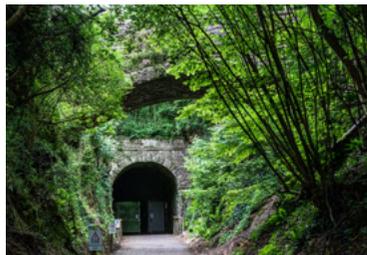


CHEPSTOW - WYE VALLEY GREENWAY - TINTERN CIRCULAR WALK

There are outstanding views and interesting history on this 12.5 mile circular walk, which links the Wye Valley Greenway path from Sedbury to Tintern, with the Wye Valley Walk between Tintern and Chepstow. Features along the way include Chepstow Castle, the old Chepstow Town Bridge, the 1km long Tidenham Tunnel, Tintern Abbey, an Iron Age hill fort site, the Eagle's Nest View Point and 365 Steps. Nearing Chepstow, the route follows in the footsteps of 18th century Wye Tourists through the Piercefield estate, passing the Giant's Cave and the Grotto created in the 1750s by Valentine Morris. If 12.5 miles seems too far in one day, split the route into two and overnight in Tintern or Chepstow.

Please note that Tidenham Tunnel is closed at night and closed completely October to March 31st to protect the colony of bats that live in the tunnel. Follow the alternate route at these times (*see map*).



KEY FACTS

MAP

OS: OL 14 Wye Valley & Forest of Dean

START GRID REF

ST 528 945

PARKING

Chepstow Leisure Centre FREE

POSTCODE

NP16 5LR

DISTANCE

Approx 12.5 miles

STILES

4

GATES

5

TIME NEEDED

Allow a full day walking at a moderate pace, with a lunch stop and other refreshment breaks. Allow extra time if Tidenham Tunnel is closed.

ACCESSIBILITY

This is a varied walk ranging from level and gentle gradients on the old railway line, to fields and more challenging steeper sections on uneven woodland paths, with short sections on town footpaths and country lanes. There are some steep unfenced sheer drops on the Piercefield section. An alternate route avoids the 365 steps if required. Walking boots are a must as some areas can be very muddy and slippery after rain. No bright lights are allowed in the tunnel which is dimly light to protect the bats. Tidenham Tunnel is closed at night and closed completely October to March 31st. Check opening times before you start here: www.wyevalleygreenway.org. Follow the alternate route when closed (*see map*). This is an excellent route if arriving by train, with Chepstow Station close to the start of the walk.

DOGS

Dogs must be on a lead on the Greenway which is shared with cyclists. Beware steep unfenced drops on the Piercefield section. 12.5 miles may be too long for your dog unless broken into stages.

ACCOMMODATION

Plenty of choice in Chepstow and Tintern for those wishing to split the walk into stages. The walk can also start in Tintern.

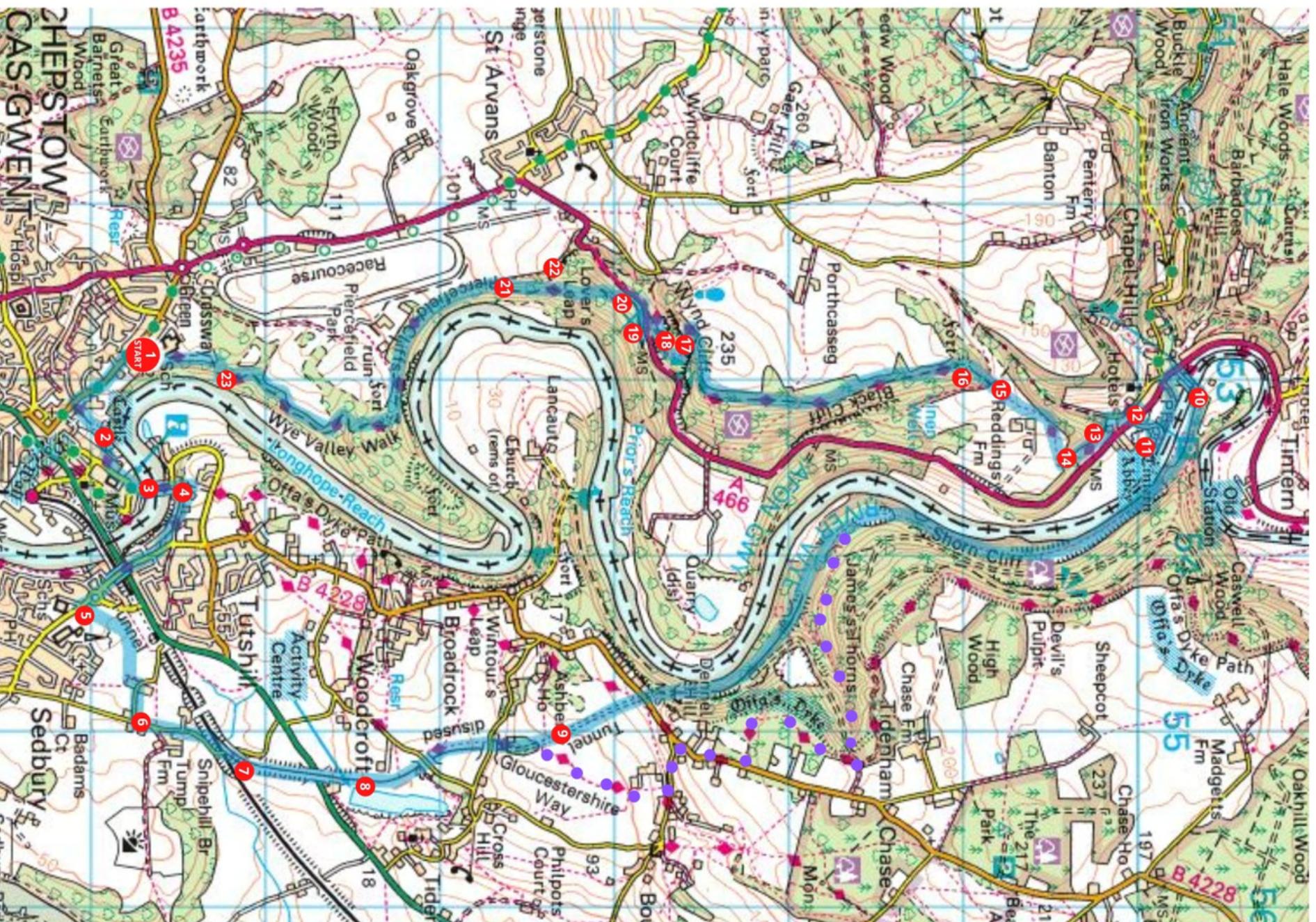
REFRESHMENTS

Cafe at the Diving and Activity Centre open at weekends. Pubs, hotels, cafes and coffee shops in Chepstow and Tintern. Please note some pubs and cafes may operate limited opening hours in Winter.

PICNICS

Picnic benches near Chepstow Castle and Bridge, at Tintern and Lower Wyndcliff. There are also bench seats at main view points and along the Greenway.

ROUTE MAP



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- Alternative walking route (2.5 km) when Tidenham Tunnel (9) is closed



ROUTE DESCRIPTION & POINTS OF INTEREST

START (1) at Chepstow Leisure Centre, leave the car park and turn left at the road towards Chepstow Town Centre. After the Dell School, turn left down a surfaced footpath signposted Wye Valley Walk / Castle / Museum. Follow the footpath down the hill through the "Castle Dell" as it is known locally, passing Chepstow Castle (2) on your left.

Chepstow Castle, the first stone built castle in Wales is of Norman origin. The oldest surviving stonework is the giant square Keep at its centre, dating from 1131. Its dramatic location, high on limestone cliffs above the River Wye, offered a strategic vantage point. Throughout the ages, it has been strengthened, enlarged, and modified but what is still visible today is largely a result of the Civil War. During the conflict, the Royalist controlled Castle was subjected to bombardment and its walls undermined during a siege supervised by Oliver Cromwell.

At the foot of the hill turn right through the Castle Dell car park (public toilets here), then left at the road and continue straight on to cross the old Chepstow Bridge (3) with great views across to the Castle and down river towards the mouth of the Wye.

The Romans were the first to build a bridge across the Wye here, about 800 metres upstream. The bridge spans two counties and two countries, and a painting by Turner shows that in 1795 the bridge was stone on the Monmouthshire half and wood on the Gloucestershire half, reflecting the different management! This bridge was replaced in 1816 with the latticed iron bridge you see today, designed by John Rastrick. The tidal range of the Wye at Chepstow is one of the largest in the world.

On the English side, take the steep footpath straight in front of you, signed Gloucestershire Way, up between two walls until you reach a path to the right signposted Offa's Dyke (4). Turn right and continue uphill.

In the 8th century, Anglo Saxon King Offa of Mercia, erected a mighty earthwork to define a border between Wales and England. The dyke was 27m wide, with a bank and a ditch on the Welsh facing side. It was 8m high from ditch bottom to bank top! In parts, the river and sheer cliffs of the Wye gorge formed a natural boundary. The 177 mile Offa's Dyke Path National Trail was created in 1971, following the route of Offa's spectacular dyke – Britain's longest linear earthwork.

Keep on this lane (ignoring an Offa's Dyke path sign on the right) until you reach Beachley Road. Turn right and continue over the bridge and go straight over the roundabout. Cross the road - turn right and at Wydean School join the new Greenway link path on the left (5). Follow this route onto Sedbury Lane (6) then continue until you cross a bridge over the main railway line before reaching the old Snipehill Railway Bridge. At the bridge take a signed stony track to the right to join the start of the Wye Valley Greenway (7). There are some far reaching views here to the right across to the Severn Estuary.

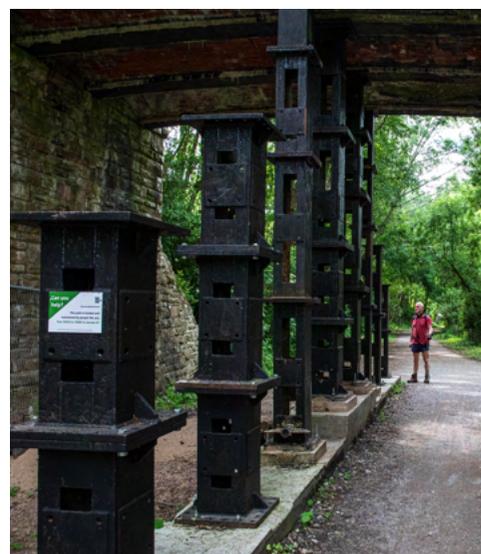
The Wye Valley Greenway footpath and cycle route follows the former Wye Valley Railway line for 5 miles between Sedbury and Tintern. The Wye Valley Railway opened in 1876, having taken 10 years to plan and hundreds of navvies to build. It linked Chepstow to Monmouth providing reliable and fast freight and passenger services for the riverside villages along the Wye, as well as improving access to the Valley's industrial sites in Redbrook and Tintern and the limestone quarries of the lower Wye. The railway also opened up tourism, with excursions by rail to see the harvest moon, rising through Tintern Abbey's rose window, attracting thousands of visitors. Passenger services were withdrawn in 1959, but Tintern and Redbrook stations remained open for parcels and goods traffic until 1964, when the line closed completely except for quarry traffic. The last train left Dayhouse quarry at Tidenham in 1992.

Follow the Greenway route passing close to the National Diving Centre and Activity Centre and Cycle Hire cabin on your right (8).

The National Diving and Activity Centre (NDAC) occupies the site of the Dayhouse limestone quarry, which was flooded in 1996 to form a lake, 82m (260ft) deep, making it the deepest of all inland scuba diving sites in the UK. NDAC includes zip wire slides, a cafe and accommodation.

Continue on the Greenway to Tidenham Tunnel (9). The Tunnel is closed at night and closed completely October to March 31st, to protect the bats that roost in the tunnel. Check opening times on the signs at the start of the Greenway to avoid a detour!

The 1 km Tidenham Tunnel, driven through hard limestone, was the most challenging part of creating the Wye Valley Line. It took 20 months to complete, 2 yards a day working day and night. Just before the tunnel, Netherhope Halt was the last of the 6 halts to be built in 1932.



ROUTE DESCRIPTION & POINTS OF INTEREST cont.....

Continue on the Greenway to Tintern. As you get closer to Tintern there are tantalising glimpses of the Abbey across the river through the trees. Bear left at the end of the railway line to cross the old Wireworks Bridge (10) over the Wye.

In 1876 the Wireworks Bridge linked the wire and tinplate works in Tintern with the Wye Valley Railway. Trains replaced the river trows which had carried raw materials in, and metal products out, for at least 300 years. The Angidy Valley was one of the earliest places in the UK to industrialise. By 1600 the wireworks had become the largest industrial enterprise in Wales. Later tinplate was made here. Ironically the last tinplate works closed less than 20 years after the rail bridge opened.

Look to your left at the end of the bridge and you can see the entrance to the old tidal dock where trows could load and unload regardless of the rise and fall of the tide. It was filled in during the 1980s and is the grassy area in Abbey Mill.

After crossing the Wireworks Bridge walk straight ahead to reach the A466 and turn left along the pavement passing the old Abbey Mill (now a cafe and shops) on your left. Continue on the pavement and take a path on your left just before The Filling Station cafe running down towards the river and bear right past some attractive old cottages to reach Tintern Abbey (11). (Public toilets here).



Tintern Abbey was founded by Walter de Clare of Chepstow Castle in 1131. By the 13th century the Abbey's Cistercian monks had created a masterpiece of Gothic architecture. Tintern was an early victim of Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries. After the monks surrendered in 1536 the abbey became a forgotten ruin. With the Napoleonic Wars raging in Europe, domestic travel became fashionable in the late 18th century and Tintern became a tourist hot spot. The Abbey was the highlight of the Wye Tour, a two day boat trip down the river from Ross on Wye to Chepstow, popularised by William Gilpin in his book "Observations on the River Wye".



With the Abbey on your left, head up to the A466 and cross the road where there is a bus stop, arched door and red post box (12). Follow the narrow lane signed "Wye Valley Walk" uphill, to reach a T Junction. Turn left at "St Anne's House". Follow the lane straight on passing behind the now closed "Abbey Hotel "on the left, until you cross a cattle grid. Take the path to the left signposted "Limekilns Catch", passing a wooden cabin "Layman's Way". A short distance on your right is a small path leading to an old Tintern Limekiln (13.).

This limekiln was in use from the 1700's to 1902 making lime by heating limestone to over 1000°C. The lime was used in building for mortar, plaster and limewash, in a variety of industrial processes and in agriculture as a soil improver. Limekilns are a common feature of the Wye Valley due to the availability of limestone and plentiful supplies of charcoal to use as fuel.

ROUTE DESCRIPTION & POINTS OF INTEREST *cont.....*



From the Limekiln return to the steep, rocky path, climbing up along the edge of the old quarry (glimpses of the Abbey and river in the valley below to the left) until you reach a gate into the field (14). Go through the gate, turn right and immediately through another gate. Walk diagonally across the middle of the field to 2 gates in the corner. Go through these gates and head diagonally across this field too, and through another gate into the next field. Keep on uphill and through a gate into Black Cliff Wood (15).

Follow the woodland path uphill to the right. The path then bears left, steeply up over gnarled tree roots and winds its way up over a mound, the site of an Iron Age Fort (16) to reach the top of the wooded Black Cliff - Wyndcliff ridge.

The Iron Age fort at the northern end of Blackcliff Wood is made up of banks of earth, rubble, and stones, surrounded by defensive steep sided ditches or natural slopes. There are at least 9 prehistoric hilltop enclosures dotted along the lower Wye Valley. These sites overlooked the river and were visible from the surrounding countryside. Did the Wye mark the border between the Silures tribe, who occupied South East Wales, and the neighbouring Dobunni? Or were these hillforts designed to control the river Wye itself and its valuable trade? In 1926 workmen digging postholes on the eastern edge of Wyndcliff Wood, found five bronze age axe heads, dated to circa 1,000 BC, which are now kept at the National Museum of Wales.

Once on the ridge bear left and stay on the narrow woodland path. At a junction of paths keep straight on. Continue for some distance until you reach a waymarker pointing to a small clearing on the left. This path will take you down to the Eagle's Nest viewpoint (17).

"Eagle's Nest" is a stone viewing platform constructed in 1828 by the Duke of Beaufort. Originally a double decker platform, access to the lower platform was removed for safety reasons in 2010. On the edge of the steep Wyndcliff, 700ft above the Wye, this is the highest point of the Piercefield Walks with outstanding views of the Lancaut peninsula and Wintour's Leap beyond, with the river curving downstream to Chepstow Castle and the Severn estuary. On a clear day it is possible to see Bristol and up to 9 counties as well as the two modern day bridges across the Severn.



From the Eagle's Nest turn left to rejoin the ridge path for a short distance before taking a path to the left signposted '365 Steps' (18) which is a steep descent, down 365 steps, to the Lower Wyndcliff. For those not wishing to use these narrow steps keep straight on at the sign, following a gentler signed path down to cross the A466 to the car park and viewpoint at Lower Wyndcliff.

The 365 steps, one for each day of the year, were cut into the Wyndcliff in 1828 by the Duke of Beaufort to provide access to the Eagle's Nest.

ROUTE DESCRIPTION & POINTS OF INTEREST cont.....

Following the main route, the 365 steps will bring you down near the site of Moss Cottage, a rustic refreshment stop where Wye Tourists took tea at a table made from a huge slab of walnut tree which had grown at Chepstow Castle. It was demolished in the 1950s.

Pass the gate to Moss Cottage and follow the path down to the right to reach the A466 and cross the road to the Lower Wyndcliff Picnic Area (19). Walk straight ahead to reach the Lower Wyndcliff Viewpoint.

After admiring the view, walk to the very far end of the carpark to a Wye Valley Walk information sign and rejoin the Wye Valley Walk (20). The route now runs for 3 miles across the Piercefield estate (20-23), through woods along the edge of the river gorge. Be aware of steep unfenced drops on this section.

The river Wye makes two enormous bends at Piercefield, creating the 'picturesque' scenery which became so popular in the late 18th century. Valentine Morris, who owned the Piercefield estate in the 1750s, laid out a series of paths and created romantically named viewpoints to enhance the natural landscape. Piercefield became an unmissable attraction on the Wye Tour, with tourists alighting from their tour boats below the Wyndcliff to walk the famed route to Chepstow. Many of the views created by Morris are now obscured by trees as today these ancient woods are internationally important for nature conservation value. Features such as The Platform once had a beautiful view of the Castle and Lancaut Cliff, but trees now hide the vista. It's a fascinating reminder of a time when the view was more highly valued.

After his death, Valentine's original house was redesigned by Sir John Soane, but is now derelict. Part of the Piercefield estate today is home to Chepstow Racecourse and on Race Days you may hear the commentary, cheering and thundering hooves as the horses fly around the track.

Continue on the Wye Valley walk passing one of the highlights of Piercefield - the Giant's Cave (21). If time permits you may wish to make a small detour up on to the higher path to the Lover's Leap viewpoint (22) reached by a path to the right soon after The Giant's Cave.

Keep on the Wye Valley Walk, passing The Double View, The Grotto (on the right) and The Platform (on the left), before finally reaching The Alcove (23), the last viewpoint of the walk, offering a dramatic view of Chepstow Castle and the Severn Bridge beyond.

From the Alcove follow the path past the bench and head up the path to a gap in the wall on the left. Follow this path alongside the school to return to your Start Point (1) at Chepstow Leisure Centre Car Park beside the sculpture marking the start of the Wye Valley Walk. (Public toilets in the leisure centre).



ENJOY YOUR WALK

We'd love to see your photos on social media - share using #wyevalleyaonb

PLEASE RESPECT THE COUNTRYSIDE, RESIDENTS & HOSTELRIES

Please always follow the Countryside Code. Stay on footpaths, close gates, respect wildlife and livestock, keep your dog under close control, take your litter home. Park responsibly and do not block gateways or roads. If you use a pub car park please check with the landlord and use them for a meal & drink. Keep the countryside beautiful and safe for everyone to enjoy.



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