



THE SPIRIT OF DISCOVERY CASTLE HILL



Start at the side door of The Storey and head up Castle Hill, keeping the castle on your left.



Look out for the black heritage-style “gas” lamps lining the road and the stone setts (rectangular cobbles) beneath your feet.

At number 19 stands the Old Dispensary. Built in 1785 in response to a typhus epidemic, it provided vital medical care for those who couldn't afford it.



At number 15 Castle Hill, you'll find the Cottage Museum (open Saturdays 1pm - 4pm April - Sept). Step inside the home of Richard and Ann Thompson, and experience everyday life in Lancaster's past and discover how this modest household reflected a city growing wealthier through global trade.



Wear your 18th century hat, peep inside coffers, have a go on a spinning whorl and practise your cursive handwriting.



A little further on down Castle Hill stands the Judges' Lodgings - Lancaster's oldest town house, and now a museum with atmospheric period rooms; open Thurs-Sun, 11am-4pm during the spring and summer, and selected days in winter.

Imagine the judges in full wig and robes sweeping down the Georgian staircase.



Turn left when leaving the Judges' Lodgings, go back up towards the castle and climb the steps to Lancaster Priory, a place of worship for centuries, with roots stretching back to Saxon times and a Benedictine priory founded here in 1094. As well as Sunday services, visitors are welcome daily (10am-4pm Mon - Sat), plus music events are held throughout the year.



Can you spot the 'Headless Lady' memorial in the churchyard? Local legend says that this grand tomb marks the grave of Ann Rothwell who fell from the tower in an attempt to stop the clock and delay her lover's execution - but the truth of her death may be rather less dramatic!

Tucked away behind the Priory in Vicarage Field are the remains of Lancaster's Roman bath house and the mysterious Wery Wall. The bath house, once part of a larger Roman residence, still shows traces of heated floors, while the Wery Wall is a fragment of a 4th-century fort that once guarded the hill. To find it, walk around the back of the Priory and follow the footpath down into Vicarage Field, then take the grassy path leading towards the ruins.



Pause for a moment and imagine a busy Roman residence on this hill nearly 2,000 years ago - the walls ringing with bustle and activity.



Lancaster Castle has dominated the city skyline for centuries, with origins dating back to Norman times and even earlier Roman defences on the hill. Over the years it has been a royal stronghold, courthouse and prison - famously the site of the Pendle Witch trials in 1612. Explore its dramatic past on a guided tour (running daily), or visit the courtyard where there is also a café on site and access to the free Lancashire Police Museum (open Thurs and Fri, closed lunchtime).



Take a castle tour with one of the knowledgeable and entertaining guides - dare you be locked in the dark dungeons?



Accessed via the gateway on Castle Hill, or via the first floor of The Storey building, these peaceful walled gardens began as private spaces for nearby homes in the 18th century. Today, they've been revived as the imaginative 'Tasting Garden' - designed by Mark Dion, heritage fruit trees lie along the branched paths of this welcoming orchard. Open daytimes Monday to Saturday, this is a calm, creative green space in the heart of the city.



Spot the beautiful Portland stone carved fruits, created by sculptor Alan Ward - you may have spotted him in his workshop at Lancaster Castle.

The Storey is one of Lancaster's creative hubs, originally built in the late 19th century and gifted to the city for arts, learning and culture. Today, it's home to a gallery, workspaces and performance space, plus a striking stained-glass window designed by Edward Holmes Jewett and created by local firm Shrigley and Hunt, celebrating the arts.



Stop by the Printroom café on the ground floor for a coffee or bite to eat!

Tucked beneath Castle Hill, The Merchants 1688 is one of Lancaster's most atmospheric historic spots. The building began life as wine merchants' cellars, storing goods arriving through the city's busy port. Today, these vaulted stone tunnels have been transformed into a restaurant and bar, where you can enjoy a drink or meal inside the historic cellars themselves, and experience a unique slice of Lancaster's trading past.



We hope you've enjoyed this Discovery Trail! Have you taken a photo with the Headless Lady, braved the castle dungeons or found out something new about Lancaster? Tag us on Facebook or Instagram @lancmorebay !

