

# Salisbury Walking Tour

Updated - May 2025

- A. Guildhall Steps – the tour starts here as this is the main meeting point for groups. Stand on the steps looking out. Behind you is the Guildhall built in 1795 it used to be a courthouse and now is a meeting venue for the City Council. In front of you is the War Memorial ( you will see the recumbent bronze lion on top of it. Ask the students to go and find out what it is and come back and tell you.

While still on the steps point out on the right the Cross Keys Arcade – shopping centre – home of TK Maxx.

Although it looks like one massive square it is actually two. The Square in front of the Guildhall is the Guildhall Square and to your left is the bigger Market Square – walk there now. As you do you will see a signpost giving distances to other places in the world called Salisbury.

- B. Standing in the middle of the Market Square with the Ox Row and Market Inn behind you, you should be looking at a department store called Bradbeers. The street in front of that with lots of bus stops is called Blue Boar Row after a 15<sup>th</sup> century pub that used to stand there – ask the students if they know what a boar is? Where Bradbeers stands was the site of the beheading of the Duke of Buckingham in 1483 and his ghost still haunts that site.
- C. The Market Square is a very old location and there has been a market held here since 1227 and lots of the streets around the market square reflect the type of things that were sold in the market. If you turn around to see the two pubs one is called the Ox Row because the little street in front of it was where cattle were sold – ask students if they know what an ox is. You can also tell them that there is still a market here on Tuesdays and Saturdays.
- D. With the Ox Row pub on your left walk to the corner of the Market Square where you can see the Yorkshire Building Society – if you come of the square there you will see Poultry Cross - again you can ask students what Poultry means. This is where hens were sold – and the Cross was built to offer shelter to the market stall owners – it has been there for 600 years. You can also tell them that there were three other Crosses around the Market – for Cheese, for Wool and for Livestock.



- E. Directly behind the Poultry Cross is a pub called the Haunch of Venison – this pub is 700 years old and was also a brothel in its history and is one of the most haunted pubs in England – the two most famous Ghost being the Grey Lady and an 18<sup>th</sup> century gentlemen card player who got into a fight in the pub – had his hand cut off and haunts the building looking for his hand – and if you go inside you can still see the hand today!

You can also explain to students about Haunch of Venison – meaning the leg of a deer and why so many English pubs have 'pictorial' names – The Blue Boar, The Haunch of Venison, The Red Lion

etc. This is because in a time before ordinary people could read, pubs would hang a picture or a model outside so they could identify themselves – a sort of medieval branding exercise.

- F. Turn round, keeping the Poultry Cross at your back, to face the narrow streets in front of you -these are Butcher Row leading on to Fish Row – ask students why these streets have these names? Obviously because they were part of the market – and this is what would happen in these streets – if you look down at the ground you will see a stone lined channel running down the middle of these streets. This was where all the blood, guts and waste would be washed away.
- G. Turn around again – on your left is Boots, walk along side Boots until you see Café Nero and Barclays. Cross the road towards Café Nero and head towards Cote Brasserie. On your right is St Thomas' church. Originally there was a wooden church on this site used by the men building the cathedral. The stone church was built about 600 years ago. There is said to be a secret tunnel that connects the church to the Haunch of Venison. Inside, and this may not interest the students ut might the group leaders, there is one of England's best preserved Doom wall paintings – which were great Church propaganda showing people what would await them if they carried on being sinners.



- H. Turn back and with Café Nero on your left cross the road and head straight. Once you have crossed the road you will see Waterstones the Bookstore ahead of you. This store used to be W H Smith's , the newsagent, and if you look up you can see a clock where the numbers have been replaced with the letters of W H Smith's – and the little weathervane on the top is a newspaper delivery boy.
- I. Walk past Waterstones and immediately on your left is the Boston Tea Party café – not that interesting but the building is – look up and you will see just how old it is. This used to be the Old George Inn – hence the name of the shopping mall which can be accessed underneath the BTP.

Much of this building dates back to the 1300s and Shakespeare and his players stayed there in 1608, on their way to nearby Wilton, and are said to have rehearsed As You Like It in the back

garden (now the shopping mall). Oliver Cromwell spent a night there in 1645, Samuel Pepys in 1668 and Charles Dickens in 1845, where it is believed he wrote some of *Martin Chuzzlewit*.

- J. Walk past the BTP and you are now heading towards the Cathedral. Just before you cross the road look over the crossing - on your right there is a Prezzo but on your left is a clothes shop called Anokhi. It doesn't look important but that building is one of the oldest in Salisbury. This is Mitre House, said to be the first house built in Salisbury and is where Bishop Richard Poore is said to have lodged to oversee the building of the cathedral. Although now a clothes shop, it is still also used for its original purpose of being the location where a new Bishop of the city will put on his robes. Traditionally, new bishops dismount from their horse in nearby Bishopdown, hence the name, and walk into the city as pilgrims. They then put on their robes in Mitre House, before entering the Close. If you look up at the wall you will see a blue bishop's hat painted on it.



- K. With Mitre House on your left walk forward towards the Cathedral. You will be passing through the High Street Gate – before you get to it, on your left is an old-fashioned sweet shop so undoubtedly the students will need to visit that!

Once they have, on with the tour. The High Street Gate was built between 1327 and 1342 and housed the little jail for those convicted of misdeeds within the Cathedral Close. A portcullis used to be lowered every night to lock the gate, which has since been removed, but the gates are still locked between 11pm and 6am. As you walk through the gate and look up behind you there is a statue of Edward VII which was added in 1902 and which replaced a statue of Charles I who had replaced a statue of Henry III.

Front

Rear



Once through the Gate on your left as some Alms-houses - charitable homes for the poor – this one is called the College of Matrons. Erected in 1682 as alms-houses for the widows of clergy and paid for by Bishop Seth Ward, it is still part of Salisbury alms-houses.



- L. The beautiful open space you are now in is called Choristers Square – you could ask the students what they think a Chorister is. This square before the Cathedral grounds is surrounded by beautiful buildings that are no either museums, parts of schools or some private residences.
- M. Now you are at the cathedral – you can explain about a cathedral – they are always big churches but they are called cathedrals because they are the ‘Seat’ of a bishop – the word comes from the Latin ‘cathedra’ meaning chair. Salisbury Cathedral has some pretty good facts
  - a. It was built quite quickly for a cathedral - taking only 38 years between 1220 and 1258
  - b. The massive tower and spire (check the students know what a spire is) was added a bit later in 1330s
  - c. The spire really is massive at 123 metres high and with a light on top to warn aircraft! It also weighs in at 6,500 tonnes
  - d. the cathedral also owns the oldest working modern clock in the world dating back to 1386
  - e. it has the best-preserved of the four surviving original copies of Magna Carta – the Magna Carta written in 1215 is the basis of a lot of law in Great Britain. It was created to control the powers of the king. It also influenced the writing of the American constitution some 560 years later.

- N. If your students have not booked and paid for a tour, they will not be going into the main body of the cathedral but they can go to the cloisters for free – where there are also toilets and a café. The entrance to the cloisters is to the right of the main west front of the cathedral



A cloister is a covered walkway, typically found in religious buildings like monasteries or cathedrals, that connects various parts of the building and often surrounds a central courtyard. Its primary purpose was to provide a space for religious contemplation, study, and a means of connecting different areas. The Cloister in Salisbury Cathedral is the largest in all of England and forms a perfect square.

- O. Once you have finished at the Cathedral head back out across Choristers Square and back out through the High Street Gate and head to Waterstones. At Waterstones turn right into New Canal - so called because it was a 'new' drainage channel created in the Middle Ages – it is still there about 2 meters under the road surface.

Ahead you will see a taxi rank on the left and a lot of bus stops on your side of the road – there you will find the central Odeon cinema -and what has to be Britain's strangest cinema as its foyer is a medieval hall built by a wool merchant called John Halle. The outside is not original but if you walk through the entry doors you are inside a Middle Ages building built in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.



- P. On leaving the Odeon continue up New Canal until you reach the crossroads with Queen Street and Catherine Street – you will see Nando's on the corner. Turn left into Queen Street and that will take you back to the Guildhall and the end of your tour.