

Pilgrim Pathways

An aerial photograph of a stone tower, likely a church tower, situated on a grassy hill. A path leads up to the tower, and the surrounding landscape consists of rolling green hills and fields, some of which are partially covered in snow. The sky is blue with light clouds.

1-2 day walks on Britain's
ancient sacred ways

A N D Y B U L L

How to use this book

■ **Get your inspiration from this book**

Choose your walk from the descriptions and advice given by the author for each pilgrimage then go to the web page accessible only to readers of this book

■ **Download the practical information**

.pdf file for paper map users – printable walking instructions to be used with the paper Ordnance Survey map listed in the book

.gpx file for GPS route – for your smartphone or GPS unit

.kml file – for use with GoogleEarth

See pp10-11 for more information



ANDY BULL is a keen walker, journalist and author who has written travel pieces for *The Times*, the *Daily Telegraph*, *The Independent*, the *Mail on Sunday* and *The Tablet*.

When he wanted to go on a pilgrimage that could be completed in a weekend, and found no suitable guides were available, he realised he would have to find a route for himself. He found 20, and *Pilgrim Pathways* is the result.

Andy has also published two travel books on America: *Coast to Coast* and *Strange Angels*; guides for mountain bikers to The Lake District and The Ridgeway; and *Walking Charles Dickens' Kent*. He has written the local history books *Secret Margate*; *Secret Ramsgate*; *Secret Broadstairs*; *Secret Twickenham, Whitton, Teddington and the Hamptons*; and *Secret Richmond*. He is now researching a book on the Great North Road.

Pilgrim Pathways – 1-2 day walks on Britain's ancient sacred ways

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Photos – This page: Sheinton to Harley (Walk 14);

Previous page: After Tillingham (Walk 11); **Overleaf:** Elie Lady's Tower, (Walk 20)

Important note

Every effort has been made by the author and publisher to ensure that the information contained herein is as accurate and up to date as possible. However, they are unable to accept responsibility for any inconvenience, loss or injury sustained by anyone as a result of the advice and information given in this guide.

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ANDY BULL

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Author acknowledgements

There are several organisations and individuals championing the resurgence of pilgrimage in Great Britain, among them the British Pilgrimage Trust. I have on occasion taken inspiration from such pioneers, and would like to express my gratitude for their wonderful work.

I should stress, however, that each of the routes you see here has been adapted – often extensively – by me to fit my (largely) two-day pilgrimage format.

Walk 1 follows part of the route developed as the Way of St Augustine by Explore Kent.

Walk 2 takes inspiration from the Old Way developed by the British Pilgrimage Trust on the section from Battle to Winchelsea.

Walk 3 is adapted from The Jerusalem Pilgrimage created by William Parsons for the British Pilgrimage Trust.

Walk 7 follows the Cornwall Saints' Way, created by the Cooperative Retail Services Community Programme.

Walk 15 follows the Ebor Way, developed in the 1970s by the Ebor Acorn Rambling Club.

Walk 16 was inspired by the work of the Friends of Finchale Camino, who mapped out an English Camino pilgrim route. However, while my route takes in all of the pilgrim points they identify from Escomb to Finchale, I follow another path, the Weardale Way, between them in order to make this walk achievable in two days.

Walk 17 was inspired by the North Wales Pilgrim's Way, but only follows short stretches of the official path. I have extensively adapted the route, focusing on key pilgrim points, in order to make this achievable in three days – two if you are energetic enough.

Other walks are entirely my own invention.



Above: A misty morning walk near West Bexington, Dorset.

How to be a weekend pilgrim

If all you have to do to whistle is put your lips together and blow, then all you need to do to be a pilgrim is put one foot in front of the other. But where to? And why?

Many people are inspired by the idea of going on a pilgrimage. TV series such as *The Road to Rome* and *The Road to Santiago* have shown that even the averagely unfit celeb can hobble through one. However, few of the rest of us have time to walk Spain's Camino, the Via Francigena through France and Italy, or even the Pilgrims' Way from London to Canterbury. So what to do?

Pilgrim Pathways has the answer: 20 answers in fact. The pilgrimages in these pages are achievable for people with limited time and busy lives. The book was inspired by the belief that pilgrimage – variously defined as a journey on foot to a place that is holy, important or special – should be open to all.

There are many ancient pilgrim paths in Britain, some long-forgotten but recently rediscovered, others well-established – but all of them are dauntingly long. *Pilgrim Pathways* offers routes inspired by the very best of them, distilled into walks that can be accomplished comfortably in a weekend, and one would ideally suit a three-day break. I have also included suggestions for ways in which the routes can be divided into one-day sections, for times when you would rather not stay away overnight.

Why make a pilgrimage?

In pilgrimage, the journey itself is as important as the destination. Hence, these routes take in Britain's most inspiring landscapes and most powerfully spiritual places. They follow rivers, coastlines, forest tracks, and trails over hill and dale. They feature



Above: Holywell, North Wales.



Above: Following the lane through Fordwich on the Way of St Augustine, Kent.

cathedrals, ancient monasteries and churches, holy wells, wayside crosses, and other places of veneration: places that have paid mute witness to millennia of prayer.

Pilgrimage doesn't have to be traditionally religious in purpose, and some of these walks are rooted in pre-history, and our most powerful myths and legends. Pilgrimage to Avebury and Stonehenge, which features in Walk 4, dates back 5000 years. Glastonbury,

in Walk 6, has its pilgrim roots in pre-Christian tales of Avalon and King Arthur.

Why you go is up to you. A pilgrimage can be approached through a desire to achieve inner peace, to defy an illness or condition, as a physical challenge, or simply to open up a breathing space in a busy life. If this coronavirus



pandemic has taught us anything, it is the value of being outside in the countryside and of taking care of our bodily and mental health. *Pilgrim Pathways* is designed to help you achieve your own personal goal.

But it shouldn't be too easy. Pilgrimage, to give a sense of achievement, of pushing your boundaries, should involve a significant physical challenge. To that end, these walks are designed to be vigorous for someone of average fitness, with some offering a greater degree of challenge than others.

Pilgrimage – an ancient tradition reclaimed

Once, before the Reformation, pilgrimage was very popular. Everyone aspired to go on at least one pilgrimage just as, today, all Muslims will hope to go to Mecca. Those who were incapable of getting to Canterbury, let alone to Rome or Jerusalem, could go on regional ones. Henry VIII ended all that. He made pilgrimage illegal, as part of a ban on the veneration of saints. In doing so he robbed his people of an ancient and hugely powerful tradition. Today, many are choosing to reclaim that tradition.

Why did medieval pilgrims go? There were selfless motivations: to pay homage, to explore a mystery, and to travel in pursuit of enlightenment.

There were also purely selfish motives. Often, pilgrims wanted to be cured of an ailment. They were after miracles. The relics of the saints – their bodily remains – were believed to have great power. Pilgrims believed, for example, that the blood on the cloak of the murdered St Thomas Becket had healing properties. Holy wells such as St Winefride's Well in North Wales were also great draws, and it was believed their waters could cure a variety of ailments.

Many in the Church exploited the faith of pilgrims. They extorted and cheated them, promising rewards in the next life in return for financial offerings in this. Because a cathedral or a monastery needed a saint's relics to attract pilgrims – and the income they brought – relics were sometimes stolen or otherwise diverted to a site in need of them. In Walk 1 you'll read how St Mildred's bones were snaffled in the night from Minster on the Isle of Thanet and transferred to Canterbury, thereby forcing her pilgrims to divert to follow her.

Thankfully, there is no such skulduggery associated with modern pilgrimage.

Left: On the trail to Chichester Cathedral, West Sussex.



Above: A basket of pilgrim prayers in St David's Cathedral, Pembrokeshire.

Planning your walk

The information for each walk comes from two sources – this book and the downloads accessible only to readers of this book from a web address given with each walk.

Choose your walk from this book

In the 20 sections of this book which follow, I recount my experience of each pilgrimage, a descriptive overview designed to give you an idea of the walk and to inspire you to do it. I give suggestions on where to stay, stop to eat, and generally how to plan your weekend or your day walk.

Choose your walk from the book, then go to the website page which has been created specifically to hold the downloads you'll find useful for navigation. The web page address is given in the practical information box of each walk in this book.

Downloadable practical information

On the website you'll find three files for each numbered walk:

- **.pdf file for paper-based walking instructions** This printable pdf file is a tabulated, step-by-step description, designed to be used in conjunction with the paper Ordnance Survey (OS) Explorer map listed in the book.
- **.gpx file for GPS route** If you have a smartphone with GPS capability (most modern phones have this) or a GPS unit (such as a Garmin) you can upload the relevant gpx file into the app used on it, and follow that as you walk. Each gpx file was recorded as I walked a given route, so should keep you exactly on the route, which will appear on your screen as a solid line.

If you're using the gpx file on your phone you'll need an app to load it into. I use the Ordnance Survey's app but there are several other apps that also use OS mapping.

- **.kml file for use with GoogleEarth** The GPS file is also supplied in that format. You can import it into GoogleEarth on your computer and make A4-sized screenshots of each birds-eye section of the walk which you could print out.

Note that you don't need all of these files to do the walks. If you prefer just using paper maps simply print the pdf file to use with your OS map.

I'm a belt, braces and possibly sock-suspenders sort of walker, so I use both the OS app and a paper map (using the gpx file and the pdf file). The app enables me to zoom in on my route, so I can see exactly – for example – which side of a hedge I should be walking along. That's great, but on its own is like looking at the route through a letterbox. So I carry the paper map in order to get an overview of the stretch I am tackling.

How to download the files from the website

These files on the internet do not appear on our public website as they are intended only for readers of this book. It is most important that you type the url directly into your browser. If you try to access it using a search engine (such as Google) it won't show up.

If, for example, you wish to get the files for Walk 18 you'll have seen in the practical information box the following:

- **Directions & GPS** 018.pdf, 018.gpx, 018.kml at <https://trailblazer-guides.com> ????

Open your browser and type: <https://trailblazer-guides.com> ???? into the browser to replace whichever website address the browser usually opens with. This will take you directly to the list of files on our website. Click on the required files to download them.

As explained above, there are three files for each walk: the **printable pdf file** with the walking and map directions, the **gpx file** if you're using gps navigation and the **kml file** if you want to see the route on GoogleEarth.

Getting to and from the walks

If you're doing the walks as day walks you'll need to use a bus, train or taxi at either the beginning or the end of the day as most of the walks are linear. There are various public transport apps but we've found **Rome2Rio** great for working out the best ways to and from a walk via public transport of all varieties.

If there are two or more of you on the walk and two cars you can of course park one at the end and then drive in the other to leave it at the start.

COVID-19

This book was partly researched during the coronavirus pandemic and even with the restrictions which that sometimes imposed it was nevertheless possible to do the walks and visit the shrines, chapels, churches and cathedrals along the routes. As we go to press all the places to stay and places to eat mentioned are still trading.

1 The Way of St Augustine

Ramsgate to Canterbury
19.2 miles/31km

Journey from St Augustine's shrine at Ramsgate through the watery world of the Stour Valley to the saint's abbey and cathedral at Canterbury, and the heart of English Christianity. St Augustine arrived in Kent in 597AD, on a mission from Pope Gregory to bring Christianity to southern England. Close to the point at which he came ashore, Ebbfleet on the Isle of Thanet, is St Augustine's Cross, which marks the point at which he first preached on English soil and met the Kentish King Ethelbert.

Beginning on the Ramsgate clifftops, along the way you take in quiet orchards, the wonderfully bird-rich water meadows and marshes of Stodmarsh National Nature Reserve, and Saxon places of worship.

2 The Old Way to the Fifth Continent

Battle, Rye, and four Romney Marsh churches 27.6 miles/44.5km

Follow a long-forgotten pilgrim path from William the Conqueror's victory altar at Battle Abbey to Romney Marsh, and a clutch of simple, ancient churches set in a stark landscape.

The middle of a battlefield is not an obvious place to begin a pilgrimage but, at Battle, where William defeated Harold in 1066, it makes sense. The Conqueror built a great

abbey at the site of his victory, placing the altar on the exact spot Harold was killed.

Battle is also on a medieval pilgrim path. Canterbury-bound pilgrims from Southampton followed the High Weald to this abbey, and on to Winchelsea and Rye. You'll be travelling through a varied and beautiful landscape, from gently undulating farmland and woods before a steep climb onto the downs, then down to level river- and canal-side walking before arriving at the flat, exposed Romney Marsh.

3 Blake, Jerusalem and St Richard

Haslemere to Chichester
25.4 miles/40.9km

This route follows St Richard's pilgrim path through the West Sussex landscape that inspired William Blake to write a poem, *And Did Those Feet In Ancient Time*, which later became better-known as *Jerusalem*.

Beginning in the Surrey Hills, you take in the far-reaching views from the evocatively named Temple of the Winds before continuing on towards the historic West Sussex market town of Midhurst. The beauty of the South Downs leads you to the Trundle, an ancient holy hill, before descending to Chichester and the Guildhall where Blake was tried and acquitted of the capital offences of treason and sedition, finishing at Chichester cathedral.

(cont'd on p16)

Pilgrim Pathways

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WALK NO / COUNTY	NAME	START/END POINTS
1 Kent	The Way of St Augustine	Ramsgate/ Canterbury
2 E Sussex/Kent	The Old Way to the Fifth Continent	Battle/ Appledore
3 Surrey/W Sussex	Blake, Jerusalem and St Richard	Haslemere/ Chichester
4 Wiltshire	A prehistoric pilgrimage	Avebury/ Stonehenge
5 Dorset	A Jurassic Coast pilgrimage	Abbotsbury/ Lyme Regis
6 Somerset	The path to Avalon	Cheddar/ Glastonbury
7 Cornwall	The Cornish Saints' Way	Padstow/ Fowey
8 Pembrokeshire	The Path of St David	Solva/ St Davids
9 Oxfordshire	A Thames Pilgrimage	Dorchester/ Oxford and Binsey
10 London	London saints and martyrs	Westminster Abbey/ Tyburn
11 Essex	St Peter's Way	Purleigh/ St Peter-on-the-Wall chapel
12 Norfolk/Suffolk	St Edmund's Way	Thetford/ Bury St Edmunds
13 Norfolk	England's Nazareth	Castle Acre/ Walsingham
14 Shropshire	St Milburga's Shropshire	Ironbridge circuit
15 W/N Yorkshire	St Paulinus and the Ebor Way	Wetherby/ York
16 County Durham	The English Camino	Escomb/ Durham and Finchale
17 Flintshire/Conwy	Welsh Lourdes, Burial Place of Saints	Basingwerk / Holywell/ Gwytherin
18 North Yorkshire	St Hilda, Blessed Nicholas Postgate	Danby/ Whitby
19 Northumberland	St Cuthbert St Aidan & St Oswald	Seahouses/ Holy Island
20 Fife	St Andrew's Way	Earlsferry/ St Andrews

A T A G L A N C E

RAIL AT START/END	MILES/KM	ASCENT	TYPES OF TERRAIN & LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY
Ramsgate/Canterbury	19.2 31	640m/2099ft	Grass/earth paths <i>Easy</i>
Battle/Appledore	27.6 44.5	682m/2237ft	Grass/earth paths, woodland paths <i>Moderate to challenging</i>
Haslemere/Chichester	25.4 40.9	1375m/4510ft	Grass/earth paths, woodland tracks <i>Moderate</i>
Swindon/Salisbury	26.9 43.3	926m/2745ft	Grass/paths, rough tracks, lanes <i>Challenging</i>
Weymouth/Axminster	22.9 36.9	1892m/6207	Cliff grass/paths, beach, pavements <i>Mainly moderate, challenging stretches</i>
Worle/Castle Cary	22 35.5	1210m/3970ft	Grass/paths, woodland tracks, lanes <i>Mainly moderate, challenging stretches</i>
Bodmin Parkway/Par	27.6 44.4	1329m/4359ft	Grass/paths, farm tracks, quiet lanes <i>Challenging</i>
Haverfordwest	19.8 31.8	1057m/3466ft	Rocky coastal paths <i>Challenging</i>
Didcot Parkway/Oxford	20.6 33.2	379m/1241ft	Grass/earth paths, towpath <i>Easy</i>
Westminster/Marble Arch	9.9 16	Negligible	Pavements <i>Easy</i>
Chelmsford/Southminster	16.6 26.7	99.8m/328ft	Grass/earth paths <i>Easy</i>
Thetford/Bury St Edm	18.9 30.4	193m/632ft	Grass/paths, forest tracks, pavement <i>Easy</i>
Kings Lynn	21.4 34.4	263m/865ft	Grass/earth paths, quiet lanes <i>Moderate</i>
Telford	14.8 23.8	607m/1990ft	Grass/paths, farm tracks, quiet lanes <i>Easy, with moderate stretch climbing Wenlock Edge</i>
Leeds/York	21.1 33.9	253m/830ft	Grass/earth paths <i>Easy</i>
Bishop Auckland/Durham	20.7 33.3	600m/1970ft	Grass/riverbank paths, pavements <i>Easy</i>
Flint/Llanrwst	33 53.1	1609m/5278ft	Grass/earth paths, quiet lanes <i>Challenging</i>
Danby/Whitby	19.3 31.1	828m/2716ft	Grass/paths, packhorse routes, tracks <i>Moderate</i>
Chathill/Berwick	22.2 35.7	550m/1869ft	Beach, paths, quiet lanes, causeway <i>Moderate</i>
Markinch/Leuchars	25.1 40.5	848m/2782ft	Grass/coast path, sandy/rocky beaches <i>Challenging</i>

4 A prehistoric pilgrimage

Avebury to Stonehenge

26.9 miles/43.3km

This pre-Christian pilgrimage through the Avebury and Stonehenge UNESCO World Heritage Site follows an ancient ceremonial route along the valley of the River Avon.

Avebury has the largest megalithic stone circle in the world. The three circles are 5000 years old and are believed to have been used in ritual or ceremony. Stonehenge has been a place of pilgrimage for millennia. It is believed the two were linked by a pilgrim route that took its followers on a symbolic journey through life to death. Today it takes you on a fairly stiff hike via an exposed Neolithic burial mound, over Salisbury Plain and on through a string of riverside villages before the final approach towards Stonehenge along the most ancient of pilgrim paths.

5 A Jurassic Coast pilgrimage

Abbotsbury, Chideock, Whitchurch

Canonicorum and Lyme Regis

22.9 miles/36.9km

Walking this spectacular coastline takes you from the lonely hill-top chapel of St Catherine, patron saint of single women, via the Catholic Martyrs' church at Chideock and the ancient shrine of St Wite at Whitchurch Canonicorum, to Lyme Regis. Some strenuous climbing is amply rewarded with panoramic views from the highest point on the Jurassic coast at Golden Cap.

6 The path to Avalon

The pilgrim route to Wells and

Glastonbury

22 miles/35.5km

You'll be riding the rolling Mendips through nature reserves and limestone crags to the holy wells of Wells and its remarkable cathedral. From there it's on across the wide-open Somerset Levels to Glastonbury, where legends of Jesus and King Arthur combine.

You climb Glastonbury Tor, a vertiginous hill rising from the Somerset Levels, topped by St Michael's tower, which may be the Isle of Avalon in Arthurian legend. Finally you descend to visit Chalice Well, one of Britain's most ancient wells, and Glastonbury Abbey, founded in the 7th century and associated with the legends of the Holy Grail and King Arthur. There is a legend that Joseph of Arimathea brought the boy Jesus here, leading to the belief by some that Glastonbury is the cradle of English Christianity.

7 The Cornish Saints' Way

Coast to coast, Padstow to Fowey

27.6 miles/44.4km

Celtic saints and pilgrims crossed Cornwall on their way from Wales and Ireland to Spain and the Compostela pilgrimage, avoiding the treacherous sea journey around Land's End. This route takes you coast to coast, across wild moorland and sheltered valleys, taking in Celtic crosses, shrines to obscure Celtic saints and holy wells along the way.

8 The Path of St David
A coastal pilgrimage through
a sacred landscape *19.8 miles/31.8km*

With the sea as your constant companion, you'll be walking in the footsteps of Wales's patron saint, from St David's baptism on St Elvis Farm to the ancient chapel and holy well of his mother, St Non, and the cathedral in the town that bears his name. St David's Cathedral stands on the site of the monastery he founded in the coastal valley of Glyn Rhosyn in Pembrokeshire and has been a major place of pilgrimage for 1200 years.

9 A Thames pilgrimage
Dorchester to Abingdon,
Oxford and Binsey *20.6 miles/3.2km*

Four saints, a sacred river, and the shrine and holy well where Henry VIII's first wife Catherine of Aragon came to pray for a son make for a peaceful pilgrimage with plenty of time for contemplation. Walking through open countryside into the heart of Oxford and beyond, you'll get a very different perspective on the venerable River Thames.

10 London's saints and martyrs
Westminster Abbey to Tyburn
9.9 miles/16km

A sacred-London pilgrimage, walking in the footsteps of St Edward the Confessor and St Botolph, patron saint of travellers; touching the holy marks left by martyrs in the Tower of London; and visiting the greatest abbey and cathedral. You'll also echo the final journey of those condemned

to death, through city streets thronged with onlookers, via St Giles-in-the-Fields and down Oxford Street to the gallows at Tyburn Tree. On the way they were allowed a last drink at The Angel pub, still in existence today.

11 St Peter's Way
Across the Essex marshes to
St Peter-on-the-Wall
16.6 miles/26.7km

St Peter-on-the-Wall is an ancient Saxon chapel built by St Cedd on the shore-side ruins of a Roman fort in 654AD. You'll travel along St Peter's Way, a 1300-year-old pilgrims' route via remote villages and ancient churches, encompassing a network of tidal creeks, mudflats and salt marsh that offer a bird-watcher's paradise.

12 St Edmund's Way
Thetford to Bury St Edmunds
18.9 miles/30.4km

In the 13th and 14th centuries the Priory of Our Lady of Thetford was a significant destination for pilgrims, with a statue of the Virgin that was said to perform miracles. Setting off from Thetford offers a varied backdrop to your walk, from riverside through forest and along quiet lanes as well as open countryside, before arriving at Bury St Edmund's Abbey, the ruins of which are alongside the city's cathedral. It attracted pilgrims as it was the burial place of the Anglo-Saxon martyr-king St Edmund, killed by the Danes in 869.

13 England's Nazareth

Castle Acre to Walsingham
21.4 miles/34.8km

Beginning in Castle Acre, the walk takes in quiet country lanes via a Saxon round-tower church and the curious, long-abandoned medieval village of Godwick, following the final stage of the old pilgrim route from London to Walsingham. Here in 1061, noblewoman Lady Richeldis built a richly decorated replica of the Holy Family's house, which became a shrine and attracted pilgrims to Walsingham from all over Europe. Although completely obliterated during the Dissolution, the site of the shrine is marked in the grounds of the ruined Walsingham Abbey. Pilgrimage has now been revived, and there are Anglican, Catholic and Orthodox shrines in the village. The Catholic shrine is in the Slipper Chapel, a mile from the Holy House, where pilgrims would leave their shoes and continue barefoot.

14 St Milburga's Shropshire

Ironbridge, Much Wenlock,
Wenlock Edge
14.8 miles/23.8km

This circular route takes you from Ironbridge, birthplace of the Industrial Revolution, via the riverside Buildwas Abbey, and ascends the dramatic 1000ft limestone escarpment of Wenlock Edge before dropping down to Much Wenlock. Wenlock Priory, or St Milburga's Priory, is thought to be the final resting place of the 8th century abbess St Milburga. Her shrine and St Milburga's Well, which was believed to cure eye diseases, were great pilgrimage sites until the Reformation.

15 St Paulinus and the Ebor Way

Wetherby to York
21.1 miles/33.9km

The route shadows two rivers and the course of a Roman road from Wetherby to York, following the Ebor Way, from Eboracum, the Roman name for York. It was travelled by St Paulinus, a young Roman monk who, in 601, was sent to convert the northern Britons to Christianity and later became the first Bishop of York. The half-way point is Tadcaster where, coincidentally, the Pilgrim Fathers decided to set sail for America. The River Ouse leads you right into the heart of York, where you'll be rewarded with the spectacle of York Minster, the largest Gothic cathedral in northern Europe.

16 The English Camino

Escomb to Finchale Priory via
Durham 20.7 miles/33.3km

Strike out on the route travelled by St Oswald, one of the first English pilgrims to walk the Spanish Camino to Santiago. It begins at the village of Escomb, which has one of the most complete Saxon churches in England. With the River Wear as your constant companion you'll arrive in the great city of Durham to visit St Oswald's church, St Oswald's Well and Durham Cathedral, with its shrine to St Cuthbert.

This is part of a recognised English section of the Camino de Santiago, which starts at the port cities of A Coruna and Ferrol, at which medieval pilgrims arrived from England.

17 The Welsh Lourdes and the Burial Place of Saints

From Basingwerk Abbey via Holywell to Gwytherin *33 miles/53.1km*

For those who relish a physical challenge, this section of the North Wales Pilgrim's Way offers plenty of climbing and descending with impressive views. It takes in St Winefride's Well at Holywell, which claims to be the oldest continually visited place of pilgrimage in Britain. Almost uniquely for places of veneration, it survived the Reformation, perhaps due to its close connections with generations of Tudor royalty.

St Winefride was a 7th century Christian woman of royal lineage who was murdered by a prince for rejecting his advances. She spent much of her later life in the Conwy village of Gwytherin, where she was buried. The chapel built over her open grave is long gone, but in 1896 a new church was built in the village, dedicated to Winefride, and is now a civil wedding venue surrounded by an ancient Celtic saints' burial ground.

18 St Hilda and the Blessed Nicholas Postgate

Danby to Whitby *19.3 miles/31.1km*

Strike out along the Esk Valley on the trail of a saint and the martyred priest of the moors. Walking the North York moors rewards you with far-reaching views from Danby Beacon. Along the way, at Egton Bridge the path coincides with memorials to the Blessed Nicholas Postgate. Born in Egton in 1596, Postgate risked his life by preaching illegally in secret locations across a wide area and was eventually caught and executed.

The walk ends with a wonderful descent into Whitby, and the ruins of St Hilda's abbey. St Hilda was an Anglo-Saxon princess and abbess of Whitby Abbey who, in 664, hosted the Synod of Whitby at which decisions were made that ended the sway of the Irish monks of Iona in favour of Roman Catholicism.

19 St Cuthbert, St Oswald and St Aidan

Seahouses to Holy Island, Northumberland *22.2 miles/35.7km*

The walk from Seahouses via Bamburgh to Holy Island follows the footsteps of three revered Northern Saints: St Cuthbert, who travelled via Seahouses to his retirement home on the Farne Islands; St Oswald, king of Northumbria, for whom Bamburgh Castle was a fortress home; and St Aidan, to whom Oswald gave the island of Lindisfarne (Holy Island) to found a monastery and Christianise his people. Accessible only at low tide, the causeway across to Holy Island offers a unique pilgrimage experience little changed in many hundreds of years.

20 St Andrew's Way

On the Fife Coastal Path from Earlsferry to St Andrews *25.1 miles/40.5km*

From the 12th century pilgrims followed this and other routes to the shrine of St Andrew in the city that bears his name. This exhilarating walk demands careful planning and awareness of the tide times, as the path takes you along rugged coastline via hermits' caves, holy wells and charming fishing villages.




3

Blake, Jerusalem and St Richard

Haslemere to Chichester

Following St Richard's pilgrim path through the landscape that inspired William Blake to write *Jerusalem*



In his poem *Jerusalem*, William Blake asks: 'And did those feet, in ancient time, walk upon England's mountains green?' following up with: 'And was the Holy Lamb of God, in England's pleasant pastures seen?'

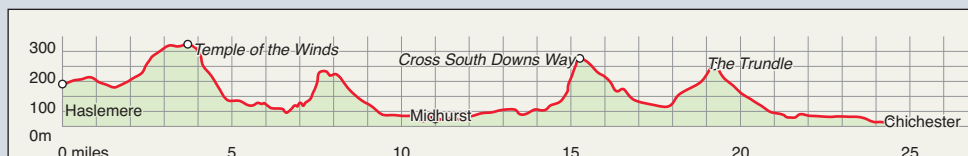
Those questions were inspired by the scenery on this pilgrimage. Not that Blake found mountains in West Sussex, but he did find the rolling, richly verdant South Downs, and in particular a hill called The Trundle, or St Roche's Hill, which he observed on regular walks to the village of Lavant.

Blake is not the only inspiration for this pilgrimage. On the path to Chichester you also follow in the footsteps of pilgrims who, in the Middle Ages, passed through Midhurst on their way to St Richard's shrine in Chichester Cathedral which, pre-Reformation, was the third most popular place of veneration in England. Today, it is probably fair to say that Richard of Chichester is among the lesser-known saints, but you may well be familiar with the final lines of a prayer he wrote:

May I know thee more clearly, Love thee more dearly,
And follow thee more nearly.'

The lane up to Black Down.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION



- **Terrain** Sustained ascents and descents on tracks through dense woodland and over grass. May be muddy after rain.

- **Difficulty** Moderate

- **Directions & GPS*** 003.pdf, 003.gpx, 003.kml at <https://trailblazer-guides.com/???>

* See p10-11 for more information on downloads

ROUTE OVERVIEW

25.4 miles (40.9km)

Wonderful walking from the wooded Surrey Hills through the rolling South Downs National Park, offering great variety and stunning views. To give you plenty of time to see Chichester cathedral at the end, you could consider breaking the Midhurst to Chichester section at Charlton to make two shorter days.

Haslemere to Midhurst

11.4 miles (18.3km)

- **Time** 4hrs 30mins actual walking time
- **Total ascent** 714m / 2342ft

- **Map** OS Explorer OL33 Haslemere & Petersfield

From Haslemere station follow the B2131 for **0.7 mile**, then join the route of the Serpent Trail and continue on paths and tracks up into the National Trust's heavily wooded Black Down. You leave the Serpent Trail on the heights, and reach the Temple of the Winds, the highest point, after **3.2 miles**. Wind down through woods and farmland via Fernhurst for **6.5 miles** to Easebourne. After Easebourne Priory and Cowdray Castle you reach Midhurst **1 mile** beyond.



PILGRIMAGE HIGHLIGHTS

- Enjoy the incredible views from **The Temple of the Winds** and the top of **The Trundle** (St Roche's Hill), among the finest in the South Downs National Park.
- Explore the pilgrim church of **St Margaret of Antioch** at **Fernhurst** (Church Rd, 10am-4pm).
- Visit St Mary's church at the former convent of **Easebourne Priory**, Midhurst.
- On a Sunday catch the church service at 13th century **St James, Heyshott** (heyshott.org.uk, services 1st & 4th Sun of the month: 11.15am, 2nd & 3rd Sun: 9.30am) at the foot of the downs.
- Visit St Richard's tomb at **Chichester Cathedral** and stay for Evensong/Evening Prayer (chichestercathedral.org.uk).

St Richard's feast day: 3 April Catholic church, 16 June Anglican Church.

Midhurst to Chichester

14 miles (22.6km)

- **Time** 5hrs 15mins actual walking time
- **Total ascent** 661m/2168ft
- **Map** OS Explorer *OL8 Chichester*



The terrain is easier on this stretch, being mainly beside farmland and through woods via several villages. From Midhurst the New Lipchis Way guides you **7 miles** to Charlton, crossing the South Downs after Heyshott. From Charlton it's an easy climb **1.6 miles** up the lane to the top of The Trundle with views over Goodwood and south to Chichester. Then it's down a chalk lane all the way to pretty Lavant (**2.5 miles**) to pick up the Centurion Way (a disused railway track) for **2.9 miles** into Chichester.

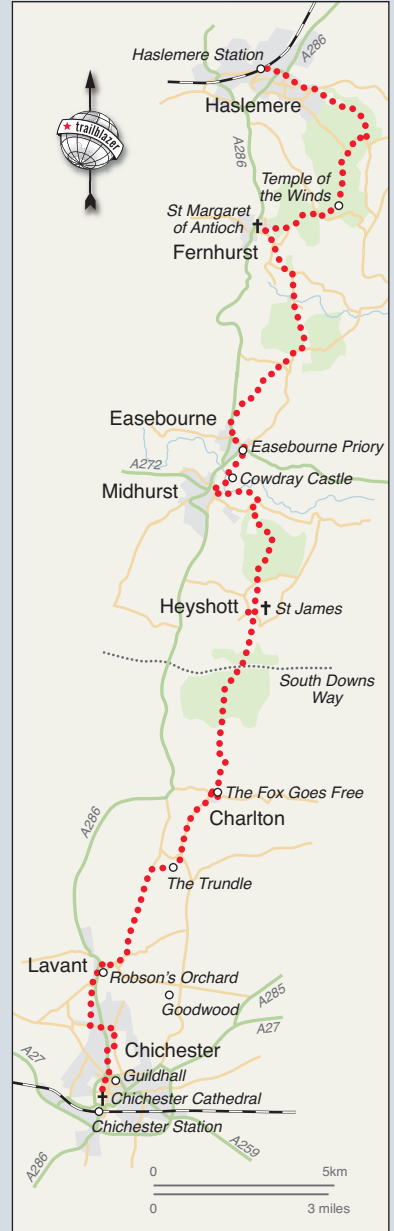
Day walk options

Either section would make a fine one-day walk.

- **By public transport** Railway stations at Haslemere and Chichester; buses from Midhurst to both.
- **Taxi option** Haslemere Taxis (☎ 01428-481464, 📧 haslemere-taxis.co.uk); Chichester Taxis (☎ 01243-778499, 📧 chichester-taxis.co.uk).

Where to eat or stay along the way

- **Haslemere** Stay opposite the railway station at the *Station House* (☎ 01428-776560, 📧 thestationhousehaslemere.co.uk) a cosy pub-with-rooms.
- **Fernhurst** Have lunch at the *Red Lion* (☎ 01428-643112, 📧 red-lion-fernurst.co.uk; food Mon-Sat noon-3pm & 6-9pm; Sun noon-4pm).
- **Midhurst** Treat yourself to a **cream tea** at the *Cowdray Farm Shop Café* (☎ 01730-815152, Cowdray Park; daily 9am-5pm). Stay at either the *Swan Inn* (☎ 01730-859557, 📧 swanmidhurst.com, Red Lion St), or the 3-star *Angel Inn* (☎ 01730-812421, 📧 theangelmidhurst.co.uk, North St). Have a **drink** in the cosy Gin Bar at the *Spread Eagle Hotel*, an ancient coaching inn on South St or go Spanish at *Faustino's Wine and Tapas Bar* (☎ 01730-814745, 📧 faustinosmidhurst.co.uk; daily from 5pm, North St).
- **Charlton** Eat lunch at historic pub *The Fox Goes Free* (☎ 01243-811461, 📧 thefoxgoesfree.com; Mon-Fri noon-2.30pm & 6.15-9.30pm, Sat noon-10pm, Sun noon-5pm & 6.15-9.30pm).
- **Chichester** Good selection of places to eat or stay.



The sun is burning off the early-morning mist from Black Down as I follow the sunken lane up this great, wooded ridge from Haslemere. The bracken is steaming, and sweet chestnuts are parachuting to the ground, shrugging off their acid-green jackets as they land.

Last night's rain has brought the woods out in a rash of fungi. Tiny pale mushrooms poke wet from the vivid moss on a decaying log. Alarm-bell-red fly agaric toadstools form a fairy ring beside my path as I wind my way south along the ridge.

The Temple of the Winds

To gaze out from the grandstand of The Temple of the Winds is to experience a



transformation. Named after a Bronze Age circular bank, this is the highest point in the South Downs National Park, with views sweeping way to the south. This is a place to make you feel small, both in space and in time.

As I look out, the last wisps of morning mist are vanishing from an ice-blue sky, in which the only modern intrusion is a few feeble silver darts of planes rising from Gatwick.

St Margaret's, Fernhurst

Winding south-west down to the village of Fernhurst might feel like an anti-climax, if it weren't for this 11th century pilgrim church. As the church guide notes, St Margaret of Antioch was 'perhaps



built by a soldier of the Cross in gratitude for his safe return from the crusades,' St Margaret being the crusaders' favourite saint. The welcome on the church door invites you to 'Stay a while and be still – let go your burden and share the serenity of this place'.

From here I pick up a green highway in the woods. This ancient drove road runs wide and die-straight through the forested Low Weald, still bounded by the moss-cloaked, tree-sprouting remnants of rag-stone walls.

Easebourne Priory

At Easebourne, the Grade I-listed stone country house you look on today began life as Easebourne Priory, in 1248. St Mary's church, which is attached to it, housed the chapel of the Prioress and 10 Benedictine nuns who lived at the priory.

The central section of this building was the chapter house, where the community



gathered. On the first floor was the Dorter, or sleeping quarters, probably divided into cells for the nuns, and behind it is the cloister. To the left is the nuns' refectory.

Margaret Cary writes, in *Easebourne Priory and Church*, that during an inspection in 1414 'the Prioress was ordered to sell her trimmings of costly fur and her jewels, and exception was taken to the lap-dogs and pet monkeys with which the ladies beguiled their leisure hours.' In 1535, at the Reformation, the nuns were thrown out and their property confiscated. The church roof was torn off and the building left open to the elements for 300 years. Henry VIII gave the priory to Sir William Fitzwilliam, owner of Cowdray House just to the south.

Above: Following the old drove road south of Fernhurst.

Left: The view from The Temple of the Winds, Black Down. You can see as far as the South Downs, which you will cross south of Heyshott.





Cowdray and Guy Fawkes

Cowdray was one of England's great Tudor houses, comparable to the finest palaces, and Henry VIII visited three times during his reign. The house was largely destroyed by fire in 1793, but the surviving ruins are impressive enough to have received Grade I listing. A curse was said to have been put on the house by a monk ejected from Battle Abbey, which Henry gave to Anthony Browne, Fitzwilliam's half-brother and heir. In 1592 the 2nd Viscount Anthony-Maria Browne employed Guy Fawkes as a footman, and was imprisoned for complicity in the Gunpowder Plot, after having been warned to stay away from Parliament on 5 November 1605.

In 1591 Elizabeth I was entertained here for five days. Anthony Browne, 1st Viscount Montague of Cowdray, was Catholic, but retained royal favour, and a banquet was held for the queen in the refectory. As part of the entertainment, an actor playing the part of a pilgrim – despite pilgrimage having been outlawed by her father – led Elizabeth to an oak tree

where the heraldry of the county was displayed, and a 'green man', dressed in ivy, expressed Cowdray's loyalty to her.

Midhurst

Midhurst is at an ancient pilgrim crossroads. From the 1200s, the paths of pilgrims making for St Swithun's shrine in Winchester, and those headed for the shrine of St Richard at the new cathedral in Chichester, crossed here. To cater for them the Knights Hospitaller, who were responsible for the welfare of pilgrims, built a chapel to St Thomas Becket, and a pilgrim hostelry, in West Street. The Hospitallers' assets were seized by Henry VIII in 1540, and later demolished.

St James, Heyshott

Chichester pilgrims might also have paused at the foot of the Downs in Heyshott, at the 13th century church of St James. Pinned to the church door is a prayer that reminds you every pilgrim also needs a place of belonging, asking: 'O God, whose son was content to share the life of his village at Nazareth: Bless, we beseech

BLAKE, JERUSALEM AND THE WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

Blake's title for the poem that has become known as *Jerusalem* was *And Did Those Feet In Ancient Time*. In it he reflects upon the myth that Jesus Christ might have visited England with Joseph of Arimathea, his tin-dealer uncle, walking over landscapes such as the 'green and pleasant land' of Sussex, establishing here a heaven on earth: a new Jerusalem. A century after it was written, poet laureate Robert Bridges included it in an anthology of patriotic verse collated in response to the horrifying casualty count at the Battle of the Somme. Hubert Parry set the words to music and, renamed *Jerusalem*, it became one of the best-loved English hymns. It was adopted by the women's suffrage movement and then by the Women's Institute, whose anthem it still is. In a piece of perfect synchronicity, the very first WI was founded in the village of Charlton, in The Fox Goes Free pub which is also on our route.

Opposite: The ruins of Cowdray House, once a grand Tudor mansion.

thee, the life of this village with thy continual presence.'

From here, if you walk this way from July through to February, you will likely find the rising plain of woods and fields alive with pheasants. They panic noisily, all except one brave creature that appoints itself my pilgrim guide, strutting along at my heels before scurrying ahead to look back and encourage me onward and upward.

The Fox Goes Free, Charlton

The next village, Charlton, plays a significant part in the story of Blake's *Jerusalem*. At The Fox Goes Free – the name referring to the point in its history when the pub became a free house – a plaque in the back bar reads: 'On 9 November 1915 the first Womans [sic] Institute meeting in England was held in this room.' The organisation adopted the hymn as its anthem in 1924.

The Trundle, St Roche's Hill

Cresting the downs, you reach the summit of The Trundle, which has been a sacred gathering place for 5000 years. This is the heart of William Blake country. It was the view of this place from Lavant to the south that inspired Blake to write the poem which became *Jerusalem*. In the 14th century there was a pilgrim chapel here, dedicated to St Roche. Born in Montpellier around 1350, St Roche survived the Black Death, and his chapel was visited by the sick who considered it a place of healing. The chapel building was destroyed in the Reformation but its oval footprint has since been revealed by archaeological investigation.

The Trundle offers a view to match that from The Temple of the Winds, with the villages of East and Mid Lavant pointing the way to Chichester, where the slender cathedral spire makes a particularly elegant finishing post.

Below: Perfect views from The Trundle: east over Goodwood racetrack and south to Chichester





Above, left: Robson's Orchard. **Right:** The Centurion Way, a disused railway line, to Chichester.

Lavant and Robson's Orchard

In the early 1800s Blake visited Robson's Orchard in Lavant every Tuesday and Friday to 'take a dish of coffee' with his friend, a wealthy spinster called Harriet Poole, who lived here. He called her the Lady of Lavant. You will find Robson's Orchard tucked in on the left, just after the Earl of March pub, although as it's a private house it can only be viewed from the road. At the time, Blake was a jobbing en-

graver who hoped to make a living as a miniaturist. He was introduced to Miss Poole as a possible client while doing some work for a painter and poet called William Hayley. Hayley lived in Felpham, near Bognor Regis, and Blake took a cottage there for three years.

Chichester Guildhall

The track of a disused railway, now a cycle path known as the Centurion Way, takes

Below: On the chalk road south of The Trundle





me to Chichester, where the Guildhall forms another significant William Blake landmark. It was here, in 1804, that he was tried and acquitted of the capital offences of treason and sedition.

In a curious episode, Blake had been confronted by a drunken soldier, John Schofield, who he discovered in his garden in Felpham. Blake was accused of assaulting Schofield, who claimed Blake said ‘Damn the King ... damn his soldier, they are all slaves.’ Blake wrote *And Did Those Feet* while awaiting trial, and later depicted Schofield wearing ‘mind-forged manacles’ in an illustration to the poem.

Chichester Cathedral

St Richard of Chichester, patron saint of Sussex, stands on a plinth on the approach to his cathedral, raising his hand as if beckoning the pilgrim on.

Richard was as big a rebel in his way as free-thinking, anti-authoritarian Blake: a teetotal vegetarian who wore a hair shirt, refused to eat off silver, fought against clerical corruption and supported papal rights against the king. Richard’s tomb became a place of pilgrimage, rivalling that of Thomas Becket at Canterbury in popularity. His tomb was destroyed at the Reformation but re-established in 1930, in the retro-quire beyond the high altar.

A relic, part of Richard’s forearm, is buried beneath the St Richard Altar, which stands flanked by a statue and icon of the saint. Here, pilgrims can collect a card bearing Richard’s prayer, which he is said to have recited on his deathbed:

Left: The bronze statue of St Richard by Philip Jackson stands outside Chichester Cathedral and was dedicated in 2000. St Richard’s right hand is raised in blessing; in his left he holds a scourge, a symbol of self sacrifice.



'Thanks be to Thee, my Lord Jesus Christ
For all the benefits Thou hast given me,
For all the pains and insults Thou hast
borne for me.

O most merciful Redeemer, friend and
brother,

May I know Thee more clearly,
Love Thee more dearly,
And follow Thee more nearly.'

And maybe you might echo Blake,
whose deep if unorthodox spiritual yearning
led him to vow:

'I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand:
Till we have built Jerusalem,
In England's green and pleasant land.'

Left: Stained glass window by Marc Chagall,
unveiled in Chichester Cathedral in 1978. It is a
visual interpretation of Psalm 150: 'Let every-
thing that hath breath praise the Lord'. The
artist was 88 when he created this work.

Below: St Richard's shrine and icon of the saint.



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NNR = National Nature Reserve

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