



WINDOW GAZER GUIDE



Pleasure Beach Heritage Tram Stop

As we leave the stop the loop takes us to join the main line, to our right as we go around the curve is South Shore, the tram tracks going to the southern terminus of Starr Gate and home to the modern fleet of Flexity trams.

On the right now is **Blackpool Pleasure Beach**, which opened in 1896 and is still owned by the Thompson family today. The Big One – a fantastic roller coaster and highly recommended if you haven't already been on it – has held a firm presence on Blackpool's skyline since 1994.



Looking back to the sea shore is a work of art, The **High Tide Organ**, one of ten pieces of art titled The Great Promenade Show between here and Starr Gate. The High Tide Organ is powered by the tide forcing air up through the pipes to produce a distinctive sound - some call it music.



Next on the sea side is the **Sandcastle Waterpark**. Built in 1986 to replace the South Shore Baths. It is one of Europe's largest indoor water parks. South Shore Baths was an open-air swimming pool and, when it opened in 1923, it was the largest in the world!

Across the road is the **Velvet Coaster**, which was the largest Wetherspoons pub in the UK when it opened in 2015. It was previously home to the Lucky Star amusement arcade.

South Pier was the last of the three piers to be built, in 1893, which makes it older than the Tower! It is the shortest and widest of our three piers. Originally called Victoria Pier it became South Pier when Central Pier changed its name from South to Central, confusing or what!



Passing Waterloo and St Chad's headlands we head

towards **Manchester Square**, home of the Manchester pub. You can see tram tracks crossing the road and heading inland. They lead to our Heritage Tram depot at Rigby Road.



Central Pier, the second pier to be constructed, opened in 1868. It was originally called South Pier until renamed Central Pier, which allowed Victoria Pier to be renamed South Pier. This became known as "The People's Pier" famous for its outdoor dancing. It was some 1500 feet long with a 400 foot low water jetty. The Ferris wheel was added in 1990 which stands at 110 feet high.



Tussauds is the popular waxworks attraction. Marie Tussaud was an early example of an independent entrepreneurial woman who learned her trade in Paris, brought her young family to Britain to develop the waxworks as a tourist attraction.



Next to Tussauds is the **Sealife Centre**, where you can come face to face with sharks and other species in a see-through ocean tunnel. Across the road the **RNLI lifeboat station** is between the tramway and the sea.

Coral Island is Blackpool's biggest indoor amusement centre with its own bars and casino.

You can't miss the **Blackpool Tower** which has dominated the Fylde coast skyline since it opened in 1894. At 518ft (158m) tall the structure needed 2586 tons of steel and iron to complete it. The view from the top is incredible.



The **Tower Headland**, opposite The Tower, is often used for outdoor events and features the Comedy Carpet, which pays tribute to over 1000 comedy stars with their punchlines and catchphrases. If you see people around here 'reading the pavement' – that's the Comedy Carpet!



Festival House, clad in distinctive golden stainless steel shingles, is home to a restaurant, the **Tourist Information Centre** and the Wedding Chapel, the only building on the seaward side of the promenade where couples can get married by the beach.

North Pier & Tower Heritage Tram Stop

North Pier was Blackpool's first pier, opening its doors in 1863 and originally just called Blackpool Pier, and remains the most genteel of our 3 piers. It is a Grade II Listed building and all three of Blackpool's piers are on the World Monuments Watch List. The tram tracks that head inland lead to Blackpool's main railway station, Blackpool North.



The tram tracks bend around the **Metropole Hotel** which was built in 1875, opening as Bailey's Hotel. In 1939 the government requisitioned the hotel as part of the war effort. In 1955, Billy Butlin purchased the hotel for his Butlins holidays chain. It remains the only hotel in Blackpool actually on the Promenade - every other hotel is on the landward-side of it!



The imposing **Imperial Hotel** was established in 1867 and is a large Victorian red brick building in what, before development, was Claremont Park. The Queen stayed at this hotel when visiting Blackpool, as did Charles Dickens many years earlier and a number of British Prime Ministers. It hosted many concerts in its ballroom in the 1970s with bands including UFO, Judas Priest and Joy Division playing here.

A few hotels beyond the Imperial is a much smaller hotel, **The Strand**, famous to Coronation Street fans as being the location where Alan Bradley met his death after running into the path of a Blackpool tram whilst chasing Rita Fairclough. This episode was screened on 8th December 1989 watched by millions as this storyline reached its climax in Corrie's 3,002nd episode.

We descend the steepest gradient on the tramway as we reach **Gynn Square**. This was the terminus of the Blackpool Tramway until Blackpool Corporation took over the Blackpool and Fleetwood Tramroad Company in 1920. The Blackpool system was extended to join with the Tramroad track which started at Talbot Road Railway Station (later, Blackpool North) forming the full tramway from South Shore to Fleetwood.

As we climb the hill from Gynn Square you can see the sunken **Jubilee Gardens** with the **Blue Light Emergency Services Memorial** in the form of four people holding hands and lit in a suitable blue hue at night. The memorial honours all four emergency services and was erected in memory of three local police officers who drowned in the sea near here on 5th January 1983 whilst trying to rescue a man who had gone into the sea to save his dog.



As the Promenade flattens once more we reach the former location of **Uncle Tom's Cabin**. First built in 1860 on the cliffs of the town's coastline it was a small cliff-top hut where landlady Margaret Parkinson sold refreshments to the adventurous visitors who took the cliff path along the coast from Blackpool – long before the Promenade's smooth surfaces were laid! The original building was demolished in 1908 due to the erosion of the cliffs, with a new building constructed close-by on what is now the Queens Promenade. The building still stands and is now home to Ma Kelly's Showboat sports and showbar.



Cabin Heritage Tram Stop

At the edge of the prom is **The Cabin Lift** which used to take holidaymakers to the foot of the cliffs and an outdoor swimming baths, which is now a go-karting track. Now unused the lift is yet another of Blackpool's Grade II Listed buildings.

If you are travelling with us during the annual illuminations period this location is where you will start to see one of the highlights – the **animated and illuminated tableaux**. They change a little each year but the children's favourites are always included. Alice in Wonderland, The Pirate Ship and the Haunted Hotel along with Dora the Explorer and, of course, Sooty and Sweep amongst other children's favourites.



On the landward side you will see a large red brick building set back behind a large lawn that was for many years **The Miners' Convalescent Home** but in 2005 was converted into apartments and its name changed to Admiral Point. The Miners' Convalescent Home was a convalescent home built 1925–27 for Lancashire and Cheshire miners and was opened by Edward, Prince of Wales. In 1995 it became yet one more of the many Grade II listed buildings in Blackpool.



Bispham Heritage Tram Stop



Officially, according to the stonework, called **Bispham Station** this stop serves the highest cliffs on the Fylde Coast – called Bispham Cliffs – and is a regular stopping off point for visitors seeking a slightly quieter time than the hustle and bustle of Blackpool itself.

Some Promenade Tours may turn here by "changing ends" at Bispham or continue to Little Bispham to use our turning loop.

The **Norbreck Castle Hotel** was originally a large private country house. From 1912 the building became the Norbreck Hydro and was expanded, in several phases, adding a ballroom, swimming pool and solarium. The Hydro was patronised by nobility, the well-to-do, and many top stars of stage, screen and radio. During World War II the hotel was commandeered by the British government as offices and accommodation for evacuated civil servants and the hotel remained under government control until 1951. At that time the hotel had car parking for 250 cars, five tennis courts, an 18-hole golf course, a bowling green, a 600-seat restaurant, two ballrooms, conferences facilities for 850, two cocktail bars, a swimming pool and 400 bedrooms, 97 of which had private bathrooms. In the late 1970s, the hotel's disco became the venue for a number of concerts by punk rock, new wave and mod revival bands.

Little Bispham Loop

Unless you are on a Coastal Tour, this is where your tour turns to take you back to Blackpool. If you were on the sea side of the tram on the way here, you'll be on the road side on the way back. Anything you missed on the way up, you'll be able to catch on the way back. As the tram goes around the loop you can see Anchorsholme Park which houses pumping stations below ground as part of the area's flood defences. The main tramway continues to Cleveleys & Fleetwood.



We hope you've enjoyed your tour with us, we look forward to welcoming you on board again soon!

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