

Builth Wells town and riverside, with option to Penddol Rocks

Distance and time

Main walk 2.4km (1–1.5 hrs)

Extended walk 4.4km (1.5–2.5 hrs)

Brief description of the walk, path conditions and facilities

During Victorian times, Builth Wells became a popular mid Wales spa town following the discovery of saline springs in the 1830s. The arrival of railways towards the end of the 19th century also boosted the number of visitors and as a result many of the town's original narrow streets are lined with Victorian and Edwardian buildings. Now regarded as the centre for farming and agriculture in Wales, Builth Wells gained new importance as the permanent home of the Royal Welsh Show on the opposite side of the river from the town. Builth Wells remains a popular touring centre and base for visitors.

The described walk may be used either as a circuit which takes in the town centre, or as a linear 'there and back' walk keeping close to the river. *The main part of the route is along tarmac paths. An extension of the route using grassy paths across river meadows is also available (see text). There are two 15cm steps to negotiate on the extended route, and there are sections where the surface has exposed tree roots which could pose a tripping hazard.*

Please note that in wet conditions the surface of natural paths can be prone to become more uneven and difficult to negotiate.

The walk starts from the main pay and display car park in the Groe riverside park close to the six arch bridge over the river, next to Builth Wells TIC and adjacent to public toilets. There are no separate accessible WCs here, but they are available in the gents/ladies sections, and no Radar key is required.

Start point for the walk

In the Groe riverside park, next to the TIC. Please note that a one-way traffic system has to be followed through the town centre to reach the car park from the west.

Relevant OS Maps

Explorer Map 188 – Builth Wells

Explorer Map 200 – Llandrindod Wells and Elan Valley

Outdoor Leisure Map 147 – Elan Valley and Builth Wells

Detailed Walk description

Start the walk by heading away from the bridge along the broad tarmac path through an avenue of trees, sometimes called “Abrams Folly”. The bridge was built in 1779 and widened in 1925. Be aware that cyclists may also use this path which follows part of National Cycle Route 8 linking Cardiff and Holyhead. Follow the path past a small picnic site on the left (300m) and seats placed at irregular intervals overlooking the river until you reach the confluence of the River Irfon and the River Wye (800m). There are more picnic tables at this end of the park, where the path curves round to the left. 150m after the bend will bring you to Rhosferig Bridge across the River Irfon. This bridge was built in 1984 to replace an earlier structure.

Note: Those wanting to do the longer walk to Penddol Rocks should follow the ‘Penddol Rocks Walk’ description given at the end of this text.

Leaving the bridge on your right continue along the path and bear left to reach Love Lane, with the football pitch on your left. After 80m, turn left into Broadway, noting a seat on the right. 20m beyond the seat, there is a level tarmac path on the left taking you back to the riverside path and the car park without visiting the town centre.

To follow the town centre route continue along Broadway until you reach Park Road. Turn left, soon after passing the High School entrance on the left and the offices of Antur Gwy on the right. Carefully cross the road towards the corner of the churchyard and go

through the narrow kissing gate. To avoid this gate turn right to pass the Church Hall and then left into the churchyard.

The parish church of St Mary was founded in Norman times and has a 14th century tower, the rest of the building being Victorian. There are several seats close to the church. With the church on your left continue along the tarmac path to reach the High Street. Turn left and follow the High Street until you reach Groe Street after the White Horse Inn. This public house was built with funds raised by public subscription after a disastrous fire swept through the town in 1690. Turn left down Groe Street. This was originally called Duck Lane and was used by the townspeople to take their ducks to the river in the 18th and 19th centuries. At the bottom of Groe Street, use the pedestrian crossing to return to the car park on the opposite side of the street.

Penddol Rocks walk

This is a 2km 'there and back' linear walk from the Irfon footbridge.

Cross the Irfon Bridge by using the ramp (1:15 gradient) or steps to reach Golf Links Road. Turn right and after 10m bear right into a large riverside meadow, using the kissing gate or adjacent field gate. Keep close to the right hand edge of the field to reach the confluence of the two rivers near the Aber Pool, a local fishing spot. Then follow the grassy path along the bank of the Wye through two large meadows. At the far side of the second field, take care as you approach a metal gate (1 metre wide). The path is uneven, affected by tree roots, and has a crossfall. Go through the gate and carefully cross the 60cm wide sleeper footbridge, with a 15cm step at each end, then climb a short slope to regain the level field path. At the far end of the third field, there is a lovely stretch of river with a mixture of deep pools and rapids at Penddol Rocks.

Having spent some time here, retrace your route back to the Irfon Footbridge.