

Avon Valley Path, Downton to Fordingbridge



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Distance: 7 miles

Start: Downton High Street

The Avon Valley Path is a 34-mile, long-distance walking route that takes you from Salisbury – one of the most beautiful cathedral cities in England – to Christchurch Priory and the sea. It was opened in 1992 and runs from Wiltshire due south through Hampshire to finish in Dorset. The Path is named after the river whose course it follows. Please bear in mind that this route can become seriously waterlogged from December to May. The Path has been divided into five sections, each providing a really good day out.

Directions

Downton is the oldest town on the Avon Valley Path. The route travels up the High Street to Moot Lane, where there are the remains of a Norman castle and an impressive 18th century landscape garden, in the centre of which is a man-made mound, now called the Moot. Continue past Moot Farm and climb up to the top of the ridge.

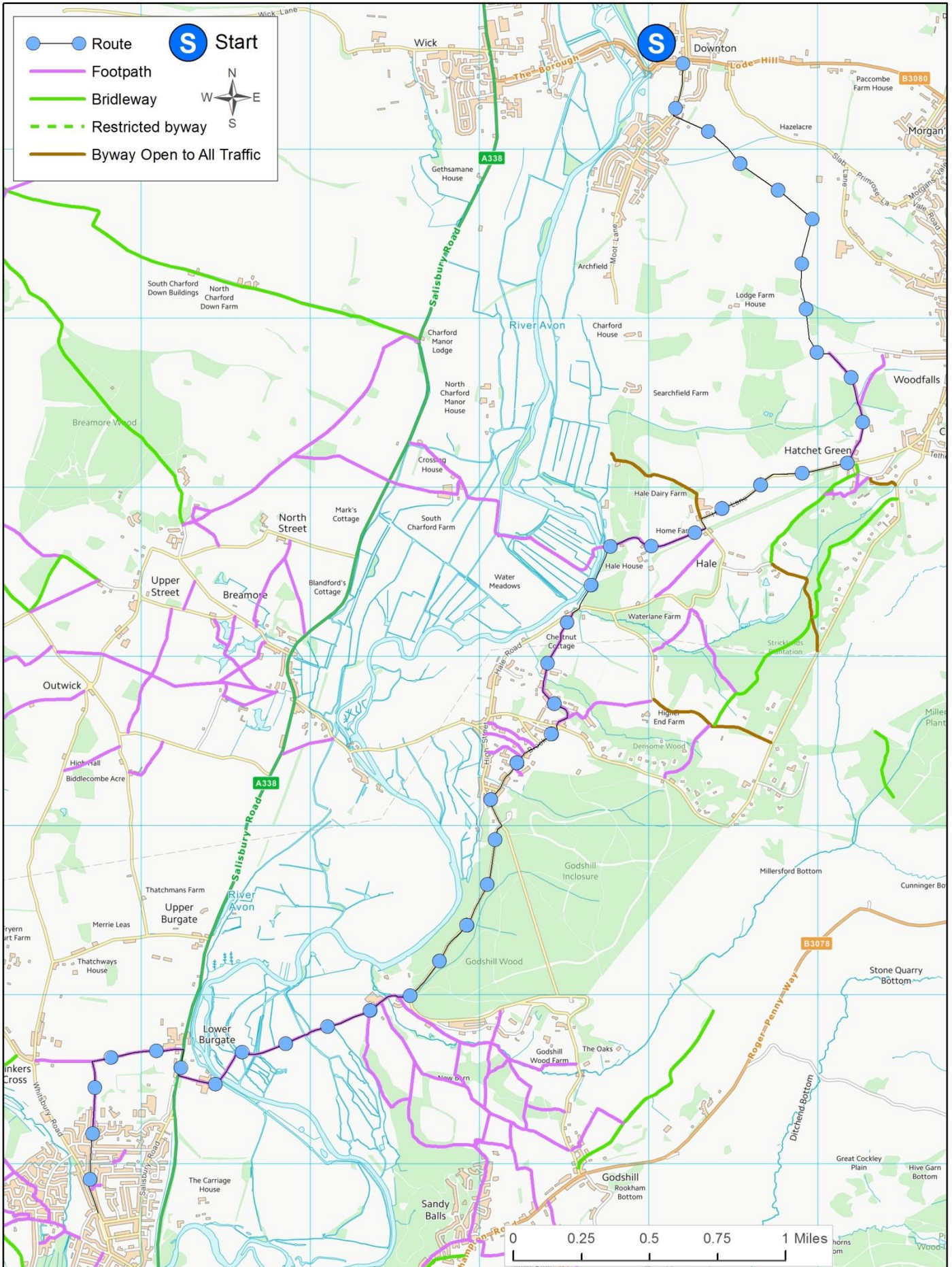
Take a break here to look back at the views of Salisbury Cathedral's spire, Downton and Clearbury. Now descend through woodland and cross into The New Forest National Park and Hampshire before reaching Hatchet Green, a typical New Forest village with thatched cottages overlooking the green where the Forest ponies graze.

Continue alongside a wonderful avenue of lime trees that lead to a Georgian mansion, Hale House, and the church of St Mary with its splendid Renaissance and Baroque architecture.

The Path then turns west to the village of Woodgreen where Palaeolithic material has been found. The Woodgreen Permissive Path [414kb pdf](#) provides a safe route into the Village

Follow the road around the medieval earthwork castle at Castle Hill, where there are superb views across the Avon Valley and to Dorset. Then the Path turns west across the water meadows to the suspension bridge at Burgate Manor Farm, where kingfishers skimming low over the water are a common sight. The bridge was replaced in 1950 after being destroyed by a tank during the Second World War. The Path then crosses the disused Poole to Salisbury railway line and on into Fordingbridge town.

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