

TOUR 7 WEST MIDLANDS

In the heart of England, the West Midlands showcases a rich diversity of urban metropolis and rural idyll, and the cuisine on offer is no less varied. Our route takes us through the west of the region, between the beautiful Malvern Hills and the border with Wales.

The 55-mile journey takes in the towns of Ludlow and Leominster and begins at **Court Farm**, located off the A4110 just north of Hereford. Here you will find a farm shop and tour, fishing lakes, and pick-your-own fields as well as a mountain boarding centre. If you're the sort of person who likes to get the adrenaline pumping early in the morning, have a go at this increasingly popular sport that combines snowboarding and skateboarding.

Taking the A4110 north before another left turn will take you through the "black and white village" of Weobley, where **September Organic Dairy** creates fine organic dairy ice-creams. If you have time, you can take a little detour to sample the fruits of their labours. Head for their shop at Newhouse Farm near Eardisley. Leave Weobley along the A4112 southbound towards the A4111, when you meet this road turn right to Eardisley. As you head through the village and up the hill, you'll see signs on the right pointing you towards Newhouse Farm (*Newhouse Farm, Almeley, Kington, Herefordshire HR3 6LJ; 01544 327849; www.september-organic.co.uk*). Join the A4112 and then head towards Kington along the A4111. Go through Eardisley and after about two miles, look out for the farm shop sign on the right. Follow this road for about a mile and the farm is on your right. Opt for the more extreme flavours such as Christmas pudding and Elderflower cream along with Tayberry.

For those not wishing to take this detour leave Weobley and join the A4112. Carry on along the A4112 until you reach the A4110 where you need to turn left, signposted Knighton. Continue along

until you reach the A4113 where you need to turn right towards Ludlow. Ludlow is a founding member of Cittaslow in the UK, a movement linked to Slow Food. The town is now a serious gastronomic centre with a cluster of fine restaurants and an annual food festival. Take lunch at the Michelin-starred **Hibiscus** restaurant (reservations highly advisable), or, if you fancy something lighter, try **Deli on the Square** (*4 Church Street, Ludlow Shropshire SY8 1AP; 01584 877353; www.delionthesquare.co.uk*). After enjoying the antiques, books and art on sale in Ludlow's ancient streets and having taken in the sights of the market (except Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays), and the picturesque ruins of Ludlow Castle, **De Grey's Tea Room** can provide afternoon refreshment.

Leave Ludlow on the A49 heading towards Leominster, at the roundabout take the A44 signposted Worcester. Stop off in Monkland to sample the cheese at **The Pleck Farm** (*The Pleck, Monkland, Leominster, Herefordshire HR6 9DB; 01568 720307; www.mousetrapcheese.co.uk*).

On the road again, remain on the A44 until you arrive in Kington, virtually on the Welsh border. **The Penrhos Court Country Hotel** is situated in a 700-year-old farmhouse in the Herefordshire countryside and boasts a fully organic restaurant and shop. Should you wish to stay the night here, you will find retiring to bed a pleasure in the exquisite Elizabethan rooms.

This tour was created by Dan Johnson, a journalist and regional food fanatic.

