



<http://www.theaa.com/walks/surprise-view-and-otley-chevin-421287>

## Surprise View and Otley Chevin

**Enjoy woodland walks and panoramic views across the Wharfe Valley.**

**Distance** 3 miles (4.8km)

**Minimum time** 1hr 30min

**Ascent/gradient** 328ft (100m)

**Level of difficulty** Easy

**Paths** Easy walking on good paths and forestry tracks, no stiles

**Landscape** Heath and woodland

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

**Start/finish** SE 205431

**Dog friendliness** Dogs can run free all over the Chevin

**Parking** Beacon House car park on Yorkgate, opposite Royalty Inn

**Public toilets** None on route

This walk begins at Surprise View and, if this is your first visit, you will have a surprise indeed. By strolling just a few paces from your car you can enjoy a breathtaking panorama across Lower Wharfedale. Almscliffe Crag is a prominent landmark in the valley. On a clear day, you may be able to see Simon's Seat, and even the famous White Horse carved into the hillside at Kilburn. With so much to see, it's easy to forget that you are only a mile (1.6km) away from the bustle of the Leeds-Bradford Airport.

The Chevin has traditionally been a popular destination for walkers and picnickers. In 1944 Major Fawkes of Farnley Hall gave a piece of land on the Chevin to the people of Otley. By 1989, when it was designated a local nature reserve, the Chevin Forest Park had grown to 700 acres (283ha) of woodland, heath and gritstone crags. Local people come here to walk their dogs, and the broad forest tracks are ideal for horse riders and mountain bikers. The walk featured here is merely one - short - possibility; the park is criss-crossed by good waymarked paths.

Immediately below the Chevin is the market town of Otley, straddling the River Wharfe, and well worth visiting in its own right. Wharfemeadows Park offers riverside strolls and rowing boats for hire. Thomas Chippendale, the famous furniture maker, was born in Otley in 1710.

Otley was granted its market charter back in 1222, and the cobbled market square still occupies the centre of town. On market days (Fridays and Saturdays) the stalls overflow along the main street of Kirkgate. There are weekly livestock markets too and Otley Show, each spring, is a big date in the local calendar. The Otley Folk Festival attracts music lovers every autumn; over a long weekend you can hardly move for mummers and morris dancers. Otley is famous - or perhaps infamous - for having more pubs per head of population than

anywhere else in Yorkshire. Even though a by-pass now keeps a lot of traffic away, it's still a busy little town.

**1** From the far end of the car park you have access to the Chevin Ridge, with its splendid birds-eye view of Otley and Lower Wharfedale. Join the obvious path, going to the right, which is also a section of the Dales Way. Follow the wall on your right, walking gradually downhill and through a gate. Keep left, still downhill, on a track which descends to meet a road by a house (Danefield House). Walk right, up the road, for about 200yds (183m) to reach another car park.

**2** Go left here, to a fork of good forestry tracks by an information board. Take the right-hand option, to enjoy easy walking on a sandy track through, predominantly conifer woodland. Beyond a little bridge, keep left at another choice of tracks. As you leave the woods you come to a meeting of tracks, with a gate and kissing gate on the left. Go through the kissing gate and keep left on a path that soon rewards you with a view over the valley, and Caley Crag - popular with novice climbers - immediately below you.

**3** Keep left, to walk through mixed woodland. Go through a kissing gate and continue on a good sandy track. Where the track forks keep left, descending to cross a beck on a wooden footbridge. Follow the track uphill, to the car park. From here you retrace your steps, that is: go right, down the road for 200yds (183m), and bear left by Danefield House. Follow the track uphill, then bear right, squeezing past a gate, to rejoin the ridge-top track. Soon you are back at Surprise View; take a last look at that inspiring view before you find your car, or enjoy a drink at the nearby Royalty Inn.