

Art and pirates in Deptford

Start Deptford rail
Finish Goldsmiths, University of London
Duration 2+ hours

'Where's Deptford?' is often the response when this petite pocket of south London gets mentioned. It merits more attention, however, thanks in large part to a burgeoning scene of small galleries.

Comparisons with Shoreditch before it was glossed over and drowned in its own irony are easy to draw, but Deptford has a vibe all its own.

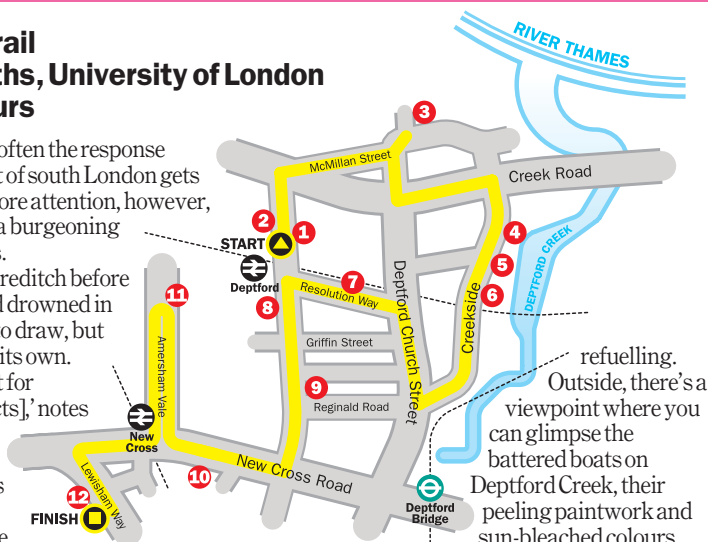
'People tend not to wait for funding [to start projects],' notes Bearpace gallery owner Julia Alvarez.

'The arts community is fuelled by a can-do approach to capture the moment.' The embodiment of this DIY ethos, spirited Alvarez is an organising force in the area and has just launched www.deptfordartmap.com.

To begin the walk, exit left from Deptford rail station on to Deptford High Street. The six-year-old **Bearspace (1)** at number 152 is one of the more established spaces in the area. Showing until June 26 is 'Etiquette of Comfort', Lisa Slominski and Sally Spinks's multimedia exploration of things we find reassuring or unsettling – puppies and knitting feature. Tiny **SE8 (2)** gallery, at 171, is dedicated to installation art, particularly from graduates. The student massive from nearby Goldsmiths provides a steady stream of avant-garde up-and-comers to pick from.

Continue north, noting two specimens of old-school pie-and-mash shops on either side – AJ Goddard at No 203 opposite Manze's at 204 – and at the top of the high street turn right on to Creek Road. Cross at the lights and slip on to McMillan Street, leading to Deptford Green and **St Nicholas Church (3)**. On the gates, the striking sculptures of a skull and crossbones are said to have inspired the Jolly Roger. Deptford's maritime history is less well known than that of neighbouring Greenwich, but the docks once supported a significant shipyard commissioned by Henry VIII, and sailors like Sir Francis Drake and Captain James Cook were blessed at St Nicholas before their voyages. On a gruesome note, Shakespeare's contemporary Christopher Marlowe was murdered in a pub nearby. Hunt out the plaque in the churyard marking the spot where he's thought to be buried.

Back on Creek Road, turn left and cross over to Creekside, home to Herzog and de Meuron's magical, multi-hued **Laban (4)** centre for contemporary dance. Walk across the undulating, sculpted grass verges to the Turbine Hall-like lobby, where the café offers a chance for



refuelling. Outside, there's a viewpoint where you can glimpse the battered boats on Deptford Creek, their peeling paintwork and sun-bleached colours unexpectedly photogenic.

Further down Creekside, marked by an easily spotted mural, is **Cockpit Arts (5)** – a workspace for makers doing fresh things with jewellery, interiors and textiles; you can visit the studios and buy cool crafts direct from designers between June 19 and 21. Next up is spacious **APT (6)** at 6 Creekside, currently hosting a Mark Wallinger-curated show. Follow Creekside to the end, turn right on to Deptford Church Street, and duck into Resolution Way off to the left. In this back alley to industrial warehouses, behind a sliding plastic door is **Arch (7)**. Paul Marks's sinuous drawings exploring chaos theory are on show until June 20. The economic downturn has brought the opportunity to



snap up unrentable warehouses for studio space at knock-down prices. 'Art always does well in a recession,' states Alvarez. 'In fact, I would say art is the main economy here.'

Resolution Way connects back to the high street and a well-deserved rest spot at the **Deptford Project (8)**, a former railway carriage reincarnated as a very likeable café (No 121-123). The new Deptford Project Market out the back peddles handmade and vintage wares by local designers on Saturdays.

The disarray of **Deptford Market (9)** is in situ on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays – look out for giant snails. Turn right on to New Cross Road, with the option of stopping at No 388 for a pint at the arty **Amersham Arms (10)**, which is looking for artists to paint its garden walls (thebeergallery.blogspot.com).

Continue on to **The Old Police Station (11)**, which is currently functioning as a uniquely dilapidated gallery, tea room and gig space (114-116 Amersham Vale). The final stop – **Goldsmiths' Richard Hoggart Building (12)** on Lewisham Way – is the source of much of the area's creative output, and features a display of work by past graduates, including Julian Opie. *Natasha Polyviou*

