

Symonds Yat Rock walks

Distance and time:

Walk One Viewpoints walk 500m (30 mins with time to enjoy the views)

Walk Two Woodland walk 2km (1 hour)

Brief description of the walks and path conditions

There is a choice of two walks to the well known viewpoints and Peregrine falcon viewing area, and a longer circular walk. Ground conditions are generally good with well surfaced paths, *though the ground surface at the main Symonds Yat viewpoint is made of worn but rough exposed stone. The walk to the second viewpoint is only accessible by negotiating 4 concrete or stone steps with handrail. There are plenty of benches at Symonds Yat Rock, on which to rest and enjoy the spectacular views.*

A longer 2km, 1.2 mile walk is possible by following the green waymarkers. *The shorter walk will avoid rough ground (see route description). The remainder of Walk 2 includes one quite steep but short descent along a rough path with loose stones on the surface. There are no benches or resting places on this walk.*

The area abounds in wildlife, with many woodland birds including jays, greater spotted woodpeckers, buzzards and small birds. You may be lucky enough to see some fallow deer, or even wild boar! There are signs around the car parks at Symonds Yat Rock explaining what to do if you see wild boar during your visit.

Start Point and facilities

The recommended approach to the Symonds Yat Rock area is along the B4432 from Christchurch and Berry Hill (near Coleford). The road to Symonds Yat Rock from Goodrich is steep and single track, with passing places. All the woodlands in and around the Yat Rock area are managed by Forestry Commission England, who publish an annual What's On guide for the Forest of Dean. Many of the publicised events are fully accessible including occasional Symonds Yat Rock fun days.

The main car parking areas are approached along a one-way system, with pay and display parking fees of £3 per day. There is a separate disabled parking area about 200m closer to Symonds Yat Rock viewpoint, but also a second disabled parking area within the large woodland parking complex. Note that the main car parks are all locked at 5pm in winter and 9pm in summer.

A toilet block with separate accessible WC, Radar key operated, and baby changing facilities is close to the main car park, about 450m from the viewpoints. The log cabin café, close to the viewpoints is open every day from February to the end of October, then at weekends through the winter. Phone to check opening times 01594 834479. There are numerous resting and picnic benches scattered around the site.

Relevant OS Map

Outdoor Leisure Map 14 – Wye Valley and Forest of Dean

Detailed Walk Descriptions

Walk 1 – Viewpoint walks (1 km)

From the toilet block, follow the signs for the viewpoint, passing through the ramparts of an iron age hillfort. An on-site interpretation board explains what the fort might have looked like and how it would have been used. There are plenty of benches around if you need a rest during the climb up the gentle but quite long incline (1:18 approx). Continue to follow the signs for the viewpoint, passing the log cabin café and picnic area.

There is one viewpoint immediately left beyond the log cabin, looking out over Symonds Yat West, the river Wye and the Doward hill. There is a bench from which to enjoy the view.

Straight ahead is another viewpoint with benches looking down towards Whitchurch.

After enjoying these views, make your way to the main viewing point. Bear right over the bridge and left at the other side along a wide stone path between timber fences. Continue up the incline to reach the main viewpoint. The path becomes rougher with exposed rocks and loose stones. Although the views are spectacular from Yat Rock access to the viewpoint might be difficult as the surface rocks are uneven and have been worn to a polished surface by centuries of visitors. Take particular care in this area. The viewpoint looks out across the river in two directions as it makes a huge 5 mile loop around Huntsham Hill. During the spring and summer the RSPB sets up a viewing point here to give visitors a spectacular view of the peregrine falcons that nest on nearby Coldwell Rocks.

After enjoying the views here, return with care to the bridge and either return to the car park across the bridge or continue straight on for the second viewpoint. As you approach the roadside pavement, there are three concrete steps with a handrail, and a further stone step onto the pavement level. Follow the pavement for 50 yards. Take the path on the left at the viewpoint sign. The path through the woods here is stony, but good, and undulates gently. There are glimpses of the river through the trees, before reaching a viewpoint with a bench and an interpretation board providing interesting geological information about the view. Retrace your steps back to the car park over the bridge or across the road.

Walk 2 Woodland Walk (2km)

Start the walk from the large timber sign post where various paths cross near the log cabin café. Turn right passing a forest barrier and crossing the disabled parking area. Take the path running parallel to the road, following the green topped posts. The path is level here with some roots and exposed stones. Pass the Forestry Commission warning sign, where the path narrows and then cross a road, walking alongside electricity posts through pleasant woodland. The path continues to be narrow, but with a good surface. Continue along ignoring all side paths. Cut trees at the side of the path could be used as resting points if needed. After about half a mile the path crosses a stream and goes up a short, gentle incline. When you reach a road

(this is the exit road from the Symonds Yat Rock car park) turn right and almost immediately left.

The next section will not be accessible for all as it includes a rather rougher section of path and a reasonably short but steep walk down a hill. If you do not want to continue, return to the car park by turning right along the road, which should not be very busy with traffic.

To continue with the main walk proceed along an un-made-up path of earth and grass. After 75 metres or so, there is quite a steep downhill section which levels off at the bottom. Be aware of the loose stones underfoot here. On reaching a wide track turn right, past tall deer fencing to protect regenerating trees. After walking alongside a stream for a short distance, the path goes gently uphill through very attractive mature mixed woodland, where many woodland birds may be seen.

On reaching the access road again, turn left, crossing two speed humps. The toilet block will soon come into view together with the car park and picnic benches.