

Wolfscoate Dale and the Tissington Trail

This walk takes in dramatic Wolfscoate and Biggin Dales plus a section of one of the Peak District's three 'railway trails'.

Walk Facts:

Start	Car park at the site of the old Alsop railway station, off the A515 Ashbourne-Buxton road (SK 155 548). Buses from Ashbourne and Buxton.
Terrain	Paths along limestone dales and fields, plus trackbed of old railway. Steady climb through Biggin Dale.
Length	Eight miles
Time	About three hours
Food/Drink	None en-route.
Toilets	None en-route.

Route

From the car park, head left along the trackbed of the old railway, signposted to Hartington. This is the Tissington Trail, on the route of a railway which ran from Ashbourne to Buxton. It was closed at a time when railways were seen as a burden, although like many others which suffered the same fate, it would have been invaluable now as a means of reducing traffic in the National Park.

Leave the trackbed by a footpath on the left at a point where the trail crosses a bridge, to gain access to Bradbury's Bank, a National trust property. Following the signposts, head diagonally right to a narrow gateway and continue in the same general direction down the hill until the wall in the valley floor is reached. Turn left and walk down the dale, following the wall all the way to the river Dove. There is some spectacular limestone scenery along the way as you rapidly descend.

On reaching the river, turn right and pass through a stile by a gate to enter wooded Wolfscoate Dale. Stay on the same side of the river ignoring Coldeaton Bridge, on an old packhorse route from Alstonefield. The packhorse route itself can be seen zig-zagging down the steep opposite bank. These lower reaches of the dale are quiet and wooded. In spring, many daffodils brighten the way while in summer the mixed woodland provides cool shade.

Continue along the dale until the woodland is left behind. Shortly afterwards, turn right into Biggin Dale at a point where the river widens significantly and the path crosses a little causeway. This area is shown on the picture - you walk along the path shown, towards the camera. The entrance to Biggin Dale is immediately after the stile at the bottom of the picture.

Biggin Dale climbs gradually and you'll leave any crowds behind at



this point. The lower reaches show what happens when these dales are not grazed sufficiently - hawthorn and gorse scrub has colonised much of the left-hand side although some of this is now being removed by volunteers. Between the scrub, cowslips bloom profusely in spring and are replaced by harebells in late summer.

Biggin Dale is dry for most of the year but in wet winters it acquires a stream. The source of this is near the top of the dale and can be spectacular on frosty mornings. The water, which bubbles up from underground, is slightly warmer than the air and steams on contact with it, giving the area the look of a hot volcanic spring!

The path through the dale is easy to follow, passing through a rather ruinous gate at one point. The upper reaches, accessed through a second gate, are a National Nature Reserve. This is an important piece of limestone upland so please keep to the path alongside the wall in order to avoid disturbance to the reserve.

At the top of the dale, turn right (signposted to Dalehead) and continue along the dale to eventually reach a minor road. Turn left along the road, then take the next turning on the right, signposted to Biggin. Walk along this road, entering the village. Leave the road at a point where it turns sharp left, continuing straight on along a rough track.

Walk along the track, passing a house, until you come to a stile by a gate. Go through the stile and walk straight on, keeping the wall on your right. Ignore a finger post pointing to the left (that path just goes back to Biggin). When you reach a field corner, follow the direction pointed by an arrow on a post, crossing two fields diagonally to reach a gap in a new dry-stone wall. Go through the gap and head right to where the Tissington Trail crosses a bridge.

Climb the path alongside the bridge to get onto the trail again, then turn right and follow the trail all the way back to the car park. The embankments along here have a good variety of limestone flowers such as scabious, cranesbill and harebell. The walking is easy along the flat trail, which is used by many cyclists. Most of these treat walkers with respect although you do have to watch for the occasional lout who wants to see how close he can pass you by without actually hitting you!

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