

**EC Christmas Party in a Castle**  
**Friday 14th - Sunday 16th December 2018**

**Brace your elves for this great weekend to wrap up the year - get some time away from the Christmas crowds with Explorers Connect staying in a Grade 1 listed ancient monument in the middle of the beautiful Wye Valley. Yule enjoy a variety of local walks, the chance to try your hand at archery and enjoy a hearty medieval feast...**

**The Wye Valley attracts hikers from all over the world - straddling the border between England and Wales, it is very near to the famous Offa's Dyke pathway and is one of the most dramatic and scenic landscape areas in southern Britain. Your accommodation is a castle which sits on a hill with amazing views of the River Wye and rolling landscape beyond. Add to that, lots of interesting and well-preserved historic features - staying here you'll really feel like you've been transported back in time. This weekend you'll be spending your days hiking, exploring, and trying your hand on an archery taster session. On Saturday evening grab a glass of mead and sit down to enjoy a special Medieval Christmas Banquet before burning it off on the dance floor.**

## **ITINERARY**

**Friday** - Arrive from 6pm where your EC hosts will welcome you and show you to your room. Due to people arriving at different times, we won't be offering dinner, so we'd recommend bringing something with you to eat or eating before you arrive. The George Inn, St Briavels is just around the corner, if you wanted to eat there, call them to book 01594 530228 food is served until 9pm on Friday – **BOOKING IS ESSENTIAL!**

We will have welcome drinks and nibbles available - an adventure film screening (around 7pm) and you'll spend the rest of Friday night relaxing and catching up with everyone. If the skies are clear we can head outside to see the Geminids meteor shower, one of the most spectacular showers of the year with 120 meteors visible per hour at its peak.

**Saturday** - After breakfast there will be a choice of different local guided walks which will range from easy to challenging, so you can join whichever you wish. The amazing Offa's Dyke route - Britain's longest ancient monument - runs right past the castle. You can explore the path northwards to the town of Monmouth or southwards to the iconic Tintern Abbey and the Devil's Pulpit... a limestone pillar allegedly where the devil preached to try and lure the monks away from the Abbey. You'll need to bring a packed lunch, drinks and snacks for your time out in the hills, but on your return the bar will be open.

Return to the castle and refresh after your day out, then join us for an entertaining talk from Huw Jack (around 4.30pm). Then make your way to the special Medieval Christmas banquet  
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and if you feel like channelling your inner princess or court jester you can even pick a medieval-themed costume to wear (optional). Following an introduction to medieval etiquette from the hosts, dinner will be served in a series of courses in the banquet hall with entertainment.

You'll start your meal with a glass of warming mead or soft drink, pottage (medieval-style soup) and bread. The main course is served as sharing platters of vegetables (roasted parsnips, carrot batons, sprouts, green beans, roast potatoes & stuffing balls) and meats (turkey, roast beef, pigs in blankets). The vegetarian option is the same vegetables with a vegetarian sausage, served with stuffed pepper and a savoury pastry. Dessert is homemade honey cake and Christmas pudding, followed by your last course of cheese and crackers. Please note that special diets can be catered for, just let us know when you book. We'll give you a bit of time to digest before we crank up the music for you to dance the night away... Keep an eye out for some extra special Christmas-themed surprises!

**Sunday** - You'll have a slightly later start, and then after breakfast you can choose between two shorter local walks before heading home mid-late afternoon, or if you'd prefer a more relaxed day can test your co-ordination at a 'turn up and try' archery session in the castle grounds from 10.30am (weather-dependent). After the session you're welcome to carry on exploring in the area in the afternoon, head on home, or how about a Sunday Roast at the pub, served from 12pm.

## ACCOMMODATION

We'll be taking over the amazing 800-year-old St Briavels Castle YHA - just 45 minutes from Bristol and an easy drive along the M4 from London.

The Castle is a Grade 1 listed ancient monument, a rich piece of our heritage and an inspiring location offering a real 'wow' factor. Accommodation is in large dormitory style rooms. All bedding (pillow, duvet and linen) is provided but you'll need to bring your own towel.

## HOW TO GET HERE

**Address: YHA St Briavels Castle, Lydney, Gloucestershire, GL15 6RG**

From the South M4, M48 to Chepstow. Follow the A466 to Monmouth for approximately 7 miles. After the metal bridge, turn right and follow signs to St Briavels.

From the North M6, M5, M50 follow the signs to Monmouth. From there follow A466 to Chepstow. After approximately 5 miles turn left and follow signs to St Briavels.

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On Friday you can arrive from 6pm where your EC hosts Belinda, Becky and Rowan will be waiting for you – if you have any problems or are delayed please contact us:

Belinda on 07990 710304 or Rowan on 07803 875426

Parking: There is parking available for guests outside the hostel

Lift Sharing: If you can offer or need a lift (or just want to say “hi” to people) then you can post on the event Facebook page here:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/1817884498511098/>

Public Transport: The nearest train station is Lydney which is 8.4 miles away. The nearest bus stop is within 50 metres of the hostel. There is an intermittent local bus service to the village. Guests are advised to check in advance that the service is running, Local buses: 707 Chepstow-St Briavels & 701 St Briavels-Coleford run by ‘Lydney Dial A Ride’ 01594 843809 (NB - May require booking a pick-up in advance). Number 69 Bus Monmouth-Chepstow, 2 mile walk to nearest bus stop.

Local taxi: K&T Taxis (Lydney) 01594 845913; Abbey Taxis (Alvington) 01594 528181; CDs Taxis (Coleford) 01594 834834.

## KIT LIST

Don't forget your **CHRISTMAS JUMPER** for Saturday's walk!

**Bring a towel** (bedding and linen is provided)

You can download our recommended kit list [HERE](#).

If you haven't done communal living before, it's great fun but we'd recommend bringing **ear plugs** if you're a light sleeper. (It's a creaky old castle, things might go bump in the night!)

## WHAT'S INCLUDED:

- Welcome drink and nibbles on arrival
- Two nights' accommodation in the Grade 1 listed ancient monument of St Briavels Castle
- Two cooked breakfasts with continental options

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- Medieval Christmas-themed banquet with entertainment
- Access to medieval costumes to wear during the banquet (optional of course!)
- Adventure themed entertainment, prizes and surprises!
- Music and dancing on Saturday night
- A choice of different walks on Saturday and Sunday led by qualified and experienced walk leaders
- An archery taster session on Sunday morning (weather-dependent)
- A team of EC Hosts for the weekend
- Christmas cheer... Ho Ho Ho!

#### **WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED:**

Please bring with you LUNCH AND SNACKS for both days, as these aren't included. There are fridges available to store food if required.

**Please note:** on arrival you will be asked to sign a medical declaration form and provide us with next of kin/emergency contact details. If you have a medical condition or injury that we should be aware of please let us know in advance. Please contact us asap if there is anything you think may affect your participation.

If you have questions about the trip, please contact Rowan ([rowan@explorersconnect.com](mailto:rowan@explorersconnect.com)).

We look forward to seeing you there!

Belinda, Becky & Rowan  
Explorers Connect