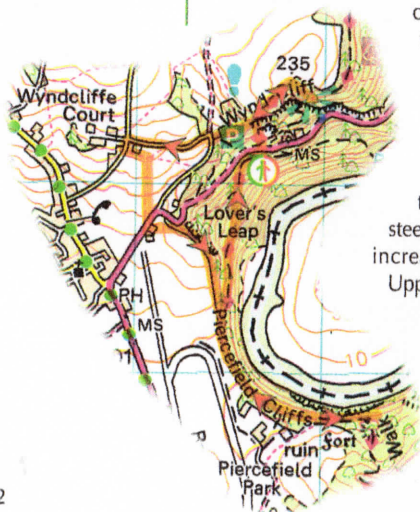


## WALK 2

### The Wyndcliff

<b>Start/Finish</b>	Lower Wyndcliff car park (ST 526 971)
<b>Distance</b>	7km (4½ miles)
<b>Ascent</b>	175m (575ft)
<b>Time</b>	2–3hrs
<b>Map</b>	Outdoor Leisure 14
<b>Public transport</b>	Service 69 between Chepstow and Monmouth runs at least once every two hours and calls at the Wyndcliff car park (four buses on Sundays)
<b>Parking</b>	The Lower Wyndcliff car park lies immediately to the east of the A466

This exceptional walk includes part of the 'Grand Tour' of the Wye Valley, devised in the Romantic Period and beloved of artists, writers, poets and gentry. It features celebrated viewpoints and a steep ascent of the 365 Steps to the Upper Wyndcliff high above the Wye.



The way from the **car park** is very clearly signed to the 365 Steps, trending right through a quarry and then taking a path that tackles a few steps at a time as it rises through mixed woodland with a good number of ancient yews. Railings protect walkers where there are steep drops at times, and there are increasingly excellent views from Upper Wyndcliff across the Lancaut peninsula, the limestone cliffs below Wintour's Leap and the final meanders of the Wye as it approaches the wide, sluggish River Severn.



A series of picturesque viewpoints, linked by romantic walks – which were constructed in the 1750s by Valentine Morris, owner of the Piercefield estate north of Chepstow – soon became highlights of the **Wye Tour**, which took visitors along the Wye Gorge by boat and carriage. Subsequent owners embellished the attractions, with the 365 Steps – a steep and rocky path built by the Duke of Beaufort's steward – and the Eagle's Nest viewpoint added around 1828.

*The increasingly steep ascent of the 365 Steps*

The last part of the ascent is unremittingly steep, up a flight of stone steps that curves left and then ascending a metal ladder across a gully, and more concrete steps before the path abruptly levels out at the top of the cliff. Turn right at a post festooned with waymark discs, briefly following the Wye Valley Walk northwards, but after only 150m turn right again to drop down to the Eagle's Nest viewpoint – a platform jutting out from the top of the **Wyndcliff**. ▶

Retrace your steps to the junction of the paths and this time go southwards along the Wye Valley Walk

The Eagle's Nest boasts unrivalled views down the Wye Valley to Chepstow and the two Severn bridges. Coleridge described the view as having 'the whole world imaged in its vast circumference'.



on a stony track that gradually descends to the Upper Wyndcliff car park, where fallow deer can often be seen. Go straight ahead along a tarmac lane, looking down into the Wye Gorge to the left, and at a crossroads turn left and quickly left again, now using a green lane that runs past a cottage and goes over a stile. Bear right here, keeping to the field boundary, and drop down towards the main road, aiming for a stile that gives access to the A466. Go right along the pavement for 100m, cross the road with care and aim for a kissing gate on the far side of a yard. Chepstow Racecourse lies straight ahead, but turn left to find another gate in the far left corner of the field.

Just to the left are the Temple Doors – entrance pillars hinting at the location of an octagonal turreted folly known as the Temple, which was demolished around 1800 – but a superb clear path goes right, along the edge of an escarpment, with a sudden drop down to the Wye flood plain on the left. The route passes **Lover's Leap**, rising above a sheer rock face and with another dramatic view of the Wye Valley, and finally zigzags down to a junction of paths. The route heads right from here in

*The view across the  
Lancaut peninsula  
from the Giant's Cave*



about 1km to The Grotto – dilapidated now but once a centrepiece of the Piercefield walks, with its domed, encrusted alcove framing the view. Return to the junction of paths and drop down slightly to walk along a well-worn path that quickly reaches the extraordinary Giant's Cave.

**The Giant's Cave** has recently been restored, although the stone giant that once guarded the entrance is no more. The views over the Lancaut peninsula and along the river in both directions are superb, and the path runs in a tunnel through the cave itself, with a big chamber and smaller ante-rooms hewn out of the rock.

Beyond the cave the way is straightforward, along a narrow but obvious path following a natural terrace half-way up the cliff but still well above the river. The way forward is rocky in places – with retaining walls on the left hinting at the difficulty of constructing the path – then crosses a stream and a boggy area before passing the gently decaying ruins of the Cold Bath (yet another feature of the Piercefield walks). ► A final steep climb up through the trees leads to the Lower Wyndcliff plateau and the **car park**, although the thatched Moss Cottage that once stood here and offered refreshments to weary travellers was demolished in the 1950s.

The remains of the Cold Bath include the sunken plunge pool, with some ceramic tiles still visible, and the dressing room.