

Exploring the reservoirs of the South Pennines

Those of us living in developed countries in the 21st century take it for granted that when we turn on the tap, fresh clean water will come gushing out. The South Pennines enjoys the greatest density of reservoirs in the country thanks to its natural geology of high ground and steep valleys which enable water catchment on a grand scale.

As part of the Watershed Landscape Project, Rochdale and Oldham Councils, along with reservoir owner United Utilities have worked together to develop a series of walks to help you explore the network of reservoirs and surrounding landscape in the two boroughs.

As well as providing a safe water supply and a rich habitat for plants, animals and birds, these reservoirs also have a fascinating history. The Industrial Revolution brought huge change to this landscape as pressure grew to meet both the demands for clean fresh water for the rapidly growing populations in the towns below, but also to feed the canal system – a vital means of transporting goods. The construction of the reservoirs on these routes required farming settlements to be cleared and the surrounding

countryside retains evidence of land use in centuries gone by. They demonstrate tremendous feats of 19th century civil engineering. Their past reveals stories of life among the navvies who built them, some of whom died during their construction.

Take Moor Care

Please take care when walking in the uplands. The weather can change quickly, so ensure you have suitable shoes, clothing, a map and food and drink. Whilst exploring the landscape, always follow the Countryside and Moorland Visitors Code. Swimming in reservoirs is extremely dangerous and can be fatal. Please be vigilant about avoiding wildfires, keep dogs on short leads and leave the uplands as you found them.

Please carry the correct map when exploring this landscape. This route is on Ordnance Survey Explorer Map OL21 South Pennines.

We hope you enjoy walking these trails. To get a copy of the accompanying booklet please visit or contact Hollingworth Lake Visitor Centre in Littleborough or Saddleworth Museum in Uppermill.

www.watershedlandscape.co.uk

WALK 1 The First Reservoirs

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Distance: 5½ miles Approx. time: 3 to 3½ hrs

This walk starts at the car park below the White House pub at the junction of the A58 and Blackstone Edge Old Road. The trail runs alongside reservoirs that are among the earliest built in the North of England, including Blackstone Edge and Light Hazzles reservoirs dating from 1798.

Follow the path out of the car park and continue up hill until you reach the White House pub. Carry on past the pub and take the left hand path shown as the Pennine Way. Keep to the main Pennine Way trail for the next 1½ miles.

At Warland Reservoir, there is a footpath that slopes downhill. Follow this path and then turn left to Warland, following signs for the Rochdale Way. This route passes through the back of a property called Calf Lee House and emerges through its front gate.

From there, make your way down to the Rochdale Canal. Cross the bridge over the canal and turn left along the towpath. Follow the towpath for just over ½ mile, crossing back over the canal at the Lock Keepers' cottage at Summit.

