

Walk the Way in a Day

Walk 32 Upper Ribblesdale from Horton

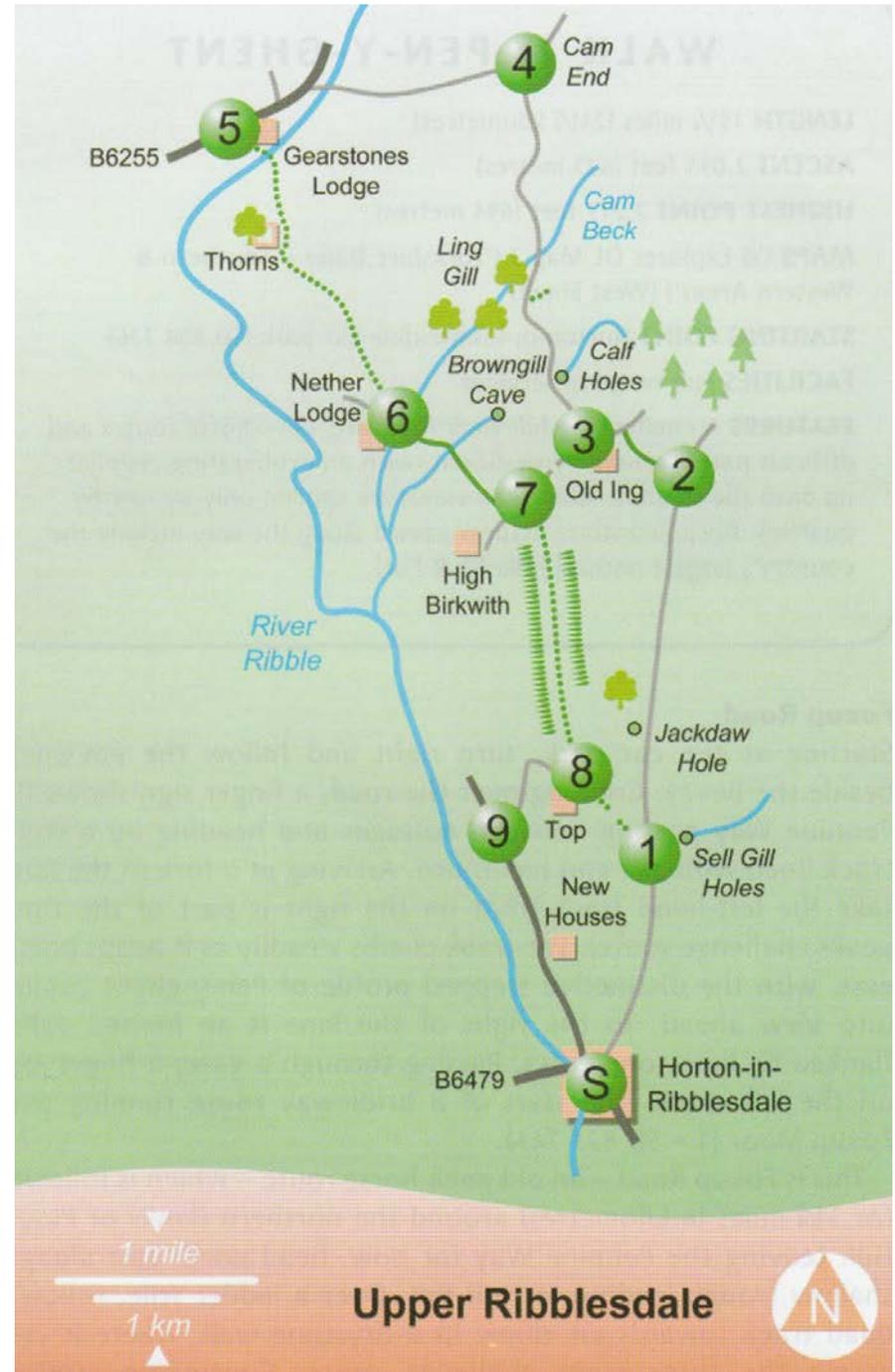
Starting at Horton-in-Ribblesdale in the heart of the three peaks area, this highly enjoyable walk follows the Pennine Way along stony tracks, passing a series of deep limestone fissures, before returning through an area of beautiful limestone scenery.



- Length: 13½ miles (22 kilometres)
- Ascent: 1,575 feet (480 metres)
- Highest Point: 1,437 feet (438 metres)
- Map(s): OS Explorer OL Map 2 ('Yorkshire Dales - Southern & Western Areas') (West Sheet)
- Starting Point: Horton-in-Ribblesdale car park (SD 808 726)
- Facilities: Full range of services.
- Website: <http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/pennine-way/route/walk-way-day-walk-32-upper-ribblesdale-horton>

Harber Scar Lane

Horton-in-Ribblesdale is located on the B6479, about 5 miles (8 kilometres) north of Settle. There is a 'pay and display' car park in the village centre, as well as limited roadside parking just over the River Ribble. There is also a railway station on the Settle and Carlisle line. Close to the Crown Inn, a finger sign shows the Pennine Way heading up Harber Scar Lane, which is followed for 3 miles (5 kilometres). The stony track climbs between walls of white limestone as it heads north-east then north. As height is gained the views over the valley are blighted by the massive limestone quarries. Cutting through the dry gully of Sell Gill Beck, note the limestone fissures (1 = SD 812 744).



Horton-in-Ribblesdale

Horton-in-Ribblesdale is the focal point of the three peaks area. The name of the village is Anglo-Saxon, and signifies a 'mucky farm'. The most prominent building is Saint Oswald's Church, which dates from the early 12th century and today leans noticeably southward! Some of the cottages date from the 17th century. The opening of the Settle and Carlisle Railway triggered further development - this time on the west side of the river - and from the 1890s houses were built for the workers at the limestone quarries.

Continuing along the track, ignore a finger sign on the left showing a footpath to Birkwith. Another of the area's limestone fissures - Jackdaw Hole - is soon passed. Forging a small stream and passing through a gate, the track continues over grassy moorland. Over another stream and through another gate, a finger sign shows the Pennine Way turning off the stony track - which continues on towards the forest around Langstrothdale - and heading up towards a small cairn (2 = SD 813 772).

Limestone Fissures

The Pennine Way heading north out of Horton-in-Ribblesdale passes a series of deep limestone fissures. At the head of Harber Scar Lane are Sell Gill Holes, which descend 210 feet (64 metres). Further along is Jackdaw Hole, which has an opening measuring 70 feet (21 metres) by 40 feet (12 metres). Nearby are Cowskull Pot (70 feet / 21 metres deep) and Penyghent Long Churn (180 feet / 55 metres deep). Calf Holes provide access to Dry Laithe Cave, where Brow Gill Beck drops 35 feet (11 metres) to a passage running under Cave Hill, re-emerging at Browgill Cave. Cavers are often encountered around the openings, or else their disembodied voices are heard echoing up from below.

Ling Gill

From here a rough track heads west, down to a derelict structure then alongside a drystone wall. Meeting a hardcore track, turn left and head towards Old Ing farm (3 = SD 804 774). From here the Pennine Way is

followed north along another stony track - an old pack-horse route, 2¼ miles (3½ kilometres) to Cam End. Heading along the walled lane, a ladder stile on the right provides access to Calf Holes (note that the outcrops around the opening can be slippery). Further along the track a stile on the left provides the option of a 'there and back' detour to Browgill Cave. Passing the wooded gorge at Ling Gill, cross over the pack-horse bridge and continue up the track to Cam End, where we leave the Pennine Way (4 = SD 801 804).

The Dales Way

This fine vantage point will be remembered from the previous walk. The first part of the return route follows the Dales Way down the broad ridge, heading west along the course of Cam High Road for 1½ miles (2½ kilometres). As the track nears Gayle Beck, steep cobbles lead down to a slippery ford, with a footbridge providing an easier option. Arriving at the B6255, turn left and follow the verge. A marker stone identifies this as the Lancaster & Richmond Road - an old turnpike. Ignoring a farm access on the right (where the Dales Way leaves our route), Gearstones Lodge is soon reached (5 = SD 780 800).

Gearstones

During the Middle Ages, Upper Ribblesdale was grazed by sheep from Furness, Fountains and Sawley abbeys. Gearstones developed as a small farming community at the heart of the Furness Abbey sheep-runs. Gearstones Lodge itself was once an inn, located at the meeting place of a number of droveways, with the surrounding walled paddocks serving as holding pens for cattle. The building is now an outdoor activities centre.

The Ribble Way

A finger sign beside the building marks the start of a path to Nether Lodge. This is part of the Ribble Way - a 70 mile (113 kilometre) trail from the river's source to the Irish Sea. Here it is followed south-east for the next 4¼ miles (7 kilometres). Crossing a meadow and passing through a gate,

ignore the rickety footbridge straight ahead and instead turn along a quad track leading down to a ford (Gayle Beck - the infant River Ribble - can be deep, so it may be necessary to backtrack a short way to the footbridge).

Upper Ribblesdale

The sizeable river flowing through Lancashire to the Irish Sea has humble beginnings high up on Gayle Moor. It runs as Jam Sike, Long Gill and Gayle Beck, eventually becoming the River Ribble at Ribblehead. The distinctive forms of Whernside, Ingleborough and Pen-y-ghent over-shadow the broad valley, which serves as an important tourist destination, despite the extensive quarrying of the Great Scar Limestone.

The quad track resumes on the far side of the beck, wrapping around a low hillock. Arriving at a ladder stile, a short section of lane runs between moss-covered walls under the shade of mature sycamore trees. Turning over a gated gap stile on the left, a finger sign confirms the route to Nether Lodge, crossing a ladder stile and heading uphill beside a drystone wall. Arriving at a ruined barn, a step stile leads to a quad track. Forging a small stream, head up to a fence stile then follow a faint path over rough terrain. Navigation is straightforward, however, with Nether Lodge now visible ahead as a group of farm buildings. Crossing a rushy mire at the bottom of a broad trough, a quad track leads to the farm (6 = SD 793 778).

Taking the route signed for Birkwith, pass through the farmyard and cross a tree-lined stream (Cam Beck). Over a step stile beside a gate, a finger sign confirms the route to High Birkwith, following a stony track to God's Bridge. Here a thick slab of limestone spans Brow Gill Beck, recalling its namesake on the River Greta. Continuing beside a drystone wall, the route soon arrives at another stony track. A short way to the right is High Birkwith farm, standing at the end of an unclassified road that offers a potential escape route, although the Ribble Way turns left, towards Old Ing farm. Before reaching the farm, a finger sign marks the start of a path to Sell Gill (7 = SD 803 772).

This follows a terrace of lush grass beneath limestone outcrops, beside

an extensive area of limestone pavement. When a deep gully cuts across the terrace, ignore a track veering off to the left and instead head down to a small footbridge. After a stiff ascent the terrace is regained, although the limestone pavement is now turf-covered. Crossing a succession of drystone walls by ladder stiles, when a farmhouse sheltering among mature broadleaf trees appears to the right, turn through a gate (8 = SD 808 750).

New Houses

Passing the buildings of Top farm, a hardcore track zigzags down through pasture to arrive at an unclassified road (9 = SD 803 745). Nearby is a small fishing lake known appropriately as 'Tarn' (it is an indication of the geology of the area that this is sufficient for identification purposes). Heading along the quiet road, just past the hamlet of New Houses a redundant clapper bridge stands beside a dry ford. Following the road through meadows towards the village, the river can be seen a short way to the right.

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