Walk the Way in a Day

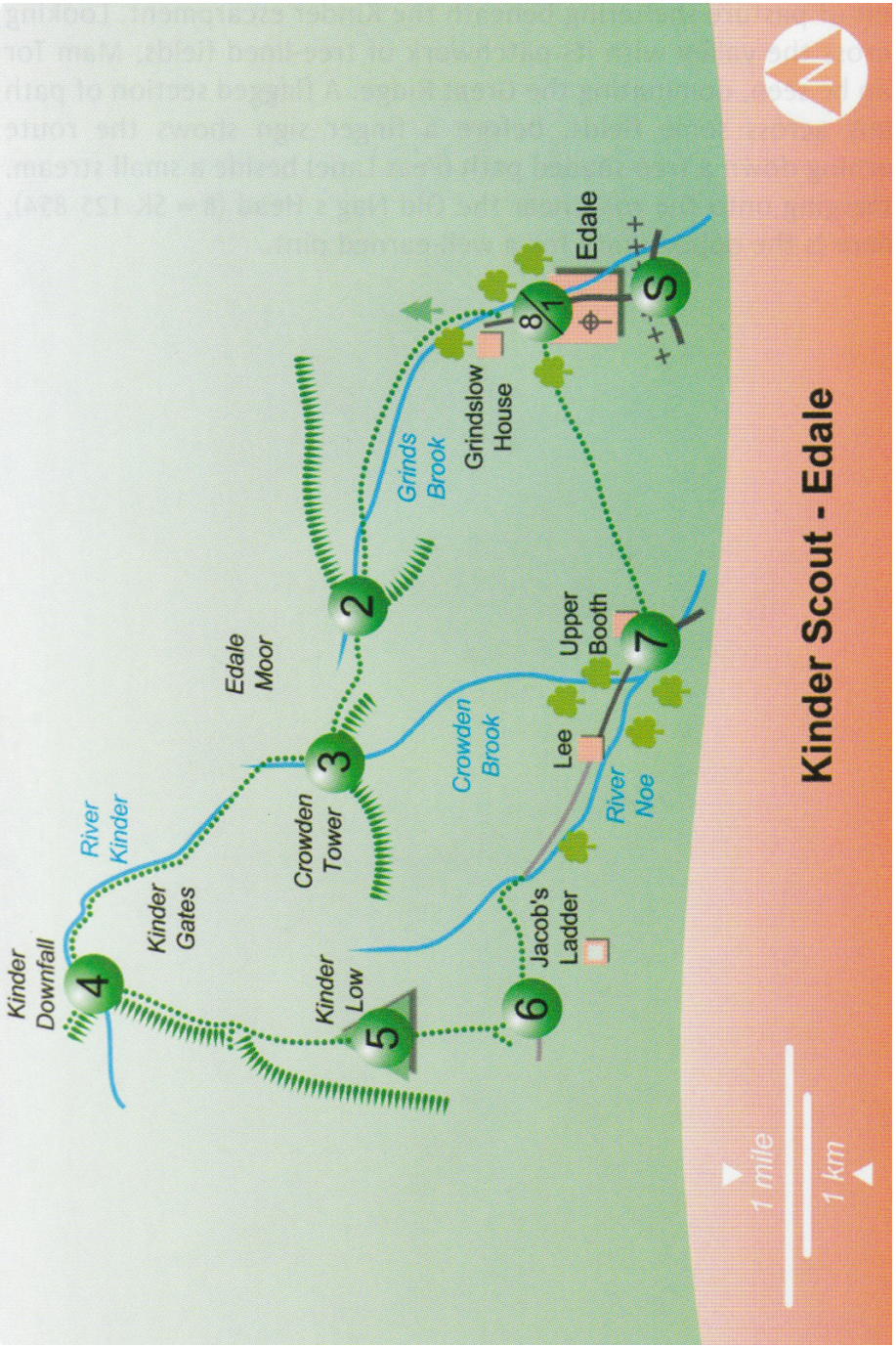
Walk 50 — Kinder Scout from Edale

An entertaining hill-walk combining alternative Pennine Way routes. Clambering up a deep clough, the route navigates the maize of peat channels on the Kinder plateau to arrive at Kinder Downfall, before returning via the plateau edge and an old pack-horse route with a stepped path (Jacob's Ladder).

Length:	10¼ miles (16½ kilometres)
Ascent:	1,837 feet (560 metres)
Highest Point:	2,077 feet (633 metres)
Map(s):	OS Explorer OL Map 1 ('The Peak District - Dark Peak') (West Sheet)
Starting Point:	Edale village car park, Vale of Edale (SK 125 854)
Facilities:	Full range of facilities.
Website:	http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/pennine-way/route/walk-way-day-walk-50-kinder-scout-edale

Grinds Brook

Travelling from the east, the starting point is reached by turning off the A625 at Hope village and following an unclassified road running up the Vale of Edale. For those travelling from the west, the Great Ridge is crossed by a difficult zigzag road. There is a 'pay and display' car park at the south end of the village, with a train station nearby. From the car park, follow a leafy lane towards the village centre, passing the Rambler Inn, National Park visitor centre and parish church. A walnut tree at the village centre is the traditional starting point for the Pennine Way (1 = SK 123 860). Nearby is the Old Nag's Head, a pack-horse inn dating from the 16th century, and a lovely pack-horse bridge spanning Grinds Brook (the latter being worth a short diversion).



The Vale of Edale

Edale is a picturesque little tourist village of Millstone Grit cottages. The name was originally applied to the valley of the River Noe, which separates Kinder Scout and the Great Ridge, although it is commonly used for the settlement of Grindsbrook Booth. The five booths of the Vale of Edale - Upper, Barber, Grindsbrook, Ollerbrook and Nether - were the locations of temporary shelters used by shepherds during the summer months. The term comes from an old Scandinavian word for a shieling, and is connected with 'bothy'. During the Middle Ages the valley was on the trans-Pennine pack-horse route between Cheshire and Sheffield. The Manchester to Sheffield railway, opened in 1894, runs up the valley before diving into Cowburn Tunnel.

A finger sign opposite the inn shows the Pennine Way heading west, although we follow the original route, continuing up the valley of Grinds Brook for 1¾ miles (2¾ kilometres). Heading up a street of stone-built cottages, a finger sign points down into a wooded clough. Joining a flagged path on the far side, the view ahead is already dominated by the hard edge of the Kinder plateau. Passing through a belt of trees and crossing a side stream, the path becomes stony as it heads up the narrowing valley. Crossing to the opposite bank, the route picks its way up through boulders, with stepped falls in the course of the brook testifying to the stiffening gradient. Ignoring a side valley heading off to the right, the head of the clough is gained by a steep clamber necessitating a degree of care (2 = SK 105 872).

The Kinder Plateau

From here the original route of the Pennine Way is followed across the plateau, 2½ miles (4 kilometres) to Kinder Downfall. However, before continuing it is worth taking time to enjoy the magnificent views from the edge of the plateau. Initially a flagged path heads west across the neck of a promontory (Grindslow Knoll), avoiding the dreadful blanket bog to the north. Arriving at a small downfall at the head of Crowden Clough, instead of crossing the stream to reach the massive outcrops on the far side (Crowden Tower), turn right and follow the watercourse upstream (3 = SK 095 873).

Initially keeping to the right of the channel, the route soon drops down to follow the bottom of the normally dry watercourse, heading northward. Climbing out of the channel, ignore a cairn off to the right (which marks the location of Crowden Head) and head north-west across boggy moorland terrain before dropping into one of the groughs that feed the River Kinder. Here the 'trench warfare' takes on a dramatic aspect as the route runs along the bottom of the deep channel. Following the watercourse downstream, the channel broadens as it is joined by others, and at one point is flanked by Millstone Grit outcrops known as Kinder Gates (note that water can pool here after rainfall, making it necessary to take to higher ground). Eventually the stream arrives at the head of Kinder Downfall (4 = SK 083 889).

Kinder Low

From here the Pennine Way is followed south along the edge of the plateau for 2 miles (3¼ kilometres), passing Kinder Low (5 = SK 079 871) before arriving at the Swine's Back. This time, instead of veering towards Edale Cross, follow an eroded path heading south-east to join the old pack-horse route at its summit (6 = SK 081 861).

Upper Booth

The final part of the walk follows the Pennine Way for 3¾ miles (6 kilometres) down the Vale of Edale. Heading east, a stepped path (Jacob's Ladder) zigzags downhill beside a deep clough nestling the headwaters of the River Noe. Ahead are fine views over the Vale of Edale, looking towards the Great Ridge. Arriving at the foot of the slope, cross over a narrow pack-horse bridge (Youngate) and join a track heading south-east down the valley, which is populated with clumps of broadleaf trees. Passing between the buildings of Lee House farm, this is run by the National Trust, and a display inside the byre is worth a look. Continuing along an access road, this dips into a dene (Crowden Clough) before reaching Upper Booth farm

at the start of an unclassified road (7 = SK 103 853).

Jacob's Ladder
Jacob's Ladder was named after Jacob Marshall, who created the original stepped path on the pack-horse route during the 18th century. At the nearby Edale Head House - now a ruin clinging to the hillside - he provided an overnight stopping place for the pack-horse drivers. These were known as 'jaggers', recalling their use of German 'jaegar' ('hunter') ponies originally bred to transport animal carcasses. Today the path is busier than ever, with a seemingly endless procession of walkers ascending and descending.

A finger sign shows the Pennine Way turning through the farmyard. From here a waymarked path runs east-north-east across a belt of pasture sheltering beneath the Kinder escarpment. Looking across the valley with its patchwork of tree-lined fields, Mam Tor can be seen, dominating the Great Ridge. A flagged section of path runs across some fields, before a finger sign shows the route turning down a tree-shaded path (Peat Lane) beside a small stream. Emerging onto the road near the Old Nag's Head (8 = SK 125 854), there is the opportunity for a well-earned pint.

Mam Tor
Mam Tor ('mother rock') stands astride the Great Ridge, which separates the Vale of Edale from the Hope Valley. It is one of the 'seven wonders' of the Peak, and is known as the 'shivering mountain' due to the frequent land slips that occur on its steep sandstone and shale slopes. The summit plateau - which reaches 1,696 feet (517 metres) - is the location of an Iron Age hill-fort. The caverns around the hill are the only significant source of the semi-precious stone blue john (from the French 'bleu-jaune', 'blue-yellow') - a form of fluorspar. The A625 trans-Pennine route used to wrap around the hill, but was permanently closed in 1979 after a major land slip.

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