

the Herefordshire Trail

154m of glorious walking

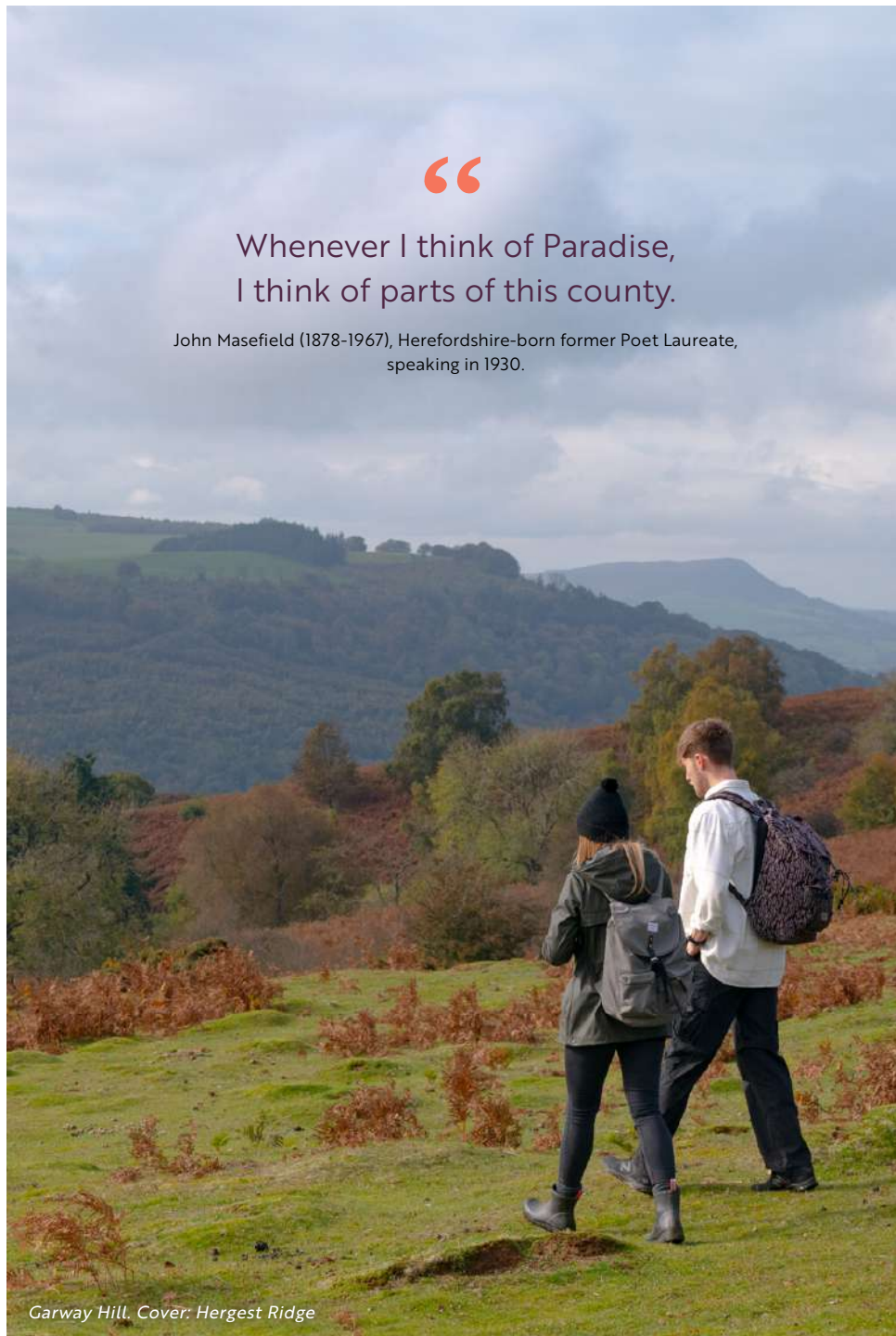
HEREFORDSHIRE



“

Whenever I think of Paradise,
I think of parts of this county.

John Masefield (1878-1967), Herefordshire-born former Poet Laureate,
speaking in 1930.



Garway Hill. Cover: Hergest Ridge

About the trail

A superbly scenic 154-mile loop around the county which threads through our unspoilt landscapes and visits our five characterful market towns, which all offer a walker-friendly welcome.

The trail takes in steep hills and wooded river valleys, time-worn hollow ways and flower-rich meadows, blossom-filled orchards and traditional hopyards.

Historic landmarks dot the route, including Neolithic stones, early castles, once-bloody battlefields and remote country churches.

Outstanding views, unrivalled tranquillity and fantastic walking all await.

Plan your trip

The Herefordshire Trail is a circular route, split into 15 sections. Our top recommendations for places to eat and stay are given at the end of each section and there is a full directory of options on page 44, designed to help you plan your trip.

If you would prefer to walk a linear section, rather than the whole loop, see page 41 for suggested itineraries.

Alternatively, Rural Concierge can organise a bespoke Herefordshire Trail for you, including accommodation and transfers. For further details, contact Liz Hill on info@rural-concierge.co.uk / 01432 370 514.

We have also designed two 'hike and paddle' itineraries for those who fancy exploring on foot and by canoe.



Leave No Trace

Herefordshire is a beautiful green county and we hope you thoroughly enjoy your visit. All we ask is that you follow the Countryside Code which is focused on protecting the environment, respecting everyone and enjoying the outdoors.

Read here:
gov.uk/countryside-code

Follow The Apple



Follow the golden waymarkers of the Herefordshire Trail, maintained by the Herefordshire Ramblers Association.

Route Highlights



Wall End Farm, Monkland

Hop Kilns

Spot the distinctive architecture of Herefordshire's traditional hop kilns. Now often converted into homes or holiday cottages, these buildings were historically used to dry hops for the brewing industry.



Brobury Scar

Veteran Trees

Ancient trees can be found all along the trail with two particular favourites being the Eardisley Great Oak and the 1500-year-old yew at Much Marcle (featured in the Queen's Green Canopy). Other fine specimens can be found in Yatton, Athelstan's, Chanstone and Whitney Woods.

Borderland Castles

Huge swathes of Herefordshire were hotly contested over the years by the English and Welsh. As testament to this tumultuous past, see the crumbling castles in the west and north.



Kilpeck Castle

Cider Presses

It will come as no surprise that the county celebrated for its cider and perry has more than its fair share of cider presses. Used to crush the juice from apples and pears, these huge, hand-carved circular stones are dotted all over, especially in villages and on farms.



Fair Oak Cider, Bacton



The New Inn,
Pembridge

Fantastic food & drink

Our premium beef and craft ciders are legendary but our contemporary food scene serves up even more gourmet adventures. Dine at delightful country gastropubs and excellent market town eateries as you walk the loop.



Hereford Cattle

Hereford Cattle

Known for its distinctive white face and rich red coat, as well as its gentle nature, the Hereford is an iconic breed. It started life on local farms before achieving worldwide fame for its fine flavour.

Market Town Mooching

Along the trail, you'll discover our five historic market towns. Unique in character, they each have a thriving independent high street and offer a walker-friendly welcome. Perfect for a relaxed mooch, grabbing a bite to eat, stocking up on provisions and staying the night.



Tinsmiths, Ledbury High Street



Church Lane, Ledbury

Ledbury

Celebrated for its stylish shopping, vibrant cafe scene and pretty heritage buildings. Wander up the photogenic cobbles of Church Lane, relax in the Walled Garden and sample the **Malthouse Cafe's** superlative cakes.



Ross-on-Wye

Ross-on-Wye

Home to vintage boutiques, art galleries and independent shops. Soak up the river views from **'The Prospect'**, stop for lunch at **Caffe Eleganza** or **Truffles Deli** and pop into the **Market House** to browse local arts and crafts.



Kington High Street

Kington

This tiny town on the border with Wales has a perfectly-formed selection of galleries, shops and cafes. Update your gear at **The Walking Hub**, relax over a local ale at **Ye Olde Tavern** and pick up picnic essentials at **Number 25 Delicatessen**.



Draper's Lane

Leominster

A real treasure trove, home to many antiques dealers as well as independent stores. Visit the beautiful 'black and white' **Grange Court**, pausing for lunch either in their cafe, **The Flying Dutchman** or **Draper's Lane Deli**.



Bromyard High Street

Bromyard

Stroll along the traditional high street with its cosy cafes and gorgeous views. Food lovers can take a delicious detour to Michelin-starred restaurant **Pensons**, **Little Pomona Cider House**, **Green Cow Kitchen** and **Frome Valley Vineyard**, all minutes away by taxi.






The Hop Pocket Shopping Village, Bromyard.
Local Food and Drink 1 Mile from the trail

Trail Route

Circuit the county from characteristic orchards and hopyards in the east to the lush Wye Valley in the south. Follow the trail through the untouched Golden Valley in the west, before climbing the heights of the north

- 1 Ledbury
- 2 Much Marcle
- 3 Ross-on-Wye
- 4 Little Dewchurch
- 5 Kilpeck
- 6 Abbey Dore
- 7 Peterchurch
- 8 Whitney Bridge
- 9 Kington
- 10 Lingen
- 11 Leintwardine
- 12 Richards Castle
- 13 Leominster
- 14 Edwyn Ralph
- 15 Fromes Hill

Join The Herefordshire Trail tribe by sharing your photos on social, using the hashtags **#FollowTheApple** and **#HerefordshireTrail**. We will share as many as we can!

 @visit_herefordshire
 @visitherefordshire
 @VisitHfds



Scan or click to download the GPX files





Ledbury Market House

1 Ledbury to Marcle Ridge

Through Big Apple Country 7.46 Miles

The trail begins on Herefordshire's most easterly edge in **Ledbury**, moments away from the majestic Malvern Hills. Surrounded by woods, orchards and hills, Ledbury is a beautiful spot, characteristic of the county and beloved of literary luminaries from John Masefield to Elizabeth Barrett Browning. It is celebrated for its array of independent shops and its international poetry festival as well as its pretty jumble of historic buildings.

Walkers will, in fact, start at the most iconic of these, the **Market House**. Sat on stilts in the centre of town, this black and white beauty is a 17th-century addition to a market dating from 1122. It trades every Tuesday and Saturday, suitable for picking up provisions to fuel the stretch ahead.

From here, the route threads through town, soon reaching open country. It's an

extensive fruit growing area and much of the onward journey is through orchards, with tiny villages and historic buildings completing the scene. In Aylton, spot the thatched barn at **Court Farm**, which dates from 1503. It is supported by eight 'crucks' – huge naturally-curved oak timbers – and has an infill between its wall timbers of thin-cut and woven oak stave ('wattle').



Orchards

In nearby Putley, you'll pass through the former landscape park of the elegant Queen Anne-style mansion of **Putley Court**. Former resident, Squire Riley, pioneered quality fresh fruit production and despatch by rail to the cities in the 1880s. Today, the local parishes celebrate their fruity heritage every autumn with the **Big Apple Festival**.

A large depression on Marcle Ridge, **The Wonder**, is marked on the OS map. In 1575, a great landslide moved downhill engulfing all in its path. Kynaston Chapel, its churchyard, trees and cattle were swallowed up "to the astonishment of all beholders," according to Tudor historian William Camden. Marcle Hill had indeed moved!

It's easy walking with fine views on **Marcle Ridge**, passing the 540-ft mast of **Ridge Hill Transmitting Station**. The route of the Herefordshire Trail continues south along the ridge but the walker can also choose to **detour downhill** to visit Much Marcle for village pubs and accommodation as well as a tour of local landmark, **Weston's Cider Mill**.

Walkers staying at Much Marcle should retrace their steps to Marcle Ridge to continue on the Herefordshire Trail.



Marcle Ridge

A Ledbury Legend

The Market House is still standing, despite the best efforts of some persistent wasps which decided to focus their attention on boring into its sixteen supporting oak pillars. Such was the extent of the problem that, in 2006, the listed building had to be mechanically lifted by 600mm for emergency rescue work.

EAT & STAY See full directory p44

- The Feathers Hotel, Ledbury** 🍴🏠
- Cwtch Cabins, Much Marcle** 🏠
- The Walwyn Arms, Much Marcle** 🍴
- Weston's Cider Mill, Much Marcle** 🍴
- The Lodge at Orchard Cottage, Much Marcle** 🏠



Marcle Ridge to Ross-on-Wye

'Sleeping Beauty' and trail treasures **11.64 Miles**



St Bartholomew's Church Yew Tree

If you stayed in Much Marcle then don't miss a visit to the 13th-century **St Bartholomew's Church**. The **1500-year-old yew tree** at the door is so big and so hollow that there is a seat inside.

In the church, find the tomb effigy of **Blanche Mortimer** which "might be the original for Sleeping Beauty," according to Sir Simon Jenkins in *England's Thousand Best Churches*. Blanche, from the powerful Marcher Lords dynasty of the Mortimers, died in 1347 aged 31. Her grieving husband Peter Grandison, whose effigy in knightly armour can be seen in Hereford Cathedral, commissioned a tomb which has enthralled many. The great architectural historian Sir Niklaus Pevsner enthuses over the "strikingly beautiful head" whilst Simon Jenkins describes "an image as lovely as any bequeathed by the medieval church."

Walk back up **Marcle Ridge** to rejoin the Herefordshire Trail and onto **Perrystone Hill**. Here the route passes through delightful **Yatton Wood**, a substantial tract of oak forest echoing with birdsong and famed for its bluebells. This hilly section of the trail loops close to the Gloucestershire border via **Crow Hill** hamlet and **Wobage Farm Pottery & Makers Gallery**, founded by the late Mick Casson, a studio potter of international acclaim. Call in to view contemporary pottery, ceramics, furniture and jewellery (open Thursday, Friday and Saturday).



Ross-on-Wye



Through fields enlivened by the song of skylarks, the trail heads to the **River Wye**. The tiny riverside hamlet of **Hole-in-the Wall** once boasted a substantial fortified manor house. Its name may derive from Turlstone ('hole-stone') mentioned in the *Domesday Book* as within the king's manor of Much Marcle.

As the trail heads for higher ground, enjoy far-reaching views over the Wye Valley and pass through the churchyard of the Norman **Brampton Abbotts Church**.

Offering plenty of places to eat and stay, the buzzy market town of **Ross-on-Wye**, with its soaring church spire, can be seen in the distance on its sandstone perch.

EAT & STAY

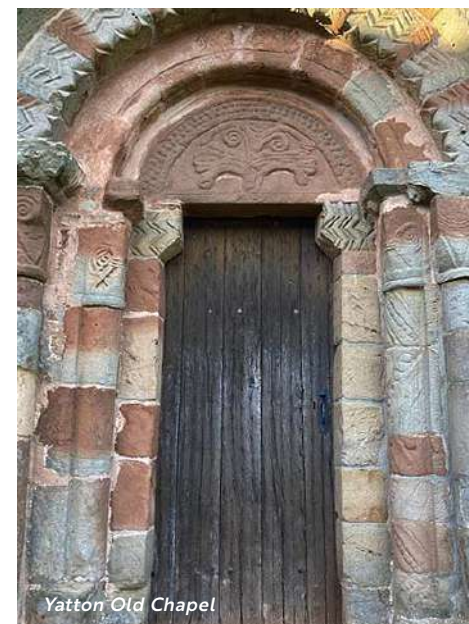
See full directory p44

- The Bridge House Hotel, Ross
- Royal Hotel, Ross
- The New Inn, St Owen's Cross
- The White Lion, Ross
- The Moody Cow Pub, Upton Bishop
- The Kings Head Hotel, Ross
- Benhall Farm B&B, Wilton



A Gem In a Farmyard

Look out for the tiny medieval church rising above the barns and farmhouse at Chapel Farm. The simple earthen-floored Yatton Old Chapel is now disused but the Churches Conservation Trust welcomes visitors. Of special note is the tympanum, the 12th century carved stonework above the door.



Yatton Old Chapel

3

Ross-on-Wye to Little Dewchurch

Upriver with the glorious Wye 10.11 Miles



Sellack Suspension Bridge

The scenic splendour of its setting on the meandering Wye made Ross the 18th-century birthplace of British tourism. Seekers of 'the picturesque' - including Admiral Lord Nelson, Turner and Wordsworth - flocked to the town to enjoy boat excursions. William Gilpin's *Observations on the River Wye* (1792) was the first illustrated tour guide published in Britain. Today, this part of the valley is a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Your trail keeps company with the river the Romans called Vaga ('wandering') via three historic bridges. The lovely six-arch red sandstone **Wilton Bridge**, completed in 1599 at one of the river's most strategically important crossings, was once protected by **Wilton Castle**. The Norman fortress was reduced to ruins in the English Civil War. The bridge suffered the loss of one arch but successive generations kept up repairs to create a structure of distinction. In the 18th-century, it was graced by the addition of a multi-faced sundial on an ornate stone pillar. An inscription urges travellers to "esteem thy precious time."

'How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee
O sylvan Wye, thou wanderer thro' the woods.
How often has my spirit turned to thee!'

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, *Lyrical Ballads*, 1798



St Catherine's Church, Hoarwithy

Upstream, the trail heads back over the river on the elegant **Sellack Boat Suspension Bridge**, a footbridge built in 1895 when local vicars were having trouble with 'awkward' ferrymen. One fed-up cleric even crossed the river on stilts! The next crossing is still often referred to as **Hoarwithy Toll Bridge**, although tolls ended in 1935. The lofty former Toll House towers above the modern bridge.

Overlooking the village, Hoarwithy's exotic Italianate **Church of St. Catherine** brings a dash of the Mediterranean to a Herefordshire valley. It is "an astonishing creation" by its Victorian architect, opines church buildings aficionado, Simon Jenkins.

The path up from the valley passes a modern landmark, **Prothither Solar Farm**, an extensive hilltop array of solar panels. Soon after, the imposing 14th-century tower of **St. David's, Little Dewchurch**, marks the end of this section.



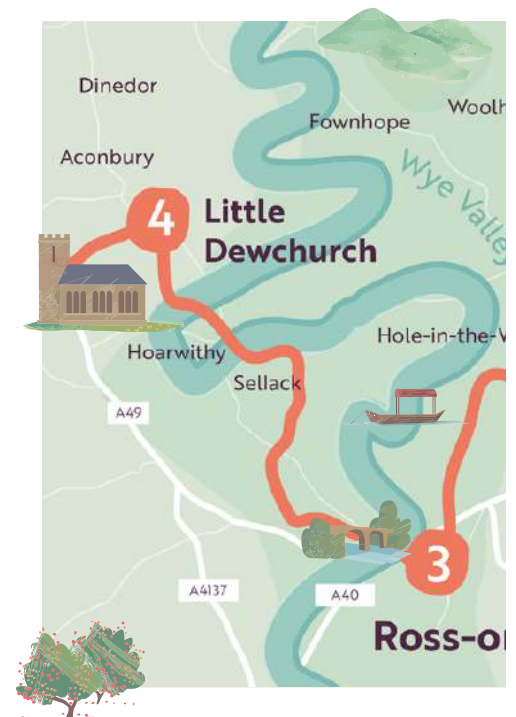
Ross-on-Wye

EAT & STAY See full directory p44

New Harp Inn, Hoarwithy

The Loughpool, Sellack

The Plough Inn, Little Dewchurch



Little Dewchurch to Kilpeck

Field and forest of a lost kingdom 6.23 Miles



Kilpeck Church

Long ago, the church of **St David, Little Dewchurch**, was known by its Welsh name, Dewi Sant, from which stems the village name. Welsh place and field names live on in this area, once the ancient former Welsh kingdom of Eryng. Part of that lost realm, from the Wye to the Monnow, became the odd Norman borderland hybrid of Archenfield. It was neither Wales nor England and was governed from Kilpeck Castle outside of the English Hundreds system as a semi-autonomous district with its own customs.

The trail then travels through the enchanting **Athelstan's Wood**, once owned by the Bishops of Hereford and named after the 11th century Bishop Athelstan. Later, it became the property of the powerful Scudamore family whose men coppiced the wood for charcoal to fuel forges. Now owned by the Duchy of Cornwall, the wood is part conifer plantation, but a delightful expanse of mature oak forest remains. In addition to the public footpath, the Duchy has created a permissive path to invite further wanderings.

From Much Birch, there are two main roads to cross but the peace of deep forest is soon recaptured in the well-wooded **Mynde Park**.



The trail passes the park's lovely seven-acre lake, with its island folly, and the stately home of **The Mynde**. Privately owned, the



mansion's lavish interior makes it a popular location for film and television.

The steeply wooded flanks of one of Herefordshire's bigger hills, **Cusop Hill**, rise beyond the park but the trail heads through an easier, undulating landscape to the gem known as **Kilpeck**.

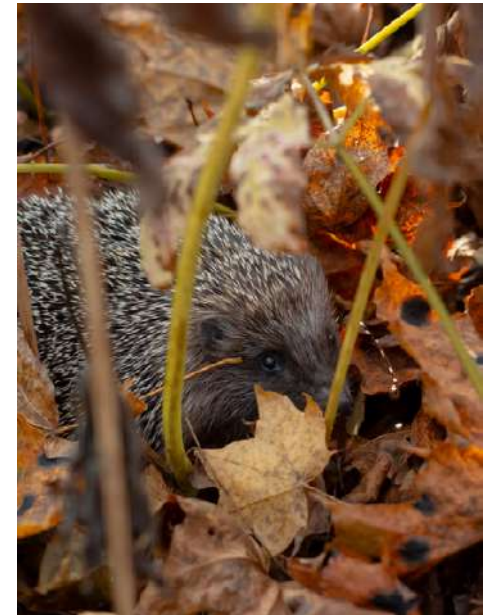
EAT & STAY See full directory p44

The Pilgrim Hotel (B&B), Much Birch  

The Kilpeck Inn, Kilpeck  

The Land of the Hedgehogs

Archenfield, a small medieval 'state' deriving from the larger Welsh kingdom of Eryng, was known as 'The Land of the Hedgehogs'. In Hentland's tiny church, named after locally-born St Dubricius, the 6th-century Prince Bishop is depicted in a stained-glass window with a hedgehog at his feet. Archenfield or Ircingfeld derives from urchin, a local name for hedgehog. The hedgehog motif appears in many local coats-of-arms.





Garway Hill

5 Kilpeck to Abbey Dore

Pilgrimage through the hills 11.60 Miles

St Mary and St David, Kilpeck, has been described as England's most perfect Norman church. So little has been altered since it was built in 1140. Its famous array of 12th-century stone carvings, including the outlandish and bawdy, even survived the purge of the Puritans.

The crowning glory of the medieval Herefordshire School of Romanesque Sculpture, Kilpeck's old red sandstone is emblazoned with animals, birds, dragons and human forms, including the green man and the Celtic fertility symbol *Sheela na gig*.

The masterpiece was inspired by a long journey on foot. A 12th-century nobleman was enchanted by stone carvings he saw on a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela that he instructed master masons to create a similar effect.

There is a long climb to **Garway Hill's** 1,204-ft summit but the panoramic views are a worthwhile reward. Overlooking the Monnow Valley, Garway was an important site for millennia. Remains of a Neolithic flint-knapping 'workshop,' a Bronze Age burial-site, Iron Age enclosures, pottery and traces of a Roman fort have been discovered here. King John gave the manor to the Knights Templar who built a church and farmed the land to finance their Crusades. The hill bears a stark reminder of a later war. The hilltop octagonal brick structure was built in 1942 as an RAF Radio Tracking Station.

The trail skirts the former **Kentchurch Deer Park**, originally owned by the Knights Templar. **Kentchurch Court** is the ancestral home of the Scudamores and Sir John Scudamore secretly married a daughter of

The Witches of Garway Hill

Garway Hill was once associated with supernatural goings on. There was a local saying - "There will always be nine witches from the bottom of Orcop to the top of Garway, as long as water flows", recounts Ella Mary Leather in *The Folklore of Herefordshire* (1912).

Welsh rebel leader Owain Glyndwr. The couple are thought to have harboured the fugitive here after his disappearance in 1412.

There is another long hill climb to **Pontrilas** before a gentler trek through the beautiful **Golden Valley**. Ewyas Harold was the site of an early Norman castle. Its species-rich common is home to meadow saffron, once cultivated by the monks of **Dore Abbey**.



Golden Valley

EAT & STAY See full directory p44
The Temple Bar Inn, Ewyas Harold 🍴🏠



Abbey Dore to Peterchurch

Treasures of the Golden Valley 7.7 Miles



The pride of the valley is the serene **Dore Abbey**. The former Cistercian monastery, founded in 1147, became a pilgrimage centre due to its possession of a prized relic of the Holy Cross. Falling into disrepair following the 16th-century Dissolution, the Abbey was restored for worship a century later by the 1st Viscount (John) Scudamore. His largesse, following family tragedies, is thought to have been driven by guilt about his living on the proceeds of former monastic lands.

The trail heads for higher ground, reaching the remote small Norman church of **St. Margarets**. Its exquisitely carved oak rood screen is a celebrated work of art, "textured pale grey with time" in the words of poet Sir John Betjeman. Dating from about 1520, it is a rare survivor of a post-reformation order of 1547 that all such works should be destroyed. From the hamlet, 800 feet above sea level, there are superb views west over the Monnow Valley to the long escarpment of the Black Mountains on the Welsh border.

Next, wander on through the ancient 100-acre **Chanstone Wood**, a Site of Special Scientific Interest, noted for its abundance of small-leaved lime trees. Locally, lime was once coppiced for various uses, including wood turning, and the bark was used for ropemaking. Lime flowers were valued as a food source for honeybees.



In the valley below, **two medieval churches** of great charm, **Turnastone and Vowchurch**, stand a short distance apart on opposite banks of the River Dore. Vowchurch's churchyard cross was once a prehistoric mark stone. From this peaceful spot, it is an easy amble alongside the Dore to the Golden Valley 'capital,' **Peterchurch**, where a spring, **St. Peter's Well**, was once reputed to have healing powers.

River of gold

The little River Dore winds through the magical Golden Valley. Dore may derive from dwr, Welsh for water. The valley was Welsh speaking when the Norman French arrived. It is thought they may have interpreted dwr as "d'or" – "of gold" – resulting in the name Golden Valley.

EAT & STAY

The Mill Restaurant, Peterchurch
Poston Mill Camping, Peterchurch
Food for Thought, Peterchurch
Casa Lupo, Peterchurch



Peterchurch to Whitney Bridge

To the uplands of the Stone Age 10.69 Miles



Snodhill Castle

A short distance from the trail (near **Dorstone**) lies the craggy ruin of **Snodhill Castle**, one of the largest and oldest Norman castles in Britain. Worth a visit, its unique features once included a 12-sided High Keep with a twin-turreted entrance and unusually elaborate defences. In 1402, Henry V ordered the castle garrison to prepare for an attack by Owain Glyndwr's forces, but it is likely the castle was destroyed in the English Civil War. Forgotten for centuries, its secrets are now being uncovered thanks to a huge restoration effort.

This once turbulent border country bristled with castles. A mile away along the trail is **Dorstone Castle Mound** accessed on a path by the village hall.

Take refreshment at the **Pandy Inn**, before climbing the steep path up Dorstone Hill to **Arthur's Stone**. This atmospheric Neolithic burial chamber predates Stonehenge by a millennium. Nearby, in 2013, archaeologists discovered the former sites of two 6,000-year-old 'Halls of the Dead.' Long-barrows, standing stones, flint scatters and stone axe discoveries across the uplands between the Wye and Golden Valleys are evidence of a Stone Age "integrated ceremonial landscape," say experts.

Fun-loving Victorians

The trail passes through Kilvert Country, named after Reverend Francis Kilvert, the celebrated Victorian diarist and vicar of **Bredwardine**. Entitled *The longest day* his entry for June 21, 1870, details an enjoyable picnic with friends at **Snodhill Castle** ruins. Later, guests danced at his vicarage where the oak floor was "badly scratched by the nailed boots of the gentlemen and some of the ladies."



Arthur's Stone

Later, soak up superb views from wild **Merbach Hill Common** which overlooks the Wye Valley at more than 1,000 ft above sea level. Here, the trail heads down an old drovers' road etched into the hillside.

There is no charge for foot sloggers crossing historic **Whitney Toll Bridge**, which dates from 1797. The placid-looking river can become a raging torrent after heavy rain in the Welsh hills. Three earlier bridges, as well as Whitney parish church, were all previously destroyed by the Wye in full spate.



Whitney Toll Bridge

EAT & STAY See full directory p44

Whitney Bridge, Whitney-on-Wye

Cynefin Retreats, Whitney-on-Wye

Locksters Pool Camping, Clifford

The Boat Inn, Whitney-on-Wye

The Pound B&B, Whitney-on-Wye



Whitney Bridge to Kington

Walking on the wild side **11.84 Miles**



Whitney Wood

Deep hollow ways cut through **Whitney Wood**, telling of past stone quarrying, timber felling and charcoal-making. A woodman once lived in the middle of this large wood, in the now ruined cottage known as the 'Vulture's Nest'. The trail briefly follows the track bed of the former Hereford, Hay & Brecon Railway (1864-1964) passing the former Whitney Station, now a sawmill. Continue along a hollow way, a section of an ancient north-south route from the Wye Valley. All around lies a wildlife-friendly patchwork of woods and watery dingles, including a species-rich local nature reserve, home to pied flycatchers, bats and the rare, white-clawed crayfish.

The 12th-century **Church of St. Mary, Brilley**, was long associated with a superstitious custom. Every corpse for burial was first carried three times around 'the funeral stone,' the stump of a medieval stone cross, beyond the gate. Mourners believed this ritual ensured the spirit of the deceased went to heaven.

The trail follows a former carriage drive, now a pleasant green bridleway, through **Eardisley Park**, past the 18th-century house, restored after a devastating fire. Its history of a long-running family legal dispute is said to have inspired Charles Dickens's *Bleak House*.

An ancient custom

Brilley's 'funeral stone' was at a meeting place of ancient tracks. In *The Old Straight Track* (1925), Alfred Watkins, the ley line theorist, stated that the custom echoed a once widespread ritual for the dead at crossroads, with former mark stones on ancient routes remaining totemic for millennia.



Brilley Church

Eardisley's Church of St. Mary Magdalene, houses a renowned font, the work of the Herefordshire School of Romanesque Sculpture, bearing a dramatic depiction of Christ's Harrowing of Hell. Further along the trail stands a giant - the **Eardisley Great Oak** - a hollow but evidently thriving tree of about 900 years old.

EAT & STAY

The New Strand, Eardisley
Arboyne House, Eardisley
The Burton Hotel, Kington
Ye Old Tavern, Kington



Church House B&B, Kington
The Swan, Kington
White Heron Properties, Lyonshall



See full directory p44



Kington to Lingen

Tracking Lord Byron 12.2 Miles



Landscape of a famous affair

"If you come down to Kington, pray come and see me," Lord Byron wrote to his friend Francis Hodgson in 1813. Newly famous for his epic *Childe Harold*, the passionate poet was in Herefordshire in a state of bliss. He celebrated his 25th birthday while pursuing an affair with a married noblewoman of 40, Jane Harley, Countess of Oxford and Countess Mortimer.

This wonderfully scenic part of the trail includes spots associated with Byron's affair with Herefordshire noblewoman Jane Harley in 1812/1813. The path first follows the lush banks of the **River Arrow** via Titley Junction Station, now a small private railway where steam engines occasionally fire up. **Titley Pool**, is a 22-acre 'kettle hole' lake and a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Accessed from a small gate by the trail, it is home to the brightly plumed great crested grebe and other species.

The lake is one of three in the grounds of the former **Eywood** mansion where Byron consorted with the countess under the nose of her husband Edward Harley, 5th Earl of Oxford. Byron wrote, "The country round this place is wild and beautiful, consequently very delightful."

The trail winds from the Arrow to the Lugg Valley via **Wapley Hill Fort**, an impressive multivallate iron age fort part-extending to five concentric ramparts. A deep shaft within is described by archaeologists as a 'sacrificial pit' or 'ritual shaft.' Byron came walking on Wapley with his lover's children and one of them threw a stone at his head. He made a fuss. "The stone being very sharp, the wound bled rather profusely... it just missed an artery," he moaned to a friend.

On a cliff, high above the Lugg is the fine country house the poet described as "my place at Kinsham." In early 1813, work



was being carried out at **Kinsham Court**, to ready it for Byron. He never took up residence, but it may have served as an occasional love nest. Byron visited the adjoining **Kinsham Church** and churchyard, scorning "the most facetious epitaphs I ever read!"

Through a lovely oak wood on **Cole's Hill**, the trail descends along an ancient hollow way to **Lingen**.



EAT & STAY

See full directory p44

The Stag Inn, Titley

The Royal George, Lingen





10

Lingen to Leintwardine

Mountain top to Roman road 9.1 Miles

Linger a little in **Lingen** which boasts an early motte and bailey castle site, a tiny church dating from the 13th century, a welcoming pub, good footpaths and a wildlife-friendly landscape. Beyond the lovely brooks and wooded dingles is stark **Harley's Mountain** – not a true mountain of course, but at 1,260 feet the highest hill on the Herefordshire Trail.

The summit rewards the intrepid walker with unsurpassed views over mid Wales and to some of Shropshire's highest hills: Brown Clee, 1,770 ft, and the distant Wrekin, 1,335 ft. Our 'mountain' takes its name from the Harley family - among them the former earls of Oxford - major landowners for centuries. London's Harley Street recalls their city links.

There is another climb to reach **Brampton Bryan Park**, a former deer park. Brimming with wildflowers, butterflies, bees and beetles, the lower park resembles an enormous hay meadow in summer. Oaks, chestnuts and other specimen parkland trees of great size and age grace the scene.

The mellow thatched cottages of **Brampton Bryan** are a picture of tranquillity belying the village's turbulent past – it was burnt to the ground in the English Civil War. In 1643 brave Lady Brilliana Harley (1598-1643), defended her home, **Brampton Bryan Castle**, against 700 Royalist troops in a three-month siege while her husband and sons were away fighting for Parliament.



The aggressors withdrew, but Brilliana's health suffered, and she died soon after. The castle was destroyed by cannon in a second siege. The ruin is out of sight in the grounds of **Brampton Bryan Hall**, which continues as the Harley ancestral home. The house featured in the film *Howard's End*.

The last section of the walk is an easy plod along the valley of the **River Teme** to **Leintwardine**, Roman *Bravonium*, where the High Street aligns with the Roman road of Watling Street.

A bit of Roman comfort

Bravonium, modern-day **Leintwardine**, was a military and trading outpost from early in the Roman conquest. It has been described as a 'Roman travel lodge' - a *mansio*, thanks to the discovery of the remains of Roman baths and underfloor heating. Roman comfort was further enhanced by the nearby River Teme salmon fishery.



EAT & STAY

See full directory p44

The Lion Hotel, Leintwardine



Brampton Bryan

Leintwardine to Richards Castle

Mule tracks of the ironmasters **13.3 Miles**



Mocktree Forest

The path from the Teme Valley heads up steep **Shelderton Hill** which rises to more than 1,000 ft and bears east, past remaining hillside fragments of the former **Royal Forest of Mocktree**, a once vast medieval hunting forest spanning the Herefordshire/Shropshire border. In the 17th century, the woodlands were leased to ironmasters to coppice wood for charcoal.

Bringewood Forge's iron smelting furnace and forges stood by the Teme, close to Forge Bridge and its elegant horseshoe weir. Energised on its passage through **Downton Gorge**, the river drove waterwheels for bellows and trip hammers. Mule trains brought in iron ore and charcoal and then carried away finished iron. When it ceased production in 1815, Bringewood was the last major charcoal-fuelled ironworks in England.

Along the riverbank, look out for **Downton Castle**, built on the profits of iron by Richard Payne Knight MP (1750-1824), grandson of the Bringewood ironmaster Richard Knight (1659-1745). Payne Knight, a classical scholar, was an enthusiast of the 'picturesque' school. His inherited estate was all he could have hoped for.

Part of it is now a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), **Downton Gorge National Nature Reserve**. Its ancient woodland is a remaining fragment of **Bringewood Chase**, a largely upland former royal forest. In winter, colliers toiled to



Downton Castle



Downton Gorge

make charcoal and mules descended steep tracks to carry fuel to the ironworks.

The trail heads over **Hunstay Hill** and through a forest tract to the **Church of St. George, Burrington**. Its rare churchyard cluster of cast-iron grave-slabs, the earliest dated 1619, are the monuments of the Teme Valley ironmasters and their families, the Knights among them.

Along the trail is the former home of a celebrated member of the family. **Elton Hall**, beside the hamlet's tiny Norman church, was the home and 'laboratory' of pioneer horticulturalist and plant breeder Thomas Andrew Knight (1759-1838). Charles Darwin, in *On the Origin of Species*, paid credit to Herefordshire-born Knight for his ground-breaking research into plant physiology.

Downton Gorge National Nature Reserve

The trail goes through this scenic reserve and skirts the mouth of the limestone gorge of the River Teme. "The narrow ravine provides a humid microclimate which benefits a variety of ferns, bryophytes, lichen and fungi," says Natural England. There is no public access into the gorge, but occasional guided walks



EAT & STAY

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Maidenhead Inn, Orleton

The Boot Inn, Orleton

High Bank Cottage, Richards Castle



Richards Castle to Leominster

Battlefields journey **9.2 Miles**

Richards Castle



The castle ruins on the hill above the village of **Richards Castle** are all that remains of the once-formidable centrepiece of England's earliest enclosed Norman Borough.

It was one of only four pre-conquest Norman fortresses and possibly Britain's oldest stone castle. A long-vanished, but once substantial, octagonal keep and curtain walls with D-shaped watch towers, replaced wooden defences erected in about 1050 by Richard Le Scrope, a Norman favourite of King Edward the Confessor.

The development angered the local Anglo-Saxon nobility - and one 'Eric the Wild' (Eric Silvaticus) in particular. As the Norman grip tightened, Eric's lands were ravaged. He joined forces with the Welsh kings to lead a rebellion. The allies laid waste to much of Norman Herefordshire and attacked Hereford Castle. The Richards Castle stronghold was a ruin by the 17th century but was the site of a clash of forces in the English Civil War.

The trail then heads through **Orleton**, a walker-friendly village with two pubs and a shop. It crosses a surviving fragment of the former **Leominster-Stourport Canal** and on through a patchwork of flat fields and the churchyard of the fine Norman church at **Eye** hamlet.

Richards Castle Church



The Balance Inn, Luston, stands at the former site of a weigh-station where the valuable fleeces of the local Ryeland sheep flocks were once weighed. The fine, long-staple wool was favoured by Elizabeth I who insisted her stockings must be made from 'Leominster Ore,' as it was known.

The trail then passes **Scatterbrain**, a name reflecting the often-violent history of the border country. In 1461, during the Wars of the Roses, the Battle of Mortimer's Cross began five miles away, but the bloody conflict which claimed the lives of 4,000 men, rippled through the Lugg Valley. Battle raged across these fields once more in 1645. Royalists led by Sir William Croft of nearby **Croft Castle**, were defeated by the Roundheads led by Colonel John Birch and prevented from recapturing **Leominster**.



EAT & STAY

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The White Lion, Leominster

The Balance Inn, Luston

Grove Farm B&B, Kimbolton



The suspicious death of Baron Mortimer

This stage of the Herefordshire Trail is associated with dramatic historical events. Sir Hugh Mortimer became Lord of Richards Castle in the late 13th century but died in suspicious circumstances in 1304. Accused of poisoning him, his 33-year-old wife, Matilda of Hereford, was thrown into the Tower of London.

Leominster to Edwyn Ralph

Spires and towers of medieval landmarks **11.65 Miles**



Leominster Priory Church

Ornate 12th-century stone carving at the west door of **Leominster Priory Church** echoes other outstanding examples of the Herefordshire School of Romanesque Sculpture seen on the trail at Kilpeck and Eardisley.

The grand scale of the Leominster church hints at medieval prosperity yet the Priory's position was sometimes precarious. Its black-robed Benedictine prior and monks presided over an agricultural empire of 16 manors, a 'cash cow' for the larger Reading Abbey founded by Henry I (where the king planned to be buried). The priory struggled and was involved in a dispute with a local moneylender. Nearby, **Grange Court** is a fine example of Herefordshire's timber-framed architecture. Beautifully carved, it is the work of John Abel, known as the King's carpenter.

Following the **River Lugg** downstream, the trail heads east over low hills to **Bache Camp** for a gentle journey through undulating countryside. A series of three lovely medieval churches acts as landmarks.

Pudleston's St. Peters dating from 1200, has a distinctive tower capped by a pyramidal roof and oak-shingled spire. Two gnarled old characters stand in a field by the church: '**Adam and Eve**' are among the county's oldest oak trees.



Leominster Morris Dancers

St. Leonards, Hatfield, one of Herefordshire's three oldest churches, is of Saxon origin and is mentioned in the *Domesday Book*. Some herringbone masonry, a Saxon font and blocked Saxon doorway attest to its pedigree.

The stonework includes locally quarried tufa, a porous white rock. A Georgian gallery reached by a narrow staircase provides a close-up view of beautiful medieval timberwork above the nave.

Dancing at dawn

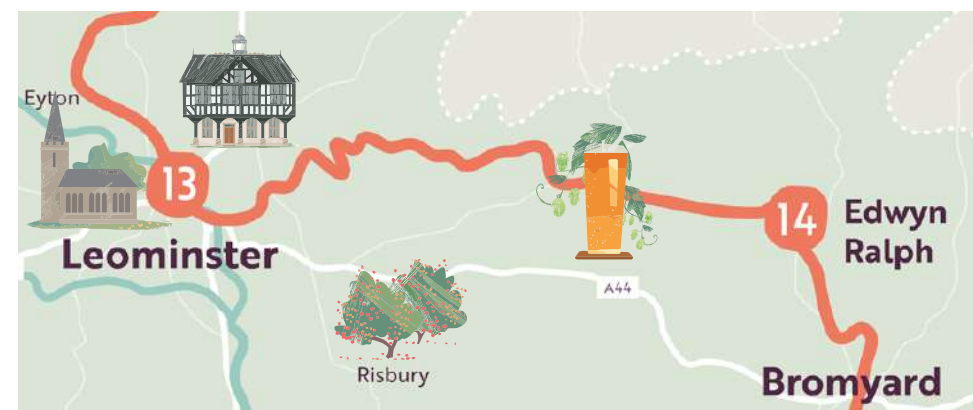
At dawn on May Day, Leominster Morris Men gather on Bache Camp to 'dance in' the rising sun. The sun and the seasons would have been important to the beliefs and rituals of the iron age farming families living here some 2,500 to 3000 years ago. Within the ramparts, the 10-acre enclosure was the site of a village of thatched huts. The villagers farmed surrounding small fields, while some were potters and metalworkers.

The trail crosses the **River Frome**, just a stream here in its upper reaches. To the north is another iron age hillfort, **Wall Hills**. A mile on, the stocky tower of the 12th-century **Edwyn Ralph Church** contains a remarkable group of medieval stone effigies. Nearby, **Moat Field** is the former site of a castle and settlement deserted after the Black Death swept England in 1348.

EAT & STAY

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TBA



Edwyn Ralph to Fromes Hill

The hop pickers' path 9.9 Miles



Bromyard Downs

Ninth century 'Bromgeard,' a settlement surrounded by thorny scrub, grew in importance after Bishop Cuthwulf gained a royal charter in 840 to **establish** a 'monasterium.' Bromyard was later enhanced with substantial timber-framed buildings. Charles I stayed at the imposing black and white **Tower Hill House** in 1645, prior to marching to Hereford to take the city from the Parliamentarians.

These days, **Bromyard** is a foodie destination, with craft cider makers, fabulous butchers and the Michelin-star restaurant **Pensons**.

In an earlier era, the town welcomed visitors of a different kind. Each September, well into the last century, local families harvesting the Frome Valley hops were joined by gipsies in horse-drawn wagons and train loads of pickers from Birmingham, the Black Country and South Wales.

The hop pickers' path heads to the valley. Threading through hopyards brimming with high-climbing vines in flower and a landscape that includes pasture, orchards and grapevines. **Paunton Court**, dating from the 16th century, is home to the **Frome Valley Vineyard** which offers tastings of English table wines.

Traditional hop-kilns with their distinctive coned roofs and cowls can be seen, though modern hop-drying is done at factory scale



Frome Valley Vineyard

and harvesting is mechanised. A recent penchant for hoppy beer has revived demand.

Thriving **Bishops Frome**, with two pubs and a community shop, once played a key role in the hop harvest. Early last century the village population of 700 would swell to 5,000 souls, many living in a 'Tin Town' of huts. In the hopyards there were campfires, singing, romance and the forging of friendships that lasted a lifetime.

From the village, the trail crosses the **River Frome** and heads to steep Fromes Hill and the busy A4103. The approach is a delightful hollow way fringed with holly and oak where the yaffle of the green woodpecker may be heard.

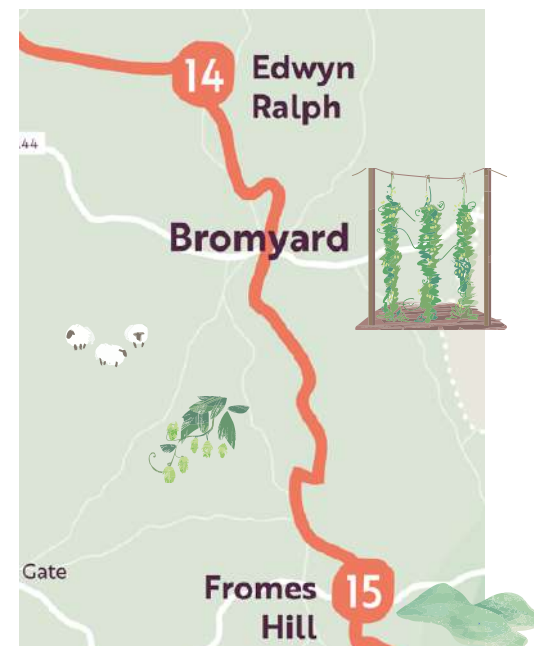
EAT & STAY

The Falcon, Bromyard
Birchwood Camping, Hatfield
The Wheatsheaf Inn, Fromes Hill



"On the first day, with crib allocated and set out in the dense greenery of the fresh hopyard, voices were muffled and you could not see who was around you, but as the vines were pulled your neighbours came gradually into view to be hailed and greeted as if encountered in foreign land ... The same friends turned up every year ... You went to the farm to be paid and have a lump of fruit cake and a drink, they was lovely days."

Hopyard memories from
A Pocketful of Hops, Bromyard
Local History Society, 1988



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Legges of Bromyard, Bromyard
The Inn at Bromyard, Bromyard



Fromes Hill to Ledbury

To the realm of poets **10.13 Miles**



Coddington Vineyard

Shortly after crossing the A4103 over Fromes Hill, the trail walker can return to the peace of deep country and the quiet, unpaved byways of another era. In autumn, the old green lanes are fringed with blackberries and damson trees sprawling from hedgerows.

In the Vale of Leadon, close to its little river, sits **Bosbury**, an important village with a wealth of listed buildings, including the fortress-like 13th-century detached bell tower. Nationally rare, Herefordshire has more detached bell towers (seven) than any other county. They were built for defence as well as religion. The medieval Bishops of Hereford owned Bosbury manor - a remnant stone gateway survives of their former **Bishops Palace**, a favoured retreat. Nearby, a moated site of a Knights Templar preceptory is now **Temple Court**.

The trail passes between rows of grapevines at **Coddington Vineyard**, which produces several English white wines and offers tastings and tours. Soon after, on 690-feet high **Oyster Hill** (the name of one of the wines) you can pause at a seat with a fine view.

Hope End ('valley end'), a former deer park that once belonged to the Bishops, was the childhood playground of poet **Elizabeth Barrett Browning** (1806-1861).



Hope End House

Here she honed her craft and, aged nine, was dubbed 'Poet Laureate of Hope End' by her father. The extravagant 'Moorish-style' house with minarets he spent years building was largely demolished and replaced within the century. Elizabeth loved the parkland which remains a scenic treasure. The woodlands were the setting of her poem *The Lost Bower*.

Your path tracks the western edge of the **Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**, hills which inspired William Langland's 14th century verse epic *Piers Plowman* and the music of 19th-century composer, Sir Edward Elgar. The trail ends at **Ledbury**, birthplace of the literary giant and former Poet Laureate John Masefield (1878-1967) who spoke with passion about his love of the local landscape.

Poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning grew up at Hope End. She became a reclusive invalid but found joy in her marriage to poet Robert Browning celebrated in her sonnet *How do I love thee?* She recalled early days at Hope End Park in *The Lost Bower* - 'Green the land is where my daily / Steps in jocund childhood played / Dimpled close with hill and valley / Dappled very close with shade / Summer-snow of apple blossoms running up from glade to glade.'

EAT & STAY

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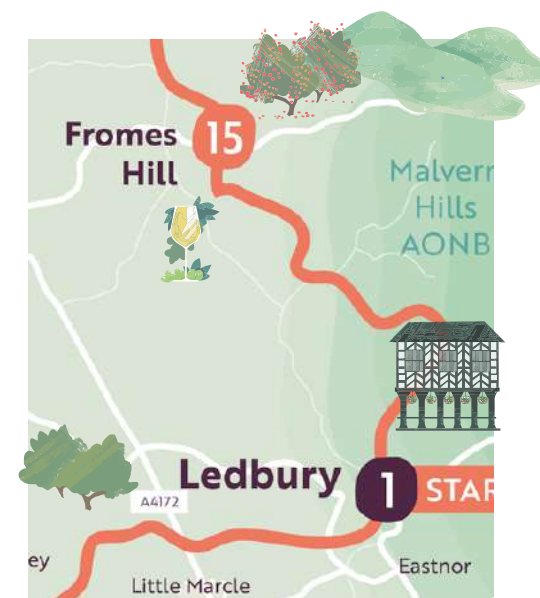
The Feathers Hotel, Ledbury



The Talbot Hotel, Ledbury



The Seven Stars, Ledbury



Short Break Ideas

Make the most of a weekend by taking a Herefordshire Trail short break.



Hergest Ridge, near Kington

Vineyard Wander

Spend the afternoon in **Ledbury**, staying at **The Feathers Hotel**. After breakfast, start the trail in reverse, walking towards **Fromes Hill**. Call in at **Coddington Vineyard** for a tour, tasting and lunch in the garden, before continuing on to **Bishops Frome**.

Stay over at **The Chase Inn**, waking for a wander through hopyards and vines to **Frome Valley Vineyard** and another tour and tasting. Walk on to **Bromyard's** black and white **Falcon Hotel** and don't miss dinner at **Pensons** restaurant (Michelin-starred), a short taxi ride away. Return to **Ledbury** the next day via the 482 bus.



The Feathers Hotel



Frome Valley Vineyard

Mortimer Loop

Travel to **Leintwardine**, staying the night at **The Lion**, a delightful country inn by the river. In the morning, walk section 11 through the **Teme Valley**, picnicking at the castle ruins in **Richards Castle** or savouring a pint at the **Castle Inn**. Hop on the 390 bus (15.11 service) from the pub, arriving in time for a mooch around **Ludlow**. Then, at 17.45, take the 740 bus (from **Compasses Inn**, Corve St) back in time for a well-earned dinner at **The Lion**.



Leintwardine



The Lion



Ross-on-Wye



Whitney-on-Wye

Hike & Paddle Weekend

Set off from **Ross-on-Wye** on foot, following the river to **Hoarwithy**. Dine in the village at the **New Harp Inn**, or walk 30 minutes to **The Loughpool** or **Cottage of Content**. Stay the night under the beams of the homely **Old Mill B&B**. In the morning, cross the road to **Tresseck Campsite**, also home to **Hereford Canoe Hire**, to paddle downstream to **Ross**. Soak up the tranquility of this remote section of river, landing your canoe just past the **Hope & Anchor** pub, where you can enjoy lunch.

Directory

Ledbury

The Feather's Hotel, Ledbury
feathersledbury.co.uk
01531 635 266

The Talbot Hotel, Ledbury
talbotledbury.co.uk
01531 632 963

The Seven Stars, Ledbury
sevenstarsledbury.co.uk
01531 635 800

Much Marcle

Cwtch Cabins, Much Marcle
cwtchcabins.com
07981 191 961

The Walwyn Arms,
Much Marcle
walwynarms.co.uk
01531 660 601

Weston's Cider Mill,
Much Marcle
westons-cider.co.uk/visit
01531 660 233

Nr Ross-On-Wye

The Bridge House Hotel,
Ross-on-Wye
bridgehouseross-on-wye.co.uk
01989 562 655

The White Lion, Ross-on-Wye
whitelionross.com
01989 562 785

Benhall Farm B&B,
Wilton
benhallfarm.co.uk
01989 563900

The Kings Head Hotel,
Ross-on-Wye
kingshead.co.uk
01989 763 174

Royal Hotel, Ross-on-Wye,
greenekinginns.co.uk/hotels/
royal-hotel-ross-on-wye
01989 565 105

The Coach House B&B,
Old Gore
thecoachhousebandb.com
01989 780 339

The New Inn, St Owen's Cross
thenewinnherefordshire.co.uk
01989 553 387

Moody Cow Pub,
Upton Bishop
moodycowpub.com
01989 780 470

Hoarwithy

The Old Mill B&B, Hoarwithy
theoldmillhoarwithy.co.uk
01432 840 602

Nr Kilpeck

The Kilpeck Inn, Kilpeck
kilpeckinn.com
01981 570464

The Pilgrim Hotel,
Much Birch
pilgrimhotel.co.uk
01981 540742

Nr Abbey Dore

Temple Bar Inn, Ewyas Harold
thetemplebarinn.co.uk
01981 240 423

Peterchurch

The Mill Restaurant,
Peterchurch
millrestaurant.co.uk
01981 550 151

Poston Mill Holiday Park,
Peterchurch
postonmill.co.uk
01981 550 151

Food for Thought
Peterchurch
foodforthought-
herefordshire.co.uk
01981 550 180

Casa Lupo, Peterchurch
casalupo.co.uk
01981 550 208

Old House Farm B&B,
Dorstone
oldhousefarm.wordpress.com
01981 551 231

Whitney-on-Wye

The Boat Inn,
Whitney-on-Wye
boatinn-whitney.co.uk
01497 831 223

The Pound B&B,
Whitney-on-Wye
poundbandb.co.uk/BandB
01497 831 391

Cynefin Retreats,
Whitney-on-Wye
cynefinretreats.com

Locksters Pool camping,
Whitney-on-Wye
campingriverwye.co.uk
01497 831 373

Eardisley

The New Strand, Eardisley
visitherefordshire.co.uk/
discover/new-strand
01544 327 285

Arboyne House, Eardisley
arboynehouse.co.uk
01544 327 058

Kington

The Burton, Kington
burtonhotel.co.uk
01544 230 323

Ye Olde Tavern, Kington
01544 231 417

Church House B&B, Kington
churchhousekington.co.uk
01544 230 534

The Swan, Kington
theswanhotelkington.co.uk
01544 239 433

The Stagg Inn, Titley
thestagg.co.uk
01544 230 221

White Heron Properties
Lyonsall,
whiteheronproperties.com
01544 340 241

Lingen

The Royal George, Lingen
theroyalgeorgelingen.co.uk
01544 267 322

Leintwardine

The Lion Hotel, Leintwardine
thelionleintwardine.co.uk
01547 540 203

Richards Castle

The Maidenhead Inn,
Orleton
themaidenhead.co.uk
01584 831 686

High Bank Cottage,
Richard's Castle
airbnb.co.uk/rooms/23474502

Leominster

The White Lion, Leominster
whitelionleominster.co.uk
01568 612 422

Nr Edwyn Ralph

The Falcon, Bromyard
falconhotelbromyard.co.uk
01885 483 034

Legges of Bromyard,
Bromyard
leggesofbromyard.com
01885 482 417

The Inn at Bromyard,
Bromyard
theinnatbromyard.co.uk
01885 489 996

Pensons, Tenbury Wells
pensons.co.uk
01885 410321

Birchwood Camping, Hatfield
birchwoodcamping.co.uk
01568 760 445

Fromes Hill

The Wheatsheaf Inn,
Fromes Hill
01531 640 600

“

Green the land is where my daily
Steps in jocund childhood played,
Dimpled close with hill and valley,
Dappled very close with shade:
Summer-snow of apple-blossoms running up from glade to glade..

From *The Lost Bower* by Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861),
set in the woods above Ledbury



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