

RIEVAULX ABBEY WALK

Journey Through Rye Dale and Old Byland

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

Introduction to the Walk

This scenic circular route begins in Helmsley town centre at the Cleveland Way Car Park. From here, the walk sets off along the Cleveland Way National Trail, passing through Blackdale Howl Wood and by Griff Lodge before dropping down to Rievaulx Bridge. The route continues past the dramatic ruins of Rievaulx Abbey and through the village, where you'll spot a wonderful thatched cottage, St Mary's Church, and the Methodist Chapel. It then leads on towards Bow Bridge, Tylas Barn, and the village of Old Byland before looping back through Callister Wood, Nettle Dale, and Hagg Hall, returning once again to Helmsley.

Highlights of the Walk

Highlights of the walk include the Cleveland Way's distinctive stone statue in Helmsley, the wooded paths of Blackdale Howl Wood and Quarry Bank Wood, and the picturesque crossing at Bow Bridge. You'll enjoy superb views of Rievaulx Abbey, peaceful lanes through Old Byland, and charming features such as stepping stones across a stream in Callister Wood. Historic landmarks include St Mary's Church, once a slipper chapel for pilgrims, and All Saints Church in Old Byland, with its Saxon and Norman architecture. The varied landscapes of Rye Dale, Nettle Dale, and the River Rye valley add further beauty to this route.

Rievaulx is a small village in Rye Dale, set within the North York Moors National Park. It stands on the site of the inner court of the great Cistercian abbey and lies beside the River Rye. Today, the village is home to fewer than 100 people, with many of its buildings constructed from stones taken from the abbey ruins. Rievaulx also has a unique political link, as former Prime Minister Harold Wilson chose the title Baron Wilson of Rievaulx when he entered the House of Lords in 1983.

Additional Information

- **Distance:** 11½ miles (18½ kilometres).
- **Duration:** Approximately 5½ hours (excluding stops and breaks).
- **Difficulty:** Moderate to demanding. A full-day route with some short climbs and around 427 metres of ascent. Best suited to reasonably fit walkers who are comfortable covering 11–12 miles on mixed terrain, including woodland paths, field paths, farm tracks, steps, and a few short steeper sections.
- **Trail Conditions:** Well-defined stone tracks, uneven woodland and field-edge paths, and quiet minor roads. Generally straightforward to follow, but some sections can be muddy and slippery in wet weather.
- **Recommended Map:** OS Explorer OL26 – North York Moors Western Area.
- **Parking:** Cleveland Way Car Park in Helmsley, accessed from the B1257 on the west side of the town.
 - **Google Maps Link:** <https://maps.app.goo.gl/TAXPnUdRh4rxayd67>
 - **What3Words:** ///prance.encoded.squirts

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Paul Beal



Step-by-Step Directions

Start your Rievaulx Abbey walk in Helmsley town centre, parking in the **Cleveland Way Car Park (1)**, which is accessible from the B1257 main road on the town's west side. Exit the car park via the main entrance near the toilets and turn left onto the Cleveland Way. Here, you'll spot the prominent triangular-shaped stone statue marking the start of the Cleveland Way National Trail. Your walk will initially follow this trail as it heads west across open fields and **alongside Blackdale Howl Wood (2)**.

As you enter the wood, descend some steps into a **small valley (3)**, then ascend back up the other side. Continue along the well-defined track, and soon you'll reach **Griff Lodge (4)**. Pass to the left of the lodge and enter another woodland area. Follow the trail downhill until you reach a **minor road (5)**, approximately three-quarters of a mile from the lodge. Turn left onto the road and walk down towards **Rievaulx Bridge (6)**. At this point, you will leave the Cleveland Way National Trail.

Instead of crossing the bridge, turn right and follow the road north, signposted for the Rievaulx Abbey Ancient Monument. Continue along this road, and you'll soon see the abbey on your right. Pass the abbey's entrance and proceed into the village of Rievaulx. As you walk uphill, you'll notice a picturesque thatched cottage on your left, followed by St Mary's Church on your right. Opposite the church, take the track on your left, passing by the **Rievaulx Methodist Chapel (7)**.

Continue along the track, avoiding the first left-hand fork, which leads through gates to a private residence. Instead, take the second left-hand fork downhill towards **Bow Bridge (8)**. Cross the bridge and follow the track as it curves right into the woodlands. After walking for just over a mile from Bow Bridge, you'll reach a **junction near Tylas Farm (9)**. Here, the path offers several options: to the right, a track leads down to the farm, straight ahead is a path through gates, but your route is a sharp left uphill towards **Tylas Barn (10)**. Continue past the farm buildings until you reach a minor road called **Clavery Ley Lane (11)**. Turn right and head west into the village of **Old Byland (12)**.

Walk through the village, and as the road bends to the right towards the village's end, keep an eye out for the first public footpath on your left. Ignore this one and take the **second public footpath on your left (13)**. This path leads you eastward along a narrow woodland path, eventually emerging into a large open area of farmland fields. Follow the path south along the field edges, which will guide you into **Callister Wood (14)**. The path descends through the wood, crosses a footbridge, and leads to **stepping stones across a small stream (15)**. Here, you will rejoin the Cleveland Way National Trail for the remainder of your Rievaulx Abbey walk.

From the stepping stones, head east along the well-defined stone track, passing several ponds on your left. The track reaches a minor road where you turn left. Follow the road past **Hagg Hall (16)**, following signs for Helmsley and Rievaulx, to return to Rievaulx Bridge. After crossing the bridge, continue straight on. Soon, the road will bend left, but take the footpath on your right, which leads back into the woodlands you visited earlier. This woodland track ascends initially and will eventually bring you back to Griff Lodge. Pass by the lodge and take the path on the left marked as the Cleveland Way permissive path.

Re-enter Blackdale Howl Wood, descending into the small valley and climbing back up the steps again. Continue following the Cleveland Way all the way back to your starting point in Helmsley town centre. This delightful Rievaulx Abbey walk spans just over 11 miles, offering a scenic journey through the Rye Dale area of the North York Moors.

Map of the Walk

