

One hundred**SHREWSBURY – TOWN TRAIL.**

This large and ancient county town has to be included in this series- I am surprised it is not more visited. This itinerary could fill a couple of hours without popping into anywhere! Decide which attractions to go into and then come again to do some of the others. I have included options that split the tour roughly in half.

Take the train to Manchester Victoria and from there a tram to Manchester Piccadilly Station. From here catch a train to Shrewsbury. *The train bounds through lovely green Cheshire and Shropshire countryside.*

As the train approaches Shrewsbury look out to the left. *You see Albrew Maltsters. Then there is Morris Lubricants clock tower and ahead you can then see the station sandwiched between the prison and the castle.*

Alight at Shrewsbury. Leave the station through the main exit. *Look back - the station is in a grand Oxford College style.*

Go left onto Castle Street past The Bull's Head (*Cask ales*). *Almost straight away there are half timbered buildings.*

Over on the right is Shrewsbury Library. *This was once Shrewsbury School.* On the left you come to The Borough Treasury building. U-turn to the left, *and pass in front of a fine half timbered house.*

Enter the castle grounds. *There is an immaculate and colourful garden in the courtyard.* Open daily, admission free.

The sandstone keep is opposite the gate. *Inside the fine building is a sumptuous regimental museum (once destroyed by a terrorist bomb). I liked the tiny one person chapel, the cigar dispensing railway loco, and the circular room (1786) designed by Telford. Admission is category one (concessions). It is closed on Thursday, and on Sunday in winter. www.shrewsburymuseums.com*

As you go back towards the gate go up the path on the left to Laura's tower. *There are good views including the River Severn, the big Shrewsbury signal box (see www.roscafen.com), the Abbey beyond, and the Lord Hill monument.*

Leave the Castle. When you pass the treasury building look left – *note the insurance badge on the half timbered building. There are many of these badges around the town. They often have three lions' heads, (or loggerheads).*

[OPTION: Continue along Castle Street going straight ahead past the cross. Go straight down the main shopping street and turn right at the bottom of St John's Hill to St Chad's church to rejoin the itinerary.*

Continue along Castle Street then curve left at the cross onto St Mary Street. *On the left is the ancient Parish Church of St Chad with St Mary. It has a fair acreage of stained glass, much of it renaissance and from Trier Cathedral. Admission free, open Monday to Saturday, April to October.*

www.visitchurches.org.uk

To the left of the church is the 'Yorkshire House' which sells cask ales and has a splendid old wooden interior. To the right of the church is the Drapers' Hall of 1580. Shrewsbury money came from trading Welsh woollen cloth.

Continue along St Mary Street, and just off the right is The Loggerheads (cask ales) – the three lions' or loggerheads are the town coat of arms.

St Mary Street becomes 'Dogpole'.

Go left as you join Wyle Cop passing *The Nag's Head* on left and *The Cornhouse* on the right (both cask beers).

On the left is Tanners Wine Merchant. Go round the back to get in. It's big, has a wonderful old office and thousands of bottles to choose from!

Go down left to English Bridge -note the flood level pole down the steps and the terrace across the road is called *Marine Terrace!*

Cross the bridge to Abbey Foregate -once the abbey's own fiefdom! Take a look round the outside the abbey. It looks as if a large transept was demolished but actually it is a bit of unfinished Victorian work. To the left is the Hospital of the Holy Cross. The monastery buildings stretched over the land on the other side of the main road.

Go into the abbey. It is a slightly austere Romanesque building with massive round pillars and arches. It was a Benedictine Abbey set up in 1083 by Roger de Montgomery, 1st Earl of Shrewsbury. Tea and cakes are served. Open daily, admission free. [Tel:01743 232723](tel:01743232723) or www.shrewsburyabbey.com

Leave the abbey to cross the main road. You can see a stone pulpit in what was the refectory site. The car park was Shrewsbury Abbey Station on the quaint and none too busy Shropshire & Montgomeryshire Railway.

Turn right and enter the World Wild Life garden on the left. This is a lovely old style arcaded garden in former abbey grounds. Admission free, open Monday to Saturday. [Tel:01743 284280](tel:01743284280) or www.shropshirewildlifetrust.org.uk

On leaving the garden turn left and walk back under the railway bridge. Pass the National School Building and a United Reformed Church built of sandstone, limestone and brick (local materials but it gives an industrial flavour to me).

Cross English Bridge and continue ahead. Cross Julian's Friars – this goes off left (*The Hop & Friar* sells cask ales.)

Go along Beeches Lane. Note Bowdler house of 1724 on right.

The road becomes Town Walls. There is a park below and on the right is the RC Cathedral of Shrewsbury. Bigger inside, it is Victorian gothic by both Pugins, with a great decorated cross suspended before the altar and a fine altarpiece. Admission is free, open daily. [Tel:01743 362366](tel:01743362366) or www.shrewsburycathedral.org.uk

On the left you pass the Crescent (1793) and then Kingshill Bridge Mansions – impressive red brick gothic.

**You come to St Chad's Church. This unusual circular church was built in 1792 and has a fine interior. Admission free, open Monday to Saturday. Sunday services. www.stchadschurchshrewsbury.com [Tel:01743 365478](tel:01743365478)*

[OPTION: Turn right after the church and go along Claremont Hill. Turn right on Barker Street and rejoin the itinerary at ** the market hall.]

Leave the church, cross the road, and enter the park through the ornate gates to the right - *Shrewsbury Horticultural Society holds the famous flower show here each August.*

Walk past the war memorial (*with a daunting angel!*) down towards the river. *On your left is an old quarry. It is now a splendid garden. Enter through one of the gothic gateways to see this watery, lovely place.*

Continue downhill to the Statue of Hercules then turn right to walk beside the river.

Pass Potshill Bridge (*this suspension bridge leads over to The Boathouse which has food and real ales on sale*).

As you come onto Victoria Quay, The Armoury is on the right. *Along with fine cask ales they sell food including many course meals.*

At Welsh Bridge you come to an open space. Look around – *over the river is the Theatre Severn, beside the river is a sculpture like a dinosaur spine, and roughly ahead is The Shrewsbury Hotel (JDW cask ales and good value food).*

Turn right from Welsh Bridge and curve to the left up Barker Street.

On the left is the Shrewsbury Museum. *It is in a fine old merchant's house (Rowley House). Collections cover geology, archaeology, local roman occupation, art etc. Admission is free, open Monday to Saturday, and on Sundays in summer. Tel:01743 281205 or www.shrewsburymuseums.com*

Carry on up Market Street towards the giant brick clock tower on the Market Hall. *Market days are Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday.*

******Turn left after the Market building to stroll along the main shopping street. Go right onto High Street. *There are some very fine buildings here – I'm still debating the modern one though.*

On the right is The Square with the fine stone Market Hall on pillars dating from 1596. *Beyond it is the Music Hall – which is to become the museum.*

Go left off High Street, up the narrow alley to Bear Steps. *This is Grope Alley! It is part of a splendid old Shambles area for you to explore.*

Cross Fish Street. *The Three Fishes is off to the right – food and cask marque real ales.*

Go up the steps (Bear Steps) opposite, and pass St Alkmund's Church on your right. *There is a fine painted glass window, but the 1795 gothic revival interior makes me think of an attempt at a cinema. Admission is free, open daily.*

Contact details as for St Chad's church (v.s.).

Go to the left from the churchyard and along Butcher Street. *On the right The Bull Inn sells cask ales and food. On the left is the Abbot's House of 1450.*

Turn right on Castle Street. Follow this ahead until eventually you pass the Shrewsbury Library on your left. *The statue in front of the old school building is of Charles Darwin (educated here). In the Music Library the 19th century schoolboys have left their marks on the woodwork! Open daily, admission free.* Continue down Castle Street and turn right to the railway station to catch a train back to Manchester Piccadilly.

FLOREAT SALOPIA!

CLASSIFICATION: MEDIUM MODERATE

WALLS, VIEWS, RIVER, BOAT TRIPS, CASTLE,
MUSEUM, ARCHITECTURE, SHOPS, CAFES,
PUBS, ABBEY, GARDENS,

RAIL FARE: category five

Maps: OS 1:50,000 sheet 126 Philip's Street Atlas Shropshire

+ Acknowledgement to Shrewsbury tourism website for a suggested route that I could base this itinerary upon. This saved at least one day's preliminary research – probably more!