

Herefordshire's Southern Cider Circuit



The Redstreak

TOTAL DISTANCE - 59 MILES

The ancient apple and pear orchards of southern Herefordshire, some of them well over two centuries old, are lovingly harvested by local producers to ferment spectacular ciders and perries in traditional and innovative styles. Cycle 59 undulating miles down shady backroads and alongside the meanders of the River Wye on a rewarding route visiting some of the region's finest cider-makers, or prune your pedalling to 31.5 miles by taking the train back to Hereford from Ledbury.

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HEREFORDSHIRE

A Visit Herefordshire Scenic Route, 2021
www.visitherefordshire.co.uk/watkins-way



1 - The Apple Tree

Begin your odyssey at the most apt spot: The Apple Tree, an inspiring mosaic set into the pavement in front of Hereford Cathedral's West Front. Comprising 100 pieces of naturally coloured British stone, the image is encircled by inspiring lyrics from an 18th-century carol, a nod to the spiritual and natural heart of the county: "The tree of life my soul hath seen, Laden with fruit and always green; The trees of nature fruitless be, Compared with Christ the Apple Tree."

2 - Aconbury

Having left behind the southern outskirts of the city and after a steady climb past Twyford Common, enjoy a lengthy freewheeling downhill towards a forested ridge and, beneath wooded Aconbury Hill topped with an Iron Age hillfort, the curious squat steeple of St John the Baptist Church. This 13th-century sandstone structure was attached to a long-vanished medieval priory of nuns — and today, legend has it, the wall of the now-deconsecrated church holds a bottle containing an exorcised phantom monk.

3 - Little Dewchurch

Enjoy the shade cast by Netherwood and Rough Hill Wood on the long haul up to Little Dewchurch. The rewards come soon enough, in the shape of the village's friendly pub, the Plough Inn (ploughinnld.co.uk), and then far-reaching views to the west across rolling farmland and forested hills.

4 - Hoarwithy

After a satisfying descent along a quiet hedge-lined country lane, pause in the idyllic russet-stone and cream-whitewashed hamlet of Hoarwithy, nestled in a bend in the Wye and with an unexpected whiff of the Tuscan hills, thanks to the unusual Italianate Romanesque-Byzantine Church of St Catherine that dominates the village. Opposite the old millstone once powered by the wonderfully named Wriggle Brook beckons the New Harp Inn (thenewharpinn.co.uk), its outdoor tables — plus chilled cider and perry — a temptation for cyclists on a warm day.

5 - Lough Pool

Your first real black-and-white house — the rural style so renowned in Herefordshire — comes in the shape of the Loughpool (theloughpool.com), a historic inn across the road from its namesake pond shaded with weeping willows. With a delightful garden and fine gastropub fare, washed down with local ales and ciders, it's a fine spot for a refuel. Take the turn to follow the narrow lane alongside the right of the pub.

6 - Ross-on-Wye Cider & Perry (Yew Tree Inn)

Stop at the Yew Trew (rosscider.com/yewtree/) in Peterstow to try the award-winning drinks produced by the Ross-on-Wye Cider & Perry Company (rosscider.com). Sharing a passion for traditional fermentation methods using whole apple or pear juice, father-and-son team Mike and Albert Johnson create a spectacular range of single-variety and blended ciders and perries — wheel your bike through the orchards, growing more than 100 varieties of apples and pears. Call ahead to arrange a visit.

7 - Sellack Picnic Area

The Wye traces a series of long, meandering loops north of Ross — and in the crook of one of these bends is the Sellack Picnic Area, a handy carpark with benches overlooking a series of old bridge pylons rising from the sluggishly flowing Wye, remnants of a disused railway that once ran south from Hereford. It's a lovely, shady spot for a rest and a snack.

8 - Foy Footbridge

A smooth dead-end road leads to Foy along a broad peninsula bounded on both sides by the Wye, studded with venerable old oaks, with views of wooded ridges ahead. Beyond the ancient Church of St Mary's, with 14th-century elements, watch for the sign indicating a footpath skirting fields to your right; push your bike along to the beautiful century-old suspension footbridge over the river.

9 - Westons Cider

On the outskirts of Much Marcle is the Weston Cider Mill (westons-cider.co.uk), one of the county's largest independent producers. Five generations of the Weston family have created cider and perry here for nearly a century and a half, and today it's still a proudly local and sustainable affair. Explore its heritage and production on regular daily tours of the mill, pick up some of the wares in the shop, or refuel on hearty cyclist-friendly, locally sourced fare at the Scrumpy House Restaurant.

www.visitherefordshire.co.uk/discover/westons-cider

10 - Much Marcle & Hellens

The sleepy little village of Much Marcle is best known as the location of one of England's oldest dwellings, Hellens Manor (hellensmanor.com). This remarkable property's first recorded owner was none other than Earl Harold Godwinson — later King Harold, of

arrow-in-eye at Hastings fame — and the current structure is a fascinating blend of Tudor, Jacobean and Georgian architecture built on 12th-century foundations. More profound for cider- and perry-lovers are the impressive fruit orchard and the avenue of venerable old pear trees planted along Monks Walk to commemorate the coronation of Queen Anne in 1702 — including a rare Hellens Green variety. Watch out for autumn apple-celebrating events in the gardens.

www.visitherefordshire.co.uk/discover/hellens-manor

11 - Gregg's Pit Cider & Perry

Tucked away down a track just outside Much Marcle, Gregg's Pit (greggs-pit.co.uk) is a true labour of love for James Marsden and Helen Woodman. The pair have rebuilt a glorious old farmhouse dating from at least the 18th century, and restored ancient orchards — centred around the 'mother' tree from which the Gregg's Pit perry pear originates. Book a visit to roam the nature-friendly orchards, meet ancient fruit-tree varieties, discover traditional methods of cider and perry production, and taste single-variety cider or perry while resting in the shade of the trees from which the fruit was harvested.

www.visitherefordshire.co.uk/discover/greggs-pit-cider-perry

12 - Ledbury

Having meandered along backroads past the erstwhile homes of the 'Dymock Poets' in Leddington, including Robert Frost and Edward Thomas, complete your cycle in the pretty market town of Ledbury. Studded with remarkable examples of Herefordshire's distinctive black-and-white timber-framed houses, including the impressive oak-stilted 17th-century Market House, it's a wonderful place to explore, eat and drink. To truncate your tour, load your bike on one of the regular trains departing for Hereford from Ledbury Station, north of the town centre.

13 - Little Pomona Orchard & Cidery

Steer around the back of Brook House Farm near Bromyard and you'll come across a modern building set among young orchards. This is the home of Little Pomona (littlepomona.com), a relatively new cider producer whose range of drinks is small — but whose ideas and flavours are never less than big. Founders James and Susanne Forbes — a long-time drinks writer and passionate advocate of quality cider — are creating special products imbued with the terroir of the land. Work your way through the latest vintages in the

spacious tasting room or at tables beneath swaying apple trees, perhaps pairing with fine local cheeses.

www.visitherefordshire.co.uk/discover/little-pomona-cider-perry

14 - Oliver's Cider & Perry

A trip into the barrel store at Oliver's (oliversciderandperry.co.uk) reveals a battalion of dark wood casks previously used in the creation of whisky, rum, red wine, sherry, even calvados — all of which adds to the character of the award-winning cider and perry produced here. And Oliver's is all about character — both that of owner Tom, who has been fermenting cider on his family farm for a quarter of a century and whose philosophy of quality and tradition inflects the diverse range of tipples, and of the fruit he sources from around the region. Call ahead to ensure Tom's around to open up the shop.

<https://www.visitherefordshire.co.uk/discover/olivers-cider-and-perry>

15 - The Black and White House Museum

Tour this compact but fascinating museum (herefordshire.gov.uk/history-lives/herefordmuseums-art-gallery) housed in a remarkable example of the classic Herefordshire timber-framed building, dating from 1621. Rooms are furnished in period Jacobean style and there is also a display of cider-making artefacts.

www.visitherefordshire.co.uk/discover/black-and-white-house-museum

16 - Museum of Cider

Complete the Circuit with a visit to the Museum of Cider (cidermuseum.co.uk) set in the original 1888 Bulmer's factory. Follow the story of cidermaking as you walk through unique champagne cider cellars, peek into a cooper's workshop, see the vat house and explore the museum's extensive collection, from cidermaking equipment to advertising memorabilia. Choose from over 150 craft ciders and perries in the Bottle Shop and top up on cake in the tearoom.

www.visitherefordshire.co.uk/discover/museum-cider