

Chapel le Dale and Ingleborough environs

We start at the car park for St Leonard's church in Chapel-le-Dale. This is easily found – take the B6255 from Ingleton toward Hawes. Pass the White Scar Caves, then 1500m (1 mile) later, look for signs to Chapel le Dale at a minor road on the left. Head down there, then just 100m after leaving the B6255 go left again into the carpark. The gate to the carpark may well be closed, but it is not usually locked, and this convenient site may be used in exchange for a donation which should be left at the honesty box at the church. Please give generously and respect the fact that the carpark is primarily for the church and worshippers – taking parking spaces when they are needed by the congregation would be inconsiderate.

For those using Satnav to get to the start, try the address for St Leonards – Roman Road, Chapel-le-Dale, LA6 3AR, or if your device uses what-3-words, the tag is **obeyed.aunts.fruits** whilst the OS grid reference is SD73837715.

From the car park head back to the minor road and turn left toward St Leonards, and just beyond there is a lane on the right – we take this and head up toward Ellerbeck. We pass signs for a number of properties on the way up but ignore all of them and stay on the road, which soon degrades into a rough track as it heads uphill. We continue up the lane through an atmospheric mossy woodland, and then exit the trees to walk along a flatter track toward the flank of Whernside – with views of the Ribbleshead Viaduct over to our right as well as of Whernside itself. We are heading northwest now, and as we progress further, we catch sight of, and then approach, Ellerbeck Gill.

We carry on - now on the Dales Highway – and we head right along the bottom of Whernside on a well signed and generally easy track, passing a number of farms – the route is clear and well signposted at all of them. We soon pass Winterscales farm and follow the track up to a concrete tunnel under the railway – we are now to the North of the viaduct at a place noted on the OS map as Blea Moor Sidings. We now head right and down to the main road.

As we arrive at the road, we go right and past the Station Inn then under the railway bridge to find a road on the left up to the quarry. We pass Ribbleshead Station, then look for the entrance to the nature reserve on the right. We are now 2/3 of the way round the walk, and now need to find the green topped marker posts that lead us south out of the quarry and up toward Gauber. Farmsteads here date back well over a thousand years.

The path remains clear and soon arrives at a drystone wall with a step stile – here we pick up a path crossing ours, and rather than hopping over the stile, go right to circle round the base of Park Fell crossing the limestone pavement as we admire Whernside, getting a good appreciation of how far the Ribbleshead Viaduct that we walked next to earlier in the day curves round as it approaches the tunnel.

After about 250m, with the southern slope of Whernside as a target, we arrive at a drystone wall and cross to continue to the corner of the next field to find another wall – from here we stay with the drystone wall – keeping it on our left as we contour round Sleights Pasture Rocks.

We soon arrive at a track – which runs down to the main road – we carry on though and continue to follow the contours round eventually re-crossing the wall at a particularly impressive area of limestone pavement before continuing to follow the wall down to Great Douk Cave.

The cave is surrounded by a wall and fence and is not signed so would be easy to miss. There is a gate onto a steep path down to the cave, and when the ground is dry, this is safe for general use. We opted not to explore the cave on this occasion, but should you wish to taste the thrill (?) of cave exploration at no risk to yourself, there is a great video at <https://youtu.be/omJ4m30pm74> which shows an exploration of the cave with no specialist equipment used.

To end the walk, we continue downhill for 100m to a point where the main Ingleborough path comes up from the road. We cross this and take a smaller path down to a farmhouse at Souther Scales before arriving back at the road with the car park in sight.

At the end of the route we have covered just over 12 km, which tips the walk into our “moderate” category, but at no point during the day has the walk been difficult, and there are many opportunities to take a breather so if you normally only select our “easy” routes, give this one a try too – it repays in spades.

- **Total distance 12.9 km (8.0 miles)**
- **Total ascent 226 m**
- **Moderate walk**