

Walk the Way in a Day

Walk 35 Malham Cove and Tarn and Goredale scar

A survey of the country's finest limestone scenery, including towering crags (Malham Cove and Gordale Scar), extensive areas of limestone pavement and a dry valley (Watlowes). The route also includes a circuit of Malham Tarn and a charming dene sheltering a lovely waterfall (Janet's Foss).

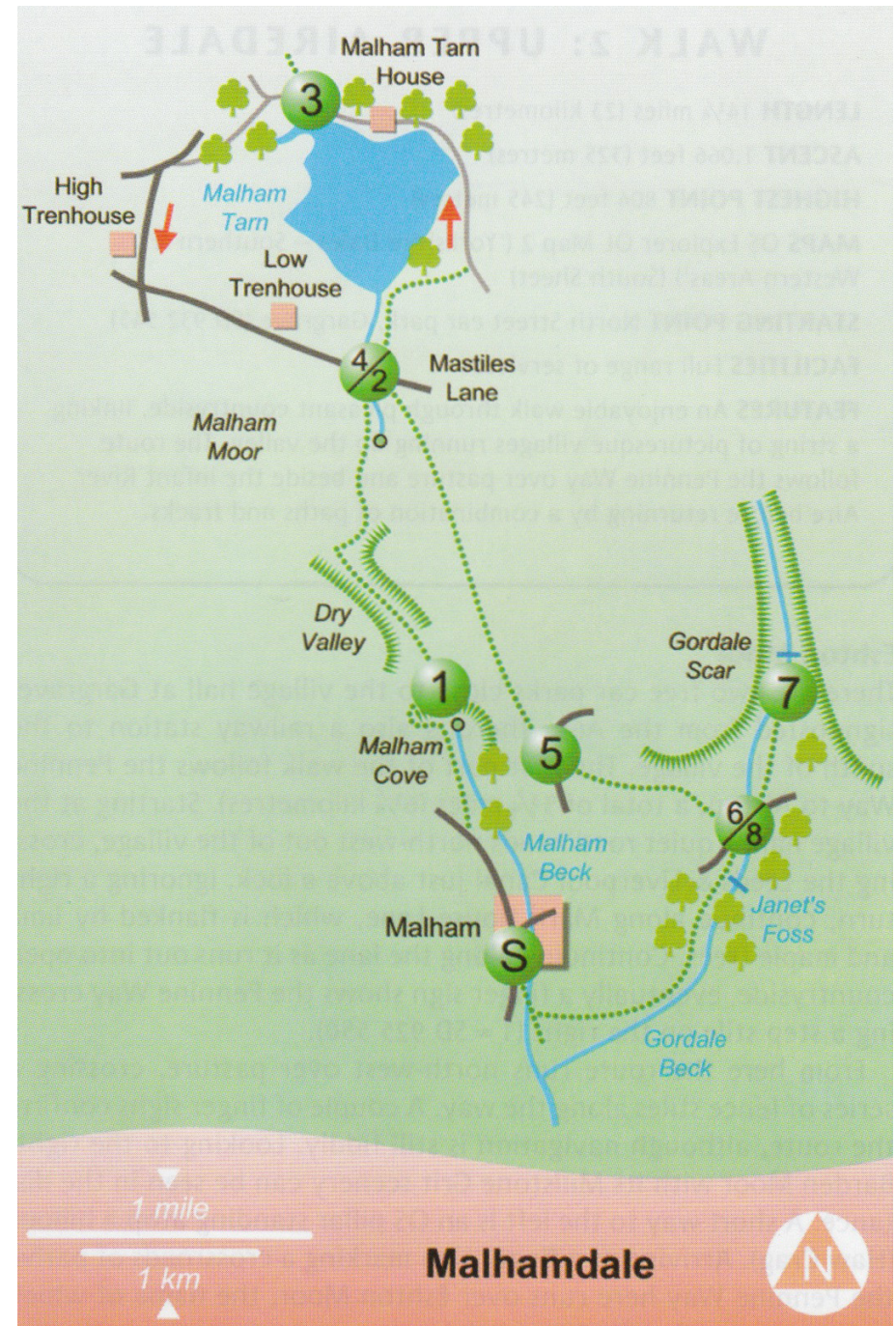
- Length: 11¼ miles (18 kilometres)
- Ascent: 935 feet (285 metres)
- Highest Point: 1,329 feet (405 metres)
- Map(s): OS Explorer OL Map 2 ('Yorkshire Dales - Southern & Western Areas') (South Sheet)
- Starting Point: National Park Visitor Centre, Malham (SD 901 626)
- Facilities: Full range of services.
- Website: <http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/pennine-way/route/walk-way-day-walk-35-malham-cove-and-tarn-and-goredale-scar>

Malham Cove

Malham is a popular tourist village, serving as a base for visitors to Malham Cove and other nearby attractions. It is normally reached by following an unclassified road running 6 miles (10 kilometres) north from the A65 at Gargrave. The National Park visitor centre at the south end of the village provides tourist information, public toilets and a 'pay and display' car park. The first part of the walk follows the Pennine Way north for 1½ miles (2¼ kilometres) to Malham Cove. From the visitor centre, head through the village, ignoring a right turn leading towards a road bridge. It is possible to follow a tree-shaded path beside Malham Beck for a short way, before rejoining the road. Ignoring a clapper bridge (Moon Bridge) on the right, the village is soon left behind as the road heads up a

Pennine Way

50 YEARS



walled lane.

Malham Cove

At Malham Cove the Great Scar Limestone is spectacularly exposed, with cliffs that tower more than 250 feet (76 metres) above the valley floor. Until the early 19th century, this place was the site of a tremendous waterfall. The stream concerned now flows underground from a point just south of Malham Tarn to emerge, not at the foot of the cliffs, but at Aire Head Springs, south of Malham village. This has left a dry valley (Watlowes) running from the Water Sinks to an expanse of limestone pavement at the head of the Cove. Malham Beck, on the other hand, drains into the ground on Malham Moor to re-appear beneath the cliffs of Malham Cove.

Looking across the valley on the right, the remains of an old field system ('lynchets') can be seen. Soon Malham Cove comes into view - a spectacular amphitheatre of white limestone, the sheer scale of which is hard to comprehend. Passing through a gate, a finger sign marks the start of a path running down into the valley. Converging with the beck, as the Pennine Way turns uphill, instead continue a short way to the point where the crystal clear water emerges from the foot of the cliffs. Rejoining the Pennine Way, a seemingly endless series of stone steps heads up beside the Cove. As height is gained, the ash and hazel of the valley floor give way to rowan and hawthorn. Arriving at the top, continue across the expanse of limestone pavement that wraps around the head of the Cove (1 = SD 897 642). Hopping carefully from block to block, note the ferns sheltering in the deep crevices. The terraced outcrops provide a fine perch, with Pendle Hill visible in the distance.

Malham Tarn

From here the Pennine Way is followed for another 3 miles (5 kilometres), up a dry valley and around the side of Malham Tarn. Heading north-west along a deep defile between craggy terraces, this was once the course of the infant River Aire, but is now dry. To the right are the remains of a waterfall (Comb Scar), now overgrown with vegetation. As the valley

narrows, stone steps lead up to a fence stile, where a finger sign shows the path doubling back towards the head of the dry waterfall. Turning north along another defile, follow this as it swings to the right. Crossing a swathe of lush grass, the path runs past the Water Sinks, where the outflow from Malham Tarn soaks into the ground. Arriving at an unclassified road, turn right and head over a flat bridge towards a car park (2 = SD 893 658).

Heading through the car park, follow a path running across rough grazing. Ahead is Malham Tarn, with a couple of boathouses visible on the far shore. Passing the outflow from the lake (Tarn Foot), veer to the right of a copse and join a hardcore track running between the lakeside and Great Close Hill, the latter with its distinctive scar. The point at which the track enters the woodland around the north side of the lake will be remembered from the previous walk. Continuing along the tree-shaded track as it runs past Malham Tarn House, eventually a finger sign shows the Pennine Way turning through a gate on the right, although we continue straight ahead (3 = SD 888 673).

Malham Tarn

Standing water is a rare sight among the limestone scenery of the Central Pennines. At end of last Ice Age, glacial meltwater pooling behind a moraine of boulder clay led to the formation of a lake, which rests upon a bed of Silurian slate. Although it extends to 153 acres (63 hectares), Malham Tarn is at most only 14 feet (4 metres) deep. Towards the end of the 18th century an embankment and sluice were added at the outflow, helping to maintain the water level. Today the surrounding area is managed by the National Trust as a 337 acre (138 hectare) National Nature Reserve. At 1,229 feet (375 metres) above sea level, Malham Tarn is the highest lime-rich lake in the country, creating a unique habitat.

Malham Moor

The first part of the return route completes the circuit of Malham Tarn. Just past a barn, turn onto a gravel track running along a tree-lined lane (marked on the map as a permissive path). Passing the access to Tarn

Moss wetlands, an unclassified road is met. Turning left along the quiet road, then left again at a junction, head south past High Trenhouse. Arriving at a crossroads, take another left turn and follow a road running east across Malham Moor. Off to the left is Malham Tarn, while to the right is an old chimney - the remains of a smelt mill that operated from 1815-60. The road follows the route of the historic Mastiles Lane, passing Low Trenhouse farm as it heads towards the car park passed earlier (4 = SD 893 658).

Mastiles Lane

Mastiles Lane is a green lane running from Kilnsey in Wharfedale up onto Malham Moor. During the Middle Ages it was used by the monks of Fountains Abbey to access their sheep runs, although it was originally a Roman road. The remains of a marching camp extending to 20 acres (8 hectares) can still be seen close to Gordale Beck.

From here an old monastic way (Troughgate) is followed south-south-east over limestone moors for 1½ miles (2½ kilometres). Across the road from the car park, a finger sign marks the start of a path to Malham Rakes. Passing to the left of some small ponds, the path runs along a shallow trough between slopes flanked by limestone outcrops. Over a ladder stile, the path becomes stony as it runs down a miniature dry valley. Looking to the right, the area of limestone pavement around the head of Malham Cove comes back into view. Eventually the path converges with a snaking road (5 = SD 903 638).

Gordale Scar

Crossing straight over the road, a finger sign shows a path to Gordale Scar, wrapping around the hillside. Passing the mouth of another dry valley, ahead are views of a terraced field system, beneath the limestone crags of Cross Field Knotts. Another finger sign shows the route turning through a gate and heading down a few steps to join a path running gently downhill on grassy slopes towards Gordale Bridge (6 = SD 913 635).

At this point a 'there and back' detour of less than 1 mile (1½ kilometres) provides an opportunity to visit the dramatic limestone ravine of Gordale Scar. Turning left, head along the quiet road a short way. Passing through a gate on the left, a sign warns of a difficult ascent ahead (although we only go as far as the foot of the waterfalls). Crossing a field used as a campsite, to the left is Gordale Beck, running swiftly down its stony channel. As the valley narrows, scree fields intrude upon the path. Continuing into the ravine, the route picks its way through rocks as it runs between overhanging cliffs. Soon the lowest of the waterfalls is reached (7 = SD 915 641). Having taken time to enjoy the spectacle, retrace your steps to Gordale Bridge (8 = SD 913 635).

Gordale Scar

Opinion differs as to whether Gordale Scar is a collapsed cavern or the product of scouring by glacial meltwater. However, few would argue that it is one of the most stunning geological features in the country. The boulder-strewn floor of the narrow ravine is shaded by overhanging limestone cliffs, up to 300 feet (91 metres) high. These are home to stunted yew trees, as well as buzzards and kestrels. Through the defile runs Gordale Beck, which at one point cascades down slabs of tufa - a substance formed from deposits of calcium carbonate. A route running up the side of the falls connects to Mastiles Lane, although this involves scrambling up a near-vertical buttress. Whilst the handholds are good, the ascent is dangerous or even impossible in times of flood.

A short way along the road (Gordale Lane), a finger sign on the left marks the start of a riverside path to Malham - now just 1½ miles (2¼ kilometres) away. At the head of the dene is a charming waterfall known as Janet's Foss. Here the beck falls over a slab of tufa, behind which is a cave that was once thought to be the home of a fairy-queen called Janet! At the foot of the waterfall is a lovely pool of clear water. Continuing along the tree-shaded path, garlic, ferns and mosses carpet the ground. As the path emerges from the dene it continues south then south-west over meadows. Arriving at a crossroads of tracks, ignore a lane on the right and continue straight ahead through a waymarked kissing gate. Joining the Pennine

Way, follow a hardcore path running beside Malham Beck. A ford leads back to the starting point, although a clapper bridge a little further along might be preferred.