

**AA**

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# Ilkley Moor and the Twelve Apostles

**Standing stones and a brief look at some of the intriguing historic features which make up Ilkley Moor.**

**Distance** 4.5 miles (7.2km)

**Minimum time** 2hrs 30min

**Ascent/gradient** 425ft (130m)

**Level of difficulty** Medium

**Paths** Good moorland paths, some steep paths towards end of walk, 4 stiles on Walk 34

**Landscape** Mostly open heather moorland, and gritstone crags

**Suggested map** aqua3 OS Explorer 297 Lower Wharfedale

**Start/finish** SE 132467

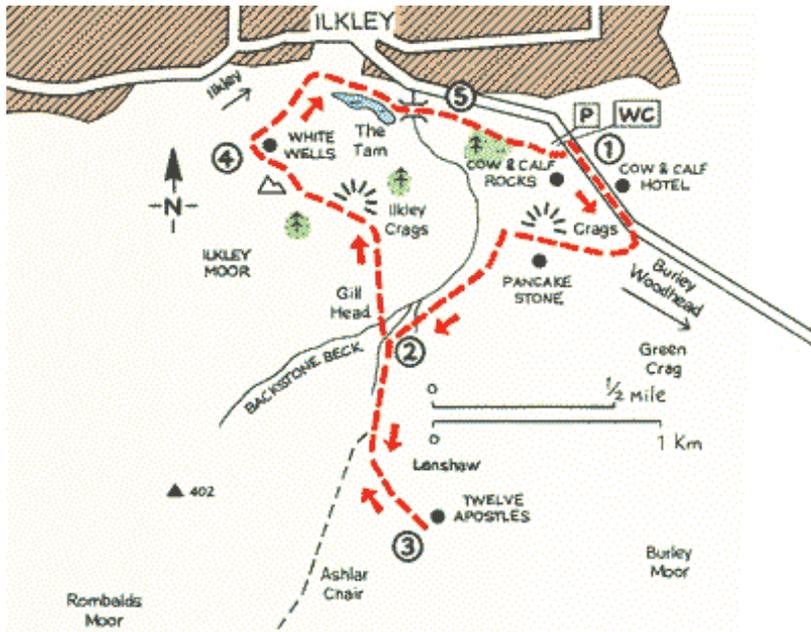
**Dog friendliness** Under control where sheep graze freely on moorland

**Parking** Off-road parking on Hangingstone Road, opposite Cow and Calf rocks, also a pay-and-display car park

**Public toilets** In pay-and-display car park near Cow and Calf rocks

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**1** Walk up the road; 150yds (138m) beyond the Cow and Calf Hotel, where the road bears left, fork right up a grassy path. Scramble up the ridge to the Pancake Stone, and enjoy the extensive views back over Ilkley and Wharfedale. Bear right on a path along the edge of the ridge, cross a stony track and pass the Haystack Rock. From here your track slowly wheels left, to run parallel to Backstone Beck, uphill, on to open heather moorland.

**2** At the top you meet the Bradford-Ilkley Dales Way link path. Go left here; soon you are walking on a section of duckboarding. Pass a boundary stone at the top of the next rise, and continue to the ring of stones known as the Twelve Apostles.

**3** Retrace your steps from the Twelve Apostles, and continue along the Dales Way link path. Having crossed Backstone Beck, you soon leave the open moorland behind, and find yourself on top of a ridge. Enjoy the views across Ilkley and Wharfedale, before taking the path (which is stepped in some places) steeply downhill. Beneath a clump of trees you come to White Wells.

**4** Bear right, passing to the left of ponds, on a path, downhill. Aim for a pyramid-

shaped rock, after which you emerge on to a metalled track. Walk either way around the tarn. At the far end take a path, uphill at first, then down to cross Backstone Beck again on a little footbridge, then one last haul uphill to reach the Cow and Calf rocks.

**5** It's worth taking a few minutes to investigate the rocks and watch climbers practising their belays and traverses. From here a paved path leads back to the car park.

Ilkley Moor is a long ridge of millstone grit, immediately to the south of Ilkley. With or without a hat, Ilkley Moor is a special place... not just for walkers, but for lovers of archaeological relics too. These extensive heather moors are identified on maps as Rombalds Moor, named after a legendary giant who roamed the area. But, thanks to the famous song - Yorkshire's unofficial anthem - Ilkley Moor is how it's always known.

The Twelve Apostles is a ring of Bronze Age standing stones sited close to the meeting of two ancient routes across the moor. If you expect to find something of Stonehenge proportions, you will be disappointed. The twelve slabs of millstone grit (there were more stones originally, probably twenty, with one at the centre) are arranged in a circle approximately 50ft (15m) in diameter. The tallest of the stones is little more than 3ft (1m). The circle is, nevertheless, a genuinely ancient monument.

The Twelve Apostles are merely the most visible evidence of 7,000 years of occupation of these moors. There are other, smaller circles too, and Ilkley Moor is celebrated for its Bronze Age rock carvings, many showing the familiar 'cup and ring' designs. The most famous of these rocks features a sinuous swastika: traditionally a symbol of good luck, until the Nazis corrupted it. There are milestones, dating from more recent times, which would have given comfort and guidance to travellers across these lonely moors. In addition to Pancake and Haystack rocks, seen on this walk, there are dozens of other natural gritstone rock formations. The biggest and best known are the Cow and Calf, close to the start of this walk, where climbers practise their holds and rope work.

A guidebook of 1829 described Ilkley as a little village. It was the discovery of mineral springs that transformed Ilkley into a prosperous spa town. Dr William Mcleod arrived here in 1847, recognised the town's potential and spent the next 25 years creating a place where well-heeled hypochondriacs could 'take the waters' in upmarket surroundings.

Dr Mcleod recognised - or perhaps just imagined - the curative properties of cold water. He vigorously promoted what he called the 'Ilkley Cure', a strict regime of exercise and cold baths. Luxurious hotels known as 'hydros', precursors of today's health farms, sprang up around the town to cater for the influx of visitors.

Predating the town's popularity as a spa is White Wells, built in 1700 around one of the original springs. A century later a pair of plunge baths were added, where visitors and locals alike could enjoy the masochistic pleasures of bathing in cold water. Enjoying extensive views over the town, the building is still painted white. White Wells is now a visitor centre that's open to (non-bathing) visitors at weekends.

## While you're there

Ilkley Moor is an intriguingly ancient landscape, criss-crossed by old tracks. These two walks offer a short and a long option, but you could explore for weeks without walking the same path twice. An east-west walk from the Cow and Calf will take you along the moorland ridge, with terrific views of Ilkley and Wharfedale for most of the way.

## What to look for

Many rocks on Ilkley Moor are decorated with 'cup and ring' patterns - including the Pancake Rock, near the start of this walk. Many more rock carvings can be found if you take the time to search for them.



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