



Beautiful **BRITAIN**

Put your best foot forward

It's easy, free and a great way to see some of our most stunning countryside – walking ticks all the boxes, as our intrepid explorers found



The Wrekin, Shropshire

By Michelle Dickson



There are lots of great walks around the Ironbridge area of Shropshire and we decided to do one of the most popular. A clear, sunny morning and the promise of views over 15 counties were reasons enough to climb the Wrekin, a 400-metre-high hill said to be the inspiration for Tolkien's Middle Earth. Just north of Ironbridge Gorge – the site of the dramatic Iron Bridge, built in 1779, the first of its kind in the world and a monument to the Industrial Revolution – the Wrekin can be walked comfortably in three hours. Better still, take half a day at a leisurely pace with lots of stops to admire the view and have a picnic at the top. We parked at Forest Glen, just off the road between Telford and Shrewsbury, joining dog walkers, runners and the odd mountain biker. This popular route starts around the base of the hill and winds through fields and woods, before a steepish climb to the summit. Our reward was the spectacular 360-degree vista across the valleys of the Shropshire plain to the Welsh mountains and over hills such as Wenlock Edge and the Long Mynd.

Where to stay

The Old Orleton, Wellington (01952 255011; theoldorleton.com) made a great base for a walking weekend. A cosily informal inn, the rooms are chic and the service friendly. Food at The Old Orleton majors on locally sourced

produce, such as Shropshire rabbit, while vegetarian choices are inventive and tempting for meat eaters, too.

Where to eat

The Hundred House Hotel, Norton, near Ironbridge, Telford (01952 580240; hundredhouse.co.uk) is a lovely old country inn; the half-timbered, thatched parts date back to the 14th century when it was the local courthouse. The restaurant has two coveted AA Rosettes. We ate Tequila-cured salmon with hickory-smoked trout, followed by Monkfish and garlic prawns in saffron and caper sauce, finishing off with Double chocolate mousse with orange crème Anglaise. Tables in the bar are decorated with small vases of herbs picked from the hotel's hidden treasure of a garden, which diners can explore.

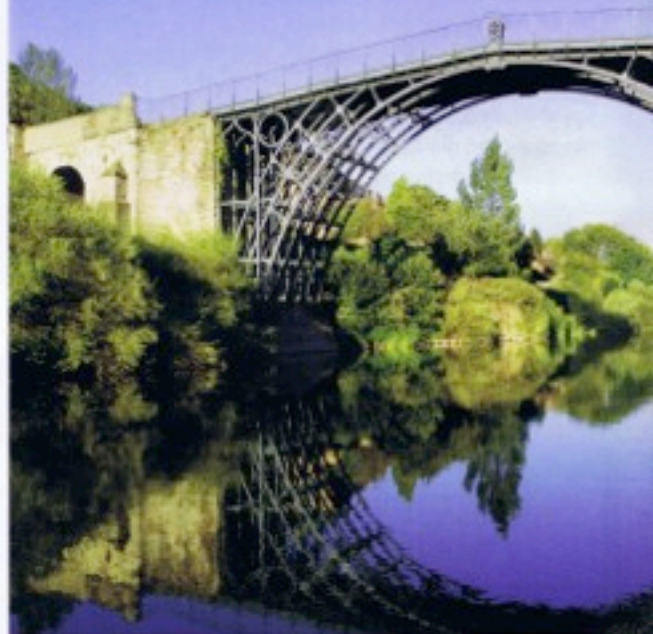
What to do if it rains

Visit Ironbridge Gorge, a gloriously scenic spot and World Heritage Site, home to 10 museums spread along the valley beside the river Severn. There's plenty to keep everyone entertained on a wet day, from Blists Hill's authentic recreation of a Victorian town, to the Jackfield Tile Museum and the Museum of the Gorge – where the story of how one small Shropshire town became the cradle of the Industrial Revolution is brought to life (01952 433424; ironbridge.org.uk).

Bring me back...

A bottle or two of the local Wood's Shropshire Lad ale, a crucial ingredient in the delicious Welsh rarebit served at Berry's in Church Stretton (01694 724452; berryscoffeehouse.co.uk).

Walk with a view, clockwise from top: the famous Iron Bridge; the Old Orleton inn; a spectacular vista from the top of the Wrekin



Best apps GB National Parks app (£4.99) grants full access to UK 1:50k Ordnance Survey maps and is clear, accurate and brilliant. The Most Amazing Walks app (£1.99) by Reader's Digest gives details of almost 200 nationwide walks, with step-by-step route details and much more.