

Planning and preparation

The Dales Way uses public footpaths and bridleways, permissive paths, farm tracks, old drove roads, byways and public roads. You will cross a living, working landscape that includes valley meadows, woods, upland pastures and rough moorland. Some sections of the Way are heavily used and well maintained, and the route is obvious. In places, paths are faint or vanishing, and you need to pay careful attention to route-finding and be alert for waymarkers of different kinds.

The Way will reward you with fine scenery, fresh air and warm rural hospitality. The simplicity of style in the Dales contrasts markedly with city life, and this is reflected in the no-nonsense attitude of those who work here.

Accommodation and facilities

Ilkley and Bowness offer a wide range of accommodation and facilities, but choice elsewhere is limited. Most walkers book well in advance. If yours is a spur-of-the-moment trip, it's wise to phone ahead.

Pubs and houses offering bed and breakfast (B&B) are widespread. There is one youth hostel on route, at Kettlewell, and there are camping barns where you need to take your own sleeping bag. The Way is not well served by official campsites, but farmers will often allow you to pitch a tent, albeit with few facilities: always ask permission. The Dales Way Association publishes a helpful accommodation list: see page 60.

Accommodation clusters are found at Grassington and Sedbergh, as well as at Ilkley and Bowness. You might consider spending two or more nights in one place and using a bus to get back and forth to the Way. Further suggestions appear on page 8.

There is little accommodation between Hubberholme and Cowgill, although a detour to Ribbleshead adds only 1.4 miles (2.3 km) each way. B&B hosts may be willing, by prior arrangement, to drive you to and from the nearest pub. However you tackle this stretch of the Way, plan your eating arrangements in advance.

There is no shop on route between Ilkley and Grassington, nor between Buckden and Dent, nor between Sedbergh and Burneside. Cash withdrawals from most UK banks can be made at Post Offices, but opening hours in the villages may be short. Card payments are often not accepted in shops and pubs, though some may be willing to provide cashback with suitable purchases. Normally you will have to pay for accommodation with cash or a cheque drawn on a UK bank.

Dales Way facilities

<i>Distance from last place</i>	<i>miles</i>	<i>km</i>	<i>café or restaurant</i>	<i>pub</i>	<i>shop</i>	<i>campsite</i>	<i>hostel, barn, bunkhouse</i>	<i>B&B or hotel</i>	<i>toilets</i>
Ilkley			✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Addingham	2.5	4.0	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Bolton Abbey	3.4	5.4	✓		✓				✓
Cavendish Pavilion	1.1	1.8	✓						✓
Barden Tower	2.3	3.7	✓				✓		
Howgill	1.5	2.4				✓		✓	
Appletreewick	1.0	1.6		✓		✓		✓	
Burnsall	1.2	2.0	✓	✓				✓	✓
Hebden 700 m off-route				✓	✓			✓	
Linton 700 m off-route				✓				✓	
Threshfield 2 km off-route				✓		✓		✓	
Grassington	3.5	5.6	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Kettlewell	6.5	10.5	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Starbottle	2.2	3.5		✓				✓	
Buckden	2.2	3.6	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Hubberholme	1.1	1.8		✓				✓	
Raisgill	1.7	2.7						✓	
Beckermonds	2.3	3.7				✓		✓	
Swarthgill	2.6	4.2					✓	✓	
Far Gearstones	4.4	7.0							
Ribblehead 2.3 km off-route				✓			✓	✓	
Cowgill	5.3	8.5		✓		✓		✓	
Dent	4.3	6.9	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Millthorpe*	4.8	7.7							
Sedbergh 800 m off-route			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Lincoln's Inn Bridge*	3.8	6.1				✓			
Crook of Lune Bridge	3.4	5.5				✓	✓	✓	
Moresdale	2.5	4.0					✓	✓	
Grayrigg	0.9	1.5						✓	
Patton Bridge	1.2	1.9						✓	
Skelsmergh	1.5	2.4				✓		✓	
Kendal 3.5 km off-route			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Burnside	1.6	2.6	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Bowston	0.9	1.5						✓	
Staveley	2.5	4.0	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Bowness	5.8	9.3	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Windermere rail/bus station (2.4 km off-route)			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

* From Millthorpe and Lincoln's Inn Bridge (and also from Birks and the A683) you can walk to Sedbergh; this book treats Part 3.5 as ending at Lincoln's Inn Bridge.

Accommodation sources are given on page 60.

Waymarking

Unlike the UK's National Trails, the Dales Way is not directly funded by national government. Consequently, waymarking is less consistent. There are lots of discs and finger posts bearing a reassuring *The Dales Way* or *Dalesway* legend, but by no means at every stile, gate or junction. Often a *Public Footpath* disc or *FP* fingerpost (occasionally *Public Bridleway* or even *Byway open to all traffic*) is all the help you will get. In places, you should follow an arrow with no label, but beware: sometimes such arrows are pointing out an unrelated footpath that takes you off the Way. Try to remain aware of your location at all times, and stay alert for waymarkers that range from official to letters painted on a milk churn.



If in doubt about navigation, seek advice if possible, or backtrack to where you were last certain that you were on the Way. Do not cut across fields or risk damage to crops or walls. Always respect the land and its occupiers, and remember that grass is a valuable crop, especially when grown for hay.



How long will it take?

Most regular walkers choose to complete the Way in six days. Taken as an endurance challenge, a few hardy souls may complete in under 24 hours, whilst casual strollers may spin it out over weeks or months, walking one day at a time. Table 1 shows two options designed for the majority of walkers. Part 3 of our book is based on the Table 1a itinerary, but there are obviously many ways to vary this. When you consider also the three Link Routes (see page 26) the flexibility is limitless.

Between Ilkley and Buckden, buses parallel to the Way give the option of breaking the journey and riding to and from an overnight base. By picking up the Settle-Carlisle railway at either Ribbleshead or Dent, you could ride to accommodation, and for a different day in the middle of your walk, perhaps explore the countryside along the line. You might also want to allow yourself an hour or two each to discover Grassington, Dent or Sedbergh.

	Distance table 1a		1b	
	6-day itinerary		7-day itinerary	
	miles	km	miles	km
Ilkley	13	21	13	21
Burnsall	14.1	22.6		
Buckden			15.2	24.5
Hubberholme	17.3	27.9		
Far Gearstones			10.9	17.5
Cowgill			9.6	15.5
Dent	12.8	20.7		
Sedbergh*			12	19.3
Crook of Lune	12.4	20		
Burneside			12.4	20
Staveley	9.2	14.8		
Bowness			5.7	9.2
Total	78.8	127	78.8	127

* see footnote on page 6

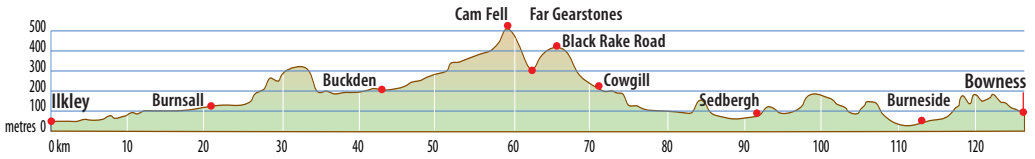
Which direction?

In keeping with the original spirit of the Way, we suggest you walk from Ilkley to Bowness. The only advantage of doing the opposite is that between Dent Head Viaduct and Far Gearstones you'd be walking *towards* the sublime panoramas of Pen-y-ghent and Ingleborough, instead of having the views behind you. But most people appreciate walking from the Yorkshire towns to Lake Windermere, and this option has the added advantage that a bus route is nearby early on in your walk.

Dent Head Viaduct, with Baugh Fell distant



Elevation and pace



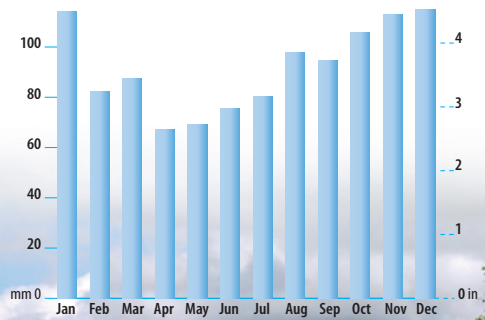
The Way reaches a maximum height of 520 m (1700 ft) on the exposed flank of Cam Fell on Day 3. Much of the route is in relatively sheltered valleys, but the surrounding hills influence the weather, so conditions are usually harsher than in the lowlands.

At a modest speed of 3 km per hour including rests and navigation stops, the longest day should take no more than nine hours, and most would take considerably less. On the whole, gradients are gentle. Gates and stiles, however, are numerous, and they can be frustrating bottlenecks if you are walking in a large group or are delayed by one.

Time of year

There is no closed period on the Way. Britain's weather is fickle: winter might produce wonderful walking conditions whilst summer may deliver a deluge. If you are planning ahead, it's wise to avoid the period November-March. Accommodation may not be available, and conditions underfoot can be awful. Spring comes late to the higher ground, and the best time is May to September. Average monthly rainfall for the Dales is shown in the graph.

Monthly rainfall in the Dales



Parts of the Way are wet underfoot

