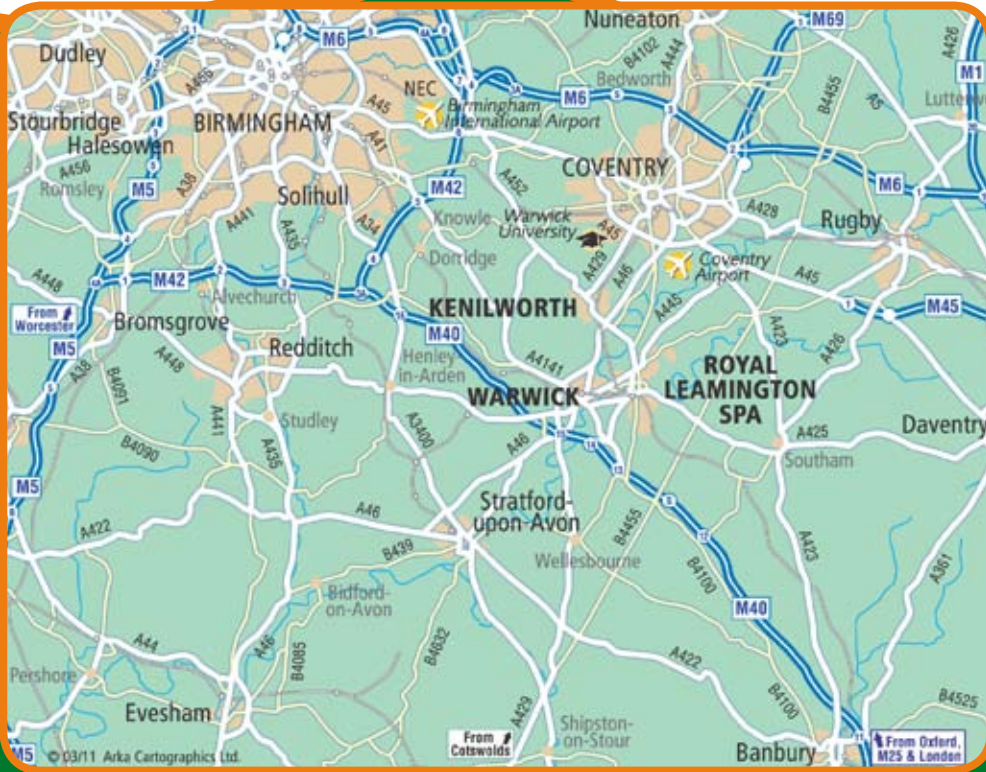


WARWICK

Parks and Gardens



For further information on Warwick's attractions, accommodation and events please contact:

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Produced by Warwick District Council and Warwick Town Council.



Discover Warwick's 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 the charming Victorian Hill Close Gardens, the restored Master's Garden at the Lord Leycester Hospital and the spectacular garden of a modern plantsman at Mill Garden to the public open space of Priory Park with its magnificent trees or the intimate charm of the College Garden 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. 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 wildlife 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. Free admission.

2. Hill Close Gardens



This little window into our gardening past was only re-discovered in 1993, when gardens of this type had disappeared and been completely forgotten. In Victorian times, 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. www.hillclosegardens.com

3. The Master's Garden at the Lord Leycester Hospital



Behind the ancient buildings of the Lord Leycester 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 from Easter to the end of September, Tuesday to Sunday and Bank Holidays, 10am-4pm. 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. Free admission.

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. Free admission.



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. Free admission. (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. Free admission. 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 is 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 daily from April to October, 9am-6pm. Admission £1.50, accompanied young children free. Plant sales. Tel: 01926 492877

9. Warwick Castle



Enjoy the beautiful grounds and gardens of Warwick Castle including the mound which was first built in 1068 on the orders of William the Conqueror. The Mound formed the most important part of the Norman castle's defence system. The Peacock Garden, designed by the Victorian landscape gardener Robert Marnock includes topiary peacocks. Running gently down to the river is the Pageant Field, flanked on either side by trees, of which some, like the cedars of Lebanon, are over 200 years old. The transformation from a fortress to a stately home was created by one of Britain's greatest landscape gardeners, Lancelot 'Capability' Brown. It is believed that Warwick Castle was Brown's first independent castle commission and his achievements here during the 1750s won him praise and national recognition. The Rose Garden was first laid down in 1868. In 1986 Princess Diana visited and opened the recreated Victorian Rose Garden. To commemorate the recreation of the garden, 120 years on, a new English rose was bred and named 'Warwick Castle'.

Open daily all year (except Christmas Day). Garden admission included in castle entrance ticket. Refreshments, toilets. Tel: 0870 442 2000 Book online at www.warwick-castle.com

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. Free admission. 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.

Open daily. Free admission.

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. Free admission. Café (10am-2pm), available for private functions. Tel: 01926 497732.