

Wild Walk – Dovedale and Tissington

Map: OL24 1:25000 – The Peak District - White Peak Area

Distance: 18.4 Miles/29.6KM

Time Taken: 2 Days – 8 hours 46 mins total move time

Total Scent: 842.5m/2764ft

Campsite: Ashbourne Heights - £6 per night for tent. <https://www.parkholidays.com/touring-and-camping>

Transport Links

Car: Overnight parking in Alstonefield. Limited spaces near public toilets.

Public Transport: None

Directions

1. DAY 1 - Leave the carpark and turn right up to the crossroads, then take a left. Follow the road and take the second footpath on the left, signposted Youth Hostel. Keep on the road until it turns into a path and follow. At the gate, list to the right, down towards the footbridge at the bottom of the dale. One across the bridge, take a left and follow the path.
2. Take a left into Biggin Dale and follow until the road. Walk up the road and take second footpath on the right through fields to Biggin pub.
3. Turn right at pub, walking along road until joining Tissington Trail from the path on the left-hand side of the road. Follow trail until hitting the carpark near Alsop en le Dale, follow for just over half a KM, just after crossing the bridge over farmland, turn off the trail into the fields.
4. Keeping to the left, follow footpath through fields until you cross under the Tissington trail again. Continue along the path until it turns into a road in Tissington, then continue onwards, past Tissington Hall and branch right along The Avenue.
5. Cross into Washbrook Lane and take the path through the field to cut the corner of the road. Take a left, walk through two fields and into woods to campsite.
6. DAY 2 – Retrace steps back to road from yesterday, then through caravan field following footpath. Through fields into Thorpe.
7. Turn onto Limestone way until Coldwall Bridge. Turn right, crossing through farmland until Dovedale.
8. Follow Dovedale through and cross the river at Ilam Rock. Walk through Hurts Wood and Hall-Dale to Stanshope.
9. Take a right. Follow track down and cross the road. Climb the steep hill up to Alstonefield and continue straight until hitting the road. Turn right and walk back to carpark.

Words

My first time in the Peak District, and I can't see a thing! The sopping overgrown hedgerow bled out into the path, making my waterproof trousers nothing more protective than a paper bag in a puddle. Through the low hanging rainclouds, I could see shadows of the valleys between the dales, carved out over millions of years for this moment of revelation.

I followed the river past old Iron Tors until the footbridge. The ground soon changes to grass peppered with rocks. I pass a cave and reluctantly resist the temptation to hop the fence and check it out. The farmer was in the field, and although there was a stile, there was no path.

At the end of Biggin dale, I pass through a nature reserve and keep right towards Dalehead. The pub in Biggin provides a welcome rest, and while I munch on a basket of fries, the wonderful landlady produces an electric heater for me to dry my socks and shoes.

The rain pauses as I join the Tissington trail, an old railway formerly connecting Ashbourne to Buxton, trusting my life with the cyclists with which I'm sharing. The soundtrack of the following five kilometres is bicycle bells and shouts of 'thanks' against an intermittently rainy background.

Descending from the footpath, I find myself in Tissington. It's an odd but beautiful place with six wells dotted around the model-like village. I continue along the quiet roads, amassing a following of cows in the final open fields. Once I hop the fence into the woods, my disciples get bored and mooch away.

The sun is up bright and early with me on day two. I greet the curious cows who accompany me on the march back up the field, where I re-join the footpath to Thorpe.

The limestone way is aptly named on this section of the path with a crumbly white rock path leading me down to the river. I turn right before the bridge, where the ground turns to thick mud clumping on the edges of my shoes and weighing down my feet.

When I reach Dovedale car park, the flurry of activity is stark compared to the solitude so far. Hordes of people were making the most of the glorious weather, but it was nice to pass children on the steppingstones and families out for a walk in the dales.

The scenery in Dovedale is like a fairy-tale, with caves, natural arches and the infamous lovers' leap that forced me to rest at the top with a large glug of water.

Further on at Ilam rock, I crossed over the bridge and ascended the scree lined trudge of Hall-Dale. Stanshope greeted me at the top with only 1.5km left to go, so I pushed on to down the track without stopping.

The undulation was starting to get to my legs, but I had one hill until Alstonefield. I looked at the looming incline ahead, adjusted my straps and strode up and into the village.