

A Cycle (or car) Tour of some Ancient Churches around Cheltenham

Prepared by GlosArch <https://www.glosarch.org.uk>

25 miles. 545ft of ascent

This fairly flat, circular route takes you to eight historic churches to the west and north of Cheltenham, Gloucestershire. The oldest, St. Mary's, Deerhurst was started in the 9th century and retains many of its original Saxon features, as does the nearby Odda's chapel, now attached to a Tudor house. Many of the others retain Norman elements from the 12th century, whilst the first and last on the route mostly date from the 13th or 14th centuries. The route stays largely off major roads. Please take care when cycling, make sure you wear appropriate safety equipment and take water, sun cream, waterproofs as the conditions dictate.

The route as printed starts at Cheltenham railway station, although other start options are the Arle Court Park-and-Ride on the A40 near GCHQ, or anywhere in central Cheltenham. If you use a GPS, .fit, .tcx and .gpx files of the route can be downloaded

- 1) Head west out of Cheltenham on the cycle path alongside the A40, crossing the road at the pedestrian crossing after the motorcycle garage. Continue west parallel to the A40 on Miserden Road and then Campden Road before the path rejoins the A40 to the roundabout after GCHQ. Then turn left and then right, in front of B&Q along the cycle track onto Grovefield Way. (N.B. The Arle Court Park and Ride is on the roundabout opposite B&Q). Turn right on to North Road West and then right on to Badgeworth Road. Pass under the dual carriageway and on the bend at the top of the rise turn left on to Bamfurlong Lane. Follow this past the airport and go straight over the traffic lights on to Old Gloucester Road. Turn left where the road is currently closed, on to Boddington Road, which brings you into the village of Staverton. The 13th century St Catherine's church (1) is signposted on the left down Brock Farm Lane. <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1304748>
- 2) Return to Boddington Lane and continue northwards for just over 1 mile (1.75km) and you will arrive at the church of St Mary Magdalene, Boddington (2). This church may have Saxon origins, but the current building dates to the 12th century with 13th and 14th century additions. <http://seventowers.org.uk/our-churches/boddington/>
- 3) From Boddington church carry on northwards until you reach the A4019. Turn right and then first left onto Main Road. **BEWARE: The A4019 is a busy road, so take care here.** Carry on along main road until you reach Cursey Lane where you turn left. The turn is marked by a sign saying "Harrow Farm". At the end of this road turn right onto the A38. **Again this is a busy road so take care.** A cycle lane is marked on the edge of the carriageway. Continue along the A38 to the traffic lights, where you turn left on to the B4213 towards Ledbury. At the top of the slope take the right turn towards Deerhurst and Odda's Chapel and follow the road down to the magnificent Saxon church of St Mary (3). The church was started in the 8th century and much of the Saxon fabric of the church remains. The many highlights include, the beasts' heads, some with original Saxon paint, the font and the Deerhurst Angel. Also

noteworthy are the 16th century stalls around the nave.

<http://www.greatenglishchurches.co.uk/html/deerhurst.html>

- 4) From the church carry on beyond the floodgates to Odda's Chapel (4), managed by Historic England. It is a small Saxon chapel built by Odda of Mercia to commemorate his brother Aelfric, in the 11th century. The chapel became incorporated into a Tudor house and was rediscovered in the 19th century. <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/oddas-chapel/history/>
- 5) Return the way you came on to the B4213 and up to the traffic lights, where you turn left onto the A38. Continue for around 0.75 miles to the next traffic lights, where you turn right on to Stoke Road. After around ½ a mile you reach Tredington. Continue until you see the 12th century church of St John the Baptist (5), with its square wooden tower, on your left. The church has a carved 12th century tympanum over the blocked north doorway, a Norman, or possibly late Saxon south doorway and some surviving mediaeval glass in the north chancel window. The tower is probably of Tudor date.
<https://www.britainexpress.com/counties/glouces/churches/tredington.htm>
- 6) Carry on along Stoke Road, until you reach the village of Stoke Orchard. The tiny church of St James the Great (6) is easily missed on your right just after Archers Lane. It was built around 1170 as a chapel for the local lord and later became a chapel of ease for the local parishioners. Inside the walls are covered with paintings dating from 1200-1273, which were discovered by the Victorians. These depict the life of St James de Compostella and suggest the church was on an important pilgrim route. They are unique in England.
<https://www.britainexpress.com/counties/glouces/churches/stoke-orchard.htm>
- 7) Continue along Stoke Road for another 2 miles and then fork left as you reach the edge of Bishops Cleeve to stay on Stoke Road. Cross the main road and continue straight until you reach the end where you bear left on to Cheltenham Road into the village centre. Continue past the shops and turn left onto School Road. The Church of St Michael and All Angels (7) is on your left. The church was started in 1170 and shows extensive Norman and transitional Early English gothic features. There is extensive beautifully carved stonework as well as fragments of original painting.
https://www.greatenglishchurches.co.uk/html/bishop_s_cleeve.html
- 8) Retrace your route along School Road and then turn left after the bend onto Tobyfield Road. On the next bend turn right onto Dale Walk. At the end turn right onto Two Hedges Road and first left onto Kayte Lane. Follow Kayte Lane to the end. Here you can either turn right and then left at the traffic lights onto the main A435, or left over the railway bridge and right into the racecourse via a gate. Follow the road through the racecourse to the end where it joins the A435 at a roundabout. Cross the roundabout and continue south on the A435 towards Cheltenham. Turn right at the first traffic lights onto Clarence Road and continue onto St Paul's Road before turning left on Dunalley St. Cross the ring road onto Henrietta St. Dogleg left and right across the High St onto St George's Place before taking the first left on Chester Walk which brings you to the final church on the route, Cheltenham Minster (St Mary's) (8). This is Cheltenham's oldest building, dating to the 11th century, although it probably stands on the site of an 8th century monastery. Some 12th and 13th century fabric survives, including a 13th century piscina, but most of the church

is early 14th century. The interior has collection of 17th to 19th century memorials
<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1386792>.

- 9) From the Minster either exit the square on the opposite site to reach Cheltenham town centre for some well-deserved refreshment or return to St George's Place, turning left and then right onto Royal Well Place which joins the cycle path and follow the signs back to Cheltenham Spa railway station.



- 1) St. Catherine, Staverton; 2) St. Mary Magdalene, Boddington; 3) St. Mary Deerhurst;
4) Odda's Chapel; 5) St. John the Baptist, Tredington; 6) St. James the Great, Stoke
Orchard; 7) St. Michael and All Angels, Bishops Cleeve; 8) Cheltenham Minster.

1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



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