

## Walking Something's afoot

When it comes to transport and mobility, one method is frequently ignored: walking. Whereas large-scale infrastructure projects are eye-catching and “leave a legacy”, pushing citizens to make their way on foot is often more about working under the radar. Yes, there are a handful of signature schemes (New York’s High Line and Seoul’s elevated park, Seoulo 7017, are two examples) but, by and large, getting people on their feet is about smaller nudges: better wayfinding, cleaner pavements, more greenery.

Today cities are looking at how to encourage and promote this slowest form of transport – for the sake of their citizens’ health. One of the most ambitious projects in recent years was attempted in Oklahoma City. During his tenure as mayor from 2004 to 2018, Mick Cornett decided to redesign his city around walking in an effort to reduce the city’s concerning obesity rate. He asked citizens to back a tax rise to fund the creation of parks, pavements and paths, and his ambition was rewarded with stronger long-term health indicators. On a more focused level, the refurbishment of Tel Aviv’s central beach promenade holds lessons for anyone hoping to design and build a walkable district.

### Getting a city back on its feet *Tel Aviv*

A vast refurbishment project transformed Tel Aviv’s previously neglected coastal promenade into a vibrant new space for the city. Architects at Mayslits Kassif turned a retaining wall into terraces, stairs and seats, and there’s also a new path at beach level, outdoor gyms, new shading elements and upgraded street furniture. Some of the café’s rooftops have been converted into areas in which to sit and linger in the sea breeze. The project has also made the beach accessible to wheelchair users, buggies and the elderly.



### Five more inspired ideas *Walk this way*

- 1. Legible London, London:** This pedestrian wayfinding system was commissioned by Transport for London in 2004 and designed by Applied Wayfinding and Lacock Gullam. There are more than 1,300 signs in total: stainless-steel totems with panels illustrating the local area and estimating walking times to landmarks. Before this, there were 32 separate signage systems in the city centre – Legible London has decluttered the streets and created cohesion.
- 2. Outdoor staircases, Stuttgart:** Stuttgart’s central districts sit at the bottom and on the slopes of a valley so pedestrians get about using more than 400 stairways that add up to about 20km. These *Stäffele* date from the early 19th century but in recent years Stuttgart has been rediscovering their significance for its transport infrastructure, with a healthy sum made available in budgets for maintenance and repairs.
- 3. Pedestrian footbridges, Tokyo:** At its busiest, Omotesando in Tokyo can be a seething mass of people. The speediest way to cross is the pedestrian footbridge that runs from the police box on one side to the Gyre building on the other. Such overpasses can be found all over Japanese cities and they provide a thoughtful way of allowing those on foot to navigate their city and beat the traffic.
- 4. Minhocão Park, São Paulo:** “Park” is perhaps a misleading name for this elevated stretch of highway in São Paulo, as it has no grass, play areas or proper seating. Yet every weekend since 2015, the roughly 3km-long stretch of flyover has been taken over by walkers, runners, cyclists and skateboarders. It’s a healthier and more valuable use of what is, in most people’s view, something of an eyesore.
- 5. Tanderrum Bridge, Melbourne:** The city’s surging population has led to congestion problems but one of the city’s top firms, John Wardle Architects, has a solution. The Tanderrum Bridge is a striking walkway that balances looks and functionality, connecting the CBD to a nearby sports precinct.