

# Walks Reeth, Grinton & Harkerside

**Distance:** 7.25 km (4.5 miles)

**Time:** 2-3 hours

**Map:** OS Explorer OL30 - always carry a map with you

**Start/Parking:** On-street parking throughout Reeth

**Refreshments:** Pubs at Reeth and Grinton

**Terrain:** Field and riverside paths, country roads, moorland tracks. Harkerside Moor is exposed to the elements, with a stream crossing and wet ground in places.

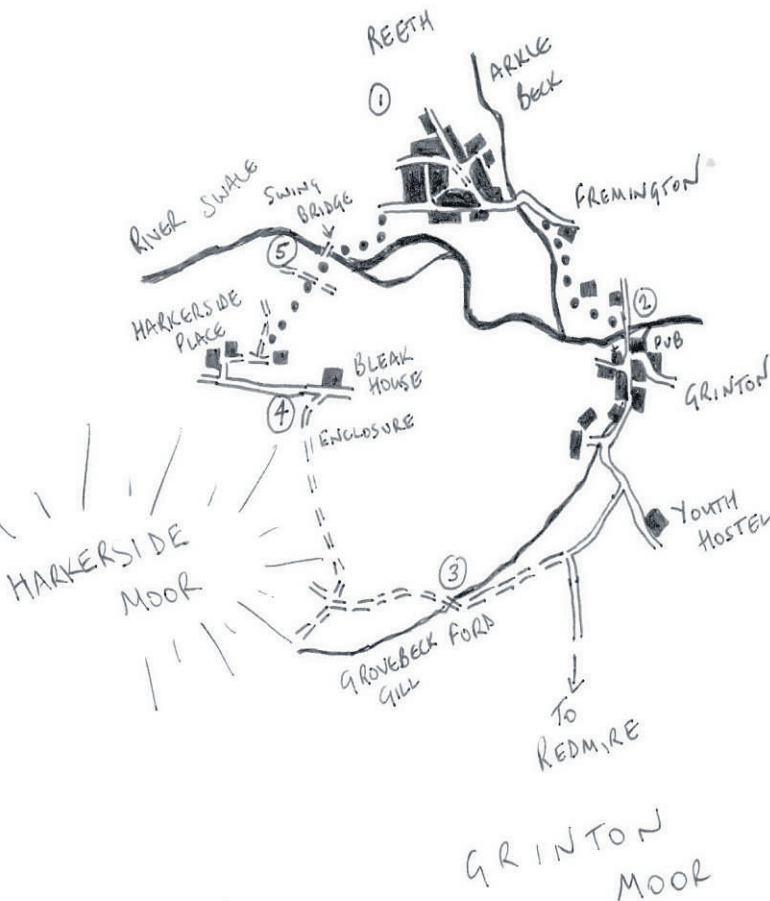
**How to get there:** From Richmond, follow the A6108 towards Leyburn then turn right along the B6270 to Reeth.

**Caution:** Part of this walk heads across moorland, with a small ford to cross, which may be difficult after heavy rain. Many of the paths are muddy/rough underfoot. The climb up onto Harkerside Moor from Grinton is quite steep. Take care walking along the roads.

## Points of interest

Reeth is one of the best places to go walking, because of the variety of paths and the beauty of the landscape. This is a walk of contrasts, from the riverside pastures of the Swale and Arkle Beck, to the moorland heights of Harkerside.

From Reeth, our route heads down to the ancient settlement of Grinton, where you will find the magnificent St Andrews Church, known as the 'Cathedral of the Dales'. This site has been a place of worship since pre-Conquest days; however, the first church was built during Norman times. Fragments of the Norman church survive in the chancel arch, a small window and the bowl of the font. The present church dates largely from the 14th to 16th Centuries and was built by the monks of Bridlington Priory. Up until Tudor times St Andrew's Church served the whole of Swaledale stretching up to the old Westmorland border, which made it one of the largest parishes in the country. This was the only consecrated ground in Swaledale which meant that the dead had to be carried in wicker



baskets for the 12 mile journey from the dale head to the church along the 'Corpse Way'; thankfully a church was built in Muker at 1580. It is worth exploring the church as it boasts many interesting features, such as the 'Lepers Squint', ancient stained glass and grooves in the stonework by the porch where arrows were sharpened by men waiting for their lords who were attending a pre-hunt service.

Our route climbs up out of Grinton, following the famous 'Cote de France' fame, before turning off along the Redmire Road then along a moorland track towards Harkerside Moor. This moorland is littered with prehistoric remains, including extensive defensive earthworks built by the Brigantes tribes during the late Iron Age. Our route then heads down to river level, where it

crosses the Swale over the Swing Bridge. The river in this section of its course has cut through some large meanders to create a very wide riverbed and many braided channels. Each winter, the riverbed shifts slightly as the river takes a slightly different course. This is, after all, England's fastest flowing river, and one that rises and falls incredibly quickly after periods of heavy rain.

## The walk

**1** Leave Reeth along the 'Richmond' road and follow this down out of the bottom corner of the large green, then round to reach Reeth Bridge across Arkle Beck. Cross the bridge and follow the road round to the right (with Arkle Beck on your right) then take the footpath to the right (signpost

'Grinton') just before you enter Fremington. Follow this clear path alongside Arkle Beck passing farm buildings and the remains of Fremington Mill on your left then follow the clear enclosed path straight on across fields all the way to reach some steps that lead up onto Grinton Bridge across the River Swale.

**2** At the road (on Grinton Bridge) turn right over Grinton Bridge then, where the main road bends sharp left (Bridge Inn on the corner), carry straight on along the road ahead towards 'Leyburn' and follow this road climbing quite steeply up through Grinton for 550 metres to reach a cattle grid at the top of the village. Cross the cattle grid and carry on up along the road for 125 metres to reach a road turning to your right towards 'Redmire'. Turn right along this road towards 'Redmire' and follow this unfenced moorland road climbing quite steeply up for 0.5 km then, where the road bends distinctly up to the left, turn right along a clear, stony track (signpost 'Bridleway - no vehicles'). Follow this stony track straight on across the heather moorland for 600 metres then drop down slightly, through a gate in a fence to reach a ford across Grovebeck Gill just beyond.

**3** Cross the ford and continue straight on along the track rising gently up across Harkerside Moor for 600 metres to reach a crossroads of clear tracks just as the track begins to climb up the steeper slopes of High Harker Hill in front of you. Turn right along the track and follow this skirting along the foot of the steeper slope on your left (High Harker Hill) before gently dropping down (superb views across Swaledale) to join a wall/enclosure on your right which you follow down to soon reach a gate in a fence across the track. Head through the gate and walk down along the track (wall on your right) curving round and through another gate to join a road.

**4** Turn left along the road and follow it for 600 metres then turn right along the farm track that leads down to Harkerside Place Farm (signpost 'Reeth via Swing Bridge'). Follow this track down over a cattle grid into the farmyard - as you enter the farmyard take the first turning to the right along a clear farm track (signpost). Follow this track on then, where the track forks after 150 metres (just before the next farmhouse), head to the left along the track through a gate in the wall (signpost 'Grinton Swing Bridge'). After the gate, bear to the right down across the field (do not head down along the track) through a small wall-gate, after which head diagonally down across the field through another wall-gate. After this wall-gate, head down the grassy bank, over a track and then a wooden plank footbridge over a drainage ditch, then on across the flat field to reach the Swing Bridge across the River Swale.

**5** Cross the Swing Bridge then turn immediately right along the clear path across the flat riverside pastures for 250 metres to reach a plank footbridge across marshy ground, beside a meander in the River Swale on your right. Cross the plank footbridge and follow the path curving left (passing a barn) up through a gate that leads onto an enclosed path, which you follow rising up for 100 metres to join a lane across your path. Turn right along the lane and follow it back into Reeth.

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## Birdwatch Ian Kerr

**T**here's a saying in bird-watching that if a good bird turns up in August it's likely to be a wader. So it's proved with the discovery of a superb spotted sandpiper. This species which breeds in North America is a fairly regular vagrant to Europe, usually in late summer and autumn.

Most which have occurred have been young birds without the diagnostic spotting on their breast and bellies. This makes them very similar to our own familiar common sandpipers, summer visitors which breed mainly on banks and gravel beds of our upland rivers and streams. The similarity between these

two species can make these rare visitors difficult to identify if some other more subtle plumage differences cannot be seen.

But there was no mistaking this latest visitor, a full adult with full spotting which stood out like the proverbial sore thumb among other small waders at Hauxley reserve on the Northumberland coast. Fortunately, many birders managed to catch up with it last weekend when the reserve was open. Since then it's been closed because of work on a new visitor centre, to replace one burned down by vandals. Sadly, such attacks seem all too familiar at our local nature reserves.

The spotted sandpiper was the pick of the migrant waders this week. Curlew sandpipers are regular visitors at this time of year. Sometimes large numbers of peach-tinged juveniles appear but this isn't one of those years so one at Whitburn Steel was a good find. A wood sandpiper was at Smallways Lake in north Yorkshire. Green sandpipers were more prominent with, for example, five reported at Chartersheugh and four at Rainton. A small influx of spotted redshanks was evident with one or two at Salholme, Hartlepool Headland and Filey and at localities along the Northumberland coast. An osprey

(pictured) continued to frequent Derwent Reservoir and one visited Nosterfield.

There was a new development this week in the bitter row between birders and shooting estates over illegal persecution of raptors. A parliamentary petition promoted by conservationist Mark Avery and broadcaster Chris Packham calling for a ban on driven grouse shooting achieved its target of attracting 100,000 signatures just a couple of days after the start of the shooting season. This means that a House of Commons debate must take place where ministers will be forced to respond. No-one is expecting any changes soon but it's

an indication of the continued intense pressure facing estates. Campaigners are to brief MPs and are calling on those who have signed to lobby their local members before the debate.

