

WEEKENDERS



Abergavenny

MONMOUTHSHIRE

Situated in the shadow of Sugar Loaf Mountain – one of the Black Mountains' highest peaks – the Monmouthshire market town of Abergavenny makes a great base for walkers wanting to explore the Brecon Beacons. In September, however, its biggest draw is the highly acclaimed food festival, which attracts 30,000 revellers annually. Created in 1999 in response to the BSE crisis, its aim is to showcase the best of British food and the people who produce it. This year's speakers include Chef's Table star Asma Khan and eco expert Tom Hunt (21-22 September; abergavennyfoodfestival.com).

THINGS TO DO Once you've eaten your fill at the festival, walk it off with a trip to the top of Sugar Loaf Mountain; the four-mile Sugar Loaf circuit takes you through a deep wooded valley and onto open moorland before the final ascent. If you're after a full day's hike, the circular ten-mile Brecon Beacons Horseshoe Ridge Walk is a worthy challenge, traversing Pen y Fan – the highest point in the southern UK. September also marks the beginning of the grape harvest, so it's all go at Sugar Loaf Vineyard, whose south-facing slopes are open for tours and tastings (sugarloafvineyard.co.uk). The ruins of Abergavenny Castle are also a short walk from the town centre, along with the restored 19th-century hunting lodge, which now acts as a museum.



Where to stay

With its own bakery, two bars and a seasonal restaurant, the Angel Hotel (above) – in the centre of town – offers a welcoming place to unwind. The former coaching inn has 35 bedrooms, ranging from former stables to contemporary cottages (angelabergavenny.com). Alternatively, The Hardwick, a couple of miles outside the town, offers eight comfortable rooms surrounding its central courtyard (thehardwick.co.uk).



Where to eat

Arrive during the food festival and you'll be spoilt for choice. A good first stop is the epic food market with indoor market hall, new producers' market, cheese and wine section and Fish and Fizz zone. There's also a night market, perfect for nocturnal feasting. For a sit-down meal, head to The Walnut Tree for simple ingredients cooked in innovative ways (thewalnuttreeinn.com) or stop for a light lunch at the Chapel Café (artshopandgallery.co.uk).

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