

WARWICK

Parks and Gardens



Guide

A walk round Warwick parks and gardens

The town of Warwick is graced with a wide variety of attractive parks and gardens, both publicly and privately owned, which are open to the visitor. They range from those that charge an entrance fee like the charming Victorian Hill Close Gardens (no. 2), the restored Master's Garden at the Lord Leycester Hospital (no. 3) and the spectacular garden of a modern plantsman at Mill Garden (no. 8) to the public open space of Priory Park (no. 5) with its magnificent trees or the intimate charm of the College Garden (no. 4) behind St Mary's Church. Starting at one of many car parks in the town, the visitor can either select individual gardens or link them in a trail to see many of the most interesting parts of the town while avoiding much of the traffic. A tour of all the gardens might take a whole day. For a day's visit there is good long stay parking in the west near Warwick Racecourse and in the east at St Nicholas Park. There are several short stay car parks in the town centre.

1 Warwick Common



In the early thirteenth century the townspeople of Warwick were given the right to graze their horses and cattle on the southern part of the present-day Common - two animals for each house. Until the twentieth century the commons were the only recreation grounds for the

townspeople and were also used for military training and a variety of sports.

Racing started at Warwick in 1707, making Warwick racecourse one of the oldest still-functioning courses in the country. Race meetings were high spots in the social life of the county gentry who raced here, and also of the townspeople, who flocked to the sideshows, showmen's booths and the refreshment stalls. The core of the Tattersall's Stand is probably the oldest extant stand in the country. It was brought up to modern standards in 2000. The cattle disappeared when the grazing rights were abolished in 1948 and the land came under the control of the Corporation. Now the central area of unimproved grassland is managed for its wild life value; skylarks nest in the summer and the sharp-eyed visitor may spot an autumn crocus, introduced in the fifteenth century to produce a saffron substitute.

Open: Daily except on race days. Golf, caravan site. Admission free

2 Hill Close Victorian Gardens



This little window into our gardening past was only re-discovered in 1993. Where gardens of this type had disappeared and been completely forgotten. Once almost every town had groups of gardens like these created on the outskirts for the use of the people living in the town centre. When work was over, they could slip down one of the paths between high holly and hawthorn hedges and unlock a gate leading into their own garden. The gardens sloped down to the common, and most of them had a summer

house and a fine view. What distinguished these gardens from allotments was not merely their privacy and the buildings, but the fact that they were used for pleasure as well as produce. Extensive Heritage Lottery funded restoration took place in 2005-6.

Open from April to October, Saturdays and Bank Holidays 11am-5pm, Fridays and Sundays, 2pm-5pm. Group visits can be arranged at any time and day. Tel: 01926 493339. Admission £3, members and accompanied children free. Teas, plant sales, toilets.

3 The Masters Garden at the Lord Leicester Hospital



Behind the ancient buildings of the Lord Leicester Hospital lies the tranquil oasis of the Master's Garden. Entered via a knot garden, the design of which echoes the mediaeval timber-framed buildings, this 600 year-old garden has been restored. Bounded by the old town walls, its splendid planting reflects its past and acknowledges the present. Features include a Norman arch, a sandstone urn dating back 2,000 years, thatched summer house, gazebo and pineapple pit.

Open: Easter - end of September, Tuesday to Sunday, 10 am - 4 pm, also Bank Holidays. Group bookings: Tel 01926 491422. Teas, plant sales, toilet. Admission: £2,

4 The College Garden



A little lane runs down the side of St. Mary's Churchyard, rejoicing in the name of The Tink-a-Tank, where walkers are shaded from the sun by the high walls and pleached lime trees planted in 1742. Off the lane, through an iron gate in the wall behind the churchyard, is the delightful retreat of the tiny garden, named for the mediaeval college of Vicars Choral. It is open at most times during daylight and forms a quiet refuge from the bustle of the town and a spot from which to admire St Mary's Church.

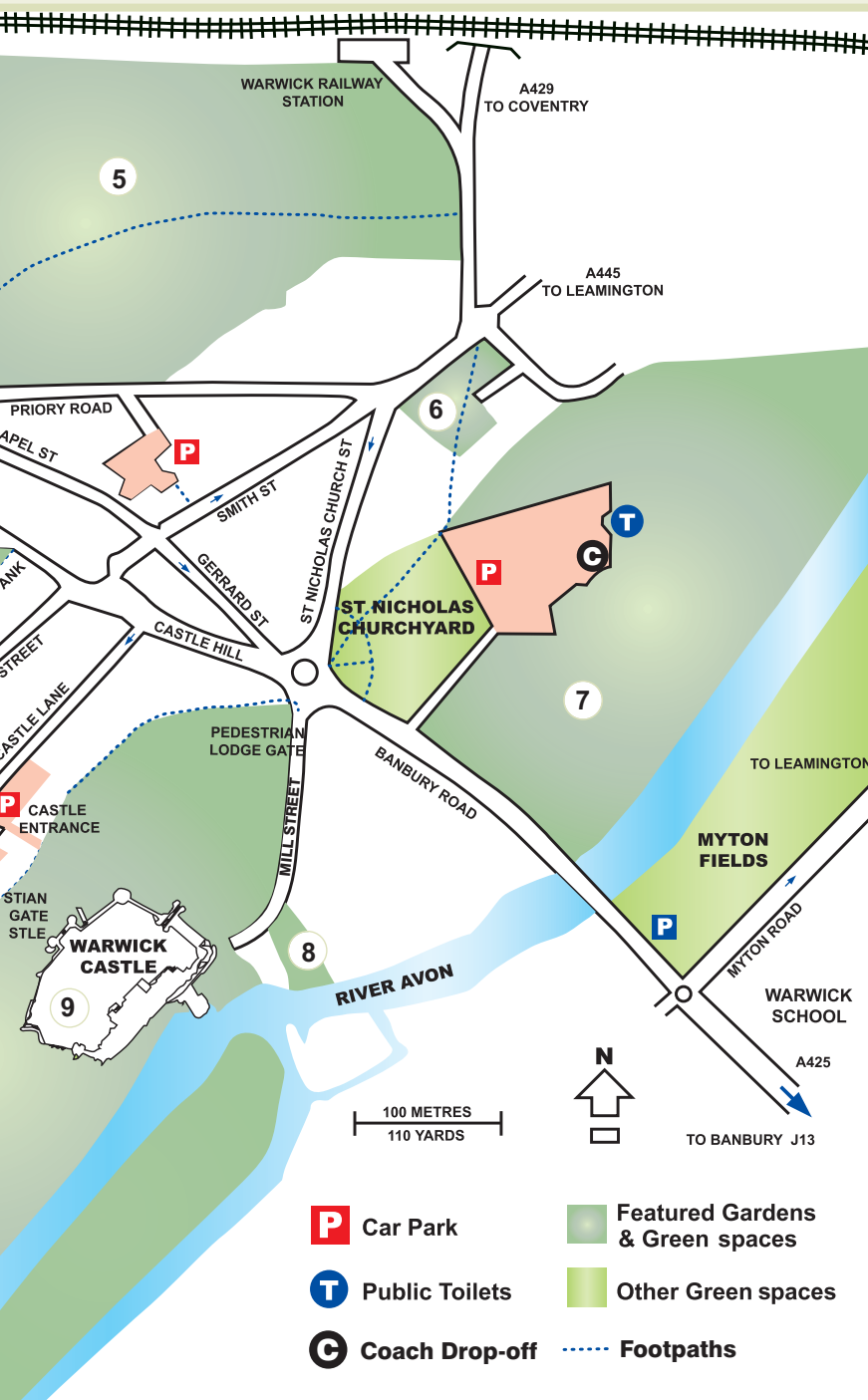
Open: Daily. Admission Free.

5 Priory Park



Surrounding the site of a former mediaeval priory, Priory Park is a splendid public open space containing magnificent trees which remind us of the planting spirit of landowners over many generations. The park can be accessed from several small entrances in the wall on Priory Road and the more careful observer will also find a delight of smaller flora in turf which has never seen modern 'improving' chemicals.

Open: At all times. Admission Free.



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|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| P Car Park | Featured Gardens & Green spaces |
| T Public Toilets | Other Green spaces |
| G Coach Drop-off | Footpaths |

6 St John's House



At the eastern end of Priory Park a short walk leads to St. John's House. Built on the site of a mediaeval hospital as a gentleman's residence, it is now a museum. Much of its garden has been built on, but the monumental gates and walkway to the house survive, as does the space which was once the Great Garden. Atmospheric yew hedges now enclose a bowling green created there two hundred years ago. It can be used by walkers as a route through to St Nicholas Park.

Open: Daily except winter Sundays. Admission: Free (Museum closed Mondays and winter Sundays). Tel: 01926 412132 or 412021.

7 St Nicholas Park



This twentieth century public park offers broad swathes of grass, carpet bedding, boating, children's play areas and sports fields. It enjoys half a mile of frontage on the River Avon with a walk which can be continued beyond the park to Leamington, Milverton or Guys Cliffe. At the end of the park Charter Bridge leads to a completely different landscape of pools and wildlife meadow. A return on the other side brings you onto Castle Bridge.

The bridge was opened in 1793, largely paid for by the Earl of Warwick who wanted to move the Banbury Road to enlarge his park. The river bank and ruined mediaeval bridge were carefully manipulated to maximise the impact and create this world-famous view.

Open: Daily. Warwick Tea Rooms, mini golf, amusements, toilets.

8 Mill Garden



At the bottom of Mill Street is the Mill Garden, famed for the quality of its planting in an unbelievable setting. It was created over a period of sixty years by the late Arthur Measures, who made it a personal expression of his love of plants. On one side are the river and the ruin of the mediaeval bridge, whose roadway once led across where there are now lawns and flowers. In a lucky year, swans nest in its shelter. On the other side, Caesar's Tower looms overhead. The stone walls of the castle give one of the most dramatic backdrops for any garden.

Open: April-October Daily 9am - 6pm; Admission: £1.50; accompanied young children free; plant sales Tel: 01926 492877

9 Warwick Castle



At the top of Mill Street, through the Castle Lodge, a rock-cut drive whose gloom and mystery are emphasised by overhanging evergreens leads to a view Of Warwick Castle, sitting amid its lawns in a burst of light. For the paying visitor the castle buildings are a major tourist attraction but its gardens are worth a visit on their own account. Capability Brown was responsible for the finely landscaped and planted grounds to the south east of the Castle and the Castle Park beyond the river. The mature trees are of particular note, as is the later eighteenth century conservatory designed to house the "Warwick Vase". Running gently down to the river is the Pageant Field, flanked on either side by trees, including Cedars of Lebanon over 200 years old. After the magnificent gestures of the eighteenth century, the Victorians left us the Rose Garden, at its best in June and July, and what is now known as the Peacock Garden, both designed by Robert Marnock.

Open: Daily all year (except Christmas Day).
 April-September 10am - 6pm, October-March 10am - 5pm; Garden admission included in castle entrance ticket. Refreshments, toilets. Tel: 0870 442 2000.

10 The Pageant Garden



Close to the town centre is the unexpected haven of the Pageant Garden. Over several generations buildings were bought and demolished to create this garden for the former gentleman's residence now known as Pageant House. In this public open space are held civic garden parties; it forms a backdrop for wedding photographs and the huge chestnut trees cast a welcome shade on passers-by.

Open: Daily 8am - 7pm. Admission Free. Toilets.

11 The Unitarian Chapel Garden



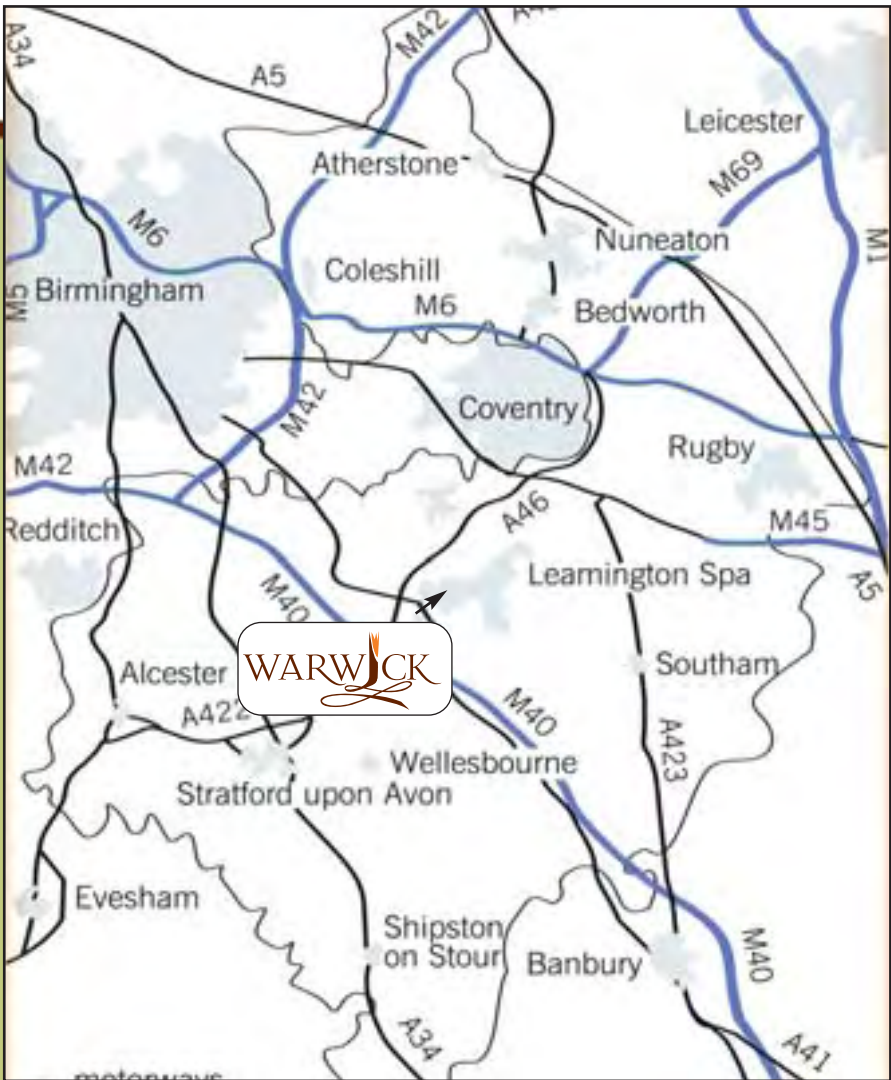
Towards the west end of the High Street stands the Unitarian Chapel. Through the gate on the left of the chapel is the former graveyard, now a peaceful garden which all are welcome to enjoy.

12 The Quaker Garden



Behind the Friends' Meeting House a quiet and intimate retreat is provided, open at most times during the day. Enter through the stone archway near the end of High Street or through a wooden door from Castle Lane. The Friends Meeting House was originally the home of some of the earliest Quakers in the town who buried their departed members in its garden. Burials have long since ceased here and in recent years the public have been allowed to enjoy its serenity.

Open: All year 8am - 4pm; Closed Sundays & Bank Holidays. Admission: free. Café, available for private functions. (10am - 2pm). Tel: 01926 497732



For further visitors information on Warwick, please contact Tourist Information Centre on 01926 492212 or visit: The Court House, Jury Street, Warwick, CV34 4EW.
Email: touristinfo@warwick-uk.co.uk; Website: www.warwick-uk.co.uk

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