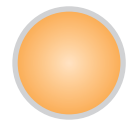


Trail Guide:



A delightful drive south of Matlock Bath, to fascinating Wirksworth, which can be a half or full day depending on the time you spend discovering the town.

The 'Wow' Factor

Visit Wirksworth, once the most important lead mining centre in the country and where Sir Richard Arkwright Junior once lived

Study the history of the town at the Heritage Centre

Find out about the only surviving 'top' winding engine, built for the Cromford and High Peak Railway at Middleton Top

Learn the 'Story of Stone' at the National Stone Centre

View the ancient gritstone of the Black Rocks - a famous local landmark

Starting from the Tourist Information Centre in Matlock Bath, turn left onto the A6, then right onto the B5036. As you enter Wirksworth this road will turn into the B5023.

There are various car parks in the town (see map), but note you cannot park in the **Market Place** on Tuesdays as this is market day. The market has been in operation since 1306, when King Edward I granted its charter.

The Market Place is close to the **Heritage Centre** where you will find an Information Centre and Exhibition telling the story of Wirksworth from prehistoric times to modern day. You can also learn about the mills which 'got tied up in red tape'. For more information and opening times, please call 01629 825225.

Wirksworth is a charming town, with intriguing alleyways and cobbled courtyards, the most important lead mining centre in the country in the 17th and 18th centuries until its decline in the 19th century, when limestone quarrying took over as the main industry. The book *Adam Bede* by George Eliot was based on the town.

In the town's industrial heyday in the 19th century there were railways of every gauge leading from the quarries. Some were lowered down steep inclines which led to the Cromford Canal. Some went in tunnels under the town to the Ecclesbourne Valley Railway - you can just imagine how busy and noisy the town must have been then. Even up to the 1970's, 400,000 tons of limestone were extracted from the quarries each year, and was used for the

Trail Key:



Walking



Car



Bus



Cycling



Scenic



Historic



Time



Distance

Difficulty Rating for walks:



Easy



Moderate



Strenuous

This trail is one of 44 exciting trails to explore in the Peak District & Derbyshire.

then thriving British steel industry, sugar refining and to make 'Hopton Wood' - an exceptionally high quality limestone, used to make flooring and fireplaces that can be found in Westminster Abbey and the Houses of Parliament.

From the **Heritage Centre** you head up towards **The Dale** and **Greenhill** which is a small area known by the locals as the 'Puzzle Gardens' due to its unique maze of paths and 'ginnels' (alleyways). You will see little houses, many that were once owned by the local lead miners which 3 centuries ago would have been filled with big families and little comfort. You will notice that there is no road access to many of the houses, which gives the feel of having gone back in time, as there are hardly any cars to spoil the atmosphere. Whilst you are up in this part of the town, enjoy the wonderful views across the dale. Greenhill was used by Rolls Royce to test car chassis up until the 1930's and also to test cars for the Alpine rallies.

As you reach **Chapel Lane**, up to the left you will see **Moot Hall** where the Barmote Court, the oldest industrial court used for settling mining disputes in Europe, has been held here since 1814 and still sits twice a year. Inside is the ancient 'Bronze Dish' used to measure lead ore for taxes, and has the following inscription: *"This dishe was made the iiiiij day of October the iiiiij yere of the Reigne of Kyng Henry the VIII (1512) before George Erle of Shrowesbury Steward of Kyng . . ."*

Going down **Coldwell Street**, where the Elephant Man's doctor once lived, you come to **Wirksworth Station**, where trains will normally operate every weekend throughout the year. It is well worth a visit for its information about the lines and tunnels that were linked to the quarries. The station is open every day, for further information and opening times, please call 01629 823076.

Next is perhaps the most impressive building in the town - **St Mary's Church**, which is believed to have been built on the site of a prehistoric enclosure and a church is believed to have stood on this site since 633 AD. The current church dates back to the 13th century and is an amazing 152ft long. A footpath goes round the entire church which gives it the appearance of being a cathedral. Inside the church is a Saxon coffin lid which dates back to around 800 AD and makes it one of the earliest Christian monuments in the Peak District. Elizabeth Evans, the aunt of writer George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans), is also buried there.

As you make your way up **St John's Street**, lined with shops and cafés, many of which were original

coaching inns or shops, keep an eye out for one of the oldest dispensing chemists in the country - B Payne. Throughout the town are some delightful, quaint tearooms, with their china tea cups, chintz décor and gentle chatter from the locals. Maybe it's time to enjoy a cup before you leave town by car on the next leg of your trip?

Well-dressing takes place in the town every spring Bank Holiday, an unbroken tradition since 1827 when water was first piped around the town.

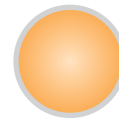
You will now head out of the town **by car** towards **Middleton Top** along the B5023, to visit the only surviving winding engine of its type, out of the eight originally built for the Cromford and High Peak Railway. It was built in 1829 by the Butterley Company and was used to haul wagons bearing limestone up the steep Middleton incline, and was still in use until 1963! For more information and opening times, please call 01629 823204.

From Middleton Top take the B5035 and you will come to the **National Stone Centre**, which is built in the middle of a massive quarry complex that at one time produced most of the limestone needed for British industry. Here you can discover all about stone, how and when it was formed, how it was quarried, what it was used for and the fossils which can be found in it. Indeed, no stone is unturned! For further information and opening times, please call 01629 824833/825403.

The last stop on your journey is **Black Rocks** on the B5036. Park in the car park and walk up to look at the fascinating rocks, an outcrop of gritstone that has been sculpted by the wind and rain and is now a popular venue for rock climbers. It is a landslipped crag of massive, coarse-grained sandstone or grit. These coarse sandstones were used to make millstones, which today, are the emblem of the Peak District National Park and are the distinctive 'Millstone Grit' rocks of the Pennines. These rocks form the 'Dark Peak' scenery of Derbyshire. The sandstones were deposited by a great river system from the Scottish Highlands around 320 million years ago.

You will get some fantastic views of the Derwent Valley around Matlock.

Now it is time to head back along the A6 to Matlock Bath.



Key

- A-Roads:
- B-Roads:
- Minor Roads:
- Track / Trail:

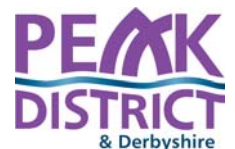
Map 1 - The drive from Matlock Bath to Wirksworth



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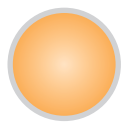


This trail is one of 44 exciting trails to explore in the Peak District & Derbyshire.



Matlock Bath Trail No. 22

A Wirksworth Wander



Key

- A-Roads
- Main Route
- B-Roads
- Minor Roads
- Track / Trail

Map 2 - The wander around Wirksworth

