

Avon Valley Path, Salisbury to Downton



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Distance: 8 miles

Start: Salisbury Cathedral

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

The Avon Valley Path begins in the county of Wiltshire at the statue of The Walking Madonna by Elizabeth Frink, which stands near the north porch of the magnificent medieval Salisbury Cathedral; its landmark spire is the tallest in Britain and is visible for miles around, guiding travellers into the city.

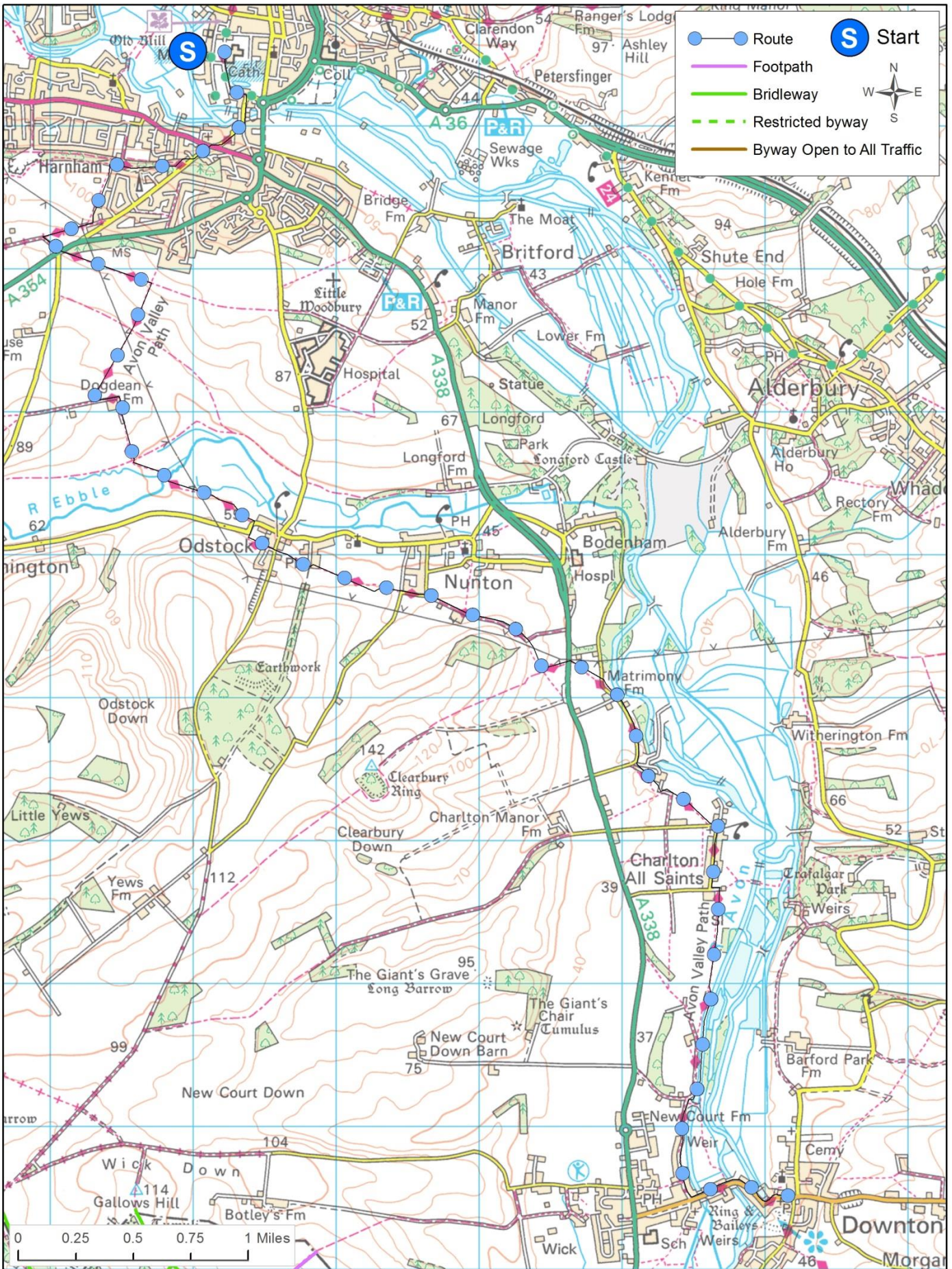
The cathedral was built on a marshy site where five rivers – the Wylde, Avon, Ebble, Nadder and Bourne – all converge. Surrounding this awe-inspiring cathedral are the massive ancient walls and serene lawns of The Close where you will find the charming Mompesson House, a 13th century banqueting hall and two outstanding museums, the Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum and the Wardrobe Military Museum.

Leave The Close by the South Gate (Harnham Gate) and cross the River Avon via Harnham Bridge, built in 1245. Then past The Rose and Crown Inn, or perhaps stop for an early rest at this halftimbered 13th century inn, as the view across the river to the cathedral from the riverside lawns is outstanding.

Continue along Bishop's Walk and up Harnham Hill and then over the open chalk downland of Homington Down towards Dogdean Farm, before dropping down to the River Ebble and the pretty village of Odstock. Stop for a break at the renowned Yew Tree pub or visit St Mary's churchyard where the rose-covered grave of Joshua Scamp lies. Then the Path takes you south of the village of Nunton.

The Path winds around the foot of Clearbury Down from which you can clearly see Clearbury Ring, an Iron Age hill fort, past the curious octagonal Round House and through Charlton All Saints; it then runs alongside the water meadows where you get your first sight of the intricate irrigation system used to 'drown' the meadows. At the 17th century New Court Farm, turn left over the bridge and follow the causeway through the meadows and into Downton.

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