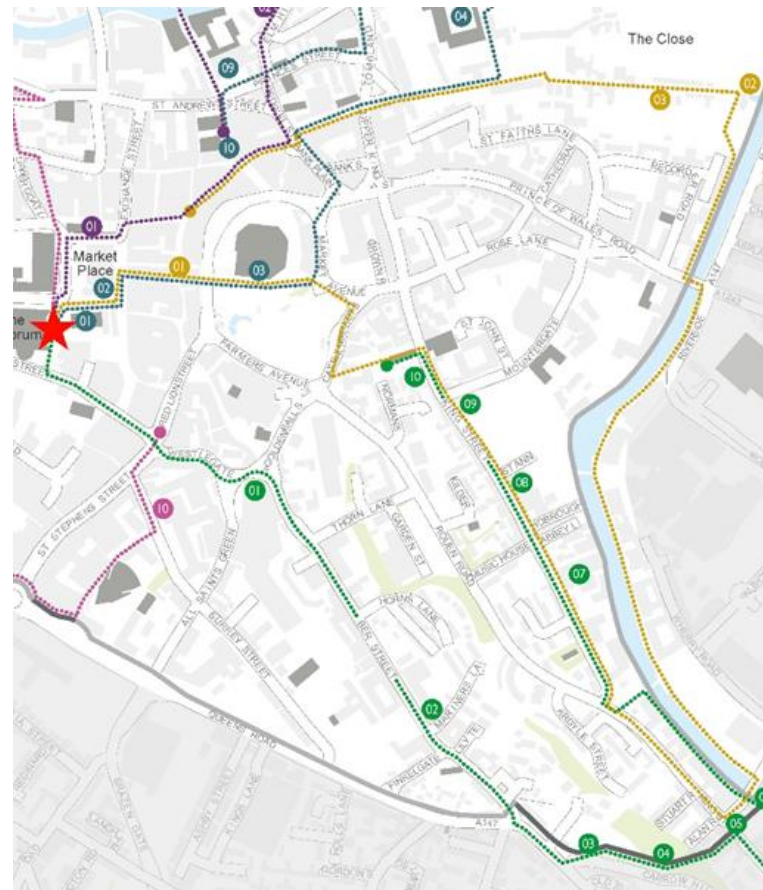


Gateways to Medieval Norwich – Riverside

This walk takes you along the section of the River Wensum that formed part of Norwich's defences and down historic King Street, the oldest and longest thoroughfare in Norwich and home of the wealthiest medieval merchant families.

Walk: 1 ½ - 2 hours

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

Starting at the Forum, take the path to the left of St Peter Mancroft and walk through the churchyard with Norwich Market on your left.

At the bottom of the slope turn left into Gentleman's Walk.

Immediately on the right is the Royal Arcade. Walk through the Arcade.

01

Continue up the slope to Castle Meadow via Arcade Street. You will see Norwich Castle immediately ahead.

Notable features along the way

St Peter Mancroft was built in 1430 on the site of an earlier church built by the Normans. It is one of the finest parish churches in the country and well worth a visit. It was the first place in the world to have rung a true peel of bells on 2nd May 1715.

The Great Market was established between 1071 and 1075 following the Norman Conquest. Norwich's market was originally in Tombland, which you will be visiting at the end of your walk.

Designed by notable local architect George Skipper the Royal Arcade was built in 1899 on the coaching yard of the old Royal Hotel, retaining the old Royal's frontage. This magnificent example of Art Nouveau architecture is still a popular shopping destination. It contains the unique Colman's Mustard shop and museum.

Norwich Castle Keep was built in 1120 on top of an earlier earth defensive mound. From the 14th to the 19th century it was used as the county gaol. In 1894 it was converted into a museum of art, archaeology, natural history and decorative arts. The exterior was refaced in the 1830s largely following the original design.



Cross over the pedestrian crossing and take the path immediately ahead through the Castle Gardens.

Continue through the gardens taking the left hand fork (direction Shirehall/ Cathedral) to the exit gate and into Market Avenue.

Turn right and cross the access road to the underground car park

Follow the road round to the right into Rose Lane. Cross over at the pedestrian crossing. On your right is a building known as the Crystal House.

You are now walking through the castle moat, which would originally have been twice as deep but has gradually filled in over the centuries. The present bridge to the castle is the oldest bridge in Norwich and one of the oldest in the country.

Spanning the underground entrance is the Duke's Palace Bridge, which spanned the River Wensum from 1822 to 1972. The cast iron bridge was saved by the Norwich Society when it was demolished as part of a road widening scheme, presented to Castle Mall and re-erected in 1992.

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.



**Go down the lane to the left of the Crystal House passing through the churchyard of St Peter Parmentergate
At the end of the churchyard turn right into King Street.**

On your right at 86 King Street is a row of half-timbered houses fronting Raven Yard.

On your left is Howard House, built as the garden house of the Duke of Norfolk in 1660.

St Peter Parmentergate was originally much smaller and in the Norman style. It was presented to the Cathedral Priory in the late 11th century by Roger Bigod, then completely rebuilt in the late C15th and early C16th.

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.

The houses would have been a single unit when they were built in the early 17th century for the Berney family, a rich influential dynasty. Richard Berney's tomb is in St Peter Parmentergate.

Note the number of yards leading off main thoroughfares in Norwich. These were groups of dwellings squeezed in behind older buildings and accessible through an arch or passageway. 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.

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. Behind Howard House was 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!



Continue to Dragon Hall on the left.

Opposite on your right 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.

Return to King Street, turn right and continue for around 100m to the Music House on your left.

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.

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).

This is thought to be the oldest surviving house in Norwich, early C12th. 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 St. 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.



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

Continue straight on, passing St Etheldreda (ex-church) Studios. At the end of King Street where it joins Rouen Rd at the Novi Sad Friendship Bridge, bear left and continue straight ahead to the junction with Carrow Road.

When you get to Carrow Road pause.

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.

As you pass Stuart Road and Alan Road on your right look upwards and you can get a glimpse of the Black Tower and an intermediate tower on the most complete stretch of the city walls (visited in detail in the Norwich Pleasure Gardens walk).

Just opposite you, across the traffic, you will see the medieval walls either side of the road. 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 left and cross Carrow Bridge. Pause in the centre and look to your right where you will see the remains of the Boom Towers.

The Boom Towers fulfilled the same function on the river as the main gates through the walls; they provided control over the movement of goods in and out of the city where they could be taxed. Vessels were prevented from entering Norwich by two great chains of Spanish iron wound by a windlass until the tax was paid; 4d (or about £9 today) for a 'ship of bulk' and 2d for others.



Immediately after the bridge turn left along the river and take the Riverside Walk for about around 500m passing under the Novi Sad Friendship Bridge and the Lady Julian Bridge.

On your left across the river are the remnants of C19th industrial buildings, including Reads Flour Mills, now converted into flats. The Music House, which you passed on King Street, was part of Young Crawshay, Youngs Crown Brewery. You can see the rear of Dragon Hall, which used St. Anne's Staithe on the corner of the river for the trading of goods.



With the Rail Station on your right, cross the Prince of Wales Road bridge. Turn left and then immediately right through the terrace of the Compleat Angler public house (don't worry, this is part of the riverside access) and down the steps to the continuation of the riverside walk.

Continue until you get to Pulls Ferry – around 200m pleasant walk along a tree-lined path.

02

The River Wensum is home to hundreds of swans. In medieval times swans were reserved for the table of the king and a handful of privileged nobles and clerics. Further along the river (and visited on the Cathedral Quarter trail) is the swan pit connected to the Great Hospital. Here, cygnets were kept in a purpose-built confined area, until they were ready for the dining table. The pit was in use until WWII when it was forced to close due to the grain shortage. By this time the hospital had been supplying oven-ready swans for the tables of the rich all over the country.



Pulls Ferry is the water gate for Norwich Cathedral. In the C15th an arched gateway was built across the canal, and the current Ferry House was built a century later. The house was used as an inn, but also as a home for a ferryman carrying people across the Wensum.

Turn left up Ferry Lane towards the Cathedral, passing the old stables on the right. You will then see the impressive form of Norwich Cathedral.

03

Continue past the lower green and the Cathedral Herb Garden fronted by wrought iron fencing and then the upper green on your right.

A canal, dug at the end of the 11th century, originally ran alongside this narrow road in order to transport stone from the River Wensum to the Cathedral building site. Heavy stone from Caen, France, timber from the Baltic and iron from Sweden came through the watergate.

On the left next to 21 Ferry Lane is the site of Browne's Meadow, leased to Sir Thomas Browne (1605-82), one of the great thinkers of the English Renaissance.

10-12 Lower Close on the left was the location of St Mary in the Marsh Church, closed 1564 but much of the building remains within these properties.

Norwich Cathedral was founded in 1096 by the first Bishop of Norwich, Bishop Herbert de Losinga. In order to create the new cathedral, priory and precinct, several existing churches and many homes were destroyed. The cathedral precinct or 'Close' is the largest to survive in England and also has the largest number of residential houses within it. These houses range from C17th townhouses to homes converted from what remained of the fourteenth and fifteenth century monastic buildings.



The Norwich School

The Close is also the home to the prestigious Norwich School. It is almost certain that Bishop de Losinga started the school soon after the commencement of the building of Norwich Cathedral as part of the Benedictine Priory in 1096. Horatio Nelson was a pupil for a short time. The school is now co-educational.



Continue straight on and exit the Cathedral Close through the Ethelbert Gate.

The Ethelbert Gate was built in about 1316. The monks needed strong walls and gates to protect themselves against citizens during various disagreements. In the uprising of 1272 aggrieved citizens even set fire to the Close and destroyed the previous Ethelbert Gate. Architecturally the Ethelbert Gate is of great importance. Its sides are decorated in flushwork, a decorative technique developed in Norfolk, which uses hard-to-come-by freestone, to edge panels of the more readily available knapped flint.



You are now in Tombland

The name Tombland comes from two Old English words meaning 'open ground', or an empty space. This area was used as the main market place for Norwich and was the centre of activity before the Normans arrived in England in 1066. The Normans built an imposing castle on a high mound to the south and moved the main market area adjacent to the castle so they could keep a close eye on what passed. Tombland was transformed by the building of the Cathedral and demolition of many surrounding buildings.



Walk up to the pedestrian crossing, cross the road and walk up Queen Street. At the top, cross over to London Street. This leads down to the Market Place and back to the Forum.

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

London Street was the first street in England to be pedestrianised in 1967.

