Thanks to Dave Green

- G.M.

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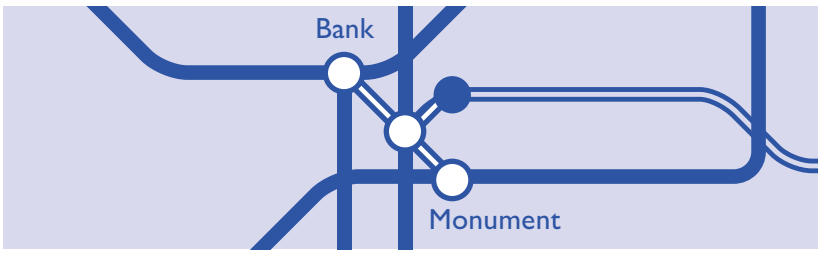
The Busiest Tube Station

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You will often hear that Oxford Circus is the busiest station in the Tube network, considering it's a station that just has Underground services. In actual fact, the Tube's busiest station is Bank. That's counting all the people who enter and exit, AND all the people who pass through to use it as an interchange station.

Bank was given its name because the Bank of England is located on the surface above. The station opened in 1884 as part of Monument station. The two stations are known as the Bank Monument complex and are so close together that commuters can access both by walking between them underground.

Bank station is being redeveloped to expand its capacity with a new platform for the Northern line and a new entrance; these should be open in 2022.





Vicki Explores!

While you're at Bank, take a look at the brilliant statue just outside, by exit/entrance number 3. This is a statue of James Henry Greathead, the pioneer of the tunnelling shield. A tunnelling shield is a protective structure used during the digging of tunnels. It acts as a support structure to prevent the soft earth from collapsing in on those working on the tunnel. Greathead was the first person to build a patented cylindrical shield. The shield was also used to dig the Tower Subway, a passenger walkway that went under the River Thames near Tower Bridge.

If you look closely at the statue of Greathead, down to his feet on the base of the plinth, you'll notice a grille of a few centimetres deep that runs all the way around. This is a ventilation point from somewhere down below. Here air is escaping out of the tunnels that Greathead helped to dig, and into the fresh air above!

Remember! Bank station is one of the busiest stations, so make sure you visit in off-peak hours or at the weekend to avoid the commuter traffic.

Take a Trip Around Bank Station

Did you know it is possible to walk around the corridors of Bank station and not repeat yourself, while staying underground for fifteen minutes? Here's how to do it:

Step 1

Start at the Central line ticket hall, enter any of the main numbered entrances that are in a circle on street level. You can then walk around in a complete circle at this point, coming back on yourself before going to the gateline.

Step 2

Next go down the escalators and turn right to walk along the Central line's westbound platform until you see the sign for the Northern line. This will take you down a spiral staircase and into a corridor which leads to an open area with a spot for buskers. Go down the steps onto the northbound Northern line platform and walk almost the entire length of it.

Step 3

Towards the end of the platform, turn right into a small corridor which is signposted for the DLR, follow this and you'll go down some narrow steps and a narrow corridor which takes you to the DLR platforms.

Step 4

Don't get on the DLR! Instead, follow the signs for the Central line, which will take you up and onto the escalator. Keep going straight, go up another escalator, and when you get to the top turn left, following signs for the Waterloo & City line.

Step 5

This is the long corridor that takes you under the red tunnelling shield still embedded in the wall. It was used in the construction of the Waterloo & City line in the 1890s.

Step 6

Before you get to the Waterloo & City platform, you'll see the new way in and out of Bank Tube station – the Walbrook Street entrance.

Step 7

Do this without repeating yourself by using the steps or lift. At the top, turn around and use the escalators to come down again. At the halfway mark you can admire the backlit artwork that depicts the Roman heritage of the site.

Step 8

Head down to the Waterloo & City line platforms, and now you get to ride the travellator – which is quite exciting – that will then take you back up to the Central line ticket hall. Now that's a walk which should take you at least fifteen minutes to complete!



The Mysterious Middle Platforms at East Finchley

If you've ever hopped on or off at East Finchley on the Northern line, you'll notice that it has two island platforms, and four tracks in total. Almost all the trains that stop here do so on the outside, Platforms 1 and 4. So what about Platforms 2 and 3 in the middle?

Well, they do get used but only when trains are coming out of a depot, or sidings, and are entering service. Or at the end of a day when a southbound train from High Barnet terminates there before heading off to the depot for the night.

There are ten trains in the morning between 5 a.m. and 7 a.m. that enter service on Platform 2 before heading north to High Barnet. In the evening after 11 p.m., there are eight trains which have travelled south from High Barnet to terminate for the night at East Finchley and come in on Platform 3.

Stylish Station

The station is gorgeous. It's a rebuilt 1930s Art Deco station conceived by the renowned Tube architect Charles Holden. It has beautiful semi-circular glazed stairways which lead to a footbridge. At the other end of the platform is a glazed window area that is used as a passenger waiting area.

Rare Station Statue

Here there is a famous statue by British Sculptor Eric Aumonier called 'The Archer'. You can only see it upon entering the station at the start of your journey.

The sculpture was unveiled in 1940 and was described as 'more than a decorative device; it is powerful symbolism'.

It still is. The archer's bow follows the line of the railway, and points towards the entrance of the longest tunnel on the Underground. This stretch of railway enters seventeen miles of tunnel, along the length of the Northern line, which finally opens out at Morden.

