

# Walk the Way in a Day

Walk  
**48**

## Black Ashop Moor from Snake Pass

A simple route encompassing a short section of Roman road, a forest trail and a rough path running up a moorland clough. The flagged route of the Pennine Way is followed along a broad ridge, with fine views of the neighbouring Kinder and Bleaklow plateaux.



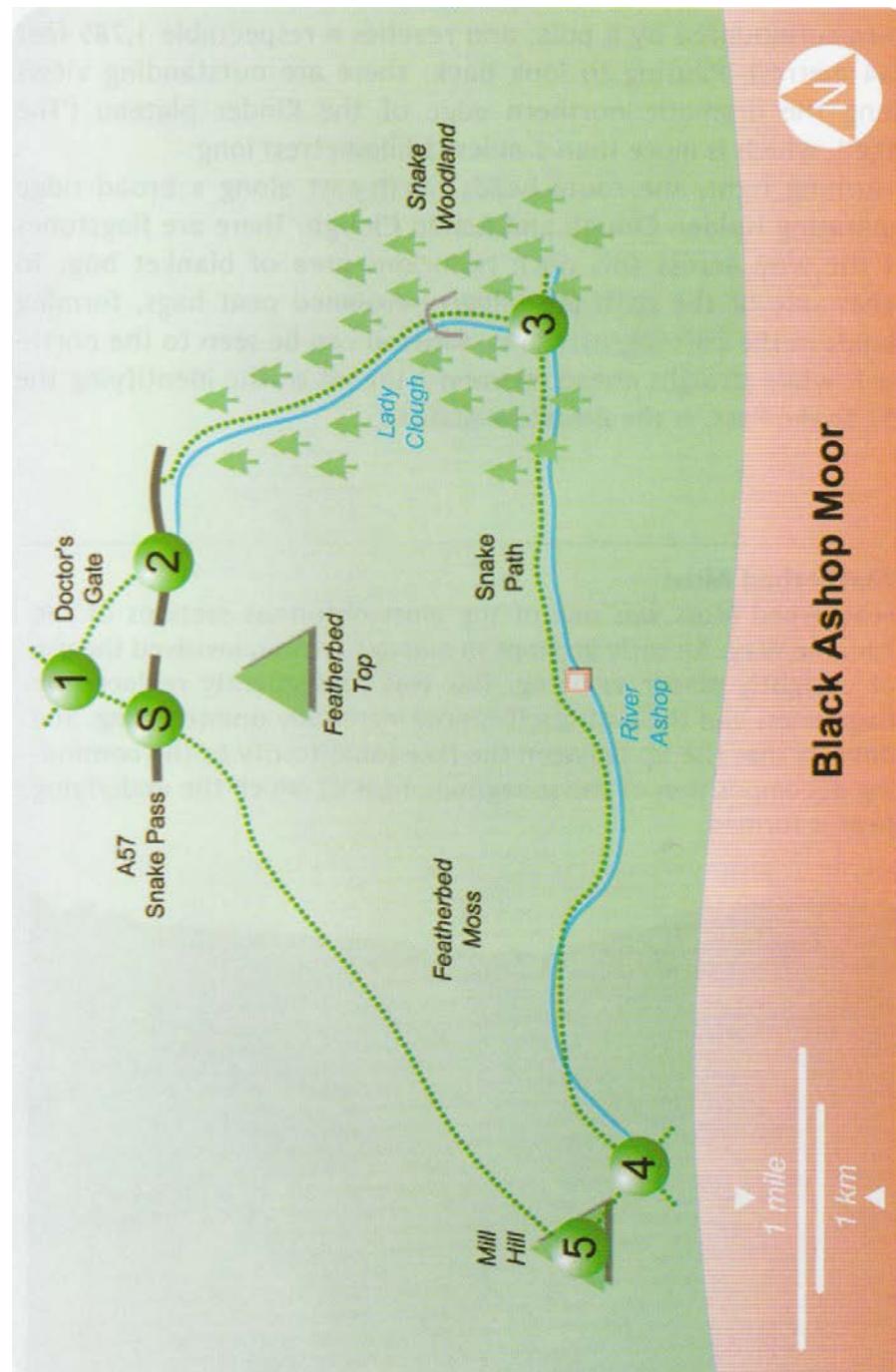
Length:	8¾ miles (14 kilometres)
Ascent:	919 feet (280 metres)
Highest Point:	1,785 feet (544 metres)
Map(s):	OS Explorer OL Map 1 ('The Peak District - Dark Peak') (West Sheet)
Starting Point:	A57 Snake Pass, summit lay-by (SK 088 929)
Facilities:	Inn nearby.
Website:	<a href="http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/pennine-way/route/walk-way-day-walk-48-black-ashop-moor-snake-pass">http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/pennine-way/route/walk-way-day-walk-48-black-ashop-moor-snake-pass</a>

### Lady Clough

Starting at the lay-by at the summit of the A57 Snake Pass, cross over the road and join the Pennine Way as it heads north-east along a gravel path. Arriving at a crossroads of routes, turn onto the Doctor's Gate (1 = SK 090 933). The course of the Roman road is followed south-east, with the medieval blockwork poking through the grass in places. Converging with the road as it passes the head of Lady Clough, head down some rough steps and cross a small stream before continuing towards a parking area (2 = SK 096 929).

### The Snake Pass

The summit of the A57 Snake Pass is 1,680 feet (512 metres) above sea level, making for difficult winter driving conditions. The route



was created as a turnpike by Thomas Telford in 1821, bypassing the original Sheffield to Manchester route running through Castleton. Whilst the road certainly snakes about as it climbs over the moors between Kinder Scout and Bleaklow, the name actually recalls the crest of the dukes of Devonshire, who were associated with Buxton. The famous Snake Pass Inn was built in 1821 as a coaching inn, originally known as Lady Clough House.

Crossing back over the busy main road, this must be followed for a short way. Whilst there is no pavement or grass verge, a broad curb provides a safe footway. When the curb gives-out, hop over a crash barrier and follow a steep path heading down into Lady Clough (this is not an official right of way, but it runs over access land). Crossing a couple of side streams below culverts, the first by an old stone bridge, a fence stile marks the start of a forest trail.

This runs 1½ mile (2 kilometres) down through Snake Woodland - a conifer plantation climbing the steep slopes on either side of the clough. The forest is pleasant enough by the standards of such places, although one day it will inevitably be harvested. Blue-topped marker posts confirm the route, which follows a slippery path running parallel to the stream. Arriving at a forestry road, cross straight over and continue along a path marked by white-topped posts. Eventually the stream is crossed by a footbridge, close to its confluence with the River Ashop (3 = SK 108 908). From here a path heads east towards the Snake Pass Inn, although we turn right, passing a sign confirming the route of the Snake Path (the inn can be visited after completing the walk!).

### **Snake Path**

This is followed west up Ashop Clough for 3¼ miles (5½ kilometres). The stony path continues through the forest until, crossing a fence stile, it emerges onto Black Ashop Moor. Picking its way awkwardly along heather-clad slopes, the path heads up the side of the deep clough. Passing an old stone ruin, the clough starts to broaden into a boggy plane. The path crosses and re-crosses the infant river, although the route is fairly clear

as it runs towards Ashop Head. Eventually a line of flagstones leads to a crossroads of routes, where the Pennine Way is rejoined (4 = SK 064 901).

### **Featherbed Moss**

From here the Pennine Way is followed for 2¾ miles (4½ kilometres) over Featherbed Moss back to the starting point. A marker post confirms the route, which initially heads north-west, climbing towards the top of Mill Hill (5 = SK 061 904). This is marked by a cairn surmounted by a pole, and reaches a respectable 1,785 feet (544 metres). Pausing to look back, there are outstanding views along the dramatic northern edge of the Kinder plateau ('The Edge'), which is more than 5 miles (8 kilometres) long.

Turning right, the route heads north-east along a broad ridge separating Holden Clough and Ashop Clough. There are flagstones all the way across this once notorious area of blanket bog. To either side of the path are bilberry-crowned peat hags, forming islands in the cottongrass mires. Glossop can be seen to the north-west, while straight ahead, beyond a line of traffic identifying the A57 Snake Pass, is the Bleaklow plateau.

### **Featherbed Moss**

*Featherbed Moss was one of the most notorious sections of the Pennine Way. An early attempt to manage erosion involved the use of unsightly plastic webbing. This was subsequently replaced by flagstones, and the path itself is now mercifully uninteresting. The bubbles that rise up between the flagstones testify to the continuing decomposition of the sphagnum moss of which the underlying peat is formed.*

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