



A detailed map of Winchester city centre is available at the tourist information centre.



To Autumn

SEASON of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
 Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
 Conspiring with him how to load and bless
 With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;
 To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
 And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
 To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
 With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
 And still more, later flowers for the bees,
 Until they think warm days will never cease;
 For Summer has o'erbrimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
 Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
 Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
 Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
 Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
 Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
 Spares the next swath and all its twin'd flowers:
 And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
 Steady thy laden head across a brook;
 Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,
 Thou watchest the last oozings, hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
 Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—
 While barr'd clouds bloom the soft-dying day
 And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
 Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
 Among the river-sallows, borne aloft
 Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
 And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
 Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
 The redbreast whistles from a garden-croft;
 And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

John Keats

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KEATS

A Winchester walk in the poet's footsteps
 A WINCHESTER WALK IN THE POET'S FOOTSTEPS



'An exceeding pleasant town, enriched with a beautiful cathedral and surrounded by fresh-looking country.'

John Keats reflects on Winchester in 1819

The English Romantic poet, John Keats, stayed in Winchester during the late summer and early autumn of 1819. Despite being tormented by his love for Fanny Brawne and ill-health, his visit to the city seems to have been a peaceful, reflective interlude in his troubled life.

Keats enjoyed a daily walk though the Cathedral Close and water meadows to St Cross. He was so inspired by the natural beauty of Winchester that, on Sunday 19 September 1819, he penned his ode *To Autumn* on his return.

The area has changed little since Keats visited, medieval buildings still 'mixed up with trees' and the Itchen still 'most beautifully clear'. Read on and take the walk yourself...



Winchester
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We invite you to follow in the poet's footsteps from the city to St Cross, passing through the landscape which inspired the ode *To Autumn*.



1 The round trip covers approximately two miles on pavements, gravel paths and grass. The walk begins at the **tourist information centre** **7** in the Victorian Guildhall, close to **King Alfred's statue** **1**. It is likely that Keats' lodgings were on the north side of the cathedral and the High Street, but the exact address is unknown.

2 Turn left outside the tourist information centre and walk up the High Street. Take the second left into Market Street and continue to the 'beautiful front' of **Winchester Cathedral** * **2**.



2 Winchester Cathedral was already 725 years old when Keats visited. Two years previously Jane Austen had been buried here, although there is no mention of her literary occupation on her tombstone in the north aisle. Keats would walk up and down this aisle reading letters from Fanny Brawne. In 1872 and 1900 respectively a brass plaque and a stained glass window were erected in Austen's memory.

3 From the cathedral, turn left under stone arches **3** and walk through the **Inner Close** **4**.



3 Keats described the Close as: 'two college-like squares seemingly built for the dwelling place of Deans and Prebendaries - garnished with grass and shaded with trees'.



4 The lovely buildings of the Inner Close include the ruined Chapter House, the 14th century **Deanery** **5** and Pilgrims' School where the cathedral choristers and Winchester College quirksters are educated.



6 One of Winchester's most photographed buildings is **Cheyney Court** **6**, formerly the Bishop's courthouse.



* Refreshments are available at the Cathedral Café.

7 Leave the Inner Close by St Swithun's Gate, adjacent to **Cheyney Court**.



On your left is **Kingsgate** **7**, one of only two surviving city gates, with the tiny church of St-Swithun-upon-Kingsgate above. If you have time to browse, this tucked-away area holds some of the city's best-kept shopping secrets.

8 Go under Kingsgate, turn left and walk along **College Street**.



This area of Winchester is dominated by **Winchester College** **8**, founded in 1382 by Bishop William of Wykeham. It is the oldest continuously running public school in England. Take the fascinating tour to glimpse the 14th century chapel with its unusual wooden vaulted roof and a red brick schoolroom attributed to Wren.



Jane Austen spent the last few weeks of her life at **Number 8 College Street** * **9**, where she completed her last novel *Persuasion*. She died on 18 July 1817.



10 On your left at the end of College Street is the present-day bishop's palace, Wolvesey. Beyond lie the ruins of the extensive palace of the medieval bishops, known as **Wolvesey Castle** **10**.

11 Turn right into College Walk. At the end turn right, then left onto the path through the **water meadows** **11**.



Walk through the water meadows as Keats did, alongside a chalk stream of the River Itchen with its trout, moorhens and wild flowers. The angler Izaak Walton, who is buried in the cathedral, fished in the River Itchen.



12 To the right are the neatly clipped cricket pitches of Winchester College and ahead is the towering mound of **St Catherine's Hill** **12**.

* The house in College Street is now private and not open to the public. Please respect the privacy of the residents.

13 After half a mile cross **Garnier Road** and continue for a further quarter of a mile until you reach **St Cross Hospital** **14**.



Keats described St Cross **13** as: 'a very interesting old place, both for its gothic tower and alms-square, and for the appropriation of its rich rents to a relation of the Bishop of Winchester' - a reference to a contemporary corruption scandal which was one of the themes of Anthony Trollope's novel *The Warden* 35 years later.



The mellow medieval buildings of St Cross Hospital enjoy an idyllic meadow landscape setting. Founded in 1136, the hospital is the country's oldest charitable institution and still functions as an almshouse. Those arriving on foot may ask for the Wayfarer's Dole, bread and ale which has been given to travellers since the almshouse was founded. The Hospital serves refreshments in the summer months, and The Bell Inn on St Cross Road is the nearest pub. Keats' final instruction is: 'pass across St Cross meadows till you come to the most beautifully clear river'. He did not elaborate further and we do not know his return route.

To return to the city you could retrace your footsteps through the water meadows or, if you prefer a paved route, walk along **Back Street, St Faith's Road, Kingsgate Road and Kingsgate Street**. **St Cross Road** is also paved and buses are available.

There is some evidence that Keats may have returned via St Catherine's Hill and the Itchen Navigation. He said: 'there is on one side of the city a dry chalky down where the air is worth sixpence a pint', a description which would fit this area.

A map is recommended if you wish to explore further. For a memorable conclusion to your walk, why not take in evensong at the cathedral? It is sung at 5.30pm on Monday (men only), Tuesday, Wednesday (sung by a visiting choir), Thursday, Friday and Saturday and at 3.30pm on Sunday.

