

Tintern Abbey and Abbey Mill

Distance and time

900m, 30 minutes, plus time for refreshments

Brief description of the walk and path conditions

This is a short barrier free linear walk (450m in each direction) along a graveled riverside path and tarmac pavements through the village to Abbey Mill. *There are some awkward sections where drop kerbs are not available, but otherwise the walk is quite accessible.*

Tintern Village stands on the Monmouthshire side of the River Wye and is best known for its famous ruined abbey which was founded by Cistercian monks in 1131, though the present remains date from the 13th century. 400 years of monastic life were abruptly terminated after the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII in 1536, following which the abbey buildings were pillaged and fell into a long period of decay. It was not until much later, in the late 18th century that the Lower Wye Valley became a fashionable destination for early tourists seeking out picturesque landscape and Romantic sites, with Tintern Abbey being the main architectural highlight of the Wye Tour. The Duke of Beaufort cleared out the interior of the building and laid down a lawn making it easier for visitors to admire the ruins.

After the railway arrived in 1876, Tintern became even more accessible as an 'excursion' destination and it was not uncommon for over a thousand people to arrive by train on September evenings to view the harvest moon rising through the Abbey's rose window.

Start point for the walk and facilities

Use either of the car parks close to the Abbey, the one nearest to the river being the most convenient for this walk and a visit to the Abbey complex, which is managed by Cadw.

Visitors to any of Cadw's Welsh monuments and sites may find it helpful to obtain a copy of their Guide for Disabled Visitors (also available as a downloadable document from their web site

<http://www.cadw.wales.gov.uk/>) The guide provides details of parking and toilet facilities, shops, visual displays and tours on tape, and is best used in conjunction with Cadw's site leaflets or their Map of Wales. Wheelchair users and their assisting companions are admitted free of charge to all monuments and are able to access parts of many of their sites. Disabled visitors to Tintern Abbey will be given a plan which includes a recommended route for wheelchairs. The Abbey grounds are laid to grass, with some firm, level paths. The entrance to the shop and pay desk is level. There are information panels and an exhibition. Benches are provided.

Relevant OS Maps

Explorer OL14 – Wye Valley and Forest of Dean

Outdoor Leisure 162 – Gloucester and the Forest of Dean

Detailed Walk description

Leave the Abbey car park and with the river on your right, passing the traffic island along the riverbank path. Notice the stone archway on the side of the Anchor pub on the left. For several centuries the Anchor has provided refreshment for travellers particularly those waiting for the ferry which crossed the river at this point. It was established in the 14th century to allow the monks from the Abbey to have an easy access to their extensive land holdings on the English side of the river. The archway is the ancient water gate for the Abbey and opened onto a stone paved slipway down to the water's edge. Although the slipway has now been filled in, its remains can be seen at low tide – on both sides of the river.

Continue along the level gravel path, once the only way that carts or vehicles could reach the Anchor. After 80m the path narrows a little to pass The Quay House whose small garden on the right was once the site of Tintern Quay. Soon after the cottage there is a seat, but no drop kerbs. Walk along the tarmac road which bears to the left past the village hall where there is a children's play area. Continue up a short slope to reach the pavement in the main road (no drop kerb). Follow the pavement along to the right passing a shop and studio to reach Abbey Mill, with its gift shops, coffee shop and restaurant. A

flight of steps leads down from the pavement to the lower level, but can be avoided by continuing past the main building and then entering the site by using the access road.

A mill has stood here at the mouth of the Angidy River for several centuries. Firstly a corn mill and later a woolen mill, the remains include one of the water wheels clearly visible by the side of the main entrance to the Abbey Mill craft shop. The wheel was powered by water from a pond on the opposite side of the main road in the area now used as the car park of the Royal George Hotel. During the 20th century the mill site was used as a sawmill, wood turnery and builders yard, which closed in the 1970's. The mill complex also includes the site of a small floating dock which was constructed in 1693 and provided with lock gates, to impound water at low tide. It was filled in in 1998 as part of a flood defence scheme which involved the construction of a new culvert to take the Angidy River under the main road.

Before returning to Tintern Abbey you may like to continue beyond Abbey Mill the short distance to the old Wireworks Bridge across the river. This bridge has an uneven surface consisting of individual railway sleepers laid side by side, and it offers a pleasant view downstream of the river and the Abbey beyond. The bridge was built in 1875 to provide a branch line connecting to the Wye Valley Railway which had bypassed the village on the opposite side of the river. It also connected to the wire and tinsplate industry further up the Angidy Valley and to the sawmill and turnery works.

Having explored the Abbey Mill complex and perhaps enjoyed a drink and other refreshments, return along the riverside path to the car park.