

Robin Hood & Sherwood Forest

Welcome to Sherwood Forest, the legendary home of England's most famous hero - Robin Hood. 450,000 people each year come to visit this place. We hope you enjoy the nature, history and legend of Sherwood Forest.

A Legendary Hero

Legends tell that Robin Hood fled to Sherwood Forest to avoid capture by his enemy the Sheriff of Nottingham. He was an outlaw, his land and goods taken from him. He had to learn to survive on his wits, finding food, shelter, and companionship in the forest. He quickly became popular with local people and attracted a band of loyal followers, the 'Merry Men'. Amongst these were Little John, Friar Tuck, Will Scarlet, and Robin's sweetheart, Maid Marion. According to the stories, the outlaws travelled through the forest, laying ambushes for wealthy travellers and stealing their riches. From this booty, Robin gave money to the poor, and those who had been ruined by the Sheriff's taxes.

The First Robin Hood Stories

Almost everyone has heard of Robin Hood. But when did the legend begin?

The first Robin Hood stories were passed on by word of mouth. In days when there were no printed books, films or TV, storytelling was a popular form of entertainment. It was not until much later that the tales were written down. The earliest written reference to the outlaw is in a poem written about 1400 AD, which describes the outlaw standing in Sherwood Forest.



A 550 year old note in a Latin document recently found in Eton school library says "*Around this time, according to popular opinion, a certain outlaw named Robin Hood infested Sherwood and other law-abiding areas of England with continuous robberies*".



All we know about the medieval legend of Robin Hood is contained in five surviving manuscripts of ballads. In later centuries, writers and storytellers added more characters, plots and ideas. Today, films, books and TV series continue to embellish the legend. Each shows Robin Hood as a slightly different character. Which is your favourite Robin Hood film?

Did Robin Hood Really Exist?

Historians have debated for years whether Robin was a real historical figure or a mythical character. Court documents from the 1300s mention a man called Robin Hood as a servant in the household of King Edward II. But the name Hode or Hood was a common family name at the time. To add to the confusion, in later years the name 'Robin Hood' became used as a nickname for any outlaw. For example, a man called "William Robinhood" was tried for robbery in 1261. In American slang, even today criminals are sometimes referred to as "hoods".

Perhaps we will never know for sure whether Robin Hood was a real hero or a fictional character, but one thing is certain - his legend lives on!

The Robin Hood Festival

Each summer an event is held in the forest to celebrate our legendary hero. The Robin Hood Festival takes place annually, early in August. This free event features characters in medieval costume, falconry, archery and jousting demonstrations, musicians, and family entertainment. For more details see our web page: www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/robinhoodfestival



What other Robin Hood Sites Can I Visit in Nottinghamshire?

A 15 minute walk from the visitor centre is the village of Edwinstowe. According to legend, Robin Hood married Maid Marian in St Mary's church there. A statue in the village high street celebrates the first meeting between Robin and his sweetheart.

In the city of Nottingham, approximately 17 miles away, is legendary home of Robin's arch-enemy – the Sheriff of Nottingham. The medieval castle no longer exists, but you can visit the dungeons and secret passageways beneath the Castle Museum, which dates from Robin's time. Outside the castle walls is a fine bronze statue of Robin Hood.

Tourist Information: Where to Stay and What to See in Sherwood Forest

Do you need tourist information about where to stay and places to visit in Sherwood Forest? Call at our Visitor Information Office or telephone **Ollerton Tourist Information Centre on 01623 824545.**

See also www.visitnotts.co.uk