



Robin Hood Highlights Itinerary

Journey in the footsteps of Robin Hood, Maid Marian and their Merrie Men

Day One

Nottingham

Nowhere else shouts “Robin Hood!” quite as loudly as Nottingham. Even if you only visit the Robin Hood highlights, there is enough to see in Nottingham to warrant a big part of your day. Taking account of the huge variety of history, culture and leisure in Nottinghamshire’s capital will easily make an overnight stop here worthwhile.

AM

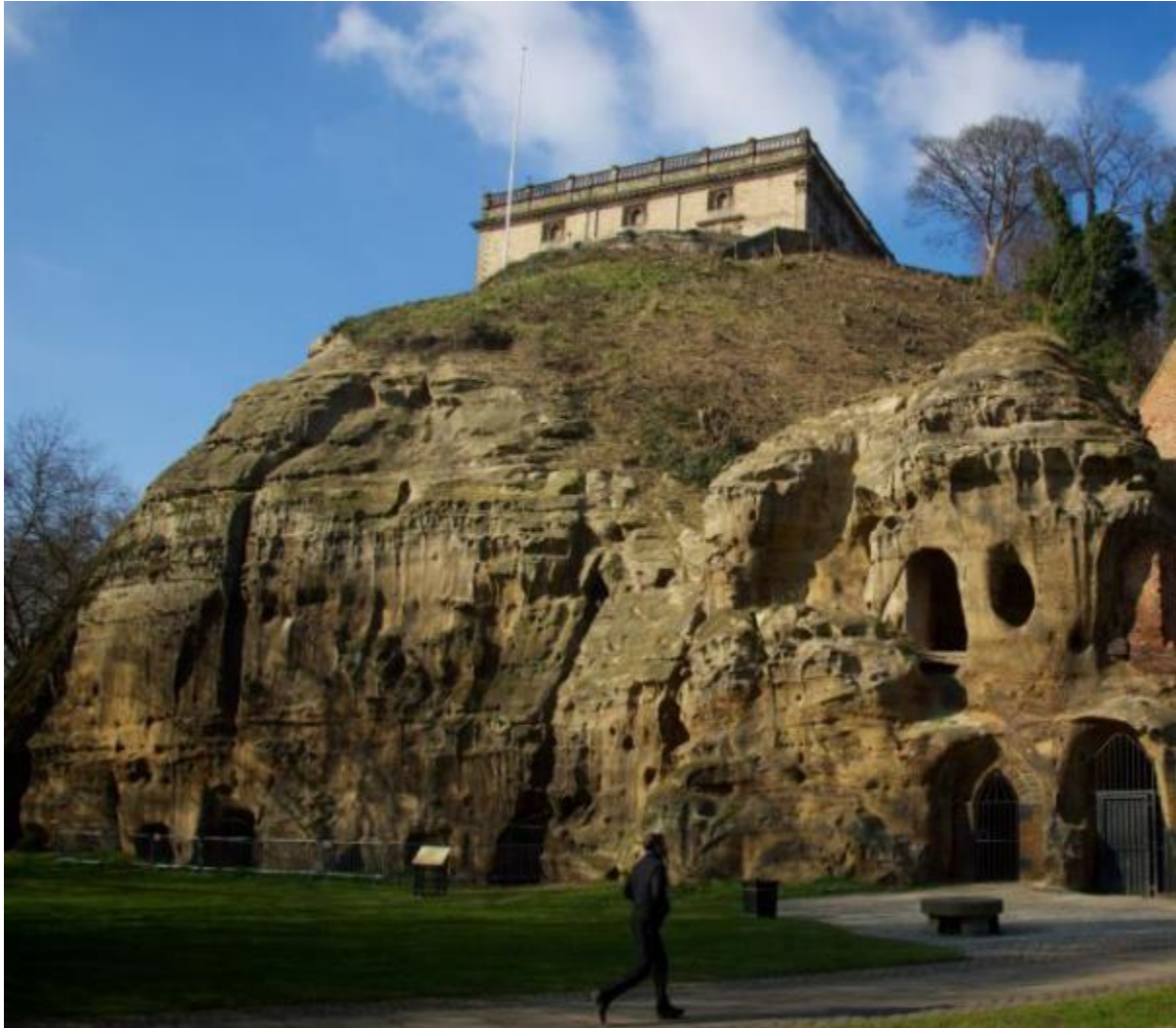
Nottingham Castle (Castle Road, Nottingham NG1 6AA)

Apart from Sherwood Forest, Nottingham Castle is probably the most famous of all the Robin Hood locations. It occupies a commanding position on a natural promontory called Castle Rock, with cliffs 130 feet (40 m) high.

For centuries Nottingham Castle was one of England’s most important royal castles. It was strategically important, for its location near a crossing of the River Trent. But it was also a place of leisure for nobles and royalty.

It is during the Third Crusade, between 1189 and 1192, where Nottingham Castle features most prominently in popular versions of the Robin Hood legends. During this time, King Richard the Lionheart and his most trusted noblemen were overseas trying to recapture Jerusalem from the Muslim armies. With the King and his supporters away, his brother John rallied his supporters towards rebellion. The Sheriff of Nottingham was among Prince John’s supporters, making Nottingham Castle a key location in the rebellion.

Sadly, for visitors wanting to see the castle which hosted so much real and legendary action, the original Norman Castle was partially demolished in 1651, leaving just the original walls and gates. In the 1670s William Cavendish, the 1st Duke of Newcastle later built a ducal mansion on the site. It is this stately home which now dominates the skyline, but enough of the old castle walls remain to give an impression of the layout of the site.



Nottingham Castle

During post fire renovations, Robin Hood returned to Nottingham Castle, in the form of the Robin Hood Rifles. Stairs on the eastern side of the mansion were demolished to create a parade ground for the soldiers. Modern amalgamations of British Army regiments saw the Nottingham regiment variously known as: The Sherwood Foresters, The Worcestershire & Sherwood Foresters and now The Mercian Regiment.

Lunch

Old Market Square (Postcode NG1 2BS)

On Nottingham's Old Market Square, we visit the location of Robin Hood's best known appearance. Folklore says that it was in the Old Market Square where Robin Hood won the silver arrow, in a contest devised by the Sheriff of Nottingham. This contest forms the central plot to Disney's animated version of Robin Hood, where Robin wears stilts to disguise himself as a stork (all Disney's Robin Hood characters were portrayed as animals) to enter the competition.

Today, The Old Market Square is one of the largest paved squares in Britain. Large as the square is today, it was once much bigger. From the 11th Century until 1928, the market square covered an area of about 5.5 acres, Because of its size, it was frequently referred to as the “Great Market Place.”

In the days before the City of Nottingham was formed, this area was halfway between the Norman town of Nottingham, situated around Castle Rock, and the older Anglo-Saxon town (called Snottingham), which was based around what is now the Lace Market. The central point between the two towns became a key marketplace, putting the square at the centre of Nottingham's growth for hundreds of years. The two towns were once divided by a wall. The line of this historic wall was reinstated when the square was redesigned in the 2000s, with a stainless steel drainage channel down the centre of the Square.

The eastern end of the square is dominated by the Council House, which served as Nottingham's town hall until 2010, when the city's administration moved to more modern office accommodation. Formal Council meetings are still held within its grand Council Chamber.

On 22nd February 2009 Nottingham's Speaker's Corner was officially opened by Jack Straw (at the time, UK Justice Secretary). This was the first official Speakers' Corner outside London.



Nottingham's Old Market Square

PM

Lace Market

The quarter-mile square of the Lace Market is one of Nottingham's most historic remaining areas. Nothing remains of the area's Saxon history, but it is thought to be the original Saxon settlement, from which Nottingham was built. At the height of the British Empire it was the centre of the world's lace industry and is now a protected heritage area. It was never a market in the sense of having stalls, but it was once packed with salesrooms and warehouses for storing, displaying, and selling lace. Today the area earns its living through bars, restaurants and shops.

Most of the Lace Market is typically Victorian, with densely packed red-brick buildings of between four and seven stories high. There are iron railings, old gas lamps and red phone boxes to give visitors a sense of going back in time to Victorian England.

Not everything in the Lace Market is Victorian. High Pavement is a handsome Georgian street, which is home to the Galleries of Justice and Saint Mary's Church.

Nottingham's Lace Market tells a tale of industrial decline, typical of many British cities. At its peak in the 1890s, Nottingham's hosiery industry employed around 25,000 (mostly female) workers. Advancements in technology reduced this number to below 5,000 during the 1970s, with many factories becoming derelict and the Lace Market falling into decline.

Nottingham City Council kickstarted gentrification of the Lace Market in 1978, offering grants to refurbish the historic buildings. Nearly all the old warehouses have now been renovated and repurposed as luxury apartments, offices and academic buildings. The industrial focus of the Lace Market has moved towards the creative sector, with several PR and design agencies making the Lace Market their home.

The Lace Market has also become one of the city centre's main tourist areas, with the National Justice Museum, and the Nottingham Contemporary art gallery being the two biggest draws.

Robin Hood Rifles Memorial

The Robin Hood Rifles were a Territorial Army unit, which once formed the 7th battalion of the local Sherwood Foresters Regiment. Although we think of *Dads' Army* as being a Home Front force, Nottingham's volunteers saw overseas action during the African Boer War from 1900 to 1902 and during WWI. The Robin Hood Rifles story begins, appropriately, on Nottingham Castle Green in the 19th century. The battalion was formed in 1859, amid fears of war with France, when most counties created rifle regiments. The unit was formed on 30th May 1859 when six volunteers paraded at Nottingham Castle under Sergeant-Major Jonathan White, who remained with the Robin Hoods for 40 years, ending his career with the honorary rank of Colonel. The Robin Hood Rifles military service is remembered at a monument within Saint Mary's Church, in the Lace Market (High Pavement, Nottingham, NG1 1HN).



Evening Accommodation & Evening Meal

We recommend a return to the Castle Quarter for your evening, as the Old Market Square and Lace Market areas become very busy during the “night time economy” period. The Castle Quarter has several historic pubs, and a wide selection of restaurants and hotels.

A few of Nottingham’s hotels have their own car-parks, while others rely on the well provisioned council, commercial and on-street parking.

Other options are to stay outside city in readiness for morning, and use the tram or park & ride to travel into the city.

Day Two

Area

Drive the scenic roads and chocolate box villages of South Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, and Lincolnshire, to Castle Bytham.

Then visit the historic City of Lincoln, where Robin’s fabled Lincoln Green clothing was made.

AM

Melton Mowbray

Melton Mowbray is something of a foodie destination. The Melton Mowbray Pork Pie is a celebrity among pies, being protected under the Government’s Geographic Indication List for food and drink. The Melton Mowbray version of the Pork Pie is thought to have been made for 18th century fox hunters, but the basic cured meat pie dates from medieval times, when Robin and his Merrie Men might well have feasted on them.

Cheese has also contributed to Melton Mowbray’s popularity as a food destination. Just off the A606 is the village of Long Clawson, famous for its Stilton Cheese, the second of Melton Mowbray’s geographically protected food names. The Long Clawson Creamery has been making Stilton since 1911. The cheese is said to have originated in Wymondham, a little further along our route.



The Long Clawson Creamery has been making Stilton since 1911

Melton Mowbray is the biggest town we have visited since leaving Nottingham. Aside from its food connections, the town's markets are worthy of a mention. A Cattle & Sheep Market is held every Tuesday, which is said to be one of the largest remaining in England. The Fur & Feather auction, held alongside the Cattle Market, on the first and third Saturdays of the month, sells parrots, peacocks, chickens, rabbits and a multitude of other pets. There is a Farmers Market each Tuesday and Friday, and a traditional street market on Tuesday and Saturday. For those with more eclectic tastes in market shopping, Tuesday's Cattle Market also hosts an Antique & Collectors Fair. On Wednesdays you can rummage for bargains at the Antique & Bric-a-Brac Market in the Market Place, and on the first Wednesday of each month the Cattle Market hosts an evening equestrian equipment sale. Then to really overdose on bargain hunting, you could join the 3,000 people at each Sunday's Car Boot Sale.

Castle Bytham

Castle Bytham is a small and pretty village, with two pubs in the old village centre. There is an obvious risk in recommending an attraction, in that it may close after publication. However, the efforts of the locals in bringing a shop and café to their village are worth recording. My recommendation for a drink and snack, is the Bytham Community Shop, to the south of the village centre on Station Road (postcode NG33 4SJ). Opened in 2020, the Community Shop is exactly what it sounds like, a shop and café developed by the local people, when the commercial operators moved out. It has all the wares of any small supermarket, along with a little café. We very much enjoyed our bacon cobs.



Castle Bytham's Robin Hood connection is sadly no longer there to be seen; it is also subject to a little academic speculation. The Editor of Henry VIII's State Papers described a letter written by Thomas Wolsey in 1524 to Thomas Howard, the 3rd Duke of Norfolk, discussing "Robyn Hoddes Crosse". There is speculation that Wolsey described a cross in either Northumberland or Barnsdale, but academics examining

the duke's travels put him in Lincolnshire at the time. The actual location of an ancient boundary stone known as **Robin Hood's Cross** is a little tenuous. It is not shown on any OS map and nothing can be seen on the ground. However, its inclusion in the 1524 letter, places it among the 10 earliest mentions of **Robin Hood**.



Castle Bytham Community Shop

Lunch

Dependent on your chosen itinerary, there are options to eat at Melton Mowbray, Wymondham, Castle Bytham, Byard's Leap, or Lincoln.

PM

After leaving Castle Bytham, our journey to Lincoln takes us through some of Lincolnshire's RAF heritage. We pass: RAF Barkston Heath, the Air Force's Staff College at Cranwell and RAF Waddington, famous for its part in the Falklands War. Three specially adapted Vulcan Bombers left Waddington for a long-range bombing raid on Port Stanley airfield.

Lincoln

Many of **Robin's** tales have our hero and his Merrie Men wearing "Lincoln Green". I never gave the title much thought, assuming it to generally refer to the forest colour of the area. However, there is a much stronger tie between **Robin's** signature colour and Lincoln's medieval wool trade.

Two shades of cloth were most coveted: Lincoln Green and Lincoln Scarlet. Lincoln became renowned throughout England for the high quality of the dyes used and for the consistency of their colour. (More information on the history of the colours, can be found in the 500RH Guidebook.)

Green was the less expensive of Lincoln's two coloured fabrics. Lincoln Scarlet was aimed at the more affluent members of society, but **Robin Hood** did sometimes dress in scarlet. An 18th century ballad reported that while in the forest, **Robin** wore the

same Lincoln Green outfit as his men. But, when at court or social events, he wore Lincoln Scarlet, symbolically showcasing his higher rank.

Lincoln Castle (Castle Hill, Lincoln, LN1 3AA)

Lincoln Castle is worthy of a visit while exploring the city. Built in the 11th century by William the Conqueror, on the site of an earlier Roman fortress, the castle is unusual in that it has two mottes. Lincoln's is one of only two such castles in the country, the other is at Lewes in Sussex. The castle has been used as a prison and court, right up to modern times. The castle grounds still house Lincoln's Crown Court, in their own Grade II Listed building. The castle is open to the public most days and visitors can walk around the walls, enjoying views of the castle complex, cathedral and surrounding countryside.

Lincoln Cathedral (Minster Yard, Lincoln, LN2 1PX)

Lincoln's Anglican Cathedral is the city's other famous building. Building began in 1072, but like all projects of the time, it went on for decades. It is said to have been the tallest building in the world for 238 years. The central spire collapsed in 1548, ending its claim to the title. Had the central spire remained intact, or been rebuilt, Lincoln Cathedral would have retained its world's tallest status until the Eiffel Tower was completed in 1889. The Cathedral did once hold one of four remaining copies of the original *Magna Carta*, which has since been moved to Lincoln Castle.

A stone carving of the Lincoln Imp, a much loved icon of the county, can also be found within the Cathedral. According to 14th century legend, two mischievous imps were sent to Earth by Satan. The two imps headed to Lincoln Cathedral, where they smashed tables and chairs and tripped up the Bishop. An angel appeared and ordered them to stop, but one of the imps sat atop a stone pillar, throwing stones at the angel. The angel turned that imp to stone, who can still be seen atop his column in the Angel Choir.

Evening Accommodation & Evening Meal

For your evening, and overnight stay, we offer a choice of remaining in the City of Lincoln, or travelling on to the smaller market town of Newark on Trent. The Lincoln and Newark areas are well provisioned with a variety of accommodation options.

Newark on Trent

Newark itself has little in the way of official ~~Robin Hood~~ heritage, although the town is certainly in the geographic area of the legends. There is a very pretty Market Place, with regular market days. The market also hosts an annual literary fair, where you might see me on a stall.

The ruined castle, alongside the River Trent is also worthy of a visit.

An evening show at Averham's Robin Hood Theatre would provide an excellent evening's entertainment, while helping a charitable enterprise.

The Robin Hood Theatre: Averham (Church Lane, Averham, Newark, NG23 5RB)

Although sharing nothing but its name with our hero, the theatre is worth a short detour for its curiosity. The theatre was built by a local carpenter in 1913, within the grounds of the very grand Averham Rectory. A section from an article written for the theatre's 21st anniversary describes it very well, "The exterior was simple and functional, but the interior surprised and delighted all who entered it. The ample stage was framed by an ornate arch painted in gold leaf, flanked by more beautiful plaster work. The handsome front drop tabs were of dark green velvet and the orchestra pit was surrounded by a heavy brass rail hung with curtains of the same material." The simplified version of that prose is that; the theatre looks far better from inside than out.

Day Three

Area: Newark to Edwinstowe.

In this section, we travel with Robin and Marian from Marian's home in Blidworth, to their wedding venue in Edwinstowe.

AM

Robin Hood Hill at Oxton

For those wanting to start their day with a stroll, a walk up Robin Hood hill at Oxton is recommended. This does use unmade footpaths and uneven ground, and as the name suggests, is uphill in parts. But, it is a far cry from the difficulties experienced on more remote hills.

The 20-foot-high, 80-foot-diameter hill is actually a 3,000-year-old burial mound, and part of a larger complex of ancient structures. The Iron Age settlement would have been close to the boundary of Sherwood Forest, which followed the Dover Beck. The views from the summit are excellent and would have assisted Robin in his travels through the forest. The hill was marked on early maps as "Robin Hood's Piss-Pot," named for a basin-shaped stone that once sat on the summit. Victorian mapmakers apparently disliked the hill's vulgar colloquial name. They removed any reference to piss-pots from their cartography, re-naming the Oxton site "Robin Hood's Hill."

The burial mound is visible from the A6097 Ollerton Road and Oxton Bypass, but the more adventurous can walk up to enjoy the view enjoyed by our hero. A public footpath ascends the hill from Oxton's Old Green Dragon Pub (Blind Lane, Oxton, NG25 0SS). Unusual for many ancient sites, this one has no entry fee, no car park and no information signs. It sits within a working farm.

From the pub follow a lane called Windmill Hill until it becomes a farm track. After about a mile, the track ends at a gate. A Bronze Age settlement called Oldox Camp is visible on your right, and Robin Hood's Hill is straight ahead. The public footpath continues over the hill to a bench and viewpoint, although from here, the path is not always obvious.

Saint Mary of the Purification & Saint Lawrence Church (Main Street, Blidworth, NG21 0QX)

Blidworth has a double claim for inclusion in the ~~Robin Hood~~ legends. Both Maid Marian and Will Scarlet are said to have lived here. It was from this village that Will took Marian away to marry ~~Robin~~ at Edwinstowe.

Then later in their story, Will Scarlet is thought to be buried somewhere in the churchyard of Saint Mary of the Purification. The exact location of his grave is lost to time, but a piece of the earlier church building stands as a memorial to Will.



Memorial to Will Scarlet: Blidworth

The original church was built in the 15th century, but only the west tower survives from the medieval church. The church was rebuilt in 1739, with additions in 1839 and is Grade I Listed.

Saint Mary's is the only church which continues the 13th century custom of The Rocking Ceremony. The ceremony re-enacts a story from Luke's Gospel, when Joseph and Mary went to the Temple in Jerusalem for Mary's ritual purification and to perform the redemption of the first born, by sacrificing two doves.

The Sunday nearest Candlemas (2nd February) is known as the Feast of the Purification of Mary. On this day, whichever baby boy from Blidworth was born closest to Christmas Day is chosen to be rocked in the church's cradle. The practice dates from a time when few people could read, so Bible stories were acted out in church. You will be pleased to hear that doves are no longer sacrificed, but each boy's name is recorded on a board inside the church.



Saint Mary of the Purification & Saint Lawrence Church: Blidworth

Bestwood Lodge and Country Park (Postcode NG5 8HT)

Bestwood Park was originally 4,000 acres of Sherwood Forest, which served as a royal hunting forest from medieval times until the 17th century. It would certainly have featured in our hero's poaching activities, and the Bestwood Lodge Hotel is decorated with carvings of Sherwood's outlaws.

Both the *Robin Hood Way* long distance footpath and National Cycle Route 6 pass through Bestwood Park. The park is a splendid place to walk and cycle. There are well landscaped trails. But there are also areas with "bomb holes", which make for interesting mountain bike challenges.

At the top of the main drive is the Bestwood Lodge Hotel, which was built on the site of the old Bestwood Hall. The hall was built around 1363, as a royal hunting lodge, which saw lots royal entertaining. The hall was demolished, and Bestwood Lodge built on its site in 1865.

The inside and outside of the lodge are decorated with relief sculptures. Above the main entrance are seven sculptures depicting the heads of *Robin Hood* and his Merry Men. Elsewhere around the building are carvings of foresters and a depiction of a bull crashing into a well, after which the nearby town of Bulwell was named.

During the Victorian era, Bestwood Colliery was established. The mine became the first in the world to produce one million tonnes of coal in a single year, but closed in 1967. The winding house still stands and can be visited on the Bestwood Village side of the park.



Carvings at Bestwood Lodge

Saint James' Church (postcode NG15 8FE).

The church lane is a private road, but is designated as a Public Footpath and reaches the church in about 200 metres.

Legend says that *Robin Hood's* minstrel Alan a Dale was married by *Robin* in this church.

Robin rescued Alan's sweetheart from an unwanted marriage to an old knight. He stopped the bishop from completing the ceremony, then *Robin Hood*, dressed in the bishop's robes, married Alan to his bride.

The churchyard also contains medieval grave-stones for forest wardens, which are carved with bow & arrow, sling, knife and hunting horns.



Saint James' Church

Robin Hood's Stables is a well-hidden cave, set into the sandstone near Papplewick Hall. The cave is within a small wooded hillside, called The Firs. The edge of the wood can be followed by walking along Hall Lane, from Top Farm (which forms part of the *Robin Hood Way*).

Lunch

There are choices of pubs and cafes in Papplewick and nearby Linby.

PM

Thieves Wood and Harlow Wood (postcode NG18 4TJ)

On the A60, we are following the ancient road between Nottingham and Mansfield, which ran past Bestwood Park through Papplewick and Newstead Abbey, before continuing through Thieves' Wood into Mansfield.

There is roadside parking alongside the A60 and a larger carpark in Thieves' Wood, from which the Friar Tuck locations can be reached.

Both woods have a fine selection of walking and cycling trails, but despite the name Thieves' Wood suggesting an outlaw connection, it is Harlow Wood into which we venture.

A short, and fairly flat, walk to Friar Tuck's hermitage at Fountain Dale will work off your lunch.

Bessie Sheppard's Stone is a good setting off point into Harlow Wood, sitting almost at the bottom of the hill, where the *Robin Hood Way* crosses the A60.

Bessie Sheppard's Stone

Sitting almost at the bottom of the hill, where the *Robin Hood Way* crosses the A60. This memorial stone was erected in 1819 to remember the murder of 17 year old Elizabeth "Bessie" Sheppard from Papplewick. She failed to return home after looking for work in Mansfield, having been beaten to death by Charles Rotherham, a Napoleonic War veteran, who had been drinking in the nearby Hutt public house. Rotherham stole Bessie's shoes and umbrella, and disposed of her body in a ditch. He returned to the Hutt, where he failed to sell the stolen goods. He finally sold the umbrella and shoes at a pub in Redhill.

Rotherham was arrested and sent to Nottingham, where his trial and public hanging drew a large crowd.

Visitors to Bessie's memorial should know that her ghost is said to appear every time the stone is disturbed. The A60 was widened in the 1930s and the stone moved back several feet. An eerie figure was seen around the spot for several days afterwards. Similar sightings were reported 20 years later after the stone was hit by a car. A final spooky event happened in 1988, when vandals attacked Bessie's grave in Papplewick, moving her gravestone. A Police Officer was photographed by the Bessie Sheppard Stone for a newspaper article about the vandalism. The Officer touched the stone and was drawn back to Papplewick, where he found the missing gravestone in vegetation 200 feet from the grave.



Bessie Sheppard's Stone

Fountain Dale

Fountain Dale is associated with Friar Tuck. It is a 10 minute walk along the Robin Hood Way from Bessie Sheppard's Stone.



The friar is said to have lived as a hermit in a nearby cave. A well, with supposedly healing waters, bears Tuck's name. Most importantly, it is said to be the place where folk tales place the fight between Robin and Tuck (alternative versions locate their fight at Fountains Abbey).

King John's Palace (postcode NG21 9BT)

King John's Palace is on private land, but can be seen from the Bridleway between Vicar Water and the Dog & Duck pub. If using the pub, the ruins are a short walk. Otherwise, you should park for a slightly longer walk from Vicar Water.

King John's Palace is the ruin of a medieval royal house and hunting lodge. The earliest reference to the lodge dates from 1164 during the reign of Henry II, when King Henry ordered £500 to be spent on the creation of a deer park. The ruins that are visible today are the remains of a Romanesque chamber dating from around 1180. Geophysical survey and archaeological excavation show that this chamber was a small part of a large complex of buildings. These included a gatehouse, tower, individual hall and chambers for the King and Queen, kitchens, several chapels, stabling for 200 horses, and lodgings for their many royal retainers. Today's remains are Grade II Listed and a scheduled ancient monument. The ruin is one of several sites in the region to have featured in Tony Robinson's *Time Team* TV show.

King John's Palace is linked to the *Robin Hood* legend through a story about King John holding hostages in the Palace, then hearing that *Robin Hood* was at Creswell Crags, led his men to the Crags to capture *Robin*. An embellishment of the legend tells of *Robin Hood* and his men disguising themselves as minstrels, to rescue the hostages from King John's Palace.



King John's Palace

Saint Mary's Church (Church Street, Edwinstowe, NG21 9QA)

Edwinstowe's medieval church stands against Barnsdale's claim to have hosted Robin and Marian's wedding. The High Street has a statue in their honour.

Some form of church has stood here since 633, when Edwin, the Saxon king of Northumbria, was killed in the Battle of Hatfield Chase. He was buried here so that his enemies could not find his body and a small wooden chapel was built. The current Church of Saint Mary's was rebuilt in stone in 1175. The main church building is Grade I Listed, and the boundary wall, gate, steps and overthrow are Grade II Listed.



Saint Mary's Church: Edwinstowe

Advert

Fables Coffee House and Cake Bar

www.fablescoffeehouse.com

High St, Edwinstowe, Mansfield NG21 9QS



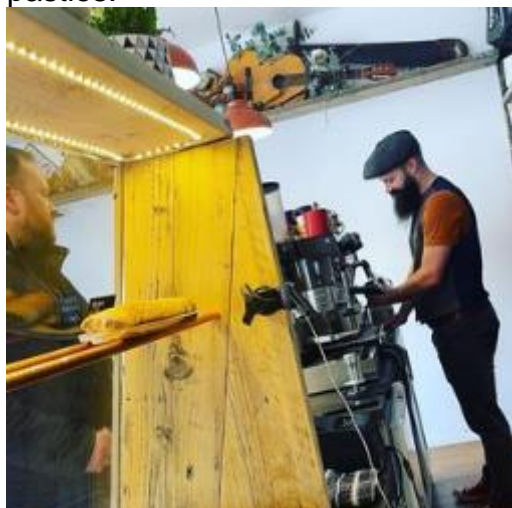
Advert

Major Brew www.majorbrew

Major brew specialise in artisan roasted coffee. They have over 22 different single origin coffee beans, all hand roasted by us.

You can buy them online, or pop and see us near the major oak in Sherwood Forest, Nottinghamshire.

We also serve freshly ground cups of coffee, tea or hot-chocolate, and a range of cakes and pasties.



Evening Accommodation & Evening Meal

The Edwinstowe area has many options for food and accommodation.

Day Four

Area

Our day begins with a stroll in Sherwood Forest's most famous section, to the Major Oak. We then head north to investigate Yorkshire's claims to Robin Hood

AM

Our day begins with a stroll in Sherwood Forest's most famous section, to the Major Oak.

Sherwood Forest & Visitor Centre (postcode NG21 9JZ)

Originally covering about 100,000 acres, Sherwood Forest is now a 450 acre woodland to the north and west of Edwinstowe. Large areas were cleared in the mid-17th century, after it ceased to be used as a royal hunting forest.

The Visitor Centre hosts exhibitions about the Forest and ~~Robin Hood~~. Film shows and talks are held on summer weekends, and the Forest Rangers lead guided walks. There is also a café and toilets.

Major Oak: This is reputed to be the largest oak tree in England. The hollow tree has a circumference of 10 metres (32 feet) and its branches spread to cover a ring of 85 meters (278 feet). The hollow in its trunk was said to have been used as a hiding place by ~~Robin~~ and his Merrie Men.

The tree is now protected by fencing, but as a small boy, I enjoyed climbing inside the hollow tree.



The Major Oak

For those not wanting a walk in the woods, Edwinstowe has lots more to offer, with its Craft Centre, statue of Robin & Marian, and other tourist attractions.



Statue of Robin & Marian

Driving out of Edwinstowe, we enter the part of Nottinghamshire known as The Dukeries, for its several Ducal estates.

Robin Hood's Cave provides opportunity for another walk, taking in part of the Robin Hood Way and a reputed hiding place of Robin and his Merrie Men.

Robin Hood's Cave (off Whitewater Lane, Walesby, NG22 9NG),

Robin Hood's Cave is on a Public Bridleway, which is part of the Robin Hood Way.

The Bridleway heads north from the layby at a sharp bend in Whitewater Lane.

About 500 metres along this Bridleway, the rock forms a low cliff over the bank of the river Maun. This is Robin Hood's Cave, which is said to have sheltered Robin Hood.

An alternative, and shorter, walk can be had through Creswell Craggs (admission charged).

Creswell Craggs (postcode S80 3LH).

Creswell Craggs was reputedly frequented by Robin Hood, and one of the caves bears his name. However, human habitation at the Craggs pre-dates our hero by a very long time.

This is a limestone gorge, whose cliffs contain several caves occupied during the last ice age. (Between 43,000 and 10,000 years ago) The caves contain the most northerly cave art in Europe. Evidence of occupation found in the sediment that accumulated over thousands of years, is considered internationally unique in the way it demonstrates how prehistoric people survived at the extreme limits of their territory.

Creswell Craggs is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). It has also been put forward as a potential World Heritage Site.



Creswell Crags

All Saints' Chapel (3 Field View, Steetley, Worksop, S80 3DZ)

Legend says the Church Clerk was Friar Tuck, who entertained the Black Prince (King Richard I) there, when the church was just 50 years old.

The elevation facing Scratta Lane is a fine example of Norman stonework, but the much more impressive carved doorway faces onto open fields. One can imagine the Norman Barons approaching from this direction, getting the full benefit of a splendid building.

Steetley Church is considered among the finest examples of Norman village church architecture. The Grade I Listed church is a small, but very pretty package. It was built around 1150, and was referred to in Sir Waite Scott's *Ivanhoe* as Copmanhurst.



All Saints' Chapel: Steetley

Lunch

Lunch options today depend on the choices you made this morning. Creswell Craggs has its own café, while there are several options on the Dukeries Estates. A short drive from Steetley Church will take you into the market town of Worksop, where there are many more options.

PM

This afternoon, we begin our drive into Yorkshire, which competes fiercely with Nottinghamshire for owning *Robin Hood*.

There are two Robin Hood locations on our way to Scarborough and Robin Hood's Bay.

The 500RH guidebook describes a very scenic drive between Steetley Church and Skellbrook. But you may choose to take the more direct route via the A1.

Saint Mary Magdalene Church, at Campsall (Postcode DN6 9LH)

Locals claim that Robin Hood married Maid Marian at this church, basing their claim on the description of a church in one of the ballads.

The present church was built towards the end of the 11th century and contains features of almost every style of architecture since that time.

In 2013, when the National Churches Trust compiled a list of Britain's favourite places of worship, local MP Ed Miliband nominated Saint Mary Magdalene because of its connection with Robin Hood.



Saint Mary Magdalene Church, at Campsall

Robin Hood's Well (Skelbrooke, DN6 8LS)

Our next destination is a minor road called *Robin Hood's Well*, which now forms a layby on the southbound A1. NB: the road has a street-sign calling it *Robin Hood's Well*, but Google Maps shows it as Great North Road.

Robin Hood's Well was first recorded in 1622, but there had been a water source here for a very long time. Aerial photography shows evidence of Iron Age settlements, which would have taken their water from the spring. Two, or possibly three, Roman forts were also built here, on what was once Ermine Street, linking York to Lincoln. A journal entry from 1638 reads "Thirst knowes neither meane nor measure, *Robin Hood's Well* was my treasure." The journal also records the Well Keeper charging the traveller two farthings for the quenching of his thirst.

By the early 18th century, the small hamlet of *Robin Hood's Well* had begun to develop. This growth was due to the popularity of coach travel, as up to 30 coaches per day passed through the hamlet. Two coaching inns developed to serve this trade, the *Robin Hood Inn* on the west side and the New Inn on the east. The *Robin Hood Inn* was demolished to make way for widening of the A1 in the 20th century. Horses were changed at the inns, for the next 12 mile stretch, where they were changed again. After being rested, the horses were attached to a carriage returning in the direction they had come from.

Although our hero may have drunk from *Robin Hood's Well*, the ornate well house post-dates him by a very long time. The Grade II Listed structure was built in 1710 by the 3rd Earl of Carlisle. He commissioned famous architect John Vanbrugh (Castle Howard and Blenheim Palace are among Vanbrugh's other works) to design the structure, celebrating *Robin Hood's* local connections.

The original well actually stood about 150m north-west of its current position. Widening of the A1 in the 1960s necessitated capping the well and moving Vanbrugh's well head building.



Robin Hood's Well

During my visit to **Robin Hood's Well**, I spoke to an elderly resident of the hamlet, who had lived there for most of his life. Many of the photographs displayed on the information board are his, with a few actually featuring him. He had clearly taken an interest in the hamlet's history, adding to the information I had read on the sign.

Evening Accommodation & Evening Meal

Our next destination is on the North Yorkshire Coast, just north of Scarborough. So, the choice is yours, along the very scenic route towards the coast.

Day Five

Area

Today is spent in Yorkshire, with most of our time within the North York Moors National Park.

You again have options for today. Robin Hood's Butts and Robin Hood & Little John's Stones need a little walking. Or, you could spend the day in the seaside towns of Robin Hood's Bay and Whitby.

AM

Robin Hood's Butts

Robin Hood's Butts are three Bronze Age barrows, situated on the Brow Moor plateau, on top of Stoupe Brow and overlooking **Robin Hood's Bay**. There are several walking options to visit them, which are described in the 500RH guidebook, and the walking itinerary.

Archaeological excavation in 1771 showed this to be a Bronze Age burial place. Local legends have grown around **Robin Hood** and his men using the low tumuli which covered the graves to place targets for archery practice.

The mounds were labelled as **Robin Hood's Butts** on Jeffery's 1772 Map of Yorkshire.

Lunch

The coast road has several lunch options. Robin Hood's Bay would also make a very nice lunch stop.

PM

Robin Hood's Bay (car-park on Robin Hood's Bay Road, Robin Hood's Bay, YO22 4QN)
Visitors should not drive into the harbour area, as the lanes are steep and narrow. There are two visitor car parks, one near the old rail station (postcode YO22 4RE) and one further down the hill near the Mount Pleasant Hotel (postcode YO22 4QN).

As with all the legends, there are conflicting versions of how this part of the North Yorkshire coast became associated with *Robin Hood*. One version simply makes an association between sea going pirates and our robber hero. While another has *Robin* fleeing Nottinghamshire, to escape the King's men.

The local history society identified the first recorded reference to *Robin Hood's Bay* from sometime between 1322 and 1346. This reference is found in a letter to King Edward III, from Count Louis of Flanders, pleading for the return of a ship which was taken to "Robin Oode Bay", by the people of England. The historians think this was a reference to piracy in the bay, linked through literary licence to the outlaws in English ballads.

The area had certainly been notorious for piracy over several hundred years. Viking settlers were recorded as settling slightly inland, to better protect themselves from sea going pirates. Clearly, 14th century seafarers were still at risk from pirates, as attested to by Count Louis of Flanders. By the 18th century, *Robin Hood's Bay* had reportedly become the busiest smuggling community on the Yorkshire coast. Hiding places and secret passages were common, and it was said that a bale of silk could pass from the bottom of the village to the top without leaving the houses.

The French connection to *Robin Hood's Bay* is supported by another local legend, in which *Robin Hood* encountered pirates while on a fishing trip, forcing the French pirates to surrender. The story goes that *Robin* returned from his trip and gave the pirates' loot to the poor people of the village in the bay, which is now called *Robin Hood's Bay*.

Another attribution for the name *Robin Hood's Bay* came from Lionel Charlton, in his 1779 book "*History of Whitby and Whitby Abbey*". Charlton attributes *Robin's* journey north as being an escape from the government troops. Unable to fight the King's forces, *Robin* retreated north, crossing the moors to Whitby, where he acquired a few small fishing boats with which he could escape. Charlton credits *Robin Hood's Bay* as the place where Robin hid these boats.

Charlton goes on to say that the outlaws set up archery targets, or butts, nearby, which became known as *Robin Hood's Butts*.



Robin Hoods Bay

The walk to Robin Hood's Stone and Little John's Stone is much gentler than the steep hike to Robin Hood's Butts.

Robin Hood's Stone and Little John's Stone

Robin Hood's Stone and Little John's Stone are in fields behind Whitby Lathes Farm.

Footpaths lead from opposite Manor House Farm caravan site (postcode YO22 4JZ), towards Whitby Lathes Farm. But there is no parking here, unless you are staying on one of several sites along Hawsker Lane.

Better parking is available a little further along the A171 on Enterprise Way industrial estate (postcode YO22 4NH).

The stones are carved with "Robin Hood Close" and Little John Close." These curious names come from the contraction of the word "enclosure." During the 17th century, Common Land was enclosed by royal decree, preventing ordinary people from grazing their livestock on the land. Often these newly enclosed fields were given names, with the word "close" added.

On recent maps, these archaic names of Robin Hood Close and Little John Close have been replaced with the more modern Robin Hood Field and Little John Field.

The Reverend George Young gave us an account of Robin Hood's activities along the North Yorkshire coast, in his 1817 book; "*History of Whitby*." Reverend Young tells us that Robin and Little John were dining with the Abbot of Whitby, who asked how far each of them could shoot an arrow. The two outlaws loosed their arrows from the top of the Abbey. Their arrows travelled 1.3 miles, to the area we have now reached. At nearly a mile and a half, this must have been a superhuman feat of archery. He tells that on the spot where Robin's arrow fell, a stone pillar about a foot square and four feet high was erected, and that a similar pillar 24 feet high marked

the spot where John's arrow fell. The fields became known as **Robin Hood Closes**, and **Little John Closes**.

Today's stones are clearly different from those described by Reverend Young. They are much closer than 100 feet apart. They are also round, rather than square, and much smaller than 24 feet high.



Little John's Stone (left) and Robin Hood's Stone (right)

Whitby Abbey can be sighted from the stones and looks a very long way for anyone to shoot an arrow.



The shot from Whitby Abbey

Walking directions to the stones from Enterprise Way (postcode YO22 4NH).

- Walk back along the grass verge alongside the A171 (away from Whitby).
- Just beyond the 30 MPH sign is a wooden finger-post. This directs you onto a Public Footpath, down some steps into pleasant walled lane.

- At the end of the lane, the FP curves left across a field. On your left you will see a metal gate, which forms an unofficial access onto Enterprise Way.
- Continue around the field, towards an industrial unit at your 1 o'clock.
- Where the hedge ends and a metal fence around the unit begins, use the wooden stile on your left.
- After crossing the stile, turn right on narrow footpath between the security fence and a barbed wire farmers fence.
- Cross a wooden footbridge over a deep banked stream.
- Pass through wooden gate, then right through a hedge at a footpath finger-post.
- Sight from the finger post, diagonally uphill to reach a wide gateway, with a FP roundel on the gatepost. You can now see a caravan site directly ahead of you.
- Go through this gateway, continuing straight on, with a hedge on your left.
- Come to another similar farm gate to the last one. Go through this gate.
- In front of you is a hedge and barbed wire fence separating two fields. There is a gateway on your left, linking these two fields. These fields are Little John Field on your right and ~~Robin Hood Field~~ on your left.

Evening Accommodation & Evening Meal

Your options in Whitby, Robin Hood's Bay and the surrounding area are many.

Cranberry Swamp Café Whitby

24 Skinner St, Whitby YO21 3AJ

Cranberry Swamp is a cool stylish cafe in Whitby. We specialise in gluten free food but also offer a choice of bread for those of you who love your toast ! Gluten free does not mean fun free! if anything the flavours and textures of our meals are enhanced by the richer and more wholesome and varied ingredients used.



We have a range of delicious and alternative breakfasts as an antidote to the "Full English" like Avocado & Bacon on toast, beautiful porridge and gorgeous House Kedgeree and our famous Mex Eggs. There are also a wide range of light meals served throughout the day including vegetarian options, daily specials, and a cake counter stocked with tasty delights.

Cranberry Swamp offer 500RH members a free (non-alcoholic) drink with any meal bought.

www.cranberryswamp.co.uk

Whitby Coastal Cruises

Whitby Coastal Cruises operate boat trips out of Whitby Harbour, all at very affordable prices. With regular sailings throughout the day, they offer plenty of opportunities to experience the Yorkshire coast from a unique perspective.

Summer Queen and Esk Belle III take trips out to sea, while Dash II takes river tours on the Esk. We have a Fishing Boat offering 3 hours trips too.

As well as our daily sea trips we run special trips providing the opportunity to see some amazing wildlife and enjoy dramatic sunsets from the sea.

Whitby Coastal Cruises offer 20% off all trips to 500RH members.

www.whitbycoastalcruises.com



Day Six

A very scenic drive across the North York Moors, takes us to the Friar Tuck locations around Fountains Abbey.

AM

Drive across the top of the North York Moors, passing Guisborough, which enters the **Robin Hood** legend as a possible home for Guy of Gisborne.

Our next stop on the Robin Hood trail is at the historic cathedral town of Ripon.

Either before, or after lunch, a short walk through Hell Wath Nature reserve takes in two more **Robin Hood** locations.

Robin Hood Wood and Robinhood Field – Ripon (car parking at Hell Wath Grove - postcode HG4 2JT).

Robin Hood Wood and Robinhood Field surround the River Skell, where Robin Hood and Friar Tuck may once have battled.

There are lots of walks in the area, and I did a short circular walk, which is described in the 500RH guidebook, and in the walking itinerary.

In **Robinhood Field** are a set of metal sculptures. From a distance, I thought these were **Robin Hood** and his merrie men. The middle two especially could be mistaken for **Robin** and Marian.

Up close, you can see they are WWI memorials, so I paused for a moment of reflection. This area was used as an Army training camp during WWI.



Statues in Robinhood Field

After the statues, a set of steep steps descend to your left, towards the river.

One interpretation of the *Ballad of Robin Hood and the Curtal Friar*, puts Robin Hood and Friar Tuck's first meeting at the River Skell.

Tradition puts their battle in the Skell as it flows through Fountains Abbey, but this could just be the interpretation of the Abbey's Victorian tour guides. Their fight could just have easily been at this more remote section of the River Skell.

We can thank the Vikings for the unusual Hell Wath name, which is Old Norse for "ford with flat stones." A ford would seem a logical place for Robin and Tuck to fight over who was to be carried across the river.



Path alongside the River Skell

Lunch

The beautiful town of Ripon has many options for lunch. There are also cafes at Fountains Abbey, which is the next stop on our journey.

PM

Fountains Abbey (including *Robin Hood's Well* & *Robin Hood's Wood*) (postcode HG4 3DY).

After a walk along the River Skell, we follow Friar Tuck into the National Trust location of Fountains Abbey, where there are two more Robin Hood locations, and a lot more too.

Fountains Abbey is one of the largest and best preserved ruined Cistercian monasteries in England. It was founded in 1132 and operated for 407 years, becoming one of the wealthiest monasteries in England, until its dissolution by Henry VIII in 1539. Its significance to the 500RH comes from *Robin Hood's Well* & *Robin Hood's Wood*, which are both to be found close to the Abbey ruins.

Fountains Abbey enters the *Robin Hood* legends through the *Ballad of Robin Hood and the Curtal Friar*, which tells a version of the Friar Tuck story. In the ballad, *Robin Hood* tells his fellow huntsmen that "there is no match for Little John within a hundred miles." Will Scadlock (the name by which the ballad called Will Scarlet) tells *Robin* that a monk at Fountains Abbey could beat Little John. *Robin* sets out to see this monk, finding him by a riverside (thought to be the River Skell).

Fountains Abbey benefitted from the arrival of the railways. When passenger services came to Ripon, tourists would take horse drawn carriages to Fountains Abbey. At the Abbey, tour guides were engaged to take groups around the ruins, and the park. Drawing on its connection to the Curtal Friar, the story of *Robin Hood's Well* developed, with the guides even hiding a longbow in the undergrowth, and claiming it to be *Robin Hood's* actual bow.



Fountains Abbey and the River Skell

Robin Hood's Well

The well is not specifically marked on the National Trust map you are given on admission to the site. But it is drawn as a stone arch, alongside the path which runs between Number 7 (Fountains Mill) and Number 8 (De Grey's Walk).

The well itself must have existed in medieval times since an underground lead pipe was found leading from the well to the abbey. There is also evidence of it being called *Robin Hood's Well* from at least 1731.

The current well cover was built much more recently though. A note found among papers at York Minster Library suggests that it was built with stones from the ruins of Fountains Abbey, after Walter Scott visited the site in the early 1800s. Scott apparently suggested to the owner of the estate, that she should build a well house.



Robin Hood's Well

Robin Hood's Wood

Robin Hood's Wood is a little wood adjacent to the Abbey. Like the well, it is not labelled on the National Trust Map, but it is marked on the 1:25,000 OS map of the

area. It is the wooded hillside which starts behind the well, and curves around in front of you, towards Studley Royal Water Gardens.

The energetic among you can climb the paths through ~~Robin Hood's Wood~~ to Anne Boleyn's Seat, Surprise View, the Temple of Fame and the High Ride Path (Numbers 13, 14 and 15 on the National Trust map).



Robin Hood's Wood

Evening Accommodation & Evening Meal

I recommend that this evening is used for travel towards Kirklees Priory, giving you a good start to Day Seven.

Day Seven

Our final day takes us out of Yorkshire, and through the equally scenic county of Derbyshire.

AM

Our final day starts with another short walk, which can be greatly extended for those following a more active itinerary.

Kirklees Priory & Robin Hood's Grave (Postcode WF14 0BY)

The remains of Kirklees Priory & ~~Robin Hood's Grave~~ are on private land, within the Kirklees Estate. There is a vast network of footpaths surrounding the Kirklees Estate, which can be turned into circular walks.

The owners open the estate to the public for a single weekend each year for guided tours, led by Calderdale Heritage Walks. These are usually towards the end of June. Outside of this narrow window for visitors, the area still has a lot to offer to walkers. More walking information is given in the 500RH guidebook, and in the walking itinerary.

There are also places of interest to fans of the Bronte sisters. Their parents once lived in nearby Hartshead, which can be reached by road, or as part of a circular walk

Any on-line map search for ~~Robin Hood's Grave~~ will show you a point on the A644. This is because the grave is about 200 metres inside woodland to the north of the road. However, the A644 is a busy road, with no opportunities to park.

The best option for getting close is to use the public footpath on the east of the estate. This footpath starts just east of the Three Nuns Inn and runs north towards the village of Hartshead.

Continuing a little further along the path, the Kirklees Estate makes clear that Park Bottom Wood is private property, with a "No Public Right of Way" sign, although it is clear many feet have trod a path towards ~~Robin Hood's Grave~~. A friend (who really should know better) did jump the fence and supplied the grave photograph shown here.



The Kirklees Estate (Private Woodland)



Robin Hood's Grave: Kirklees Priory

Kirklees Priory fits into the *Robin Hood* legends at a critical point, that of our hero's death. The estate also claims to be the location of *Robin Hood's Grave*.

The association originates from one of the two oldest ballads which feature *Robin Hood* – “*A Lytell Geste of Robyn Hode*.” Towards the end of *A Lytell Geste of Robyn Hode*, Little John carried *Robin Hood* to the Kirklees Priory nunnery for treatment of an injury. Little John hoped that the abbess would cure his friend, but the abbess betrayed him. She treated his wounds, then went on to administer bloodletting with leeches, which was a common treatment at the time. However, the abbess deliberately left the leeches in place too long, and bled *Robin* to death.

A 1786 version of the ballad adds the now famous detail that *Robin Hood* shot one final arrow, asking to be buried where it fell. This has become the most common account of *Robin Hood's* death.

Robin Hood's Grave lies approximately 600 metres from the gatehouse. While considerably less than the 1.3 miles claimed for *Robin* and Little John's shots from Whitby Abbey, it is still quite an improbable arrow shot for a dying man, made with a medieval longbow.

Rather than a traditional grave site, the monument is a rectangular stone wall, topped by iron railings, which surround the supposed grave. Set into the inner face of the surrounding wall, is an epitaph, which reads:

Hear Underneath dis laitl stean
Laz robert earl of Huntingtun
Ne'er arcir ver az hie sa geud
An pipl Kauld im robin heud
Sick utlawz az hi an iz men
Vil england nivr si agen
Obiit 24 Kal Dekembris 1247

This can be translated into modern English as follows:

Here underneath this little stone
Lies Robert, Earl of Huntingdon
Never archer were as he so good
And people called him Robin Hood
Such outlaws as he and his men
Will England never see again
Obit: 24 December 1247AD

As with many things relating to *Robin Hood*, there is a considerable amount of speculation as to whether this is genuinely the grave of our legendary hero, or if it is simply a tale that has been embellished over time. The 500RH guidebook discusses some of the conflicting legends and historian's opinions.

From Kirklees Priory, we head towards the Derbyshire Peak District, making a brief stop in Sheffield's Loxley Village.

Loxley Village

Three miles northwest of Sheffield city centre, Loxley is now a suburb of the city. Before being merged with Sheffield, Loxley was a village in its own right, as part of the West Riding of Yorkshire. The name Loxley derives from the Old English words “lox”, meaning lynx and “leah”, meaning glade. So, Glade of the Lynx seems quite an appropriate name for our cunning hero’s possible birthplace.

In the 12th century, the forest of Loxley Chase extended as far south as Nottinghamshire where it joined up with Sherwood Forest, so it is not inconceivable that **Robin Hood** and his Merrie Men roamed between the two. Yorkshire claims that Robin of Locksley or Robert Locksley, was born in the area sometime around 1160.

There have been many references linking Loxley to the **Robin Hood** legend. The earliest was a pardon held in the Public Record Office, which was awarded to **Robin Hood** one year after the riots of the Peasant's Revolt. **Robin's** pardon reads, “Robert Dore, also known as Robert Hood of Wadsley in the County of Yorkshire, received the king’s pardon on 22nd May 1382.” Many of the rioters of the Peasant's Revolt were hung, but it appears that **Robin** paid a massive fine to save his life.

In March 2020, the local *Star* newspaper reported that a teacher at Loxley Primary School had discovered the birthplace of **Robin Hood**, in an ancient woodland at the back of the school. The school uses the archer as its logo and has a statue of **Robin Hood** in the playground.

Dan Eaton, a teacher and local historian, is a lifelong **Robin Hood** fan, who joined the school in 2017. Mr Eaton came across a large marker stone with a cross carved into it. The stone was in the middle of woodland, a few steps away from a dense area of ancient holly bushes, which reminded him of early drawings of the outlaw.

Local MP Olivia Blake even got in on the **Robin Hood** action in her 2020 maiden speech to Parliament. Ms Blake said that her Sheffield Hallam constituency had a “very long history of social justice”, alluding to the idea that Loxley was the birthplace of **Robin Hood**.

Robin of Loxley

A pardon in the Public Records Office, granted by King Richard II read: “Robert Hode (Hood), also known as Robert Dore of Wadsley, received the King’s pardon on 22nd May 1382”. Under the medieval feudal system, Loxley was a subordinate village to nearby Wadsley.

The records show that this particular claimant to the mantel of **Robin Hood** was born in 1399. His mother was the granddaughter of John de Balliol, King of Scots, a descendant of King David, the Earl of Huntingdon. His cousin provides a link to the legends concerning Kirklees Priory, when she became the Prioress of Kirklees in 1402, shortly before her cousin died.

Loxley also provides a link to a noble title somewhat belatedly accorded to our hero. Some 127 years after the death of Loxley's **Robin Hood**, one of his descendants became Earl of Huntingdon. Since then, many generations have continued a family tradition by naming their firstborn after **Robin Hood**. The current Earl is William Edward Robin Hood Hastings-Bass, the 17th Earl of Huntingdon.

Robin Wood Loxley (postcode S6 6SS)

Robin Wood is an area of ancient woodland, which is owned by Loxley Primary School. This is where teacher Dan Eaton found the lost marker stone, which he believes marks to location of Robin Hood's birth. The woods are open to the public, with a nature trail and information about the flora and fauna you will find there.

Robin Wood is only a short walk from the school, and you are best to remain parked on Rodney Hill.



Within the wood is evidence of historic occupation. There are dry stone walls and the remains of stone enclosures. Standing on a high point in the wood, just before finishing your circuit, is the marker stone with its cross found by Mr Eaton.



The marker stone in Robin Wood, found by Dan Eaton

Lunch

From Loxley, we travel into Derbyshire's Peak District. There are many options for lunch stops, around Ladybower Reservoir, or in the village of Hathersage.

The Little John Hotel Station Rd, Hathersage, Hope Valley S32 1DD

The Little John Hotel is becoming renowned as Derbyshire's 'Craft Beer Hotel' and provides an



excellent base for climbers, walkers and other visitors.



They have 12 comfortable ensuite bedrooms and two self catering cottages. They serve food every day, with special themed nights as advertised.

www.littlejohnhotel.co.uk

PM

Little John's Grave: The Church of Saint Michael the Archangel (Church Bank, Hathersage, S32 1AJ)

The pretty Church of Saint Michael the Archangel is 200 metres along Church Lane in Hathersage. Stones in the churchyard mark the grave of Little John, where a thigh bone measuring 28 inches (72 cm) was said to have been unearthed. This would have made Little John eight feet (2.46 m) tall.

Little John was supposedly born in East Yorkshire, but local tradition says that he retired to Hathersage and was buried in the churchyard. No other place has claimed Little John's grave, unlike Robin Hood's resting place, for which there are several claims. We are only eight miles from the village of Loxley, across the moors on the edge of Sheffield, fitting with the geography of some legends.



Little John's Grave



Little John's Grave

Even without the Little John connection, Saint Michael the Archangel is worthy of a visit.

The earliest recorded church was built during the reign of Henry I. The present Grade I Listed building dates mainly from the late 14th and early 15th centuries. The church also has a more recent connection to the flooding of Ladybower Reservoir, when a stained glass window was removed from Derwent Chapel before it was submerged. The window was by the renowned Victorian artist Charles Kempe, who contributed to over 4,000 churches during his career.



Church of Saint Michael the Archangel in Hathersage

Those of you inclined to another walk, could visit another **Robin Hood** location, on the Stanage Gritstone Edge.

Robin Hood's Cave: Stanage Edge (Hooks Carr carpark, Hope Valley, S32 1BR)

Stanage Edge is the cliff face that towers over Hathersage to the north. During industrial times, it was a quarry for the Millstone Grit, from which the area's famed mill stones were carved. Today, it is one of England's most popular rock climbing venues.

Like many of the places that bear his name, it is hard to say whether **Robin Hood** actually used the cave, especially since Little John is supposed to have come to Hathersage after his retirement from being an outlaw. But it is a beautiful spot to visit on a walk.

The film industry recognised the dramatic impact of Stanage Edge, when Kiera Knightly stood on the Edge, playing Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice*.

Robin Hood's Cave is first named as such, on the 1880 edition of the Ordnance Survey map.



Robin Hood's Cave: Stanage Edge

We drive south from Hathersage towards Baslow, and the nearby Hamlet of Robin Hood, where there is a cluster of Robin Hood locations.

The Hamlet of Robin Hood (Chesterfield Rd, Baslow, DE45 1PQ)

There is no definitive record of how this hamlet gained the name of Robin Hood, but it is thought to have been given first to the inn, with the hamlet later adopting the name. The first written evidence of habitation is in Parish records from 1733.

The Robin Hood Inn (postcode DE45 1PQ) is first recorded on a one inch to the mile Ordnance Survey map published in 1840. Earlier maps show a building in the same location, but with no sign that it was an inn.

Records show the land to have been occupied by John Savage, who died in 1842. It seems that Thomas, helped by his brother, who was a baker, created an inn on the site. John Savage ran the inn from his homestead next door. The 1851 census records him as an Innkeeper and Farmer.

Robin Hood Bar was the name of a strip of land between the A619 and Heathy Lea Brook, which runs parallel and to the south of the A619.

The 1847 tithe award for Baslow lists five plots of land under the collective name of Robin Hood Bar. The Bar in the name refers to the Toll House, or Toll Bar, which once stood here to collect tolls for passage through the Duke of Devonshire's estate.

Robin Hood Farm is on Old Brampton Road, just past the Inn and car parks. It is now a B&B.

The Robin Hood Plantations are clusters of woodland, just south of the A619 and near the Emperor Stream. They are named on a 1922 Ordnance Survey map.

Our final Robin Hood locations of Robin Hood's Hills and Codnor Castle, both involve short walks. So those not inclined to walking might prefer to spend their final night in the Peak District.

For Robin Hood's Hills, Chair & Cave we pop back over the border into Nottinghamshire.

Robin Hood's Hills, Chair & Cave (Postcode NG17 9AT)

Robin Hood's Hills, Chair & Cave are all in the vicinity of the junction with the B6021 Nottingham Road and A611 Derby Road.

Robin Hood's Hills

In 1824, the author Washington Irving rode to *Robin Hood's Hills*. Leaving his horse at the foot of the crags, he scaled their rugged sides, and sat in a niche of the rocks, called *Robin Hood's Chair*. Irving said, "it commands a wide prospect over the valley of Newstead, and here the bold outlaw is said to have taken his seat, and kept a look-out upon the roads below, watching for merchants, bishops, and other wealthy travellers, upon whom to pounce down, like an eagle from his eyrie".

Descending from the cliffs and remounting his horse, Irving rode along a narrow "robber path," as it was called, which wound up into the hills to an artificial cavern cut in the face of a cliff, with a door and window cut through the stone. In Irving's time, this cave bore the name of Friar Tuck's cell, although it is now known as *Robin Hood's Cave*.

Robin Hood's Hills are accessed from Derby Road, Annesley. There is a network of Public Footpath rights of way around the area, but dog walkers have trodden many more unofficial paths around and over the hills.

The official Public Footpath access begins within the traffic light controlled junction of Derby Road and Shoulder of Mutton Hill.

- There is a limited amount of parking on a wide grass verge, along the south side of Derby Road. There is also plenty of roadside parking down Shoulder of Mutton Hill, after its name changes to Nottingham Road.

After passing through a metal kissing gate, The public footpath heads quite steeply downhill. Towards the bottom of the hill, the path splits left and right.

I first headed right (west), looking for *Robin Hood's Cave*. I had read accounts saying that the cave was now filled in, which seemed correct from my visit. Contouring around the hillside brings you to a broad gully. The cave site is on the south face of this gully, on the bracken covered hillside.



Robin Hood's Cave (no longer visible in hillside)

After looking at the former cave site, I retraced my steps and followed the left (east) path towards Robin Hood's Hills.



Robin Hood's Hills (looking from below Robin Hood's Cave)

It is necessary to climb again, to cross the railway line. The path crosses the line across the opening of a railway tunnel. This gives us the opportunity to see one of the area's more modern Robin Hood locations. The Nottingham to Worksop railway is called the Robin Hood Line. For anyone wanting a journey on our hero's namesake railway, the nearest stations are in Newstead Village and Kirkby in Ashfield.



The Robin Hood Line – looking from above the tunnel exit

After crossing the railway, the path descends to the base of Robin Hood's Hills. Unofficial paths lead up a broad gully to your left, which lead onto the flat topped hill. Although the paths are not official rights of way, a very official looking bench on the summit suggests that access is not a problem. It is possible to leave the hills at the high point, along an unofficial path leading across a field towards Derby Road.

There are several fenced areas, which should be respected. Robin Hood's Chair is a promontory which falls within one of these enclosures, but we can see the location by backtracking to the base of the hill.

Once back on flat ground, contour around the base of Robin Hood's Hills. On the east side of the hill, a broad gully cuts through the hillside. Robin Hood's Chair is the left hand promontory, at the top of this gully. There was once a significant rock outcrop, on which legend has our hero looking out from. There is no longer anything noticeable, but you do get a feeling for the view afforded from the spot in medieval times.



Robin Hood's Chair

Just beyond this gully, the tree cover on the hillside changes from deciduous old growth to evergreens. Walks continue along the base of the hills, and also up into the evergreen covered hillside.

I retraced my route back to my van. It is not necessary to climb the steep path and re-cross the *Robin Hood* railway line, because a broad vehicle width track climbs more gently towards Derby Road. The track emerges on Derby Road opposite the end of a row of terraced houses.

The final stop on this itinerary visits Codnor Castle, back into Derbyshire.

Codnor Castle (Parking at DE5 9QY)

Henry de Grey (1155-1219) is credited for building the first stone castle on the site. It is Henry's grandson, Reynold de Grey (c.1240-1308), who provides the castle's link with *Robin Hood*. Reynold is considered as a strong contender for the bad Sheriff of Nottingham, based on his tenure as Governor of Nottingham Castle, from 1267. This period also saw activity by Roger Godberd, an outlaw who lived in Sherwood Forest. Some local historians combine these factors, to establish Godberd as the basis for the *Robin Hood* legends.

The only vehicle access to Codnor Castle is along private farm roads, but there are a choice of several walking and cycling routes to the castle.

The most direct walking route starts on the left of the Poet and Castle pub (2 Alfreton Road, Codnor, DE5 9QY), taking just over a kilometre along Public Footpaths to reach the castle remains. Several other walking and cycling routes are available, some of which are highlighted in the 500RH guidebook.

Local historian Brian Benison spent many years researching Reynold de Grey and Roger Godberd, and their connection to the *Robin Hood* legends. He published his findings in his 2015 book, *Robin Hood in Sherwood Stood: The Real Story*. Benison studied public records to see what the historians of the day wrote about outlaws who lived like the *Robin* of legend.

Benison's most likely candidate for *Robin Hood* was Roger Godberd, who served under Simon de Montfort, the 6th Earl of Leicester, and two other barons, in their rebellion against King Henry III. When all three barons were killed, Roger assumed leadership of the rebellion, causing him to be outlawed. He settled in Sherwood Forest, living there for four years, and defying the authorities. He was said to have been able to call upon 100 men but was eventually caught in 1272.

Benison then identified Reynold de Grey of Codnor Castle as a prime candidate for the legendary Sheriff of Nottingham.

It seems that Reynold de Grey and Roger Godberd might have started out as friends, going hunting together and there is even a record of them being jointly charged with stealing the king's deer. Reynold was one of the youngest ever Sheriffs and had been a military leader, helping Edward I conquer Wales.

It was the Barons' Revolt between 1264 and 1267 which ended their friendship. During this bitter conflict, you were either on the side of the barons or the Royals. Roger supported the barons, while The Sheriff sided with the Royals.

Fans of the *Robin Hood*'s regular one upmanship over the Sheriff, might be disappointed to hear that it was the Sheriff of Nottingham who caused Roger Godberd's downfall. Reynold de Grey captured Roger in the grounds of Rufford Abbey, taking him to Nottingham Castle. Roger escaped the Castle, being recaptured and sent to trial at Tower of London, where he was pardoned.



Codnor Castle

Evening Accommodation & Evening Meal

The nearby towns of Ripley and Eastwood each have a wide selection of accommodation. While eateries are plentiful in the surrounding area.

Advert

Infusion Tea House

A short distance from the Codnor Castle 500RH location

The Mews, Church St, Ripley, DE5 3BU

<https://www.fusion-studios.co.uk/infusion-teahouse>



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Thorpe Cottage - Ashford in the Water

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- Sleeps 2 (1 Bedroom)
- Self catering accommodation
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That brings us to the end of The Robin Hood Highlights itinerary. I hope you enjoyed travelling around this selection of the many locations on the Robin Hood 500. If you would like to explore the route in more detail, please consider buying the 500RH guidebook, or taking 500RH Membership, for access to our other itineraries.