

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 4 Hollingworth Lake

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Distance: 3 miles Approx. time: 1½ to 2½ hrs

This walk starts at Hollingworth Lake and Country Park Visitor Centre, which has parking spaces, information, toilets and refreshments. Hollingworth Lake is the largest reservoir in the South Pennines, with a surface area of 45ha and water capacity of 2,468 megalitres. It is also the best known of the reservoirs because of its huge recreation appeal. The location became a magnet for visitors seeking entertainment in Victorian times.

From the Visitor Centre, take the path up to the lake and turn left, following the dam along the lake.

At the end of the dam, take the left hand fork in the road. Follow the signs for the Pennine Bridleway. This will take you through the hamlet of Hollingworth Fold and up on to the edge of Whittaker Moor.

Follow the bridleway for approximately 1½ miles up the moor and along a line of pylons. You will see a vehicle track on your left. Don't take this, but after it take a sharp left hand path down to a white gate. After taking this path, go straight ahead for ¼ mile along the side of a golf club. This path leads to the wooded valley near Owlet Hall and through Whittaker Wood.

Turn left at the woodland and continue down the footpath for approximately ten minutes. When you reach the valley floor, turn left along the river.

Then take your first right, following the signs for Hollingworth Lake through the Ealees Valley. Keep to the path, which takes you back to the Visitor Centre.



Hollingworth Lake

