

Walk *the* Don

MUD CREEK LOST RIVERS LOOP (Moore Ave., Milkman's Lane, Mount Pleasant, St. Clair loop) Experience a walk along routes of three buried waterways, all hidden from public view decades ago in the interest of progress. Enjoy the natural serenity of living ponds on the former site of Toronto's largest brick works, right in the heart of the city.



Public Transit: *Getting there;* Saturday only 28A TTC Bus from Davisville Subway station. Free daily Evergreen shuttle bus from Broadview Subway station.

Getting home; Take the 28A TTC Bus back to Davisville Subway Station or return to Broadview Subway station via the Evergreen shuttle bus.

*Public transit routes and schedules are subject to change. Please check with provider.
TTC Information: www.ttc.ca or 416-393-4636. Visit www.ebw.evergreen.ca for their shuttle bus schedule.



Parking: Paid parking available at Evergreen Brick Works.

Food and Washrooms: Available at Evergreen Brick Works.



Level of Difficulty/Accessibility: The trail varies from gravel, dirt to hard-surface. There are long steps at Point 12 and a steep slope at Point 15, both of which would be unsuitable for strollers/wheelchairs. Sidewalks through residential streets take you from 12-15. Travel from the Brick Works to points 9 through 16 is on mostly flat trails.



Approximate Time: Allow 2 1/2 hours for the entire walk, but more time to visit the Brick Works.



Distance: 7.2 kilometres.



Caution: Be aware of cyclists and other trail users at all times. Use the trails at your own risk.



1 For over 100 years, this unique property was home to the Don Valley Brick Works. The site was perfect for brick making, with a quarry of clay and shale, access to water from Mud Creek, and nearby railroads for transportation. In 1989, when brick production ended, the city, province, conservation authority and private donors purchased the property to protect and restore the lands. The quarry was filled in with excavation material from Scotia Plaza on King Street and the ponds were created. Evergreen leased a portion of the site and developed plans to revitalize the grounds and existing buildings. Officially reopened in September 2010 as **Evergreen Brick Works**, this location offers many community programs and provides an ideal launching pad into the surrounding ravine system. Take a moment to look at the Watershed Wall in the Tiffany Commons court yard. Carved into

the metal plate are some of the Lost Rivers of the Don Watershed; The large Exploring the Lower Don map shows where you are in relation to the lake.

2 Walk through the open-air building on your left, called **The Pavilions**, and out to the Terrace. Until the early-1980s, this large area was an active quarry with a 40 meter (130 foot) deep pit from which brick-making material was excavated. In the mid-1980s, the quarry was filled in and ten years later, after coming into public ownership, was landscaped and restored to a natural space with wetlands, meadows and forested areas. This is now the Weston Family Quarry Garden and Don Valley Brick Works Park. Here you may see great blue herons, red winged blackbirds, muskrats, turtles, fish, snakes, foxes and much more. Mud Creek continually replenishes the wetlands. Water then trickles slowly out to the

Don River enroute to Lake Ontario.

3 What is warm, fast and dirty? **Stormwater runoff** causes pollution and erosion in the Don watershed. In urban settings, where ground surface is predominantly hard, stormwater heats up, travels quickly and gathers debris. These three stormwater ponds allow heavy materials to settle out; aquatic plants, such as cattails and duckweed, filter, clean and slow the water from Mud Creek before it enters the Don River. The large rain water cistern to your left is one of 13 on this site that collect and slow rain water. Captured rain water is used to irrigate the gardens.

4 Exit the Brick Works via the metal stairs or the ramp on your left up to the **Beltline Trail**. This trail follows the route of a former commuter railway. The Belt Line Railway, built in the early 1890s, looped from Union Station up along here, across North Toronto to the Humber Valley, and back again to Union Station. Operation ceased when the railway went bankrupt in 1894.

5 Walk left (south) when you get to the trail and you will see a large enclosed **dog area** to your left. This off-lease, fenced area allows dogs to run around without damaging surrounding environment. Dogs unknowingly destroy sensitive wetlands and upset wildlife habitats eg: turtles lay their eggs along the shores, birds make nests among the

bulrushes and muskrats houses in the ponds.

6 On your left are two **major roadways**, the Don Valley Parkway and the Bayview Extension. Stormwater run-off from these roads into the Don River is a major concern. Oil, heavy metals, and salt wash off the roads into the river when it rains. Think back to the plantings and storm ponds you just saw adjacent to the Brick Works parking lot. Those ponds are an example of good management mitigating this type of problem. Plant buffers help absorb some of the pollutants from parking lots and Bayview Ave. Stay on the trail along this stretch to avoid the healthy patch of poison ivy.

7 Just after the path rises toward the Bayview Ramp, a little wetland lies to your right. It's the mouth of a very small creek that flows through **Binscarth Ravine**. This is home to a large clump of jewelweed, a native plant that hummingbirds love. At the fork in the path, stay to the right toward Balfour Park. The river should now be on your left-hand side. If you go left, you will follow Milkmen's Lane up into the residential area of Rosedale.

8 Toronto is laced with buried streams, mostly diverted and encased in concrete conduits. We call these "lost rivers" because they are hidden from view. Now comes the confusing part. The Spadina Trunk Storm Sewer, built late 1960s, diverts water from Castle Frank Brook into

the Yellow Creek valley. Both creeks originate near Downsview Park. Stand over the round sewer grate, just below the concrete **Glen Road bridge**. You hear the roar of Yellow Creek down below while you see Castle Frank Brook flowing before you. Castle Frank water eventually enters the Don closer to Bloor, whereas Yellow Creek water empties near the Bayview/DVP ramps. For more information, visit the Lost Rivers website.

9 Before both the Bayview Extension and the DVP were built, this particular trail was once a road. **Park Drive Reservation** had very little use after the Baviue Extension opened. Later in the mid 1960's, the Crosstown Expressway was proposed by the City with plans to turn this into the Crosstown Expressway, just one of a network of proposed expressways that were to make use of the ravine systems of the City. These plans ended with the successful Stop the Spadina campaign, but the storm sewers to drain water from the Allen Expressway and the Castle Frank Brook sub-watershed were built along the proposed route.

10 You are now at **Mt. Pleasant Road**. Follow the sidewalk up to the Crescent Road bridge (TTC access here), over Mt. Pleasant, turn right on Wrentham, right on Roxborough and left on Mt. Pleasant, hugging the shoulder into David Balfour Park.

11 In **David Balfour Park**, follow the trail north until Yellow Creek becomes visible on your left-hand side a short distance into the Park. Along this stretch, you pass under the elevated bridge of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Stay close to the river, following the asphalt path, then cross at a wooden bridge with a railing (not the first damaged bridge with the stone abutments), turn right to begin the long climb up the the street. Steep sections show damaging erosion from heavy rains where lack of groundcover allows soil to wash downhill.

Between twelve and thirteen thousand years ago, during the retreat of the Laurentide Ice Sheet, ice blockage in the St Lawrence valley forced melt water to accumulate as a larger Lake Iroquois, the name previously given to the lake we now know as Lake Ontario. Many streams, including Yellow Creek, Castle Frank Brook and Mud Creek flowed directly into that cold glacial lake. The water was 50m above current Lake Ontario water levels, encompassing all areas south of Davenport Road and St. Clair. The area you are climbing is near the shore cliffs of glacial Lake Iroquois.

12 Turn right at **Avoca Road**, at the top of the climb, and cross St. Clair Ave East at the lights. View the depth of the ravine below you from the platforms built into the bridge.

13 Turn left onto **Inglewood Dr.** and right onto Moore Park Avenue several blocks later.

14 Cross Mount Pleasant Road, continue along **Moore Avenue** until the road dips just past Welland Avenue and descend the steep path down into the Moore Park Ravine and the Beltline Trail.

15 As you head back towards the Brick Works, **Mud Creek**, once known as Mount Pleasant Brook, becomes visible. This section is the last fragment of its 11.2 km encased journey from the Downsview area to the main branch of the Don River. As it makes its way across the city, Mud Creek drops 115 meters in elevation (275 feet) from its source point to its junction with the Don River. Today, as Mud Creek flows through Toronto, it is largely buried underground beneath industrial lands, suburbs, offices and apartment buildings, a cemetery and several parks.

The **Moore Park Ravine** cuts deeply into glacial and interglacial deposits of clay and gravel. Along this stretch, various paths access the Beltline Trail from surrounding communities. Stay on the main trail and follow the signs to the Evergreen Brick Works.

Mud Creek was identified by Toronto and Region Conservation as a site to showcase best practices for a healthy ravine. In partnership with neighbouring communities, the city and the conservation authority, the abandoned brick works are now a living example of stormwater control combined with an amazing natural area in the heart of Toronto.

16 **Belt Line Pond**, on your left, attracts ducks and other bird species. The pond was formed in the depression between the rail line embankment and the edge of the valley slope. Thanks to conservation groups, the pond has undergone a series of native species plantings and removal of invasive species. The trail passes under the Heath Street footbridge. Fallen trees and eroded embankments show the destructive forces of nature and civilization.

17 Vegetation throughout the valley is mixed. Below your feet in wet areas are horsetail plants that can be traced back 400 million years ago. Above you, the invasive Norway Maple grows rampantly and shades out the slower-growing trees and shrubs native to this area. The result is lack of variety in tree species and heavy erosion.

18 The steep embankments leading up to the **CPR tracks** are the former shoreline of the ancient glacial Lake Iroquois mentioned earlier. Notice that the creek flows under the trail in numerous places along this stretch.

19 Under **Governors Road Bridge**, watch Mud Creek plunge from a large outflow pipe into a deep pool.

20 The hillside to your right is the site of a major mudslide in 1973 that erased the former pathway leading up to **Chorley Park**. This was the former site of the Ontario

Lieutenant-Governor's residence. A TTC bus to the Rosedale Station stops at the far end of the park.

21 On your left, follow the pathway or stairs down to the Don Valley Brick Works and take a moment to marvel at the landscape. The North Slope Quarry Wall at the far end contains geological sediments and fossils from the last interglacial period. It is an internationally significant geological site.

Trail Users' Guide

- Users of these trail guides are responsible for their own safety and well being.
- Be aware of cyclists and other trail users at all times.
- Walk with others.
- Keep your children in sight at all times.
- Trails may involve stairs and slopes.
- Trails may not be lit or cleared of ice and snow.
- Stay on the trails or mown areas; do not leave them at any time.
- Cross roads only at intersections, lights or crosswalks.
- Keep your pet on a leash and clean-up after them.
- Do not pick or damage any vegetation.
- Beware of Poison Ivy: "Leaflets of three, let it be."
- Do not feed the wildlife.
- Do not light fires.
- Leave nothing behind.
- Washrooms operate seasonally.
- Avoid the trails during and after a storm; water levels can rise suddenly.
- Wear footwear for pavement, loose or broken surfaces and bare earth.
- Wear clothing to suit the weather and protect against insects.
- Carry drinking water.

Learn more about the Don River watershed at www.trca.ca



Prepared by the Don Watershed Regeneration Council & Toronto and Region Conservation Authority

MUD CREEK WALK

