



Norwich Heritage Walk

This heritage walk is approximately 1.5 miles (2.5 km) long and is mostly along pedestrianised streets. It will introduce you to the castle, cathedral and some of the other historic landmarks close to the city centre. Allow at least an hour, but you may want to take longer to enjoy it all! This route involves some slopes and uneven surfaces.

Itinerary

The tour starts at the Forum, on Millennium Plain. This is the building that rose in 2001 from the ashes of Norwich's library, which was destroyed by a fire. One of the newest buildings in the city, it's a good place to start exploring some of the oldest.

Opposite the Forum is St Peter Mancroft Church, built in 1430-55. It's such a fine building that it's sometimes mistaken for one of the city's two cathedrals. Inside, the full height of the wooden hammerbeam roof can be appreciated. The medieval stained glass in the East window shows scenes from the New Testament and is well worth taking time to see. This is just one of 31 medieval churches in Norwich – more than in any other city in Western Europe.

From St Peter Mancroft, you can wander into the Market Place. To avoid steps, go to the right of the church and turn left onto Gentleman's Walk. Norwich Market is the largest 6 day open market in the country, and has stood here for over 900 years. Follow the slope down to cross Gentleman's Walk, and through a tiled archway into the Art Nouveau splendour of the Royal Arcade, designed by Norwich architect George Skipper. When this remarkable building was opened in 1899, it was described as “a fragment from the Arabian Nights dropped into the heart of the old city”. Among its many elaborate features are tiles showing peacocks and other exotic themes. (If the Arcade is closed, divert to the left via Davey Place, then turning right towards the Arcade.) Continue out of the Arcade. As you walk up a slight slope, take a moment to look back at the ornate tiled façade.

Cross Castle Meadow into Castle Gardens for a closer view of Norwich Castle. This was built as a military stronghold by the Normans, although from 1345 it acted as the county jail. The 1800s saw great changes for the Castle. It underwent a Victorian restoration and became the city museum and art

gallery, as it is now. On a visit to the massive castle keep you can still see how it would have looked when the Normans were there.

If you have time, you can walk or take the lift to the top of the Castle mound and look out across the city. Retrace your steps and turn right in front of the Arcade, along Castle Street, then following round to the right into London Street. As you bear right here you will pass the former London and Provincial Bank, another Victorian building by George Skipper, with its statues and ornamentation. Further up London Street is the current NatWest Bank, which looks more like a church in the style of Sir Christopher Wren, but was actually built in 1928.

At the top of London Street, cross over into Queen Street (by the medieval church of St Michael at Plea, with its more recent "Forget-me-not" clock). At the end of Queen Street, cross over onto Tombland, once the site of the city market until the Normans moved it to make room for the Cathedral Close. Now Tombland is mainly occupied by cafe and restaurant terraces. Ahead is the stone and flint archway of St Ethelbert's Gate, which leads you into the Cathedral Close itself. (The other main entrance to the close is the Erpingham Gate, further to your left along Tombland).

There is much to explore here - the quiet spaces of the Close with its range of historic buildings, the Cathedral Cloisters and their medieval roof bosses, the new Refectory and, of course, the Norman Cathedral itself.

Continue the walk at the Erpingham Gate, opposite Norwich Cathedral's West door. As you walk through here you will see ahead of you the half-timbered – and oddly angled – Augustine Steward's House, which dates from 1549. Cross here, near the memorial to Edith Cavell. A locally born nurse, Edith Cavell was executed in 1915 for her role in helping soldiers escape from occupied Belgium. Turn right and walk along Wensum Street to St Simon and St Jude's Church, where you turn left on to Elm Hill.

Elm Hill is a narrow cobbled thoroughfare of picturesque buildings ranging in origin from the early 1500s to the Georgian era. It became one of the most prestigious streets in the city, and was once home to Mayors and Sheriffs. Today, many of the attractive old buildings contain unusual and specialised shop and galleries. Bear left after the Britons Arms, a thatched building dating from the 15th century (which was an inn for many years and is still a coffee house & restaurant), and continue up the hill.

Turn right into St Andrew's Hall Plain. The flint-faced building of St Andrews Hall was once a huge church, part of the Dominican Friary on this site, and has stood here since 1471. Opposite the Hall is St Andrew's Church. This 500-year-old church is second only in size to St Peter Mancroft and is believed to be where Abraham Lincoln's ancestors worshipped in the city (their rural stronghold was at Hingham, about 15 miles East of Norwich).

Cross the road (St Andrew's Street) and go up Bridewell Alley, to the right of the church. The Bridewell, which gives its name to this characterful alleyway,

was once a medieval merchant's house and a Victorian prison, but now hosts an excellent museum about trade and industry in Norwich.

Cross Bedford Street into Swan Lane , turn right onto London Street and bear right alongside Jarrolds towards the Guildhall. The Guildhall's south-east face is now in view, with its distinctive chequerboard flintwork. The building dates from 1407 and was the centre of government and justice for the city for over 500 years.

Overlooking the Guildhall and market place is the Art Deco City Hall which was opened in 1938. Don't miss the imposing bronze lions that flank the City Hall steps, as you return to the tour's starting point at the Forum.

Interesting sights on this walk

- The Forum
- St Peter Mancroft Church
- Norwich Market
- Royal Arcade
- Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery
- Tombland
- Norwich Cathedral
- Cathedral Close
- Erpingham Gate
- Elm Hill
- The Britons Arms
- The Halls
- St Andrew's Church
- The Guildhall
- City Hall