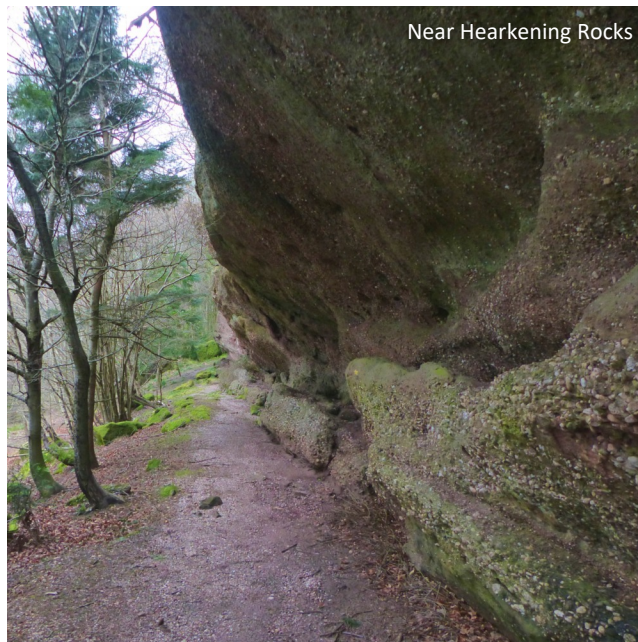


Near Harkening Rocks



Staunton & English Bicknor 11 miles: strenuous

Featuring the impressive Suck Stone and Near Harkening Rocks, two medieval churches, a lengthy section along the Wye, the Yat Rock viewpoint and a quiet stream valley, this walk offers an in-depth introduction to the landscapes of the Forest of Dean.

Map overleaf. Allow 5–6 hours. One stiff climb to Yat Rock; several stiles, and field and woodland paths may be muddy.

1 From the Forest Retreat, turn left down the hill and follow the road for ½ mile to the Bracelands entrance, on the right. 2 Follow the track heading straight on beyond the entrance, passing a wooden barrier. 3 By a gate from the campsite, turn left, with a grey waymark and a sign to “River”. 4 At the bottom of the valley, go straight on at a crossroads and follow the track uphill and to the right. Keep right when another track joins from the left. 5 Keep left at a fork to a metal barrier into Forest Close, Staunton, and walk out to the main road. 6 Turn right to the church. 7 Beyond the churchyard, turn right onto a hedged track leading away from the road. 8 Beyond the last house, follow a path into the woods. 9 At a junction of paths, bear slightly left onto a path which curves right and leads downhill. 10 On meeting a track, turn left to meet a forest road. 11 Turn right and follow the gravelly track to Redding’s Lodge. 12 Beyond the house, continue along the track past a barrier. 13 Just before a fork, turn left onto a footpath with a Highmeadows Trail waymark disk. 14 Bear right at the top of Near Harkening Rocks and follow yellow arrows on the trees as you pick your way down the slope between the rocks, before swinging left to pass below the main overhang. 15 At the end of the cliff the path swings right to the Suck Stone, then drops left to meet a wide surfaced track. 16 Turn right and follow the track for a third of a mile. 17 Turn left off the track onto a descending track below some overgrown clearfell; at the bottom of the wood, bear right. The track descends before swinging right below some rocks. 18 After a metal barrier, the path bends left to meet a bridleway, where you turn sharp right and descend to the Wye. The bridleway runs above and parallel to the main riverside track for a while before eventually joining it. 19 After just under a mile, you pass the Biblins footbridge; continue along the riverside track for a further 1¼ miles to Symonds Yat East. 20 Beyond the Royal Lodge Hotel, take a walled footpath on the right signposted to Yat Rock. 21 After 200 yards, turn right up steps through the trees and past a bench. 22 The path continues uphill with intermittent steps; at the next junction by a wooden fence, turn right (again signposted “Yat Rock”). 23 On meeting a broad path below a barrier, take a few steps left then take the path opposite, still climbing with intermittent steps. 24 Just before the road, turn right up some stone steps and past a small, low cave on your left. 25 A further flight of stone steps leads up to the picnic area by the Symonds Yat Café. 26 Cross to the

footbridge and turn left along the boardwalk to visit the Yat Rock viewpoint. 27 Returning to the café, bear left through the staff car park to the road. 28 Follow a footpath on the right that passes behind a white-painted house. 29 On meeting the metalled entrance road for the main Symonds Yat car park, turn left and walk out to the public road. 30 Turn right along the road for 75 yards, then cross and climb a stile at a public footpath sign after the last house on the left. 31 Follow the hedge on your right then, when it turns right, strike out across the field ahead, aiming for the far left-hand corner. 32 Join a farm track along the top of the wood on your left and continue beyond a farm gate, ignoring a footpath off to the right. 33 After 600 yards, when the track bends right into a farm, carry straight on to a kissing gate into a paddock and cross to a second kissing gate. 34 Bear right to a third and fourth kissing gate and enter a wood, following the path down to a lane. 35 Turn right, then left at a road junction, and walk up into English Bicknor, passing the primary school entrance. 36 At the T-junction at the top of the hill, turn left (look over the wall on your left for the earthworks of the former motte-and-bailey castle). 37 Stay on the main road at a road junction, then turn left through the lych gate to visit the church. 38 Returning to the road, cross over and walk down Godwins Lane. 39 Beyond the last house, continue down the green lane ahead of you. 40 Cross a stile into a field and walk down to the valley bottom, bearing slightly left, to a stone slab stile and a boardwalk across the stream. 41 Climb the wooded slope to a track then turn right and drop back down to recross the stream at a footbridge. 42 Turn left and follow the stream up the valley, leaving it to cross a stile. 43 Another stile leads into a lane; cross to yet another stile and bear half-right, climbing to pass above a wood. 44 Climb a stile and continue along the valley side, past another stile into a narrowing field. 45 A track leads briefly through woodland into another narrow field, beyond which it runs along the bottom of the valley through more woodland. 46 At the end of another small field, bear slightly right onto the obvious track continuing up the valley, now dry. 47 At a ruined barn, the farm track swings right (private) but the right of way continues straight ahead to a gate into a field. 48 Walk up the right-hand side of the field to a road. 49 Turn left and follow the road down to the bottom of the valley. 50 Pass the pumping station on the left and continue uphill along the lane, passing the turning to the Dog & Muffler pub on your left. 51 Continue up the narrow lane uphill between cottages and houses until you meet Park Road in the centre of the village. 52 Turn right and walk along the main village street for 500 yards to the village green and church. 53 Cross straight over into Bracelands Drive and continue for a further 300 yards back to the Forest Retreat.



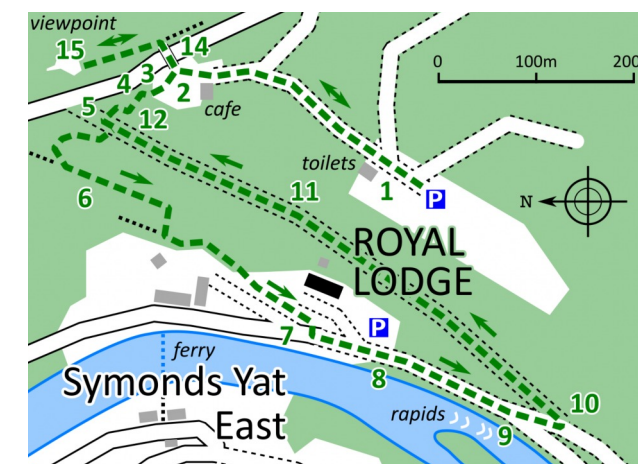
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Yat Rock 1½ miles: moderate

5 minutes’ drive + 1 hour’s walking. A steep descent and ascent with rocky steps (though a slightly gentler option is available). Woodland paths may be muddy.

Start: Symonds Yat Rock pay-and-display car park. Drive out of the Forest Holidays site, then left at the crossroads in Christchurch. Turn left immediately, signposted to Symonds Yat Rock; the car park entrance is on the left after 1¼ miles.

1 From the Symonds Yat Rock car park, walk past the toilet block and up to the café. 2 Beyond the café, walk to the far left-hand corner of the picnic area, where stone steps descend with a wooden handrail. 3 Beyond a low cave on your right, descend another flight of steps. 4 Bear left, away from the road, down yet more steps and continue through the woods to a broad crossing path just below a barrier (for a longer but gentler descent, turn left here then right at the river). 5 For the direct route, take the path almost opposite. 6 At a wooden fence, bear left (still heading downhill). 7 The path eventually emerges between gardens by the Royal Lodge. 8 Walk to the far end of the car park and join the wide track beyond the barrier; follow it parallel to the river. 9 Fork left after about 100 yards. 10 After a further 100 yards or so, turn sharp left onto a path that doubles back up the hillside. 11 Climb to the barrier where the downward path crossed. 12 Turn right up the stepped path you descended earlier. 13 Bear right past the cave as you approach the road again, and climb to the café and picnic area. 14 Cross to a footbridge over the road and follow the boardwalk to the left to reach the viewpoint. 15 Return to the picnic area and bear left past the café then right to return to the main car park.



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FOREST OF DEAN

YAT ROCK
1½ miles: moderate

SYMONDS YAT via BIBLINS
5½ miles: moderate

KING ARTHUR'S CAVE
7¼ miles: fairly strenuous

STAUNTON & ENGLISH BICKNOR
11 miles: strenuous

With the exception of the **green** route, overleaf, all of the walks described in this leaflet begin at the Forest Retreat and visit Symonds Yat East and Yat Rock by different routes. Thus the outward and return routes suggested here can be combined to give various additional circular options:

- **Yat Rock & English Bicknor (7 miles):**
red route steps **1–7**, **purple** route from step **27**.
- **Bracelands & English Bicknor (8½ miles):**
orange route steps **1–15**, **purple** route from step **28**.
- **Staunton & Yat Rock (8¾ miles):**
purple route steps **1–19**, **orange** route from step **8**.

Symonds Yat via Biblins
5½ miles: moderate

The most straightforward route to and from Symonds Yat, featuring an old mine, a significant riverside stretch and of course the classic viewpoint of Symonds Yat. Look out for Peregrine Falcons and Goshawks overhead.

Allow 3 hours. A straightforward descent to the Wye on the grey-waymarked “Bracelands to the Wye” path and a level riverside path to Symonds Yat East, followed by the sharp climb to Yat Rock. From there the return is fairly level. Woodland paths may be muddy.

1 From the Forest Retreat, turn left downhill and follow the road for ½ mile to the Bracelands entrance, on your right. **2** Follow the track heading straight on beyond the entrance, passing a wooden barrier. **3** By a gate from the campsite, turn left, with a grey waymark and a sign to “River”. **4** At the bottom of the valley, turn right, still following the grey waymarks. **5** After ¼ mile, look out for a disused mine level on your right. **6** Continue down the valley; after ¾ mile you cross the Wysis Way and shortly afterwards pass the Oldstone Well spring on your right. **7** On reaching the River Wye, turn right and follow the riverside path for 1 mile to Symonds Yat East. **8** Beyond the Royal Lodge Hotel, take the walled footpath on the right signposted to Yat Rock. **9** After 200 yards, turn right up steps through the trees and past a bench. **10** The path continues uphill with intermittent steps; at the next junction by a wooden fence, turn right (again signposted “Yat Rock”). **11** On meeting a broad path below a barrier, take a few steps left then take the path opposite, still climbing with intermittent steps. **12** Just before the road, turn right up some stone steps and past a small, low cave on your left. **13** A further flight of stone steps leads up to the picnic area by the Symonds Yat Café. **14** Cross to the footbridge and bear left along the boardwalk to visit the Yat Rock viewpoint. **15** Returning to the café, bear left through the staff car park to the road. **16** Follow a footpath on the right that passes behind a white-painted house. **17** Cross the entrance road for the main Symonds Yat

car park and continue along the path ahead (with yellow “Christchurch to Symonds Yat walk” waymarks, which you will follow from now on). **18** After 600 yards cross the exit road from the car park, still following the yellow-waymarked path. **19** Ignore a track on the right and climb to pass to the left of Mailscot Lodge. **20** The path continues beyond the drive, shortly crossing another forest road (within sight of the road on your left). **21** Cross another forest road, still following the mostly level path with the woodland sloping down to your right. **22** Eventually you pass the assault course on your right and emerge past a barrier onto a road. Turn left to return to the Forest Retreat.

King Arthur’s Cave
7¼ miles: fairly strenuous

The outward route is the quickest and easiest route to Symonds Yat. The return is more adventurous, seeking out the impressive King Arthur’s Cave and secret viewpoints over the Wye Gorge.

Allow 4 hours. Several moderate climbs and descents. This route uses the hand ferry at the Saracen’s Head to cross the Wye, which may not run when the river is high. Call ahead on 01600 890435 to check availability. Woodland paths may be muddy.

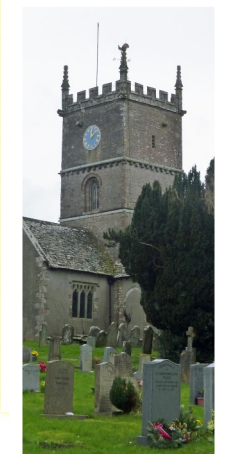
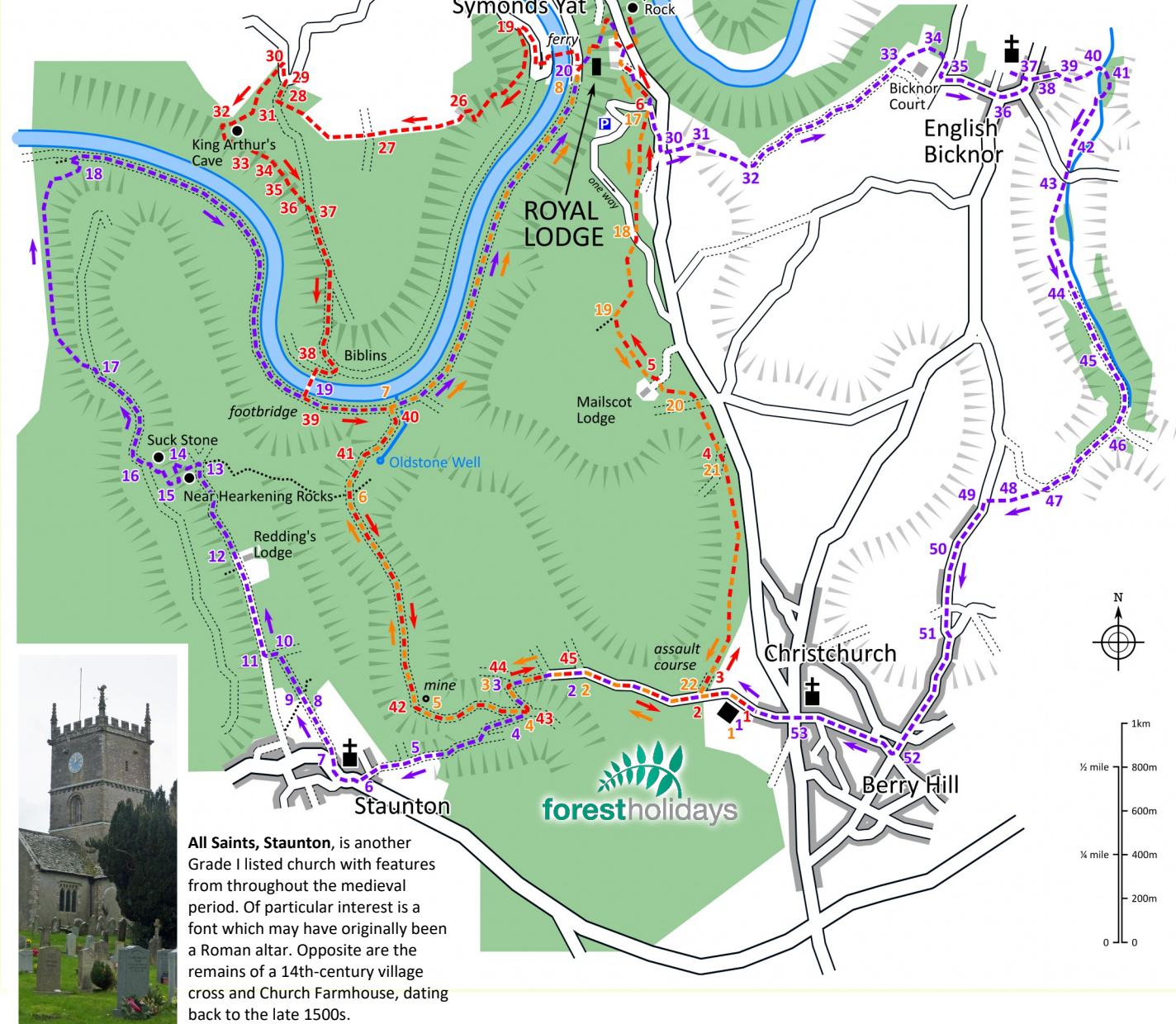
1 From the Forest Retreat, turn left down the hill. **2** Pass a gateway with a cattle grid on the left, then turn right off the road at a public footpath sign, past a barrier onto the waymarked Christchurch to Symonds Yat Rock Walk. **3** Keep right of the assault course and follow the mostly level path with woodland dropping away to your left. **4** After ¾ mile you cross a forest road within earshot of the public road to your right, and then another, before passing to the right of Mailscot Lodge. **5** Continuing along the yellow-waymarked path, descend past a bench. A track joins from the left and 400 yards later the path crosses the metalled exit road from the main Symonds Yat car park. **6** After a further 600 yards, cross the car park entrance road before emerging onto the road behind a house. **7** Walk through the disabled/staff car park on the left, to the Forestry Commission café. **8** Beyond the café, walk to the far left-hand corner of the picnic area, where stone steps descend with a wooden handrail. **9** Beyond a low cave on your right, descend another flight of steps. **10** Bear left, away from the road, down yet more steps and continue through the woods until you meet a broader crossing path just below a barrier (for a longer but gentler descent to Symonds Yat East, turn left here, then right when you meet the river). **11** For the direct route, take the path almost opposite. **12** At a wooden fence, bear left (still heading downhill). **13** The path eventually emerges between gardens at the car park by the Royal Lodge. **14** Turn right to the Saracen’s Head pub. **15** Take the hand ferry across the River Wye. **16** Once across, climb the steps and turn left. **17** Beyond a white-painted cottage on the right, and opposite Wyaside Cottage on the left, turn right up a narrow path signposted through the hedge. **18** This steep stony path cuts a corner in the road. When you regain the lane, turn right. **19** Opposite a turning place on the

right, turn left into a narrow path beside a telegraph pole. **20** This path winds uphill between premises to meet a larger path in front of a cliff face, with a Woodland Trust sign at its left-hand end. Turn left and follow the path as it bears right. **21** At a path junction where the path ahead starts to descend, turn right (uphill). **22** Pass between a partly fenced-off cliff face with a cave on the right, and a rocky pinnacle on the left. **23** Again, before the path starts to descend, turn sharp right, to the right of a fenced-off pit. **24** At a further Woodland Trust sign, bear left, keeping the fence on your left. **25** Pass a small stone ruin on your right and then a mineshaft within a circular fence on your left. **26** Follow a generally level track along the top of the wood, with gardens and properties to your right. **27** At a junction of tracks, go straight ahead along a driveway to reach a house called Woodview. Follow the metalled lane beyond. **28** When you meet a junction of byways with a small car park and interpretation panel to your left, turn right. **29** At a road junction just beyond the entrance to Doward Park Campsite, turn left. **30** After about 100 yards, turn sharp left onto a signposted public footpath that cuts back downhill. Pass the remains of various small quarry buildings. **31** When you emerge in a disused quarry, bear right back into the trees. **32** Pass a shallow cave with a rock pillar and continue past further cliffs and caves until you reach the larger King Arthur’s Cave, with its mound of spoil in front of the entrances. **33** Beyond the cave, follow a path that bears left to a waymark post. **34** Bear left at another waymark and scramble up through a low crag. **35** The path continues along the contour with regular waymarks, and at one point a short diversion to the right leads to a viewpoint at the top of a cliff overlooking the Wye valley. **36** The path continues before dropping down and up and then reaches the wide gravel drive to Biblins. **37** Turn right and follow the drive downhill (keeping right when a track forks left) until you approach the campsite buildings. **38** Turn left to a barrier, then turn right to the Biblins footbridge over the Wye. **39** On the opposite bank, turn left and follow the river for 400 yards. **40** At a major junction of tracks, where the riverside path divides, turn right along a track up a side valley. **41** Pass the Oldstone Well spring on your left after 250 yards, then shortly afterwards cross the Wysis Way. **42** Continue up the valley for ¾ mile, passing a disused mine level on the left. **43** When you reach a crossroad of tracks, turn hard left at the grey waymark post. **44** At the top of this track, turn right to pass the entrance to Bracelands campsite. **45** Follow the road for ½ mile back to the Forest Retreat.



The **Suck Stone** is said to be the largest detached conglomerate boulder in the British Isles.

St Mary’s Church in English Bicknor has a fine Norman arcade with an example of ‘beakhead’ carving. Other treasures include three 14th-century effigies.



All Saints, Staunton, is another Grade I listed church with features from throughout the medieval period. Of particular interest is a font which may have originally been a Roman altar. Opposite are the remains of a 14th-century village cross and Church Farmhouse, dating back to the late 1500s.