

Royal Windsor Heritage Trail



This trail takes you from Windsor Castle, across the River Thames to Eton College and allows you to discover 1,000 years of history. The historic core of Windsor has grown up over the centuries in the shadow of Windsor Castle and each successive monarch has left their mark upon the town.



Starting from the [Royal Windsor Information Centre](#) (1) within Windsor Royal Shopping Centre, walk up the hill towards [Windsor Castle](#) and turn right on to the High Street. Pass Barclays Bank on your right and continue on to the pedestrian crossing. Cross over the road and walk to your left, round the corner and up the hill to Church Street on your right (2).

This area of cobbled streets is known as Guildhall Island where many interesting buildings date from as early as the 17th century. The Old King's Head (3) bears a plaque on its wall recording the warrant for the execution of Charles I in 1648 and it is said to be where William Shakespeare wrote "The Merry Wives of Windsor". Just a few doors along is a house reputed to be where Charles II housed his favourite mistress, Nell Gwynne (4). Carry on to the end of Church Street, take a right and right again on to Market Street making sure you look at the signage describing the history of the buildings. At the [Carpenters Arms](#), turn left into Queen Charlotte Street (5), one of the shortest streets in Britain at just 51 feet 10 inches. Follow this to the end and on to the High Street.

To the left of Queen Charlotte Street is Market Cross House (6), now housing the [Crooked House Tea Rooms](#). This was originally a private house thought to have been built in 1687. Its leaning appearance is due to the use of unseasoned timber and structural changes that have happened over the years. Next to Market Cross House is the [Windsor Guildhall](#) (7). Sir Christopher Wren completed the building in 1690. On closer inspection you

will notice that the central columns do not touch the ceiling and tradition has it that the councillors of the time, against Wren's wishes, insisted on the columns in the interest of safety. Wren, not to be outdone, left the columns an inch short of the ceiling.

Walk back past the Crooked House towards the Castle. At the bottom of Castle Hill is the Queen Victoria Statue (8) erected in 1887 for the Golden Jubilee to mark the 50th anniversary of her coronation. The architecture of the town owes much to Queen Victoria and her marriage to Prince Albert.



Walking down the hill with the Castle walls rising steeply to your right, look out for the metal inserts in the gutter, used to stop horse-drawn carriages from rolling down the hill. To your left you will see [Windsor Royal Station](#) (9). The railway line was extended from Slough in 1849 by the Great Western Railway to provide access to the railway for Queen Victoria.

Curfew Tower (10) looms menacingly over Thames Street as you continue down the hill. The tower housed the dungeons and had a gibbet at the top where corpses of criminals were hung as a warning to the people. Further on still on the left hand side of the road is the [Theatre Royal](#) (11). The theatre was established on this site in 1815 although the present building dates from 1910. Continue past the theatre and around the corner. Cross over the road at the traffic lights and continue straight ahead to the bridge. Just before Windsor Bridge is [Sir Christopher Wren's House](#) (12). The famous architect built the house in 1676 as his family home. He was a member of parliament for Old Windsor and his father was Dean of Windsor. The house is now a hotel with splendid views across the [Thames](#).



The bridge was built in the reign of Henry III in the 13th century and was a wooden structure. Those passing over the bridge had to pay a toll. The current bridge (13) was opened in 1823 but was closed to vehicles in 1970 due to structural problems. This busy section of the River Thames is bustling with all manner of river craft as well as many water birds including the beautiful swans. As you cross the bridge you can see Eton College Boathouses on the left where the sculls and skiffs were kept for the boys to

practice their rowing. The College owns much of the land around this area including the Brocas, the open land behind the boathouses.

Eton High Street (14) is packed with galleries, boutiques, antique shops and gift shops. Allow plenty of time for browsing. One of the most interesting buildings is the Tiger Garden Restaurant (15). It contains the remains of the original cock fighting area, a sport which was popular during the 17th and 18th centuries. The building is said to have been frequented by Charles II. In front of the restaurant is an original pair of stocks and a Victorian post box.

On crossing Barnes Pool Bridge (16) at the end of the High Street you are within the boundaries of [Eton College](#). The College, founded in 1440 by Henry VI, has educated 19 British Prime Ministers including Walpole, Pitt The Elder, Macmillan, Douglas-Holme and David Cameron. The chapel was originally planned to be the size of a cathedral and a white cross can be seen on the left hand wall of Keat's Lane, opposite, showing the proposed end of the nave.



Today Eton College (17) is one of the most exclusive schools in the world where the ancient desks and benches bear the graffiti of generations of former pupils. Between March and September discover the language, dress, sports and age-old traditions on one of the daily-guided tours.