



Gin Trail Route: A tour of 4 historic Hampshire churches

Start point: Holy Trinity Church, Merepond Lane, Privett, Alton, Hampshire (GU34 3PE)

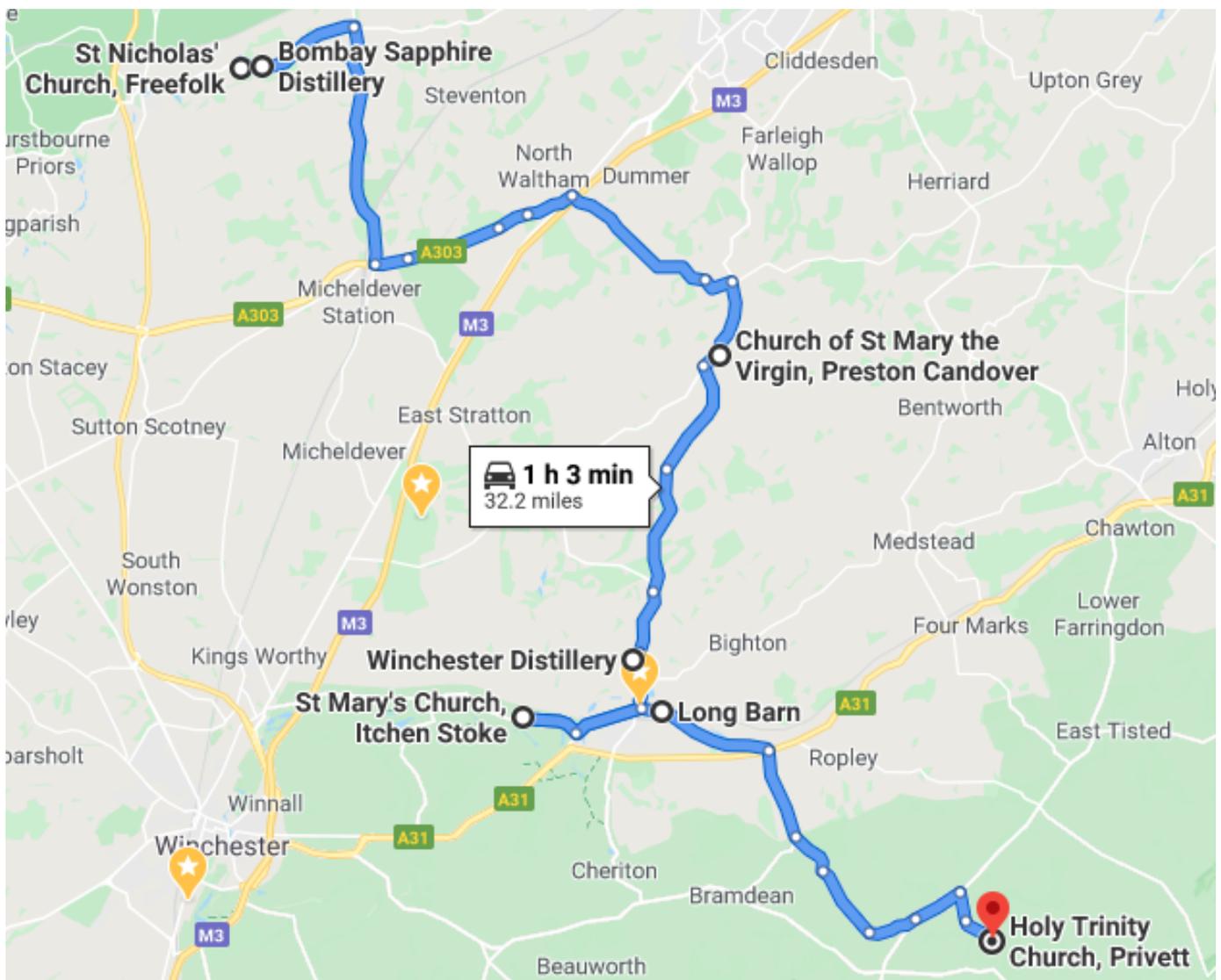
Distance: 1 hr 4mins by car (32.8 miles)

Route: Linear, Driving

Always follow current UK government guidelines for COVID-19 (www.gov.uk/coronavirus) when enjoying these walks and check the most up to date advice before setting off. Please plan ahead as sites, public transport links and facilities (public houses, car parks, ect.) may be closed or have restrictions.

Hampshire is the home of mighty ports, connected to thriving towns by busy motorways, but its leafy heart hides church spires and fine food and drink producers. Chalk springs feed church fountains, watercress beds and gin distilleries. Wild juniper survives in hot spots on chalk down land, while views from church doorways span river valleys to the farmland beyond. Flint farmworkers cottages line footpaths which have led congregations to services for centuries. Enjoy our Gin Trail through the South Downs and discover the history hidden in the landscape.

The trail starts at Holy Trinity Church in Privett, built by the Nicholson Family who have produced Nicholson Gin since 1736. It then moves on to the Lavender Fields and Watercress beds at Long Barn in on the way to St Mary's Church at Itchen Stoke. After this the route goes past Winchester Distillery before reaching the Church of St Mary the Virgin in Preston Candover. Finally, the trail visits St Nicholas' Church in Freefolk, which is just a stone's throw from the famous Bombay Sapphire distillery.



Directions (Via Google Maps)

← from Holy Trinity Church, Privett, Merepond Ln, Privett, ...
to Bombay Sapphire Distillery, Laverstoke Mill, London ...

1 h 4 min (32.8 miles)



via Bishops Sutton Rd/B3047

1 h 4 min without traffic

Holy Trinity Church, Privett

Merepond Ln, Privett, Alton GU34 3PE

> Follow Church Rd and Fawley Ln to A32

2 min (1.0 mi)

↩ Turn left onto A32

2 min (1.5 mi)

> Continue to Old Park Rd

5 min (2.5 mi)

> Drive to Bishops Sutton Rd/B3047

6 min (3.3 mi)

15 min (8.3 mi)

Long Barn

The Old Sheep Fair, Bishops Sutton Rd, Alresford SO24 9EJ

↑ Head west on Bishops Sutton Rd/B3047 towards Sun Ln

i Continue to follow B3047

1.4 mi

↪ Turn right to stay on B3047

i Destination will be on the right

0.9 mi

St Mary's Church, Itchen Stoke

St Mary's Church, New Alresford, Itchen Stoke SO24 0QU

↑ Head east on B3047

0.9 mi

↩ Turn left onto Alresford Rd/B3047

i Continue to follow B3047

1.1 mi

↩ Turn left onto Broad St/B3046

i Continue to follow B3046

0.8 mi

↩ Turn left

315 ft

↩ Turn left

52 ft

↩ Turn left

43 ft

7 min (2.9 mi)

Winchester Distillery

Manor Factory, Old Alresford SO24 9DH

↑ Head north towards Green Cl

0.2 mi

↩ Turn left onto B3046

1.0 mi

↪ Turn right onto Spiers Ln

3.9 mi

↪ Turn right onto B3046

0.3 mi

↪ Turn right

118 ft

↪ Turn right

i Destination will be on the right

266 ft

10 min (5.4 mi)

Church of St Mary the Virgin, Preston Candover

Church of St Mary the Virgin, Preston Candover, Basingstoke RG25 2EN

↑ Head north-west towards B3046

15 s (394 ft)

> Drive along Dummer Rd and A303

13 min (8.6 mi)

> Take Laverstoke Ln to London Rd/B3400

9 min (4.2 mi)

↩ Turn left onto London Rd/B3400

43 s (0.3 mi)

> Drive to London Rd

53 s (0.1 mi)

24 min (13.4 mi)

St Nicholas' Church, Freefolk

St Nicholas' Church Freefolk, Whitchurch, Laverstone RG28 7NW

↑ Head south on London Rd

⚠ Restricted-usage road

89 ft

↪ Turn right to stay on London Rd

⚠ Partial restricted-usage road

0.1 mi

↪ Turn right onto London Rd/B3400

i Destination will be on the left

3 min (0.5 mi)

Bombay Sapphire Distillery

Laverstoke Mill, London Rd, Whitchurch RG28 7NR

Gin Trail Highlights

Holy Trinity, Privett

This opulent Victorian church is set high in the South Downs, a memorial to the Nicholson family of 'Nicholson's Gin' fame. They lived in style at nearby Basing Park and were philanthropic gentry, building the neighbouring flint school house and model labourers' cottages in Privett, as well as this marble-lined, soaring church.

Tragedy struck in 1901 at the Nicholson Gin Three Mills Distillery, West Ham, London. One worker was overcome by 'foul gas' when he inspected a disused well, the 29 year old managing director Godfrey Nicholson climbed down to investigate and two more workers followed. The victims of this industrial accident are commemorated by a plaque in Holy Trinity Church, and a sculpture called 'The Helping Hands' in Postman's Park, London.

1. *Can you spot another memorial to Godfrey Nicholson in the church?*

Botanicals

Gin is distilled from wheat or potato spirit and predominantly flavoured with juniper. Gin distillers add other botanicals to the still to create their own distinctive flavours. As you drive through Hampshire, you will be able to spot several of these plants growing beside the roads. Around Alresford, there are lavender fields at Long Barn and watercress beds on the way to St Mary's, Itchen Stoke and the Winchester Distillery. At Laverstoke Mill near St Nicholas, Freefolk, you can see exotic botanicals grown in an elegant glasshouse designed by Heatherwick Studio. More prosaically, over one thousand wild juniper bushes have been taken from local cuttings and planted on the M3 motorway at Twyford Down.

St Mary's, Itchen Stoke

This romantic Victorian church was inspired by thirteenth century Sainte Chappelle in Paris. You will spot St Mary's apse and double belfry soaring above the road as you drive along the Itchen River valley. Enter through the west door on a sunny day and the stained glass windows will bathe you in a kaleidoscope of light, whilst the pale walls gleam with thousands of white-flowered tiles. There is a beautiful glass mosaic memorial embedded in the south wall, dedicated to Major Ponsonby Cox, who broke somebody's heart when he died in the First World War.

2. *Can you discover who 'the one who loved him' was?*

Winchester Distillery, Old Alresford

This is a micro distillery located in a former cold-store for watercress. Inspired by the craft gin boom in London, it opened in 2015. Winchester gin contains 25 botanicals, inspired by the 25 seats for the Knights of the Round Table in Winchester.

St Mary the Virgin Old Church, Preston Candover

Follow the River Candover, the 'beautiful stream', up the valley from Alresford, to a tiny mortuary chapel tucked away from the main road. This is the chancel of a much larger mediaeval church, the corners reputedly marked by two sarsen stones to the west. St Mary the Virgin is a fascinating example of recycling: the west wall is built of a local rubble of flint, the fragment of a stone coffin lid and window tracery; the floor is a patchwork of Georgian stone memorials and medieval tiles.

St Nicholas, Freefolk

Follow the River Test to the parish of Freefolk and Laverstoke. Two local buildings, St Nicholas Church and Laverstoke Mill, are mentioned in the Domesday Book and their histories are linked. St Nicholas Church has evolved according to the taste and means of the local landowners, from its thirteenth century footprint to the early twentieth century stained glass windows on the east wall, dedicated to the Portal family, papermakers of Laverstoke Mill. When you push open the heavy door of the whitewashed church, St Christopher's head and shoulders peer out at you from three layers of medieval frescoes. Further along the north wall, the Jacobean effigy of Richard Powlett will catch your eye.

4. Can you find a 16th century helmet and 15th century spur?

Bombay Sapphire Distillery, Laverstoke

The paper mill at Laverstoke was renovated by the Bombay Spirits Company and opened to the public in 2014. The Georgian and Victorian buildings on the site now contain a sustainable distillery in a conservation area and a site of special scientific interest.

Answers

1. There is a stained glass window commemorating Godfrey Nicholson and his brothers on the south wall
2. The vicar's daughter, Cecilia Skrine, commissioned this memorial
3. Katherine Dabridgecourt's memorial brass is hidden beneath the mat beside the east wall
4. The helmet and spur are hung over Richard Powlett's tomb