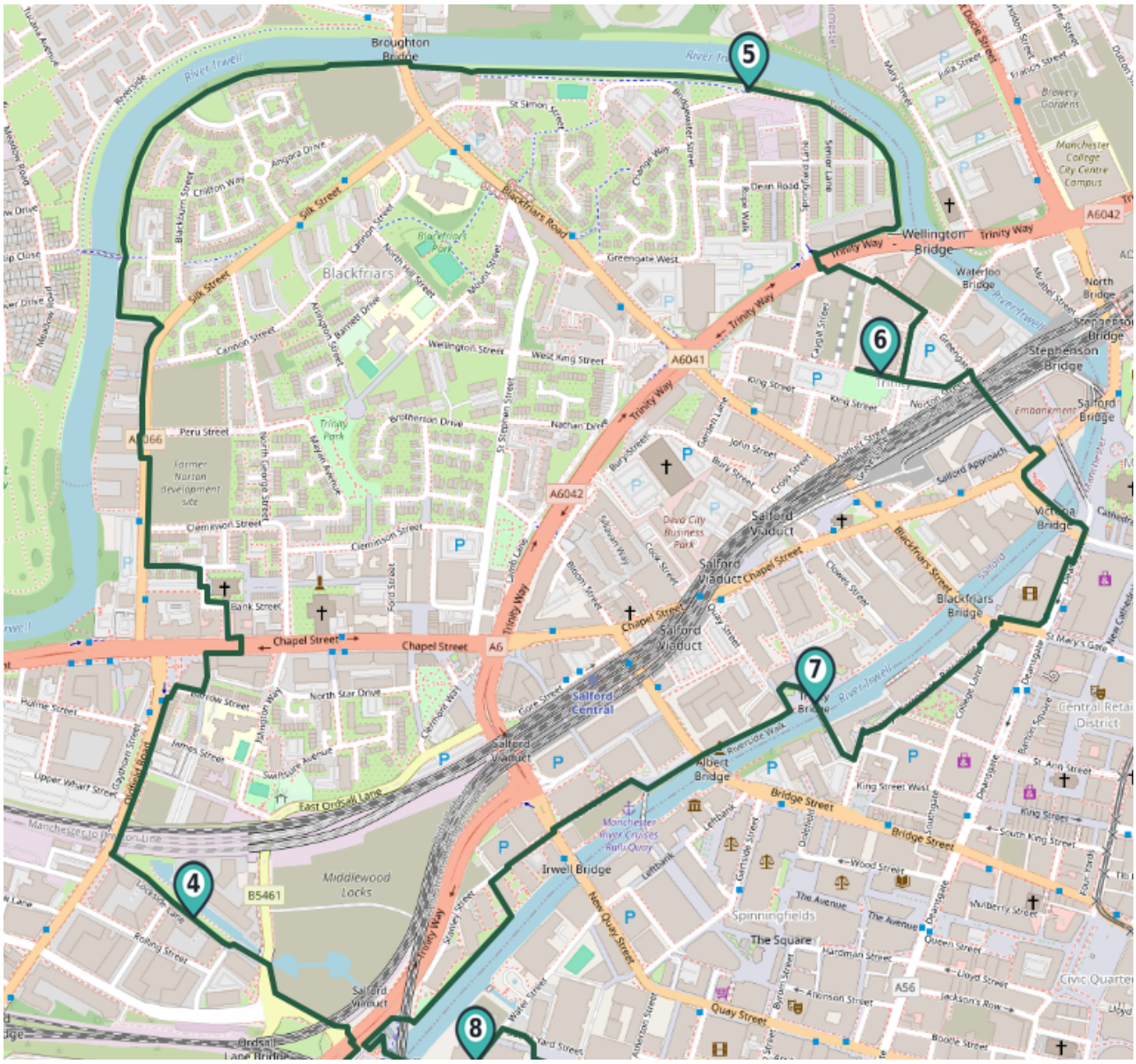
1 Science and Industry Museum
2 Mamucium Roman Fort
3 Castlefield Viaduct sky garden
4 Middlewood Locks
5 Irwell riverside path
6 Greengate Park
7 Trinity Bridge
8 Aviva Studios

Route detail



Map data © Openstreetmap contributors

Route detail





1 Science and Industry Museum

The Science and Industry Museum explores Manchester's role in shaping the modern world, from railways and steam power to computing and communications. Set on the historic Liverpool Road Station site, it brings together original buildings, working machinery and exhibitions that tell the story of the ideas and inventions that changed everyday life.



2 Mamucium Roman Fort

Mamucium Roman Fort marks the place where Manchester's story began almost 2,000 years ago. Built by the Romans around AD 79, the fort gave Castlefield its name and became the focus of an early settlement. Today, reconstructed sections of the fort and original remains offer a glimpse into the city's Roman past



3 Castlefield Viaduct sky garden

Castlefield Viaduct has transformed a Grade II-listed Victorian railway viaduct into Manchester's garden in the sky. Opened in 2022, the elevated green space is filled with trees, flowers and shrubs, with planting designed to thrive in its unusual setting. The 330-metre structure once carried trains into Manchester Central and now has a new life as a public garden.



4 Middlewood Locks

Middlewood Locks is a canalside neighbourhood between Salford and Manchester city centre, built around three restored basins of the Manchester, Bolton & Bury Canal. Landscaped green spaces, waterside paths and places to eat and drink sit alongside new homes and public spaces, with the restored canal forming the focal point of the neighbourhood.



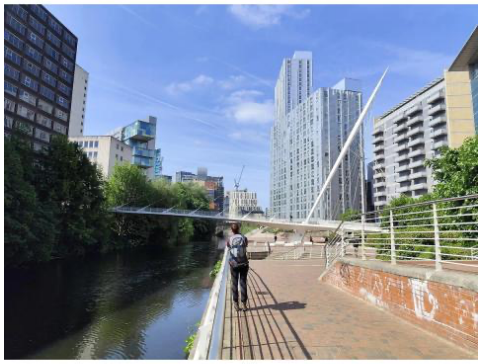
5 Irwell riverside path

The Irwell Riverside Path follows the River Irwell along the edge of Manchester city centre, providing a waterside route between Manchester and Salford. Paths, bridges and stretches of planting offer a different view of the city, while the route connects places including Spinningfields, Greengate and Middlewood Locks and forms part of the wider Irwell River Park



6 Greengate Park

Greengate Park is a new green space at the heart of one of Salford's fastest-changing neighbourhoods. The first phase brings more than half an acre of landscaped public space, with trees, planting and places to sit. Further phases will extend the park and connect it with Greengate Square, Market Cross and the surrounding streets.



7 Trinity Bridge

Trinity Bridge crosses the River Irwell, linking Manchester and Salford and providing an important pedestrian connection between the two cities. Designed by Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava and completed in 1995, its angled white pylon and cables make it one of the river's most recognisable landmarks. The bridge takes its name from nearby Sacred Trinity Church.



8 Aviva Studios

Aviva Studios is the home of Factory International, overlooking the River Irwell in Manchester's St John's neighbourhood. Designed by OMA, its flexible spaces host music, theatre, exhibitions and large-scale performances. Outside, new public spaces open towards the river, connecting the venue with the surrounding neighbourhood and the nearby Science and Industry Museum.

CL4 - Irwell & Castlefield Loop accessibility notes

The CL4 route has been reviewed to make it as accessible as possible for a wide range of users. There are a number of locations where gradients, uneven surfaces, pavement conditions and restricted access may present difficulties, particularly for wheelchair users, people using mobility scooters and those with limited mobility.

The main accessibility considerations are outlined below.

Narrow or restrictive access points

- Narrow access point and ramp from the Bridgewater Canal to Hulme Hall Road.
- Low tunnel sections on the Bridgewater Canal towpath (restricted headroom).
- Bollard narrowed path on the step free alternative near Blackfriars Road.

Hills and gradients

There are some uphill and downhill sections along the route. Some are relatively gentle, while others may be challenging for people with limited mobility or using manual wheelchairs.

Some gradients remain unavoidable due to topography or infrastructure constraints:

- Fairly steep ascent on the north west end of Lockside Lane.
- Steep ramps on sections of the Bridgewater Canal towpath.
- Minor gradients on certain riverside paths.

A number of surfaces are uneven or degraded.

- Cobbled surfaces at Castle Street, Hulme Hall Road, St Philip’s Place and outside St Philip’s Church.
- Gravelly or potholed surface under the Regent Road tunnel.
- Unmade, damp or rough riverside paths in places.