



# White Peak Wildlife Walk



Transport



Distance

7 km  
4.5 m

Allow

3+hr

Difficulty



## Trail Summary

Moderate difficulty. Plenty of ups and downs.

### Start and finish:

White Lodge car park off the A6, a few miles north of Bakewell. OS White Peak Explorer Map, OL 24. SK 170 706.

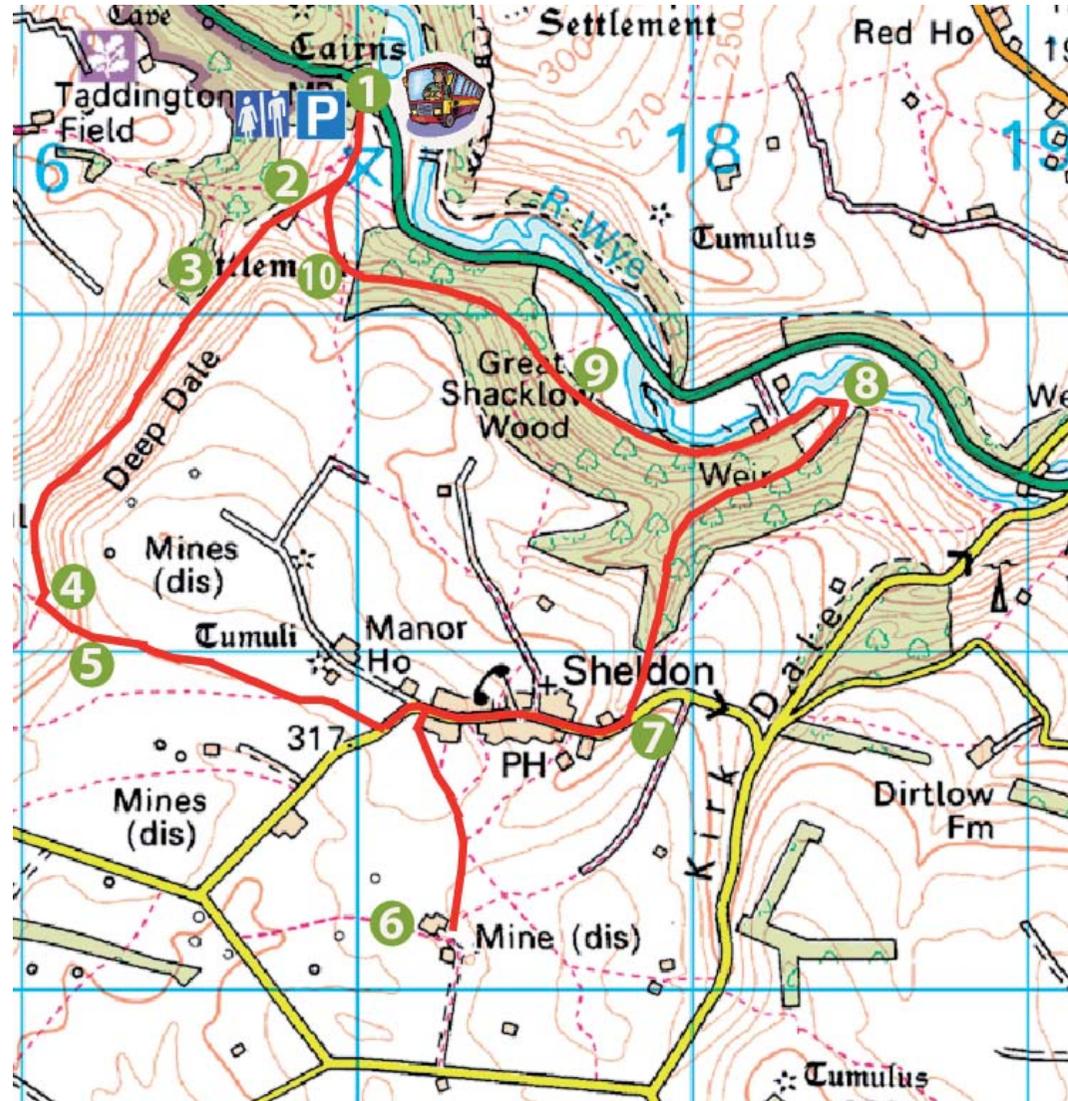
### Access:

**By car:** Park in White Lodge pay and display car park off the A6.

**By public transport:** Various buses run between Sheffield/Bakewell and Buxton. The TransPeak runs between Nottingham/ Derby/Matlock and Buxton/Stockport/ Manchester ([www.transpeak.co.uk](http://www.transpeak.co.uk)). All will stop on the A6 opposite White Lodge car park. Call Traveline to find out more: 0871 200 2233. Be clear about return times before you set off, as not all time-tables are displayed at the bus stop.

A circular walk through typical White Peak landscapes, including woodlands, dales and the high grassy plateau. It can get muddy and rough underfoot, so wear boots.

*Discover White Peak wildlife in stunning Deep Dale. A carpet of wildflowers from May to August.*



Part-funded by the European Union European Regional Development Fund

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This walk encapsulates the unique landscape of the White Peak. You'll see wildflower-rich dales, ash woodlands, the grassy limestone plateau, lead rakes and meandering rivers. The walk has something to offer at any time of the year, but to see the outstanding array

of wildflowers visit between May and August.

Before you start the walk it is well worth going to the far end of the car park and exploring Taddington Wood. There is no official footpath here but the National Trust and Peak District National Park Authority who own this part of the wood are happy for you to use the informal path.

**Taddington Wood** is ancient ash woodland, with some wych elm and magnificent old coppiced

hazels. Follow the path up the hill into a clearing and through to the next compartment on the left. Here you'll find Jacob's Ladder (pictured right). This rare plant flowers during June and July with tall spikes of bright blue flowers.



### 1. White Lodge Car Park

The eco-toilets here are water-free composting closets with antiseptic hand gels for users.

Take the path by the pay and display machine and follow it up through the fields of wildflowers – buttercups and daisies in early summer, ragwort, thistle (pictured right) and knapweed later on. Head along the path to Deep Dale. The path is rocky here and if the stream is running, there is a bit of a clamber to the stile. It is usually dry in summer. Once over the stile you are into Deep Dale Plantlife International Nature Reserve.



### 2. Approaching Deep Dale

The meadows are a mixture of neutral and calcareous (acidic) grassland. On the lower grassland meadow saxifrage grows in abundance. Its starry

white flowers appear in May and June. Also at this time of the year the acid yellow of crosswort flowers brightens the meadows. In late summer, the land is golden with ragwort and splashed red with clusters of hawthorn berries.

Follow the path. At a waymarked 'T-junction', go right – signposted to **Deep Dale** and **Monyash**.

### 3. A Dale of Flowers!

As you walk up through the reserve, cowslips (May) and early purple orchids (May to June - photo right) become increasingly common, until you reach the steep slope of the reserve. Here a most spectacular view greets you. The slope is covered with the nodding heads of yellow cowslips, contrasting with rich purple orchids.



But the show isn't restricted to May and June. Throughout the summer there is a succession of flowers, with rock rose, St John's wort and in late summer the slopes are a purple hue of devil's bit scabious. You may spot green hairstreak and dark green fritillary butterflies (next page) feeding on the nectar.

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*Carpets of Flowers*

One of a suite of downloadable trails available from [www.peak-experience.org.uk](http://www.peak-experience.org.uk)



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Look closely at the ground of the slope and see how many flowering plants there are, compared to the thin grass. On these slopes the soil is so thin that most grasses cannot eek out an existence, so there's room for wildflowers to flourish.



Keep an eye out for Plantlife's discreet information posts, with more about the wildlife, history and ecology of the Dale.

At the top of the Dale you reach a gate in the wall on your right. Go through the gate and make for the yellow waymark arrows.

#### 4. Out of the Dale

You are now leaving the reserve. Notice how the vegetation is lush. Grasses dominate, with few wildflowers.

Follow the footpath on your left up the steep hill to Sheldon. At the top of the hill, cross the first field diagonally to wards a wall on your left.

#### 5. Limestone Plateau

At the top of the hill you are on the limestone plateau. Much of land and vegetation has been

improved agriculturally, by the addition of fertilizers. During the spring and summer the air is filled with the trilling of skylarks and meadow pipits, which nest in the fields. Swallows stream by close to the ground feeding on insects, they nest in the nearby farm buildings. You may also spot curlews in the area, with their distinctive long curved bill and loud drawn out call. Magpie Mine looms dark on the horizon.

Cross a number of lush pasture fields (there are no waymarks here) until you join the small tarmac road ahead. Remember to shut all the gates.

At the road, turn left and after about 100m there is a choice of routes. A footpath on the right by a farm building will take you on a short (1.5 km) and interesting diversion to Magpie Mine (point 6). Alternatively, carry on through the village of Sheldon (go straight to point 7).

#### 6. Magpie Mine

For Magpie Mine (pictured above right), follow the waymarked footpaths that take you through a number of meadows.

Notice how long and thin the fields are, the field boundaries haven't changed since farmers enclosed the plateau hundreds of years ago. Some of these fields are still managed traditionally as hay meadows.

The mine was a working lead mine from the



1700s until the 1950s. Some say it's haunted!

The slopes below the mine buildings are a patchwork of fine vegetation, including crosswort, birdsfoot trefoil, thyme, yarrow and mouse-eared hawkweed, to

name but a few. Look out for the dainty mountain pansy (June to August - pictured below). In Derbyshire and Yorkshire the pansies are yellow. Further north and into Scotland they are purple.

Find out more about the history and myths of Magpie Mine at [www.peak-experience.org.uk](http://www.peak-experience.org.uk).



To the left of the mine is an undulating landscape of shafts and spoil heaps that over time have been colonized by plants. Very few plants are able to cope with this thin soil, containing traces

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of lead ore and other minerals. However, spring sandwort (known locally as leadwort - pictured below) thrives on such toxic soil, with the lack of competition from other plants.



Retrace your steps back to Sheldon. The stone and beamed pub opens all day and serves food at lunchtime and evenings. It's got quite a collection of clocks.

Walk right through the village until the last house on the left. Take the footpath just the other side of the farm and follow it down into Little Shacklow Wood. You need the lower path of the two in this field, it skirts a small farmyard wall and takes you through a little wooden gate into woodland – it's a rocky path down!

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### 7. Little Shacklow Wood

This wood bears the scars of the past. Mining and quarrying hollows and non-native species are all traces of human involvement. The floor of the wood is carpeted with pungent ramson

(wild garlic - pictured below), which flowers white from April to June.



Cross a stile. You come briefly into open fields. Keep heading towards the road, then take a sharp left, signed as a public footpath. Soon you come back into woodland. Follow the path as it meanders along the River Wye.

### 8. Birds along the River Wye

Look out for pied wagtails flitting along the water. Then take the path round the back of the old mill. A little way along there is a fish pond. You might see fish break the surface. During spring and early summer waterbirds nest.



As the path takes you through the wood, Little Shacklow Wood turns into Great Shacklow Wood.

### 9. Great Shacklow Wood

Read the natural signs to see that you are in ancient woodland. Some woodland plants spread very slowly and are only found in ancient woodlands. Here, the ground flora is diverse, with species like dog's mercury (March to May), bluebells (April to May) and mountain currant (April to May).

### 10. Rare Bird's Nest Orchids

As the wood starts to turn into more open scrub, but before it descends down to Deep Dale, look closely for one of our rarest and strangest plants, the bird's nest orchid (end of May to July). Both stem and flower are pale brown. They grow 20 to 40 cm tall and have a mass of roots resembling a bird's nest. The orchid can grow in dark woodlands because it gets nutrients from decaying plant matter, with the help of a fungus in the soil.

Follow the path down and retrace your steps back to White Lodge car park.

#### Credits

Words: Emma Mortimer.

Photos: Emma Mortimer, Georgia Litherland.

We hope you enjoyed your walk! Please tell your friends. There are more self-guided trails for you to download at [www.peak-experience.org.uk](http://www.peak-experience.org.uk). Inspired by the landscape? Send us photos or stories from your walk to share with others on [www.MyPeakExperience.org.uk](http://www.MyPeakExperience.org.uk)