

the
Mortimer Trail

30 miles through beautiful, once tumultuous, borderland

HEREFORDSHIRE





About the Trail

This peaceful landscape in the north of Herefordshire was once dominated by the powerful Mortimer family. From the Norman Conquest to the Tudor Landscape the family and their castles featured centrally in battles against (and sometimes with) the Welsh, in conquests in Ireland, in kingmaking and breaking as well as in the Wars of the Roses.

The Mortimer Trail explores this dramatic legacy over 30 miles, following a succession of hills, ridges and valleys between Kington and Ludlow. Sleepy villages, shady woods and sparkling rivers dot the route, with superb vistas in all directions.

Follow the Green waymarkers of the Mortimer Trail.



Scan or click to download the GPX files



Plan your trip

The Mortimer Trail is a linear route which will take 2 to 5 days and can be walked in either direction. There's a number of ways to complete the Trail.

- > **Book accommodation and arrange transport back each day**

Either organise a taxi to pick you up or go for the classic 'two car' option, leaving one car at the planned end point, before the other car takes all walkers to the start.

Kington makes a great base with many places to stay including [The Burton Hotel](#), [Church House B&B](#) and [The Walking Hub](#) as well as self-catering accommodation such as [White Heron Estate](#) and [Redlands](#). [Pearl Lake Holiday Cottages](#) in Shobdon is also near the route.

- > **Stay en route, breaking up the trail into convenient sections**

Stay overnight in Kington before setting off the next day. Break midway at the award-winning [The Riverside at Aymestrey](#) or [The Mortimer Trail B&B](#), then spend the final night in Ludlow. For a three-day walk, factor in a night at [The Stagg Inn](#), Titley, another superb gastropub with rooms.

- > **Book an organised walking break**

The team at [Wheely Wonderful](#) will happily organise everything on your behalf.

- > **Complete the Mortimer Trail in a day!**

Experienced long-distance runners and walkers can take the [Walking Hub's](#) challenge to complete the 30-mile route in a day.



Trail Route 30 Miles/47.5KM

Walk through wonderful woods, alongside meandering rivers teeming with wildlife and across open fields, discovering lost castles and ancient hill forts along the way.

Key Stops

- | | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| > Ludlow | > Yatton Hill and | > Wapley Hill |
| > Mortimer Forest | > Pokehouse Woods | > Titley |
| > The Goggin | > Aymestrey | > Green Lanes |
| > Bircher Common | > River Lugg | > Rushock Hill |
| > Croft Woods | > Shobdon Hill | > Kington |
| > & Ambrey hillfort | > Byton | |



Ludlow Castle over Dinham Bridge

1 Ludlow

Within 20 years of their Conquest, the Normans decided that the hill above the fast-flowing Teme was the ideal place for a castle to lord over England's western fringes and keep the Welsh at bay.

The castle became one of the main bases of the Mortimer family, who dominated this landscape for 400 years.

The Normans soon built a planned market town and many of the medieval buildings have survived fire, siege and Georgian rendering. Meanwhile, most of its 13th century walls, and the fine Broad Gate in those walls, have also survived.

Today the town has a fine reputation for food: restaurants, cafes, inns, its market and independent shops.

The Mortimer Trail starts outside the castle walls, descends to cross the Teme over Dinham Bridge and climbs steeply up the Whitcliffe Common edge of Mortimer Forest.

2 Mortimer Forest

Once a vast hunting forest of predominantly oak and other native trees, the Forest these days is much used by walkers, mountain bikers and horse-riders.

As well as hunting, the Forest was important over the years for wood supply, foraging, charcoal, lime kilns and iron works.

The route climbs through this former vast ancient hunting forest in stages, sometimes up steep woodland paths, sometimes on gentle forest tracks, and sometimes across cleared high terrain ablaze with bluebells in May and June.

From the summit of High Vinnalls soak up fine views in all directions, including Wenlock Edge, the Clee Hills, the Malverns, the Black Mountains, Brecon Beacons, the Shropshire Hills, as well as peaks in Radnor Forest and Snowdonia.

From the summit, the Mortimer Trail descends gently southwards through cleared hill and a lovely woodland track above Deer Park.



Mortimer Forest



Sign Post at Orleton Common

3 The Goggin

The Trail exits Mortimer Forest onto the glorious expanse of Hanway Common, with superb views over to the Malvern Hills.

Hugging the hedge on the Common's western edge, the route descends to exit onto an old bridleway. A little detour east on the Herefordshire Trail down to Richard's Castle soon reaches what is left of the pre-Conquest Norman castle motte and the tranquil 12th century St Bartholomew's Church, with its detached belfry.

Where the shared bridleway meets the road is called The Goggin, a delightfully named spattering of cottages along the narrow and hilly lanes between Richard's Castle and Elton.

The climb south out of The Goggin begins a mile or two of quiet up-and-down lane walking to Orleton Common. It is possible to descend to Orleton village, with its two fine inns, village shop and buses.

4 Bircher Common

After passing by Lodge Farm on a gradually climbing track, the Trail opens out onto the National Trust-owned Bircher Common, with two fine mixed coppices – Oaker and Bircher – on its southern flanks, and more fantastic views.



Bircher Common Pump House

5 Croft Woods & Croft Ambrey hillfort

The Trail enters Croft Woods on an easy forest track before ascending steeply to the ramparts of Croft Ambrey Iron Age hillfort. Standing at almost 1000ft above sea level, the large multi-enclosure site dates from around 390BC and massive, ancient horse-chestnut trees are dotted around the site. Breathe in the views and consider a worthwhile detour to Croft Castle, which is also in the care of the National Trust.



Croft Ambrey © Malcolm Rocheford



Croft Castle

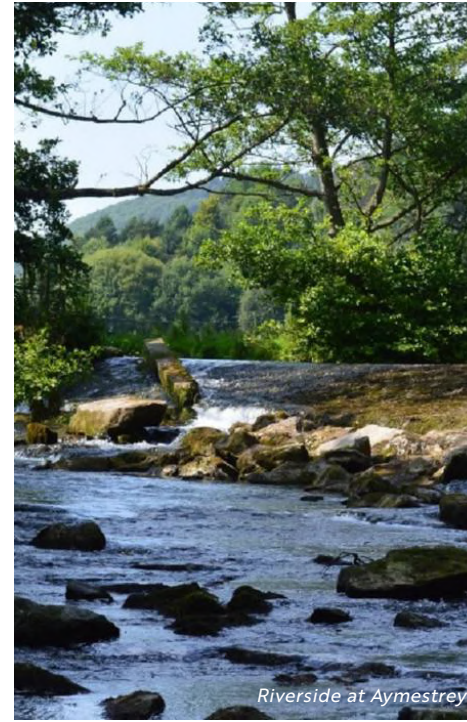
6 Yatton Hill and Pokehouse Woods

The next section of the Trail is long and varied, mostly downhill. Look from the path along the top edge of Yatton Hill for good views towards and beyond Wigmore.

Wigmore Castle was another stronghold of the Mortimer family. Held by the Parliamentarian Harley family (as per Harley Street) at the time of the Civil War, the castle was scuttled and abandoned so that the Harleys could concentrate on defending neighbouring Brampton Bryan Castle in this predominantly Royalist area. It's now a romantic ruin, looked after by English Heritage.



Wigmore Castle



Riverside at Aymestrey

7 Aymestrey

Aymestrey is nearly the half-way point between Ludlow and Kington. It sits on the River Lugg – meaning 'bright stream' – which is a Site of Scientific Special Interest. Take a moment to admire the 12th century chancel in the Church of St John the Baptists and St Alkmund.

The Riverside at Aymestrey offers an award-winning restaurant with rooms. There is also a cafe, the Watering Hole, at a campsite 200 yards south off the main road.

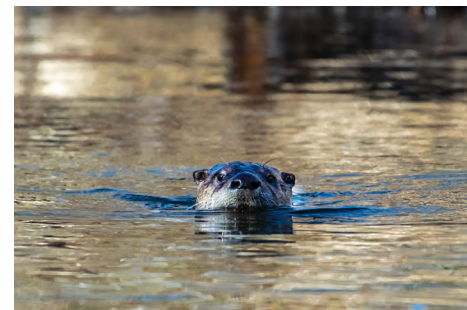
Half a mile further south is the site of the battle of Mortimer's Cross. In winter 1461, the Yorkists scored a major and bloody victory over the Lancastrians, enabling Edward IV to become King.

8 River Lugg

From Aymestrey, the trail follows a riverside lane west until breaking across a field and later tracing the secluded River Lugg for a mile or so along a track.

This is a gem of a stretch, the river and its banks teeming with wildlife: kingfishers, dippers, common sandpipers, perhaps an otter and a wealth of wildflowers and ferns.

Walkers come out onto a lane where the Lugg is crossed on the lovely Lyepole Bridge, before making the steep ascent to Shobdon Hill Wood.



Wildlife along river Lugg



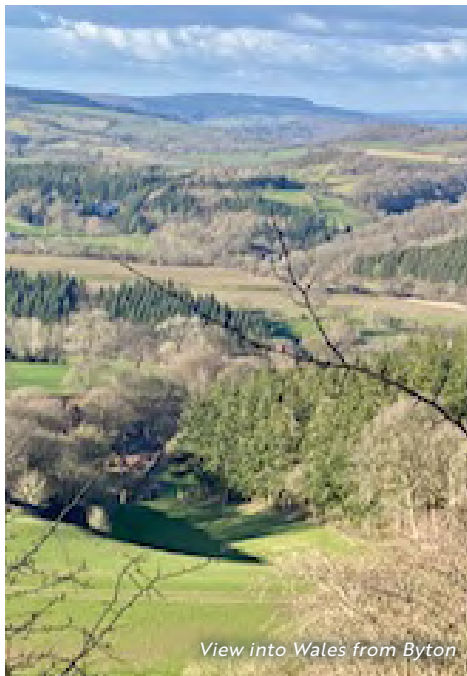
Shobdon Hill Wood © Malcolm Rochefort

9 Shobdon Hill

After following the wood edge for half a mile, the Trail turns west to begin a long gradual climb to the top. Deer can often be seen in this pleasant mixed broadleaved woodland.

Just beyond the top, the option of a forest track 90° to the left will either take you down to Shobdon or to a public footpath alternative route west to Byton via Belgate Farm and Hill Barn to avoid Byton Common, where the Trail can be difficult in wet conditions.

The Mortimer Trail itself comes off Shobdon Hill on a path turning right off the forest track at the western edge of the wood near the trig point.



View into Wales from Byton

10 Byton

The path out of Shobdon Hill Wood follows the top edge of steep wooded Byton Common. Look out west over the former glacial lake of the River Lugg, and perhaps spot a grazing pony.

The trail then turns sharply north to descend through woodland, to the peacefully located St Mary's Church, Byton. There is an early Agnus Dei (Lamb & Flag) above the door.

11 Wapley Hill

The trail turns right to begin the long woodside ascent of Wapley Hill, much of it through bracken.

The wide valley seen to the north was a glacial lake formed after the last Ice Age, until the River Lugg broke through to the east through Kinsham Gorge.

Wapley Hill is crowned by another fine and substantial Iron Age hillfort, with up to four sets of ramparts surrounding a 25-acre enclosure, now partly cleared.

Take care to find the trail's southern descent from the hillfort, past Warren House and down half a mile to join a lane at the hamlet of Stansbatch.

12 Titley

The trail takes a lane, soon becoming a track and then just a field path, south out of Stansbatch. Crossing fields, you'll arrive at the north end of Titley village. Pause at the local church, an 1865 high Victorian jewel, with an earlier tower.

There was once a Benedictine priory outpost here and the impressive 19th century Titley Court can be seen at the southern end of the village.

Also of note, is [The Stag Inn](#), providing good food, beers and wines, and accommodation to the walker.

13 Green Lanes

From Titley, the route continues alongside hedges and through fields to reach Green Lane Farm, then bears west to reach Little Brampton Wood.

Dipping in and out of woodland, the trail follows the hilltop path above Little Brampton Scar. It then descends before breaking south uphill again across fields to the edge of Kennel Wood.

Chamomile Path to Titley
© www.wheelywonderfulcycling.co.uk



Leaving Titley

© www.wheelywonderfulcycling.co.uk

14 Rushock Hill

Just after the edge of Kennel Wood, the trail crosses a bank which is the actual remains of Offa's Dyke.

Rushock Hill Common, which the Trail skirts across via old quarry-working undulations, is another piece of open common land used for grazing and offering a beautiful vista.

The trail descends from Rushock Hill, eventually crossing the B4355.



Market Hall Clocktower, Kington

15 Kington

The route continues to descend along the Mill Farm track until a gap in the hedge on the right takes the walker across fields. The old railway track and River Arrow keep the trail company, before arriving in Kington.

The formal end-point of the Mortimer Trail is the car park near the old Market Hall in the centre of Kington.

With plenty of places to eat and stay, this traditional market town is known as a centre for walking, hosting the Kington Walking Festival. It sits in the shadow of the atmospheric Hergest Ridge, which is home to a favoured section of Offa's Dyke Path as well as resident wild mountain ponies.

Kington's other points of interest include St Mary's Church and the spectacular Hergest Croft Gardens.

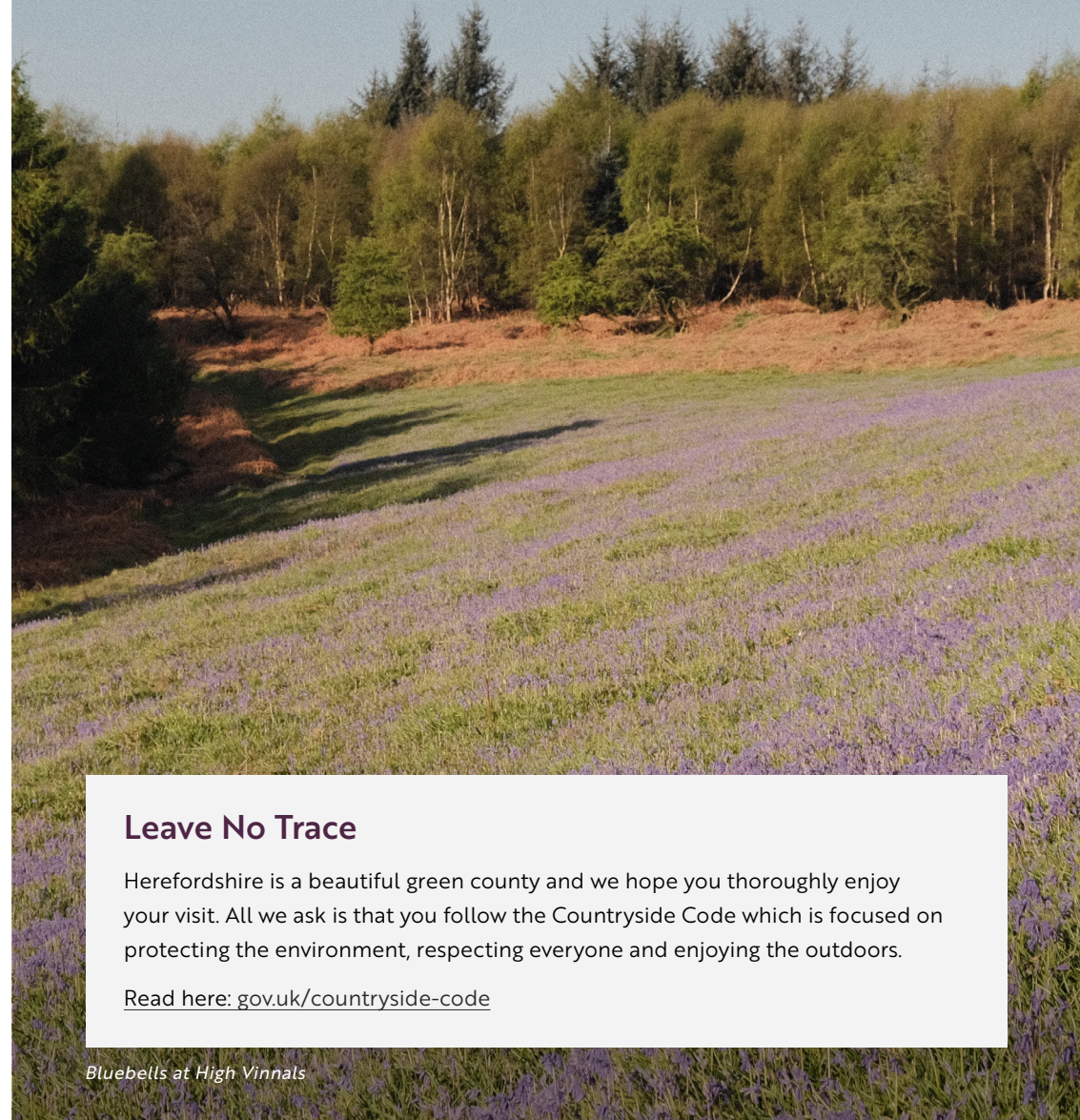


Hergest Ridge

Share your walking adventures on the Mortimer Trail, using the hashtag

#MortimerTrail

 @visit_herefordshire  @visitherefordshire  @VisitHfds



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](https://www.gov.uk/countryside-code)

Bluebells at High Vinnals



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