



Oxford on the Level

A self-guided tour for people with mobility problems or pushchairs

Download our free map and plan this route of 1-2 miles

To borrow a powered or unpowered wheelchair or a scooter please contact Oxford's **Shopmobility** Tel =+44 (0)1865 248737. You can park free of charge in the Westgate car park while you do so.

For more information on accessibility within Oxford view the Oxford City Council's disability and accessibility web pages.



Quarterboys, Carfax Tower



Tom Tower, Christ Church



Stained Glass, Cathedral of Oxford

The tour starts at **Carfax**, the ancient heart of the City, where the four roads from the north, south, east and west gates met. The name is derived from the Latin quadrifugus (four-forked). Dominating the scene is **Carfax Tower**, all that remains of the now demolished St Martin's Church. You will notice the impressive clock and quarterboys (the 16th century originals are in the Museum of Oxford, adjacent to the Town Hall on St Aldate's).

Cross the road at the lights to the woollen shop at the top of St Aldate's and proceed down St Aldate's, past the **Town Hall**, its door surmounted by the City's coat of arms. (There are accessible toilets in the Town Hall; enter by the level entrance at the top of St Aldates). If time allows the Town Hall is mostly accessible and there is a computer terminal in reception where you can take a look at virtual tours of the views from the top of Carfax Tower, parts of the Town Hall and the Museum of Oxford.

Cross Blue Boar Street and continue down to the main entrance of **Christ Church College**. People in wheelchairs are permitted to enter the college here, passing under **Tom Tower**, designed by Sir Christopher Wren in 1681. It houses a 7 ton bell called Great Tom which strikes 101 times, once for each of the original members of the college, at 9.05 pm. This is nine o'clock Oxford time, the City being five minutes west of Greenwich.

Take a turn around Tom Quad, the largest quadrangle in Oxford, at the centre of which is a pond, originally created partly as a reservoir for the college. The present statue of Mercury replaces an earlier one, damaged in 1817. Christ Church is Oxford's grandest and largest historic college. Originally founded by Cardinal Wolsey in 1525, it was taken over by King



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Oriel College



Corpus Christi College



Merton Street

Henry VIII who in 1546 created Christ Church, uniquely combining a college with the **Cathedral of Oxford**. The Cathedral can be entered by a ramp built with the entrance lobby. Within the Cathedral is the reconstructed Shrine of St Frideswide, the patron saint of Oxford. During the Civil War (1640's), Oxford was the King's headquarters and Charles I and his court lived in Christ Church, while his wife, Henrietta Maria, with her court or household lived in the nearby Merton College.

If you have time a visit to the grounds is pleasant and is possible to as far as the river on accessible paths.

Leave the College by the way you came in, turn right and proceed up the road to Blue Boar Street. Continue along Blue Boar Street (please note that you will need to proceed with a wheelchair on the road which is used by occasional traffic) and bear right through Oriel Square until you meet Merton Street. **Oriel College** is an attractive building and was founded in 1326 by King Edward II and is the fifth oldest college in Oxford. Take the pavement in Merton Street (if bikes allow passage).

As you pass **Corpus Christi College** on your right look through the doorway to the 16th century sundial surmounted by a pelican, which features both the arms of the college and those of Richard Foxe, Bishop of Winchester, who founded the college in 1517. In the nineteenth century, Corpus was one of the first colleges to recruit its students in open competition. These included Thomas Arnold, a famous educational reformer and headmaster of Rugby School; John Keble, the Christian poet and inspiration of the Anglo-Catholic revival in the England; C.P. Scott, the most famous newspaper editor of his day; William Hailey, a distinguished colonial administrator; and the Poet Laureate Robert Bridges. The art historian, John Ruskin, was a Fellow.

Continue along Merton Street on the pavement, as there is an area of cobbles coming up.

If you want to take a look go into the covered entrance area to **Merton College** on your right. You are permitted to go as far as the ramp and look across to the hall and quadrangle of one of Oxford's oldest colleges, founded around 1274 by Walter de Merton. His statue (a copy), holding his Bishop's crozier and the great seal of his Chancellor's office, together



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Queen's College



University Church of St Mary the Virgin



All Souls College

with that of a king (Henry III), surmounts the gateway. Cross the road to see the stone panel which shows the founder kneeling in the wilderness before the book of seven seals from the Revelation of Saint John. Undergraduates of this college of particular academic standing are termed “postmasters”, a unique use of the word.

As you go out of the college cross the cobbles to the other pavement (you will see a section of lower pavement to your right as you cross). Go left as far as Magpie Lane. Turn right up Magpie Lane as far as the High Street. Before crossing the High Street at the lights, look across the road on the right to **Queen's College**, (some way down the road) named after Queen Philippa, wife of Edward III. The cupola over the entrance gate, designed by Hawksmoor, covers a statue of Queen Caroline, wife of George II, who gave money for rebuilding the college.

Cross the High to enter the **University Church of Saint Mary the Virgin** through the accessible front entrance. Look up at the statue of the Virgin and Child whose heads were shot off by a parliamentary soldier in 1642 and restored 20 years later.

From medieval times the church was closely associated with the origins of the university and was used for meetings, examinations and ceremonies. It was also a place of safekeeping for the university's funds which were stored in iron chests. Hence the term “University Chest”, meaning the university members and administrators dealing with university finances.

The trials of the three Bishops, Cranmer, Latimer and Ridley (1554, 1555 and 1556) were conducted in this Church. They were burned at the stake in **Broad Street** for their beliefs. A pillar opposite the pulpit was damaged by the erection of a platform for the final trial and sentencing of Cranmer; a small arrow marks the spot.

During the Civil War many people were buried beneath the church floor when the City, loyal to the King was besieged in 1644 and 1646. John Wesley, founder of the Methodist Church preached the University Sermon on seven occasions here. John Henry Newman, leader of the Oxford Movement was vicar of St Mary's 1828-43.



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Radcliffe Camera



Radcliffe Camera from
Brasenose College

Leave the church by the same way and go to your right, down a small lane, a few yards up the High Street into **Radcliffe Square**. From here you have a fine view of the magnificent double towers of **All Souls College**, built to a design by Nicholas Hawksmoor in 1716 and 1720, together with the splendid sundial designed by Sir Christopher Wren.

Founded as a graduate college for a warden and forty fellows in 1437, its members were required not only to pursue higher studies but also to pray for the souls of the departed, particularly King Henry V, King of England and France, and soldiers of the House of Lancaster who fell in the French wars. During the Civil War All Souls College donated over 250 lb of plate to the Royalist cause.

Facing you is perhaps Oxford's most photographed building, the **Radcliffe Camera**. Believed to be the first round library in Britain, it was completed in 1748 and became a science library. Now part of the **Bodleian Library**, it is connected by underground passage to the New Bodleian and the main Bodleian libraries. This enables books from around 80 miles of shelving, much of it also underground, to be conveyed safely to readers at their desks above.

Turn left into **Brasenose College** which takes its name from the bronze sanctuary knocker attached to the main gate of the medieval Brasenose Hall. At that time colleges, like churches, enjoyed special privileges, and a fugitive from the law who entered the gates was free from molestation. A replica knocker is placed above the door. The original, taken to Stamford in the 1330's and only retrieved in 1890, now hangs above high table in the college dining hall. Amongst the famous students who attended Brasenose are Robert Runcie, Archbishop of Canterbury, John Buchan, writer and Colin Cowdrey, Cricketer.

Leave Brasenose College and turn left along the pavement. You may wish to take a closer look at the Bodleian Library (a path leads off slightly to the right, between the cobbles). Alternatively, turn left down Brasenose Lane (note the medieval-style gutter) cross Turl Street and carry straight on to Market Street. There are public toilets (including a disabled toilet - RADAR key access only) on your left. The **Tourist Information Centre** in Broad Street holds RADAR keys for sale.



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Covered Market



Golden Cross yard

Enter the **Covered Market** (laid out in 1774) which was intended to house the street markets formerly in Fish Street (St Aldate's) and Butcher Row (Queen Street). The market is open Monday-Saturday (Sunday in summer) and offers a variety of wares from fish to saddles, from vegetables to children's clothes and from frocks to delightfully decorated cakes. The market traders and university have for centuries had a close, if stormy, relationship, the one supplying the needs of the other. The price, quality and measures of food and drink sold were matters of almost continuous dispute.

As you explore the market, look up to admire the fine 19th century roof timbers. Follow the passage next to the Oxford Cobbler and enter the Golden Cross yard.

The **Golden Cross yard** is an interesting example of recent renovation and restoration. In 1986-7 its ancient properties were returned to their former appearance, a task undertaken in close co-operation with the City Council's Conservation Officer. The existing sixteenth, seventeenth and nineteenth century buildings enclose a courtyard formed in the Middle Ages for the Cross Inn. An inn may have existed on this site as early as 1193 when Mauer the vintner is recorded. During the sixteenth century the inn was used by travelling companies of players and it is said that Shakespeare stayed there on occasions. The first floor of the Pizza Express occupies the former bedroom accommodation of the inn and contains the major fragments of two painted rooms, the Crown Chamber (c1570) and the Prince's Chamber (c1595). Unfortunately these rooms are not accessible by wheelchair. However, the ground floor of the Pizza Express with its conservatory is accessible to wheelchairs (disabled toilet available) if you would like to sample a pizza, afternoon tea, etc.

garden, splendid historic architecture and attractive new buildings, could make a pleasant alternative. St John's is located on **St Giles**; north from Carfax, up Cornmarket Street, keep straight on until you come to St Giles. It is probably easier to take the right hand 'pavement', going north, and then turn right at Broad Street and cross the road almost immediately Magdalen Street East. St John's is a little further up on the right. The entrance for wheelchairs is near to the Lamb and Flag pub.



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Oxford Official Guided Walking Tour



St John's College

Leaving the Golden Cross yard you arrive at thronging **Cornmarket Street**. Turn left down Cornmarket and you return to Carfax, the heart of this unique City.

We hope that you have enjoyed your tour of Oxford. People using wheelchairs are welcome to join any of the  Official Guided Walking Tours, which leave the Tourist Information Centre at 11.00am and 2.00 pm daily. (Please advise when booking that you are a wheel chair user) These tours are conducted by the Oxford Guild of Blue/Green Badge Guides and offer a two-hour introduction to the City and colleges.

If you do not have sufficient time to take the whole of this tour, then an afternoon visit to **St John's College** (after 1pm), with its level access



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