

## Lonely Planet selects **Salisbury** among top 10 cities to visit

Wiltshire city listed along with Washington, El Chaltén, Milan and Zermatt in travel guide's selection of places to visit in 2015

## Lonely Planet select the top 10 Countries to visit in 2015



**The Cathedral city of Salisbury.** Photograph: David Goddard/Getty Images

The rain has just cleared over Salisbury Cathedral and a smattering of tourists are beginning to emerge from beneath the trees, sauntering about its impeccable lawn, stopping occasionally to photograph the tallest spire they will find in Britain.

Among them is regular visitor Anthony Iles, 70, who is on a campervan holiday with his wife. "We like the walks and it's got some very fine old buildings," he says. "It's a nice town ... a city I suppose."

With a population of 40,000, Salisbury's city status is easily overlooked. But over the coming year that could change. The destination – usually visited as a stop-off on the way to nearby Stonehenge – has been tipped by travel guide publisher Lonely Planet as among the top 10 cities in the world to visit in 2015, beating the Austrian capital of Vienna and Canada's biggest city, Toronto, to take seventh place in the rankings.

The cities on the list – topped this year by Washington – are judged on criteria that include whether there is something special going on during the year, whether there have been recent developments or a buzz about the place and whether it is deemed an up and coming destination.



**Salisbury Cathedral viewed from Harnham Water Meadows at sunrise.** Photograph: Ken Leslie /Alamy

In Salisbury's case, the Wiltshire city will play an important role in the 800th anniversary of the Magna Carta: of the four original copies of the document that remain, Salisbury cathedral holds what is perhaps the best preserved.

The cathedral can even count Jay-Z among its fans – in the summer of last year the rapper held the global launch of the artwork for his album *Magna Carta ... Holy Grail* at the site, displayed alongside the ancient document.

"The 800th anniversary of the signing of the Magna Carta gives a great excuse to visit," says Tom Hall, Lonely Planet editorial director and contributor to the Best in Travel guide.

"Like most visitors I headed straight for the cathedral, but found that I liked exploring Salisbury's historic old centre, green spaces with a relaxed atmosphere and exploring some historic pubs as much as the big-name sights."

In one such historic pub, the Haunch of Venison – a supposedly haunted pub in the city centre – there is a sense that Salisbury well deserves Lonely Planet's accolade.

"I've been a visitor for Salisbury for many years," says Colin Boon, 55, who is sitting in the wood-panelled front room of the venue sipping an ale. "Basically for the pubs ... Then I decided to move here. It was one of the best decisions I ever made. I've lived in many places around the country and the world but of all the places this is my favourite. It's certainly up there with Norwich."

Mark Bramley, general manager at the Red Lion – the oldest purpose-built hotel in Europe and a stunning example of the 13th-century architecture found in the city – defends Salisbury's ranking with even more passion.

“If I didn’t live in Romsey – which I do think is the best town in the world – I’d move here,” he says. “It’s a city because we’ve got the Cathedral, but we’ve got a market town mentality. And I mean that positively, not negatively.”



**Arundells, home of former Prime Minister Sir Edward Heath.** Photograph: Sophia Evans/the-guardian.com

The growing attention Salisbury has been getting owing to the Magna Carta celebrations is already proving positive for the hotel. Bookings are up on this time last year and the number of visitors coming for holidays or leisure, rather than business, is increasing.

“The secret’s getting out,” he says. “But people should come and explore the city – there’s more than enough to do for four or five days here. I think it’s got more to offer than Bath; they’ve just got the Royal Crescent, the Pump Room and once you’ve had a drink of the water you’re done. You can do it in half an hour.

“We’ve got the Cathedral, Old Sarum, Stonehenge, Ted Heath’s house and you can walk from the city centre into Constable’s countryside in five minutes. It’s a hidden treasure.”



**Looking across the rooftops to Salisbury Cathedral.** Photograph: Julian Elliott Ethereal Light/Getty Images

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## **Top 10 cities in Lonely Planet's Best in Travel 2015**

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**Washington DC – USA**

**El Chaltén –Argentina**

**Milan – Italy**

**Zermatt – Switzerland**

**Valletta – Malta**

**Plovdiv – Bulgaria**

**Salisbury – UK**

**Vienna – Austria**

**Chennai – India**

**Toronto – Canada**

**Source:** *Lonely Planet's 'Best in Travel 2015'*