

the Royal Forest route

a journey of two halves!

This circuit through the heart of the Forest of Dean has been divided into two halves. The first section, from the **Dean Heritage Centre to Clearwell Caves**, is the best route and starting point for visitors arriving from Gloucester and the East. For those joining the **Royal Forest Route** from the West (Wye Valley and Severn Bridge) we recommend that you join at **Clearwell Caves** and start with the section between **Clearwell Caves and the Dean Heritage Centre**.

Remember that the route is only 20 miles long. There is plenty of time to stop, visit the attractions and enjoy the beauty spots. Plan your own diversions as well – to visit the **Dean Forest Railway**, **Symonds Yat**, nearby **Newent**... There are many other options. Elsewhere in this guide, you'll find further information to help you plan. There is also plenty of easily printed information on www.visitforestofdean.co.uk

→ In this Guide, basic route information is marked with a black arrow.

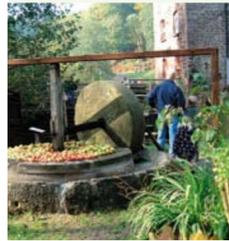
1 Attractions on the route are designated with a green symbol.

Some of the Attractions near the route and worth a detour have blue symbols.

It is worth noting that some attractions charge an admission fee.

Please remember to follow the country code and drive carefully in the forest – the sheep have the right of way!

For more information on the Route as well as things to do and see in the Forest of Dean, visit: www.visitforestofdean.co.uk



→ From the Dean Heritage Centre car park, turn left: You are heading for the heart of the Forest of Dean!
→ Immediately on your right you will pass **Soudley Ponds Nature Reserve**, a pleasant spot for a picnic or walk.
→ At the next junction follow the brown and white 'Scenic Route' signs for one and a half miles to **Ruspidge/Cinderford**.

→ At Ruspidge you could stop and take the 'Blue Rock Trail' (on your right) a pleasant walk and picnic site.
→ Follow the road to the T-junction at the end, opposite you will see the **White Hart Inn**. To continue on the Royal Forest Route turn left and follow signs for the **Speech House (B4226)**.



Start at Clearwell Caves if arriving from the West

Clearwell Caves → Clearwell → Naghead → Mallards Pike → Dean Heritage Centre

8 Clearwell Caves

The caves are a unique part of Britain's heritage. Iron ore has been mined here for nearly 3000 years to form an incredible system of underground tunnels and chambers, of which 8 large caverns are now open to the public. Originally a natural cave system, it is partially filled with iron ore, which has been mined extensively since the beginning of the Iron Age. Today, there is a fashionable demand for **Clearwell Ochre**, an oxide pigment mined underground. Reds, yellows, purples and browns are used for colourings, from watercolours to interior decoration.

→ Leave **Clearwell Caves** and turn left, downhill to continue on the **Royal Forest Route**.

Just down the road from here is **Clearwell**, an attractive village with several good pubs and inns. This section of the **Royal Forest Route** includes some of the scenic highlights of the Forest, and some excellent picnic spots.

→ In **Clearwell** there is a monument in the centre of the village, opposite the **Wyndham Arms**. Turn left at the monument to continue along route signposted for **Clearwell Castle** (not open to the public), that you will soon pass on your right.
→ Continue on the **Royal Forest Route** past the **Castle** until you see signs for **Coleford** on the left.
→ On the bend turn left, signposted towards **Coleford**.
→ Continue along this road for 300 yards to the T-Junction. Turn left signposted **Coleford (B4228)**.



→ You will pass the **Orepool Inn** on your right. Follow the road towards **Sling** and before the **Miner's Arms** turn right signposted to **Parkend**.
→ At the T-junction, turn right signposted for **Blakeney**. On this road you will pass a sign for the **Gloucestershire Way** and also the **Mary Rose Young Pottery shop**, both on your left (1.5 miles) is the **Naghead Nature Reserve (RSPB)**.

9 Naghead Nature Reserve

This reserve is mostly oak woodland and is a great place for bird spotting with about 2,000 nest boxes on the site. Here in the summer months you can see such rarities as the **Pied Flycatcher**, the **Redstart** or the **Wood Warbler**. There's an information centre for more details on birds and other animals in the area.



→ Come out of the Reserve and turn left and continue to follow signs for **Blakeney**. Bear left round the corner where you will find the **Woodman Pub** on your left.
→ Continue straight along this road following signposts for **Blakeney**.
→ To visit **New Fancy View**, a popular bird-viewing site, turn left off the route following signposts for **Cinderford** and **The Speech House**.
→ **New Fancy View** is on the right (300 Yards) and is signposted.



→ Stay on route for two and a half miles. You will notice picnic sites on either side of this road. Each site provides picnic benches.

Shortly before the **Speech House**, on the left-hand side of the road opposite the **Speech House Woodland** you will find the signposted **Cyril Hart Arboretum**. **Ernest Wilson**, known as 'Chinese Wilson' as a result of his collecting trips to the East, started this fine collection of trees in 1916. There is a picnic site and parking. A trail for the visually impaired is provided.

Further along the road (300 yards) on the left hand side is the **Speech House Hotel**.

2 The Speech House Hotel

is a forest landmark. Built in 1676 as a hunting lodge for **Charles II** (his Arms can still be seen in the hotel's stonework). The building became the administrative centre of the forest, with the largest room being the **Verderers' Court**.



→ Opposite the hotel you will find a stone monument that marks the centre of the Forest.
→ Continuing past the **Speech House Hotel** you will soon see **Beechenhurst Lodge** signposted on the right.

In a moment the ashes are made, but the forest is a long time growing.

(Seneca)



→ Back on the **Royal Forest Route** after half a mile you will find **Mallards Pike** signposted on your left.

10 Mallards Pike Lake

This lake and picnic area (with loos) offers gentle walking and wonderful views plus the **Go Ape!** high adventure ropes course. At the lake you can see a sculpture of the frog and the mermaid. The name refers to a tollhouse that once stood at the entrance. **Mallards Pike** is also the starting base for the **Severnwyde Llama & Camel Trekking** company.



→ Turn left out of **Mallards Pike** and continue along the road.
→ Take the first left turning after about a mile (under a former railway bridge). If you want to stop at **Wenchoford Picnic Site** it's on the right just before the bridge and is clearly signposted.
→ Pass under the bridge and you will now be on the road known by the locals as 'The Roman Road'. It is also the road we like to call **The Golden Mile**.

Everyone will have their own favourite area of the Forest, but in autumn the route between **Wenchoford Picnic Site** and the return route to **The Dean Heritage Centre** is spectacular. **The Golden Mile** is, we think, the 'must see' part of the Forest for the autumn months when the whole area is a riot of colour. This area is transformed again in May when the woodlands are filled with acres of bluebells.

→ Turn right at the T-junction to return to the **Dean Heritage Centre**.

This will take you back to the start of the route. For those who started the route at **Clearwell Caves** turn right to visit the **Dean Heritage Centre** and then follow directions for the route from this point.

3 Beechenhurst Lodge Visitor Centre

has paid parking for cars and coaches (be sure to have some change ready). It also has loos, an excellent cafeteria and a shop selling local crafts, gifts and souvenirs plus a visitor information section. This is the starting point for the **Sculpture Trail**, buy a guide at the lodge.

Sculptures such as the 'Giant's Chair' and 'Cathedral' add highlights to a gentle and picturesque two-mile route.



→ To rejoin the **Royal Forest Route**, turn right out of **Beechenhurst** and follow the road down the hill.
→ Just before the crossroads on the left you will find the entrance to **Cannop Ponds**.

4 Cannop Ponds

is another popular wooded picnic spot overlooking a pond. An ideal spot for lunch with the family, with a woodland stream that holds a fascination for younger children.



→ Leaving **Cannop Ponds** the way you came in turn left and continue straight over the crossroads along the **Royal Forest Route** signposted for **Coleford B4226**.

→ At this point you can see out **Pedalabikeaway (Forest Cycle Centre)** by turning right at the crossroads. Follow **Brown and White** signpost. From **Pedalabikeaway** there are marked cycle routes through the forest.
→ Back on the **Royal Forest Route** you will see **Brown and White** signs for **Hopewell Colliery**, a reminder of the coal mining tradition in the Forest.
→ Turn right off the main road into **Hopewell Colliery**, or continue straight on for **Coleford Town Centre**.



5 Hopewell Colliery

An ideal location to go underground and see a **Forest of Dean coal mine**, with mine workings dating back to the 1820's. The attraction is open everyday during the main season and has a cafe.



→ A little further on from **Hopewell Colliery** you can turn right at the next crossroads for **Symonds Yat Rock viewpoint (B4432)**.

→ To continue along the route go straight over the crossroads and follow the road downhill towards **Coleford (B4226)**. Turn left at the end of the road, towards **Coleford**.

→ **Coleford** is a busy working town with a long history, you can follow the **Coleford Town Walk** which highlights historic buildings. The **Coleford Visitor Information Centre** offers advice, information and accommodation bookings.

→ On reaching **Coleford**, turn left at the traffic lights to continue on the **Royal Forest Route**, following the **B4228** and **Brown and White** signposts for 'Clearwell Caves, Perrygrove, Puzzlewood' (Or for **Coleford Town Centre** and the **Visitor Information Centre** go straight ahead at the traffic lights).

→ On the **Royal Forest Route** following the **B4228** go straight over at both sets of traffic lights and head out of town. **Perrygrove Railway** is half a mile further on, on the left.



6 At the Perrygrove Railway

you can travel for 1½ miles on a unique 15" gauge estate steam railway and follow an all weather treasure hunt. An ideal attraction for children.



→ 400 yards further along the **B4228** is **Puzzle Wood** on the right hand side. This is an extraordinary visitor attraction that defies easy description.

7 Puzzle Wood

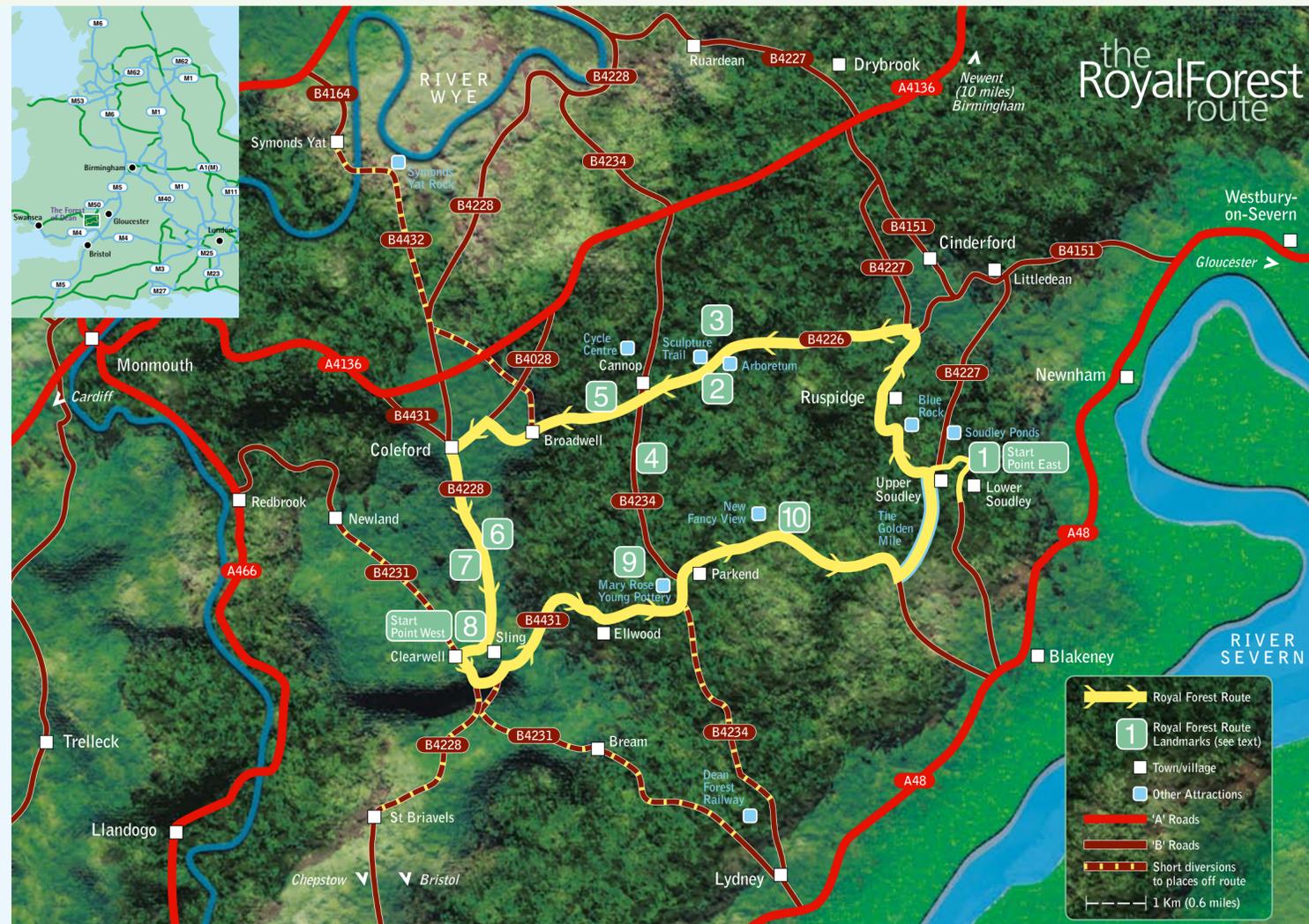
is a former (pre-Roman) open cast ore mine, although its popularity today is really due to the extraordinary landscape that the grown-over ore workings have created. A maze of paths with seats and bridges disorientate and surprise at every turn, like some fantasy movie set.



→ The **Royal Forest Route** continues from **Puzzle Wood** to **Clearwell Caves**. Come out of **Puzzle Wood** and turn right towards the **Caves**, follow the **Brown and White** signposts. Take the next right turn off the main road after about 400 yards up the road and follow the road down the hill. The caves are about 400 yards down the hill on the left-hand side of the road.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep.
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

Robert Frost (Stopping by Woods On a Snowy Evening)



welcome to the Queen of forests

Forests are great places to get lost in, but the Royal Forest Route guide is here to help you find your way around – this is one place where a little local knowledge works wonders.

We recommend that you stay for a few days to experience the best of the Forest. The Forest itself and the nearby Wye Valley, Lydney and Newent areas have seductive charms in any season. Spring offers daffodils and bluebells.



How to use this guide...

This brochure includes a map of the Forest of Dean. You can use the map to complete a circular driving tour of around 20 miles of the ancient forest. Better still walk or cycle part of the route.



There are good pubs, craftspeople and food producers to distract you, special events, cycle hire and sculpture trails to enjoy.

To join the Route, we've suggested two joining points according to whether you arrive from the East or the West.

Autumn Leaves
Falling Dance
Upon a Breeze
Kaleidoscope Of
Colours Sleep
Cascading Trees

Andrew K Fletcher

As anyone from Gloucestershire will tell you: there's magic in the forest!

The Royal Forest Route offers you an inside guide to the mysterious area of Gloucestershire known as the Forest of Dean. A former royal hunting forest that provided food for the King's Winter Court at nearby Gloucester, the Forest of Dean has retained its aura of mystery.



Go underground to ancient ore mines, lunch in fantastic picnic places, discover artists and craftspeople inspired by the landscape, try local foods and visit wonderful independently-owned attractions that just couldn't exist anywhere else!



Summer is a riot of green – sunset in the Forest can be breathtakingly beautiful.

It goes without saying that Autumn has to be seen to be believed. This brochure reveals The Golden Mile – our absolute 'must see' highlight of the Autumn forest.

If we rightly consider, every green tree is far more glorious than if it were made of gold and silver

Martin Luther

But we really do recommend that you spend a few days exploring the Forest. Around the 20-mile route you will find the natural and man-made visitor attractions that give the Forest such character.



www.visitforestofdean.co.uk

Further Information

There are plenty of places to stay in the Forest of Dean, full details of which can be obtained from the Coleford Visitor Information Centre, or by visiting www.visitforestofdean.co.uk where bookings can be made online.

- Coleford Visitor Information Centre, High Street, Coleford, Gloucestershire, GL16 8HG Telephone: 01594 812388 Email: tourism@fdean.gov.uk
- Cotswolds & Forest of Dean Destination Management Organisation, Chargrove House, Main Road, Shurdington, Cheltenham GL51 4GA Telephone: 01242 864171 Email: tourism@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Travel Information

By Train: The nearest railway stations are Gloucester, Lydney and Chepstow. For travel information contact: National Rail enquiries on: Tel: 08457 48 49 50 www.nationalrail.co.uk

By Road: The Forest of Dean is within easy access of the M4 (M49), M5 and M50 motorways, as well as many major roads. National Express operates nationwide coach services. Tel: 08705 808 080 www.nationalexpress.com

Tourist Information Centres

Coleford
High Street
Tel: 01594 812388

Gloucester
28 Southgate Street
Tel: 01452 396572

- Useful Links**
- www.visitforestofdean.co.uk
 - www.cotswolds.com
 - www.deanforesttrailway.co.uk
 - www.deanheritagemuseum.com
 - www.perrygrove.co.uk
 - www.clearwellcaves.com
 - www.tauruscrafts.co.uk
 - www.pedalabikeaway.com
 - www.thespeechhouse.co.uk
 - www.forestofdean-sculpture.org.uk
 - www.forestry.gov.uk
 - www.puzzlewood.net

Leaflet Designed and Produced by Litchfield Morris: www.litchfieldmorris.co.uk

Food and Drink in the Forest

The Forest of Dean is a natural environment with a wealth of food and drink on offer. The Dean is home to several producers of outstanding natural foods.

It can be very satisfying to buy your food direct from source or see it being made, and there are lots of opportunities to do just that in Forest of Dean.

The Forest is home to a number of speciality and award-winning cheese makers. Look out for Charles Martell's 'Stinking Bishop' or Diana Smart's 'Single Gloucester' to include in your picnic hamper. No bread for your lunch? The Authentic Bread Company, based in Newent, makes more than 30 different types of organic bread, savouries and cakes, which are sold at Wydean Wholefood Shops in Lydney, Coleford, Cinderford and Newent. For a barbecue, the Forest has several excellent butchers specialising in meat that has been reared locally. Drop in to Mr Peters of White and Millers in Coleford and sample some of his award-winning sausages. For fish lovers the Severn & Wye Smokery at Chaxhill, Westbury-On-Severn, offers locally smoked salmon and eel. For a very short season in the Spring, eelers (eel fry which have journeyed from the Sargasso Sea) are caught along the Wye and Severn, although nowadays most are exported to Japan, where they are revered and fetch a high price.

Even local wine is available. The Three Choirs Vineyard, at Newent, has 70 acres of carefully cultivated grapes – including Pinot Noir. A visitor centre reveals the mysteries of winemaking and a shop offers estate white, red rose and sparkling wines. Just down the road, the family-run St Anne's Vineyard grows over 100 varieties of grapes and offers fruit wines too.

Why not sample the very best of food and drink in the Forest by visiting the popular Forest Food Showcase that takes place every year in October at Beechenhurst.

Alternatively discover some of the delightful shops selling local produce such as Hunter & Todd Delicatessen in Newnham-On-Severn, Over Farm Market near Gloucester, or La Bodega at Taurus Crafts in Lydney.

This area of Gloucestershire is famed for Blaisdon Red plums and apple and pear orchards. The village of Hartpury takes its name from the Saxon word for pear – pirige. Perry, a traditional fermented drink made from pears, has been produced for centuries in Gloucestershire. There are over 100 varieties of local perry pear which are known by over 200 names such as 'Hartpury Green', 'Blakeney Red' and 'Staunton Squash'!

Real cider, on the other hand, is simply made by collecting local apples, pressing them to extract the juice and fermenting it. It tastes of apples, with distinct flavours coming from each variety or mixture used, and subtly different levels of acidity, sharpness, alcohol etc with each batch made. Some real cider is then bottled using the method champenoise (which some say was invented by cidemakers in the Forest of Dean) to make a naturally sparkling drink. Old farm cider was originally served straight from the barrel long after fermentation had ceased, and drunk still. Many cider enthusiasts still prefer it like this. What is important is that wonderful fruity sharp natural flavour and a strength of around 5-8% which puts the drink mid way between beer and wine.

Finally look out for Freeminers ales, brewed in the Forest and award winning!

Why not pick up a copy of the Wye Valley & Forest of Dean Eating Out Guide for a great range of restaurants, cafes, pubs and inns throughout the area. For further information, visit www.visitforestofdean.co.uk



Around the corner from the Royal Forest Route

Along with the attractions detailed on the route there are many other places to see that make the area worth staying a little longer to see.

- **Symonds Yat**, 3 miles from Coleford. Here there are great views, including a Peregrine Falcon viewing point at Symonds Yat Rock. Nearby are great locations for the more adventurous with local canoe and kayaking centres. Also the aMAzing Hedge Puzzle.
- **Wye Valley**. The Lower Wye Valley runs from Hereford to Chepstow, forming the borders between England and Wales. The natural beauty of the area is unquestionable.



- **Westbury Court Garden** (National Trust) at Westbury on Severn. This formal Dutch Water Garden was laid out between 1696 and 1705. The Water Gardens include a long canal bordered by yew hedges and an elegant Dutch style pavilion. Historical varieties of apple, pear and plum with many other plants introduced to England before 1700. The holm oak may be the oldest in the country.

- **Newent**, is certainly one of the most attractive towns in the Forest of Dean area. It is a thriving, unspoilt market town with a wide range of attractions for the shopper and visitor. Many of the buildings date from the 13th century, and centrepiece of the town is the Old Market Hall, which was built in 1668. The area around Newent has long been known for its wild daffodils, which grow naturally in the woods and meadows around the town.



- **Three Choirs Vineyard**. Three Choirs is a friendly way to discover how classic wines have once again taken root in England after an absence of nearly 900 years. Stroll among 70 acres of carefully cultivated vines, where well-chosen modern varieties grow alongside world-renowned grapes such as Pinot Noir.

- **Lydney**, a settlement since Roman times, was the home of Sir William Wintour, Admiral of the Fleet of Queen Elizabeth I in 1588. Many of the ships to oppose the Spanish Armada were built from the Forest of Dean's oak trees. The recently restored Lydney Harbour is a rare example of an unspoilt 19th century harbour which, along with the lower and tidal basins and the pier, has been designated Scheduled Ancient Monument status.



Taurus Crafts, an exciting place to see a vibrant range of crafts and discover your own creativity. Located on the Lydney Park Estate, it has a gift shop, delicatessen, restaurant and the superb Forest of Dean Model Village. The village is home to a wonderful collection of professionally crafted miniatures of local landmarks, towns and villages.

