

# 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 7 Denshaw Valley Reservoirs

From Huddersfield Road, head towards the main access gate for Dowry Reservoir. Head over the stile towards the reservoir. The Pennine Bridleway joins from the right. Continue along the path crossing the bridge over the reservoir. Continue up the hill. After the remains of Dowry Castle on the left, continue along the Pennine Bridleway.

When you reach a gated area at the top of the track, turn right through the smaller gate and continue along the bridleway for a little over ½ mile. When you reach the fingerpost, turn left and follow the track downhill. Readycon Dean reservoir will appear on your right. Continue along the track until you reach the end of the reservoir.

Leaving the track at this point, follow the waymarker ahead, in a straight line just to the left of the gate. Make your way uphill towards the next waymarker. You're on open access land here, so the following route is a suggestion only.

Where the ground levels out, aim for the next waymarker ahead. Turn right and continue with the wall on your right. Look for the rocky area as you pass and aim for the next waymarker. Continue in a straight line along the ridge heading downhill towards the stile ahead.

Cross the stile here and continue ahead following the waymarker towards the small pond and the single stone slab bridge. At the stone slab bridge, turn left following the waymarker until you come to a small standing stone.

From the standing stone, continue walking alongside the weir and reservoir. Head towards two distinctive sycamore trees.

Cross the stile, and continue with the wall on your right, heading towards the smaller sycamore tree. At the end of the field, use the stone stile to cross over the wall on your right. Turn left and head over the stile and go between the wall and the reservoir.

Cross through the gap in the wall remains, turn right, and continue along with the wall on your right. Continue past the United Utilities metal gate on your right, following the track round to the left.

Turn right, following the track that leads down to Dowry reservoir. When you reach the Pennine Bridleway, turn right across the bridge and back to the starting point.



Denshaw Valley Reservoir

