

Rhayader: Town and Riverside

Distance and time

Walk One – Groe Park and Riverside Approx 500m (20 mins)

Walk Two – Waun Capel Park, Riverside and Town Centre Approx 2.3km; allow at least 1 hr, excluding stops.

Brief description of the walks, path conditions and facilities

When the River Wye reaches Rhayader it encounters a rocky channel and the resulting waterfall, which can be seen from one of the walks, gave the town its proper name of Rhaedr Gwy meaning “the waterfall of the Wye”. The falls below the bridge are impressive, especially when the river is in spate. Rhayader is an attractive market town and is close to the Elan Valley where there are many opportunities for picnics and walks overlooking the dams and reservoirs that were built to supply the growing water needs of Birmingham. The Elan Valley Visitor Centre is about 3 miles (4.8 km) from Rhayader (leaving the town via West Street).

Two walks are described, the first a short stroll in Groe Park, on the west side of the river, and the other a longer circuit taking in the town centre, Waun Capel Park and the opposite side of the river.

The first route is on tarmac paths.

The second, longer route, also uses paved surfaces, to begin with, but beyond the entrance to the rugby club, the riverside section of path is more difficult. *Although the path is generally level, there are two short inclines of 1:6 near the start and the surface is a mix of compacted earth, stone and grass, with a 50m section affected by exposed tree roots. The path width varies from 40–120cm. Parts of the path can be soft in wet weather.* The entire walk is barrier free.

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

WCs (Radar operated) are located in North Street. There are also WCs (not disabled access) just off Elan Road, 50m towards the town centre.

Start point for the walks

Walk One – Groe Park and Riverside: Gravel car park in Elan Road about 200m beyond the bridge. To reach Groe Park from the clock tower in the town centre go along West Street.

Walk Two – Waun Capel Park, riverside and town centre: Central pay and display car park in Dark Lane, close to Rhayader Leisure Centre in North Street, where WCs (Radar operated) are located.

Relevant OS Maps

Explorer Map 200 – Llandrindod Wells and Elan Valley

Outdoor Leisure Map 147 – Elan Valley and Builth Wells

Detailed Walk descriptions

Walk One – Groe Park and Riverside

Leave the gravel car park in Elan Road by following the downhill lane, passing The Triangle Inn on the left and then reaching the entrance to Groe Park in 80m. This is a pleasant riverside park with children's play area, picnic benches and seats by the river, with the sound of the waterfall always present. Follow the wide tarmac path across the park to reach the river bank and join another, less smooth tarmac path along the bank. The walk can be extended along the path to the end of the park and then turn left through a gate and up a short ramp, with 2 steps, to regain the road. To avoid these steps, retrace your walk through the park.

Walk Two – Waun Capel Park, riverside and town centre

Leave the car park, turn right and then left to pass the Leisure Centre to reach North Street (the main road). Use the pedestrian crossing to enter Cross Lane, noting signs to Children's Premier Play Area and Waun Capel Park. Follow Cross Lane around the edge of Rhayader Livestock Market to reach Church Street. Cross into Castle Road and continue straight ahead along a short, narrow street between terraced cottages, to reach the entrance to Waun Capel Park and the site of Rhayader Castle on the left.

The castle was originally built of timber in 1177, then destroyed by fire in 1190, then later rebuilt and again destroyed, leaving no visible remains apart from defensive ditches on the north and east sides. The castle site, which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, occupies a pleasant grassy knoll overlooking the river with views to the hills beyond. There are two seats and a picnic table here.

Go through the gateway into the park and follow the wide tarmac path downhill towards the river average gradient 1:8 to 1:12. Where a narrower tarmac path joins from the right, note that there are several seats set into the bank overlooking the children's play area and the park below.

(To extend the walk to Otters' Rock cross the steel footbridge, turn right and follow the well-trodden, earthy path (in parts uneven), through woodland alongside the river. Otters' Rock is a large rock in the river.)

To continue our walk turn left at the bottom of the wide path onto a narrower tarmac path running parallel to the river. After a short distance, there is an attractive waterfall on the far side. The path soon narrows (1 metre minimum) where it squeezes past a rocky outcrop and around the corner it reaches a small grassy open space with picnic tables, seats and a car park. Head across the car park and along a narrow street leading out to Bridge Street. Carefully cross this road, which takes traffic to the Elan Valley Reservoirs, turn left and, after 15 metres, turn right into Water Lane, by the side of Lulworth Cottage, with a signpost to "Riverside Walk".

Now follow Water Lane gently downhill for 100m and, go through the gateway where it bears left into the rugby club. Turn right off the tarmac onto a path signed "Welcome to the Riverside Walk". This is a very well-used path with a natural surface, which narrows down to 40cm in places. It is generally level and keeps close to the river bank on the right. Soon after the sign there are two short (8m) slopes (1:6) down and up a bank. The path is compacted earth in places and may

be soft after rain. There are exposed tree roots for 50m as you approach the first picnic tables. These are on the right of the path close to a small beach. Continue another 150m along the path, which now has an earth/stone surface, varying in width from 40–120cm, to reach two more picnic tables on the right. The path then narrows to 30cm through a grassy area with three more picnic tables on the left. 80m beyond the tables, the path reverts to grass and then changes to a stone surface (40–100cm wide) to arrive at a small grassy area in front of a cottage. Bear left up the short path and a tarmac drive (1:8 gradient) to reach the main road, which is a continuation of South Street.

Turn left to follow the roadside pavement towards the town centre. To avoid the very narrow pavements ahead, carefully cross the road at the brow of the hill, and turn right into Caeh Herbert Lane at the side of Bethel Baptist Chapel. Keep on the left side of Caeh Herbert Lane and in 80m, turn left into Martin's Way, a tarmac alley leading through to East Street. Then turn left to reach the Clock Tower at the town centre crossroads. Turn right into North Street, to return to the Leisure Centre in 150 metres.