

Muker Walk

Best Swaledale Hiking Route for Waterfalls & Views

Visit my website for full details: <https://www.paulbeal.com/muker-walk>

Introduction to the Walk

This circular Muker walk begins from the village car park, just south Straw Beck. From there, the route climbs steadily up the slopes of Kisdon, joining stretches of the Pennine Way on its way towards Keld. Along the way, you'll discover the East Gill waterfalls near East Stonesdale, visit Currack Force, and make a short detour to Wain Wath Force. There's also the option of a rewarding out-and-back descent to Kisdon Force before returning through Rukin Wood and along the banks of the River Swale, finishing across the flagged meadows back in Muker. It's a wonderfully varied route through one of Swaledale's most scenic valleys.

Highlights of the Walk

The walk is full of memorable moments. The zigzag ascent of Kisdon reveals breathtaking views of Swaledale, with the River Swale winding through the valley below and Great Shunner Fell on the horizon. You'll pass traditional field barns, dry stone walls, and cobbled tracks that hint at centuries of farming life.

Highlights include the peaceful footbridge over the River Swale, the graceful cascades of East Gill and Currack Force, and the broad rocky ledge of Wain Wath Force. The optional descent to Kisdon Force is steep and narrow, but the view of the twin waterfalls is unforgettable. The return through mossy Rukin Wood and the stone-flagged paths across Muker's protected hay meadows bring the perfect finish to this scenic and varied route.

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Additional Information

- **Distance:** 8¼ miles (13 kilometres).
- **Duration:** Approximately 4¼ hours (excluding stops and breaks).
- **Difficulty:** Moderate – suitable for regular walkers with reasonable fitness. Includes a steady ascent to Kisdon and some short, steep sections near the waterfalls. The optional descent to Kisdon Force is especially steep and can be very slippery, particularly after rain.
- **Trail Conditions:** A varied mix of stone tracks, grassy field paths, cobbled lanes, and flagged meadow sections. Some stretches can be muddy or uneven, especially through woodland and beside the River Swale.
- **Recommended Map:** OS Explorer OL30 – Yorkshire Dales Northern & Central Area.
- **Parking:** Designated car park in Muker village, accessed from Gunning Lane (B6270). Pay-and-display with public toilets close by, making it an ideal starting point for exploring Muker and Swaledale.
 - **Google Maps Link:** <https://maps.app.goo.gl/VfFS4rNVhAC4vYRi8>
 - **What3Words:** ///station.taller.dilute

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Thank you for your support!

Paul Beal



Step-by-Step Directions

Begin your Muker walk by parking in the village centre, where a **designated car park (1)** lies just south of Muker and Straw Beck. The entrance is accessed from the B6270 road called Gunning Lane. From the main exit, turn left and cross the road bridge over Straw Beck, then immediately turn left again, heading into the village. Pass a few cottages on your right before walking up the tarmac incline in front of the Muker Literary Institute. Turn right just after the institute and continue uphill into the village centre. At the top, veer left and then right to navigate towards the rear of the central cluster of houses. Here, two public footpaths are available—take the first path signposted to Keld, avoiding the second one, which leads to Gunnerside and Keld via the meadowland, as you will return along that route later.

Follow the tarmac lane between Lane Farm and Stoneleigh, passing the Old Vicarage before continuing upwards along a stone track. As the path ascends, it **bends left (2)**, then zigzags steeply uphill in a north-west direction. Avoid any side paths, sticking to the main route as it gradually levels out. A bridleway signpost for Keld will appear—continue towards a farmhouse nestled on the hillside. At the farmhouse, ignore the right turn for the Pennine Way to Keld and instead **take the left fork (3)**, also signposted Pennine Way. Soon after, at another junction, avoid the left turn to Thwaite, instead turning right to follow the bridleway north up a steep grassy incline, signposted once again for Keld.

Continue along the enclosed track, bordered by dry stone walls. As the path bends left and climbs further, you will pass a **memorial stone (4)** set in the wall dedicated to Neil W. Jones. At roughly 490 metres in elevation, having walked about 1½ miles from Muker, the trail reaches its highest point. Here, follow the grassy path across the summit in a north-west direction before beginning a gentle descent. A signpost for Keld will confirm you are on track. As you descend the hillside, **the path gradually curves north (5)**, with a communications tower visible on the right. The grassy track soon meets a stony path—continue straight downhill as the descent steepens, leading to an **intersection near an old, moss-covered barn (6)**. If you reach the road, you've gone too far.

At the intersection, turn right and follow the public footpath uphill in a north-easterly direction. The undulating route hugs the dry stone wall—stick to it until the path drops steeply. At the lowest point, find a gate in the **bottom-left corner of the field (7)** and turn left through it. Walk along the field's edge with the steep-sided valley and River Swale below on your right. Continue along this path until you reach a gap in the wall on your right, where you will join the Pennine Way. Turn left towards Keld, then soon after, take a right turn onto a **concrete and brick track (8)** descending steeply, signposted Pennine Way and Swale Trail. This track resembles an old tramway route. At the bottom, cross the bridge over the River Swale to reach the waterfalls near East Stonesdale—a landmark you'll return to later.

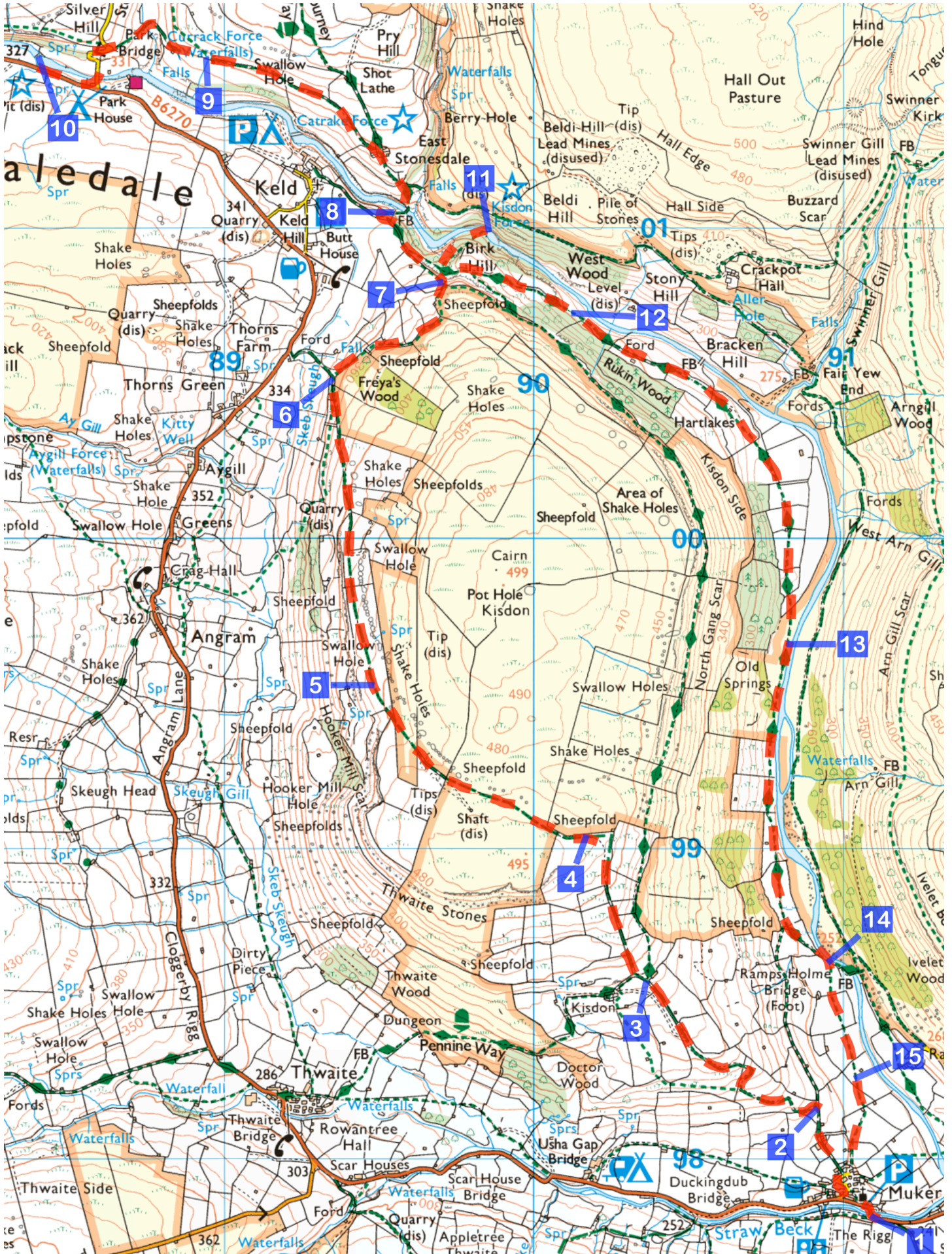
After taking in the waterfalls, follow the stone track uphill towards a bench area. At the top, turn left, staying on the Pennine Way. Continue along the stone track as it climbs again, passing through a farmyard. When the bridleway forks, take the left-hand route, avoiding the steep right-hand Pennine Way path. The track continues in a westerly direction, with Keld and the River Swale below on your left. Eventually, the route descends to a bridge crossing a beck, where you will see **Currack Force Waterfall (9)** on your left. Press on to reach a minor road, which leads downhill across Park Bridge to meet the main road.

At the main road, turn right for a short detour to **Wain Wath Force (10)**, another impressive waterfall. After enjoying the view, retrace your steps past Currack Force to return to the East Stonesdale waterfalls and the bridge over the River Swale. Cross back over the footbridge and follow the tramway-style path uphill. At the top, turn left, rejoining the Pennine Way signposted to Thwaite and Muker. Soon, a sign for **Kisdon Force Waterfall (11)** appears, offering an optional detour—a steep, narrow, and often muddy descent. If you choose to visit the falls, take care, then return to the main Muker walk path.

Continue on the Pennine Way until the trail forks. Here, take the left-hand path for Muker, rather than the right-hand route to Thwaite. The path undulates through **Rukin Wood (12)**, a charming stretch of woodland. Emerging into open countryside, you'll pass an old stone farmhouse perched on the hillside. The descent from here is steady, weaving past several old stone barns and through multiple dry stone wall gaps. Yellow-painted circles on walls and buildings help to confirm the public footpath. The valley widens as you descend towards the banks of the River Swale.

Follow the **grassy riverside path (13)** southwards, keeping the River Swale to your left. The route soon leads to Ramps Holme Bridge, a distinctive footbridge crossing the river. Instead of crossing, **turn right before the bridge (14)**, climbing a short flight of stone steps to pass through a gate signposted for Muker. From here, follow the flagged stone path through a series of **grassy hay meadows (15)**, which eventually lead you back into Muker village, completing your Muker walk.

Map of the Walk



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