

Chepstow Castle Dell, town and riverside

Distance and time

Castle Dell walk 1 hour (1 ¼ miles), plus time in Chepstow

Riverside Walk 30 minutes (½ mile).

Brief description of the walk and path conditions

A choice of two circular walks around Chepstow. One visits the Castle Dell and the town centre, the other takes walkers for a shorter stroll along the riverside park.

The walks are on well surfaced town paths and pavements, with an incline of around 1:8 at its steepest through Castle Dell, where there are resting places at the top.

Chepstow is the starting or ending point of the Wye Valley Walk. It is an attractive town, dominated by the massive castle set on a cliff above the Wye. The castle was the first stone built castle in Wales, with its first period of building beginning just after the Norman conquest in 1066. Chepstow was also a port of considerable importance, with warehouses, quays and a boat building industry. The museum in Bridge Street has excellent displays about the development of the town.

Relevant OS Maps

Explorer OL14 – Wye Valley and Forest of Dean

Outdoor Leisure 162 – Gloucester and the Forest of Dean

Start point for the walk and facilities

The car park in Bridge Street is the recommended start point for both walks, although the Dell car park might be preferred by those wishing to use the Chepstow shopmobility scheme which is located at the One Stop Shop, next to the library. Parking at both car parks is pay and display, although it is free to disabled badge holders.

To reach the Bridge Street car park from the A466 (Monmouth road or Severn Bridge direction) the best approach is to enter Chepstow down

the A48 (Mount Pleasant) following signs for Chepstow castle. Turn left at the traffic lights off the A48 into Chepstow, bearing left into Middle Street (one way). At the junction turn left into Bridge Street (straight on), and follow signs for the Castle which is located at the bottom of the street on the left. The Museum is almost opposite the car park, and the Tourist Information Centre (which can provide an excellent map of the town) is located in the car park with WCs next to it, including a disabled WC accessed via a Radar key.

To reach the Dell car park turn off the A466 at the roundabout next to Chepstow Racecourse, taking Mounon Road into Chepstow. The road has sleeping policemen and chicanes to slow traffic past local schools. The car park is on the right approx 1km from the roundabout, and is sign posted. The shopmobility scheme is at the One Stop Shop, next to the town library. To book a mobility scooter or wheelchair phone 01291 635700. The Dell car park has a toilet block with disabled WC.

Detailed Walk description

The Dell and Chepstow town

From the Castle car park take the smooth gravel path to the left of the castle. The approach to the castle itself is difficult due to the steep approach and inside there are uneven surfaces and steps. The outside of the castle can be viewed from this walk though. The castle had several phases of development, beginning in 1067 with a square keep which was built using stone from the Roman town of Caerwent nearby. The Castle was extended and re-fortified over the centuries by various owners. It saw action in the Civil War and was twice taken by Parliamentarians during this turbulent time. In 1685 the garrison was disbanded and the castle fell into disrepair.

To continue the walk, follow the smooth gravel and then tarmac path gently climbing up the Dell. The large rocky boulder that you will pass on the left was brought here from Plynlimon, close to the source of the Wye and marks the official start of the Wye Valley Walk. A similar rock from Chepstow was taken to the end point of the walk high up in the mountains of Mid Wales.

The path continues to climb rather more steeply (1:8), and then levels out as the path bends round to the right. Here there are benches on which to catch your breath and a childrens play area. Pass the play area to enter The Dell car park via an archway through the old town wall.

There are various options to return through Chepstow town, with its many facilities and shops. Take one of the passages near the WC block from car park to reach Bank Street. Turn left down Bank Street, bearing right to reach Beaufort Square (both Middle Street and Hocker Street should be avoided as the former has very narrow pavements, and the latter is cobbled). Go down the pedestrianised St Mary Street to reach Upper Church Street. Note the interesting buildings in this area, including the almshouses and the unusually named Five Alls public house. Turn left and follow the road round to the right, and down Bridge Street to return to the Castle car park.

Detailed walk description

Riverside Walk

This is a short stroll beginning at the Castle car park, exploring the interesting riverside area.

Turn left out of the car park down Bridge Street. The old Wye Bridge at the end is a fine cast iron structure, and was until 1988 the main entrance into the town from Gloucestershire and the only crossing over the river for cars and other vehicles. It is at least the sixth bridge to be built on this site. Maintenance of the earlier stone and timber bridges was made very difficult by the extremely high tidal range here. The tide rises and falls by 40ft (12m) every day, the second highest in the world.

To continue the walk cross the road with care to join the Riverside Park. There are WCs, including a disabled WC here. Today the Riverside Park is a restful place, but until a century or so ago it was a busy port. The area was then known as Gunstock Wharf, with piles of timber on the quay and bark houses behind, for storing oak bark ready to be shipped to the tanning industry in Bristol and Ireland. Wooden

sea-going merchant ships were built in three shipyards in Chepstow. A plaque on the wall of the Wye Knot restaurant records the embarkation of the leaders of the Chartist uprising to van Dieman's Land (Tasmania), where they transported as punishment for leading a campaign to allow all men to have the right to vote. A number of old converted warehouses will be noted in this interesting area as you proceed along the path.

Across the river is a natural square entrance hole in the cliff, known as the Gloucester Hole. The Union Jack was first painted on the cliff around 1935, and has been regularly repainted every since.

At the end of the path, join the road that leads away from the river. You may return to the Castle car park via St Anne's Street (turn right at the first junction), or by continuing for a short distance up Lower Church Street, crossing the road to enter the Drill Hall car park. Walk across the car park to join a tarmac alleyway to Gwy Court. The access road for Gwy Court joins Bridge Street just below the museum and the Castle car park is just opposite.