

SHORT WALKS IN NIDDERDALE



Wath



1-2
hours



1.5 / 2.4
Miles / KM



Easy



Scenic



© Robert Light

Upper Nidderdale is renowned for its stunning natural beauty. This short picturesque walk around the village of Wath is one of a series of trails offering the chance to enjoy the contrasting landscapes and fascinating heritage that make Upper Nidderdale such a special place. Along this route you can enjoy a range of different settings, from the wetlands of Nidd Marsh to the tranquillity of Spring Wood Top, take in serene views across Gouthwaite Reservoir nature reserve and see historic buildings such as the nineteenth century Dutch hay barn at Spring Wood Top farm.

PARK: Wath (limited), Pateley Bridge

EAT & DRINK: Wath, Foster Beck, Pateley Bridge

SHOP: Pateley Bridge

For more free Nidderdale AONB walking and cycling guides, visit our website at nidderdaleaonb.org.uk

Please follow the countryside code. Keep your dogs on a lead and close gates behind you.

- 1 The walk begins at the small car park on Low Wath Road, just before the junction with Wath Road. Limited parking is available here (about 6 places) but Wath can be reached after a pleasant walk of just over 1.5 miles (2.4 km) from the car parks in Pateley Bridge.
- 2 Walk over the narrow bridge that leads towards Wath village and look for a stile immediately to your left. Go over the stile and head up stream on the path next to the river Nidd. You will see the embankment of the former **Nidd Valley Light Railway** to your right. The footpath follows the bank of the river and as the field narrows, Beach, Ash and Alder trees begin to line the embankment.
- 3 When you reach a fence head for the gate on the right and go through it. In front of you at the far end of the next field is the dam wall of **Gouthwaite Reservoir**. Follow the path towards an iron gate on the right edge of the reservoir. The path provides an excellent view of the dam wall with its decorative stone masonry and huge arches, which when overflowing are a spectacular sight.
- 4 Pass through the iron gate and then a second gate before proceeding along the track which leads diagonally up the hillside. The path reaches a walled track that runs from Wath up the valley towards Bouthwaite. Pass through the gate onto the track and turn right, back towards Wath.

LOOK OUT FOR NIDD MARSH

The field immediately before you reach Gouthwaite Reservoir contains an area of acid grassland with pockets of woodland and an area of marshy grassland at the centre. There are also spoil heaps from boreholes dug before the reservoir was built which support species such as sheep's sorrel, heath bedstraw and heath speedwell.

LOOK OUT FOR GOUTHWAITE HALL

The higher elevation provides excellent views of Gouthwaite Reservoir and the hillside beyond. On the opposite bank of the reservoir, close to the road on the reservoir side, you can see Gouthwaite Hall. Built in the 17th century the hall was the seat of the Yorke family, Nidderdale's major landowners at the time. Along with the adjacent farmhouse the hall was re-sited higher up the hillside in 1900 following a flood which unexpectedly filled Gouthwaite Reservoir just before its completion. The surveyors had miscalculated and both buildings were partially submerged!

- 5 Follow the path and after approximately half a mile (800 metres) you reach **Spring Wood**. Shortly after the track enters the wood you will see the now abandoned **Wood Top Quarry** to your left. The quarry floor is filled with water and following periods of rain a spring at the top of the quarry cascades down the rock face to form a spectacular waterfall.
- 6 Shortly after passing the quarry the track leaves the wood for a while and passes the now empty **Spring Wood Top Farm**, with its adjacent Dutch hay barn. After approximately 200 yards (180 metres) the track re-enters Spring Wood Top and begins to wind down the hillside through the woodland canopy, which includes oak, ash and silver birch, towards Wath Village. The track emerges from the wood shortly before it reaches Wath Road.
- 7 Between the end of the woodland and the road junction you will pass two buildings on your right hand side. The first of these is the 17th century **Sigsworth Cottage** and the second, the 19th century Sigsworth Lodge.
- 8 You now join Wath Road and carry on heading down the hill through the village back towards the bridge. After passing a row of five cottages on your right you reach **Wath Mill**, set back from the road with its gable end facing towards you.
- 9 You have almost returned to Wath Bridge. The final feature of the walk is the **Sportsman's Arms**, immediately on your right after you pass Wath Mill. Set back from the road, with its own car park and grounds, the Sportsman's is worthy of a visit to enjoy some well-earned refreshment!





GOUTHWAITE RESERVOIR

Gouthwaite was the first reservoir to be constructed in Bradford Corporation's ambitious Nidd Valley Water Works Scheme. Built between 1893 and 1901 by John Best & Co from Edinburgh, it is now a Site of Special Scientific Interest which supports an array of rare birdlife.

© Janina Holubecki



NIDD VALLEY LIGHT RAILWAY

Built by Bradford Corporation, the line was opened in 1907 to service the Nidd Valley Water Works Scheme. Although dismantled in 1936, the railway embankment is still prominent for much of its route up the Dale.

© Nidderdale Museum



WOOD TOP QUARRY

Opened in 1893 to provide stone for the construction of Gouthwaite Reservoir, the quarry closed in 1901 when the reservoir was completed. Stone was transported by tramway to the construction site around 500 yards (450 metres) away.

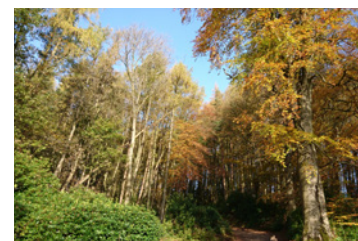
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SPRING WOOD TOP FARM

The farm buildings here include a Dutch style hay barn with three open bays. The barn was built in 1875 by Edmund Barlow and for its time provided an innovative way to store hay. Look out for the Dove Cote in the gable end.

© Robert Light



SPRING WOOD

This picturesque woodland was a popular tourist attraction during the late 19th century. Before the railway was constructed in the 1890s groups of visitors arrived by charabanc.

© Robert Light



SIGSWORTH COTTAGE

Built during the late 17th century in the traditional longhouse style, with barn and dwelling under the same roof, the cottage has had various incarnations. It is listed on a title map of 1838 as two cottages and a shop.

© Robert Light



SPORTSMAN'S ARMS

This former farmstead was first granted a temporary licence to serve alcohol in 1895 to cater for the men working on Gouthwaite Reservoir. After the reservoir was completed it became a sporting hotel known from 1907 onwards as the Sportsman's Arms.

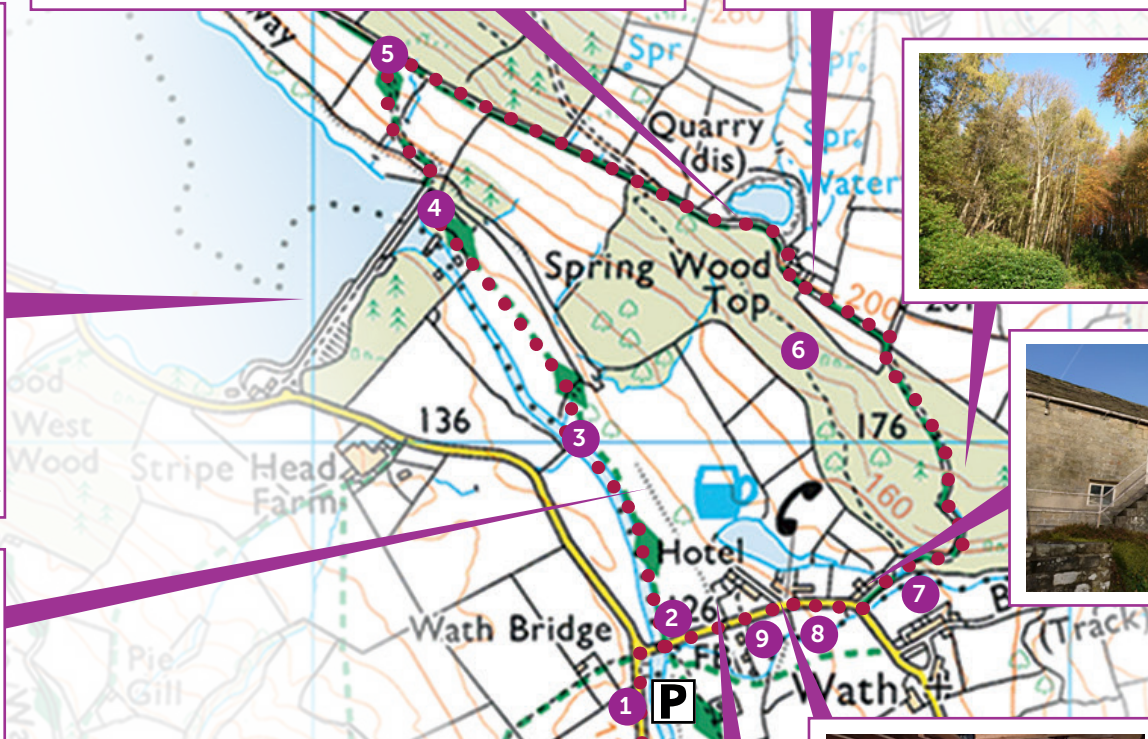
© Leanne Fox



WATH MILL

A step back in time to Nidderdale's industrial past, this fascinating building boasts a 28 feet (8.5 metre) diameter waterwheel, gearing mechanism and four sets of mill stones, all largely untouched since the late 19th century. The present building probably dates from 1816 when the Mill was adapted for textile production although it is likely that the current infrastructure was installed during refurbishments following a fire in 1878.

© Dorothea Restorations



Seasonal Features

Summer: Look out for flowering wetland plants on Nidd Marsh, such as the violet petalled heath speedwell and red petalled sheep's sorrell.

Winter: Migrant birds such as goosander, tufted duck, pochard and whooper swans from Iceland can be seen on Gouthwaite Reservoir.

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1 (km)