

Walk 3 – Ilkla’ Moor Baht At

Distance: 5.5 miles (9km)

Time: 3 hours

Terrain: A strenuous walk, over moorland tracks and paths, starting with an extremely steep climb of some 322 metres or over a thousand feet. Some rough and muddy sections where boots are essential.

Parking: Public car parks in Ilkley town centre.

Public Transport: Wharfedale Line trains from Leeds and Bradford to Ilkley. Bus X84 from Leeds, 650 from Bradford

Start: Ilkley Manor House.

Please abide by all governmental guidance regarding Covid-19.

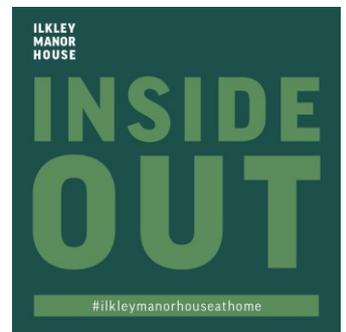
Ilkley Moor is perhaps the most famous area of moorland in Britain, immortalised by a wittily macabre folk song that has become Yorkshire’s unofficial anthem. But what has attracted generations of walkers to the area is the magnificent expanse of open country, fringed by crags and tree-lined gills, part of the great massif of Rombalds Moor, dividing industrial Airedale from the greener expanses of Wharfedale and the unspoiled glories of the higher Dales. This walk takes in many of the classic features of Ilkley Moor, climbing to the moor’s dramatic summit.

Turn left outside the archway leading into the Manor House into Church Street, crossing at the pedestrian lights and keeping ahead to the traffic lights. Turn right into Brook Street. At the top of Brook Street cross to the circular flower bed at the bottom of Wells Walk, taking the path to the left of the stream up the little linear park of Mill Ghyll. Bear right where the path forks, crossing the stream to steps and a little metal gate. Cross Queens Road into and up Linnburn Mews, an unmade road, then across the drive to the former Wells House estate from where, slightly to the right, a path climbs alongside the stream, soon entering and passing Darwin Gardens. A blue plaque explains the history of Wells House, its impressive façade now coming into view, the former Hydropathic Hotel where Darwin took the water cure in 1859, and which later became Ilkley College.

Continue into Wells Road, the massive expanse of Ilkley Moor facing you. Cross the area of open grass that forms the edge of Moor, heading left towards the little summer shelter on the low ridge ahead, picking up the path over a footbridge and steps, but turning right just below the shelter onto a narrow tarmac path that soon ascends somewhat uneven stone steps heading directly up to White Wells Bath House (see Walk 1) straight ahead. This is a steep climb but benches at the top enable you to both catch your

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breath and enjoy the magnificent view back over Ilkley, westwards towards Langbar and eastwards down across the valley to Norwood Edge.

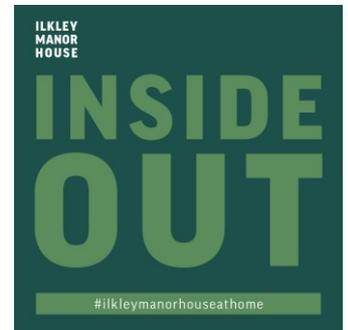
Your path now continues behind White Wells, along the broad, stony track signed Millennium Way, which climbs steadily up the side of the Moor at an ever steeper angle, crossing well worn, rough hewn steps at awkward angles. Pass the junction into Rocky Valley on the left, keeping straight ahead past and between the great gritstone outcrops known as Ilkley Crag until finally the gradient eases over Cranshaw Hill, and you cross Backstone Beck at Gill Head. Some sections of eroded path are protected by board walk. The climb is now less severe but still a steady pull towards the stone pillar of Lanshaw Lad ahead. Keep straight ahead at the crossing with the path from Cow and Calf until you reach and pass Lanshaw Lad where about a hundred and fifty yards ahead and slightly to your left you will see the Apostle Stones – a mysterious circle of stones, technically on Burley Moor, dating from Bronze Age times some 3,500 years ago. What these stones signify is an unsolved mystery, but they are positioned at an astonishing panoramic viewpoint - into Wharfedale, across the Aire-Wharfedale gap into what is now modern Guiseley with Leeds-Bradford Airport and Otley Chevin beyond, and southwards into Airedale and the South Pennines.

Unless you are tempted to follow this ancient packhorse way to Dick Hudson’s and Bingley, return to Lanshaw Lad but take the narrow path left which now follow the crest of the Moor along the outcrops of White Crag Moss, heading westwards. At a fork keep on the slightly broader, somewhat boggy path left which eventually crests the hill to a small cairn and trig point at the very summit of both Ilkley and Rombalds Moor – 1,347 feet or 402 metres above sea level, with, in fine weather, magnificent views in all directions, a notable landmark to the northeast the sinister white golf balls of Menston Hill, above Blubberhouses and Denton Moors across the valley.

Your route continues due west towards the radio masts straight ahead. Much of this moorland is sadly eroded by boots and even cycle tyres, so pick your way carefully through the morass. Soon sections of welcome, recently provided paved stone causeway appear, as does a stone boundary wall. Again a mixture of causeway and boggy sections takes you along the wall eventually to pass the radio masts to finally join the unsurfaced road over the summit of the Moor known as Keighley Gate - “gate” being an old Norse and Yorkshire dialect word for road.

Turn right to enjoy an easy descent. After half a mile, as the road swings left, take the sandy path on the right, signposted, which leads to a steep path alongside a deep hollow, Spicey Gill, where the action of both water and quarrying has created a huge rocky amphitheatre.

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You eventually rejoin Keighley Gate, now surfaced, above the car park. Continue downhill, past its junction with Westwood Drive, where you take the signed path, left, through woodland behind Wells House. This meets Queens Road – cross to descend the stone steps ahead into Princess Road. Note the metal fence opposite St Margaret's Church to the right of the electricity sub-station where a gateway leads to three boulders carved with Bronze Age cup and ring marked stones, placed behind fences for security from vandals.

Return to the sub station, to the side of which a narrow enclosed way descends between gardens to meet Parish Ghyll Road. Continue past handsome Victorian houses to The Grove and centre of Ilkley.

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