

Ribblehead

The walk starts at the roadside parking on the B6255, close to the junction with the B6497, anywhere within sight of the Ribblehead Viaduct. This is a popular area and can be quite crowded at weekends so we would recommend a weekday walk, or an early arrival.

Satnav users can use the postcode of the Station Inn - LA6 3AS – or what-3-words tag will find that **polygraph.under.eliminate** pinpoints roadside parking, whilst the grid reference for paper map users is SD76657934.

From the parking area we look back to the viaduct and see Wherside looming over it on the right.

The most dominant feature of the landscape though is obviously the famous Ribblehead railway viaduct, and we see a clear path heading off toward the centre of the viaduct and we take that to start the walk.

This also the most popular route to the peak of Wherside, as well as the route for those visitors who want to stop and look at the viaduct itself - so expect company at the start of the outset.

The Ribblehead Viaduct carries the Settle–Carlisle railway across Batty Moss – hence it's alternate name - the Batty Moss Viaduct.

We stay on the right (East) of the viaduct, following the railway North as it curves round toward the Bleamoor signal box and beyond that the Bleamoor tunnel. As we approach the signal box, and the wonderfully remote house next to it, look out for an arched passage under the railway on the left – signposted as a Bridleway to Winterscales - this is where we divert away from the popular Wherside climb and take a less trodden but very attractive route along the base of the hill.

Under the arch, constructed from bricks made on site during the construction phase of the viaduct, we follow the bridleway along the base of the valley noting several small streams coming together to form Winterscales Beck. Also worthy of note along here are some very attractive areas of limestone pavement.

We pass Winterscales Farm and cross an attractive bridge so that we are now to the right of the beck – now with a significant flow. The bridleway continues along the contour lines heading Southwest. A farm track leaves on the left heading down to Gunnerfleet farm – ignore this - and follow the signage for the Bridleway to Scar End.

Similarly, ignore a farm track on the right slightly further along as we approach Scar top.

A number of paths come together here – our route is the clear and obvious one signed for Scar End.

We continue along the bridleway for a while now, enjoying good views toward Ingleborough on the left, and the viaduct slight behind us now, until we arrive at an attractive house called Broadrake.

Although there is a lane heading left at Broadrake, the bridleway, and our route, carry on straight ahead along the valley for one more field until we meet a farm building beyond which the steep path down from Wherside joins us. Here we turn left and head down Philpin Lane toward the main road.

We see signs of a disused quarry on our right, and marked on the OS map, but not particularly evident on the ground, is an ancient settlement to the left.

As we approach the base of the valley, the track crosses what initially appears to be a stream bed – this is in fact generally dry, and we turn left here to head back up the valley initially toward Haws Gill Wheel.

If there has been persistent and/or particularly heavy rain, there may indeed be a flow here so take care to schedule this walk to avoid such conditions.

As we arrive at Haws Gill Wheel, we see why the flow in the stream bed is intermittent: Winterscales Beck arrives with a generous flow on our left, but disappears into an underground cave at the Wheel.

When rain is exceptionally heavy, the capacity of the cave system is inadequate to take the full flow of the beck, and so a swirling eddy forms at the wheel which overflows down the normally dry stream bed that we approached on.

Continuing on, we cross the route of the Winterscales beck below the point where it disappears and then track upstream with the beck on our left. The route is well trodden and clear and takes us northwest to pick up a broader farm track which curves round to the right before crossing the beck at Ivescar.

From here the Viaduct dominates the view ahead, and unlike earlier in the walk we can appreciate the subtle curve of the entire structure.

Just after we cross the beck, the route forks three ways; We take the right hand option, effectively following the beck which we keep on our right, until we arrive at Gunnerfleet Farm where we cross the stream yet again, to pass in front of the farm following the track round toward the centre of the viaduct.

As we walk under the arches of the viaduct it is impossible not to be impressed with the scale of the structure – and it is worth taking a moment to read the information boards that detail the restoration process and honour the original construction.

The path continues back to where we started - although by now the ice cream van and the pub should be open!

- **Total distance 9.2 km (5.7 miles)**
- **Total Ascent 208 m**
- **Easy walk**