

Lancaster City Trail



1 Let's begin outside the Priory Church. Walk over to the top of the steps. From here you can see the history of the city laid out before you. The magnificent Georgian buildings tell of the riches that were made during Lancaster's heyday as a bustling port on the spice route. As your eyes travel upwards, notice the rows and rows of Victorian terraces that were built by the Victorian owners of the thundering cotton mills to house the workers who toiled for them. On the skyline you can see **The Ashton Memorial**, completed in 1909, after being commissioned by Lancaster's foremost entrepreneur **Lord Ashton**. Sometimes referred to as Lancaster's Taj Mahal, it is believed to have been built in tribute to his wife Jessie. Around it spreads a spectacular park with a café and butterfly house, an atmospheric place to while away an afternoon.

Now, turn around and look at the Priory itself. You are standing on ancient hallowed ground - it is believed that Christian worship has been taking place on this site since the 2nd century - the Romans arrived in Lancaster in about 80AD. **The Priory** itself is very old and was granted a charter as a Benedictine Priory in 1094. You can find out more inside the Church.

2 Turn again and look at the Castle. It started life as a Roman fort and has a thrilling history of dungeons, witches, knights and martyrs. It is here that the Pendle witches were tried and condemned to the gallows which in those days were near **The Ashton Memorial**. From where you are standing you can see **Hanging Corner** where the public executions were held in the 18th-19th centuries - imagine the thousands of people who gathered where you are standing to watch.

On the right you can see the Shire Hall which is still used as a Crown Court. The older part of the Castle dates back to the mid-12th century. You can take a tour around the Castle - see the old prison wings which only closed in 2011 and be locked in the pitch black dungeons - *do you dare?*

Time to move on. With the entrance to the Priory on your right, walk around the clock tower noticing the spectacular view of the coast - it's easy to see why the Romans chose this site for their defences. You will see a lane in front of you - follow it down; on your right amongst the undergrowth is the spot of a **Roman Bath House**. Keep going until you reach the Quay.

Transport your mind back to the 1750s. Lancaster's bustling quayside was England's 4th largest port - you would have seen jostling crowds of sailors, merchants, errand boys, traders and ladies of both good and ill repute. Legend has it that there were 50 hostels along this quay, catering for the crews that brought cargoes of rum, spices sugar and tobacco from the colonies. You can still see the **Custom House** which is now **The Maritime Museum**.

Follow the riverside path staying on this side of the river, take the walkway onto and back off the **Millennium Bridge** until you turn right into **Water Street** and cross over **Cable Street** (where the sailors hung their ropes to dry). Cross the main road into **Chapel Street** and notice **St John's Church** which was built in 1754 when the port was expanding. Every Sunday rich merchants came here to make their peace.

Keep to the right and walk up 'Stinking Lane' which at some stage in its history was renamed as the current (and more fragrant) **Rosemary Lane**. Before you cross, look up **St Leonardgate** to your left to see more Georgian merchants' houses and the renowned **Grand Theatre** built in 1782.

8 Carry on up Great John Street and when you get to **Dalton Square**, stop and ponder the Town Hall, another gift to the city from **Lord Ashton**, to house the city council, its public services, a court, banqueting suites and a large concert hall. The monument of **Queen Victoria** in **Dalton Square** was given to the city at the same time and features 53 eminent Victorians at its base.

Cross over and turn left into **Gage Street**, continue through **Frances Passage** (yes spelt correctly), into **Penny Street**, turn right until you reach the crossroads with **Market Street**. Here you will see a horseshoe set into the pavings. Legend has it that it was **John O'Gaunt's** horse that cast its shoe when galloping to the Castle.

10 Carry on up Market Street to **Market Square**. On the wall of the 1725 pub you will see a plaque that tells you that **Bonnie Prince Charlie** was declared Regent near this site in 1745.

11 The City Museum, once the **Town Hall**, is also in this square.

Keep walking up Market Street until you see a small ginnel on your right behind Barclays Bank. This is **Sun Street**, it was built around 1780 and it cuts through what would once have been the dramatic gardens of a prosperous Georgian lawyer. You will see **The Music Room** on your left, this would have been a beautiful folly in the ornamental gardens. The nine muses decorate its interior walls in stunning plasterwork and it can now be rented as holiday accommodation via **The Landmark Trust**. The Atkinson's coffee roaster wafts its rich aroma into the streets of Lancaster, as it has done since **Thomas and Jane Atkinson** opened the **Grasshopper Tea Warehouse** in 1837.

Continue on down Sun Street, noticing the tiny Georgian properties that would once have been thriving shops. At the end you reach **Church Street** which follows the line of the original Roman Road where Roman legions marched to the fort. Turn left and walk up the street, you will see the house where **Bonnie Prince Charlie** is supposed to have stayed, (number 76).

14 At the head of the street you will see the majestic **Judges' Lodgings** which was originally built in 1630 as the house of the Governor of the Castle. Following this it was used as accommodation for judges who travelled to cast their verdicts at the Assizes courts at the Castle.

15 Take the fork to the left of the Judges' Lodgings and approach the Castle. You will see the former Dispensary of 1785 (number 19) which provided healthcare for the poor.

As you reach the top you will see Lancaster's picture book Castle in all its glory - the epitome of a true English stronghold. The portcullis is known as **John O'Gaunt's Gate** and renders the castle a dominating force over the town. On the right of the gate is some older stonework - this is the **Well Tower** but locally it is known as the **Witches Tower** because this is where the famous **Pendle Witches** spent their last days before their demise.

Keep the Castle on your right and continue to walk down the hill. You will come to the side entrance of **The Storey** in which you will find **The Print Room Café Bar** (open Tuesday-Friday 8am-6pm & Saturday 9am-6pm) and **Lancaster Visitor Information Centre** (open Monday-Saturday, 10am-4pm).

Pop into the Print Room for delicious home cooked food and fresh coffee, and then call into the Visitor Information Centre where our friendly and knowledgeable staff will be pleased to help you find out more about anything that has captured your imagination during the trail.

EXPLORE OUR HISTORIC CITY

As you approach on the M6, you can tell by the dramatic change in the landscape that you are arriving somewhere special. The air softens, the terrain gives way to rolling hills and an impressive city skyline opens out at your side.

Historic Lancaster, with its two universities, is a city of learning and a city of stories. It is a city where the past sits comfortably with the present. Splendid stone façades hark back to its heyday as a Georgian port; quirky independent shops rub shoulders with a smattering of well-known stores; museums and monuments are enjoyed by old and young; bars and restaurants bustle with locals.

For miles and miles around, rolling countryside is dotted with sleepy villages, pretty ports and quiet bays.

LANCASTER.

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OTHER WALKS & TOURS OF LANCASTER

Tours of Lancaster Castle

Open daily for guided tours from 10am until 4pm. (Court sittings permitting). 01524 64998

Civic Society City Walks

City Walks take place on particular Sundays in summer and trace Lancaster's history on a 2-hour walk. Book your place at Lancaster Visitor Information Centre. 01524 582394

Civic Society Cemetery Tours

Explore the heritage of the "Top Cemetery" on Quernmore Road. Third Sunday of the month, April to November. Meet at the main cemetery gates, off Quernmore Road, at 2pm.

Lancaster Tours

A series of themed walks around Lancaster, taking place on selected dates throughout the year. www.lancastertours.co.uk

For other local publications please visit:

Lancaster Visitor Information Centre
The Storey,
Meeting House Lane,
Lancaster, LA1 1TH.

Don't forget to ask at the Visitor Information Centre about the Friends and Family Xplorer card which allows a year's access to all the Lancashire Museums at a discounted rate. You can also pick up a free Visit Card which offers discounts on food, drink and entrance fees at a number of venues within the district.

Trails of the City

City of Heritage

LANCASTER
CITY COUNCIL

Promoting City, Coast & Countryside



Lancaster

SMALL CITY BIG STORY