

Walking Directions

Kisdon Gorge Circular, from Muker

11km, 645m elevation, allow 4 hours

INTRODUCTION

This walk is a real Dales classic – two charming villages, peaceful riverside walking, gushing waterfalls, ruin strewn moorland and stunning views over Swaledale's patchwork of dry-stone walls and field barns.

Despite its modest distance, this walk can easily take most of a day if you spend plenty of time enjoying the villages, exploring Swinner Gill, soaking up the views and admiring the waterfalls (or even taking a quick dip!).



The view down Swaledale

NB: These notes are for guidance only and you undertake the walk at your own risk. We cannot be aware of any footpath damages or other changes to access since the notes were written. Parts of the route are on narrow, steep sided paths so, if you are not comfortable at any point, always turn back. Always carry a map and compass and know how to use them.

USEFUL INFORMATION

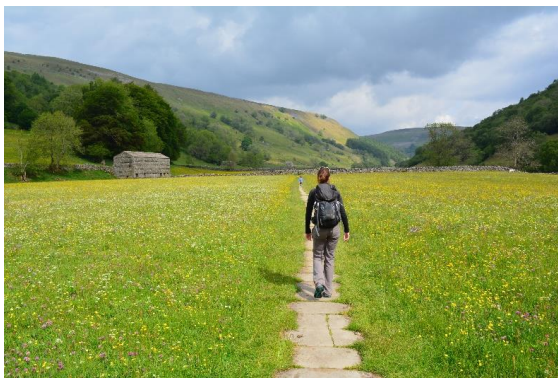
PARKING: Free roadside parking is available in Muker on the main road, on the western edge of the village. Alternatively, a pay-and-display car park is available by the bridge (at the eastern edge of the village). Parking does fill up quickly in summer so we recommend a reasonably early start.

TOILETS: On the main road in Muker, opposite the pub (20p charge). In the large car park at the bottom of Keld. They belong to the farm/campsite and are free but there are boxes for voluntary donations.

REFRESHMENTS: The Farmer's Arms pub, village tearoom and self-serve coffee and cake at the Old School Gallery, all in Muker. Keld Lodge, a pub/restaurant right at the top of the hill in Keld. Both the campsite tearoom and the self-service public hall tea room are currently closed.

DETAILED DIRECTIONS

From the centre of Muker, with the Farmer's Arms behind you, turn left, passing the village shop and tearoom to your left, then take the lane left, uphill through houses. Pass the Public Hall to your right and keep ahead, following the lane slightly right (passing 'Corner Cottage' on your left-hand



Through the Muker Hay Meadows

side) as it turns into a track and reaches an info-board about the 'Every Barn Tells a Story' project. Follow the footpath sign just ahead towards Gunnerside. This leads along a clear (mostly flagstone) path through meadows, which, in early summer, are some of the best examples of upland hay meadows in Britain and are full of a beautiful array of wildflowers (but lovely at any time of year).

On reaching the River Swale, turn right, still following signs to Gunnerside, which soon leads you to a footbridge over the river. On the far side, go up the steps ahead and turn left at the footpath sign, now in the direction of Keld. After a few more steps, the path joins a broad bridleway and you follow this path, which tracks the River Swale, upstream for just under 2km.

Shortly after the path moves away from the river and begins to gain height, you pass a small, fenced off wood on the right with some newly planted trees. Here you have two options – our recommendation is to leave the main bridleway to explore stunning Swinner Gill. However, the path is narrow and, in places, has a steep drop off into the gill, so if you prefer to stick to the main path or weather conditions are poor, simply carry on ahead and rejoin these notes at [#] below. *NB You have to cross the beck in Swinner Gill so if there has just been heavy rain, we recommend sticking to the main path.*



Heading into Swinner Gill

To explore the gill, you leave the main path uphill to your right as soon as the fencing

around the wood ends (there is no footpath sign here so be careful not to miss it!). The path takes you steeply uphill, following the line of the fencing, until the way ahead is blocked by fern. Here, turn left to follow the initially slightly overgrown path that soon becomes clearer and bends around into the mouth of the gill.

The narrow path clings to the edge of the gill as the ground drops steeply away to the beck on your left, but it is clear and easy to follow. The path takes you up the stunning gill and you can see a series of small waterfalls along the beck below you. The path begins to descend and crosses a wooden stile over a fence before taking you right down to meet the beck. Here the path appears to end but you simply cross the beck on any of the well-placed stones to reach the far side.

The path continues up the gill with the beck now on your right-hand side. The start of the path is located just to the right of small section of partially sunken stone wall (that appears to be part of some sort of drainage channel) and once on it, it is easily followed all the way up the gill to emerge by the stone bridge ahead of you, with the ruins of the Swinner Gill Mine Works over the bridge to your right.



The head of Swinner Gill

Cross the bridge to have a closer look at the ruins (there are also some inviting pools in East Grain Beck, close to the ruins, should you fancy a dip!) and then retrace your steps. After crossing back over the bridge, initially turn left, onto the path you just came up, but the path almost immediately splits and you take the right-hand fork, uphill, taking you onto a clear, higher path (actually part of the Coast-to-Coast route) which gives you great views back down into Kisdon Gorge. It goes through a large wooden gate and then bends right, now a wide, stony track, to reach the ruins of Crackpot Hall on your left.

† *The ruins are actually a farmhouse (rather than a grand 'hall' as you might imagine) and the area is sadly uninhabitable due to subsidence from the centuries of nearby mining activity, which explains why such a stunningly located house has been deserted. The intriguing name comes from the Norse for 'crow' and pot, the local name for a cave. Stories are told of feral children once living here, but a BBC radio documentary found that they were simply the family that lived in the farmhouse, roaming free in the 1930s!*

Once you have enjoyed the ruins, continue on the same path as it takes you past the ruins to your left and soon joins a well-maintained bridleway [#] (which is actually the bridleway you left to head up Swinner Gill). Here you can see the remains of the Beldi Hill Lead Mines above you on the right. Turn right onto the bridleway and follow it until you go through a gate to come out at the top of East Gill Force. At the footpath sign, take the left fork down the hill signed 'Pennine Way, Swale Trail, Keld ¼ MI' (making a slight detour to get a good close up view of the falls).



Crackpot Hall



East Gill Force

Just below the main waterfall there is another pretty waterfall, as East Gill meets the Swale. Cross a small, wooden footbridge and turn right up the steep track to reach a footpath sign.

If you are short for time, you can turn left here, signed 'Pennine Way, Thwaite/Muker' and continue the route notes from [*] below, but we recommend turning right, signed to Keld, to have a look around this tiny, remote village.

† You arrive into the bottom of the village, which tumbles down a steep hill. Turn left and uphill to reach the tiny Keld Countryside and Heritage Centre on your left, which is well worth spending a few minutes in, reading the info-boards about the history of the village and the industries that have sustained it. A small but excellent community project. It is also worth heading into the church yard which leads through to the Keld Wellbeing Garden and Community Orchard.

To continue your walk, retrace your steps to the info-board and follow the path back towards East Gill Force. Where it splits, stay right (rather than heading down to the waterfall), following the Pennine Way sign to 'Thwaite/Muker'. [*] In a few hundred metres, a path to your left, signed 'FP Kisdon Upper Force', is well worth a detour if you don't mind a very short scramble (someone has put a helpful rope on the only tricky bit!). This path is only a few hundred metres long and takes you down to a beautiful spot for viewing upper and lower Kisdon Force. You can get right onto the limestone by the river and, for the adventurous, this is a great place for a dip in summer when the

river isn't high (the pool under the upper falls is particularly inviting, and a bit less daunting than the lower falls!).

Retrace your steps back to the main Pennine Way path and continue uphill. When you reach a footpath sign, take the right-hand fork signed 'Pennine Way, Thwaite/Muker' (rather than carrying on straight ahead, which is signed just to Muker). You now continue along the Pennine Way for just under 3km, most of the way to Muker. The path takes you through a small section of woodland then thick fern before emerging onto more open fellside, tracking a tumbledown dry-stone wall on your left for much of the way. As the view opens up, you first get wonderful views down into Kisdon Gorge, with mining and farming ruins on the far side, and back over Swinner Gill, which you explored earlier. Eventually you can see the valley sweep around to the left and you get stunning views along Swaledale.



Stunning Swaledale

Not long after the path begins to descend you pass a Pennine Way footpath sign and shortly after reach a three-pronged footpath sign. Here you leave the Pennine Way and follow the wide track signed 'Bridleway, Muker ¾ mile'. The walled track becomes a windy, tarmacked drive and leads you down back into the village of Muker. Follow the road downhill to return to the main road and the village centre. If you have time, a pint sitting outside the Farmer's Arms watching the world go by is highly recommended!



Following the track down to Muker

