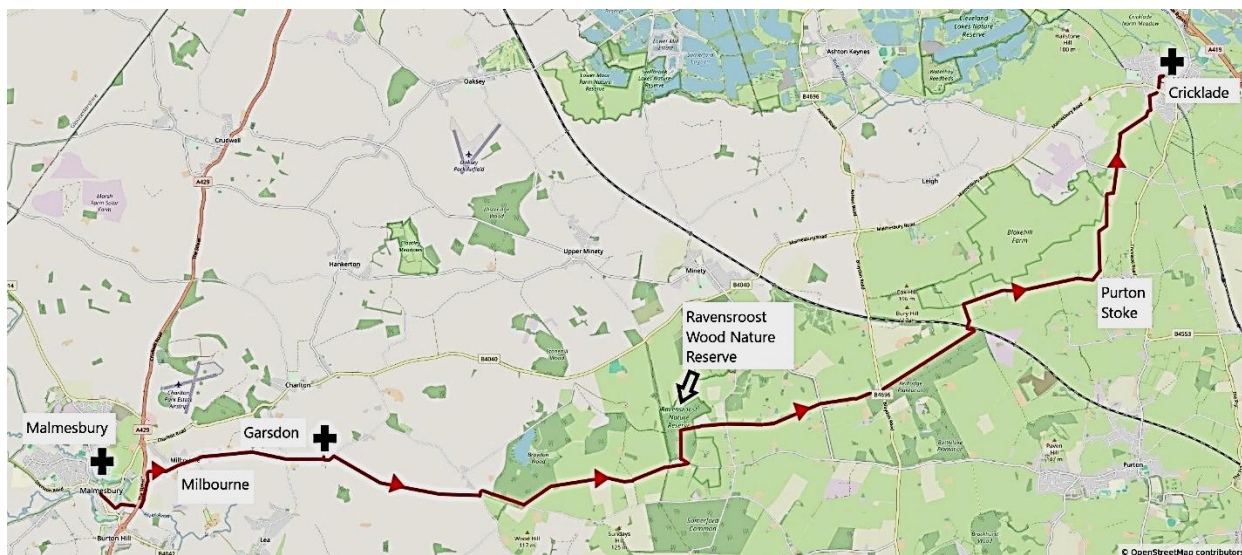


## Day 1: Malmesbury to Cricklade



*The walk begins at Malmesbury Abbey, where King Athelstan is buried. The current building dates from the 12<sup>th</sup> century and is the third abbey to stand on this site. The first abbey was founded by St Aldhelm in the 7<sup>th</sup> century.*

*The first half of the route is mainly on quiet country roads, following the North Wessex Way (the historic route between Oxford and Bristol) through Milbourne and Garsdon. The route then follows bridleways through Ravensroost Wood and onwards towards Cricklade, finishing at St Sampson's Church in the centre of the town.*

**Distance:** 15 miles

**Duration:** 6 – 6½ hours, not including breaks (depending on the ground conditions, as the bridleways can be very muddy at certain times of the year)

**Level of difficulty:** Easy, but long

**Maps:** Ordnance Survey Explorer 168, 169

**Car parking:** Long stay parking in Malmesbury at Station Road Car Park (SN16 9QY), several free car parks in Cricklade ([crickladetowncouncil.gov.uk/services/car-park/](http://crickladetowncouncil.gov.uk/services/car-park/))

**Public transport:** see <https://www.connectingwiltshire.co.uk/>

### Malmesbury

The site of an Iron Age fort and later an Anglo-Saxon monastery which became a celebrated centre of learning, Malmesbury is reputed to be the oldest Borough in England with a charter dating back to 880. It became one of Alfred the Great's chain of defensive 'burghs', designed to deter Viking attacks. The Domesday Book lists Malmesbury first, indicating it was the most important town in Wiltshire at the end of the Anglo-Saxon period. Aldhelm, the son of a West Saxon king and a pupil of an Irish monk, Maildubh, after who Malmesbury is named, became the first Abbot of Malmesbury Abbey in 675. His remarkable career made him a hero for Athelstan, the first King of England (died 939), who chose to be buried at Malmesbury Abbey. Malmesbury has a packed subsequent history. It was the place of the first human flight, (by a monk named Eilmer in 1010), the birthplace of the leading political philosopher, Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury in 1588, changed hands six times in the English Civil War, experienced continuing allegations and prosecution of witchcraft in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and was the scene of the death of Hannah Tywnnoy, the first person killed by a Tiger in England, in 1703. It is a beautiful hilltop town with a thriving high street, remarkable Norman Abbey (part living church, part ruin) and a great choice of cafes, restaurants, pubs and places to stay.

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**Refreshments:** Malmesbury Abbey café, cafés and pubs in Malmesbury and Cricklade. No amenities along the route, except for some benches in Ravensroost Nature Reserve.

**Toilets:** Malmesbury Abbey, Malmesbury Town Hall, Garsdon Church (when open), public toilets in Cricklade.

### Short Walk Options:

1. Malmesbury to Garsdon Church. 3 miles. Directions 1 to 8.
2. Malmesbury to Ravenswood. 7 miles. Directions 1 to 13.

### Directions:

1. With your back to the porch of **Malmesbury Abbey**, walk straight on through the churchyard and through the gatehouse to reach the Market Cross.
2. Turn left and walk along Oxford Street, then turn right into Market Lane at the side of the Town Hall to reach Cross Hayes car park.
3. Cross to the opposite diagonal corner of the car park and walk down Back Hill. (You will see the disused Ebenezer Chapel on the right-hand side as you walk down the hill.)
4. Walk down the steps at the bottom of the hill and turn left at the junction with the road.
5. Cross the river bridge and follow the road along, past the bowls club on the left.
6. After passing under the A429 road bridge, take the broad track on the left and follow this uphill, parallel to the A429, for around 600 yards to reach a junction with a tarmac track.
7. Turn right along this track until a road joins from the left. Continue straight ahead through the village of Milbourne, ignoring roads to the left and right.
8. At the crossroads (around half a mile after Milbourne), continue straight ahead and follow the road around until you arrive at **All Saints Church, Garsdon**, on the left.

### Garsdon

Originated as an estate given to Malmesbury Abbey by King Ine of Wessex (born 670, died 728) in 701. The Abbey held the estate in 1081 (Domesday Book entry) and retained it until the Dissolution. The Domesday Book records seventeen households, two mills, and sufficient land for six plough teams. The church tower dates from 1265.

9. The church is a good place for a coffee stop, with a bench outside and a toilet inside. The philosopher Roger Scruton, who died in 2020, is buried to the west side of the churchyard.
10. Walk back down the gravel church driveway and turn left onto the road. Follow the road until you see a sign for Brinkworth and Purton in front of an old telephone box and a post box.
11. Take the road on the right towards Brinkworth and Purton. At the next junction, turn left and then almost immediately turn right.

## Day 1: Malmesbury to Cricklade

12. At the next junction, turn left signposted Minety and Purton. Braydon Wood is on the left-hand side.
13. After about 1½ miles along this road, turn left into the entrance and car park for Ravensroost Nature Reserve. Follow the wide track through the woods, where there are some picnic benches, until you reach a wooden shooting lodge on the right-hand side with benches outside. This is a good place for a lunch break.
14. Continue along the wide track for around 50 yards to a metal gate and a junction with a bridleway. Turn right along the bridleway.
15. Continue along this bridleway, ignoring side paths, through the Nature Reserve until you reach the road at Armyn Cross. Armyn Cross Farm is on the opposite side of the road.
16. Cross the road to the bridleway and follow it for around a mile to the next road crossing. The area by the road is another possible lunch stop.
17. Cross the road to the bridleway, which bears right then left. After around 100 yards, the track turns left to a gateway. Go through the gateway, then turn right and follow the field edge to a set of double gates.
18. Go through the gates, turn right and walk around the right-hand side of the pond. Walk straight up the slope towards Gospel Oak Farm.
19. When you reach the wooden fence in front of the house, turn left and follow the fence line around to the left of the house. Carry straight on past the house and barn and along the tarmac drive. The Electric gate is opened via a push button. Continue to the road. **Take care here, as this is a fast and busy road.**
20. Cross the road, follow it to the right for a few yards and then turn left into a bridleway. Follow this past some houses and continue along it for around a mile until you approach a railway line. The railway line is in a cutting, so it is not obvious at this point. (NB This section can be very muddy, depending on the time of year.)
21. Just before the railway line, the path arrives at a T-junction with another bridleway. Turn left and follow the path to a bridge on the right over the railway.
22. Cross the bridge and continue along the bridleway to reach a gate. Going through the gate, turn right along another bridleway and through another gate to reach a tarmac road. This is Stoke Common Lane.
23. Continue straight along Stoke Common Lane for around a mile. Look out for the interesting Purton Stoke Spa pump room building on the left:  
<https://englishbuildings.blogspot.com/2008/02/purton-stoke-wiltshire.html>
24. Just before you reach the village of Purton Stoke, take the bridleway on the left and follow it in a roughly straight direction through several gates. The bridleway becomes a footpath passing to the left of Whitehall Farm. After passing a long barn, the path meets a bridleway.



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25. Turn right along the bridleway through the farmyard. Take the bridleway to the left between the farm buildings (after the large yard).
26. Go through a 6-bar gate and through a field to reach a road.
27. **Cross the road with care, as it can be busy.** Turn right, then turn left after a few yards to walk along Blind Lane. At the end of this lane, you reach Chelworth Road. **Again, take care, as this can also be a busy road.**
28. Walk carefully along the side of this road, and cross to the other side before the double bend, as this is a blind corner. After the second bend, turn left into the footpath (Church Walk) through the housing estate.
29. Stay on Church Walk, walking between the houses on a tarmac pavement.
30. Keep heading in the direction of the church tower, which you can clearly see from the path.
31. Walk through the underpass past Saxon Close and, where the path divides, take the right-hand fork signposted Parsonage Farm Close.
32. When you reach a hedge in front of you, turn left for a little way and then turn right through a gate into the churchyard of **St Sampson's, Cricklade**.

### Cricklade

Founded in the 9<sup>th</sup> century by the Anglo-Saxons at the point where the Roman Ermin Way (from London to Gloucester via Silchester) crossed the Thames. Another of Alfred's 'burghs' (thirty of these are recorded in the Anglo-Saxon 'Burghal Hidage'), it was critical to the Wessex defensive line as it was close to Cirencester, where a Viking army was established. The fortifications have been extensively excavated. The Cricklade Council website claims that Cricklade is 'the most intact example of a late Saxon town in Britain'. The town was an authorised royal mint from 979 until 1100.

### Timings for Monday 18 August (approximate):

09:30 - 10:00	Registration at <b>Malmesbury Abbey</b> (Cloister Garden's), briefing, Opening Ceremony
10:00	Set off from <b>Malmesbury Abbey</b> (Cloister Garden's)
11:15 - 11:30	<b>All Saints Church</b> , Garsdon (3 miles)
13:15 - 13:45	Ravensroost Wood Nature Reserve (7 miles)
17:30	Arrive at <b>St Sampson's Church</b> , Cricklade (15 miles)
Contact: David Pope, 07413 713 515	

With thanks to John Dewhurst, Churchwarden of All Saints, Kingston, for the information in the panels