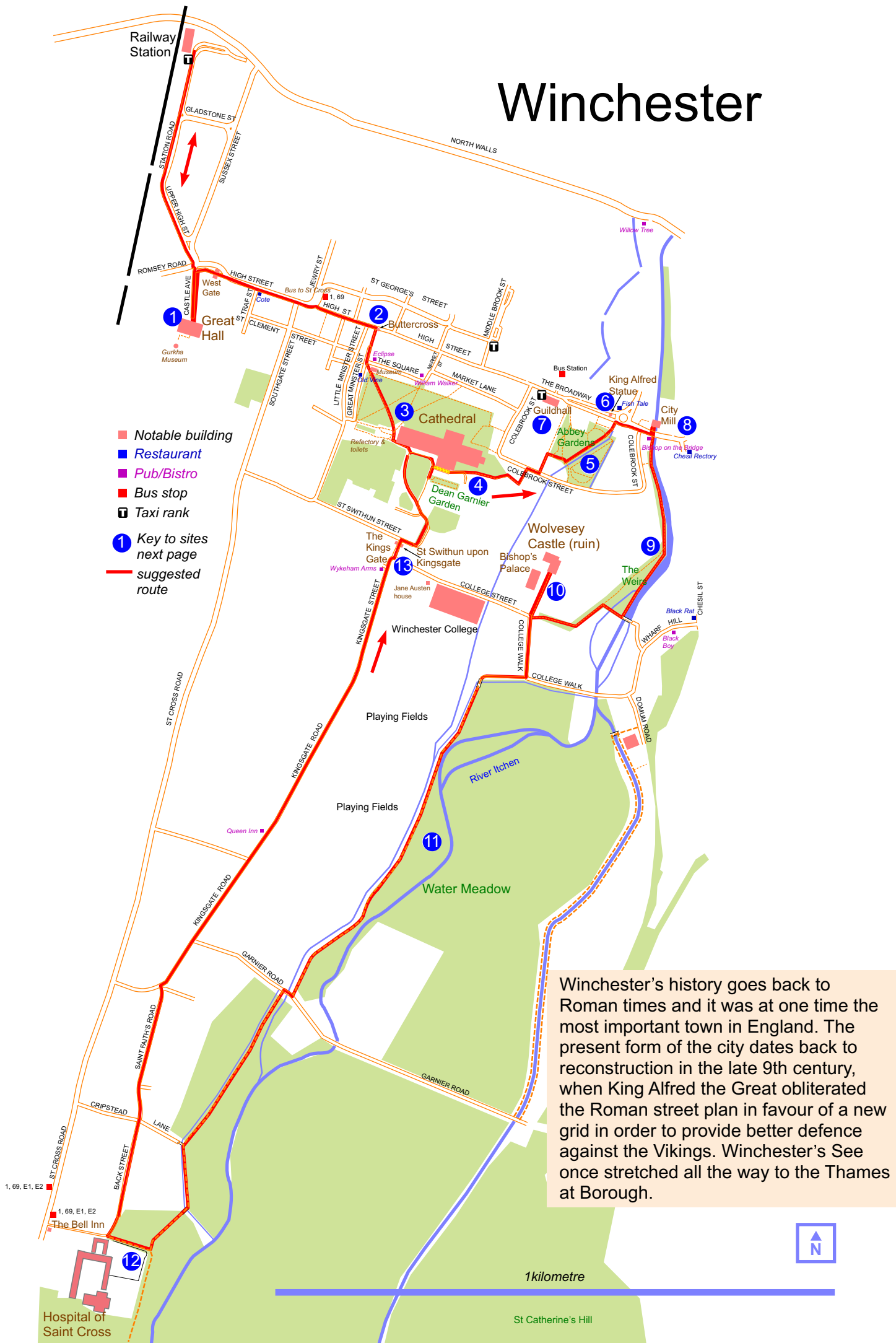


# Winchester



Winchester's history goes back to Roman times and it was at one time the most important town in England. The present form of the city dates back to reconstruction in the late 9th century, when King Alfred the Great obliterated the Roman street plan in favour of a new grid in order to provide better defence against the Vikings. Winchester's See once stretched all the way to the Thames at Borough.



1kilometre

## Itinerary

- 1 The Great Hall**, one of the finest surviving aisled halls of the 13th century is the only surviving part of Winchester Castle and houses the round table. Suggested donation of £3, toilets and shop. Occasionally shut for civic events see <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/greathall/greathall-visit.htm>. The Gurkha Museum is nearby.
- 2 The Buttercross**, Dated as early 15th Century the monument was restored in 1865. It was once used by countrymen to sell produce, hence the name Butter Cross. In 1770 it was sold off by the Paving Commissioners to a Mr Dummer. When he tried to remove it, the citizens of Winchester organised a small riot and preserved the monument for the City. There are now twelve figures on the monument. We stop for coffee before visiting:
- 3 Winchester Cathedral** The cathedral is the longest in Europe at 556 feet, built largely of stone from the Isle of Wight. Originally all Norman, started in the 1070s, there are several major periods of re-building in later styles up to the early 1500s (the three main phases of Gothic: Early English, Decorated and Perpendicular) You can still see the Norman roots of the Cathedral in its massive, round-arched crypt and transepts. The west end is a particularly good specimen of Perpendicular architecture. See the last page for a plan. Cnut was buried here in 1035 (There is a mortuary chest for King Canute and Queen Emma), as was William Rufus in 1100. Inside the base of Winchester's statue of Joan of Arc is said to be a stone taken from her prison cell in Rouen where she was tried and burnt at the stake. Secular names linked to this place include 17th-century angler Izaak Walton and the English novelist Jane Austen. Admission is £7.95 for a year, £6 for the tower tour. Occasionally, for services and special events it is necessary to close the Cathedral or part of the Cathedral to visitors, sometimes without advance notice. See <http://www.winchester-cathedral.org.uk/planning-your-visit/closure-notice/>
- 4 The Dean Garnier walled garden** is built over the remains of the dormitory the Benedictine monks of St Swithun's Priory. Dean Garnier, whose garden it became at the dissolution, was a founder member of the Hampshire Horticultural Society and created the beautiful garden and arboretum at nearby Bishopstoke Rectory. He also planted many of the mature trees that now surround the Cathedral.
- 5 The Abbey Gardens and Mill** are part of the site of St Mary's Abbey. In 1539 the Abbey was surrendered to Henry VIII as part of the Dissolution of the Monasteries and most of the buildings were demolished. The site was subsequently gifted to the City by Queen Mary Tudor to celebrate her marriage to Philip of Spain in the Cathedral in July 1554. The land was later divided into two, the eastern part was occupied by a fine town house and formal gardens that survive today as the Mayor of Winchester's official residence and the public park. The western part of the site was cleared for the City's Guildhall in 1873. Remains of St Mary's Abbey can be seen at the back of the Guildhall. The Abbey Mill, with the later addition of a Classical Portico, survives. The Abbey Mill Stream passed through the monastery to feed the fishponds and power the Mill.
- 6** As we exit the park the **statue of King Alfred** is in front of us. The statue of a suitably heroic but improbable Alfred was designed by Hamo Thornycroft, RA, and erected in 1899 to mark one thousand years since Alfred's death. The huge statue measures 17 feet from the base to the top of Alfred's arm. Curiously, the sword was made to be detachable, though the rest of the statue is a single, solid bronze casting. Local legend states that if a female virgin at least 16 years old walks around the statue three times in a clockwise direction, Alfred will lower his sword.
- 7 The Guildhall**, left, was built from 1871-1875 to a design by architects Skiller and Jeffrey. This era was the height of Victorian interest in medieval Gothic architecture so the style is Middle Pointed Gothic, made of sandstone with red stone dressing, under a slate roof. The guildhall houses a gallery above the Tourist Office. It offers local artists and artisans a place to exhibit their work through a series of regularly changing displays. The gallery features works of art, painting, prints, drawings, sculpture, ceramics, and crafts.
- 8** A mill has existed on the site of the **City Mill** since at least Saxon times. In 1539, following the Dissolution of the Monasteries, King Henry VIII took the Mill into Crown ownership. His daughter Queen Mary Tudor made a gift of it to the city in 1554, partly in recompense for the cost of her wedding in the nearby cathedral and partly in response to earlier pleas for financial assistance from the city. In 1743, a new tenant, the tanner James Cooke, began rebuilding and extending the medieval mill. This is the building you see today. Used for a while as a Youth Hostel with bathing in the mill race. National Trust £4 admission.
- 9 The weirs** public park is a fine place to stroll by one of the fast flowing streams of the River Itchen, between the river and the old outer walls of the town.

⑩ **Wolvesey Castle** was the original home of the Bishop of Winchester but is now a ruin. A palace was built on the same site by Christopher Wren for Bishop Morley in 1684. A wing of this Baroque house is the current residence of the Bishops of Winchester. The ruins are maintained by English Heritage, entry free.

⑪ Our walk to St Cross by **the water meadows** of the River Itchen follows in the footsteps of John Keats in 1819. The lightly graveled path is between two river branches for much of the way and the babbling of the water is ever present. The loop to St Cross to and from College Street is a little under 2 miles and takes about an hour at a reasonable pace and there are two pubs on the way back to The King's Gate. There are buses about every 15 minutes, stops indicated on the map. For me, however, the attraction of the trip to St Cross is mainly the walk itself.

⑫ **The Hospital of St Cross and Almshouse of Noble Poverty** is a medieval almshouse founded between 1113 and 1136. It is the oldest charitable institution in the United Kingdom. It is also the largest medieval almshouse in Britain, built on the scale of an Oxford college but older. It has been described as "England's oldest and most perfect almshouse. The Hospital was founded to support thirteen poor men, so frail that they were unable to work, and to feed one hundred men at the gates each day. The thirteen men became the Brothers of St Cross. Then, as now, they were not monks. St Cross is not a monastery but a secular foundation. In the fifteenth century, Cardinal Beaufort created the Order of Noble Poverty, adding the Almshouse to the existing Hospital buildings and giving St Cross the look that it has today. Entry £4.50. The tea room is open 10.30 to 12.30 and 2.30 to 4.30. On occasional days there may be some areas of the Hospital that are closed to the public for private events. Wherever possible notice will be given at <http://stcrosshospital.co.uk/visiting-st-cross/opening-times/> to advise of any restrictions, but please call the Porter's Lodge for up-to-date information (tel: 01962 851375).

⑬ At the end of the return from St Cross the route passes under the King's Gate and the church of **St Swithun's upon Kingsgate**, a church dating back to the Domesday Book. The church is open most days, entry free. After leaving the church turn right and into the cathedral precincts. You pass the timbered buildings which used to be the Bishop's Court, from where the way back to the cathedral becomes clear. From the cathedral, retrace steps to the railway station.

## Eating, drinking, traveling - check beforehand

### Pubs

**Bishop on the Bridge**, 1 High Street - Fullers pub, large, light and airy, background music, beer fine but food proved unappealing <http://www.bishoponthebridge.co.uk/>

**Black Boy**, Wharf Hill - a warren of a pub stuffed with quirky collections, some background music, cask Marque and interesting well served beer <http://www.theblackboypub.com/>

**Bell Inn**, St Cross Road - have read conflicting reports

**Eclipse**, The Square - a pleasant traditional pub by cathedral, no music.  
<http://www.eclipseinnwinchester.co.uk/>

**Queen Inn**, Kingsgate Road - popular, with the feel of a country pub, own beer, on way back from St Cross <http://www.thequeeninnwinchester.co.uk/>

**William Walker**, The Square - closed at time of visit, unable to check out, varying reviews

**Wykeham Arms**, Fullers up-market town pub near King's Gate with an accent on food and accommodation <http://www.wykehamarmswinchester.co.uk/>

### Restaurants

Winchester is awash with restaurants of all kinds of restaurants from chains like Cote and Rick Stein to individual ones like these:

**Chesil Rectory**, Chesil Street - Olde World setting, interesting menu <http://www.chesilrectory.co.uk/>

**Fish Tale**, East Gate Street - mainly good reviews <http://www.fishtalebarandgrill.co.uk/index.html>

**Old Vine**, opposite cathedral, have had a good meal there in the past  
<http://www.oldvinewinchester.com/>

**Black Rat**, Chesil Street - imaginative quirky menu, not cheap <http://www.theblackrat.co.uk/> Many coffee shops on the High Street near Minster Street and a tea place, Alexander's, on Little Minster Street (top of passageway).

### Travel

There is a 15 minute regular bus service serving Saint Cross, stop name The Bell Inn. There are 4 direct trains per hour back to London taking just over an hour.