

Route Summary

This circular walk crosses the famous stepping stones in Dovedale, walks on shady paths alongside the River Dove as it cuts between towering limestone crags, tracks through the grassy slopes of Hall Dale, strewn with wildflowers, and passes through the picture-perfect village of Ilam.

Route Overview



Category: Walking
Length: 9.260 km / 5.79 mi
Last Modified: 5th April 2019
Difficulty: Medium
Rating: Unrated
Surface: Undefined
Date Published: 5th April 2019

Description

Details

Distance: 6 miles

Time: 3-4 hours

Terrain: Country lanes, woodland paths and trails

Accessibility: Moderate, some inclines and uneven terrain, gates, stiles, stepping stones

Start and end grid reference: SK14640

Downloads:

Introduction

This circular walk takes in the most beautiful views of this stunning part of the Peak District. It crosses the famous stepping stones in Dovedale, walks on shady paths alongside the River Dove as it cuts between towering limestone crags, tracks through the grassy slopes of Hall Dale, strewn with wildflowers, and passes through the picture-perfect village of Ilam before returning to Dovedale. There are magnificent views along the way, although this route does not feel like a tough one and is a good one for the whole family to enjoy, maybe with a picnic en route.

For the most part this walk uses clearly-marked trails and paths, with some country lanes. Be aware that you do need to cross the Dovedale Stepping Stones at the start of the walk; there is no other way to cross the river at that point. There are a few inclines, some with steps. The route requires you to walk on country lanes (with no footpaths) for a short distance. The walk starts and ends at a car park (parking fees apply), at which there are public toilets. There is a tea room and a pub in Ilam. Allow 3-4 hours to complete this walk at a moderate pace, allowing for rest stops to take in the views.

The Walk

The walk starts from the car park at Dovedale, SK14640, DE6 2AY. To begin the walk, turn right out of the car park and follow the wide well-marked path with the River Dove on your right.



After a short distance you will cross over the river by way of the much-photographed and very scenic stepping stones. Turn left immediately after crossing the river and go through the squeeze stile to follow the path signposted to Mill Dale.



This path takes you through the wooded slopes alongside the babbling River Dove, now on your left. The terrain is uneven and stepped in places – look out for the fantastic fossils in the limestone on the steps. In parts the path is boarded with wooden planks. Note the magnificent limestone crags of Tissington Spires towering above you, the faces of which are often dotted with rock climbers.



Continue on the path through Dove Dale until you reach the footbridge at Ilam Rock. Turn left here to cross the river, signposted to Stanshope. Immediately after crossing the bridge turn right and follow the path through the woodland, signposted to Ilam, with the river now on your right again. Stay straight on the main path alongside and ignore the footpath off to the left marked Ilam (Steep Ascent).

Pass through a squeeze stile in a wall to find a beautifully-positioned bench for a rest stop. Turn left at the bench, heading away from the river.



This path climbs through beautiful woodland, with bright mosses covering the stone wall and tree trunks, before emerging into the deep grassy gorge of Hall Dale. Follow the path straight on through the gorge, ignoring paths off.



As the gorge gradually becomes more shallow and the village of Stanshope comes into view ahead, look out for a crossroads of paths. Turn left through a gate in a stone wall and cross the field diagonally left, walking in the direction of a derelict barn on the horizon.

Continue through another gate, keeping a stone wall on your right. Stay straight on when the wall turns right, to reach a stile. Keep right and follow the wall to the next stile. Veer left uphill to the next stile and then head across the field to reach Ilam Moor Lane.



Turn left on this quiet country lane and continue walking along its length following signs to Ilam.

This pretty village is well worth exploring and there are National Trust tea rooms at Ilam Park, with beautiful views and riverside walks along the River Manifold. Ilam Hall itself is now run as a youth hostel.





In the centre of the village at the prominent monument of Ilam Cross, turn left to follow the road signposted to Dovedale and Thorpe. After approx. 250 metres turn left off the road on to a public footpath marked Bunster Hill.



Stay on this obvious path across the fields through a series of gates, following signs to Dovedale, with the distinctive flat-topped mound of Thorpe Cloud ahead. The car park from where you started the walk eventually comes into view ahead of you.

Waypoints

