

# The Peak District

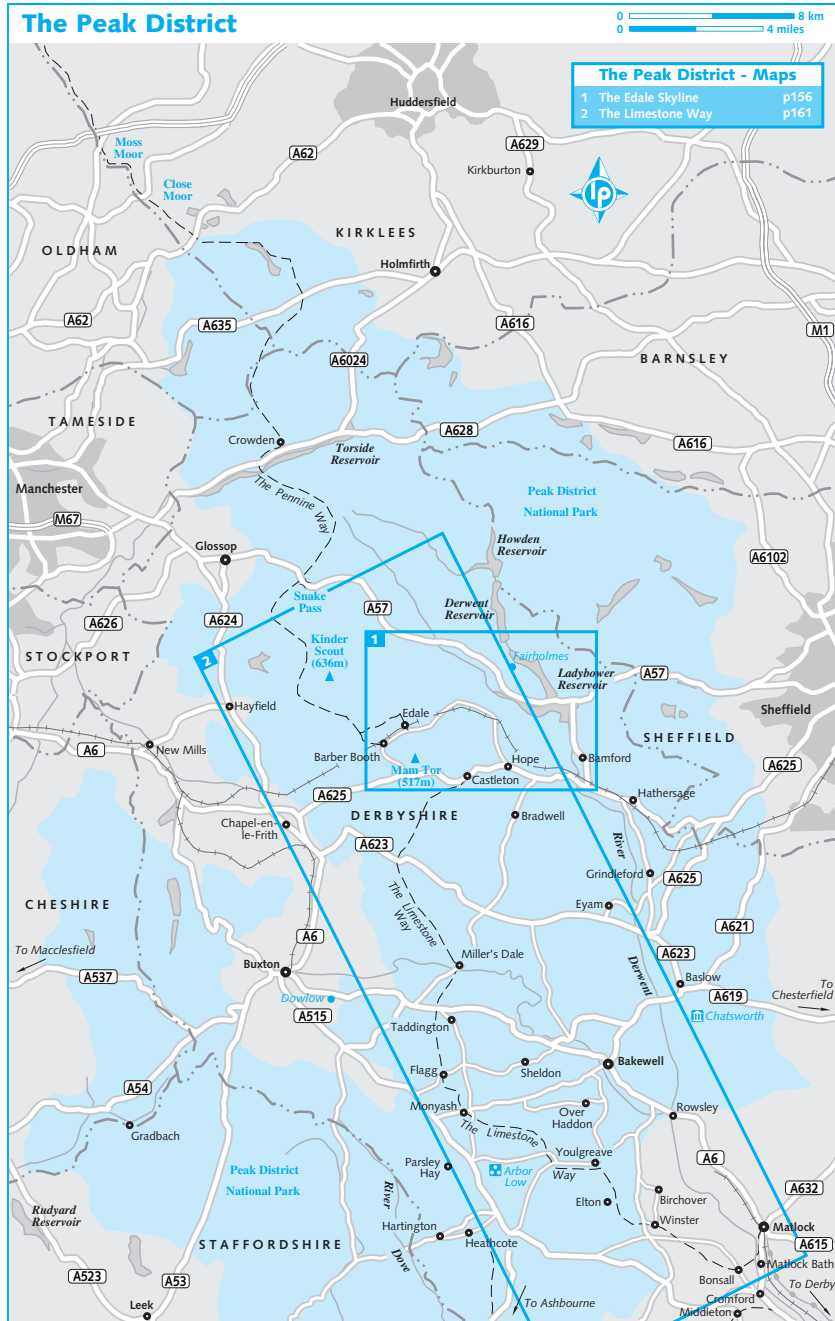
The first thing you notice about the Peak District – despite its name – is a distinct lack of pointed mountain tops. The word ‘peak’ actually comes from *peac*, an Old English term for any mound or hill, and while the area has very few soaring summits there are indeed plenty of hills, making the Peak District one of the most popular walking areas in northern England. And deservedly so: access is easy, facilities are good and there’s a huge choice of routes of all lengths and standards through a variety of landscapes.

Much of the area is contained within the Peak District National Park – Britain’s oldest and largest park – divided by geology into two distinct sections. The Dark Peak in the north is mostly high, wild, rolling moorland covered in rough grass, heather or peat bog, sliced by gullies known as ‘grouchs’ and dotted with rocky outcrops of grey gritstone (a hard, coarse-grained sandstone), many eroded by the weather into unusual shapes. In sharp contrast, the White Peak in the south is a lower, ‘friendlier’ and less-imposing landscape of pale limestone and fertile farmland, with tranquil grassy dales and wooded valleys running between the pasture-covered hills.

In this chapter we describe two routes, one in the Dark Peak and one in the White Peak, as top-class samples of what the area has to offer. Use them as tasters, then go on to explore for yourself. Some pointers for further walks are given on p163, but wherever you go in the Peak, you won’t be disappointed.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Gazing at views on both sides from the ridge near **Hollins Cross** (p157) on the Edale Skyline
- Enjoying the White Peak landscape of neat fields and dry-stone walls on the **Limestone Way** (p158)
- Following the idyllic river past the ancient village of **Youlgreave** (p162)
- Avoiding the peat bogs and striding through the heather on the **Kinder Plateau** (p157), gateway to the Pennines



## INFORMATION When to Walk

The Dark Peak can be explored at any time of year, although in winter the weather on the upland areas can switch from balmy to arctic in less than an hour, making walking a serious business. Even in summer, mist and rain on the featureless, plateau-like moors can quickly turn an easy day out into an epic adventure – so be prepared. Walking in the White Peak is far less hazardous.

## Maps

For the whole area on one sheet, get the Ordnance Survey (OS) Touring 1:100,000 map No 4 *Peak District & Derbyshire*. For more detail, you can use OS Landranger 1:50,000 maps No 110 *Sheffield & Huddersfield* and 119 *Buxton & Matlock*, but these are still not really detailed enough for walking. Much better are the OS Explorer 1:25,000 maps No 1 *The Peak District – Dark Peak Area* and 24 *White Peak Area*, or Harvey Maps Superwalker 1:25,000 *Dark Peak*.

## Books

The Peak District is a popular walking area and very well covered by numerous guidebooks. An excellent choice is *Peak District Northern & Western Moors and Peak District Eastern Moors & the South*, both by local expert Roly Smith, with a good range of walks, colour maps and photos, and new information to take account of recent ‘freedom to roam’ legislation (see the boxed text, p448). In the same series are *The Pennine Divide* and *South Pennines & Bronte Moors*, both by Andrew Bibby, covering the hills and moors neighbouring the Peak District. All four books are endorsed by the Ramblers’ Association.

Also with a good selection of walks of varying lengths and standards is the *Peak District Pathfinder Guide*. Highly recommended is *Walks from the Hope Valley*

*Line*, detailing routes from stations along the railway running through the park. For background, or maybe a souvenir of your visit, *The Peak District Official National Park Guide* is highly recommended – lavish and stylish but inexpensive – with text by Roly Smith and beautiful photos by Ray Manley.

## Guided Walks

National park rangers organise an excellent series of guided walks throughout the year. They’re free of charge (although you might need to reserve a place) and range from gentle strolls to strenuous all-dayers. For more information, see the *Peak District* newspaper (see below) or enquire at tourist offices.

## Information Sources

There are many tourist offices in and around the Peak District; larger ones include **Bakewell** (☎ 01629-813227; bakewell@peakdistrict-npa.gov.uk), **Buxton** (☎ 01298-25106; www.highpeak.gov.uk) and **Matlock** (☎ 01629-583388; matlockinfo@derbyshiredales.gov.uk). Others are detailed in the individual walk descriptions.

For online information about the whole area, start with the official sites [www.peakdistrict.org](http://www.peakdistrict.org) and [www.visitpeakdistrict.com](http://www.visitpeakdistrict.com). For more tourism information, places to stay, local attractions and so on, try [www.peakdistrict-nationalpark.com](http://www.peakdistrict-nationalpark.com), [www.peakdistrictonline.co.uk](http://www.peakdistrictonline.co.uk) and [www.derbyshire-peakdistrict.co.uk](http://www.derbyshire-peakdistrict.co.uk).

At tourist offices, shops and hotels you can pick up *Peak District*, a free newspaper produced annually by the national park authority, full of tourist and background information, with a full list of guided walks and other local events.

Tourist offices and many newsagents also sell the *Peak District Bus & Train Timetable*; as well as containing public transport details, this booklet lists places of interest, market days, local services and places for

## BIG IN JAPAN

Surrounded by large cities such as Manchester and Sheffield, the Peak District is particularly popular over weekends and holidays when oxygen-starved urbanites invade its quiet serenity in pursuit of walking and other outdoor activities. Records show that the Peak District is visited by around 22 million people each year, putting the park among the busiest in the world, right up there with another well-known peak: Mt Fuji in Japan.

bicycle hire – especially useful if you're spending a few days in the area – plus a map showing all bus routes and long paths in the area, including the Limestone Way.

## GETTING AROUND

Very few other national parks have such handy public transport access, with two services of particular use to walkers in the Peak District. The **TransPeak** ([www.transpeak.co.uk](http://www.transpeak.co.uk)) bus service crosses the area several times daily between Derby and Manchester via Matlock, Bakewell and Buxton and many smaller villages – plus some bus stops right out in the wilds. The Hope Valley Railway runs between Sheffield and Manchester through the heart of the Peak District, with trains at least every two hours, stopping at several rural train stations where you can walk off the platform and straight into the hills. For more information, pick up the *Peak District Bus & Train Timetable* (see p153), or use the national travel information lines and websites summarised in the boxed text on p456.

## GATEWAYS

The main gateways for the Peak District are the cities of Derby, Sheffield and Manchester, all with good coach and train links to the rest of the country, and easily reached by car. From here you can reach several towns within the park (such as Bakewell or Buxton) that make good jumping-off points, plus the towns and villages nearest the start of the routes we describe.

## THE EDALE SKYLINE

<b>Duration</b>	5¼–7½ hours
<b>Distance</b>	11 miles (17.5km)
<b>Difficulty</b>	moderate
<b>Start/Finish</b>	Hope (opposite)
<b>Transport</b>	bus, train

**Summary** A circular walk on hills and ridges, across open moor and farmland, mostly on good paths with marvellous views.

The Edale Skyline route is a classic Peak District walk and a perfect introduction to the park. Keeping mainly to high ground, you make a circuit of the Edale Valley with views across the nearby Hope Valley from the ridge that marks the natural boundary

## WORKING THE PARK

Established in 1951, the Peak District is the oldest national park in Britain, covering an area of about 500 sq miles (around 1400 sq km). As with other national parks in Britain, the Peak District is not state-owned but made up of many different privately owned areas of land. Today, as for thousands of years, many people live and work in the park, engaged in farming and tourism, as well as more controversial industries such as quarrying.

between the gritstone Dark Peak and the limestone White Peak. To the north lies heather-covered moor, to the south the hills are covered in a patchwork of fields. This walk gives a taste of both landscapes.

The Edale Valley is enclosed and lightly populated, flanked on its southern side by a steep, grassy ridge and to the north by the notoriously boggy expanse of Edale Moor, commonly called Kinder Scout, the Kinder Plateau, or just plain Kinder. The quiet village of Edale, at the western end of its namesake valley, is most famous for walkers as the start of the Pennine Way (p261).

The Hope Valley is broad and contains several villages, including Hope itself and Castleton, a tourist honey pot famous for its nearby show caves. Another feature is the cement factory, its chimneys incongruously billowing smoke amid this lush and tranquil scene. Aesthetically it's an eyesore but economically it's a lifeline and a reminder that the Peak is a living, working park.

## PLANNING

OK, we'll come clean. The route we describe here isn't the real Edale Skyline. The *real* Edale Skyline is a much longer outing, circling the entire Edale Valley. We're suggesting a shorter version here that misses none of panoramic views over the Derbyshire hills but does avoid some of the longer, wilder, boggy sections of the full route.

Having said that, paths can be very muddy after rain, although they are well defined. There are few signposts, so the ability to use a map and compass is crucial, as weather conditions can change very rapidly. Don't let that put you off though; in the right conditions this route is a beauty,

and enthusiastic walkers will find it a very satisfying excursion.

The route starts and ends in Hope, and we describe the circular route in an anti-clockwise direction, so you can complete two-thirds of the distance before having a relaxed lunch in Edale village. If your timing is different you can easily do it the other way around. To include time for lunch or other long stops, you should allow seven to eight hours in total.

## Alternatives

We describe a circuit from Hope village; an alternative start/finish point is Edale village. For a shorter walk you can do the route as described from Hope to Edale (6.5 miles) then get the train back to Hope.

If you're feeling strong, the full (20 miles) Edale Skyline route misses Edale village and continues round the western end of the valley, over Brown Knoll, Rushup Edge and Mam Tor – a wonderful outing for fine a summer day.

## Maps

For the Edale Skyline you will need either the OS Explorer 1:25,000 map No 1 *The Peak District – Dark Peak Area* or the Harvey Superwalker 1:25,000 map *Dark Peak*.

## Information Sources

The tourist office and national park centre at Edale, the **Moorland Centre** (☎ 01433-670207) is the best source of information on all aspects of the area, including accommodation, food, transport and weather forecasts. Useful websites are [www.peakdistrict.org](http://www.peakdistrict.org), [www.visitpeakdistrict.com](http://www.visitpeakdistrict.com) and [www.edale-valley.co.uk](http://www.edale-valley.co.uk).

## NEAREST TOWN

### Hope

This route starts and ends at the village of Hope, but the village of Edale (p263) is another possible start/finish point – and has more accommodation options.

## SLEEPING & EATING

Campers can head for **Laneside Caravan Park** (☎ 01433-620215; [www.lanesidecaravanpark.co.uk](http://www.lanesidecaravanpark.co.uk)); sites for 2£8-10), a well-organised and well-equipped site just on the eastern edge of the village.

In the centre of the village, the **Woodroffe Arms** (☎ 01433-620351; Castleton Rd; d £50, mains £7-

9; ☎ lunch daily, dinner Tue-Sat) is a friendly pub that welcomes walkers.

A long-standing favourite is **Woodbine B&B** (☎ 07778-113882; 18 Castleton Rd; s/d £25/50; ☎ café breakfast & lunch), attached to the equally popular Woodbine Cafe, serving meals and teas for walkers, cyclists and cavers, with a sumptuous selection of homemade cakes and a roaring open fire on cold days. This is also a hang-out for paragliders; the café has a direct radio link with a weather gauge on Rushup Edge, so the flyers can see if it's worth leaving their table.

Just a few doors away, **Courtyard Cafe** (snacks £2-3, mains £4-6; ☎ to 6pm, later in summer) has a sunny conservatory and garden, while **M & B Pizzas** (mains £4-8; ☎ 6-10pm Wed-Sun) is an unexpected little takeaway, serving burgers as well as margaritas and all the regulars – perfect if you're camping and don't feel like getting the stove out.

There are more accommodation choices on Edale Rd, leading north out of the village, including **Mill Farm** (☎ 01433-621181; millfarmhopevalley@hotmail.com; s/d £30/50), a picture-postcard cottage with lovely garden, and **Chapman Farm** (☎ 01433-620297; s/d £30/50), with just two guestrooms.

Also on Edale Rd is a walkers' favourite pub, the **Cheshire Cheese** (☎ 01433-620381; [www.sallydog.co.uk/cheshirecheese](http://www.sallydog.co.uk/cheshirecheese); d £75, mains £5-7; ☎ lunch & dinner), with comfortable B&B, a traditional, no-frills bar, a good range of beer and a selection of filling meals.

Further up the road, about 1 mile outside the village, perennially recommended **Underleigh House** (☎ 01433-621372; [www.underleighhouse.co.uk](http://www.underleighhouse.co.uk); d from £65) is friendly and good quality.

For food on the walk, Hope has a **Spar** (☎ daily) shop and a deli-bakery, both selling picnic ingredients.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Hope is very well served by frequent buses from Sheffield, which go on to Castleton, but your best option is the frequent and convenient train service on the Hope Valley railway line between Sheffield (25 minutes) and Manchester (40 minutes), stopping at Hope and Edale train stations – among others – about 10 times per day (slightly less on Sunday). Make sure you get the stopping train though – otherwise you'll see the Peak at high speed from the Trans

Pennine Express! Timetables are available from local tourist offices or online at [www.nationalrail.co.uk](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk).

## THE WALK Hope to Win Hill

45 minutes–1 hour, 1.5 miles (2.4km)

Leave Hope village by going north along Edale Rd from the T-junction opposite the church. Continue for 300m, fork right onto a lane and follow this until you pass under a railway bridge. Turn immediately right onto a track that leads you uphill to Twitchill Farm. (Now holiday cottages, the farm is an attractive sight but also a reflection of recent developments in countryside economy – tourism makes more money than farming.)

Go through the farmyard and then through a gate into steep fields, where a path leads diagonally up to a junction of paths on the ridge crest. Turn right and walk for about 700m to reach the summit of **Win Hill** (462m).

Stop to enjoy the views here and look west across to Lose Hill. Local legend has it

that the names derive from a battle many centuries ago when the victorious and the vanquished sides retired to a hill each.

While you are resting, beware of the greedy (and fearless) sheep who try to snatch your sandwiches.

## Win Hill to Edale

2½–3½ hours, 5 miles (8km)

Retrace your steps to the junction of paths and continue straight on (northwest) along the broad ridge crest. Up here you really get the feeling of being near the sky, as panoramic views and a fresh breeze blow away the cobwebs in mind and body. Another path (a former Roman road) joins from the left, but keep going along the main ridge, with a plantation now on your right, to reach **Hope Cross** – an old stone marker built in 1737 and showing routes to Hope, Edale, Glossop and Sheffield.

Go through a gate and continue for about 300m to another gate. Here a signpost to Edale sends you left down a track into the small, steep-sided valley of Jagers Clough. If it's been windy on the ridge, you can get

a bit of peace down here and even listen to the birds. At weekends, though, your peace may be disturbed by the squealing brakes of descending mountain bikes.

At the bottom of the valley, wade the stream – in summer it's very shallow – or hop from rock to rock, then continue uphill on the track leading towards Edale for about 50m until it bends sharply to the left. Don't follow the track but carry straight on along an overgrown path leading up **Jagers Clough** itself. This path is not signposted and easy to miss, so take care.

Assuming the Jagers Clough path is passable (see the Warning box, right), continue up this delightful valley past miniature waterfalls, crystal-clear pools and clumps of hardy rowan trees. Look back, too, for great views of Win Hill and your route so far. The path crosses the stream a few times. Sometimes it's so narrow you have to use the stream, climbing up the rocks or skirting along the edge. Just before the top it becomes quite steep and rocky.

When the gradient eases you meet a good path running along the southeastern edge of the **Kinder Plateau**. Turn left (southwest) and follow the path – it soon swings in a more westerly direction – for about 1.5 miles. This is a great bit of the walk, with stunning views down to your left (south) over the Edale valley across to the ridge between Mam Tor and Lose Hill, your route this afternoon. You'll also pass a few rocky gritstone outcrops – so characteristic of the Dark Peak moorland – such as the fancifully titled **Druid's Stone**.

When you reach the top of a ridge called **Ringier Roger** (another delightful name), a path leads down towards Edale village, but it's more enjoyable to continue on the high ground a little further, around the edge of a beautiful valley called **Golden Clough**. Near the top of this valley, there's a junction of paths; take the path leading straight down Golden Clough. Near a plantation this meets another path coming down Grindsbrook Clough. If the weather is fine, and time's on your side at the top of Golden Clough, you could also continue along the edge of the Kinder Plateau for another mile and then come down Grindsbrook Clough itself. Either way, the paths all lead downhill, finishing with a gentle, pleasant stroll through the trees, across a footbridge and

## WARNING

In spring or autumn, after rain, the stream through Jagers Clough may overflow and block the path. In winter it may also be icy and dangerous. To avoid this section, either retrace your steps to the signpost near Hope Cross and continue north then west on clear paths round the head of the valley, or take the direct low-level path to Edale.

into Grindsbrook Booth, the northern end of Edale village.

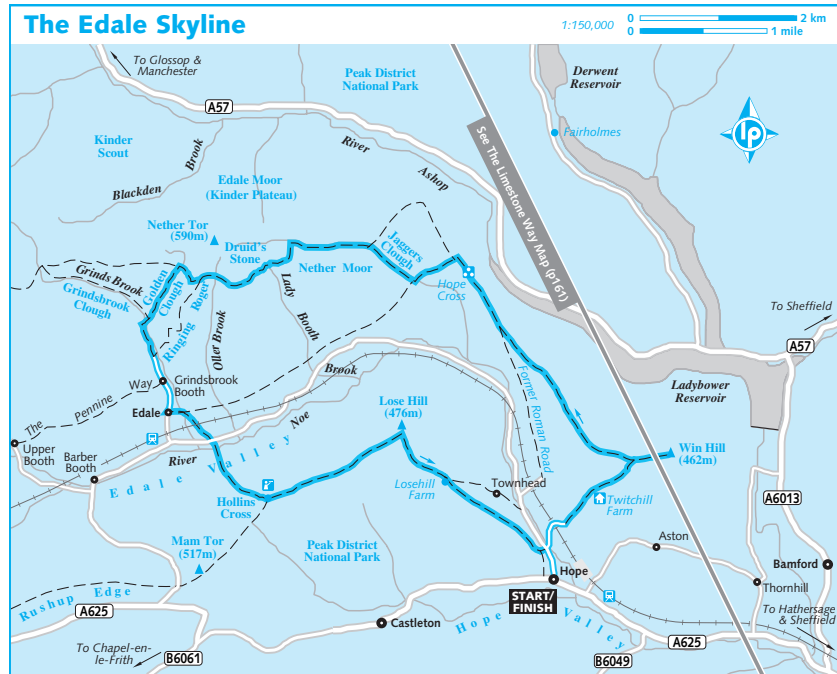
Nearby is a famous pub called the **Old Nag's Head** (☎ 01433-670291; self-catering cottage £60, mains £10-15; ☺ lunch & dinner), and about 1 mile down the road, near the train station, is another pub officially called the **Rambler Country House** (☎ 01433-670268; [www.theramblerinn.co.uk](http://www.theramblerinn.co.uk); s/d £36/72, mains £10; ☺ lunch & dinner) but known to all as the Rambler Inn. Both pubs offer bar food and are worth visiting for lunch, although at both places the menu is surprisingly dreary and the atmosphere disappointing. As an alternative, try the basic **café** at the train station, which is popular with walkers, serving hot drinks, snacks and meals – mostly with chips. For more information on places to eat or accommodation in Edale, see p263.

## Edale to Hope

2–3 hours, 4.5 miles (7km)

Edale's lovely old church is about halfway along the road that runs through the village, around 250m beyond the Old Nag's Head. Opposite the church is an old cemetery. Look for the signpost and follow the footpath through the cemetery then across fields, skirting the camp site by the tourist office, to go under a railway bridge and then meet the road that runs along the Edale Valley. Go straight across and onto a good farm track leading steeply uphill to meet a path that then leads even more steeply up to the ridge between Mam Tor and Lose Hill.

You reach the ridge crest at a point called **Hollins Cross**. Pause to savour the view over the next valley, with the village of Castleton below. To the southwest you can make out the collapsed sides of Mam Tor. If conditions are right, the sky will be full of paragliders taking advantage of the wind above the appropriately named Rushup Edge.



## WELL DRESSED

Unique to the Peak District is the custom of decorating wells or springs in thanksgiving for a local supply of water. The practice may have started in pre-Christian times, and seems to have died out by the early 17th century, to be revived by the inhabitants of Tissington in gratitude for their supply of pure water, which they believed protected them from the Great Plague of 1665.

Each year about 20 village wells are 'dressed' with large, colourful pictures depicting scenes from the Bible, local history and events, or tackling more modern issues such as rainforest protection.

The pictures are produced by spreading a thin layer of clay over a wooden frame, then outlining the design with bark and filling in the colours with an intricate mosaic of flower petals and leaves. And in these conservation-minded days, the traditional practice of using slow-growing mosses and lichens as colour is beginning to decline, with seeds, acorn cups and coloured stones creating a textured background instead.

Well dressing takes place in Peak District villages from May to mid-September, with June and July being the main months. Tourist offices have a list of when village well dressings will be displayed. Wirksworth, Eyam and Youlgreave are three villages particularly renowned for this tradition.

From Hollins Cross head east along the ridge path. This is another highlight section of the route, with excellent views down in both directions. You can clearly see the difference between the Dark Peak and the White Peak as you stroll along their dividing line.

It will take you about 30 minutes to reach the summit of **Lose Hill** (476m) for a final look at the panorama before descending. You meet a low path from Hollins Cross at a stile. Cross the stile and continue descending, with a wall on your left, to Lose-hill Farm. After the farm the path divides. The left branch (straight on) is an alternative route to Hope via Townhead, Edale Rd and the Cheshire Cheese pub. The right branch is the main route, going over another stile and then heading through fields directly to Hope, the Woodbine Cafe and the cream tea that you've been waiting for all day.

## THE LIMESTONE WAY

<b>Duration</b>	2 days
<b>Distance</b>	26 miles (42km)
<b>Difficulty</b>	easy-moderate
<b>Start</b>	Matlock (opposite)
<b>Finish</b>	Castleton (p160)
<b>Transport</b>	bus, train

**Summary** A long but easy-going route on paths, tracks and lanes, winding through valleys and farmland, neatly avoiding busy areas.

The limestone country of the White Peak is characterised by steep-sided dales cloaked in ash woodland, while the higher land is covered by narrow fields edged with ancient dry-stone walls. In spring especially, many of the fields are bathed in the colour of wildflowers, while down in the dales rare orchids thrive. This scenic area, popular with tourists for more than a century (Victorian sightseers compared the area – with just a tad of imagination – to Switzerland), is perfect for easy walking.

With beauty comes a downside – some areas can get crowded at weekends. The Limestone Way deliberately avoids the honey pots and is ideal if you want an undisturbed taste of Derbyshire's White Peak landscape. You'll also get a glimpse of history, as the first part of the Limestone Way winds through an area that, centuries ago, was a centre for small-scale lead mining – the route follows tracks once used by generations of lead miners.

## PLANNING

The Limestone Way was originally designed as a route through the White Peak from Matlock to Castleton in the Hope Valley – where White gives way to Dark. More recently, the route was altered slightly to pass west of Matlock, then extended southwards to Rocester, a village north of Uttoxeter, where it links with another route called the Staffordshire Way (p278). Our description, however, follows the original route, which can be walked in either direction but is de-

scribed here south to north. Signposting and waymarks (sporting a Derby ram logo) are sporadic, and the whole area is crisscrossed with a network of other paths, so carrying a map is essential. We have described the route as a two-day walk but in summer keen walkers can polish it off in one go.

Day	From	To	Miles/km
1	Matlock	Monyash	13.5/21.8
2	Monyash	Castleton	12.5/20.2

## Alternatives

The Limestone Way is never far from a bus route, so there are many options for doing just part of the walk before returning to your start point. On top of this, the White Peak is covered with footpaths, so endless opportunities exist for shorter circuits incorporating parts of the Way.

If you want to tackle something longer, you could do the route north to south, from Castleton via Bonsall (near Matlock) all the way to Rocester, a total distance of 46 miles.

## Maps & Books

Most of the Limestone Way is marked on the OS Explorer 1:25,000 map No 24 *The Peak District – White Peak Area*. Castleton and the final 2.5 miles of the route are on map No 1 *Dark Peak Area*.

Derbyshire Dales District Council publishes two leaflets – *The Limestone Way, Castleton to Matlock* and *The Limestone Way, Matlock to Rocester* – both in a north-to-south direction with strip maps and useful background information, available (free) from local tourist offices.

For more detail, *The Limestone Way* by R and E Haydock and B and D Allen covers both directions, with several circular walks based on the route, although this book was published in 1997 and copies are hard to find.

## NEAREST TOWNS Matlock & Matlock Bath

The country town of Matlock is easy to reach by public transport, and has banks, shops and several B&Bs. Matlock Bath is a large village about 2 miles from Matlock, decked out somewhat bizarrely as a seaside town, complete with promenade, gift shops,

cable car and discarded fish-and-chip wrappers. Other attractions include the famous evening 'illuminations' – multicoloured lights all along South Pde and North Pde (together forming the main street) and an impressive flotilla of decorated boats on the river – delighting the crowds at weekends from late August to late October. The **Matlock Bath tourist office** (☎ 01629-55082; matlockbath.info@derbyshiredales.gov.uk) can advise on accommodation, public transport, local events and other walking options in the area.

## SLEEPING & EATING

Options in Matlock include central **Riverbank Guesthouse** (☎ 01629-582593; Derwent Ave; d from £60), at the end of Old English Rd, off Dale Rd. (There are a couple of other B&Bs nearby on Dale Rd itself.)

Also good are **Glendon** (☎ 01629-584732; Knowleston Pl; d from £50) and the friendly, well-organised and highly decorated **Sheriff Lodge** (☎ 01629-760760; www.sheriffllodge.co.uk; Dimple Rd; s/d from £44/65), up on the hill a short distance from the centre.

A little out of the centre in the other direction, the **Boat House Inn** (☎ 01629-583776; www.boathousematlock.co.uk; 110 Dale Rd; d from £40) has good no-frills rooms, plus good no-fuss food and good no-fizz beer.

About halfway between Matlock and Matlock Bath, the **Firs** (☎ 01629-582426; 180 Dale Rd; d from £48) is another walker-friendly place (and if it's full, there are two more B&Bs nearby).

In Matlock Bath, on the main street are two good-quality B&Bs: **Fountain Villa** (☎ 01629-56195; www.fountainvilla.co.uk; 86 North Pde; s/d from £35/50); and **Ashdale Guest House** (☎ 01629-57826; www.ashdaleguesthouse.co.uk; 92 North Pde; s/d from £35/60).

For food in Matlock, the **Crown** (Crown Sq) is a popular pub with good-value drinks and bar food. Other good pubs include the **Thorn Tree** (Jackson Rd), off Bank Rd.

For something more stylish, the **Strand** (☎ 01629-584444; www.thestrandrestaurant.com; Dale Rd; mains £15; ☺ lunch & dinner) is a French-inspired bistro and café-bar.

Matlock has lots of takeaway options around Crown Sq and along Dale Rd, offering pizzas, kebabs, Chinese or Indian.

Neighbouring Matlock Bath has a string of cafés, takeaways and restaurants. Some of the pubs do food too; our favourites include

the **Princess Victoria** (South Pde), with good beer, and the **Fishpond** (South Pde), centre of the local live-music scene.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

From Derby at least 10 local buses and around five trains per day run to Matlock (40 minutes), via Matlock Bath.

If you need to cut the route short, you can jump on the **TransPeak** ([www.transpeak.co.uk](http://www.transpeak.co.uk)) bus where the Limestone Way crosses the A6 near Taddington. This bus runs north to Buxton (15 minutes) and Manchester (1½ hours) or south to Matlock (35 minutes) and Derby (1½ hours).

### Castleton

The village of Castleton was established more than 900 years ago, after William Peveril, illegitimate son of William the Conqueror, was made Steward of the Royal Forest of the Peak in 1080. He built a castle on a rock bastion above the valley, and the village grew up beneath it. Henry II added more defences in 1176 and used the castle as a hunting lodge, but despite these regal connections, Castleton never became important. Its present status as a tourist honey pot is derived from the nearby show caves (source of Blue John, a semiprecious mineral) 'explored' by several thousand visitors each year. If you come here in high summer, it'll seem like several million – but at least there's a good choice of places to stay. The **tourist office** (☎ 01433-620679) has information on accommodation, public transport, local events and other walking options in the area. For more local information, websites

include [www.derbyshireguide.co.uk/travel/castleton.htm](http://www.derbyshireguide.co.uk/travel/castleton.htm).

### SLEEPING & EATING

Overlooking the village square, **Castleton YHA Hostel** (☎ 0870 770 5758; [castleton@yha.org.uk](mailto:castleton@yha.org.uk); Castle St; dm £14; ☑) is a large old building with friendly staff who know the area well.

Among many walker-friendly B&Bs, long-standing favourites include **Bargate Cottage** (☎ 01433-620201; [www.bargatecottage.co.uk](http://www.bargatecottage.co.uk); Market Pl; d £55), very close to the end of the Limestone Way, and **Ramblers Rest** (☎ 01433-620125; [www.ramblersrest-castleton.co.uk](http://www.ramblersrest-castleton.co.uk); Millbridge; s/d from £25/40), with a range of rooms, including one with a jacuzzi – ideal if you've had a hard day's walking. Also good and central is **Cryer House** (☎ 01433-620244; [fleeskel@aol.com](mailto:fleeskel@aol.com); Castle St; s/d £25/50), with welcoming hosts.

On the main road towards Hope is the historic **Peaks Inn** (☎ 01433-620247; [www.peaks-inn.co.uk](http://www.peaks-inn.co.uk); How Lane; d from £75), now mixing old and new following a recent renovation, and **Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese Inn** (☎ 01433-620330; [www.cheshirecheeseinn.co.uk](http://www.cheshirecheeseinn.co.uk); How Lane; d from £65), where stylish B&B apartments contrast with the traditional bar.

Castleton also has several good pubs, all doing meals and most doing accommodation too. The **George** (☎ 01433-620238; Castle St; ☑ lunch & dinner), next door to the YHA hostel, is a first port of call for many walkers, with good beer and home-cooked food.

Nearby, the **Castle Inn** (☎ 01433-620578; [www.innkeeperslodge.com/castleton](http://www.innkeeperslodge.com/castleton); Castle St; d from £60, meals £7-10; ☑ lunch & dinner) is a larger place with several en suite rooms and good-value meals served to 10pm.

### PEAK DISTRICT RARITIES

Before the onslaught of modern intensive farming methods, the fields of the White Peak were multicoloured with some of the most flower-rich grassland in Britain. Commonplace plants mingled with rarer species and harboured a wonderful array of invertebrates that, in turn, attracted many birds. Although chemical fertilisers and uniform rye-grass have done away with much of this, in spring and summer many dales are still full of flowers specially adapted to living on the thin limestone soil.

One of these flowers is Jacob's ladder, found almost exclusively in the dales of the White Peak, with large blue petals and ladder-like leaves. Also rare, and especially enchanting, are orchids. Most flower in April and May but their numbers are small thanks to generations of collectors flouting the law against picking these flowers – and despite the fact that orchids need their own special soil fungi to grow, so won't germinate in people's gardens. As people are marginally better informed these days, you should see a few orchids if you walk here at the right time. Needless to say, the orchids should be left in peace.

As befits a major tourist spot, Castleton also has many cafés and tearooms. Try award-winning **Rose Cottage**, on the main street, or walker-friendly **Three Roofs** near the car park. **Peveril Shop**, opposite the bus stop, does hot snacks and excellent-value sandwiches to take away – ideal if your transport is just about to leave!

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

From Castleton, buses go to Bakewell (50 minutes, three times per day), from where you can get another bus to Matlock or on to Derby. From Castleton, buses also go to Sheffield (1¼ hours, at least 10 per day) via Hope, where you can switch to the train and reach either Manchester or Sheffield, but make sure you tell the driver you want the station (about 1 mile beyond the village centre). On summer weekends there's a regular shuttle bus between Castleton and Hope train station (15 minutes), tying in with train departure and arrival times.

### THE WALK

#### Day 1: Matlock to Monyash

6½–9 hours, 13.5 miles (21.8km)

From the car park near Matlock's train station go up Snitterton Rd. After 50m turn left onto a path on a bridge over the railway line. The path goes steeply uphill, crossing many fields. When you stop to catch your breath, look back over Matlock and the Derwent Valley, with High Tor and Riber Castle (actually a Victorian sham) behind.

Pass to the right of Masson Lees Farm, then bear right along the edges of fields skirting **Masson Hill**, known locally as the 'first hill of the Pennines' as it's the chain's southernmost hill over 1000ft. Follow a narrow track to a junction where a left turn leads down a steep path to the stone market cross at the village of Bonsall.

Keep the **King's Head** pub on your left, cross the village main street and follow the Way as it climbs a few steps between walls, then crosses a field to reach Upper Town. The path meets a lane. Go straight on for about 200m to the next road junction, where you go through a gate and follow the Way across a field. Take care by the small barn; ignore the clear path going straight on and make sure you keep left – the Way is the less-obvious path alongside the wall.



This leads you to a track called Moorlands Lane, across the fields of Bonsall Moor. The Way crosses more fields and a few lanes and tracks before swinging more westerly. Just past an outcrop called Luntor Rocks, keep left and stick to the track that runs along the hillside above the village of Winstor. You may want to rest on the organic-looking bench made from wooden poles and strips of lead – a reminder of the industry that once thrived here.

The track meets a main road near the **Lead Ore House** – another relic from mining days (the history of this old building is explained on a plaque). From here you follow another track (a former packhorse route known locally as the Portway, which in turn followed an even older trade route dating from prehistoric times) to meet the main street running through Elton on the eastern edge of the village.

If it's time to refuel, detour left (west) into the village to reach **Elton Cafe** (☎ Sat & Sun, Sun only in winter) serving homemade soup, things with chips and a selection of cakes, making it a favourite for cyclists and walkers.

If you can resist the lure of cholesterol, continue north on Dudwood Lane. At the bottom of the hill, just before meeting a main road, cross a stile on the left and follow the Way between the prominent gritstone outcrops of Cratcliffe (on the right) and **Robin Hood's Stride** (on the left). This is a popular picnic site and a playground for local rock climbers. Robin Hood may well have been here, as in medieval times Sherwood Forest – the legendary brigand's traditional home – covered much of Derbyshire too and the nearby valleys may have been ideal for a spot of robbery and wealth redistribution. (Incidentally, Robin Hood's trusty lieutenant, Little John, is buried at Hathersage, about 4 miles east of Castleton – the end of the Limestone Way.)

Beyond Robin Hood's Stride, go through a gap in the wall and cross two fields to reach a lane where you turn right. After 300m go left on a path through a nice patch of woodland, then down to a gate in a small valley, where the route turns sharp right. Continue over fields, mostly downhill, to meet a lane on the outskirts of the traditional White Peak village of **Youlgreave**. Turn right onto this lane, cross over a bridge and then go immediately left

along a path running through beautiful water meadows beside the River Bradford. After about 500m you cross a footbridge to the south bank. To the north (up the hill) is the centre of Youlgreave, where the **George Hotel** (☎ 01629-636292) welcomes walkers with no-frills surrounds, good beer and bar food. If you want to break the walk early, it also does B&B.

The Way runs beside another beautiful stretch of river, with small weirs and pools, then crosses over an arched bridge and zigzags up to a road. Go right for 500m, left over a stile, up an unclear path to another road, left along this road for 100m, then right through a squeeze gate. Continue diagonally uphill across fields and through a car park and picnic site to reach a minor road called Moor Lane.

Go left along Moor Lane to meet another road, where you go straight on, leaving the roads behind and back into fields again. The Way goes over several stiles and gates to skirt Calling Low Farm and drop steeply down into **Cales Dale** (part of Lathkill Dale National Nature Reserve) and then just as steeply up the other side.

After a few more fields you reach **One Ash Grange**, an old farm used in medieval times by the monks of Roche Abbey in Yorkshire as a penitentiary for rebellious brethren. Look out for the monks' former cold store and pigsties on the right of the path. The Way leads across more fields, eventually to meet a track between old stone walls, which takes you down to Monyash.

#### MONYASH

In the quiet village of Monyash, B&Bs include walker-friendly **Sheldon House** (☎ 01629-813067; www.sheldoncottages.co.uk; Chapel St; s/d £45/60), only taking guests for two consecutive nights, and friendly, award-winning **Rowson House Farm** (☎ 01629-813521; www.rowsonhousefarm.com; camp sites for 2 £5-16, s/d £25/50; ☎), a working farm on the edge of the village, also offering camping at the attached Lathkilldale Campsite. For more accommodation ideas see www.monyash.info.

The only pub in the village is the historic **Bull's Head** (☎ 01629-812372; s/d £30/45, mains £8-10; ☎ lunch & dinner), with B&B in large rooms and a range of bar meals. This place can get busy at weekends, but there's outside seating too.

Monyash also has the Village Store and the **Old Smithy Café** (☎ 01629-810190; www.oldsmithymonyash.piczo.com), another long-time walker favourite, serving up all the usual stuff – tea, cakes, sandwiches, pies and chips – and on Saturday evenings the café transmogrifies into a bistro.

#### Day 2: Monyash to Castleton

5½–7 hours, 12.5 miles (20.2km)

Leave Monyash heading north along the lane past the **Pinfold** (where stray animals were once kept until their owner paid a fine and collected them) then left along a walled track by Dale House Farm. This leads across fields to the village of Flag.

Beyond Flag, leave the fields and keep to lanes and tracks for several miles. Where the Way crosses the busy A6 near Taddington, there's refreshment and accommodation at the **Waterloo Inn** (☎ 01298-85230; d £65, mains £7-9; ☎ lunch & dinner); it also offers sandwiches and bar snacks for around £4, plus tea and coffee and a nice garden. Nearby is a **YHA camping barn** (☎ 0870 770 8868; dm £6).

The trail eventually leads down to the steep-sided valley of **Miller's Dale** and the village of the same name. Overhead, two large viaducts straddle the gap; they carried the railway between Manchester and Derby before short-sighted closures in the 1960s forced trains off the rails. It's hard to believe this sleepy settlement used to have a busy train station with constant traffic and five platforms. Today one viaduct carries the Monsal Trail – see p164 – and there's information (and loos) at the old station.

Go eastwards along the Miller's Dale main street, under the viaducts and past the church, before taking a minor road on the left up a hill (opposite the **Angler's Rest** pub). After 100m turn sharp left on a rough track, go up through the yard of Monksdale Farm and then follow the Way northwards. To the left (west) the fields drop into Monk's Dale. The track leads you across a high area of fields to meet a lane at Monk's Dale House. Go left and down the hill, then right over a stile to thankfully regain paths leading northwards up **Peter Dale** and **Hay Dale**, a pair of delightful limestone valleys particularly famous for their wild orchids (see the boxed text, p160).

Beyond Hay Dale you reach a lane. Turn left here to reach a main road (A623). Go

left, then quickly right through a gate to follow tracks and paths over many stiles (tiring now as you reach the end of the walk) across the upland pasture of Bradwell Moor. Follow the path downhill into rocky **Cave Dale**, where you can almost imagine the cavern system before it collapsed to form this steep-sided valley.

This dale leads beneath the ramparts of **Peveril Castle**, through a narrow gap in the rocks and into the heart of Castleton. Turn left along Bargate to reach the village square.

If you're not staying the night, go through the square to the main road, then turn right and continue round some sharp corners to reach the bus stop. If you're not in such a rush, nearby are several pubs and cafés where you can celebrate your completion of the Limestone Way with a pot of tea or a pint of beer.

## MORE WALKS

We have described two walks in this chapter to represent the different landscapes of the Peak District, but of course there are many more walking possibilities.

### NORTHERN PEAK DISTRICT

The northern part of the Peak District is called the Dark Peak, where the moors are high, wild and frequently featureless, a map and compass absolutely essential, and the walking rather specialised. Sinking to your knees in wet peat may not be everyone's ideal day out, but the caste of walkers known as 'bog-trotters' simply love it, with 'old Kinder Scout, and the moors thereabout' offering endless possibilities.

A good Dark Peak introduction is the 13-mile (21km) circuit of Edale Moor, commonly called Kinder Scout, the Kinder Plateau or just plain Kinder, starting and finishing at the village of Edale. If you want to experience the high moor but prefer the comfort of a good path across the peat, the first day of the Pennine Way (see p264) is a rewarding walk from Edale over to Crowden.

Fit and experienced mile-eaters could try the 40-mile (64km) Derwent Watershed Walk, a tough challenge usually taking two days (although some heroes do it in one go),

but a wonderful outing across the very best of the Dark Peak. The route goes from Yorkshire Bridge near Bamford, up Win Hill, along the ridge from Lose Hill to Mam Tor, round the head of the Edale Valley to Kinder Low, Kinder Downfall and Mill Hill, then across the A57 to Bleaklow Head, Bleaklow Stones, Howden Moor and back south to where you started via Back Tor, Strines Edge and Stanage Edge.

For a much less daunting taste of the Dark Peak, you could head for Fairholmes (consisting of a car park, national park centre, bike-hire outlet and café), between the Derwent and Ladybower Reservoirs, and quite easily reached by bus from Sheffield or Castleton, especially at weekends. A good circular walk takes you along the east side of Derwent Reservoir and up Abbey Brook onto the moors. The route then follows the ridge south over Back Tor and along Derwent Edge, past rocky outcrops with great names such as Cakes of Bread and Wheel Stones, ending back at Ladybower Reservoir.

### CENTRAL PEAK DISTRICT

A good base for walking in the central area is the town of Bakewell, surrounded by a network of footpaths, and with hotels, B&Bs, a YHA hostel, shops, restaurants, cafés and pubs (as well as several bakeries selling world-famous Bakewell puddings), plus a good tourist office. The town also has good bus links to Buxton and Matlock, with onward connections to Manchester and Derby respectively.

An excellent (and mostly flat) one-day option from Bakewell is the Monsal Trail, the route of an old railway line that winds westwards through the heart of the central Peak District all the way to Buxton. The route includes the impressive viaduct at Monsal Head, and delightful river-side paths along Miller's Dale and Chee Dale. From Buxton you can get a bus back to Bakewell or simply stay the night (Buxton has some interesting sights and a good choice of places to stay). To save clock watching, you could get an early bus to Buxton, have a look around and then walk

back to Bakewell. The 13 miles (21km) will take about five to six hours of walking; with stops it'll be seven to eight hours.

A shorter option from Bakewell is to head eastwards along the Monsal Trail and continue along tracks and paths to the village of Rowsley, or over the hill to the famous stately home of Chatsworth.

South from Bakewell takes you to the village of Over Haddon and into the wonderful and classic limestone valley of Lathkill Dale, protected as a nature reserve.

Further south, routes also using long-gone railway lines include the Tissington Trail (13 miles) between Ashbourne and Parsley Hay, and the High Peak Trail (17.5 miles) from Dowlow, near Buxton, all the way to Cromford, near Matlock. Both trails provide effortless walking through the heart of the Peak District.

For something equally linear, but with more views and gradients thrown in, from Bakewell you could also head for Baslow, either by foot on rights of way through the fields and Chatsworth Estate, or on the bus that goes towards Chesterfield. From Baslow you can follow the famous Derbyshire Edges – a line of gritstone cliffs and a classic Peak District feature, brought to worldwide attention in 2006 when the heroine of the *Pride & Prejudice* movie comes here to stare forlornly into space. A classic 'edge-walk' takes you north along Baslow Edge, Curbar Edge and Froggatt Edge, finishing down in Grindleford, which has a classic walkers' café and a train station on the Hope Valley railway line. This walk is 5 miles (8km).

If you want to stretch the walk, or start from Grindleford, you can go up through the woods around Padley Gorge, past the ancient hillfort of Carl Wark, over Higger Tor and across to the highest and longest of the edges – Stanage Edge. This is most easily done as an out-and-back route but if you want to keep going, footpaths lead eventually all the way to the A57, where you can pick up a bus to Castleton, Manchester or Sheffield. That's a long day-walk but an excellent Peak District outing on a fine summer day.

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