

# RIPON WALK

## Circular Route to Studley Royal and Fountains Abbey

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

### Introduction to the Walk

This Ripon walk starts at the Cathedral Car Park in the heart of the city before following the River Skell towards Hell Wath Nature Reserve and Studley Royal Deer Park. It is a varied circular route, combining cathedral history, riverside paths, open countryside, estate parkland, the Fountains Abbey outer grounds, and the graceful designed landscape of Studley Royal.

### Highlights of the Walk

One of the great pleasures of the walk is the approach through Seven Bridges Valley, where the River Skell winds below old stone bridges and wooded slopes. The route passes The Lake, Mackershaw Lodge, the ancient Abbey Wall and glimpses of Fountains Abbey, giving the walk a strong sense of history, design and landscape throughout.

The return route through Studley Royal Deer Park adds more memorable landmarks, including the obelisk, St Mary's Church, Choristers' House and the long straight avenue aligned with Ripon Cathedral. From Studley Great Gate, the walk continues through Studley Roger and back to Hell Wath, before following the Skell into Ripon and returning to the cathedral where it began, completing a rewarding and beautifully balanced circular walk.

### Additional Information

**Distance:** 10¼ miles (16½ kilometres)

**Duration:** Approximately 4½ hours (excluding stops and breaks)

**Difficulty:** A fairly long walk with modest ascent, using riverside and field paths, woodland trails, bridleways and estate tracks. The route is generally straightforward to navigate.

**Trail Conditions:** A mixture of tarmac lanes, riverside paths, grassy bridleways, woodland tracks, stone estate roads and field paths. Some sections may be muddy after rain. There are also gates, footbridges, uneven ground, and a few short roadside sections.

**Recommended Map:** OS Explorer 298 Nidderdale

**Parking:** Cathedral Car Park in Ripon city centre. This is a long stay pay and display car park, conveniently placed for starting and finishing the walk near Ripon Cathedral.

- **Google Maps Link:** <https://maps.app.goo.gl/mD23kUnaW9STTYG16>
- **What3Words:** ///backs.thank.campsites

### 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**



# STEP-BY-STEP DIRECTIONS

Start your Ripon walk at the **Cathedral Car Park (1)** in the city centre. From the car park, make your way across to the Sainsbury's supermarket, then follow the path signposted to the cathedral. When you reach the cobbled road in front of the cathedral, called Minster Road, turn right and head downhill. This road, Bedern Bank, leads down to a roundabout. Go straight across, taking the second exit onto King Street, and follow it down to **Bondgate Bridge (2)** with its wrought iron parapets, crossing the River Skell.

Immediately after the bridge, turn right onto a footpath that drops down to the river in front of several apartment blocks. Follow the path beside the River Skell with the water on your right. When you reach the road, carry straight on onto Barefoot Street. Shortly afterwards, turn right through a gap in the wall and follow the footpath signposted to Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal, again keeping the river on your right.

Walk beneath the bridge and continue through the children's play area, passing the paddling pool. Leave the play area and turn right onto Borrage Green Lane, following it past Ivy House. Soon afterwards, just before Borrage Farm, turn left through a wrought iron kissing gate onto a **public footpath (3)**. Follow this across the fields and through woodland to reach Hell Wath Nature Reserve.

Now follow the **Hell Wath Nature Trail (4)** across the fields. The route is marked by sturdy wooden signposts with green lettering and green arrows, and it's easy enough to follow if you keep to the main path through the reserve and stay with the green arrows. When you reach the last of these signposts near the southern end of the reserve, you come to a **T-junction (5)**. You could turn right here to double back along the circular reserve trail, but for this walk turn left to leave the reserve, walking south along the broad woodland path.

The path brings you to a tarmac lane at the edge of the reserve. Turn left and walk past Hell Wath Cottage, then follow the lane past the car parking area to a wider road and continue straight ahead. As the road bends round to the left, turn right onto the concrete public bridleway known as **Whitcliffe Lane (6)**. Follow it south for about three-quarters of a mile to reach Whitcliffe Hall.

Whitcliffe Hall is a large farm. Walk straight past it, following the signpost for Bland Close Farm. After the final large wooden barn of Whitcliffe Hall, turn right onto a **public bridleway (7)** signposted Ripon Rowel. Follow the bridleway for about a third of a mile across open fields, then go through a gate into woodland. Walk down the woodland trail for a minute or so, then take a sharp right and descend further through the trees. At the bottom, just before the River Skell, the path splits. Take the left-hand fork and **cross the footbridge (8)**, then turn left into Chinese Wood.

Walk through the woods and pass through the iron gates into Studley Royal Deer Park. Cross the first of the stone single-arched packhorse bridges and follow the well-defined stone track through the valley. Cross a second bridge, then two more that sit close together, and finally one more after that.

Immediately before the **weir (9)** at the northern end of The Lake, take a sharp left where a wooden signpost points to Mackershaw Park, and follow the stone track uphill. Before you make this turn, you might like to wander a little further to admire The Lake, or even take a stroll around it. A public footpath follows the western shore all the way to the entrance to Fountains Abbey, though do bear in mind that entry to the abbey is chargeable.

Keep following the wide stone track uphill and across Mackershaw Park, where it eventually becomes a grassy path across the fields. Leave the park through the historic **arched stone gateway (10)** and turn right. Follow the woodland bridleway and then cross a grassy field to reach Hill House Farm. Walk through the farm, following the blue bridleway waymarker arrows, and after you leave keep on the bridleway as it bears round to the right. Stay with the bridleway across the fields to enter the National Trust's Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal estate. Well marked with blue arrows, it runs alongside the ancient **Abbey Wall (11)**. Keep to the bridleway until you reach a road, where you leave the estate again.

At the road, turn right onto Fountains Lane and follow it down to the junction, then bear right, signposted to Ripon and Fountains Abbey. The road crosses Fountains Bridge and bends to the left in front of the Fountains Abbey West Gate entrance and a row of large stone cottages, before turning sharply right and climbing uphill.

At the top of the hill, turn right onto the signposted **public bridleway (12)** and follow the stone track to reach a road. There's no need to walk on the road itself, as the bridleway runs alongside it behind the hedgerow. Follow the track as it crosses the road near the entrance to Fountains Abbey and enters woodland. It's a broad stone track with a hedgerow on each side, roughly following the line of the road, which stays on the far side of the woodland to your left.

Just before you reach the **obelisk (13)**, turn right through the gates into Studley Royal Deer Park, signposted as the footpath to Saint Mary's Church and Studley Royal Water Garden via the Deer Park. Walk straight ahead along the well-surfaced lane, passing Saint Mary's Church on your left, and continue through Studley Park. A little further on, also on your left, you pass the National Trust holiday cottage called Choristers' House.

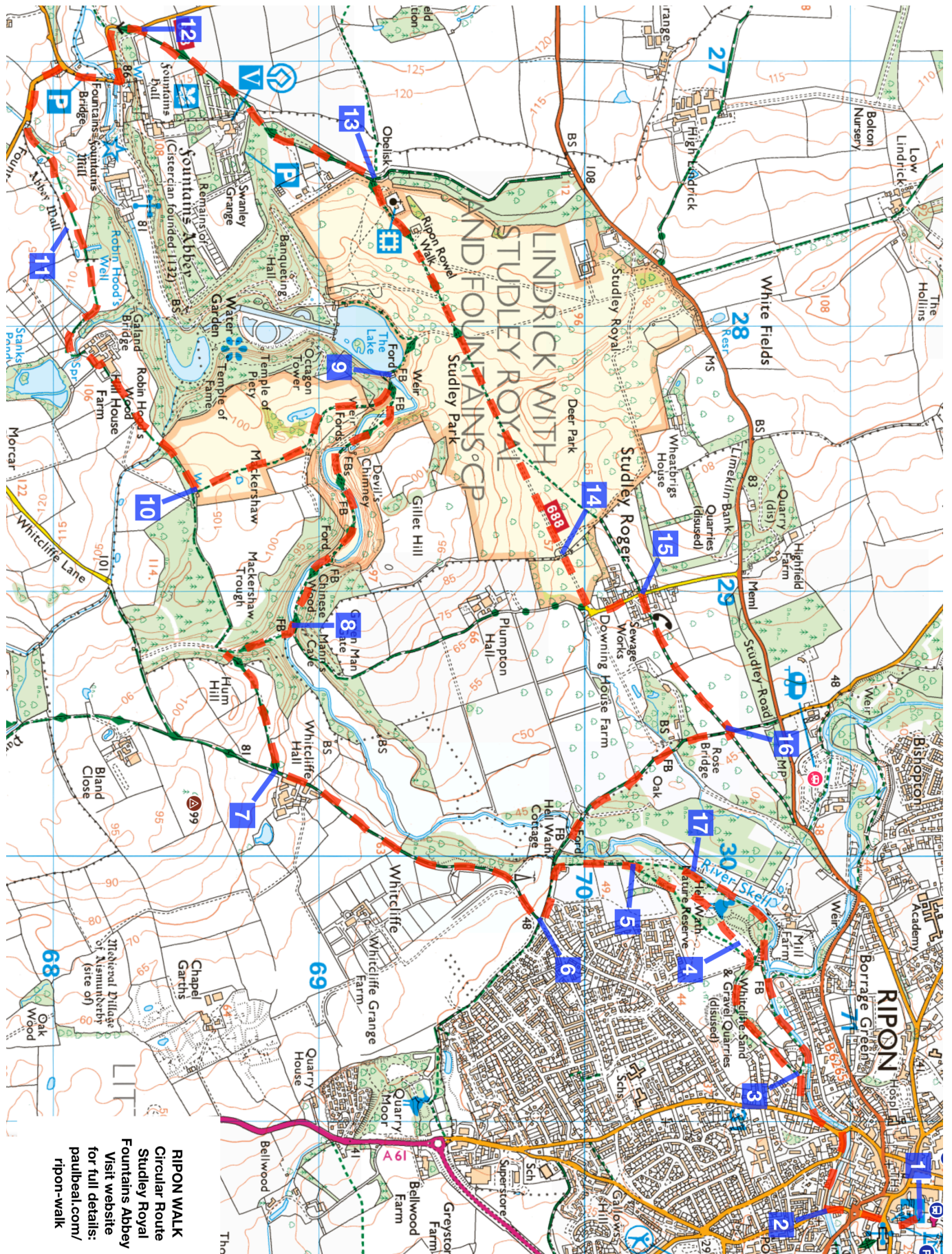
Stay on the lane, which is remarkably straight and lines up with Ripon Cathedral away in the distance. It gradually widens into more of a road as it runs through the park and leads directly to the ancient **arched stone gateway (14)** on the eastern side. Pass through the arch and carry straight on to meet a minor road. Turn left here to walk into the village of Studley Roger.

As you walk through Studley Roger, look out for a signposted **public footpath (15)** on the right. It appears about fifty metres after you pass the stone memorial to Harold William Baines, almost opposite a house called The Old Post House. Take this footpath, where a wooden signpost points the way to Ripon, and follow it for just under half a mile to reach a **crossroads (16)**. Turn right here, signposted as a public bridleway to Hell Wath.

This leads you back for about another half a mile to Hell Wath Cottage, where you were earlier. Turn left to make your way back into Hell Wath Nature Reserve. Pause at the interpretation board as you enter the woodland, then follow the route marked by yellow circles down towards the River Skell. At the first of the Hell Wath Nature Trail signposts the path splits, so take the left-hand fork and keep following the nature trail signposts down to the river. Walk along the **riverside path (17)**, keeping the Skell close on your left, and pass the Ripon Navigation Marker Stone. Descend the Fairy Steps and carry on beside the water. Leave Hell Wath Nature Reserve and continue along the riverside path, taking care not to cross the river.

The path soon becomes Borrage Green Lane, familiar ground from earlier in the day. Pass Ivy House on your left and turn left into the children's play area. Walk through it, follow the path beneath the bridge and return through the gap in the wall onto Barefoot Street. Retrace your steps to the path alongside the River Skell in front of the apartment blocks, which brings you back to Bondgate Bridge. Cross the bridge and head north along King Street, over the roundabout and up Bedern Bank to return to the cathedral and finally to the car park.

# MAP OF THE WALK



**RIPON WALK**  
 Circular Route  
 Studley Royal  
 Fountains Abbey  
 Visit website:  
[paubear.com/ripion-walk](http://paubear.com/ripion-walk)