



Salisbury station circular walk

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

There is plenty to see and do on this short walk from Salisbury station. Starting out along the wonderful River Avon riverside path, it passes through the Avon Valley Nature Reserve to Old Sarum, a spectacularly located Iron Age fort with views over the medieval city of Salisbury. The route returns to the city's chequerboard layout through Market Square, along the High Street and into Cathedral Close, with its historic houses and magnificent 13th-century cathedral.

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.

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, keep straight on over the field, turn left through gates onto the access road to the great earthwork of Old Sarum. It was first constructed in 500BC and later occupied by Romans and Saxons. Today, it consists of a ruined castle, cathedral and bishop's palace, built by William the Conqueror. Internal disputes, 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 Rolleston 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. 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 (£5 donation suggested) has the country's tallest spire (125m). From the west entrance there is an uninterrupted view of nearly 140m 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.