

Ingleborough from Clapham

We start in Clapham – which is well signposted from the A65. There is a large car park at the Yorkshire Dales National Park centre, where there are also public toilets. At quieter times of the year it may be possible to find on street parking – we opted for Church Avenue - but if you do this, please park in a manner that is considerate to residents. If you are using Satnav to get to Church Avenue than the address to enter is Church Avenue LA2 8DT. If you prefer paper maps than the OS grid reference is SD74566938 whilst the what-3-words tag is **adopters.noisy.bills**

From the church we cross the road bridge over Clapham Beck and then turn right to walk uphill. Almost immediately we find a viewing point on our right where we see Clapham Beck flowing down a waterfall from the (man-made) lake within the Ingleborough Estate. Our route continues past the Old Sawmill – we recommend this convenient and friendly cafe – not only is the food good, but there are interesting artefacts from the days when the building was a water powered sawmill for the estate.

We now head past the side of the sawmill looking for a footpath sign that highlights the route to Ingleborough Cave and Ingleborough – this is no more than 30m past the sawmill. We head right and follow a clear track which takes us around the outside of the Estate and up to a farm at Clapdale, 1km to our north. On the way we pass Limekiln Plantation (on our left) and the rear of Clapdale Wood (on our right). At the farm, we continue to follow the track and then after a gate need to head right - the track continues on, but there is clear signage to highlight the correct route.

The path now heads steeply downhill and back to Clapham beck. We are now outside the northern perimeter of the Estate, and once at the bottom of the valley, we head left toward the cave. Before we get that far though, we (may) hear a curious regular thumping noise – which we soon realise is coming from an enclosed pump house next to the beck. This is a “hydram” pump, a device which uses water pressure from the water cascading downhill to pump a smaller supply uphill.

Ahead, and to the left of the beck we now see a more substantial building – this is the entrance to Ingleborough Cave.

Beyond the cave entrance the track continues over a bridge -the beck emerges from a spring at Beck Head next to the bridge. From here onward we are in the valley bottom within a very pretty ancient woodland. We follow the path up a very slight slope for about 250m until we see a stile on our right – this is a good route up to Long Lane. We don't take the stile this time, though and instead use it merely as a landmark – we need to follow the path round to the left a little, where we soon have a choice of routes.

The more common route is hard left on the Pennine Journey path up Trow Gill - a dry gorge. The route up through the gill is steep and can be a bit of a scramble – but there is an easier alternative. We took an intelligent compromise and walked up to Trow Gill for good look before returning to the base and then heading onward - just 40 m from the stile that we used as a landmark. This easier path heads north and then swings round to the left to take an easier route parallel to Trow Gill.

After about 500m heading northwest, we meet the Pennine Journey path again – so whether you prefer the rewarding but challenging Trow Gill route or our easier alternative is a matter of taste – we come back much the same way of course, so you could do one outbound and the other on the return.

Our next landmark – about 300m after we arrive back on the Pennine Journey path is Gaping Gill, one of the most famous caves in the Yorkshire Dales National Park and one of the largest underground chambers in Britain. The main chamber measures 129m long, 31m high, and 25m wide. Depending on weather conditions, Fell Beck – a stream with intermittent flow which can entirely disappear in dry conditions, pours over a lip of rock above and then crashes 100m to the floor of the cavern before draining through to Ingleborough Cave and emerging as the Clapham Beck that we saw earlier in the day.

Having enjoyed the view of Gaping Gill, we head back to the Pennine Journey footpath and start the slog up Little Ingleborough, before following the ridge line north to the peak of Ingleborough, using the Trig point as a guide. There is no disguising the fact that this is hard work – but the views from Ingleborough make it worthwhile.

A glance at the OS map shows that as well as the viewpoint, we need to look for evidence of a fort. It was once considered that the somewhat sparse remains of buildings here were evidence of Iron-age forts dating back 2500 years and offering a strong defensive vantage point. More recent analysis suggests however that they are more like 3500 years old and therefore Bronze age. The structures that were once assumed to be huts are now thought to be ring cairns, used in funerary rites.

Also present at the peak of Ingleborough is another architectural relic – though this one is much better understood; Look for traces of a circular stone foundation – these are the remains of Ingleborough Hospice, a building with a bizarre history.

A Bentham resident called Hornby Roughsidge (or Roughsedge) was a prominent local landowner during the reign of William IV - he financed the building of St Margaret's church on Station Road in Bentham amongst other works. In 1830 he became Lord of the manor at Ingleton and resolved to build a structure on the peak of Ingleborough to serve as a shooting lodge and Hospice (then meaning a place to shelter rather than a charitable medical facility). Money was raised by public subscription and a magnificent stone tower featuring a dome and flagstaff adorned with an impressive doorway carrying the Latin inscription "pro bono publica" which translates as "for the good of the public" was built.

The opening ceremony was accompanied by athletic events and horse races, and it would seem that the warm weather required a great deal of care in respect of re-hydration. Later in the day, profoundly refreshed residents who resented to appearance of the structure on "their" hill returned and destroyed the tower – it seems that the timespan between opening and almost complete destruction was less than half a day.

Our return route is essentially the reverse of the outbound path – although we opted not to revisit Gaping Gill and Trow Gill again. The route will be familiar to you from earlier in the day, so we don't describe it here.

- **Total distance 15.4 km (9.6 miles)**
- **Total Ascent 751 m**
- **Challenging walk**