

CYCLING IN THE YORKSHIRE DALES



About the Author

Harry has been cycling for as long as he can remember. His first cycle tour was with school friends Graham and Dave across the North York Moors staying in youth hostels during one of those long sunny summers of long ago. After a lengthy break, when the bike was used for commuting, he restarted cycle touring round Ireland then France, Spain, Italy, Portugal, Austria, Slovenia and Norway.

Moving to Nidderdale with partner Liz and taking up triathlon were the spur to a new bike, lots more cycling and soon cycling for pleasure took over. Having got the bug again cycling is his preferred method of exercise and foreign travel.

Harry has enjoyed re-riding many of his favourite routes and discovering some new ones for this guide and he has no doubt that you will have a great time trying them out.

Other Cicerone titles by the author

Cycle Touring in Spain

CYCLING IN THE YORKSHIRE DALES

by Harry Dowdell

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Updates to this Guide

While every effort is made by our authors to ensure the accuracy of guidebooks as they go to print, changes can occur during the lifetime of an edition. Any updates that we know of for this guide will be on the Cicerone website (www.cicerone.co.uk/1017/updates), so please check before planning your trip. We also advise that you check information about such things as transport, accommodation and shops locally. Even rights of way can be altered over time. We are always grateful for information about any discrepancies between a guidebook and the facts on the ground, sent by email to updates@cicerone.co.uk or by post to Cicerone, Juniper House, Murley Moss, Oxenholme Road, Kendal LA9 7RL.

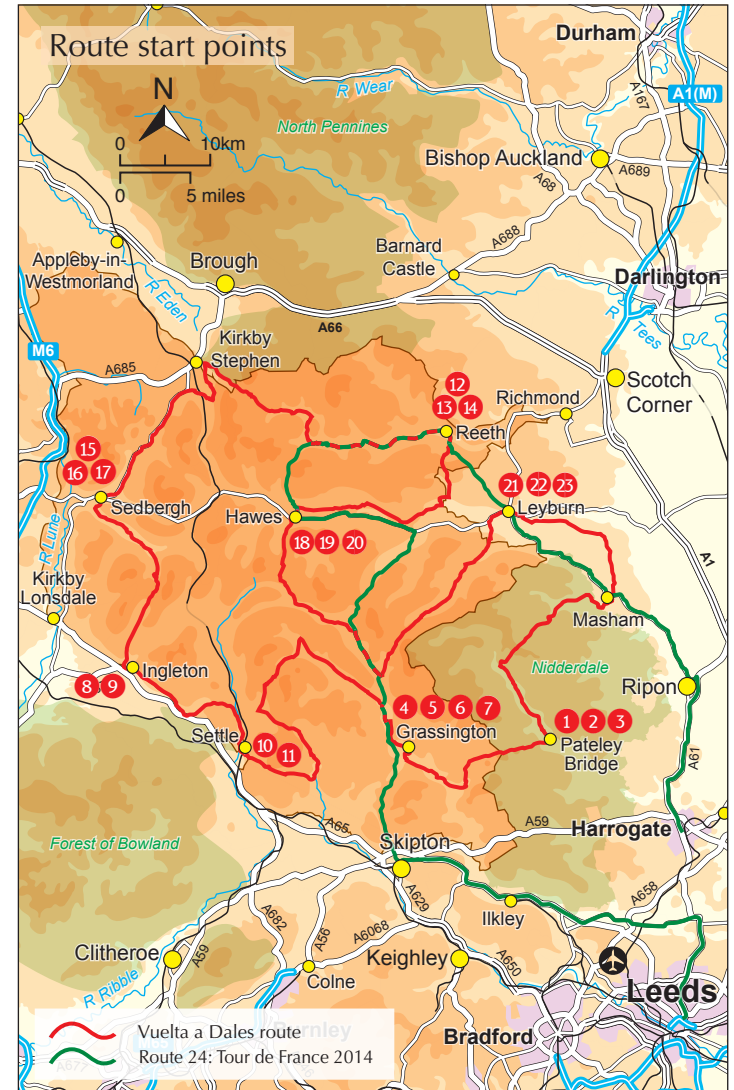
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Front cover: Approaching Tan Hill on Long Band (Route 13)

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Route symbols on map extracts

- route
- alternative route
- Tour de France route
- route direction
- start/finish point
- start point
- finish point
- alternative start

Features on the overview map

- Vuelta a Dales route
- Route 24: Tour de France 2014
- Urban area
- Yorkshire Dales National Park
- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

800m
600m
400m
200m
75m
0m

The route maps in this guide are reproduced at 1:100,000 except for those for Route 24 (Tour de France) and the Vuelta a Dales which are at 1:250,000. The town centre maps are based on 1:25,000 OS maps.

GPX files
GPX files for all routes can be downloaded for free at www.cicerone.co.uk/1017/GPX.





Cycling towards Harkerside, Swaledale (Route 21)

INTRODUCTION



A path through the hay meadows, Muker, Swaledale

Ahead the hay meadows were in full flower, similar to those in Asturias, Norway, the Alps and Slovenia, the variety of plants evidence of the poor soil quality. A flagstone path marked the way, linking stiles and field barns. Moulding to the gentle folds of the land it is neither flat nor straight. I've been coming here all my life. I'll be back again.

There is no road in this part of the dale, leaving it to those travelling under their own steam. A wooden footbridge spans the river in its rocky bed. Youthful and lively it babbles, burbles and bickers on its way: once out of the Dales – a landscape born

in water, carved by ice and decorated by man – this spark is lost. Field barns litter the dale, dry stone walls carve it up. The sides are steep, limestone scars breaking through under a fringe of broadleaf trees. The floor is wide and grassy: a classic glacial valley.

The dale bends and the path climbs past long abandoned mine workings. Below the river crashes over Kisdon Force: *foss* and *dal*, Norse words.

Making up the middle section of the Pennines – England's backbone – the Yorkshire Dales is an area of high moorland cut by deep dales. It is home to Britain's most precious

landscapes and habitats, a beautiful area of great contrasts with each dale having its own character. Long popular with lovers of the outdoors, in 1954 1769km² of it were designated a national park. In August 2016 the park was extended to the west and north-west by 417km²

The visitor travels through small villages set in hay meadows rich in wild flowers. The buildings are made of the underlying stone, the walls standing according to the skills of their builders. Isolated barns wait with empty haylofts, while below there's room for livestock waiting to be gathered in when the season turns. Rising from the dale bottom the steep hill-sides are used for grazing. It is a pattern

of farming that is seen from the fjords of Norway to the Picos of northern Spain. Here change is slow. Some of the steeper slopes are covered in scree or sparse tree cover. As height is gained the fields increase in size. The gradient eases to reveal extensive plateaus of blanket bog or heather-covered moorland. All too soon the descent starts into the next dale, which is familiar yet distinctly different.

Cyclists enjoy the network of small roads and lanes, some originally built by the Romans while others are upgraded cart tracks or drovers roads. The roads are generally quiet and are used mostly by local traffic. The lack of large urban areas on the fringe keeps the number of visitors low and



Drystone walls, Malham



Approaching Dale Head with Pen-y-ghent dominant (Routes 7 and 10)

good trunk roads outside the Dales ensure that heavy traffic has no reason to pass through. Apart from a small number of quarries there is no heavy industry.

The Yorkshire Dales have hosted visitors for over two millennia and today's visitors will readily find accommodation – camp sites, bunk-houses, Youth Hostels, B&Bs or hotels – and refreshments out in countless pubs, tea shops and restaurants.

GEOLOGY OF THE DALES

The underlying geology, modified by natural and human activities, gives the Dales of today their unique character. Although the pre-Cambrian slates exposed at Thornton Force near Ingleton are the oldest rocks to be found in the Dales it is those

deposited during the Carboniferous Period that dominate the landscape. Some 300 million years ago carboniferous limestone was deposited in deep, warm, clear seas. Much of it would have been precipitated but there were also coral reefs, such as that which makes up Skelterton Hill near Cracoe in Wharfedale. As the land periodically encroached on the sea, layers of shale, sandstone, limestone and coal were deposited in the coastal areas. Shale would originally have been deposited as clay or mud some distance from the shore and changed due to the pressure exerted over time by overlying rocks. Sand would have been deposited close to the shore, with tides and currents moving some to form sandy beaches which were subsequently compressed into sandstone. Coal came from trees

Limestone pavement, Malham Cove

and other organic matter washed out to sea or deposited in a river bed and then quickly covered so that it did not rot. These rocks are known as the Yoredale facies. Eventually the whole lot was covered by thick deposits of coarse sandstone laid down in huge deltas. This is millstone grit.

Much of the millstone grit and Yoredale facies have been lost leaving carboniferous limestone the dominant rock of the Dales. The Yoredale facies still lay over the limestone of Wensleydale, dominate Swaledale, and make up the higher parts of Pen-y-ghent, Ingleborough and Wharfedale. The remaining millstone grit can be found forming the high plateaus of boggy moorland of upper Swaledale, Grassington Moor, Barden Moor and

Nidderdale as well as capping some of the higher peaks. Subsequent mineralization of the limestone then deposited ores of lead and barium.

The Carboniferous rocks remain almost horizontal and do not have significant folding but do have some faulting. An area bounded by the Stainmore Trough Fault in the north, the Dent Fault to the West and the Craven Fault to the south was raised relative to the surrounding areas and tilted slightly. This raised area, the Askrigg Block, matches the area commonly defined as the Yorkshire Dales. The line of the Stainmore Fault in the north can be guessed at as the hills drop steeply to the level ground that hosts the A66. The line of the Craven Fault can be clearly seen in the hills

that end precipitously parallel to and just north of the A65. The Dent Fault can be followed from Kirkby Stephen to Kirkby Lonsdale along the eastern side of the Howgill Fells, across Dentdale and along the bottom of Barbondale. To the west are older Silurian sandstone and some Ordovician shales.

The Askrigg Block has been carved by glaciers leaving classic U-shaped valleys separated by high plateaus. Particularly striking are Wharfedale and Swaledale between Muker and Keld. Glacial deposits of boulder clay form the drumlins of upper Ribblesdale and Wensleydale and moraine traps Semerwater and Malham Tarn.

Glacial activity on the limestone has left a karst topography of crags, scars, coves and limestone pavement.

This is most striking between Malham and Malham Tarn, the southern part of Wharfedale, the lower slopes of Ingleborough and much of Wharfedale. Weakly acidic ground water has dissolved limestone giving potholes, sinkholes and extensive cave systems that are popular with potholers.

HUMAN HABITATION

The Dales have been continuously inhabited by mankind since the end of the last ice age, approximately 10,000 years ago. Flints found in caves indicate the presence of Mesolithic people. These were followed by those of the Bronze then Iron Ages who left stone circles and hill forts respectively. Iron Age people lived in small round huts generally located on the

Malham Tarn from Capon Hall

ROUTE 1

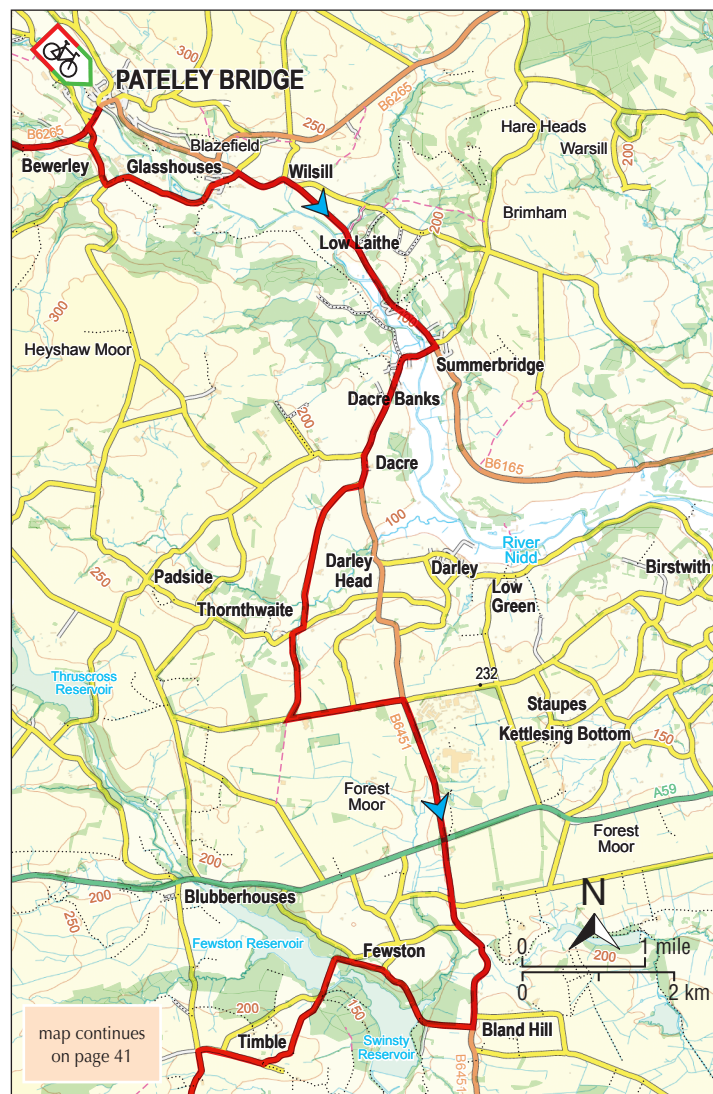
Nidderdale, Washburn and Wharfedale

Start/Finish	Nidd Walk SE 157 655
Distance	65.9km/41.2 miles
Total climb	835m
Grade	Long Hard
Cycling time	3hr 20min
Café stops	Ilkley town centre, Bolton Abbey (Cavendish Pavilion), Stump Cross Caverns and Toft Gate

From Nidderdale the route climbs over to the Washburn Valley and from there into Wharfedale. Much of the route is on narrow lanes with little traffic. The valley roads are rarely level but the more challenging climbs occur when moving from one dale to the next, particularly going from Wharfedale back into Nidderdale.

Turn left, leaving Nidd Walk, and immediately cross the River Nidd. Turn left (0.3km), opposite the Royal Oak, towards the Bewerley Park Centre. There are a couple of sharp but short climbs. Pass through **Bewerley**, turn left (1.2km) and pass the Bewerley Park Centre. Continue on this narrow road as it descends to re-cross the Nidd followed by a steep climb through **Glasshouses**. Turn right at the crossroads (3.2km) towards Knaresborough. Pass through **Wilsill**, descend and pass through **Low Laithe** and continue into **Summerbridge**. Turn right (7.0km) at the Flying Dutchman towards Dacre and Otley.

Descend steeply, re-cross the Nidd and climb through **Dacre Banks**, after which the road steepens considerably. Pass the first right turn in **Dacre** (8.9km) for Braithwaite but take the second right turn (9.3km) towards **Thornthwaite**. Turn right at the T-junction (11.4km) towards Blubberhouses then turn left (11.6km) into Day Lane towards Blubberhouses and Otley, for a



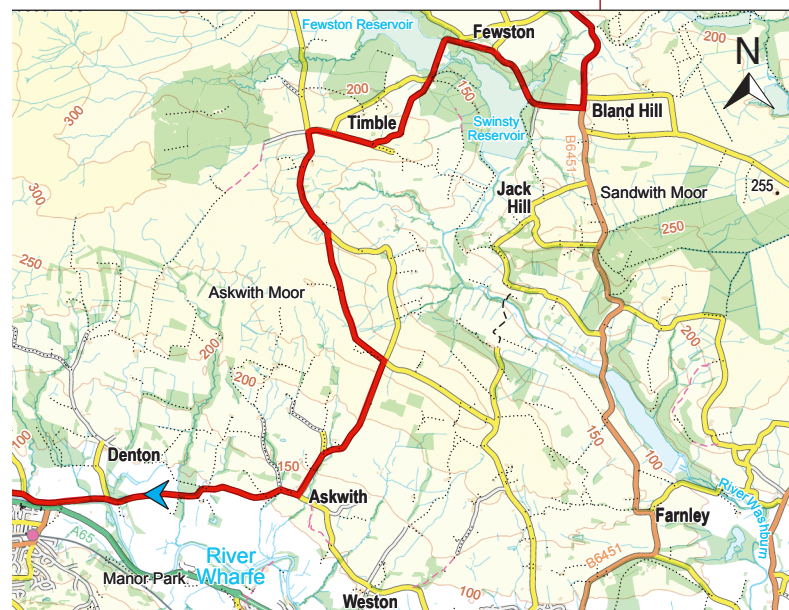
climb straight up the dale side. Turn left at the T-junction at the top (12.8km) towards Otley, then turn right at the staggered crossroads (14.3km) towards Otley. Pass RAF Menwith Hill. Continue straight ahead at the crossroads with the A59 (16.3km) towards Fewston.

The A59 follows the course of a **Roman road** and by looking right its traces can be seen climbing over Blubberhouses Moor and Round Hill.

The route enters the catchment of the **Washburn**. The Washburn is held back by four reservoirs and much of the moor, woods and farmland is owned by Yorkshire Water (YW). YW have done a lot to open up their land to the public with extra paths and bridleways, picnic areas, car parks and toilets. The upper reservoir, Thruscross, contains the

submerged remains of West End which can only be visited in time of drought. Controlled releases from Thruscross are popular with kayakers.

Continue and pass the Sun Inn. Turn right (19.1km) to **Fewston**, descend and bend right. Cross a bay of Swinsty Reservoir and climb through the woods. Pass Fewston church, which hosts the Washburn Heritage Centre. Descend and bend left to cross the Fewston reservoir dam. Fork left (21.9km) at the Millennium Stone outside the entrance to the car park and toilets. Climb on this narrow road and pass through **Timble**. Turn left at the T-junction (23.8km), in effect straight ahead. Turn left (24.1km) at the cross roads heading south. The steep climb ends on heather-clad **Askwith Moor**. The views ahead are into West Yorkshire and to the left is the lower

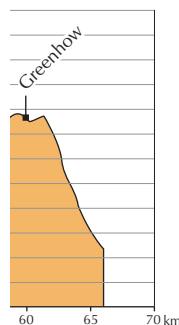
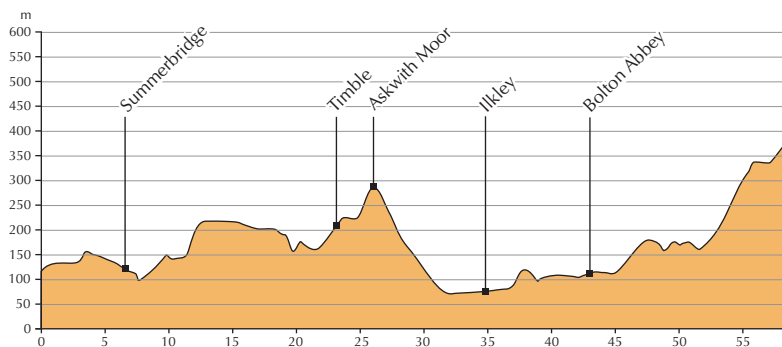


A left turn would lead into the centre of Ilkley and tea shops.

Washburn. Turn right at the crossroads (27.6km) to Askwith and Ilkley and so enter Wharfedale.

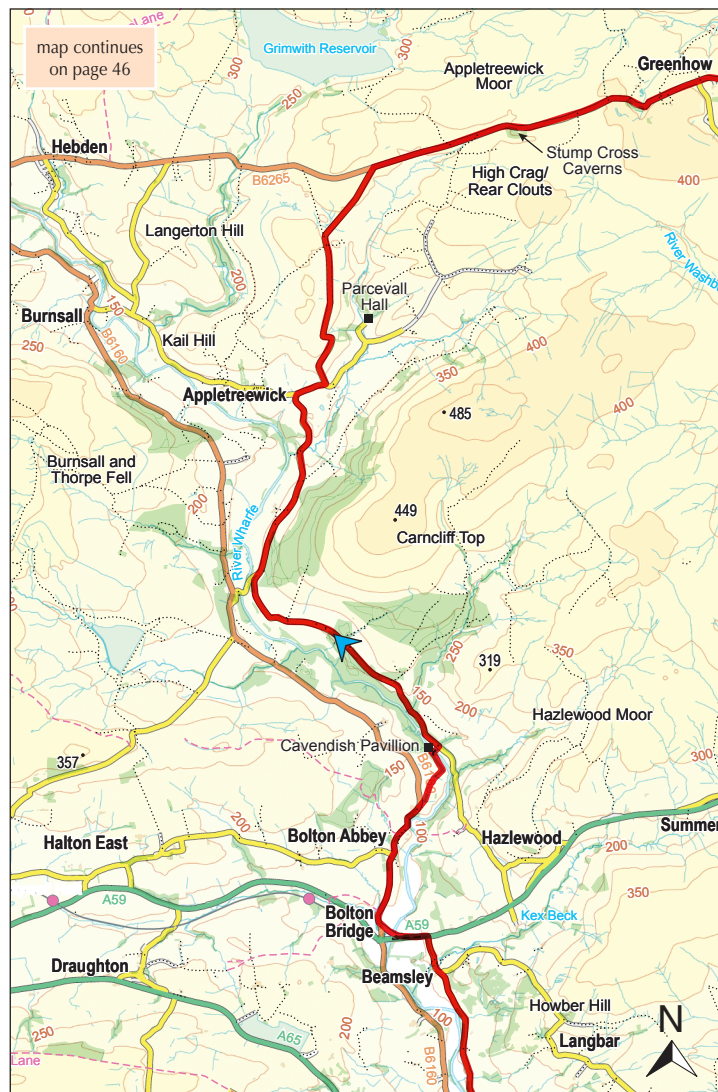
Descend with a couple of tight bends into **Askwith** and turn right at the T-junction (29.8km) towards Denton and Ilkley. This undulating and twisty valley road is very popular with local cyclists so expect company. As the road closes on the river it levels off, a rare thing in the Dales. Pass Denton Bridge (33.1km). Enter **Ilkley** and pass the lido. Continue straight ahead at the staggered crossroads (35.3km) to Nesfield and Beamsley. ◀ Bend right then turn left (36.0km) into Nesfield Road. Pass through Ilkley Golf Course, where the road narrows.

The road is twisty with many blind corners, short but steep climbs and descents. Great cycling with snatched views across the dale. Pass through Nesfield and **Beamsley**. Turn left at the T-junction with the A59 (42.5km). After 200m cross the road at the traffic island and take the surfaced bridleway signed B6160, cross the Wharfe and turn right at the T-junction (43.2km). Pass the hotel, arch and **Bolton Abbey**. Turn right (44.9km) by the memorial, signed to the Sandholme car park. Descend through the grounds of Bolton Abbey and pass the car park pay booth to arrive at **Cavendish Pavilion**. Dismount and push your cycle.



Footbridge and stepping stones at Bolton Priors

Cavendish Pavilion has been a popular stop for cyclists for many years. The basic requirements of café and toilets are met. It is a great location and with some rewarding riverside walks. Upstream is the Strid, a boiling cataract where the Wharfe is squeezed into a narrow channel. Downstream are the ruins of Bolton Priors, an Augustinian priory founded in 1154. The estate is managed by the Chatsworth Settlement Trustees.



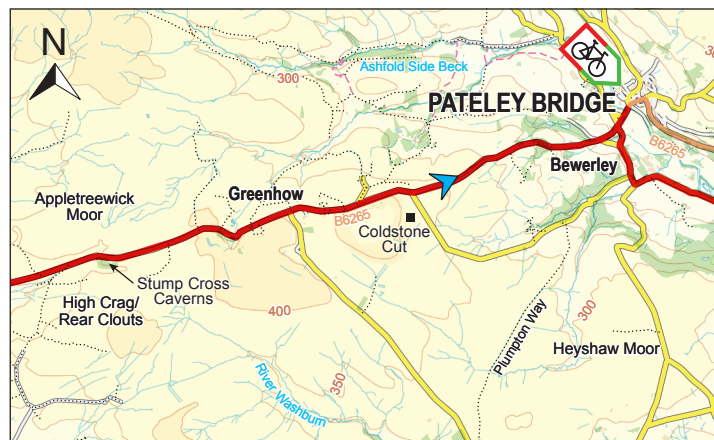
Cross the wooden bridge in front of the pavilion and climb the gentle slope to the public road. Turn left at the T-junction (46.0km). The tree shaded road is narrow with some short but steep climbs. Turn right at the T-junction (49.8km) and continue along the undulating side of the dale. Turn right at the T-junction (52.4km) towards Pateley Bridge and Skyreholme. The climb is gentle at first but steepens considerably as it bends left (52.9km). Pass the turn for Skyreholme and Parcevall Hall at this point. ▶

The steep climb does not last forever. To the right and far below is Trollers Gill, which is best approached on foot from near Parcevall Hall. Turn right at the T-junction (56.2km) with the main road to Greenhow and Pateley Bridge. This section can be busy with fast traffic. After a level section climb past **Stump Cross Caverns**. Continue upwards to **Greenhow**, pass straight through the village. Climb past the limestone quarries on the right. The road is lofty and the views of upper Nidderdale quite extensive.

To visit the 24 acres of recently renovated gardens, the largest in the National Park, of Parcevall Hall simply follow the signs.

Nidderdale on a crisp autumn morning





Stump Cross Caverns are limestone show caves open to the public. Remains of reindeer, wolves, bison and wolverine have been found. At over 400m Greenhow is one of Yorkshire highest settlements and it is claimed that St. Mary's is the highest parish church in England.

There is strong evidence that the Romans mined lead here, probably with slave labour. Lead ingots dated to AD81 have been found. At Toft Gate there is a signed path to the viewing platform of **Coldstone Cut**. The platform is an attraction on its own never mind the views of Nidderdale and beyond.

Pass the Toft Gate Lime Kiln and car park (62.5km). The descent into **Pateley Bridge** is often steep with some tight corners so take care. Not everyone gets down unscathed. Enter Pateley and return to the start.

ROUTE 2

*Brimham Moor, Fountains Abbey
and Studley Royal*

Start/Finish	Nidd Walk SE 157 655
Distance	44.5km/27.8 miles
Total climb	575m
Grade	Medium Hard
Cycling time	2hr 15min
Café stops	Fountains Abbey visitor centre and in Ripon the market square and close to the cathedral

The route visits three National Trust properties: the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) of Brimham Moor, with sculpted gritstone tors and heather-covered blanket bog; the World Heritage Site of Fountains Abbey; and the landscaped deer park of Studley Royal. Only Fountains has an entry charge. The route then explores lower Dales country with views across the Vale of York to the North York Moors. The return to Pateley is across high heather-covered moorland and ends with excellent views of Nidderdale.

The route initially follows the Way of the Roses Coast to Coast cycle route 688. Signage is excellent, thus simplifying navigation, so keep an eye open for the blue signs.

