

# SLEW WALKER

## A GUIDED WALKING TOUR OF PRINCES PARK

BY ALINA BURWITZ



## **Welcome to *slower*, a guided audio tour of Princes Park.**

The route begins and ends at the Sunburst gates, at the top of Princes Avenue.

Take this tour as an opportunity to slow down a little. To connect with what's around you. To discover a new part of an old park.

*slower* is part of a suite of three pieces, *less.slower.louder*.

To find out more, please email [less.slower.louder@gmail.com](mailto:less.slower.louder@gmail.com)

A very special thank you goes to the following people for lending me their time and their voices in making this a reality:

Tracey Dunn

Jay Farley

Katy Gardner

Lis Davidson

Laura Prior

Danny Tarbuck

Sarah Zedler

Friends of Princes Park

An enormous thank you goes to Theatre in the Rough, including Chris Fittock, Joseph Rynhart, Sarah Van Parys, and Becky Downing, for enabling me to engage with the climate crisis in a way that felt empowering rather than disenfranchising.

This opportunity has been groundbreaking for me, and I hope it will inspire people to see the power they have to enact change.

To paraphrase Jonathan Safran Foer: the world won't be changed by us taking small actions, but the world also can't be changed without us doing them.

A small suggested reading list:

*Consumed: The Need for Collective Change: Colonialism, Climate Change and Consumerism* by Aja Barber

*We Are the Weather: Saving the Planet Begins at Breakfast* by Jonathan Safran Foer

*Walking in the Woods: Go back to nature with the Japanese way of shinrin-yoku* by Yoshifumi Miyazaki

*The Hidden Life of Trees* by Peter Wohlleben

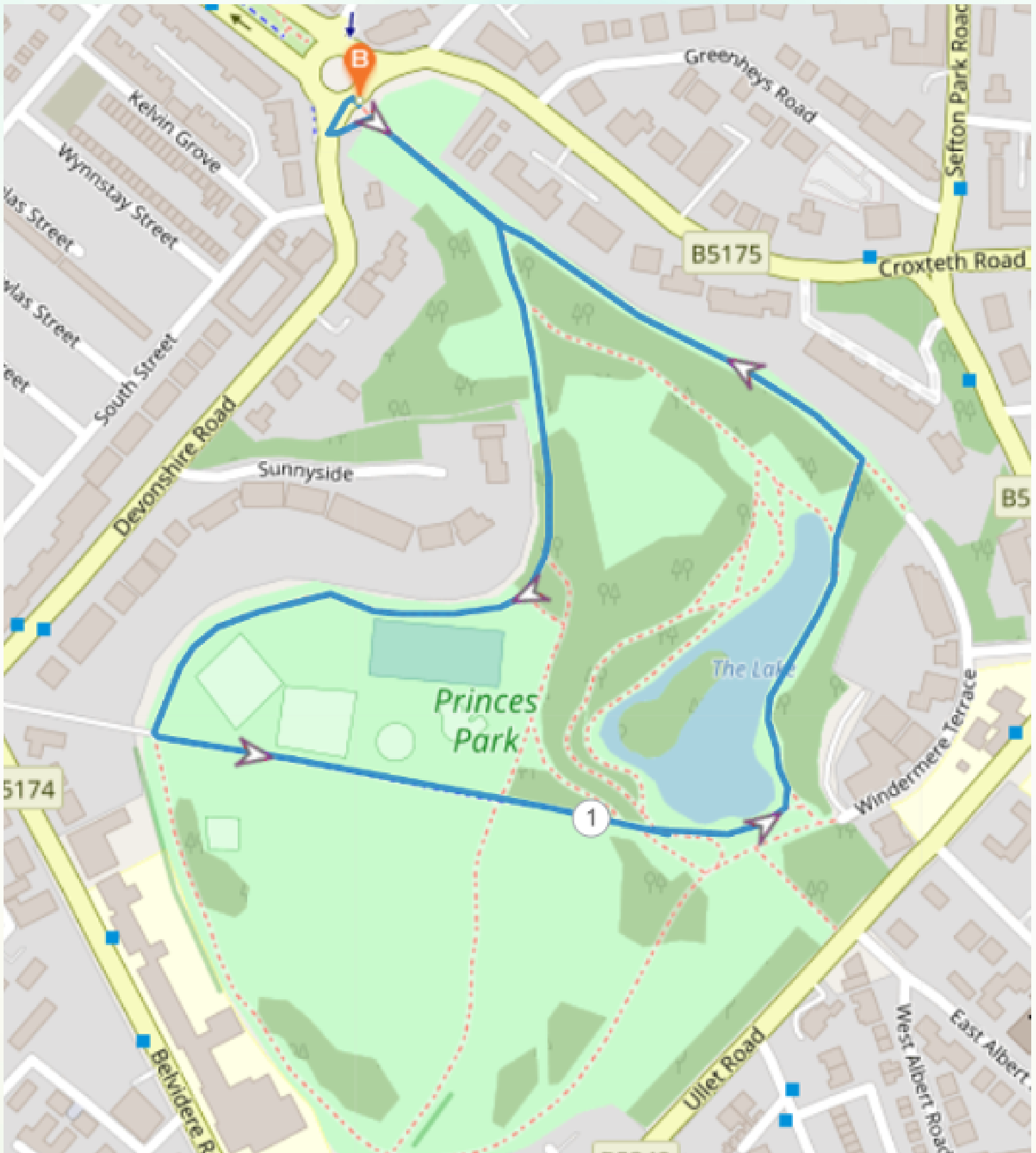
## Accessibility Notes

Please note that the route includes some uneven ground and some inclines. The tour is intended to be taken at the listener's own pace, and changing the route is encouraged if a certain path is not accessible for you.

The map below shows one of the two routes that the audio guides you down. This route includes uneven ground and two inclines. The first is not very steep, the second one is very steep.



This following map indicates a route with more even terrain and two inclines. The first is not very steep, the second is slightly steeper.



# AUDIO GUIDE TEXT

**WRITTEN &  
PERFORMED BY  
ALINA BURWITZ**

## **Section 1: Introduction**

Welcome to slower and welcome to Princes Park.

Together, we'll make our way through the park, at a slower pace, and find something new in this old park. This time is yours, this park is yours.

If you're someone who likes to move slowly, let this be your permission to keep moving however you need. Move at your own pace, and do it proudly.

If you're someone who feels pulled from place to place, let this be a new pace. No better time to be present than the present, right?

This route is for the people who live around the park, and for those that move through it.

It's for the people who look after it, campaign for it, protect it.

It's for the people who play football on the fields, for the people who walk the spiral, for people who travel through Princes Park.

This route is for you.

There will be times when I ask you to stop. Please always make sure it's safe to do so, and keep to one side of the pavement.

Please also be mindful of other people using the park, including around crossings.

The route we'll take together includes some slightly steeper paths and, weather dependent, there may be puddles or fallen twigs and branches. That might change what way you go, that's okay.

All that matters is that together we're moving slower.

## **Section 2: Entering the Park**

We're meeting at the Sunburst gates, also known as the Mandela gate.

It has been home to protests, home to dedications against our systems built on racism and exploitation, and systems that keep people from the life and safety they deserve.

Between summer to winter 2020, protests written on cardboard or paper or cloth were woven into these iron bars, often battered by wind and rain. Whenever they fell, they were put back in place by people passing.

[Pause]

Let's pass through the gates now.

As you do, let your gaze move left and right.

There are big shaggy trees planted in the grass right by the entrance of the park, either side of the gate. They look as soft as they do mighty and tall. Those are Atlantic cedars.

Planted in 2013 by Friends of Princes Park and dedicated to Nelson Mandela, they will keep growing and growing.

These trees can live over 100 years, meaning that they won't stop growing for a long time yet. They'll be here for much, much longer, moving at their own pace, just like you.

Keep moving forward. Once you reach the pink obelisk, the tall monument, turn right.

[Pause]

When you reach the bench on your right, take a pause. Look to the tall trees on the left.



### **Section 3: Parakeets**

Depending on the time of day, you may encounter my favourite birds living here in Princes. Bright and bold and loud, parakeets swarm around these trees. If you are really lucky, and the leaves aren't hiding them, you may hear or see the lime-green birds in the tall trees.

I could watch them for hours, craning my neck to see them.

Whether you can find the parakeets or not, let's stop and take it in for a bit. Let's breathe it in.

You don't need to boss your breath around. We're going to breathe in for four, hold for four, breathe out for four, hold for four and then repeat. It sounds more complicated than it is.

Ready?

Here we go.

**Inhale**, two three four.

Hold, two three four.

Exhale, two three four.

Hold, two three four.

**Inhale**, two three four.

Hold, two three four.

Exhale, two three four.

Hold, two three four.

**Inhale**, two three four.

Hold, two three four.

Exhale, two three four.

Hold, two three four.

Let your breath go back to its natural rhythm.

Did you smell anything or taste anything while you were breathing?

The road is only round the corner but the air tastes different here, don't you think?

[Pause]

It's said that the designer of the park wanted it to feel like you were in the countryside when you walked in.

It seems like that's more important than ever: being in the countryside. To be in nature.

Head up the wide path, let's leave the parakeets behind us for now. You may hear them before you see them amongst the leaves and branches. Loud and determined, they cheep without shame or fear. Best of all, they know how to be loud.

The path is sloping slowly, curling around to the right slightly. There are acorns and bits of broken branches on the ground. Can you feel them make the path uneven? Watch out for cyclists and speed lovers as you follow the path past the tennis courts.

In the summer, the field to your left is full of families and kids and people enjoying the sun trap that is Liverpool in late July and August. If there's no football being kicked about, it's probably because it's raining out.

Princes Park has a bit of everything. and sometimes it does feel like a bit of countryside in the middle of Liverpool.

Sometimes, if you look at the right times, you'll get glimpses of the houses to your right. Between bars and hedges and wall, you'll see the big communal gardens, children's playthings, and chairs.

Follow the path as it snakes lazily.

[silence]

## **Section 4: Hedges and Mazes**

You've left the gate well behind you, as well as the tenacious tennis players. During lockdown, there was not a chance that you'd get a spot on the tennis courts. Between early starters heading out when the mist was still out, to people swinging their rackets for hours, you rarely had a chance.

I always love when there's a group playing football—tennis, kicking a ball over the net, back and forth.

[Pause]

You're coming up to some hedges on the left now. Just poking out over the top of the hedges is a container, painted brightly with park scenes. Near that container, the Friends of Princes Park built a labyrinth.

What's between those hedges and you? Is the grass closely shorn, or is nature coming back, stubbornly and patiently?

In summer, the wild grasses and meadow plants reach up into the blue sky. Each of these parts of this field feel segmented by the hedges, little rooms of their own filled with stories.

Sometimes the hedges hide the stories from each other, like when a group of young people set up a photoshoot with a mirror amongst the high-growing grasses, or when tiny kids were undergoing football training, full of serious silliness.

The empty moments tell their own stories.

[Pause]

Look down. I wonder what way your shadow is pointing? Is it rippling over the tiny stones in the concrete, spilling over the cracks in the cement? Is it grey out, and you can't see your shadow, only splotches of water on the ground?

[silence]

Let's move on.

On your right, the black rusty bars give way to glimpses of homes. Best of all, brave blackbirds often sit at the tips of the branches and sing loudly.

The males have gorgeous dark feathers, beady clever eyes and sharp and pointy orange beaks.

The female birds run the show with their intricately patterned tummies with flecks of rich brown on their cooler brown chests. Their eyes, just as intelligently, peer out at you.

Maybe there are some above you now.

As you carry on, the black bars on your right will turn into wooden fencing and then back again.

The fences are made up of slats that are a patchwork of different repairs across the years, some bowing from the force of that very special Merseyside wind, others weighed down by branches and brambles and ivy.

Where moss and lichen haven't added their own bluey-green flair to the browns and beiges, people have. Graffiti and paint and plastic wallets with paper in have been some of the ways that people have shared their thoughts, making the fences home to political and personal messages.

As the fencing gives way to bars again, you reach the crossroads. Check both ways then head straight on, down the path ahead of you.

## **Section 5: Down the Path**

[silence]

Can you feel how much cooler it is here?

It feels like an entirely different place than the one we left behind.

[silence]

The path curves round and down as the fields and coppices rise above you to the left. Let the path show you which way to go.

Follow the path. Keep an eye out for the uneven bits. When I run through the park, I use the middle bit as my guide. It's the most even part of the patchwork path, it stays straight enough to run on and be reliable.

Every time I take this route, I follow the graffiti with my eyes, imagine who put it there and when.

As you follow the broken path here, Wood Henge rises to your left. Built together in collaboration with children from Toxteth, wood henge was built to give young people a place to be in the park.

As the path curves up and to the left, there's a natural dip. Four paths come together here, the one you're on, one that leads up to the fields on your left, one to the right that take you down to Aigburth Road, and the one straight ahead.

It used to flood here, badly. Sometimes you still get puddles. But Friends of Princes Park worked on it, making the path more reliable even in wet weather.

What does the air feel like here?

Is it still? Windy? Can you feel the air moving around you, or is the sun baking down on you?

Of the four paths, take the one ahead of you.

Take some time to enjoy this part of the park and I'll meet you in a little bit.

[silence]

The Friends group has done a great deal of planting around here, breaking up the landscape and creating habitats.

## **Section 6: The Fields to the Left and Right**

There used to be a wild area here, called Park Nook.

Unfortunately, the developers won out, and the area was razed and replaced with so-called luxury flats.

One of the people who protested against the development saw the power of the Toxteth community.

Princes is a place where people come together. It's space for anyone to use, and people do.

When lockdown was at its highest, or when the sun was out, this is where we would meet. This little dip of grass on the right was quieter and cooler than the rest of the park.

On the left, families would gather and share food outside. There were times when the sun would cross the whole sky and we would still be here.

The shadows would grow long and longer, and we would shift every few hours to make the most of it.

We would sit on the right, near that dip. It was always quieter here, and felt cut off. Like a different world.

I could have stayed in those moments forever, the four of us in the sun, letting hours pass us by.

The worst part would always be walking home through the park, crossing a sea of rubbish left behind.



## **Section 7: The Lake**

Leave the fields behind you. Take the gravelly, hilly path up, the one on the right.

At the gate, turn left towards the lake.

Follow the concrete. On the right is another wildflower patch.

As the soil warms up and the days grow longer, the seeds will wake up again. Come spring and summer time, new colours will burst forth. Some are here already.

Will you come back to see them when they do?

Move to the black railing overlooking the lake. What can you sense?

There are times when the birds are noisy, shouting and chatting, even fighting. Other times, they're quiet, almost eerily so. I'm used to early mornings when they're fighting over all sorts, but every time I stop here, at the lake, there's something different. Everyone comes here for a different reason.

The fishermen come, the families come, the dogwalkers come. People gathering their thoughts, running, or just passing through.

This smooth stretch of concrete has seen so many people pass over it.

[pause]

If you would like to, come off the path and onto the grassy verge. You can be close to the lake if you like, or closer to the bushes, or stay on the smooth concrete. You'll feel the lake's calm no matter where you are.

I've brought friends here, brought food, brought a book only to ignore, and sat. Just enjoyed being, not doing.

Bring your head up.

Take a moment here. Breathe with me.

In for four, out for four. Ready?

In, two, three, four. Out, two, three, four.

In, two, three, four. Out, two, three, four.

In, two, three, four. Out, two, three four.

In, two, three, four. Out, two, three, four.

Let your breathing come back to how it wants to be.

Keep your head up.

What do you notice?

[Pause]

When I find myself rushing and need to slow down, I pay attention to the small things. How balanced do I feel in my body? How am I holding my shoulders?

What about you?

Can you sense the clothes on your body, or the way you are sitting or standing? How will you slow down after today?

Sometimes I come out here just to stand at the lake and let my body root me to the ground. In snow and rain, it's as calming as in the sun.

There's almost always a breeze near the lake.

Can you feel it now?

This lake is full of life. The people are as much part of it as the birds and the tall grasses growing in the lake.

So many birds have made this lake their home, trusting the water to be a home to their chicks, and a feeding ground as they grow.

Let's enjoy this moment.

[Silence]

Are you ready to move on?

Before you do, one last deep breath in. And out. Turn away from the lake, to your right.

## **Section 8: Circling Back**

The path splits here.

The one on the left sometimes floods, and has a sharp incline at the end.

The one on the right has an incline at the start and is then flat and wide.

Choose which one you'd like to follow. Whichever one you take, you'll appreciate the path you're on.

[Pause]

Are you ready to move on?

Take your chosen path.

This stretch might be one of my other favourite parts of the park. No matter what way I'm going, I know there will always be something special to experience before I leave the park.

There's the wildflowers on the slope, the lower path that's hemmed with cherry blossom trees and Judy the Donkey's grave, or the upper path that's broken up by shade from old, old trees. Where you can look across the fields and see the park.

[Pause]

We're coming to the end of our time together today.

## **Section 9: The Gate**

You will be reaching the point where the paths lead to, and past, the pink obelisk.

Move down the straight wide path, with the Sunburst gates ahead of you. The black iron gate looks delicate and strong, with those golden shapes in the middle that look just like the sun to me.

When you reach the gate, stop.

Turn around.

Take a deep breath in. And out.

I hope you enjoyed this small piece of what Princes Park has to offer and hope you enjoyed slowing down with me.

Thank you for exploring the park with me today. There are many more joys to find here and many more paths you can take.

If you ever want to move slower, you know what to do.



**P. H. HOLT**  
FOUNDATION

---

Produced by **Theatre in the Rough Festival**, March 2022

Registered Charity No. 1133246

Part of the 400 Parts Per Million Project