



A circular walking guide from Salisbury station

Hop off the train at Salisbury for this wonderful winter stroll through the medieval city centre to Old Sarum.

Leave the train station, following the signs to Market Square. The Tourist Information Centre is on Fish Row, on the south side of Market Square. With the Guildhall behind you, cross the Market Place diagonally to the library and take the signed riverside walk path leading to Ashley Road (1).

Cross the footbridge over the river, go left on the gravel path and walk through the Avon Valley Nature Reserve, a beautiful stretch of the river with reed beds, water meadows, woodland and grassland. Sluice operators used to flood the water meadows in winter to protect grazing areas from severe weather and provide an “early bite” for stock in spring.

The path curves right (2) to meet a paved path where you turn left to reach a road (3). Cross and continue to the right on The Portway (4), a track leading to Old Sarum (5). Later, where it turns right you keep straight on over the field, then turn left through gates to meet the access road to Old Sarum.

First constructed in about 500BC by Iron Age people, Old Sarum was later occupied by Romans (who called it Sorviodunum) and Saxons. Today, it consists of a ruined castle, cathedral and bishop’s palace, built by William the Conqueror. Internal disputes, a poor water supply and the development of Salisbury in 1226 led to Old Sarum’s decline.

Retrace your steps to the access road and follow the track left along the field to emerge at Castle Road (6). Continue to Victoria Park, walk to the main gate, cross the road, pass Moberly Road (7) and over Victoria Road. Cross the bridge over the ring road and then the railway (8). Cross Wyndham Road and through Swaynes Close (9) on the footpath. Go right on Bedwin Street, left on Rollestone and right at Winchester Street to Endless Street and Market Square (10). Many of the lane and road names reflect the historic trades and activities in the area—Poultry Cross, Fish Row, Salt Lane and Butcher Row. Exposed wattle-and-daub walls exist on the first floor of Watson’s gift store on Queen Street. The Odeon Cinema, New Canal Street, is accessed through a medieval hall built in 1470 and restored by Pugin in 1834.

The Red Lion Hotel on Milford Street displays Parliament clocks—large, glassless-faced clocks that saved patrons the five-shilling tax levied on timepieces in 1797. There is also a German skeleton and organ clock carved by POWs of the Spanish Armada, it is claimed. Not to be outdone, the mummified hand of a card cheat is displayed in the Haunch of Venison pub on Minster Street.

Now, follow the route to Cathedral Close, which is well signposted. Voted England’s favourite view and inspiring Constable’s painting from across the water meadows, the 13th-century cathedral has the country’s tallest spire (404ft). From the west entrance there is an uninterrupted view of nearly 450ft to the high altar. It has the largest cloister in England, although it was never a monastery, and the chapter house holds one of only four surviving copies of the Magna Carta. Allow at least an hour to visit the cathedral and chapter house, perhaps stopping for refreshments in the Refectory Restaurant.

Leaving the cathedral, emerge on West Walk (11), where former prime minister Edward Heath lives. Also along here you will find The Wardrobe Military Museum, the Medieval Hall and the Salisbury Museum. To the north is the National Trust property, Mompesson House & Garden (open April to October only). To return, retrace the route following the signs to Salisbury station.