

Bretton Hall & Country Park



<http://www.theaa.com/walks/bretton-hall-country-park-421283>

A visit to a fine house, and an estate that's been transformed into an acclaimed sculpture park.

Distance 4 miles (6.4km)

Minimum time 2hrs

Ascent/gradient 200ft (60m)

Level of difficulty Easy

Paths Good paths and tracks all the way, 6 stiles

Landscape Pasture, fields and parkland

Suggested map aqua3 OS Explorer 278 Sheffield & Barnsley

Start/finish SE 296124

Dog friendliness Leave dogs at home if you want to explore sculpture park

Parking Pay-and-display car park of Bretton Country Park, immediately off M1 at junction 38

Public toilets At visitor centre adjacent to car park

Bretton Hall is a fine 18th-century mansion built by Sir William Wentworth, who was inspired, after going on a Grand Tour of Europe, to build in a grand Palladian style. He built his house on a hill, so that he could enjoy the view across the two lakes and landscaped parkland. Bretton Hall now has a new role as an educational campus, which has recently merged with the University of Leeds. In these tranquil surroundings, students can take degree courses in arts, music and performance.

It may seem odd, at first, to find an outdoor sculpture park with an international reputation here in down-to-earth West Yorkshire. But with Henry Moore coming from Castleford, and Dame Barbara Hepworth from Wakefield, perhaps it's not so strange after all.

The sculpture park was established back in 1977, which makes it the first such venture in the United Kingdom. Exhibitions of modern and contemporary art are displayed in over 200 acres (81ha) of parkland, together with two galleries, providing a changing programme of exhibitions, displays and projects. Over 200,000 people a year visit this extraordinary 'art gallery without walls'.

In the adjacent Bretton Country Park is a collection of sculptures by Henry Moore. He was one of the first sculptors to create works for siting in informal landscape settings, where they would be encountered by people who were unlikely to visit a gallery. So it seems fitting that a dozen of Moore's monumental bronze figures have found a permanent home here. Both the Yorkshire Sculpture Park and Bretton Country Park are open all year round, and entrance is free.

1 Rejoin the road and walk right for 200yds (182m), then take Jebb Lane to the right. Pass a few cottages, soon bearing right in front of a large barn onto a stony track (signed to Bretton Park). Go through a gate, onto an obvious field path. The path bears left, around

woodland. Cross a stile in a fence and follow the fence to the right, towards another wood. Bear left, to follow the field-edge path, with woodland on your right. At the top of the hill cross two stiles in quick succession.

2 Continue walking in the same direction, now following a footpath downhill through pleasant pasture land. Where a track goes off to the right, at a small pond, your route is to the left, on a lesser path going uphill, between fields. Cross a stile and continue uphill across a field. At the next fence you meet an obvious stony track.

3 Follow the track and the fence to the right, downhill, getting good views of Bretton Hall. When the track bears right, go through a gate in decorative stone gateposts ahead. Cross a bridge that divides a lake in two, and continue through another gate. When your track bears right, keep on a lesser track ahead, slightly uphill. The track wheels right, at the top, bringing you to the main entrance of the sculpture park.

4 Take time to look at the sculptures, which are spread throughout the park. There are two smaller galleries - the Bothy Gallery and Pavilion Gallery - plus the Bothy Café. Walk gradually downhill until you reach the River Dearne.

5 Follow the river to the left, through a gate and into Bretton Country Park again. Walk through parkland, passing an elaborate, arched bridge and a cascade of weirs. The path soon leads you back to the visitor centre and car park.