

# 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](http://www.watershedlandscape.co.uk)

## WALK 3 Chelburn Reservoirs

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Distance: 2½ miles Approx. time: 2 hrs

This walk starts at the car park behind Summit Inn. To find the car park, turn right after the turn off for Summit Inn on Todmorden Road, continue across the canal bridge and ahead to the clearance opposite an information board.

Take the path uphill from the car park. Follow this path over the river crossing. Follow the sign for the Pennine Bridleway. At the next gate, continue straight ahead and follow the Pennine Bridleway signs uphill. Continue along this path uphill, which has views of Higher and Lower Chelburn Reservoirs on your right. Bear left at the bridleway sign. Follow the track uphill. Near the top of the hill, keep the bridleway sign post on your left. Carry on along the bridleway keeping signs on the left. Follow the path as it slopes gently downhill towards a fenced walkway. Follow the fence around to the front of Leach Farm, which was turned into an animal sanctuary. Bear left along the main pathway (the Pennine Bridleway) with Leach farm behind you.

Continue straight along this rough road until it turns right at another bridleway sign. Continue forwards onto the Halifax Road, passing the Moorcock Inn on your right. Follow the road past a row of houses on the right. After the houses, follow a public footpath sign leading to steep steps downhill.

Continue onto a narrow footpath through a grassed area which meets a metalled road. Turn right and walk through an industrial

estate keeping right. Ignore the footpath and stile to the right. Continue all the way through the estate to a high metal gate at a car park entrance. Take the narrow path to the right of the high gate which runs alongside a fence. Walk towards Green Vale Mill and over the canal bridge at Lock No. 44 and continue right along the tow path.

Follow the canal footpath to West Summit Lock No. 37. Turn right across the canal. Bear right back towards the car park where you started.

