

SUNSET

A romantic walk through
picturesque Winchester

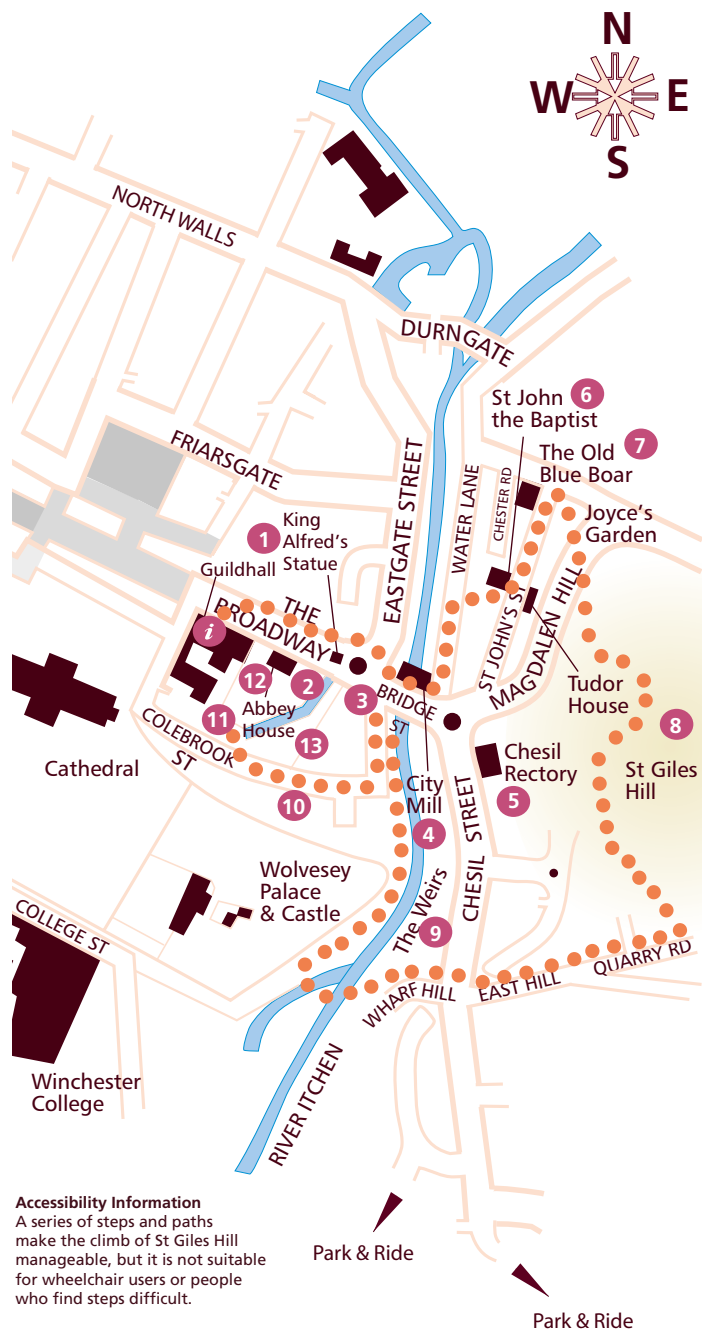
'The sunset caught me, turned the brush to copper,
Set the clouds to one great roof of flame above
the earth.'

Elizabeth Coatsworth



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Accessibility Information

A series of steps and paths make the climb of St Giles Hill manageable, but it is not suitable for wheelchair users or people who find steps difficult.

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

Sunset Walk

The 'Sunset' walk is a self-guided circular trail of approximately 1¼ miles through the beautiful and historic eastern part of Winchester.

Encompassing St Giles Hill, The Weirs and Abbey Gardens, the walk passes some of the city's oldest buildings and most exquisite scenes.

The walk is a photographer's joy and will delight at any time of the day, however, the panoramic view of the city from St Giles Hill is arguably at its best as the sun sets.

Did you know?

According to research published by academics at Aberystwyth University (Prof. Richard Marggraf Turley and his colleagues), the 'Stubble-plains' of Keats' poem Ode to Autumn could be referring to the former cornfields at the foot of St Giles Hill.



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The walk begins in the **Broadway**, originally a Roman thoroughfare, which is dominated by a bronze statue of **King Alfred the Great** **1** erected in 1901.



The King of Wessex drove back the Danes and reinvigorated the city after the Dark Ages. Known as the founder of the kingdom, King Alfred made Winchester his seat of power, introduced laws, stimulated scholarship and encouraged use of a new language which became 'English'.



Abbey House **2**, beside the Victorian Guildhall, dates from 1680 and is the Mayor's official residence. The house and Abbey Gardens are built on the site of an abbey, known as Nunnaminster (and later St Mary's Abbey) on land granted to Eahlswith, King Alfred's queen.

Walk towards the Eastern Hill, known as **St Giles Hill**, pausing at **City Bridge** with the **River Itchen** flowing fast beneath you.



This was the main **river crossing** **3** into Winchester. Here, the City Bridge and the East Gate allowed access to and from the Roman, Saxon and medieval city. It is said that a miracle was performed here in the 9th century by Bishop (later Saint) Swithun.



A lady bringing eggs to market broke them as she crossed the river at this spot, but Swithun came to her aid and made the eggs whole again.

The **City Mill** **4**, owned by the National Trust, was built in 1744. There has been a mill on this site since the 10th century.



The area beyond the bridge is known as 'The Soke'. In the Middle Ages the bishop had jurisdiction over this area and many citizens moved here to avoid the City's higher taxes.

Notice to the right a timber framed house, the **Chesil Rectory**, which dates from 1450 and is now a multiple **5** award-winning restaurant.

Take the first left into **Water Lane** and follow the path by the river, looking back to see the island garden at the rear of the **City Mill**. Look out for otters at dusk! After 45 metres turn right between numbers 40 and 41 Water Lane and follow the path up into the churchyard of **St John the Baptist**.



St John the Baptist **6** is one of Winchester's oldest parish churches. It was built in the 12th century and retains a medieval air with wall paintings inside on the north wall.

The church was used by Winchester College before their chapel was built in the early 15th century.

Leave the churchyard and turn left into **St John's Street**, noticing to your right **'Tudor House'**, once the city's workhouse.



St John's Street was on the medieval pilgrims' route to Canterbury from the city. Further uphill you will see

The Old Blue Boar **7**. Dating from the 14th century, some believe it to be Winchester's oldest house.

Turn right and cross over **Joyce's Garden** and busy **Magdalen Hill**, entering **St Giles Hill** a few metres further down. Ascend the hill and make your way across the wide green space at the top. On the lower side you will find the viewpoint.



At **St Giles viewpoint** **8** there are seats to enjoy spectacular panoramic views of Winchester.

Use the information panel to pick out St Catherine's Hill, the river and canal, The Hospital of St Cross, Winchester College, Wolvesey Castle, Winchester Cathedral, King Alfred's statue, the High Street and the Westgate.

In the Middle Ages St Giles Fair was held here. It started as a local event but grew into a semi-permanent fair with traders from all over Europe selling cloth, wine, iron and 'strange beasts and birds, apes, bears and ferrets.'*

From the viewpoint, follow the hill round and up the steps to the south-east corner and descend to **Quarry Road**. Turn right following the signs to **Riverside Walk**, crossing **Chesil Street**, until you reach **Wharf Mill** (an award-winning conversion of industrial premises to flats). Turn right.



You are now following a riverside walk known as **The Weirs** **9**, next to the medieval city walls. Just before City Bridge is one of the only visible parts of the city's Roman wall.

* A History of the County of Hampshire, Volume 5 (1912)

By the Roman wall ascend the steps into a small garden. Turn left through the garden into **Colebrook Street**.



Colebrook Street **10** marked the boundary of St Mary's Abbey. It is said that two historic figures once lodged in the street. In the 17th century, Nell Gwynn, Charles II's mistress, took up residence. And in the early 19th century the poet John Keats wrote his ode 'To Autumn' during a stay in the city. The poem was inspired by a walk through the Water Meadows to the Hospital of St Cross.

Turn left and follow the road round until you reach the entrance in the wall on your right into **Abbey Gardens**.



The entrance to Abbey Gardens is through an 18th century temple façade which was built as a frontage for the **Abbey Mill** **11**, whose mill stream you cross.



Excavated foundations of the abbey church can be seen in Abbey Passage, next to the Guildhall. Tucked into the corner of Abbey House is a **scented garden** **12** for blind people.



The walk ends here in **Abbey Gardens** **13** in sight of King Alfred's statue where it began.

