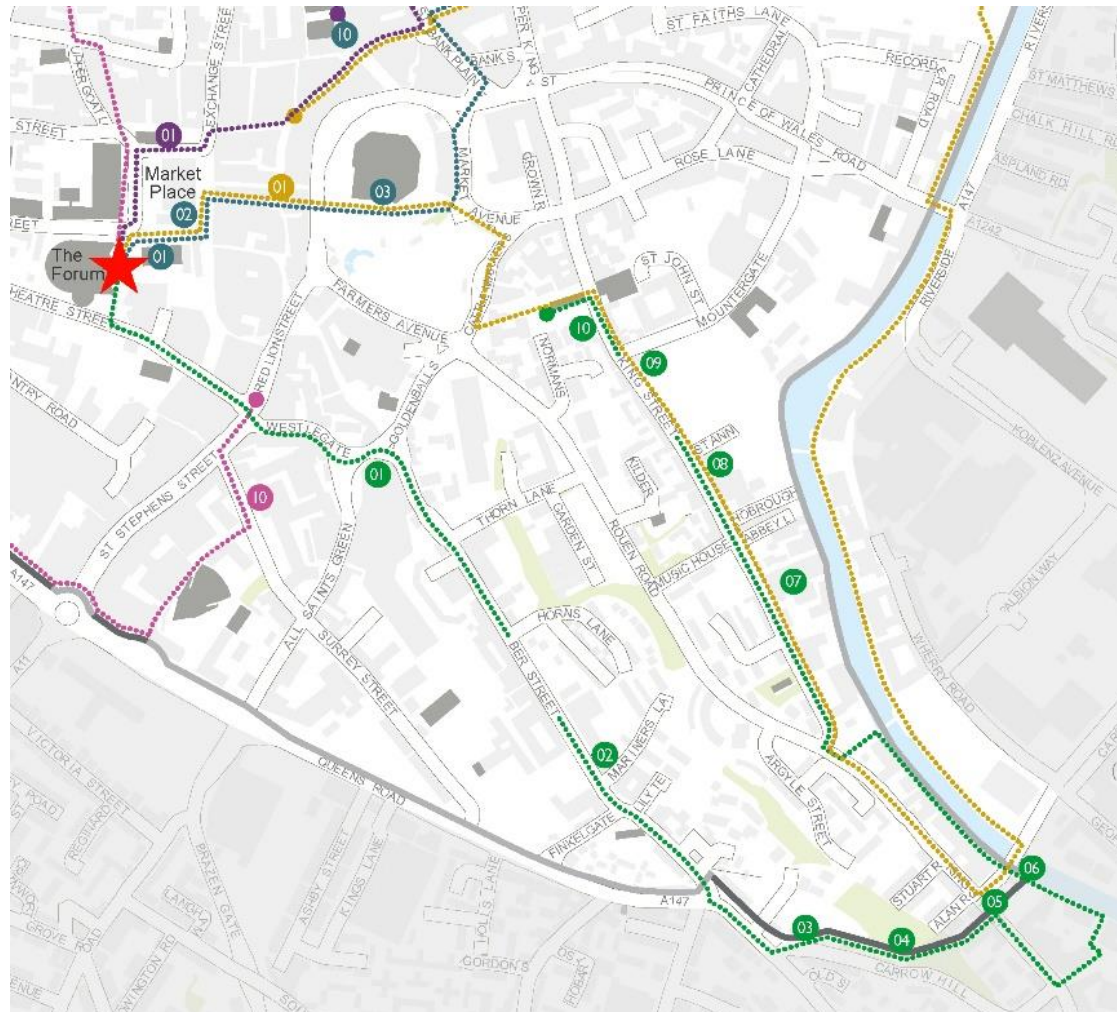


Glimpses of Medieval Norwich – Norwich’s Pleasure Gardens

This walk takes you to sections of the city wall between the end of Ber Street and the river that formed part of Norwich’s famous pleasure gardens in the 18th century.

Walk: 2 hours Access: This route has a section with over 100 steps. For those who wish it an alternative level route is indicated

It is one of five trails to help you explore Norwich’s medieval walls, and discover other medieval treasures along the way. Work started on the walls in 1294 and they were completed in the mid-14th century. When completed they formed the longest circuit of urban defences in Britain, eclipsing even those of London. Today only fragments remain but, using these walking trails you will discover that much of Norwich’s medieval past.



Route directions

The walk begins at the Forum. On leaving the Forum turn right into Theatre Street and cross at the zebra crossing.

Turn left down Theatre Street. This soon becomes Rampant Horse Street.

Pass St Stephen's Church on your right.

At the crossroads continue straight ahead up Westlegate passing All Saints' church on your left. In front of you is the John Lewis store and to your right is All Saints Green.

01

Cross All Saints Green, to the John Lewis side of the road and then walk clockwise round John Lewis to the other side of the store and Ber Street.

Notable features along the way

Why Rampant Horse? Because there was a horse market in the street.

St. Stephen's Church was built around 1350 but restored and largely rebuilt in the C16th.

'Westlegate' is the site of a former wheat market.

All Saints' Church was built in the C15th. Like so many churches in Norwich, it is now redundant, and has been repurposed as an antiques centre and cafe.

All Saints Green was the site of a Saxon market before the Norman Conquest. In Elizabethan times this was the only place within the walls where cattle could be slaughtered. All Saints was a thriving parish, with the Swine Market in the plain in front of the church, then, after the pigs had moved out, a Timber Market. The population was nearly wiped out in the Black Death in 1349, and the area gradually became desolate.

Ber Street was probably one of the main north/south Roman roads into the city. The street was also known as Blood and Guts street as it had a long association with butchers and slaughterhouses. Cattle drovers took their cattle down this street to the old cattle market situated where the Castle Mall now sits.



After about 50m pause just by the John Lewis car park entrance.

At this point there are views along the horizon across the valley to the old regimental barracks (with clock tower) and the modern water tower. This ridge was where Robert Kett, gentleman farmer from Wymondham, massed his followers in 1549. Kett's Rebellion comprised peasant farmers protesting against the enclosure of land which robbed them of common grazing rights. Kett's troops overran Norwich but were quickly defeated and executed.

Ber Street was notable for old yards (more than 40 in 1884). These were groups of dwellings squeezed in behind older buildings and accessible through an arch or passageway. They were built from the C16th onwards in order to provide accommodation for the increasing numbers of workers without encroaching on Norwich's green spaces. These yards were crowded, insanitary with shared facilities, and unhealthy due to the lack of ventilation and dismal light. Most were demolished during the early C20th slum clearances.

In the next 100-200m on the right hand side see if you can spot Fiddy's Yard, a modern memorial to the old yards, and Lock & Key Yard where cattle drovers used to leave money and valuables as it was considered a safe place.

Walk back a few yards from Fiddy's Yard and cross the road at the pedestrian crossing. Turn right to continue along Ber Street.

You will pass a fragment of the ruined medieval church of St Bartholomew on your left.



Continue along Ber Street passing the church of St John de Sepulchre on your right. Opposite is a row of early cottages.

Just beyond the Ber Street Gates Pub on your left, are the remains of the city wall adjacent to the site of the Ber Street Gate.

02

Look back at the Ber Street pub.

Of particular note are 156 and 160. No.160 was built c.1450 with the upper part added in 1590. It is particularly rustic with a ground floor built of flint rubble.



Only at Ber Street, to the east of the site of the gate, does the wall survive to its full height including the parapet wall of the wall walk with merlons and crenellations. From this section it is possible to get some sense of the scale of the wall, here almost 7 metres high, and would appear even taller from the ditch side, which would have been some 20 feet deep and 60 feet wide.



The Ber Street Gate was built in the early C14th across the old Roman road. It was rebuilt in 1340 and 1727 and demolished in 1807. On the wall of the Ber Street Gates public house is a 1930s bas-relief of the gate by John Moray-Smith taken from a drawing by John Ninham 1754-1817, who in turn based the view on John Kirkpatrick's early 18th century drawing of the gate. He produced 'Views of the Gates of Norwich' in 1792-3 though it was not published until 1861. He managed to draw the interiors and exteriors of 11 out of 12 gates and these provide an invaluable record of these vanished monuments.



Continue along the pavement joining Bracondale, the main road. Just beyond the pedestrian crossing turn left down Carrow Hill . After about 25 metres turn left through the gates of 2-4 Carrow Hill. Then immediately right along the city wall.

03

The path takes you through a gap in the wall so you are now walking on the inside. Note the arches supporting the high level wall walk leading to the Black Tower with clear evidence of the entry to the wall walk from the Tower.

04

This is one of the longest and best preserved sections of the walls, possibly because it is built on steep ground which was unsuitable for housing or industry therefore was not demolished or incorporated. Note the arrow slits and putlog holes (where the building scaffolding rested).



You are now on the site of the pleasure gardens known as The Wilderness which opened in 1750. From the late seventeenth century until the mid-nineteenth Norwich was home to a succession of pleasure gardens. The Wilderness was popular and became famous for its breakfast entertainments. In the evenings the walls were illuminated and there were walks through the gardens and views from the towers.



The Black Tower is one of the most impressive and best preserved towers in the city walls. It was used to house plague victims in the 1620s and '30s. It was subsequently used as a snuff mill and cotton spinning mill.

NB- Ahead of you there are over 100 steep steps going down. If you are unable to tackle steps you can retrace the route back to Carrow Hill and turn left. At the bottom turn left again and rejoin the trail at Carrow Bridge approximately 100m around the corner.

If you want to explore around the Black Tower turn right through the last of the arches immediately before the Tower. This narrow stepped path takes you round the base of the tower. You could continue to the bottom of the hill as an alternative way down, but the route is not as well maintained as that described below.

Having explored retrace the route to the main path.

For those who can manage lots of steps, continue along the main path and then down 65 steps to a tower. Go down a further 33 steps round to the base of the tower. Continue along a path next to a fine section of the city wall.

Continue alongside the wall down to King Street.

05

This is where the city gate used to cross the street between the surviving sections of city wall and the modern road is still one of the main thoroughfares into Norwich.



The Connisford (or King's Ford) Gate is referred to between 1175 and 1186 even before the walls were built. It was demolished in 1794.



Turn right and continue along King Street for about 100m, round the bend and cross the street by the pedestrian crossing.

Turn left and walk back along King Street for about 50m.

Turn right down a factory/flats access road opposite Carrow Hill.

Go down the steps beyond the Pay & Display point (marked on the photo) straight ahead of you.

Most of these industrial buildings from the old Colman's factory have been converted to residential use. Don't worry that it looks a bit private – there is a riverside public path at the bottom. -



This is the site of the old Carrow Bridge, which was built in 1810 on the old Carrow Road (now Carrow Hill). The new bridge on a diverted Carrow Road was built in 1923.



Turn left and walk along the river.

06

Continue on the path as it turns left and goes uphill and return to King Street. Turn right and walk around the corner, crossing the river by the Carrow Bridge.

10m beyond the bridge take a right turn between bushes down a narrow stepped path. Turn right and walk under Carrow Bridge along the riverside path.

Walk for about 200m until you get to the Novi Sad Friendship Bridge. Cross the bridge and turn right into King Street.

You will pass some interesting buildings from Norwich's C19th industrial heritage, notably the home of Colmans Mustard. Some buildings have plaques indicating their former use.

You get a glimpse of the Boom Towers as you approach them. The towers held chains across the river to restrict entry to Norwich and enable tax collection on goods being carried by river traffic. Richard Spynk, a local merchant who funded the walls building programme, supplied the defences at the Boom Towers in around 1343. There is a description of them on a plaque on the wall of a nearby building.

Pause on the bridge and you get an excellent view of the Boom Towers. You can see that, with the addition of a stout chain barrier, this would prevent any unauthorised entry to Norwich by the river.

King Street is probably the oldest and longest thoroughfare in Norwich. It probably formed part of a Roman route and was settled before the Norman invasion. A number of religious establishments were located there and, by the end of the medieval period, the great families of England had colonised the street. When the gentry fled the increasingly squalid conditions of the City, the once great houses were turned into tenements. By the C19th King Street was one of the most populated parts of the city.



Walk for about 200m. On your right, painted dark pink, is the Music House.

07

Opposite the Music House is a row of houses, 170-180 King Street.

Continue to Dragon Hall on the right.

08

This is thought to be the oldest surviving house in Norwich. The first element of the building is a two storey structure at right angles to King Street started in the early C12th. In 1175 the building was extended south along King Street. It got its name during the Elizabethan period when the city's official band of musicians practised there. The Norwich Waits were a famous band of five musicians who all lived in King Street and were presented with their instruments by Queen Elizabeth I who visited Norwich in 1578. In the C18th the building was purchased by Young, Crawshay and Youngs (one of city's big 4 breweries) adjacent to their Crown Brewery and used as a pub for the next 150 years.



These houses date from the C16th. To the left of Ship Yard was the Ship Inn, which operated as early as the late C18th. Rather misleadingly, a carved lintel above the entrance to Ship Yard proclaims it as the Princes In. It is thought that this was salvaged from a hostelry of that name which was located in Tombland in the late C14th.



This is a unique survival of an early C15th merchant trading hall. The undercroft dates from 1330 with C14th and C15th additions. It is now occupied by the Writers' Centre, which offers occasional tours.



Opposite on your left before Dragon Hall is St Julian's Alley. You can make a detour to see St Julian's Church where Lady Julian of Norwich was an anchoress in the C14th.

Julian of Norwich was the author of the first surviving book by a woman in the English Language. She had a series of visions in 1373 which prompted her to become an anchoress. Due to bomb damage during WW2 what you see today is a reconstruction of the original mid C11th church. You can visit Lady Julian's cell, now a chapel, where she lived for over 40 years. She would participate in church services through a window into the chancel, and counsel visitors through a window into the street. The Norman archway to the 'cell' comes from the church of St Michael-at-Thorn (gutted in 1942 air raids).



A further 100m on your right is Howard House, built as the garden house of the Duke of Norfolk in 1660.

The garden boasted a bowling green and many fine walks. Now sadly in a decrepit state it is being restored as part of a major housing development called St Anne's Quarter. This is the site of the ancient Austin Friars Priory.



09

Behind Howard House was another one of Norwich's famed pleasure gardens - 'My Lord's Garden'. This later became the site of another of the City's big breweries - Morgans. In May 1845 Walter Morgan, one of the owners, was found drowned in a fermentation vat.

Just beyond Howard House on your left is a row of half-timbered houses fronting Raven Yard.

The houses would have been a single unit when they were built in the early C17th for the Berney family, a rich influential dynasty. Richard Berney's tomb is in St Peter Parmentergate just ahead of you on the left.



10

On your left is St Peter Parmentergate. Go up the path through the churchyard church and you will come out at Cattle Market next to the Crystal House.

You have now come to the end of the walk. You should be able to see Norwich Castle up above you.

If you want to find out more about Norwich's medieval past visit Norwich's premier museums - the Castle, the Museum of Norwich at the Bridewell and Strangers Hall.

The Crystal House is not medieval but very striking. Inspired by the Great Exhibition of 1851, Holmes & Sons engineers built this glass and steel structure in 1863 as a showcase for their steam engines.



Norwich Castle Keep was built in 1120 on top of an earlier earth defensive mound. From the C14th to the C19th it was used as the county gaol. In 1894 it was converted into a civic museum. The exterior was refaced in the 1830s by architect Edward Boardman largely following the original design.

