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| Start point | The castle remains (car parking area)<br>Grid reference TF819152 • Postcode PE32 2XB                            |
| Parking     | Castle car parking area/ free   |
| Distance    | 1.5 miles   |
| Details     | Gentle gradients, 65% soft<br> |

## Walk instructions

1. From the car parking area, follow the grassy footpath signposted Nar Valley Way downhill keeping the castle on your right.
2. At the bottom of the hill bear right past the castle and continue on to Cuck Stool Lane.
3. At the end of Cuck Stool Lane, turn left on to Bailey Street.
4. At the junction, turn right on to Blind Lane but then go through a gate on your left in to the meadow. Follow the well marked path as it heads towards the River Nar and then follows the course of the river.
5. At the end you will come to a gate. Go through the gate and turn left on to South Acre Road.
6. At the ford and the footbridge, turn right through a gate in to a meadow surrounding the Priory. Keep to the path which follows the course of the River.
7. As you approach the outer perimeter of the Priory grounds, follow the path round to the right.
8. Keep following the path around the outer perimeter of the Priory grounds. You will go through a gate. Turn right to follow the path past the Priory Barn.
9. At the track where you will see the gatehouse, turn left. Turn right on to Priory Road. Follow the road back in to the village past St James's Church.

10. Follow the High Street past the Ostrich pub and Stocks Green. Continue straight on past Bailey Street to Pye's Lane. Follow Pye's Lane back to the castle remains on your right.



Photographs © Nick Ford

## Castle and Priory ▲

The Castle was originally a Late Saxon hall with modest defences held by a Saxon thegn called Toki. After the Norman Conquest, the building was passed to William de Warenne, a veteran of the Battle of Hastings, who replaced the hall with a stone building. This building was more like a country house than a castle and was replaced by a keep in the 12th century when the defences were also strengthened. The outer bailey was re-designed and turned into a planned settlement with a market place at Pale's Green and a possible second at St James' Green. The current layout of the town has developed from the medieval plan.

The remains of the Cluniac Priory, founded by William de Warenne in 1089, are amongst the most impressive and intact in the country. For almost 450 years it was the home and workplace of monks and their servants, a refuge for pilgrims and a stopping point for royalty, clergy and nobility. The Priory was also part of a vast monastic network centered on the great abbey of Cluny in France. The Priory was dissolved in 1537.

Information sourced from 'Castle Acre Priory and Castle', English Heritage (2008) and Norfolk Heritage Explorer (2010).

# Castle Acre

A beautiful route taking in the rich history and stunning landscape around Castle Acre. The remains of the Castle and Priory are real highlights of this walk.

## Chalk rivers

The River Nar (SSSI) at Castle Acre is a beautiful example of a spring-fed chalk river home to species such as brown trout and water voles. The population of water voles has increased as numbers of mink have been controlled. As you walk by the river, you will see how crystal clear the water is. Chalk rivers carry very little suspended material but are uniquely mineral-rich. This, along with their stable temperature and flow regime results in the unique characteristics of chalk stream ecology.

## Bailey Gate

The 13th century Bailey Gate was built to defend the north entrance to the fortified town. In front of it was a deep ditch, crossed by a bridge and to either side were the massive earthwork ramparts that continued right around the town.

(‘Castle Acre Priory and Castle’, English Heritage, 2008)

## St James Church

A large medieval parish church dating mainly to the 14th and 15th centuries, on the site of a much earlier building.

