

THE PICTURESQUE WYE TOUR

INSPIRATIONAL VALLEY
The Birthplace of British Tourism



www.gilpin2020.org

www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk

www.visitmonmouthshire.com

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It is 250 years since William Gilpin took a boat tour down the River Wye in 1770, an event that heralded the birth of British tourism.

Gilpin was a pioneer of the 'Picturesque' and his ideas led to the concepts of landscape appreciation and conservation, culminating in the designation of protected landscapes – our National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Wye Valley was designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1971. This publication explores what inspired Gilpin (and Turner and Wordsworth amongst many others) and hopefully inspires you to 'navigate the Wye' too. Find out more at:

www.gilpin2020.org

www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk

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INTRODUCING THE WYE TOUR

The beauties of the Wye Valley were discovered for the first time at the close of the 18th century, when war against France forced people to take holidays at home. What they found in this part of their native country entranced them for its variety of landscape experience and historic association. That is still true 250 years later when the same journeys can be made and the same visual experiences can be relived. This is an inheritance all too easy to violate and thus one to fiercely cherish and protect.

Sir Roy Strong

Safe Exploring

Note: Some of the walks in this guide can be steep, slippery and precipitous. Take a map, and wear stout shoes and suitable clothing.

Grid References

Outdoor Leisure Map OL14 Wye Valley & Forest of Dean 1:25,000 covers the whole of the Wye Tour area and all grid references relate to this map.





boats on the river and *Observations* started the fashion for 'picturesque tourism' – travel which focused on an appreciation of scenery rather than just history or architecture.

Increasing interest in, and appreciation of, Britain's landscapes helped make Gilpin's book an instant success and brought visitors, including artists, writers and poets to the Wye Valley. Many kept journals and diaries which provide a wonderful insight into their travels: Samuel Ireland, William Coxe, Charles Heath, Thomas Martyn, Thomas Roscoe, Leitch Ritchie, Louisa Ann Twamley and Mr and Mrs S C Hall were amongst those who recorded their observations on the Wye Valley.



INSPIRATIONAL VALLEY

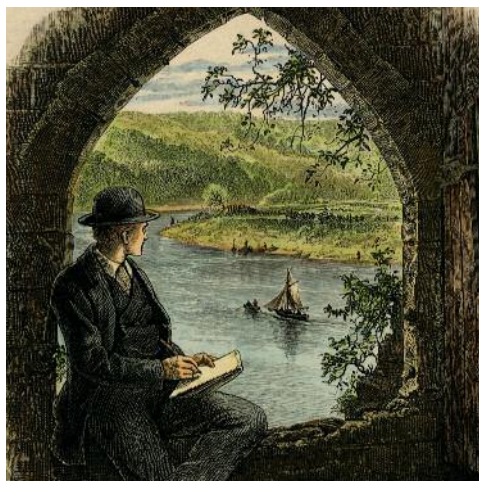
Birthplace of British Tourism

"if you have never navigated the Wye, you have seen nothing."

William Gilpin, 1782

William Gilpin

History of the Wye Tour – In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries it was fashionable to take a boat tour down the Wye Valley, to view its romantic sites and picturesque landscape. 'Tourists' dined at specific locations, took walks to particular viewpoints and visited specific romantic ruins, making the 'Wye Tour' one of the first 'package holidays'.

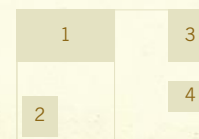


In 1745 a rector from Ross-on-Wye, Dr John Egerton, was the first to build a boat especially to take his guests on excursions down the Wye. By the late eighteenth century there were at least eight boats operating on a commercial basis, in response to growing demand from tourists. Much of the demand was a direct result of a book, the first tour guide to be published in Britain in 1782, entitled *Observations on the River Wye and Several Parts of South Wales*, by William Gilpin. Gilpin took the Wye Tour from Ross to Chepstow in 1770 and wrote, "*if you have never navigated the Wye, you have seen nothing.*" Part of the popularity of the Wye Tour was that tourists viewed the valley from

Wordsworth, Turner, Philip de Louthembourg, Michael 'Angelo' Rooker and Coleridge left inspiring records of their trips in paintings, poetry and prose. By 1850 over twenty guidebooks had been published, firmly establishing the Lower Wye Valley as the birthplace of modern British tourism.

The heyday of the Wye Tour was from 1760 to the 1830s. Its popularity was renewed in the 1820s when steam packets from Bristol started arriving in Chepstow and again, in the 1870s, when the Wye Valley Railway opened. By the 1880s thousands of people were arriving at Tintern Station to walk to the Abbey and view the harvest moon rising through the East Window.

We hope this guide will help you to enjoy the most 'picturesque' sites visited by the early tourists. Some of the views are remarkably similar today, others show considerable change in the landscape, but one thing all the sites still have in common is their ability to inspire.



1. **Tintern Abbey**, Visit Monmouthshire
2. **View of the Wye from Chepstow Castle**, Chepstow Museum
3. **Tintern Abbey**, Edward Swinburne, Chepstow Museum
4. **Tintern Abbey from the River Wye**, J.M.W Turner, c.1828, Tate



WILLIAM GILPIN

Gilpin was a pioneer in the appreciation of landscape in Britain and his ideas had a lasting effect on the way we came to view the landscape. He developed a set of rules for the Picturesque movement:

"the most perfect river-views are composed of four grand parts: the area, which is the river itself; the two side-screens, which are the opposite banks, and lead the perspective; and the front-screen, which points out the winding of the river..... They are varied by... the contrast of the screens....the folding of the side-screen over each other.....the ornaments of the Wye.... ground, wood, rocks, and buildings..and colour".

William Gilpin *Observations on the River Wye*, 1782

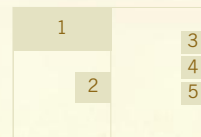
THE PICTURESQUE MOVEMENT

and Landscape Painting in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

There were two types of landscape painters in eighteenth and nineteenth century Britain; topographical artists (like photographers today) and Picturesque artists who produced romantic and sublime paintings. At this time 'Picturesque' meant literally, a scene which would make a painting, but it came to be used outside the context of art and painting, having a major influence on garden design, landscape fashions and ornamental walks. Designers were encouraged to think like artists, especially when planning 'enhancements' to the landscape on country estates such as Piercefield, one of the most famous landscaped parks in eighteenth century Wales and a highlight of the Wye Tour.



1. **View of Chepstow from Piercefield**, G E Madeley c1840, Chepstow Museum
2. **Interior of Chepstow Castle**, detail of engraving from drawing by George Robertson, 1787, Chepstow Museum
3. **Tintern Abbey**, William Gilpin, 1782, Nelson Museum, Monmouth
4. **View of the Wyndcliff from Lovers Leap**, Piercefield Park, G E Madeley, Chepstow Museum
5. **Chepstow Castle**, detail of engraving from drawing by Thomas Hearne, 1798, Chepstow Museum



Travellers in search of the Picturesque had some essential items in their luggage, which were deemed necessary to control the untamed landscapes they encountered! A piece of tinted glass, called a Claude Glass, a pedometer, a telescope, a barometer, maps, tour journals, sketch books, drawing pads, a watercolour set, pens and pencils, and a pocket edition of William Cowper's poems were the essential requisites for a tour. The Claude Glass was a convex mirror about four inches wide on a black foil. It miniaturized the reflected landscape, so that detail was lost except in the foreground, helping painters to simplify what they saw. Many tourists used the glasses to manipulate the scene: a sunrise glass when used at midday gave a dawn view. As Gilpin wrote, Picturesque practice always involved some 'improvement' of the landscape.

Gilpin described a number of significant views which could be seen from the river, as well as other sites which could be explored on foot. This guide aims to introduce you to some of the work of the original Wye Tourists, and to inspire you to visit the places they painted, many of which can be viewed along the Wye Valley Walk or on a canoe trip down the river.

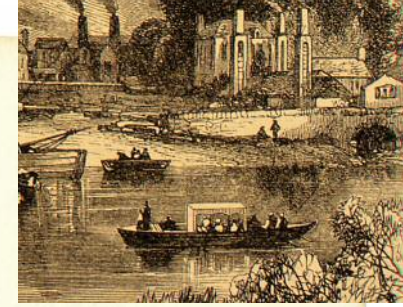




"My 'light bark' was not much unlike a gondola, when its tarpauling cover was spread over the framework; but being favoured by a randomly bright morning, I preferred sitting under the skeleton and enjoying the charming scenes around me. A table in the centre of the part allotted to passengers, and cushioned seats around, made this small floating parlour a most commodious conveyance."

Thomas Roscoe

Wanderings and Excursions in South Wales, c1830s



THE WYE TOUR BOATS

Boats were the preferred method of travel for the Wye Tour and vessels were specially constructed for the growing tourist trade. They were light and could be used with or without a sail. Equipped with a canopy, padded seats and a table to sit at, tourists could paint, draw or write as they took in the scenery.



Patronised by H.R.H. the Crown Prince of Siam

PLEASURE BOATS

TO ALL PARTS OF THE RIVER WYE.
Conducted by Steady and Experienced Boatmen.
Boats near Mayhill Station.

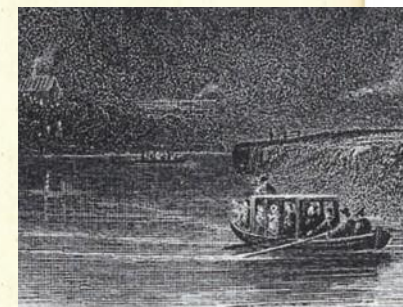
PATRONISED BY HER ROYAL HIGHNESS THE EX-EMPRESS EUGENIE.

THOMAS MORGAN,
PROPRIETOR.

Over 40 years' experience Wyebridge Street, Monmouth.

From the 1770s boats were available to take visitors down the Wye throughout the summer months. Boats were hired from inns in Ross and Monmouth. The boat owner provided food and wine to be enjoyed on the trip which generally took two days going downstream from Ross. There was a crew of three (one to steer and two to row), but boats frequently had to be hauled over shallows and rapids by gangs of 'bow hauliers'. Stops would be made at the well known sites so that tourists could explore or walk to viewpoints high above the river. In the later nineteenth century the Tour became over-commercialised and much less leisurely.

1. **Tour boat passing English Bicknor**, 1791, Nicholas Pocock, Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery
2. **Tintern Abbey**, engraving by W Radclyffe after Copley Fielding from 'Wanderings in South Wales....' By Thomas Roscoe, 1837, Nelson Museum, Monmouth
3. **Advert from the Monmouthshire Beacon newspaper**, late 19th century, Nelson Museum, Monmouth
4. **Tour boat at Redbrook**, detail from engraving, 1861, Nelson Museum, Monmouth
5. **Tintern**, engraving from 'The Wye, Narrative of a Pedestrian Ramble' by Leitch Ritchie, 1841, Nelson Museum, Monmouth
6. **Bow Hauliers on the Wye**, detail from engraving. Nelson Museum, Monmouth
7. **Coldwell Rocks**, engraving by W Radclyffe after David Cox from 'Wanderings in South Wales....' By Thomas Roscoe, 1837, Nelson Museum, Monmouth



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ROSS-ON-WYE

Traditionally Ross-on-Wye was the start of the Wye Tour, with the Royal Hotel the favoured place to stay. It had commanding views over the river, and benefited from the adjacent pleasure garden and clifftop walkways beside St Mary's Church, known as The Prospect, which had been laid out by John Kyrle around 1700.

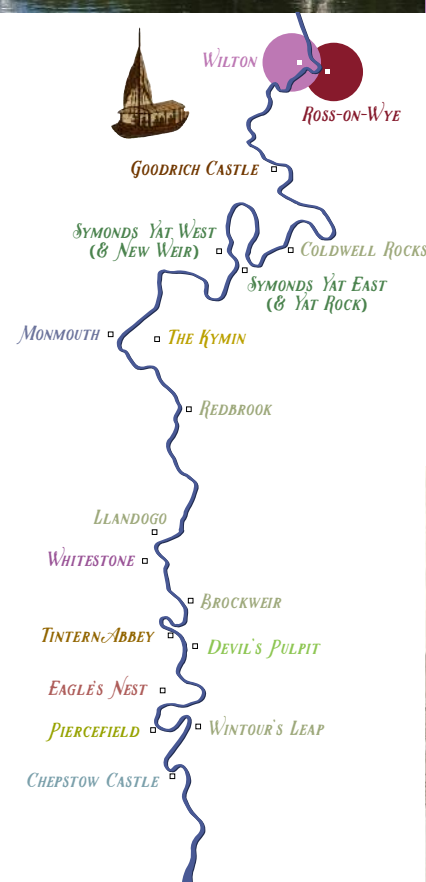


1. Ross-on-Wye, Drew Buckley
2. The Royal Hotel, Chepstow Museum.
3. Wilton Castle, John Glover, after 1794, Yale Centre for British Art.

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Visitors embarked on the Tour at the town dock in front of the Hope and Anchor Inn. Here, boats were hired, fitted with 'every suitable convenience' and reassuringly supplied with boatmen 'well skilled in navigation'.

Some guides advised tourists to keep well out of earshot of the boatmen 'so the ear is not strained by the coarseness of language heard so frequently from the navigators of public rivers'. A spacious flight of steps was constructed at the Dock Pitch for the 'elegantly dressed' to reach the river. By the late 18th century there were at least eight boats operating on a commercial basis in response to the growing demand from tourists.



The peculiarities of this river, attracting so many travellers have taught the people of Ross to provide pleasure boats for their accommodation. They are built to hold ten persons commodiously, have a table to draw or regale upon; lockers to hold books, or bottles and benches for four or five men to navigate the boat.'

Sarah Wilmot, 1795

Sarah Wilmot

WILTON

Wilton Castle was the first romantic ruin the tourists passed, but most hurried on downstream to grander delights than its 'crumbling old towers and ivy-grown walls'. Wilton was a busy riverside village of wharves, warehouses and inns catering for the boatmen and bowhaulers using the river. You can still see the grooves worn by the bowhauler's ropes on the downstream side of Wilton Bridge.

Access

Wilton Castle is privately owned but can be viewed from the riverside footpath near Wilton Bridge, which runs close by.

Grid Reference 359 027





GOODRICH CASTLE

Gilpin's first grand scene, where the view was 'correctly picturesque', was Goodrich Castle. Tourists enjoyed the view of the castle from the river, before leaving their boats at the ferry house and walking up to the castle.



Access

Goodrich Castle is just off the A40, signposted with brown castle signs. There is a large car park from where it is a 400 yard walk to the entrance to the Castle, which is in the care of English Heritage. There is an admission charge. www.english-heritage.org.uk

Grid Reference

579 199



'After spending about two hours & taking two sketches amongst the ruins, we returned to our boat, ate some bread & cheese & began to think of enjoying ourselves when a storm came aptly enough to remind us of the instability of all human pleasures.'

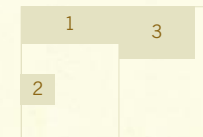
Mary Anne Hibbert, 1823

Charles Heath felt this route was 'very inconvenient for well-dressed women, being in part through fields of high grass in season, and of steep ascent'. Artists also complained that, 'The whole building is so surrounded with rock & steep banks of trees, that it is impossible to draw a near view of it', whilst inside 'elm and ash trees of considerable height' grew. Today the trees inside the castle have been removed, but it is still almost hidden by the trees that surround it.

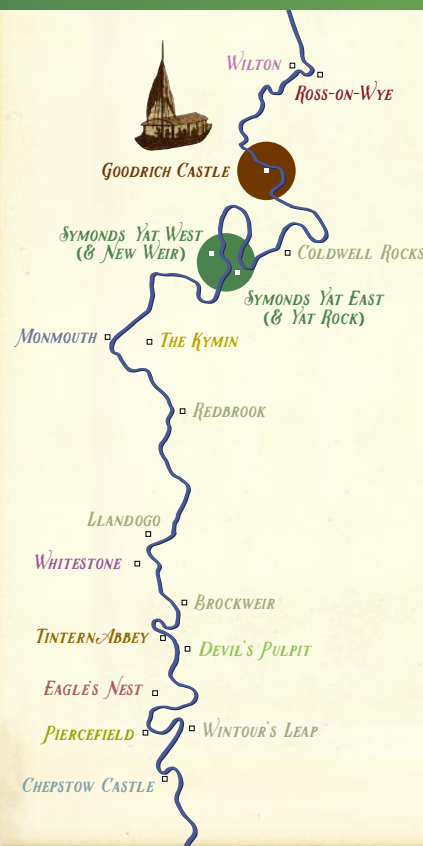
By the 1830s the castle had a competitor for the traveller's attention. Unable to buy Goodrich Castle to house his collection of medieval armour, Sir Samuel Meyrick built his own 'admirable imitation of the antique', naming it Goodrich Court. Wordsworth disliked this 'fantastic new castle set up...as if to show how far modern art can go in surpassing all that could be done by antiquity and Nature'. It was demolished in 1950 and only the gatehouse on the A40 remains.



1. **Goodrich Castle**, 1872, William Callow, Chepstow Museum (Goodrich Court to the right, Goodrich Castle to the left.)
2. **Goodrich Castle on the Wye**, Peter de Wint, Chepstow Museum
3. **Symonds Yat View**, Chepstow Museum.



SYMONDS YAT EAST, WEST & ROCK



Coldwell Rocks was the favourite place for a picnic and it was also where tourists left their boats to climb up to the viewpoint at Symonds Yat Rock, Gilpin's second grand scene on the Wye.

The crew rowed the boats around a four mile loop in the river to New Weir on the opposite bank at Symonds Yat West. Here, tourists found their boats waiting alongside 'an immense Iron-forge and slitting Mill, disgoring its black sulphurous smoke'. The tourists loved the contrast of this industrial landscape with the peaceful scenes of fishermen in their curious fishing boats called coracles.

The white water of New Weir now attracts boats of a different kind – canoes and kayaks. The only remaining pleasure boats on the Wye today operate on the calm water above the weir.

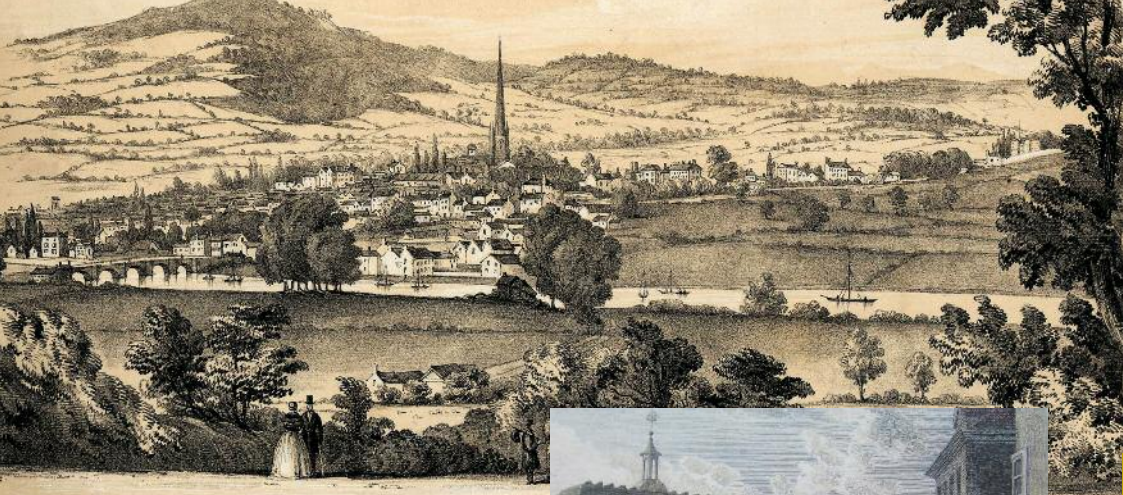
Access

Access to Yat Rock is from the B4432 north of Coleford. Follow brown tourist signs to Symonds Yat Rock. Access to Yat Rock is via a footpath from the main Forestry England car park.

Grid Reference

564 160





MONMOUTH



Monmouth was the half way stage on the Tour and most visitors stayed at one of the inns in Agincourt Square. Cashing in on the popularity of the Tour, Monmouth writer Charles Heath began printing small guide books which were easy to carry whilst travelling. His series of guides to the Wye Valley's attractions, called *Descriptive Scenes*, provided specific historical information about popular tourist sites. He had a shop, opposite the Shire Hall in Agincourt Square, where visitors could purchase his books and prints.

As well as exploring Monmouth, excursions were also made to nearby romantic ruins at Raglan and Llanthony Abbey.



THE KYMIN

During the Picturesque movement it became fashionable to build summerhouses at sites with spectacular viewpoints. With one of the best views around, the small two-storey circular Georgian banqueting house that stands on top of The Kymin, was built in 1794 by the Monmouth Picnic Club.

Guests who came here received instructions on how to observe the views in the correct Picturesque manner. A Naval Temple was built in 1801 and when Nelson visited Monmouth the following year, long four-pounder guns boomed out from the Temple to greet him as his tour boat from Ross came into view on the river below at Hadnock Reach. Nelson enjoyed a 'handsome' breakfast in 'The Round House' as it is known locally. The site is now owned by The National Trust (www.nationaltrust.co.uk) and it is the view, extending over much of rural Monmouthshire, which continues to be the biggest attraction. The grounds are open daily from dawn to dusk. The Round House is open from the end of March until end of October on Saturdays, Sundays and Mondays.

Access

Take the A4136 from Monmouth towards Coleford and the Forest of Dean. After nearly one mile turn sharp right signposted for *The Kymin*. Follow this road, which is narrow, windy and steep in places, to the top of the hill and the car park. (Note car park closing times - it may be locked early autumn/winter afternoons.) From the car park walk up to the Round House and viewpoint, past the Naval Temple.

Grid Reference 528 125



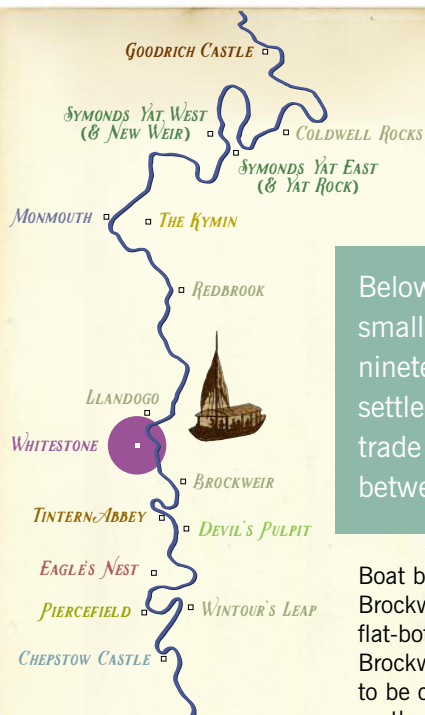
"I shall not attempt to describe the unbounded expanse of country which presents itself around and beneath, and embraces a circumference of nearly three hundred miles. The eye satiated with the distant prospect, reposes at length on the near views, dwells on the country immediately beneath and around, is attracted with the pleasing position of Monmouth, here seen to singular advantage, admires the elegant bend and silvery current of the Monnow, glistening through meads, in its course towards the Wy, and the junction of the two rivers, which form an assemblage of beautiful objects".

William Coxe

An Historical Tour in Monmouthshire, 1801

1. **View of Hills in the Environs of Monmouth**, 1801, Thomas Tudor, Monmouth Museum
2. **Agincourt Square**, Monmouth, 1808, Monmouth Museum
3. **Monnow Bridge**, c.1800, watercolour by Michael Angelo Rooker, 1746-1801, Nelson Museum, Monmouth
4. **The Kymin**, detail from oil painting by John Arthur Evans, 1854-1936, Nelson Museum, Monmouth

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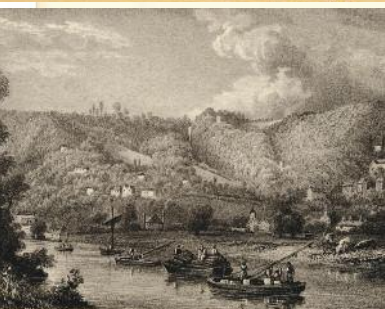
LOWER WYE VALLEY

Below Monmouth the Wye flows past several small rural villages which in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were important industrial settlements. The river was the focus of travel and trade as there was no road through the valley between Chepstow and Monmouth until 1828.

Boat building was an important industry in the villages of Brockweir, Llandogo and Tintern. The larger local boats, flat-bottomed barges known as trows, could sail as far as Brockweir where cargoes were unloaded onto smaller boats to be carried upstream. Coracles were also a common craft on the river.

Surprisingly the scenes of industrial activity along the Wye were considered Picturesque by the tourists. Redbrook's iron and tin works 'gave animation to the romantic scenery' thought Archdeacon Coxe when he visited in 1799. At Whitebrook wire and paper were manufactured and, "Within half a mile of it (Tintern Abbey) are carried on great iron-works, which introduce noise and bustle into these regions of tranquillity" wrote Gilpin. He was referring to the Angidy Ironworks which had made Tintern an important industrial centre for over 300 years. Following Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries, Tintern would have faded into obscurity but for the fact that the Crown chose to establish a foundry for brass and iron in the Angidy Valley. At its peak over 600 people were employed in Tintern.

Along this lower stretch the valley is largely forested, one of the main changes in the landscape over the past two hundred years. At the time of the Wye Tours much of the woodland was coppiced to feed lime kilns and furnaces. Trees were also felled for bark, used in the tanning industry and for timber, especially for pit props in the Dean mines. Many conifers have been planted since World War I, although this is nothing new. "Will it never be known that firs in groups are like plumes on the graves of the Picturesque?" wrote Fosbrook in 1818.



WHITESTONE

It is thought that the views from Whitestone and Cleddon inspired Wordsworth to write "Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey". He commented that "no poem of mine was composed under circumstances more pleasant for me to remember than this". Whitestone remains a very pleasant place to spend some time, enjoying the views from the conveniently placed benches along the woodland trail.



Access

From Llandogo take the Trellech Road (beside the shop), climbing up out of the village. After about 1.5 miles there is a Natural Resources Wales car park on the right. Park here and follow the main track up the hill passing the adventure playground on your right. Take the path on the far left of the upper car park heading up hill with the valley on your right. There are three viewpoints along the route, each providing a more spectacular view over Llandogo. At the third viewpoint follow the track around to the left as it joins another forestry road. Continue along this straight section until the main path bears right. Keep left and follow the path down a rocky descent back into the lower car park.

Grid Reference

524 029 (car park)



William Wordsworth

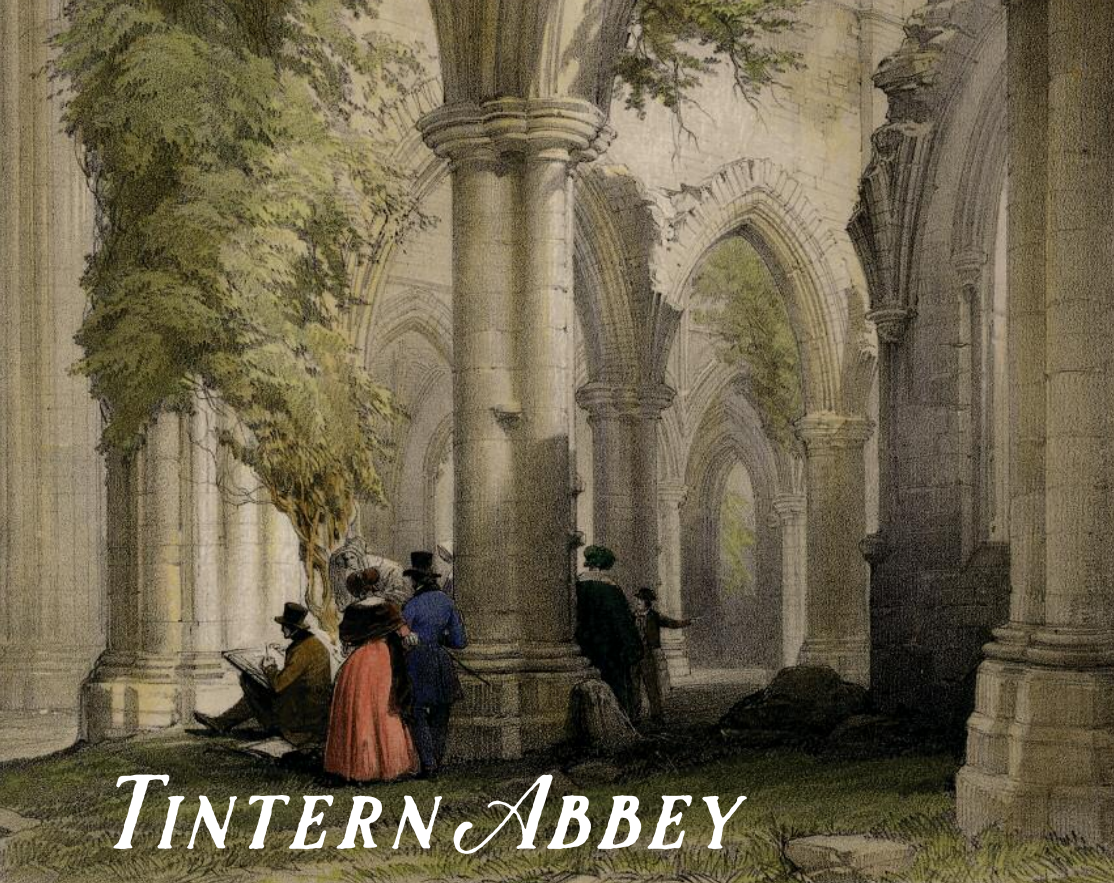
*Five years have passed; five summers, with the length
Of five long winters and again I hear
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs
With a soft inland murmur. Once again
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
That on a wild secluded scene impress
Thoughts of more deep seclusion, and connect
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.*

William Wordsworth

Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey, 1798

1. **Redbrook**, engraving from 'The Book of the Wye, South Wales and the Coast' by S C Hall, 1861, Nelson Museum, Monmouth
2. **Llandogo**, lithograph by T M Baynes after W H Bartlett, Chepstow Museum
3. **The View from Whitestone**, Visit Monmouthshire
4. **Llandogo**, engraving from 'The Book of the Wye, South Wales and the Coast' by S C Hall, 1861, Nelson Museum, Monmouth

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Built by Cistercian monks in 1131, Tintern Abbey was the architectural highlight of the Wye Tour, a tourist destination since the 1750s when The Duke of Beaufort cleared the interior of the Abbey and laid a lawn to make it easier for visitors to view the ruins.

Tintern was also an industrial village and the 'great ironworks, which introduce noise and bustle unto these regions of tranquility' inspired many travellers looking for the picturesque. They loved the drama of fire and flames and sparks. You can follow in their footsteps along 'The Angidy Trail' today.



Many tourists were initially dismayed by the unpicturesque beggars and hovels surrounding the Abbey. Grose disapproved of, "the ill-placed neatness of the poor people who show the building, and by whose absurd labour the ground is covered over by turf as even and trim as a bowling-green, which gives the building more of an air of an artificial ruin in a garden than that of an ancient decayed abbey." However once inside, the Abbey delighted all. Thomas Roscoe wrote:

"the rich heavy folds of Nature's most graceful drapery, luxuriant ivy, which adorns the lofty aisles and transepts of this majestic edifice, and scarcely suffers us to regret that it is a ruin. Small ferns and flowers of many hues spring from wall and buttress, and the presiding genius of such spots, the fragrant and beautiful wall flower wanders over arch and window, decking them with its fair garb of green and gold, and crowning the decaying pile with a halo".

Once the railway arrived in 1876, Tintern became even more accessible as an 'excursion' destination. In the 1880s it was not uncommon for over a thousand people to arrive by train on September evenings to view the harvest moon rising through the Abbey's rose window.

".....the most beautiful and picturesque view on the river....

It occupies a great eminence in the middle of a circular valley, beautifully screened on all sides by woody hills, through which the river winds its course."

William Gilpin, 1782

William Gilpin



Access

Tintern Abbey is on the A466. There is a large car park adjacent to the Abbey.

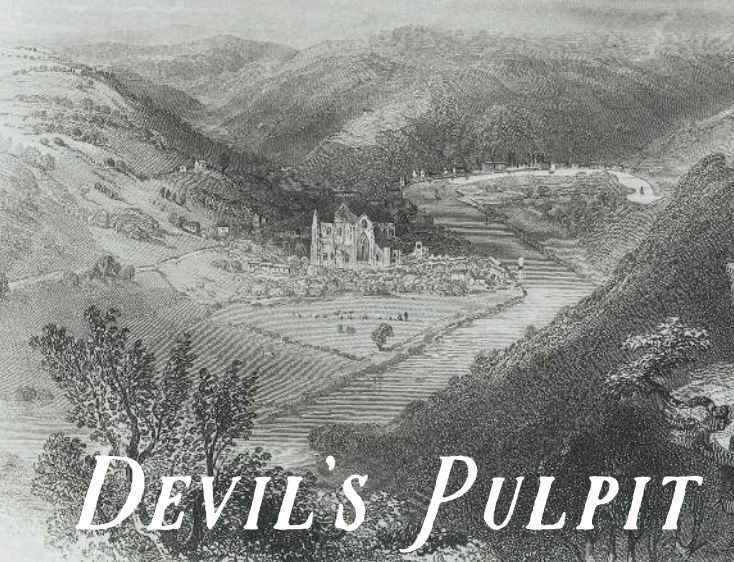
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1. Tintern Abbey, side aisles looking north, detail from lithograph by L Haghe, Chepstow Museum
2. Tintern Abbey by moonlight, c.1900, Chepstow Museum
3. Wire Mills at Tintern, Wire Mills at Tintern, 1807, James Ward, Chepstow Museum



DEVIL'S PULPIT

This narrow pillar of limestone near the edge of the Wye gorge has magnificent views over Tintern Abbey, and was a popular site with the Wye Tourists. Legend has it that the 'pulpit' was used by the devil to cajole the monks toiling below and persuade them to join him!

Although the view of the Abbey is kept clear today it is evident that the area was much more open when Thomas Roscoe and his contemporaries visited in the nineteenth century. The hillsides behind the Abbey on the Welsh side of the river were also much less forested than nowadays. Notice also how the Abbey is surrounded by more cottages and houses in W H Bartlett's 1845 lithograph. The 'hovels' have gone today, but there are intrusions into the picturesque landscape: car parking, tarmac, the visitor centre and souvenir shops!

"On the opposite bank of the river, an ancient entrenchment runs some distance along the ridge of the hill, and one angle, commanding a splendid view of Tintern and the fair vale around it, is dignified by the appellation of the 'Devil's Pulpit'."

Thomas Roscoe *Wanderings in South Wales*, 1836

Access

Access to Devil's Pulpit from Tintern is on foot up a fairly steep ascent. Start from the bridge over the River Wye adjacent to Abbey Mill. Cross the bridge and follow the path around to the right for a short distance. Turn left between the metal posts and continue upwards. After a level area, continue upwards again, looking out for a painted stone on the ground saying 'Devil's Pulpit'. Take a left turn here up a fairly rough, tortuous path which crosses a forestry track and continues upwards. On reaching the Offa's Dyke Path turn right and Devil's Pulpit is about half a mile further along.

Grid Reference

543 995



EAGLE'S NEST



The Eagle's Nest is a spectacular viewpoint, high above the Wye at Wyndcliff, looking out over the sweeping curve of the river around the Lancaut Peninsula. In the distance the river winds out to the Severn. The Wyndcliff was, in effect, the start (or finish) of Valentine Morris's Piercefield Walk, the highest point on the walk with the grandest view. Coleridge, one of the Romantic poets, described the Wyndcliff view as *"the whole world imaged in its vast circumference"*.

"the river here forms almost a circle and the rocks richly wooded an amphitheatre, over which a wide extended country appears spread out including the river Severn beyond."

Joseph Farington *The Wye Tour of Joseph Farington*, 1803

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1. The Vale of Tintern from Devil's Pulpit, W H Bartlett, 1845
2. View from the Wyndcliff, compressed detail from engraving, Chepstow Museum

Access

Start at the Lower Wyndcliff Natural Resources Wales car park adjacent to the A466 north of St Arvans. Cross the road following the Wye Valley Walk uphill to the Upper Wyndcliff car park. (You can start here for a shorter walk. This car park is reached via a lane off the A466, 0.5 miles north of St Arvans. The carpark is on the right after 0.5 miles.) Take the footpath on the left at the back of the car park which is signposted for Eagle's Nest and Wye Valley

Walk - 350yds. Follow this stony path uphill, without turning off the main route until reaching the sign for Eagle's Nest off to the right. Go down the steps to the viewpoint.

Thick woods now obscure the cliffs and exposed rock along the right bank of the river, cliffs which were clearly visible in the nineteenth century picture, although the field patterns on the left bank of the river are very similar today. This farm was bought by the Piercefield Estate in order to protect their views across the valley!

Circular Route

It is possible to take a circular route, returning via the 365 steps, by taking the path to the left on your way back down the hill returning to the Lower Wyndcliff car park.

Grid Reference

527 974

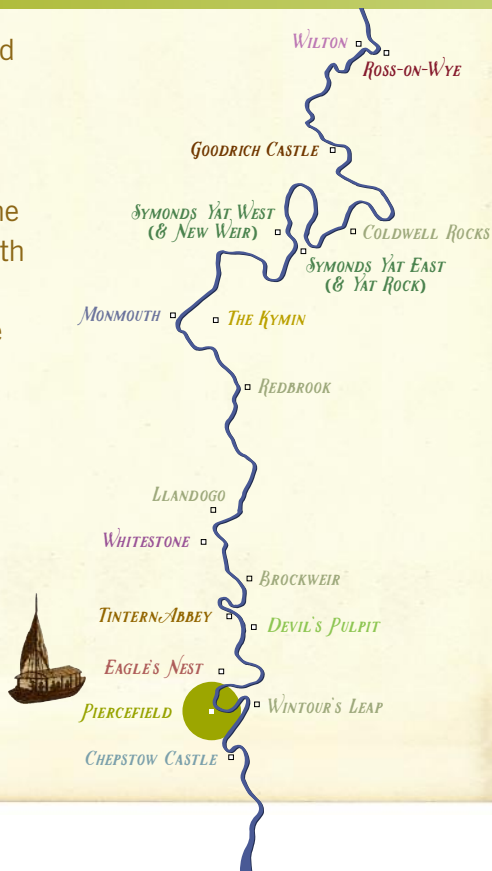




PIERCEFIELD

This walk takes you across Piercefield Estate, retracing paths laid out by Valentine Morris in the eighteenth century. Morris's Picturesque walks had viewpoints and features along the route and were extremely popular with tourists. In fact, Piercefield became an unmissable attraction on the Wye Tour as Gilpin wrote, *"Mr Morris's improvements at Persfield.... are generally thought as much worth a traveller's notice, as anything on the banks of the Wye."*

The Picturesque Piercefield Walk, a longer walk taking in all the features on the Piercefield estate, from the Eagle's Nest to The Alcove, can be downloaded from www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk.



"One of the sweetest vallies ever beheld lies immediately beneath, but at such a depth, that every object is diminished, and appears in miniature. This valley consists of a complete farm, of about forty inclosures, grass and corn fields, intersected by hedges, with many trees; it is a peninsula almost surrounded by the river, which winds directly beneath, in a manner wonderfully romantic; and what makes the whole picture perfect, is its being surrounded by vast rocks and precipices, covered with thick wood down to the very water's edge."

Arthur Young *A six week tour through the Southern Counties of England and Wales, 1768*

Arthur Young



right onto the track and then after about 100 yards turn left down the path. Keep on this main path and as the track bears right through a cutting you will see 'The Platform' on the left, a dressed stone structure with the remains of iron railings on the top and a yew tree growing out of it! Yew trees now obscure the view over the river. Keep on the main path through more woodland and after a while you will come to some railings on the left and glimpses of Chepstow Castle. A little further on you will find 'The Alcove' on the right, looking out over the river and the Castle.

Much of this view remains unchanged, though the noise of traffic, and the new bridges over the Wye and the Severn highlight two centuries of 'progress'!

Continue up the steps, following the path which turns off to the left through the wall, and along the fenced pathway passing the school on your right before returning to your starting point in the Leisure Centre car park.

Access

Park in Chepstow Leisure Centre car park, just off the A466 near Chepstow Racecourse gates. Leave the car park on foot and walk back towards the main road. Turn right heading back towards the racecourse roundabout. Turn right immediately after a drive on the right called 'The Cloisters', taking a footpath through an archway in the wall. On reaching the gravel track keep straight on with a wall on your right hand side. Follow this track through the woodland (you might just catch a glimpse of Piercefield House in the distance through the trees) until reaching a gateway/kissing gate. Go through the gate into open parkland. This was part of Valentine Morris's Piercefield Park, where many eighteenth century artists painted. Gilpin painted an earlier house, this house

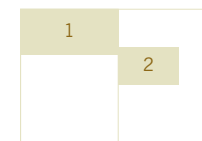
being redesigned in the late eighteenth century by Sir John Soane. It has been in ruins since the 1920s.

The racecourse is now on your left. Follow the track and then bear right heading towards Piercefield House. Standing with your back to the ruined house the view looks out across the Severn Estuary.

Walk on directly in front of the house for about 100 yards with the fence on your left. Cross the stile and follow the footpath down to meet the Wye Valley Walk. Turn right onto the Wye Valley Walk and keep on this path. Look out for 'The Grotto' on the right, surrounded by laurel. The view is now completely obscured by laurel trees.

Continue along the path, and after a down hill section you reach a logging track. Turn

Grid Reference
530 948

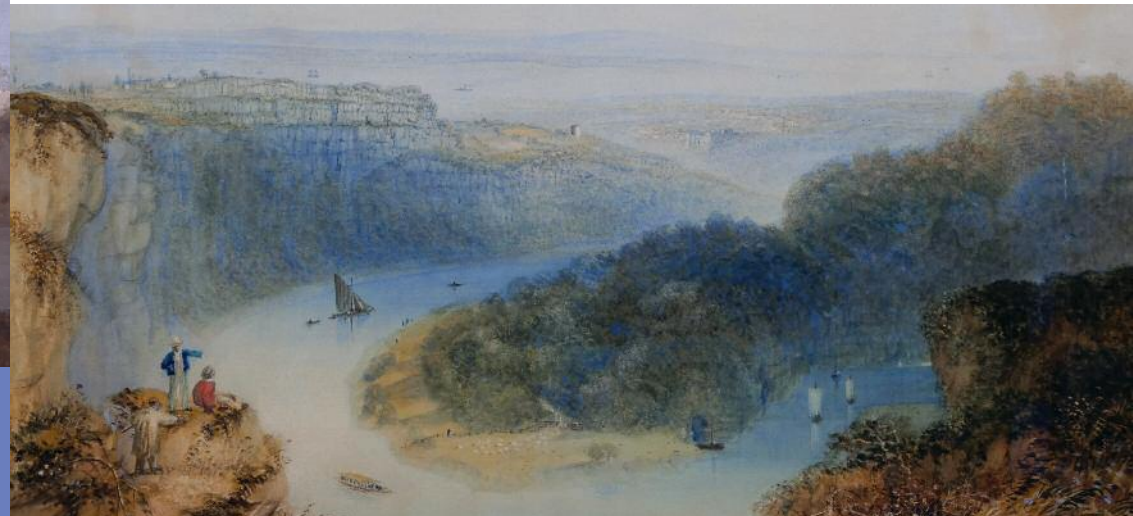


1. **Piercefield Mansion & Park**, c.1840 G Eyre Brooks, Chepstow Museum
2. **An Extensive View from Wyndcliffe looking across the Severn estuary towards England**, 1840, David Cox, Chepstow Museum



"The strength of the castle must have been very great and, combined with its fine position, made it almost impregnable. Built on the summit of a lofty cliff, which is perpendicular on the river side, its walls seem a continuation of the rock, from which towers and battlements rise up in varied and picturesque groups. What was grim and threatening in its day of power and pride, is now softened into beauty by time and decay."

Louisa Anne Twamley *An Autumn Ramble on the Wye*, 1839



CHEPSTOW CASTLE

In the late eighteenth century the ruins of Wales' first stone built castle, spectacularly sited on cliffs above the Wye, provided inspiration for many visitors, including Turner. Chepstow was the highlight at the end of the Wye Tour, *"so uncommonly excellent, that the most exact critic in landscape would scarcely wish to alter a position in the assemblage of woods, cliffs, ruins and water"*, commented Wyndham.



1. Chepstow Castle, 1802, Paul Sandby, Chepstow Museum
2. From Wintour's Leap, William Collins, c 1834, Chepstow Museum

"I went to the Bridge and made a drawing of the Castle which occupied me four hours. The view forms a very picturesque composition the parts of the Castle appearing united so as to make a well collected mass of large objects."

Joseph Farington *The Wye Tour of Joseph Farington*, 1803

A pleasant walk from Chepstow, following Offa's Dyke path, will take you to Wintour's Leap, a popular picturesque viewpoint with stunning views over Piercefield. Download the Lancaut Walk from www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk

Chepstow Museum, just across the road from the Castle is worth a visit having an inspiring collection of engravings, prints and paintings by artists who took the Tour. Quotes from journals and diaries of the time are on display alongside paintings in the Wye Tour room. Many of the historical pictures in this guide are held in the collections of Chepstow and Monmouth Museums and can be viewed by appointment. They also have a lovely shop selling books about the Wye Tour, and unusual gifts and cards.

Access

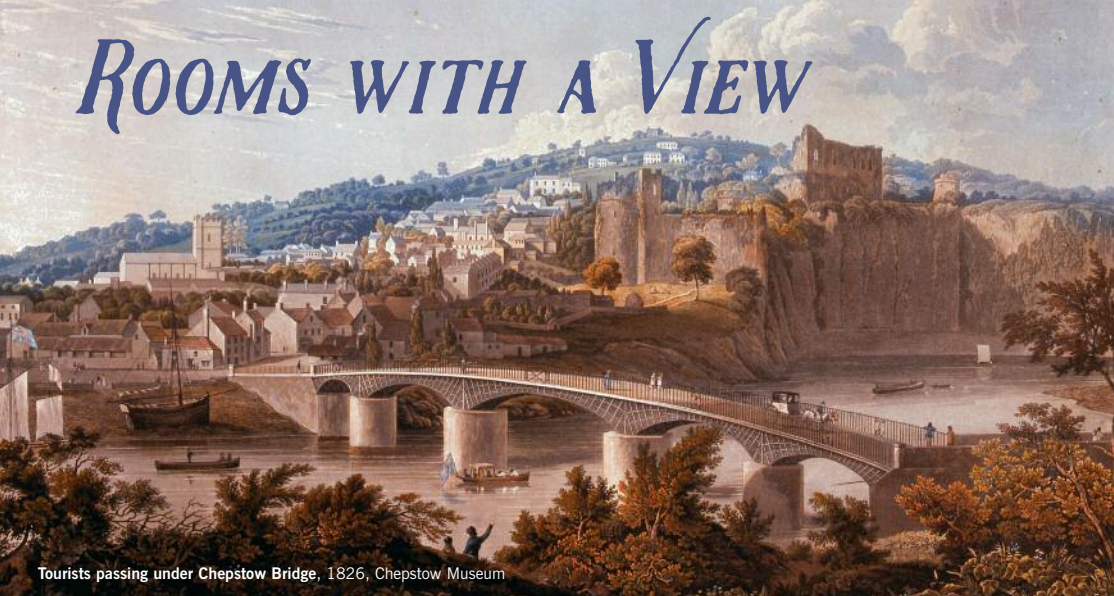
There is easy access to the Castle from the Bridge Street car park adjacent to the Tourist Information Centre at the bottom of Chepstow. From here you can walk down to the riverside or across the Wye Bridge, from where the best views of the Castle can be obtained. There is also a permissive path across the fields on the Gloucestershire side of the river, looking across the Wye to the Castle, a favourite view with artists.

Grid Reference

535 942



ROOMS WITH A VIEW



Tourists passing under Chepstow Bridge, 1826, Chepstow Museum

PLACES TO STAY ON THE WYE TOUR

Ross-on-Wye

As the official start of The Tour Ross was often full of tourists booking tour boats and securing provisions for their trip down river.

The Royal Hotel

The Royal, as majestic visually as its name suggests, was a favourite with Wye tourists at the start of their voyage, enjoying views across the river below.

www.greenekinginns.co.uk/hotels/royal-hotel-ross-on-wye
☎ +44 (0) 1989 565 105

Wilton Court Hotel

Set in an Elizabethan building and having a marvelous riverside setting with views across the Wye towards Ross, this 5* hotel is just a few minutes' walk from Wilton Castle.

www.wiltoncourthotel.com
☎ +44 (0) 1989 562 569



Goodrich

Joshua Cristall, one of the foremost watercolourists of his day, lived at Granton House in Goodrich. He was president of the Royal Academy Watercolour Society and very much part of the Picturesque movement.

Granton Coach House

Granton House was once home to Joshua Cristall, from where he painted local cottages and people harvesting ferns on Coppett Hill. Today you can stay in Granton Coach House.

www.grantoncoachhouse.co.uk/accommodation-wye-valley
☎ +44 (0) 1600 890 277

Symonds Yat East

The Saracens Head Inn

This 16th century riverside inn has a spectacular position overlooking the river Wye, where it flows into a steep wooded gorge. Embark on a river trip with Kingfisher Cruises.

www.saracensheadinn.co.uk
☎ +44 (0) 1600 890 435

Monmouth

Most tourists stayed in one of the inns in Agincourt Square, which had been renamed from 'the Market Place' in the hope of attracting more tourists. A few slept on their boats.

The Kings Head Weatherlodge

With views across Agincourt Square, this 17th century coaching inn was one of Monmouth's most important inns and much favoured by Wye tourists.

www.jdwetherspoon.com/hotels/wales/monmouthshire/the-kings-head
☎ +44 (0) 1600 710 500

The Punch House

Overlooking Agincourt Square this Grade II listed pub was also a popular coaching inn called The Wine Vaults.

www.sabrain.com/pubs-and-hotels/south-wales/monmouthshire/punch-house-new
☎ +44 (0) 1600 713 855

Tintern

Abbey Cottage, Tintern

Abbey Cottage's picturesque credentials cannot be beaten, having one of the best views in the village of the abbey, ideal for painters, sketchers and photographers.

www.monmouthshirecottages.co.uk/cottage/tintern-abbey-cottage/
☎ +44 (0) 1600 860 341

Beaufort Cottage, Tintern Abbey

This cottage, in the grounds of Tintern Abbey, was one of a few built in the 18th century. It has an amazing close-up view over the ruins from the bedroom window!
www.wyevalleyholidaycottages.co.uk/beaufort-cottage-tintern-abbey

Foxes Reach

This luxury holiday cottage, just 1.5 miles from Tintern Abbey, is ideally situated for inspirational painting holidays. Special artist's offer – one free dog place!
www.monmouthshirecottages.co.uk/cottage/foxes-reach
☎ +44 (0) 1600 860341

Chepstow

The Beaufort

A 16th century coaching inn traditionally used by Wye tourists.
www.beauforthotelchepstow.com
☎ +44 (0) 1291 622 497

Woodfield Arms

With original features dating back to 1648, most rooms in this historic pub have unrivalled views to the UK's oldest stone-built castle.

www.thewoodfieldarms.com
☎ +44 (0) 1291 620 349

The George Hotel

William Makepeace Thackeray stayed at this coaching inn and described it as 'one of the cleanest, neatest, cheerfulest, fresh-salmon-givingest inns to be found anywhere'.

www.georgehotelchepstow.co.uk
☎ +44 (0) 1291 625 363

Abergavenny and the Vale of Usk

Excursions were also made to nearby 'romantic ruins' in the Vale of Usk to see the sights of Raglan Castle and Llanthony Abbey. Gilpin describes his trip up the Usk Valley in *Observations*. For many years a coach took tourists from Monmouth to Raglan as a side trip to the Wye Tour.

Angel Hotel, Abergavenny

Many tourists stayed in Abergavenny at the Angel Hotel, a fine coaching inn which continues to serve visitors in style today.
www.angelabergavenny.com
☎ +44 (0) 1873 857 121

The Beaufort, Raglan

This 17th century coaching inn is a stone's throw from Raglan Castle, from where the large stone fireplace in the lounge originates. Legend mentions passageways to the castle yet to be discovered.
www.beauforthotelraglan.co.uk
☎ +44 (0) 1291 690 412

Crown Cottage, White Castle

Located right next to White Castle with views of the castle and surrounding Monmouthshire hills, Offa's Dyke and the Three Castles Walk.
www.wyevalleyholidaycottages.co.uk/crown-cottage

Vanilla Cottage

Luxury holiday cottage on the River Usk within walking distance of the Craft Renaissance Craft Centre. Special artist's offer – one free dog place.
www.monmouthshirecottages.co.uk/cottage/vanilla-cottage/
☎ +44 (0) 1600 860 341

Llanthony Priory Hotel

Part of the original Llanthony Priory, the hotel's rooms are furnished in a manner suited to a 12th century priory, including four poster beds, with picturesque views over the ruins.
www.llanthonyprioryhotel.co.uk/
☎ +44 (0) 1873 890 487

Broadley Farm

Two cottages with stunning views over Llanthony Valley and the Black Mountains, a short walk from the picturesque ruin of Llanthony Priory. Gallery displaying owner Clare's work, also runs stone carving courses.
www.broadleyfarm.com

For details of all the accommodation in the area go to:



www.visitmonmouthshire.com/accommodation-in-monmouthshire.aspx



www.wyedeantourism.co.uk/stay

ART GALLERIES, STUDIOS & COURSES

Take home a piece of the Picturesque from one of our local art galleries - or make a masterpiece yourself on a painting course inspired by our landscapes. Landscape painting holidays in the Wye Valley are offered by www.alphapaintingholidays.com.



Ross-On-Wye & Surrounding Area

Canwood Gallery

A former cow shed in the rolling countryside of Herefordshire is now a free, avant garde art gallery exhibiting thought provoking art and sculpture from UK and international artists.
Checkley, Herefordshire,
HR1 4NF
www.canwoodgallery.com
☎ +44 (0) 7776 138 668

Made in Ross

A co-operative of local arts and crafts producers whose unique work is on display at the historic Market House in Ross-on-Wye. Open daily, with members on hand to welcome visitors from 10am to 4pm. Free Admission.
The Market House,
Ross-on-Wye, HR9 5NX
www.madeinross.co.uk
☎ +44 (0) 1989 769 398

Wobage Makers Gallery

Wobage Makers Gallery exhibits hand-made contemporary crafts including pottery, woodwork, jewellery, basket making and textile art.
Crow Hill, Upton bishop,
Ross-on-Wye, HR9 7QP
www.wobage.co.uk
☎ +44 (0) 1989 780 496



Monmouth

Creates Gallery

Monmouth's cobbled Church Street is home to this independent gallery specializing in showing original artwork in a relaxed setting.
15 Church Street,
Monmouth, NP25 3BU
www.createsgallery.com
☎ +44 (0) 7535 160 712

Atelier Gilmar

Dedicated to contemporary jewellery, this studio showcases the unique work of goldsmiths Gill and Alan Saunders.
5B, Church Street,
Monmouth, NP25 3NY
www.ateliorgilmar.com
☎ +44(0) 1600 715 454

Wye Valley Arts Society

A group of amateur and professional artists based in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, meeting at the Shire Hall in Monmouth and holding events and exhibitions.
www.wyevalleyartsociety.co.uk

Lower Wye Valley

The Wye Valley Arts Centre

Housed in a restored chapel in picturesque Llandogo, Wye Valley Arts Centre offers a selection of courses in painting, drawing, photography, sculpture and jewellery.
Llandogo, Monmouthshire,
NP25 4TW
www.wyearts.co.uk
☎ +44 (0) 1594 530 214

Marianna Robinson Art

Mariana's vibrant work is in private collections around the world. She tutors watercolour workshops and offers private tuition.
Mariana-Art, Cascades,
Llandogo, Monmouth,
NP25 4TE
www.wyedeantourism.co.uk/disc-over/all/t-1871%7C/i-3686-MarianaArt
☎ +44 (0) 1594 540 484

Wye Valley Crafts Association

Members display their arts and crafts in the historic surroundings of Abbey Mill, five minutes' walk from Tintern Abbey.
Abbey Mill, Tintern, NP16 6SE
www.wyevalleycrafts.co.uk
☎ +44 (0) 1291 689 346

The Workshop Gallery

Ned Heywood exhibits and sells his thrown pottery in The Workshop Gallery in Chepstow.
The Workshop Gallery,
Lord Nelson House, The Back,
Chepstow, NP16 5HH
☎ +44 (0) 1291 624 836

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1. **Ross from the Wye Meadows**, B. Powle. Private Collection
2. **Tintern Abbey**, Tintern Abbey, Samuel Palmer, 1835, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection
3. **Victorian Visitors at Tintern Abbey**, Chepstow Museum

Abergavenny

Court Cupboard Craft Gallery

Showcasing the arts and crafts of members from the Black Mountains Circle. This group of local artists and makers take much of their inspiration from the landscape they live and work in.

New Court Farm, Llantillio Pertholey, Abergavenny, NP7 8AU

www.courtcupboardgallery.co.uk

☎ +44 (0) 1873 852 011

The Art Shop

Regular exhibitions of Fine and Applied Arts by local, international, established and emerging artists in a domestic interior setting. The shop stocks artist's materials and fine papers.

Cross Street, Abergavenny

www.artshopandgallery.co.uk/

☎ +44(0) 1873 852690

The Chapel

Art café, showcasing collections of jewellery, textiles and ceramics, hosting events and workshops with artists, musicians, writers & poets. Inspirational art books and magazines.

Market Street, Abergavenny

www.artshopandgallery.co.uk

☎ +44 (0) 1873 736430

Made in Monmouthshire

Showcasing the creative talents of local makers and celebrating their role in keeping alive traditions that shaped the landscape. See their work in Abergavenny Museum and local events.

www.madeinmonmouthshire.com

Chapel Cottage Studio & Gallery

A small family run Art teaching studio nestled into the Welsh countryside just outside Abergavenny.

Llanddewi Rhydderch,

Abergavenny, NP7 9TT

www.chapeltagestudio.co.uk

☎ +44(0) 1873 840 282

Raglan

Court Robert Arts

Sculpture garden, gallery and tearoom. Lemon Studios offer painting, drawing, sculpture and creative clay courses for all abilities. Also accommodation on site.

Tregare, Raglan NP15 2BZ

www.courtrobertarts.co.uk

☎ +44 (0) 1291 691 186

Usk Valley

Craft Renaissance

Themed exhibitions, showcasing new work by talented local makers. Gallery shop selling locally produced art and crafts. Courses and workshops for you to participate in.

Kemeys Commander,

Usk, NP15 1JU

www.craftrenaissance.co.uk

☎ +44 (0) 1873 880 879

Gallery At Home

Contemporary art gallery celebrating both new and established artists and the joy of living with art.

Llancayo Court, Usk,

Monmouthshire, Wales,

NP15 1HY

www.galleryathome.co.uk

☎ +44 (0) 7725 830 195



Throughout 2020 there will be events and activities to celebrate the 250th anniversary of William Gilpin taking the Wye Tour.

Check out what's on at:
www.gilpin2020.org

Photo: Wye Valley River Festival Art Installation at Tintern Abbey, Emma Drabble

Why not take part in the spectacular Wye Valley 'Big Draw' event, which will see people coming together to draw and paint all along the banks of the Wye? Or join a special Wye Tour walking holiday or a guided Wye Tour canoe excursion? Art and photographic exhibitions will be flowing down the Wye Valley at venues throughout the AONB. Look out for guided walks to favourite picturesque locations. There will be Gilpin-themed events during the Wye Valley River Festival (2nd – 17th May 2020) and Ross Festival (22nd – 26th May 2020), including the launch of a virtual Wye Tour boat on the riverside in Ross. Ross Walking Festival (2nd – 4th October 2020) will feature walks along the Wye taking in viewpoints and places of interest described by William Gilpin.

18th Century Art

To set Gilpin, and the boom in British landscape painting, in context, sign-up for a ten week art history course exploring art during this creative century. Mondays from 20th January 2020. Held at The Drill Hall in Chepstow.

Book via Chepstow Museum

☎ 01291 625 981

Wye Valley River Festival

Two weeks of artistic happenings flowing down the Wye from Hereford to Chepstow, celebrating the landscapes of the Wye Valley. 2nd – 17th May 2020. www.wyevalleyriverfestival.co.uk

Learn about the Picturesque

Hereford College of Arts will be running 'Picturesque' themed Short Courses during their annual Festival of Arts in June 2020.

Details at www.hca.ac.uk.

farOpen Studios Trail

Visit artists and makers in their studios to see their art and where they get their inspiration from. Annual open studios trail across the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley held during July.

www.faropen.co.uk

h.ART

Held every September, Herefordshire Art Week is a nine day art trail of artists, craft makers and creative businesses who open their studios, galleries and exhibitions to visitors.

www.h-art.org.uk

Wye Valley Big Draw Event

Hereford College of Art will lead partners in a mass drawing event along the banks of the River Wye, following in the footsteps of Rev. William Gilpin. October 2020.

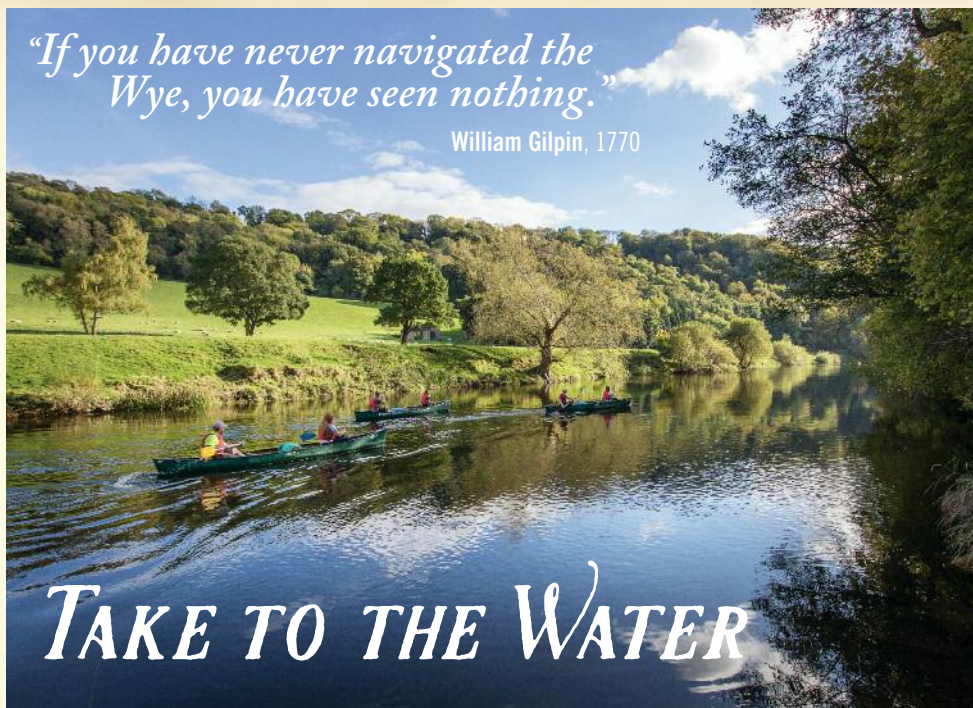
Fancy joining in? Check out

www.hca.ac.uk.

HCA Hereford College of Arts

*"If you have never navigated the
Wye, you have seen nothing."*

William Gilpin, 1770



TAKE TO THE WATER

As the Wye Tour was generally taken by boat, many of the views the early tourists enjoyed can only be seen on the river. A couple of boats still operate from Symond's Yat, generally between March and October. Probably the way to follow the Wye Tour today is a guided canoe trip.

Riverboat Cruises at Symonds Yat West

Short cruises leave Symonds Yat West Leisure Park from the 13th century church of St Dubricious.

☎ +44 (0) 1600 890 672

Kingfisher Cruises from Symonds Yat East

Kingfisher Cruises operate 40 minute river trips from the Saracens Head at Symonds Yat East through the Wye Gorge.

www.wyenot.com/kingfisher01.htm

☎ +44 (0) 1432 267 862

For the more adventurous why not join a guided canoe trip down the river, or hire a canoe and follow the (waterproof) Canoeist's Guide to the Wye Tour from Ross to Monmouth?

Guided Canoe Tours with Way2Go

Way2go Adventures offer guided canoe trips down the Wye, including special Wye Tour excursions.

www.way2goadventures.co.uk

☎ +44 (0) 1594 832 248

Canoe Hire

You can find details of canoe hire companies here:

www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/exploring-wye-valley-aonb/on-the-water

Canoeist's Guide to the Wye Tour

Download a copy here:

www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk/exploring-wye-valley-aonb/on-the-water/canoeing



Professional artists like Turner, and writers like Wordsworth, always chose to walk through the Wye Valley, rather than taking a tour boat. They wanted time to immerse themselves in the landscape, travelling at their own pace. You can follow in their footsteps today by walking the lower section of the Wye Valley Walk, and Offa's Dyke Path, which follows the river Wye for much of its journey downstream through the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. See www.wyevalleywalk.org.

Celtic Trails

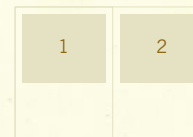
Based in Tintern, Celtic Trails offer Wye Tour walking holidays, following in the footsteps of Turner, Wordsworth and Coleridge. Choose from 4 night and 6 night holidays walking downriver from Ross-on-Wye to Chepstow.

www.celtictrailswalkingholidays.co.uk/walking-holidays/wye-valley-walk

Wye Valley AONB set of self-guided walking leaflets

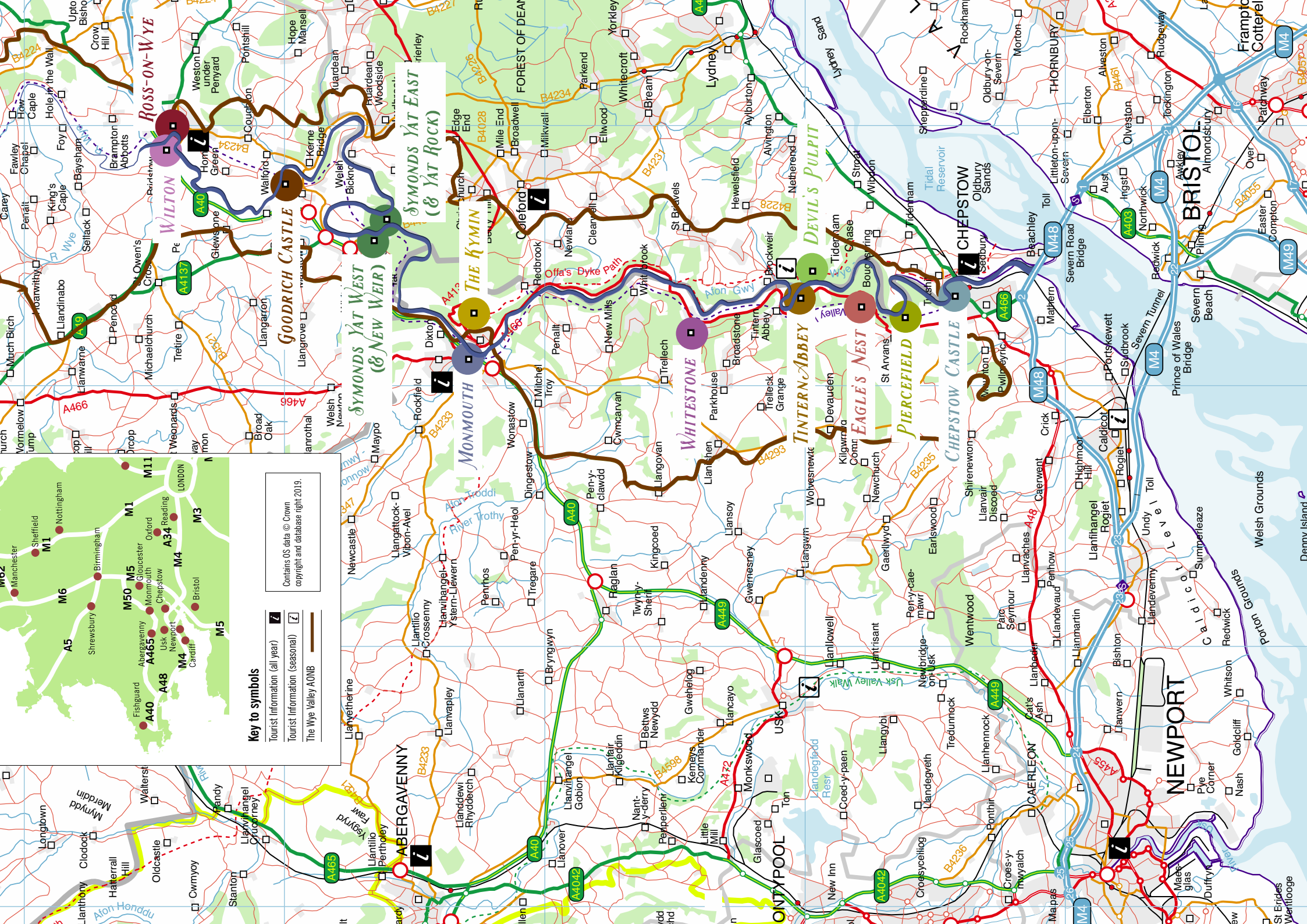
These guides will take you through the favourite picturesque landscapes of the Wye Tour.

Download copies of the **Picturesque Piercefield Walk**, **Head for the Hillforts Trail**, **The Wordsworth Walk** and **The Lancoat Peninsular** at: www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk



1. **Canoeing near Coldwell Rocks**, Gemma Wood
2. **Ross Church**, Hereford Museum and Art Gallery

Official Tour Guiding – If you would like to be shown around by an Official Wales Tourist Guide, Phil Coates offers fully guided 'Observations on the River Wye' tours. See: www.walesbestguides.com



Key to symbols

- Tourist Information (all year) [Z]
- Tourist Information (seasonal) [Z]
- The Wye Valley AONB [Brown line]

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Notes and Credits

Many of the pictures used in this guide are held in the collections of Chepstow and Monmouth Museums and can be viewed by appointment. We would like to thank Anne Rainsbury and Sue Miles from Monmouthshire Museums Service for their help in sourcing images and allowing their reproduction here.

Chepstow Museum ☎ +44 (0) 1291625 981

Monmouth Museum ☎ +44 (0) 1600 710 630

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You can obtain a Welsh version of this brochure from the Wye Valley AONB Unit by emailing information@wyevalleyaonb.org.uk or downloading a copy at:

www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk

www.visitmonmouthshire.com

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www.drabbleandco.com

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