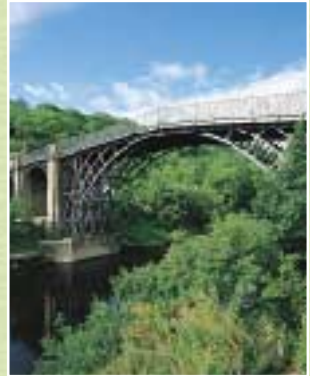


# The Severn Way



*Walk the Severn  
from Source to Sea*



ENVIRONMENT  
AGENCY

# The Severn Way

Now one of the longest waymarked walking trails in Britain, the Severn Way traces a route along the entire Severn Valley from source to sea, a walking distance of around 210 miles (338kms).

Linking two countries with diverse cultures, the path is an ideal way to explore the towns and villages, history and heritage of Wales and England, whilst at the same time passing through some superb countryside.



The Severn Way is easily accessible by train and bus throughout much of its length, making it easy to walk the route in stages over a number of visits. Accommodation to suit all tastes and budgets is plentiful along the route.

The Severn rises on the wild Plynlimon plateau in mid-Wales, plunging through Hafren Forest past picnic areas to **Llanidloes**, the first town on the river with its fine half-timbered Market Hall.



Llanidloes Market Hall

Flowing onwards through an increasingly wide valley it reaches **Newtown**, the largest town on the upper Severn which developed in medieval times as

the centre of the Welsh Flannel industry, vying for trade with nearby **Welshpool**, whose prosperity developed on the back of a thriving livestock market and agricultural produce trade.

The Severn Way follows the Montgomeryshire Canal, along which goods from the Severn were transported from the head of navigation on the river at Pool Quay, near Welshpool. The Severn flows into England along a tightly meandering course, passing in the shadow of some of the oldest hills in Britain - the rocks of Breidden Hill and The Wrekin are about 800 million years old.



Shrewsbury, The English Bridge

Between these ancient landmarks lies **Shrewsbury**, its wealth of narrow medieval streets, courtyards and alleyways overhung by half-timbered houses and pubs crowded between the massive edifices of castle and abbey. Just downstream the riverside pastures conceal the site of Viroconium, one of the foremost Roman sites in the country.

In its middle reaches the Severn carves its way through ridges of limestone and sandstones to form a long, sinuous gorge. Sheltering beneath its cliffs is the World Heritage Site of **Ironbridge**, birthplace of the Industrial Revolution.



Buildwas Abbey

This industrial heritage is displayed in countless museums and interpreted sites. Less obvious but an equal joy to discover is the remarkable variety of flora and fauna in the river, along the banks and within the cool, broadleaf woodlands which cloak the gorge for much of the next 25 miles.

Where tributary streams join the Severn, and at lower points in the gorge side, towns such as **Bridgnorth** and **Bewdley** have grown up. The two are linked today by the famous Severn Valley Railway, where the sounds of its steam trains echo throughout the valley. In former times these towns were thriving inland ports, and the old wharves, fine merchants houses and warehousing reflect those times.

An unusual man-powered foot-ferry links country parks, village and heritage trails within the valley.



The middle Severn Valley, Bridgnorth



Bridgworth District Council

Hampton Loade Ferry

Passing through the edge of the Wyre Forest, the Severn Way reaches **Stourport-on-Severn**, Britain's first purpose built canal port which lies at the point where the Staffordshire & Worcestershire Canal discharged the industrial produce of the Black Country into warehouses and onto Severn Trows. Built in the 1760s and 70s, it retains a period feel and remarkable architecture.

Peaceful countryside dotted with villages rich in half-timbered houses set amongst fruit orchards are a prelude to **Worcester** with its massive cathedral towering beside the Severn. Known as "The Faithful City" for its unwavering support for the monarchy over the past millennium, the city marks a change in the character of the Severn Valley. Downstream, the river plain widens, rising gently to meet the slopes of the Malverns and the Cotswolds.

The riverside path threads past the old river port of **Upton-Upon-Severn** and the ancient abbey town of **Tewkesbury**, through rich pastures and croplands to reach **Gloucester**. The old Roman fortress town of Glevum is probably the oldest settlement along the Severn, renowned today for its ornate cotswold-stone cathedral and National Waterways Museum at the

Victorian docks. Weirs here mark the highest level to which tides flow. The Bristol link now extends the Severn Way into the heart of **Bristol**.



Tewkesbury Abbey

Tewkesbury Borough Council

The Severn Estuary has the world's second highest tides, the incoming tide sufficient on certain days to produce the Severn Bore, a miniature tidal wave best viewed at tiny estuary-side villages such as Elmore, some miles south of the city.



Estuary near Arlingham

Gloucestershire County Council

As the estuary widens, vast sand and mudbanks appear at low water, attracting thousands of water birds to the world famous Slimbridge Wildfowl and Wetlands Reserve. Looked over by medieval Berkeley Castle, the Severn passes below the two modern-day road bridges to merge with the Bristol Channel and the sea.



Clifton Suspension Bridge, Bristol.

Bristol City Council

## *Walking the Severn Way*

The Severn Way is in mountain country between the source and Llanidloes. Carry waterproofs, warm clothing, a basic first aid kit, whistle, torch and high-calorie snacks. Sturdy walking boots, a compass and the relevant map complete the package. From Llanidloes to the sea the route encounters gentler countryside, but walking boots or stout shoes are still the sensible option. The vagaries of the climate mean waterproofs and a warm sweater are also advisable for much of the year.

The torrents and waterfalls of the river's upper reaches together with the rugged countryside should be treated with respect. Paths are well defined but can be potentially dangerous. Stick to the waymarked route, avoid straying into boggy areas or the bouldery river bed and treat bare rocks and steep scrambles with care. If the weather has been changeable, a call to the Met Office's "Weather Eye" service for mid-Wales may be worthwhile, tel: 0891 500414.

The lower, tidal stretches of the Severn Way below Gloucester should also be treated with respect. Avoid walking onto the mud and sand banks at low tide, they conceal deep channels, hidden gulleys and quicksand. Always take sensible precautions, leaving yourself free to enjoy to the full the marvellous countryside and heritage along the walk.

## Further Information

Seven Ordnance Survey "Landranger" maps cover the entire route of the Severn Way and are a useful aid in helping to identify features in the landscape (Sheets 126, 127, 136, 138, 150, 162 & 172). The larger scale "Pathfinder" series offers much more detail and makes it easy to find and follow short link and loop walks to villages, places of interest and pubs just off the main spine of the Severn Way.

The Severn Way is currently only named on OS maps for the section from Tewkesbury downstream. A detailed Walkers Guide Book to the Severn Way is also available.

Up to the minute information about the wide variety of things to see and do, places to stay and refreshment opportunities along The Severn Way is best obtained locally from the network of **Tourist Information Centres** in the towns and cities through which the Severn flows. These are detailed below; opening hours vary from place to place and season to season.

### Llanidloes

Town Hall, Great Oak Street,  
SY18 6BN Tel: 01686 412605

### Newtown

Back Lane Car Park, SY16 2PW  
Tel: 01686 625580

### Welshpool

Vicarage Garden Car Park,  
SY21 7DD Tel: 01938 552043

### Shrewsbury

The Music Hall, The Square,  
SY1 1LH Tel: 01743 350761

### Ironbridge

The Wharfage, Ironbridge,  
TF8 7AW Tel: 01952 432166

### Telford

Thetford Chase, TF3 4BX  
Tel: 01952 291370

### Bridgnorth

The Library, Listley Street,  
WV16 4AW Tel: 01746 763358

### Bewdley

Load Street, DY12 2AE  
Tel: 01299 404740

### Kidderminster

Severn Valley Rail Station,  
Comberton Hill, DY10 1QX  
Tel: 01562 829400

### Worcester

The Guildhall, High Street,  
WR1 2EY Tel: 01905 726311

### Upton-Upon-Severn

High Street, WR8 0HB  
Tel: 01684 594200

### Tewkesbury

Barton Street, GL20 5PX  
Tel: 01684 295027

### Gloucester

St. Michael's Tower, The Cross,  
GL1 1PD Tel: 01452 421188

### Thornbury

Town Hall, Old Police Stn, High  
St. BS12 2AR Tel: 01454 281638

### Bristol

St Nicholas Church, St Nicholas  
St. BS1 1UE Tel: 0117 926 0767

## Public Transport in the Severn Valley

For information about rail services (except steam railways) telephone: 0345 484950.

For National Express coach services telephone: 0990 808080.

Severn Valley Steam Railway enquiries: 01299 403816  
24hr Talking Timetable: 01299 401001.

For local bus services phone the bus enquiry line for the county in which you are interested (opening times vary):

Powys: 01597 826642/3

Shropshire: 0345 056785

Hereford & Worcester: 0345 125436

Gloucestershire: 01452 425543

South Gloucestershire and Bristol: 0117 955 5111

The Environment Agency co-ordinated and helped to fund the Severn Way walking trail in partnership with Gloucestershire, Hereford & Worcester, Shropshire and Powys County Councils with support from Bristol City Council, South Gloucestershire Council and the Countryside Commission.

