

3.3 Malham to Buckden

49 53

Distance 12.5 miles 20.1 km

Terrain constructed path, limestone pavement and moorland tracks and paths; many stiles en route to Arncliffe

Grade some steep climbs and a long stone stairway to the top of Malham Cove

Food and drink Malham, Arncliffe (pub), Starbotton (pub), Buckden

Summary scenic walking in the heart of the Yorkshire Dales following an 'M-shaped' route over into Littondale and then Upper Wharfedale



- Walk north along Malham's main road past the Buck Inn, now following the Pennine Way (PW). Where the road forks, bear left and look for the signed Woodland Walk on the right, parallel to the road and beside Malham Beck.
- Soon emerge from woodland onto the road and follow it for a further 250 m to Town Head Barn where an NT sign directs you into Malham Cove on the right. The constructed path passes through fields, punctuated by gates and enlivened by resident cattle.
- The sheer cliffs of the cove are an impressive sight, and the beck a good place to spot dippers and wagtails. You may like to detour around the lower triangle of paths before settling into the main climb.



Fork left for Malham Cove

The cliffs of Malham Cove





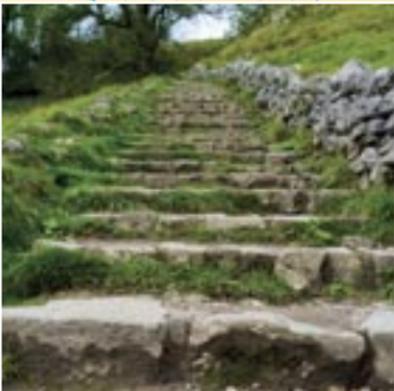
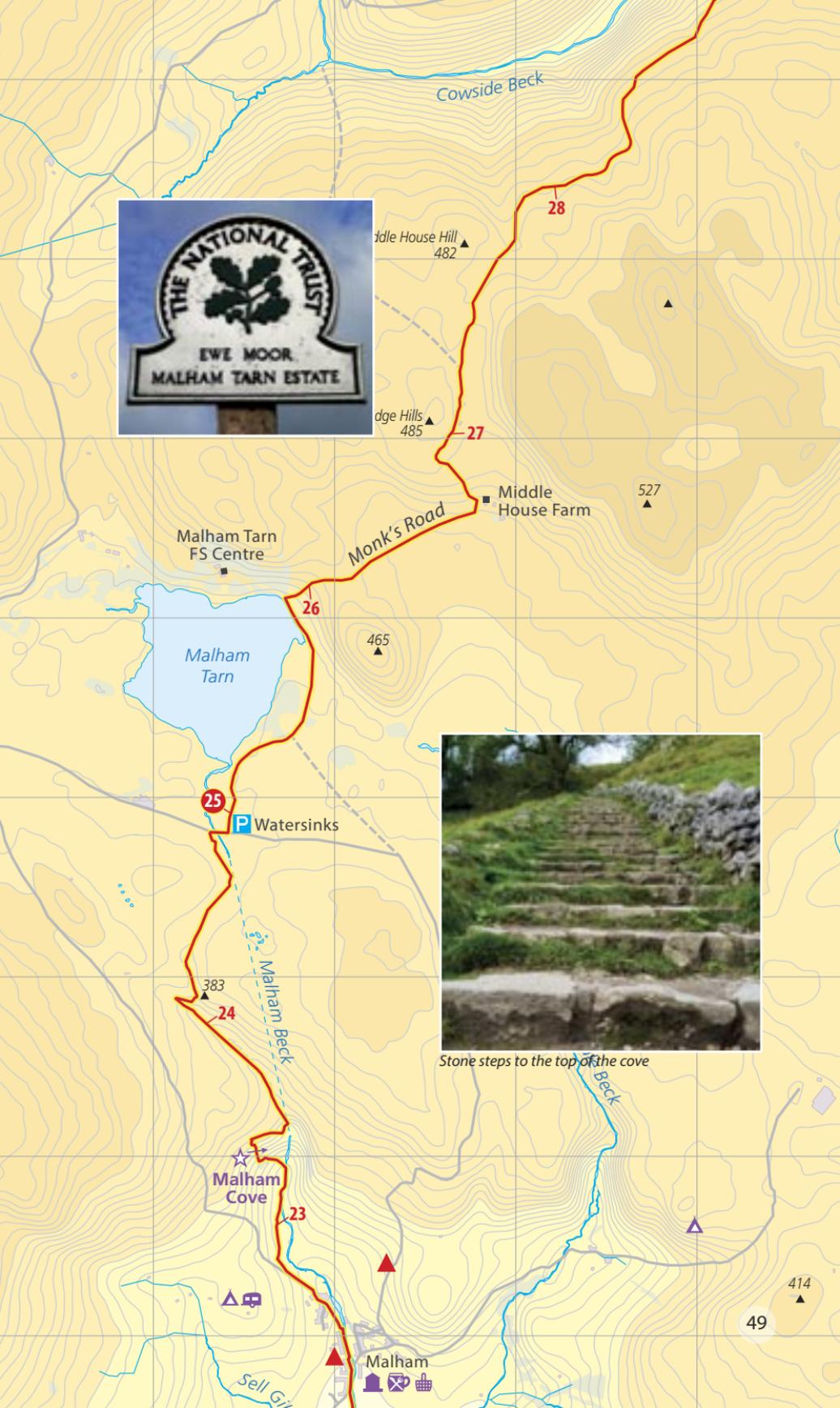
South over Malham Beck from the top of the cove

- Our route stays with the Pennine Way (PW) up the stone steps on the left – over 400 of them – so pause to enjoy the views en route to the top. In addition to the wonderful limestone formations all around, from the top you may still see the distinctive shape of Pendle Hill to the south-west.
- The Way now turns right to cross the limestone pavement that stretches out across the top of the cove. The direct distance is only about 200 m, but take your time: the stones can be slippery and rare plants grow in the crevices: see page 29.
- After crossing the pavement, aim for a PW fingerpost which turns you left for ‘Malham Tarn 1¼ ml’. Climb either of two stiles through a stone wall past the National Trust sign shown on page 49.
- Follow the clear, limestone-strewn path uphill to a stone step-stile and keep straight on up a rough, rocky staircase to a height of over 350 m (1150 ft) at the top of the ‘Dry Valley’.
- At a PW fingerpost ‘1 mile to Malham Tarn’ turn sharply back right and follow the path through a dramatic defile. The route then veers left and descends towards Watersinks car park. At the road, turn right for 100 m, then turn left through the car park to resume the PW northward at a fingerpost (mile 24.9).



Malham Tarn from the south-east





Stone steps to the top of the cove

- Continue towards the tarn shore on a grassy path, swinging briefly inland around a walled plantation before crossing to a PW fingerpost on the constructed track. Follow the track to and through a Malham Tarn Estate timber gate with red 'No vehicles' notice.
- Follow the track as it returns to the shore before approaching a gate with obscure fingerpost. The PW goes through it to Tarn House, but instead turn right before the gate, at mile 25-9.
- Head up the grassy hill following the fingerpost 'Middle House 2 ml'. You will follow Monk's Road, an old pack-horse path, all the way to Arncliffe, but signage is very sparse and does not use that name.
- At first, there are faint signs of a trod path which becomes a bit clearer as the ground rises, bending right to follow a fence. Crest the brow of the hill, and aim for Middle House Farm, now visible ahead.



Fingerpost to Middlehouse

- Approaching the farm, the path approaches a step-stile in the fence, but don't cross it (mile 26-6). Instead, follow the 'Arncliffe' blade of the fingerpost, pointing uphill, away from the farm.
- Pass through a gate in the stone wall and follow the rough, stony track as it bends left and right, then picks up the line of a stone wall as it descends towards trees and a cluster of stone barns: see photo below.
- After the barns, veer left towards a path junction at mile 27-3 that announces 'Arncliffe 2¾'. Bear right to follow the fingerpost northwards as the path becomes clearer – a pleasant grassy walk following a straighter course.



Fingerpost to Arncliffe (mile 27.3)

Cluster of trees near the stone barns





Gap in decrepit stone wall

- On the way to Arncliffe you cross eight or nine stiles in stone walls – a mixture of step-stiles – some gated, others not – and gap-stiles. In a couple of places the wall is so decrepit that there is no stile at all: see above.
- The long descent to Arncliffe includes some steep, rough downhill patches, and soon provides some great views over the village and Cowside Beck: see below. The final gate-stile deposits you in a grassy lane down which a stream may run in places.
- Lower down it becomes a tarmac lane that passes houses to emerge at the village green with the Falcon Inn (B&B and meals) on your right. The village is full of attractive stone buildings with a very fine church.
- To continue the Way, head across the village green past the old stone pump to follow the narrow lane between houses and cross River Skirfare by a road bridge (mile 30.2).
- Within 120 m the road reaches a T-junction but you leave it, straight over a stile-gate into a field, following a discreet fingerpost marked Starbotton.



Stone pump, Arncliffe village green

North-east over Arncliffe, with Cowside Beck



- Climb the first, very steep field and go over the step-stile into the second. Follow the trod path up to a fingerpost where you meet the bridleway and turn right uphill (mile 30.4).
- The bridleway is steep at first, but soon eases a little as it climbs above Brayshaw Scar, passing through a former gateway in the drystone wall. It's worth pausing from time to time to enjoy lovely views behind you over Arncliffe and Littondale.



Step-stile into second field

- Beyond the wall, there's a cottage ahead on Old Cote Moor. Ignore the track leading to it, and instead fork right at mile 30.9 on another track through the heather. Within 250 m at a track crossroads, go straight over heading for a false summit on the skyline.
- Afterwards reach a gate at the high point of 520 m. Follow the sign into the National Trust-owned Upper Wharfedale at mile 31.4.
- Continue straight ahead on the clear path between a fence and drystone wall, descending potentially boggy ground until the decrepit wall turns sharply left across the track. The track beyond is clear and broad: ignore any intersecting tracks.
- A steep descent finally leads to and through a hole in the wall ahead. Afterwards continue to descend, passing to the left of a large disused sheepfold. Go through a gate in the wall ahead. Panoramic views of Upper Wharfedale lie before you, with Starbotton and its fell ahead, and the River Wharfe meandering through its dale.
- After the gate, follow the track down to your left, passing through woods and meadows, until you reach a timber footbridge over the river. Take great care on this path as it can become slippery in the wet. If Starbotton is your goal, cross the River Wharfe by footbridge and follow the walled track to reach the road into the village.
- Otherwise continue on the well-marked Dales Way (DW) which stays to the west of the river. The path is easy going, and from here on, you follow the DW almost all the way to Sedbergh.
- About 1.5 miles (2.5 km) after the Starbotton footbridge, the path follows the river banks closely. At mile 34.7 bear right, then turn right at the minor road (Dubb's Lane). For Buckden, cross the River Wharfe by road bridge. To continue the Way bypassing Buckden, turn left on the path just before the bridge.

Starbotton and Wharfedale from mile 32





Wharfe Bridge (mile 32-6)



Gate into NT property at mile 31-4