

Medieval Churches in Herefordshire & the Wye Valley

Day One - Monday

3:00pm Meet for a Walking Tour of [Medieval Hereford](#)

Visit the site where Hereford Castle once stood, explore parts of the existing medieval [city walls](#) and discover the execution site of [Owen Tudor](#) after his capture at the Battle of Mortimer's Cross.

Day Two - Tuesday

9:30am Board the minibus/coach and head to the first ['Knights and Monks' visit.](#)

Travelling through the Herefordshire countryside, means we are travelling through much of the Hospitaller property in the area. In 1338 records show a church did exist at Callow (south west of Hereford). This was one of five gifts made to the Knights Hospitaller in Herefordshire. Today much of this area is owned by the Duchy of Cornwall.

[St Michael and All Angels, Belmont Abbey](#)

Belmont Abbey is a community of monks, founded in 1859, following the Rule of St Benedict. Benedictine monasticism was part of the landscape of Mediaeval Britain, but the Reformation in England and the Dissolution of the Monasteries brought an end to the monastic life in England and Wales. The age of the great Abbeys like Canterbury, Westminster, Gloucester and St Albans was over, but monasticism itself was waiting to be restored. In the seventeenth century Englishmen and Welshmen went to the Continent and re-established the English Benedictine Congregation in exile.

The monastic community now undertakes numerous works including the pastoral care of the Catholics in Herefordshire, while other monks work in parishes in West Cumbria and South Wales. In addition, the community maintains a small foundation near Lima in Peru - the Monastery of the Incarnation.

10:45am Travel from Belmont Abbey to [Kilpeck Church](#)

A quick stop has been scheduled at Kilpeck, as it is probably the most famous church within Herefordshire due to the quality of exquisite, intricate and wonderfully preserved Herefordshire School of Romanesque carvings.

The Book of Llandaff suggests a church existed at Kilpeck ("Lann degui cilpedec") in the 8th century (Book of Llandaff, reproduced by J. Evans, © The National Library of Wales, p. 275). The present church was built perhaps in 1134 when a priory cell of Benedictines was established. In 1848 it underwent restoration by Cottingham. The nave, chancel and apse are of decreasing height and width. The church has flat buttresses and clasping corner buttresses. In 1134 the church of St David was given to the Abbey at Gloucester.

HC16, c/o Leintwardine House, Leintwardine, Craven Arms, Shropshire, SY7 0LB

Resilient Heritage Lottery funded Project. Sustainable Tourism for Sustainable Churches.

11:45 [Abbeydore, Dore Abbey](#)

The Abbey was founded in 1147 by French Cistercian Monks from Morimond and is steeped in so much history. The Church you see today has been little altered since the 1900 rearrangement. Today it enjoys regular services with its fine organ and is the venue for many concerts.

1:15pm **Lunch stop at [the Bell at Skenfrith](#)**

The Bell at Skenfrith. A former 17th century coaching inn, on the banks of the River Monnow in Monmouthshire, Wales. The village of Skenfrith has its own Norman Castle and an historic medieval church St. Bridget's.

2:45pm [St Michael Church, Garway Church](#)

An intriguing 13th century church on a rectangular plan, created from an earlier 12th century round church built by the Knights Templar. St Michael is composed of a nave, chancel, and south chapel, joined to a detached 70 foot high tower by a 17th century passage.

The chancel arch of the round Templar church was used as the chancel arch for the 13th century building. The rounded foundations of the earlier Templar church were uncovered by excavations in the 20th century, and can be viewed to the north of the current nave. The Templars built their churches on a circular foundation, in emulation of the Temple of Solomon (Al Aqsa Mosque) in Jerusalem. Garway is the only visible circular nave remaining in England. At the time of its foundation Garway was the most powerful Templar church in the Welsh Marches and today is only one of six Knights Templar churches left in England.

3:45pm **Travel from Garway to [Llanwarne](#)**

[Ruined church of St. John, the Baptist](#)

The Book of Llandaff mentions a 7th century church in Llanwarne being given to Bishops of Llandaff. It records that one Catvuth ap Coffro gave to Trichan, 5th bishop of Llandaff, a piece of land in Llanwarne.

At the time of the Domesday Book (1086) the church belonged to the Bishop of Hereford, and by 1291 it belonged to Llanthony Priory. In 1861 there were plans to restore the church but this was to prove too difficult due to extreme damp, and in 1863 the church was replaced by the present Christ Church. The roof was taken off the old church and it was left as a ruin.

4:45pm **Arrive back to Hereford**

Day Three – Wednesday

9:30am [Board the minibus/coach and head off on the Little Churches along the Wye Valley \(Half Day\)](#)

10:15am [St Mary's, Foy](#)

The Church stands on a peninsula of land formed by the River as it meanders between Hereford and Ross-on-Wye. A spectacular spot.

An ideal spot to rest and enjoy the traditional English views over the river and suspension bridge to the farmland of Hill of Eaton opposite.

The present church's origins stand in the 13th.C. during the reign of Henry III, when nave and chancel were built. Sir Robert de Tregoz, the local lord, died with Simon de Montfort at Evesham in 1265. The stone from his demolished castle opposite was probably later used to construct the 14th.C. bell tower. The bell tower roof shows evidence that there was once an octagonal spire. During the same period the rare decagonal font was also installed. It is the largest in the shire. In the 15th.C. the Abrahall family appear as lords of the manor and benefactors restoring much of the building including the chancel east wall. The family also held the incumbency for almost 3 centuries. Their heraldic 'urchin' crest and motto 'j'ay guardé la foy' in ancient French or 'I have kept the faith' appear on many of the memorials the most notable of which is by Esau Osborn of Bristol.

11:15am [St Tysilio's Church, Sellack](#)

St Tysilio's is a 12th-century, grade 1 listed church situated in an idyllic setting close to the River Wye in Sellack; an area of outstanding natural beauty alongside the river meadows. It is on the Herefordshire trail which here follows an old route across the Wye to Kings Capple; formerly crossed by ferry which was replaced by a pedestrian bridge in 1895. Given the beauty of the church and idyllic surroundings it has become a popular image for local artists.

The unusual layout is the most surprising feature of this building and the East Window contains glass dating back to the 15th-century.

12:15pm **Lunch visit to Ross On Wye and St Marys Church**

Ross On Wye has a long and varied history and first appears in records of 1016. There is a 13th Century Church and a Market House from the 17th Century. Ross-on-Wye boasts to having been one of the first recorded attempts to beautify a town for the benefit of its residents. The town sits on a high on a sandstone cliff and has peaceful gardens and excellent walks beside the River.

[St Mary's Church](#) the "jewel in the crown of Ross," with its well-proportioned spire (the highest in Herefordshire) sits proudly above the town. The building dates mainly from the late 13th and 14th centuries though two sensitive restorations in the 19th century and a complete reordering of the nave in recent years are responsible for the look and feel of the building today. Of particular note is the early 15th century glass in the east window and a fine collection of mainly 16th and 17th century monuments to the Rudhall family.

2:00pm Arrive into Hereford at [St John Medieval Museum & Coningsby Hospital](#)

Just a short walk from the city centre, the St John Medieval Museum and Coningsby Hospital is adjacent to the Blackfriars Rose Garden and the ruins of the Dominican Monastery.

On the visit we can find out about the foundation of the Coningsby Red Coat Hospital, probably the model for The Chelsea Hospital in London, as well as exploring the 13th century Chapel, still used today by the Order of St John, and the Museum, which explains the links between the Crusades, the Knights Templar and The Hospitaller Knights.

The remains of Blackfriars Monastery are directly beside the museum and set within the Rose Garden is one of the last surviving examples of a stone Preaching Cross.

3:00pm Free afternoon to explore Hereford city on Market day

Day Four – Thursday

9:00am Board the minibus/coach and head to [The Birthplace of British Tourism - A Medieval experience](#)

9:45am Goodrich Castle is our first visit of the day

A Norman medieval castle ruin north of the village, controlling a key location between Monmouth and Ross-on-Wye.

The Castle was probably built by Godric of Mappestone after the Norman invasion of England, initially as an earth and wooden fortification. In the middle of the 12th century the original castle was replaced with a stone keep and was then expanded significantly during the late 13th century into a concentric structure combining luxurious living quarters with extensive defences. The success of Goodrich's design influenced many other constructions across England over the following years. It became the seat of the powerful Talbot family before falling out of favour as a residence in late Tudor times.

11:00am **We head to [Whitchurch Church](#) situated on the River Wye.**

The parish church of St Dubricius is one of the oldest in the Deanery of Ross and Archenfield and the list of incumbents date from 1289.

This beautiful church is situated on the banks of the River Wye near to Symonds Yat East.

12:00 midday **Lunch at the [Old Court Hotel](#)**

Due to inaccessibility on the narrow roads, our transport will be parked at the Old Court Hotel for the duration of the visit to St Dubricius, lunch and River Cruise.

1:30pm **River Wye Cruise**

Enjoy a relaxing cruise along the river Wye. The 40-minute cruise with a full commentary, winds its way through Symonds Yat gorge and village dividing into East and West, telling of the natural beauty and history of the area.

2:45pm **Head south with a visit to [St. Peters Church, Dixon](#), nr Monmouth**

St. Peter's is situated on the banks of the River Wye, just north of Monmouth. This attractive whitewashed building dates back to at least the 12th Century, though was probably a holy site before then.

3:30pm **Before heading home we have free time to visit Monmouth**

The castle of Monmouth was originally built by the Normans in the late 11th century, as one part of a system of fortifications to help establish their dominance of the Welsh Marches, and as a base for extending their control into Wales itself. The castle, which overlooked the confluence of the rivers Wye and Monnow in a strategically important border area, was initially a modest motte and bailey structure, rebuilt in stone by 1150. A small market town developed around the castle and, in 1267, it passed into the hands of Edmund Crouchback, Earl of Lancaster and son of Henry III. In turn, it passed to his own son Henry de Lancastre. On 27 August 1297, he petitioned his uncle, Edward I, to issue a murage grant for the town. The 1297 grant was issued for five years and the funds collected allowed for the construction of the medieval town walls and gates.

4:30pm **Head back to Hereford**

Day Five – Friday

10:00am **[Hereford Cathedral](#) Tour**

Before heading home, visit the home of the Mappa Mundi, Hereford Cathedral with a Cathedral Close Tour.

Discover the medieval characters that sit across the North Porch entrance, the lessons of the wood and stone carvings in the St John's Walk, the magnificent cloisters of the Vicars' Choral and the intriguing West Front which tells the history of the Cathedral in one glance.