

LEAF PEEPERS WELCOME FOREST OF DEAN & WYE VALLEY

UK's first Leaf Peeping Drive launches in Forest of Dean and Wye Valley as region makes a bid to be recognised as UK's capital of Leaf Peeping

autumnal foliage hotspots, foraging, forest bathing, leafy crafts, walks and adventure all part of new online guide



The Forest of Dean and Wye Valley is making a bid to be recognised as the UK's leaf peeping capital with the launch of the country's first **Leaf Peeping Drive** and comprehensive online guide to attract more visitors this autumn.

The area, which encompasses sections of the three counties of Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Monmouthshire, is well known for its annual symphony of colour with over 20 million trees of mixed species spread over its 200 square miles.

Its tourist board is looking to take advantage of the growing popularity of 'Leaf Peeping' tourism, a term which has come over from North America and growing in profile in recent years. It's all about people enjoying the changing seasons and travelling to view and photograph foliage.

The new fifty mile mapped out drive guides visitors to the very best spots to experience autumn colour demonstrating how the region's foliage show can easily rival that of New England and Japan where peepers from around the world flock to in their thousands each year.

"Our members are ready to welcome visitors with open arms this autumn and the experts are predicting a show-stopping glow following a wet June which they say plays a key role in a colourful [autumn season](#)," explains Helen O'Kane, Chair of the [Forest of Dean and Wye Valley Tourism](#).

"It is a delight to watch the trees start to light up as the days begin to draw in. The majestic oak, ash, birch, beech, larch, sweet chestnut, maple and tulip trees contrast beautifully with our evergreens. We believe our extensive woodlands, sweeping river valleys, rocky outcrops and

diverse species of trees give us the winning formula to be crowned Leaf Peeping capital of the UK!"
O'Kane added.

Chief Leaf Peeper

Paul Rutter has been recruited as the region's Chief Leaf Peeper to be on hand to give expert foliage advice and has helped pinpoint the area's Leaf Peeping Hotspots for visitors to enjoy.

Paul is a tree specialist and woodland advisor for [Plant Life](#) who lives in Ross on Wye with 45 years of experience, so knows the area inside out. He explains, *"This region has one of the UK's finest displays of foliage for the autumn which makes it perfect for Leaf Peepers. It is the time to embrace the changing seasons and celebrate the important role that trees play on our planet. They are fascinating and we still have so much to learn about their ecosystems and the connections they have to other lifeforms is totally understated."*

Leaf Peeping Drive in detail

The new 50-mile **Leaf Peeping Drive** is a circuit that can be picked up at any point which includes ten identified 'Hotspots'. Starting from Symonds Yat Rock the route heads through dense deciduous woodland to reach The Kymin viewpoint. From here follow the road clinging to the Wye with its oak, beech and ash riverbanks to reach Tintern Abbey. The drive now heads deep into the Forest of Dean and takes in Puzzlewood's ancient woodland before reaching New Fancy's 360-degree forest views. Visitors will enjoy miles of unbroken woodland along forest roads including 200 different tree species with a stop at Cyril Hart Arboretum before calling in at Beechenhurst and then Cannop Ponds, to then re-join the Wye, crossing Kerne Bridge.

Leafy ideas from local businesses

Local businesses are embracing the campaign with creative ways to ensure a huge welcome for Leaf Peepers. The owner of Wharton Cottages near Ross on Wye will be renaming her properties [Leaf Peepers Cottages](#) perfect for peepers looking for a base. Whilst over at Eastnor Pottery they are running leaf themed clay modelling workshops. Forest of Dean Adventure's 12 metre climbing wall will be decorated in autumn leaves, Parva Farm Vineyard is matching wine to leaves on a vineyard walk. Boutique hotel, Tudor Farmhouse, has even concocted a special Leaf Peepers Fizz cocktail to revive all those thirsty peepers after their foliage frenzy. There is forest bathing, wildlife safaris and photography workshops aplenty all designed for Leaf Peepers looking to explore the region guided by its many local experts.

In-depth Leaf Peeping Guide

The in-depth guide is online and features a downloadable PDF of the Leaf Peeping Drive and 10 Hotspots, many accessible by car and some requiring more discovery on foot. The guide also includes Paul Rutter's specially created Leaf Peeping short walks, as well as a whole host of other ways to enjoy the autumn foliage including themed accommodation breaks, autumn feasts, numerous ways for autumn visitors to get creative and enjoy a leafy crafty experience. Advice is on hand on how to capture foliage with professional photographer David Broadbent's Big Lens Botany Tips.

The Leaf Peeping Guide is available now at www.wydeantourism.co.uk/leafpeeperswelcome.

For more information on events and accommodation across the Wye Valley and Forest of Dean, please visit: www.wydeantourism.co.uk

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For more media information including access to the very best autumn images, contact Fiona Reece or Ryan Baker at Travel Tonic on fiona@traveltonic.co.uk / ryan@traveltonic.co.uk / 01452 346116

Notes to Editor

Interview/ photo / filming opportunities available for media as well as interviews with a host of local experts including Paul Rutter, Chief Leaf Peeper as well as Forest of Dean and Wye Valley Tourism Directors.

About the Guide:

- The mapped-out drive, walks, escapes, experiences, activities, crafts and even suggestions for Junior Leaf Peepers have all been chosen to maximise the potential for Leaf Peeping perfection
- There are three walks suggested by Chief Leaf Peeper Paul Rutter for Leaf Peepers who want to kick through the leaves and get up close to the fabulous foliage show
- There are tips from a local professional photographer on how to capture autumn through a lens
- The guide includes places to stay so you get a serving of Leaf Peeping with your breakfast – from a brand-new tree house in a private woodland to a hotel stay adjacent to one of the Leaf Peeping hotspots, the Cyril Hart Arboretum.

Specific highlights of the guide include:

1. **Eagle's Nest** Hotspot - climb 365 steps from the valley below looking out for beech, ash and oak which will turn the woodland into a rich palette of russets, golden yellows and copper browns. At the top, you'll be rewarded with views that span from the Wye out to the River Severn and the Cotswold Hills beyond.
2. **Cyril Hart Arboretum** Hotspot - next to the Speech House Hotel, this is home to over 200 tree species that create a rich palette of autumn colours, from the bright yellow of the tulip trees to the deep reds of the maples.
3. **Leaf Peepers Cottages** – the owners of Wharton Lodge have renamed their accommodation 'Leaf Peepers Cottages' for the season. Located on the outskirts of Ross, enjoy 14 acres of private parkland home to a variety of mature and majestic trees, including Californian Redwoods, London Plane, Cedar of Lebanon and Wellingtonia.
4. **Forest Bathe in autumnal Colours** - qualified Forest Therapy Guide Carina Greenwood is taking groups into the forest during autumn to bathe their senses in the forest; looking, listening, smelling and tasting through a series of 'invitations' and activities proven to enhance wellbeing for mind, body and soul.
5. **Leaf Peeping on Two Wheels** - explore over 40km of traffic-free bike trails that run through the area. Bikes are easily hired and the 9-mile 'Family Trail' is a great starting point for youngsters, beginning at the Cannop Cycle Centre and cutting through the heart of the forest passing five of Leaf Peeping hotspots: Cannop Ponds, Beechenhurst, Cyril Hart Arboretum, New Fancy View & Mallards Pike.
6. **Forage and Feast**- Harts Barn Cookery School is hosting three 'forage and feast' workshops, with participants taken out into the surrounding hedgerows, woods and fields to fill a basket with a

bounty of nuts, berries and mushrooms before returning to the school to create a feast of infused tea, bread, savoury dishes and something sweet to finish off with.

7. **Get crafty with 'Take a Leaf' Clay Modelling** - Eastnor Pottery will be hosting a selection of autumn themed clay modelling classes where participants will have the chance to create a clay leaf tile, paint it in a range of autumn colours and then fire and glaze it.

About Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Tourism

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Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Tourism (WVFDT) was formed in 2006 and is the official Destination Management Organisation representing the interests of almost 400 members.

The Wye Valley & Forest of Dean Tourism is the destination management organisation for the "Dean Wye". The area covers three counties of Gloucestershire, Monmouthshire and Herefordshire and is the only cross-border tourism association in the UK working with both tourism businesses and stakeholders in Wales and England.