

# The Woodbridge Inn and Ironbridge, Shropshire



*Moderate Terrain*

5 miles  
Circular  
2 to 2.5  
hours

210114



## Access Notes



1. The walking route is relatively flat, with just a couple of short (but fairly steep) slopes.
2. There are no stiles, just a couple of gates and a short flight of steps. The paths are a mixture of tarmac pavements, quiet lanes and a stone/gravel old railway line. The area is surrounded by woodland so leaf drop can make the paths a little muddy in winter but the mud is never deep.
3. The return leg follows a long stretch of a narrow pavement alongside a fairly busy road. At a couple of points the narrow pavement disappears completely to accommodate properties which sit directly on the road, so take care of traffic here.
4. If you would rather avoid the long stretch of pavement walking, you can simply retrace your steps from the outward leg instead.

The Woodbridge Inn is situated on the banks of the River Sever with a raised outside terrace and a sunny garden room both giving great views across the river.

A 5 mile circular pub walk from the Woodbridge Inn in Coalport, Shropshire. (A 2 mile version of this walk, The Woodbridge Inn and Coalport, is also available on the All Trails App). The walking route follows an old railway line through the supposed birthplace of the Industrial Revolution all the way to Ironbridge, crossing the famous Iron Bridge which dates from 1779. The return leg follows the gorge lane back through Coalport and then joins a section of the Silkin Way path for the final stretch. There are opportunities to visit some of the popular visitor attractions within the Ironbridge Gorge, including the Coalport China Museum, the Jackfield Tile Museum and the Iron Bridge Toll House.

## Getting there

Coalport is located within the Ironbridge Gorge in Shropshire. The walk starts and finishes from the Woodbridge Inn, just off Coalport Road on the southern side of Coalport Bridge.

Approximate post code **TF8 7JF**.

The pub has its own large car park, however during peak times this can be very busy, in which case please use the public pay and display car park at the China Museum on Coalport High Street. (From this car park, turn right along the High Street, then cross over Coalport Bridge to reach the pub on the left – about a 10 minute walk).

## Walk Sections



**Start to Jackfield Memorial Bridge**



Leave the pub car park via the vehicle entrance and cross over the road with care to join the footpath opposite, the Severn Valley Way signed to Ironbridge. On the right



We have created this walk with the help of AllTrails. Download the app to

follow the route on your phone for live updates of your position and distance walked amongst other things.

You will find lots of walks across the country including walks from the rest of the Brunning and Price family of pubs.

[alltrails.com](https://www.alltrails.com)



you'll also see a waymarker in the shape of a Saxon Warrior which marks this as part of the Mercian Way, a 230 mile long cycle path which runs from Salisbury to Chester. This path is so-named as it passes through what was once the Anglo-Saxon Kingdom of Mercia. Pass through the kissing gate (or cross the horse hurdles) to join this wide surfaced track.

The path soon swings left heading up a flight of shallow steps and, at the top of these, follow the track as it swings right and levels off. The path follows the corridor of a former railway. After a little distance you will see a sign pointing to the right for Silkin Way via Jackfield Bridge. Turn right here and follow the slope down to the road. Keep right along the road and, as you draw level with the old railway bridge to your right, swing left still signed for the Silkin Way. Follow the lane as it swings left and you will reach a metal footbridge to your right, Jackfield Memorial Bridge.

## 1 → 2 Jackfield Memorial Bridge to Jackfield Sidings



For this longer version of the walk, do NOT cross Jackfield Memorial Bridge, just continue along Ferry Road. At the end of the road keep straight ahead onto the stone footpath and you will pass a large red brick factory on the left, with a wooden chute protruding from it. This is the former Maw and Co ceramic tile factory which now houses a craft centre.

At the end of the building, keep left signed to Ironbridge and this will lead you past the gated entrance to the craft centre. Continue up the concrete slope and at the top keep right along the quiet lane, again signed for Ironbridge. At the fork in the lane keep left and follow this tarmac lane for some distance. Some way in you'll notice old wooden sleepers and tracks set into the lane, testament to this area's link with the industrial revolution. Some of the earliest railway systems in Britain were developed in the Ironbridge Gorge, first made of wood and then iron.

Just beyond the sleepers, you'll pass a church on the right and another tile works on the left, Craven Dunnill. The ceramic tile production industry here dates back to the 16th century and tile manufacturing at this site restarted in 2001. Towards the end of the building you'll see examples of the beautifully decorated Victorian tiles set within the arches of the windows. Follow the lane as it bends left (passing the entrance to the Jackfield Tile Museum should you wish to visit), then bends right (passing the old converted school dating from 1844), then bends left again.

You will come to a junction with another road, keep right/ahead and, at the bottom of the slope, cross over to keep straight ahead onto the footpath which runs immediately to the left of the old Jackfield Sidings.

## 2 → 3 Jackfield Sidings to Ironbridge

This path was once a section of the Severn Valley railway line. The 40 mile long line was built between 1858 and 1862. There were sidings here to support the various tile works, along with a passenger halt station. Little remains of the railway except the large level crossing gates.

Follow the tarmac path, pass through a wooden gate and then



continue onto the stone path. Some distance in you'll pass under a footbridge and then later under a road bridge. You will emerge out to a coach parking area. Keep straight ahead through the long narrow parking area and at the end, pass by another Saxon Warrior marker post and leave the car park via a small gate. Turn immediately right to cross over the famous Iron Bridge. (You'll pass the old toll house on the left which houses a museum should you wish to visit). Take a moment in the centre of the bridge to enjoy the views along the River Severn.

## 3 → 4 Ironbridge to Coalport



The Iron Bridge was the first of its kind in the world fabricated from cast iron. Abraham Darby III built the 30 metre bridge with construction beginning in 1779 and the bridge opening in 1781.

On the far side of the bridge keep right, passing a number of small shops in the square to the left. On the right, you'll find a great viewing platform from which you can really appreciate the intricate metal work of Iron Bridge. Keep straight ahead on the pavement of the High Street and you'll come to a small roundabout. Follow the right-hand pavement to continue along the road opposite, Waterloo Street. Follow this street and, beyond the main village, you'll have great views of the River Severn down to the right.

The River Severn was always the main artery for transport through the gorge, with large barges carrying goods. It is Britain's longest river and today is a haven for wildlife with strong populations of trout, salmon and otters testifying to its cleanliness.

On the left you'll pass the remains of the Bedlam Furnaces. The Bedlam Furnaces were built in 1756 and were taken over by Abraham Darby III in 1776. The furnaces were used to forge cast iron at lower prices making it economic for engineers to build the first iron bridge in the world. The name Bedlam Furnaces may have originated from a painting by John Sell Cotman who painted the furnaces in 1803 and titled it Bedlam Furnace near Irongate, Shropshire.

A little further along you'll pass the next bridge over the river at



Coalford, a modern cantilever structure built in 1993. Do NOT cross the bridge, continue on the pavement running along the left-hand side of the river. Follow the pavement for some distance. At one point the pavement disappears to accommodate a cottage which is set right up to the road – take care here to listen carefully for any traffic before you pass by. Eventually you will reach a fork in the road marking the start of Coalport.

## 4 → 5 Coalport to End



Keep right along the grass verge and then follow the road edge (take care on this busy junction) and immediately beyond the junction you can join a slightly raised path running to the right of the road. After some distance this path veers right away from the road and you will reach the northern end of Jackfield Memorial Footbridge. Ahead of you is a stretch of the Shropshire Canal, known as the Coalport Canal. Walk a few paces forward and look to your left where you'll see an inclined railway emerging from the canal's water! The explanation for this requires a little knowledge of the history of the town.

Coalfield was planned as a canal–river interchange and new town by ironmaster William Reynolds. Between 1788 and 1796 he built warehouses, workshops, factories and workers' accommodation in Coalport, making the town much larger than it is today. He also directed the construction of the Shropshire Canal, linking the East Shropshire coalfield with the River Severn – the terminus being Coalport Wharf. The Hay Inclined Plane (the inclined railway you can see before you) was completed in 1793 and acted as a link between the top and bottom of the Severn gorge. The Shropshire Canal, 63 metres above where you are standing now, used box-shaped tub boats to transport goods. The twin railway tracks were laid down the incline so that the tub boats could ascend and descend the inclined plane on wheeled cradles. At the bottom of the incline the rails went underwater allowing the cradle to become submerged and the tub boat to float, moving along the Coalport Canal and out to the River Severn. The alternative to this amazing engineering feat would have required 27 locks to move the tubs the same height.

Coalport is perhaps most famous for Coalport Pottery, founded in 1795. Production continued here until the factory was moved to Staffordshire in 1926. If you wish to visit the Coalport China Museum, (which houses the Northumberland Vase, the largest piece of Coalport China ever produced) go straight ahead along the canal to reach the entrance and then come back to this point to continue your walk.

When you are ready to continue, return to the point with Jackfield Memorial Bridge to your right and turn left up the steps (signed to Tar Tunnel and Victorian Town). At the top of the steps, turn right over the bridge (up to the left you'll have another great view of the Hay Inclined Plane). Keep straight ahead along the High Street taking care of any traffic.

As a section of grass opens up on the right, turn left onto a stone slope heading uphill and signed for the Victorian Town. Follow this zig-zagging up through the park area. At the very top of the slope you'll see an old train wheel which acts as a waymarker for the Silkin Way footpath. Turn right, signed to Coalport Bridge. At the next crossroads keep straight ahead, still signed for Coalport Bridge.

Stay on the Silkin Way heading steadily downhill, ignoring any footpaths off left or right. The path eventually leads you under a road bridge. Continue on the path between tall walls and you will emerge out to a junction with a wide tarmac drive. Keep left along the drive and, a few yards in, keep right at the fork (passing another black train wheel marker post). Continue up a short slope and through a gate to reach a T-junction with the road. Turn right across Coalport Bridge.

Coalport Bridge was built from cast iron in 1818, and unlike its more famous neighbour in Ironbridge, it remains open to traffic, albeit limited to a single lane.

At the far side of the bridge you'll reach the Woodbridge Inn on the left, for some well-earned hospitality.

### Disclaimer

This walking route was walked and checked at the time of writing. We have taken care to make sure all our walks are safe for walkers of a reasonable level of experience and fitness. However, like all outdoor activities, walking carries a degree of risk and we accept no responsibility for any loss or damage to personal effects, personal accident, injury or public liability whilst following this walk. We cannot be held responsible for any inaccuracies that result from changes to the routes that occur over time. Please let us know of any changes to the routes so that we can correct the information.

### Walking Safety

For your safety and comfort we recommend that you take the following with you on your walk: bottled water, snacks, a waterproof jacket, waterproof/sturdy boots, a woolly hat and fleece (in winter and cold weather), a fully-charged mobile phone, a whistle, a compass and an Ordnance Survey map of the area. Check the weather forecast before you leave, carry appropriate clothing and do not set out in fog or mist as these conditions can seriously affect your ability to navigate the route. Take particular care on cliff/mountain paths where steep drops can present a particular hazard. Some routes include sections along roads – take care to avoid any traffic at these points. Around farmland take care with children and dogs, particularly around machinery and livestock. If you are walking on the coast make sure you check the tide times before you set out.

