

Denshaw Moor and the Piethorne Valley

Start: Rams Head Inn. A672, Ripponden Road

Distance: 11.6 km/7.2 miles

Time: 4 hours

Total Ascent: 590 metres/1,935 feet

Introduction

Following mainly obvious tracks, footpaths and bridleways, this spectacular walk makes an initial crossing of Denshaw Moor before heading north along the Pennine Way National Trail and traversing the windswept landscape of the Marsden Moor Estate. Leaving the Pennine Way, you will descend into the Piethorne Valley with its five major reservoirs, before making a final, lung-busting, climb to return to the Rams Head Inn.

Walk Description

Starting from the 450 year old Rams Head Inn, the route sets out along a wide track which leads to the secluded and seldom visited Readycon Dean Reservoir. Nestled in a quiet little valley, Readycon Dean Reservoir sits at the source of the River Tame. Its moorland waters eventually converge with the River Goyt before flowing into the River Mersey and then out into the saline waters of Liverpool Bay.

Crossing the dam, you ascend Denshaw Moor to meet the A640 Denshaw to Huddersfield Road, from where you soon follow the Pennine Way across the Marsden Moor Estate, which is now managed by the National Trust after it was conveyed to them by the Radcliffe family, in 1955.

Crossing White Hill, and after leaving the Pennine Way, you soon find yourself following an undulating ridgeline known as Windy Hills. From this vantage point the M62 motorway can be seen below, with thousands of vehicles flowing in an ant-like procession along this busy trans-Pennine highway.

Reaching the historic junction with Tunshill Lane, you now follow the Rochdale Way which descends steadily to the valley floor where you arrive at the head of Piethorne Reservoir. Built in 1866, this is the largest reservoir in the valley. In the mid-18th century, a 5 inch Celtic Spear head was found here leading historians to believe that the valley and surrounding area could have sustained human habitation since the Iron Age.

Leaving the reservoir behind, climb the steep track, which is a former packhorse route, and make the final lung-busting ascent back to the Rams Head Inn. If you have planned your return to coincide with opening hours, a well-earned pint can now be relished.

This walk summary has been compiled from the original route which features in the local guidebook, *Saddleworth Discovery Walks*. The full route description, a map and detailed information about points of historical interest are contained in the book, which is available to buy from www.saddleworthdiscoverywalks.co.uk or at local stockists.