

12. Journey's end - The walk into Bath

Discover a true sense of pilgrimage with this wonderful walk into the heart of Bath and the southern end of the Cotswold Way. Follow the trail as it slides from open hill top into historic city, winding its way around open farmland and down bustling alleyways to its crescendo at the majestic splendour of Bath Abbey.

Distance:

6 miles
(linear – public transport return)

Duration:

3½ - 4 hours
(plus maximum ½ hour return)

Difficulty:

Moderate – one stile, some steep sections

Public transport/parking:

Bath Park and Ride No. 31 (Lansdown). Mon-Sat only, with seasonal Sundays. Visit: www.bathnes.gov.uk/parkandride for details.

Parking not available at the racecourse

Start/Finish:

Grid reference ST 732 682 (OS Explorer 155), postcode BA1 9BJ.

Refreshments:

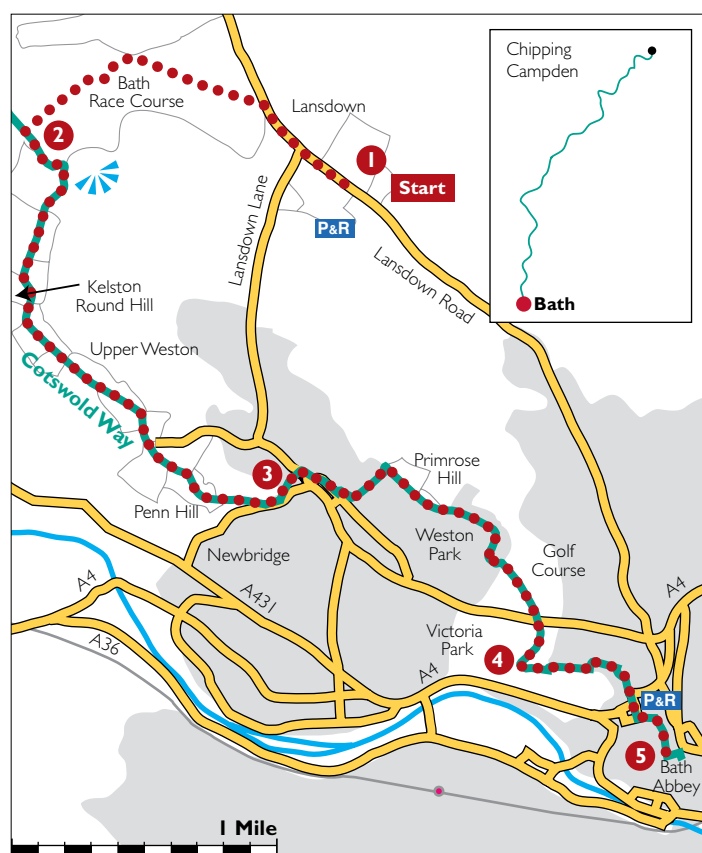
Hundreds of wonderful places to eat, drink and rest in Bath city centre.

1 Leave the Park and Ride by the vehicle exit and cross the busy road via the island to the path on the other side. Turn left and head towards the pub, crossing back over the road at the next island to follow the grass verge. Continue on across the pub forecourt, and just past the far side follow the footpath left across a small area of scrub. Turn right immediately before the racecourse, and follow the track between the maintenance sheds and the drystone wall. Head around the edge of the golf course, keeping the wall on your left, and continue on past the racecourse main entrance.

When you meet the main access road, turn left between the buildings towards a sign marked 'centre course' and pass through the narrow gap in the fence ahead. Turn right and follow the racecourse boundary fence all the way round until you reach the far corner, being careful to avoid the track itself and to clear up after your dog. At this point you join the Cotswold Way and will not be leaving it until the end of your walk.

2 Turn left and follow the trail until you reach the viewpoint. Pass through the kissing gate and turn left to follow the track downhill. Continue on towards the tree-topped dome of Kelston Round Hill as wonderful views over Bath begin to open up to your left – a sight that has given comfort to the road weary for thousands of years. Stay on the Cotswold Way through three kissing gates as it heads around Shiner's Wood and onto the track passing the hill up on the right. When you meet the farm road, head straight on over the stile and around the top edge of the field, passing through the metal gate at the far side. Follow the path round past a view point on your right and through another metal gate to head down towards the recreation ground.

3 Head straight across the playing fields as the Cotswold Way crosses the boundary between countryside and city. At the far corner, pass through a gate and head left to pick up the Cotswold Way signs as they change from weathered oak to green and white metal fingers. Continue to follow the signs over a zebra crossing, past a church and up some steep sections of path between houses. Pass through a kissing gate and turn right to follow the path along the bottom of a field, known as Primrose Hill, pausing at the end to glance all the way back up to where the walk began. Keep following the Trail down a shaded path, across the last of the rough grassland and up another steep section. Stick with the signs as they guide you right towards Sion Hill, and



then down a path through the middle of the golf course. Cross the road at the bottom, past the last of the green and white signs, and follow the path around the edge of Victoria Park.

4 At the bottom of the park, turn left and pick up another stile of Cotswold Way signing; from now until the end you will be looking out for black stickers with gold arrows attached to lampposts and bollards etc. Head past the war memorial and through the ornate park gates, then instead of making for the second set of gates, turn left and cross the road to follow the path below the Royal Crescent. Turn left at the end, then right down Brock Street towards the picturesque tree-filled Circus. Turn right and head down Gay Street, crossing over at the lights to carry on down the other side. At the bottom, turn left onto Wood Street and carry straight on until you meet the junction with Milsom Street. (For the return journey,

turn left up Milsom St; the Park and Ride bus stop is halfway up on the right). Turn right and head down Old Bond Street to the right of the central line of shops, then left at the bottom and immediately right onto Union Street. Keep straight on across the next road, then left into the Colonnade as the wonderfully welcoming sight of Bath Abbey is revealed.

5 Continue past the Roman Baths, then to the right of the Abbey; the official finish (or start!) point of the Cotswold Way is just round the corner across the square from the tourist information centre. At this the journey's end, rest awhile and feel affinity with those who have walked before you; with over a hundred miles lying behind, this is your chance to join the last few footsteps of pilgrims ancient and modern as one of the nation's finest walks comes to a close.