

LOW FORCE TO HIGH FORCE WALK

Visit Stunning Teesdale Waterfalls

Visit my website for full details: <https://www.paulbeal.com/low-force-to-high-force-walk>

Introduction to the Walk

Starting at Bowlees Visitor Centre, this circular walk takes in two of Teesdale's most spectacular natural landmarks, Low Force and High Force. Begin with a short detour to Gibson's Cave and Summerhill Force, where water cascades over layers of limestone and sandstone, before returning to the visitor centre to start the main route. Cross Wynch Bridge to reach the first waterfall, Low Force, then follow the Pennine Way beside the River Tees, passing sandstone sheep sculptures, calm pools and rocky ledges. Continue upriver to the dramatic High Force, where the Tees plunges into a deep pool beneath cliffs of ancient rock, before looping back through peaceful fields and quiet lanes to Bowlees. It's a wonderfully varied route, rich in scenery, geology and local character.

Highlights of the Walk

The woodland path to Summerhill Force offers a peaceful start, while Wynch Bridge, with its historic 'one person at a time' crossing, adds charm and a touch of adventure. The Pennine Way's riverside section features tranquil stretches of water and lively rapids, with plenty of spots to pause and take in the views. High Force is the dramatic centrepiece, where the River Tees plunges over the Whin Sill into a deep plunge pool.

Low Force and High Force lie within the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the European Geopark, where the River Tees tumbles over the hard Whin Sill rock formation. This ancient layer of igneous rock shapes the valley's cliffs and gorges, creating two of northern England's most distinctive waterfalls. The area is renowned for both its natural beauty and geological significance, drawing walkers and photographers from across the region.

Additional Information

- **Distance:** 5½ miles (8¾ kilometres).
- **Duration:** Approximately 2¾ hours (excluding stops and breaks).
- **Difficulty:** Easy to moderate. Mostly straightforward walking with gentle climbs and some uneven ground near the waterfalls.
- **Trail Conditions:** Good paths throughout, with clear waymarking and a mix of riverside tracks and quiet country lanes. A few sections can be rocky or muddy after rain, so suitable footwear is recommended.
- **Recommended Map:** OS Explorer OL31 – North Pennines.
- **Parking:** Bowlees Visitor Centre, where you'll also find toilets, a café, and visitor information. The centre is located near Low Force Waterfall on the B6277, just over three miles north-west of Middleton-in-Teesdale.
 - **Google Maps Link:** <https://maps.app.goo.gl/EwaSCgtRxxCpEBa89>
 - **What3Words:** ///trader.thousands.craft

Support My Work

If you've found these directions helpful or enjoyed this walk, please consider making a £2 donation to support what I do. Your contribution helps me create more free walking guides like this one.

You can donate by visiting <https://buymeacoffee.com/paulbeal> or by scanning the QR code.

Thank you for your support!

Paul Beal



Step-by-Step Directions

This Low Force to High Force walk starts at the **Bowlees Visitor Centre car park (1)**, located just over three miles north-west of Middleton-in-Teesdale, on the B6277 road. The visitor centre is close to Low Force Waterfall and offers a café, a gift shop, an information point, toilet facilities, and a picnic area.

Before setting off on the main walk, consider taking a detour to **Gibson's Cave and Summerhill Force (2)**. The signposted path from the car park is a straightforward linear route of about two-thirds of a mile in total, making this a brief yet rewarding addition to your day. After visiting the cave, return to the car park to continue your journey.

To begin the main Low Force to High Force walk, cross the bridge over Bow Lee Beck and ascend the steps, passing the visitor centre. Head down the lane to the B6277 road. After crossing the road, follow the signposted footpath towards Low Force Waterfall and Wynch Bridge. Once across **Wynch Bridge (3)**, turn right onto the Pennine Way, which follows the scenic River Tees. As you continue, you'll pass two sandstone sheep sculptures before reaching the striking Low Force Waterfall, a picturesque spot on this route.

Follow the path for about a mile, keeping the river on your right, until you reach **Holwick Head Bridge (4)**. Although you won't cross it yet, take note of its position as you'll return here later. Stay on the footpath beside the river and walk just over half a mile further to reach **High Force Waterfall (5)**. This breathtaking natural landmark is undoubtedly a highlight of the Low Force to High Force walk. After taking in the view, retrace your steps back to Holwick Head Bridge.

Once at the bridge, cross over and turn left to follow the path alongside the river. The trail will lead you into woodland, where you'll climb a set of steps to reach the B6277 near **High Force Hotel (6)**. Cross the road here and continue walking between the hotel and the gift shop, then turn right onto a path that winds through fields. You'll pass a barn on your right and after about half a mile emerge onto a minor road.

In front of you is a small triangular grassy area with tall trees. Walk around it and follow the quiet country lane down to the **farm at Dirt Pit (7)**. From here, simply continue along the lane, ignoring any side paths. After a little over a mile, the lane will lead you back to the **Bowlees Visitor Centre (8)**, completing the Low Force to High Force walk.

Map of the Walk

