

STAGE 1: Pateley Bridge to Middlesmoor



1 day
Whole section



14.5 / 23
Miles / KM



Moderate+
Varied terrain.
Some fairly
steep inclines



Scenic
Moorland, reservoirs,
disused railway,
potholes, sweeping
views

LODGE

The remote settlement of Lodge lay on one of the main drover's routes between England and Scotland. Abandoned with the advent of the reservoirs, it is now little more than a handful of ruins.



THE DISAPPEARING NIDD

For two miles the infant Nidd vanishes underground into a labyrinth of limestone caverns, leaving behind an eerily dry riverbed. The entrance to Manchester Pot, the main sinkhole, can be seen after a short detour from the route – although entering any pothole is the preserve of experienced cavers.



SCAR HOUSE DAM

The largest dam in Britain when it was finished in 1936, and an impressive feat of engineering: 1,800ft long, 170ft high and 135 cubic ft thick at the bottom.

ANGRAM AND SCAR HOUSE RESERVOIRS

Built at a staggering cost for the time – Scar House alone came to £2,200,000 – these reservoirs were designed to service the booming population and thirsty mills of Bradford.

GOYDON POT

Just off-route, this natural feature is worth a look. It's the entrance to Nidderdale's largest cave system, dry for most of the time, but when in spate a formidable sequence of underground waterfalls.

NIDD HEADS

After a sojourn underground, the Nidd gushes back into the light of day beside the road into Lofthouse and embarks in earnest on its 50-mile quest to join the Ouse in the Vale of York.



LOFTHOUSE

One of several villages in Nidderdale to have evolved from a medieval monastic grange, Lofthouse is a charming medley of stonebuilt cottages clinging to a steep winding hill.



NIDD VALLEY LIGHT RAILWAY

A ghostly presence throughout our walk, this former railway was 13 miles long and ran between Pateley Bridge and Angram. It was built by the Bradford Water Corporation to serve the reservoirs at the head of the dale, and operated from 1907 to 1936.



PATELEY BRIDGE

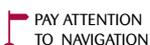
Undisputed 'capital' of the dale, this bustling old market town is an ideal base for walkers with its numerous shops, pubs and cafes and is a fascinating place in its own right. The museum is a good introduction to life in Nidderdale through the ages and the famous High Street boasts several renowned butcher's shops and an outdoor shop, as well as the oldest sweet shop in England.

WATH

Deriving its name from a crossing on the Nidd – a *Wath* is a ford in Old Norse – the village of Wath has been home to a bridge since the 16th century.

WATH MILL

This handsome old mill dates from 1880, but sits on the site of a cornmill first established in 1527. The machinery inside is astonishingly well preserved. Open to the public on occasional days during the summer months.



PAY ATTENTION TO NAVIGATION



TOILET LESS THAN 0.5 MILES FROM ROUTE



PAYING ATTRACTION

0 (km) 1 2 3 4 5

The perfect opening to the walk, with the Upper Nidderdale landscape unfurling dramatically before you. The River Nidd plays hide and seek as the scenery grows wilder and you reach the highest points of the whole Nidderdale Way.

SET OFF FROM PATELEY BRIDGE

- 1 Start at the town end of the bridge. Go down **Mill Lane**. At the end, an alleyway runs along the backs of houses onto a riverside path. At a footbridge, stay on the same bank and keep on through a footgate. The path stays close to the river for a couple of fields, then falls into step with the former trackbed of the Nidd Valley Light Railway.
 - 2 As the houses of **Wath** come into sight, look for a yellow footpath arrow on a gatepost and a faint footpath branching off to the left. Pass through a stile in a wall and carry on across the next field to a footbridge onto the lane. Cross over and pick up the footpath again as it carries on along the river. Bear right to a stile and on through a marshy field before heading uphill through trees to Gouthwaite Dam.
 - 3 From the gate at the end of the dam, head right to a stile. The path climbs steeply away from the reservoir and joins a green lane. Turn left. At a fork, take the lower path. Stay on this track as it slopes down to the shoreline. Stay on the same track all the way along the reservoir until you reach **Bouthwaite**.
 - 4 Turn right and immediately left on a stony track that goes past cottages and into the farmyard at **Bouthwaite Grange**. Cross the beck and bear right up a bumpy lane beside a mossy wall. Keep to the wallside and follow the contour. At **Longside Farm** go up a steep hill to a gate, then drop down again to continue on a grassy path. After a gate take the right fork to **Longside House**.
- LOOK OUT FOR BOUTHWAITE AND MONK'S ROAD**
- Part of Fountains Abbey's former estates, Bouthwaite is still set around the medieval grange farm, rebuilt in the 17th century. The monks drove their livestock onto the moor via the road that leaves the hamlet at its eastern end.
- 5 The path goes along the edge of the trees, but soon branches off downhill across fields. At the bottom follow the trackbed of the railway again, cross the road, and keep going in the same direction as before. After a couple of fields, cross the corner of another and go diagonally over to a wall corner by a disused quarry. Just beyond, emerge through a stile onto the road and go left.
 - 6 Look out for **Nidd Heads**, where the River Nidd bursts forth from underground, having disappeared into a swallowhole two miles upstream. Near it a footpath leaves the road for Lofthouse. Cross the fields in line with the backs of the houses and go over a stile by a beck into the next field. Flank the wallside to arrive in **Lofthouse** next to the village institute.

- 7 Head right uphill, past the war memorial. The road climbs steeply to a hairpin bend, where the Nidderdale Way strikes out to the left. Stay on this track for about a mile, disregarding a right fork through a gate. Pass to the rear of Thrope Farm. Soon after, drop down to the Nidd, which usually has no water in it at this point, and cross it at a place marked on the map as **Dry Wath**. Follow the absent river upstream to **Limley Farm**.
- 8 Thread your way between the farm buildings and round to the right to meet the **still-dry Nidd**. The path crosses it and starts up a bracken-clad hill. At the top, skirt round **Thwaite House** to the left to meet the driveway. Take a path alongside it through a narrow strip of trees. Emerge through a footgate onto a metalled road.
- 9 Follow this road past farms and cottages for about a mile. At **New Houses Edge Farm**, keep left. Cross a gill with a small waterfall. Just afterwards, keep to the upper path at a fork. You'll quickly join another path. Go right, past a small conifer plantation, to another fork in the path. Here, go right uphill.
- 10 Upon finding yourself confronted with a drystone wall and no means of crossing it, track right with the wall until you reach a gate. On the other side, choose the lefthand path with white-painted marker posts. It joins a gamekeeper's track. Go left. This track will take you all the way to **Scar House Dam**, with steep sections as you cross **Twizling Gill** and **Woo Gill**.
- 11 Go over the dam and at the other end turn right on a water company road. A track cuts away from the road and up the fellside. It leads up onto **In Moor Lane**, an old droving route that leads you after about two miles directly into **MIDDLESMOOR**.

LOOK OUT FOR SCAR VILLAGE

Little remains of it besides a row of crumbling concrete bases, but this was once the site of a 'navy village' built during the creation of the reservoirs to house around 1,250 workers and their families. It had its own church, school, cinema, concert hall and tennis courts.

GREAT WHERNSIDE

A brooding eminence for much of the Nidderdale Way, Great Whernside is Yorkshire's fourth highest hill and the source of the River Nidd, which wells up from the peat on its eastern flank.

SCAR HOUSE AND ANGRAM EXTENSION

An optional extra on the Nidderdale Way, this excursion around Angram and Scar House reservoirs is a chance to experience the spartan, atmospheric landscape at the very head of Nidderdale. The ruins of Lodge are on the outward leg.



 **EAT AND DRINK AT:** Pateley Bridge, Wath, Lofthouse, Middlesmoor, Stean

 **SLEEP AT:** Pateley Bridge, Wath, Bouthwaite, Ramsgill, Lofthouse, Middlesmoor, Stean

 **SHOP AT:** Pateley Bridge, Stean

See Directory for accommodation details