

Milldale and Nabs Dale

A pleasant walk on riverside paths, up a wooded dale and through high fields with spectacular views of limestone country. Varied scenery and relative ease make it suitable for all times of the year. This part of the Dove is much quieter than the lower reaches and the scenery is, in my view, superior.

Walk Facts:

Start	Car Park in Milldale (SK 138 547), off the A515 Ashbourne/Buxton road
Terrain	Field and riverside paths, steep climb through Nabs Dale
Length	Three miles
Time	Two hours or so
Food/Drink	Milldale (shop) There's also a pub on the road to Alstonefield
Toilets	Milldale (by the bridge)

Route

From the car park, walk down the road to the river. This usually has a good compliment of ducks which are always hungry and will come up onto the bank if you offer food. I sometimes take a small bag of corn (sold in pet shops as pigeon food) to feed them, as this is better for them than the usual bread!

The walk continues over the bridge. This is 'Viator's Bridge' from Izaak Walton's book 'The Compleat Angler', although in Walton's time it didn't have parapets and resembled a stone path crossing the river. The lack of parapets was due to it being a packhorse bridge in the days when goods were transported around these parts on unmade tracks by horse-power. Parapets would have got in the way of the packs which were strapped to the sides of the horses.

Crossing the Dove takes you from Staffordshire into Derbyshire, as the river forms the county boundary around here. Once across, take note of the old packhorse track zigzagging its way down the hillside - this is your return route. The zig-zags were to make it easier for the laden horses to ascend and descend the steep hill.

Follow the well-made riverside path downstream. The small weirs which cross the river are intended to create pools, which favour trout and other fish. As well as the fish, the Dove along here is the haunt of birds such as dippers and water fowl. I also once fleetingly saw a kingfisher here. The river may almost dry up in late summer but can also be a torrent in winter and has been known to freeze over in cold weather - the last time I can remember this happening was the winter of 1996/97.

As a large cave (called Dove Holes) looms ahead, turn away from the river at a metal sign indicating a footpath to Alsop-en-le-Dale, crossing a short area of nettles and grass to enter wooded Nabs Dale.

Nabs Dale is rather steep and rough but also delightfully quiet and peaceful, surrounded by high limestone crags. Pause for a while to listen to the birdsong from the woods and enjoy the scenery. It's a wonderful place for a lunch break or a little 'birding'!



Eventually you leave Nabs Dale over a stile by a gate, into farmland. Turn left past a house and head towards the buildings of Hanson Grange farm. Pass through a gateway then walk diagonally uphill, heading for an electricity pole. Cross the wall by a stile about 30 metres above the farm, then head left to the farm track and turn right onto it. From now on the walk is through open fields.

Follow the farm track to a crossroads of paths by a trough, then turn left. This is the highest point of the walk. Pass through several fields,

always keeping the wall on your left and descending gradually. The views are spectacular, particularly into the deep cleft of Wolfscote Dale, some distance away to the right.

As the path and wall veer left the buildings of Milldale come into sight below, giving a wonderful airy view of the village (pictured). The church you can see on the hill opposite, at Alstonefield, is worth a visit.

Finally, the zig-zags of the packhorse route provide an easy way down the steep hillside back to the village and its welcome refreshments. *Please* preserve this fragile ancient track by not cutting off the corners!

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