



Dales Way (Self-Guided)

Please email us at info@ukexploratory.com or call us on +44 (0)1729 823 197 to chat about this holiday. You'll find all the latest information at www.alpineexploratory.com/holidays/dales-way.html.



Walking to Bolton Abbey on the Dales Way

About these Holiday Notes

These Holiday Notes help you decide whether this holiday is right for you. Before your trip we send you final detailed information.

Details

Start Ilkley
Finish Bowness-on-Windermere
Region Yorkshire Dales and Cumbria
Country England
Length 6 walking days and 7 nights
Total distance 136km or 85 miles
Typical day 23km (14 miles), 230m ascent
Highest altitude 525m on Cam Fell
Grade Intermediate

Introduction

Trek for a week through the Yorkshire Dales National Park, from the town of Ilkley in West Yorkshire to the village of Bowness-on-Windermere in the Lake District. The Dales scenery is tranquil and charming.

The Dales Way sticks to the valley for much of its length, tracing a way through fields and often beside rivers. However, in the Way's central section between Wharfedale and Dentdale it follows a high moorland route more exposed to the elements.

The terrain is generally grassy underfoot or on a path, with sections of track and road too. Veterans of the Coast to Coast and Pennine Way will find the trekking quite manageable, but the Dales Way is still a challenge.

Our trip completes the full Dales Way from Ilkley to Bowness-on-Windermere, missing nothing out. The final descent into Bowness is a treat with a grand sense of arrival in the Lake District. Both start and end villages have ready access by train.

Our approach to the Dales Way

Your route

Your route follows the official Dales Way. Set off from Ilkley at the start of your holiday and follow the course up Wharfedale, an increasingly picturesque valley. Pass Bolton Abbey and the villages of Burnsall and Grassington, then higher up pass through Kettlewell, Buckden and Hubberholme. Beyond lies more remote terrain at Oughtershaw and the moorland of Cam Fell. Drop towards Ribbleshead and make a final crossing of moorland to Dentdale. Here lies Dent, a charming village, and beyond it Sedbergh. Now in fields, the Dales Way passes to the North of Kendal and makes a final surge into the Lake District. Emerge on the shores of lake Windermere at Bowness.

Routecards and maps

Each day's route is explained in detail on your routecards, to bring you to your night's accommodation. We give you the real maps for you to follow, not printouts or photocopies.

Getting there and back

Your holiday starts in Ilkley and ends in Bowness-on-Windermere. Travel to Ilkley and from Bowness is not included in the holiday price - we leave it to you to make the arrangements that suit you best. Ilkley and Bowness have good train connections to main line trains. Your info pack contains full information on travel options. It is possible to leave a car at either your first or last night's accommodation. If you would like to do this, please let us know.

Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in Ilkley

Ilkley is a smart little town in West Yorkshire, convenient for Leeds. There is plenty of dining to be had in the town centre.

Small hotel, Ilkley

Day 2: Ilkley to Grassington

(25.5km or 16 miles)
Your first stage is long but gentle, tracing the course of the river Wharfe. Pass Bolton Abbey and then Burnsall and finally arrive in Grassington. Grassington is a bustling village in the Dales.

Guesthouse, Grassington

Day 3: Grassington to Hubberholme

(20km or 12.5 miles)
Take to higher ground in the morning as your route climbs onto the hillside. This is the first stretch to Kettlewell, a smaller village than Grassington but equally pleasant. In the afternoon the route sticks to the valley, nearing Buckden and continuing on the level to the hamlet of Hubberholme with its small old church.

Inn, Hubberholme

Day 4: Hubberholme to Ribbleshead

(19km or 12 miles)
Your third day's walking takes you across the Dales Way's highest ground. Begin along the river valley almost to its head, then branch off onto the moor past isolated farms. A good track then takes you down to Ribbleshead, a famous stop on the Leeds-Settle-Carlisle railway just off the Dales Way.

Inn, Ribbleshead

Day 5: Ribbleshead to Sedbergh

(26km or 16.5 miles)
Sedbergh with its famous school and many book shops is today's destination, after the length of Dentdale is walked. Dentdale and Dent itself give some of the prettiest views on the Dales Way. All this comes after a morning's high crossing, the last of the real moorland on the route.

Guesthouse, Sedbergh

Day 6: Sedbergh to Kendal

(26km or 16.5 miles)
Destination Kendal, or the small villages to its North: Burneside and Staveley. Today brings further walking on field paths, generally at low levels, as you cross the M6 motorway and enter Cumbria.

Guesthouse, Kendal (Burneside/ Staveley)

Day 7: Kendal to Bowness

(20km or 12.5 miles)
On your final day, the Dales Way takes a twisty and intriguing course into the Lake District. Views come at unexpected points back to the Yorkshire Dales, and might make you wonder how true a Dales Way it is.. but what a super route and what an enjoyable walk down into Bowness. The end of the trek.

Guesthouse, Bowness

Day 8: Departure from Bowness

Morning departure from Bowness.

Our usual schedule of accommodation might not be available, especially if there is not much time between booking and your trip starting. We will book accommodation as closely as possible to this itinerary and present you a schedule for you to check before we proceed.

Accommodation

This holiday stays in pleasant guesthouses, hotels, bed & breakfasts or inns along the route. We place most value on a friendly welcome, comfortable standards and a good location within the village or town. We book ensuite accommodation except where it is not available, for example in older buildings or more remote locations.

Your info pack contains full details of your accommodation including contact details and directions.

Food

The food of the Yorkshire Dales and Cumbria is hearty and often locally produced. Classic dishes include Cumberland sausages or lamb shank with mashed potato; steak and kidney pie; and of course fish and chips. Fish or game of many types are often seen.

You will have enough chances to buy lunch ingredients, or to stop for lunch, along the way. However, on some stages you will have to be self-sufficient throughout the walk. Your routecards show places to eat and stock up on the route.

We include breakfast on all mornings.

The walking

Terrain

The terrain is a mix of the following and more:

- Paths in woodland
- Walled tracks
- Paths through fields (some indistinct)
- Country lanes
- Paths over the open hillside (some indistinct)
- Steep rocky paths or steps
- Stony mountain tops

The landscape should be treated as wild terrain in which you will need to be self-reliant. We strongly recommended that you know how to navigate with a map and compass; the skills are easy to learn and your notes include details of some good books.

Signposts and waymarks

Directions on the ground are reasonably common in the form of small yellow waymarks and wooden finger posts. However, signs have a habit of disappearing or confusing at crucial points, so please be prepared to navigate!

Your own routes

While your routecards make up the walking for the trip, you are of course free to walk wherever you choose, taking side trips or going by a different route of your own choice. Please note that if you follow your own route you will have left the holiday for the duration.

Local transport

No local transport is needed for this holiday due to its nature as a continuous walk. Your only focus is on the walking – a real break! Excursions to local towns, for example Skipton, Settle or Kendal, might be possible by bus or train. As well as these options your notes and routecards tell you about the options for shortening or missing out entirely each day's walk by using buses and trains, where possible.

Language

English is the local language.

Weather

The weather in the Yorkshire Dales between April and October is generally very suitable for walking. While snowfall is in theory possible on higher ground all year round, it is very rare in the summer months. April and May can often be excellent months for warmth and relative dryness. Any time in June, July and August is likely to be warm enough for comfort but with a good chance of rain on at least some days. Towards the Autumn, September and October can be quieter and very pleasant, though colder.

This all means that it is sensible to come equipped for and expecting all the types of weather that might be experienced in a typical summer in the UK: from heavy rain storms with a chill in the air, to hot sunshine.

Equipment

You will need the usual equipment for mountain walking in the UK. Especially important are good walking boots, waterproofs and sun protection. Your info pack contains a suggested equipment list. Please also see the Equipment page of our website for more information.

Insurance

We recommend, but it is not compulsory, that you have insurance cover for personal liability, cancellation and your baggage and money. Your info pack contains details of suitable insurance policies.

Money in the UK

The currency is the Pound Sterling (GBP).

Local expenses

Local expenses include food and drink other than breakfast, which is included, plus any local transport, attractions and extras.

Guided days

Hire a professional mountain leader to join you on this self-guided holiday, for one or more days. A leader helps plan and carry out each day's walking and adds interest to your holiday by pointing out local features. Please contact us for prices and more information.

Groups

Walk by yourself or in your own group, or see if we can match you up with other like-minded walkers on the same holiday. Any group will be a maximum of 8 people.

Hazards

Health

The UK does not require tourists to take any vaccinations. However, it is recommended to keep tetanus vaccines up to date.

Safety

This is adventure travel! This holiday takes you to some wild and remote areas, in particular some areas of upland moor and mountain where navigation can be difficult in poor weather. The weather can also be a hazard in itself. During any walking, whether following a routecard or making your own route, you are responsible for your own actions and safety and you should join the trip with suitable skills, experience and equipment.

Further information

Please email us with any questions at info@ukexploratory.com.

Disclaimer

This information is given in good faith and is believed to be correct at the time of issue. UK Exploratory cannot be liable for any loss or injury incurred.