

BRIMHAM ROCKS WALK

From Pateley Bridge via the Nidderdale Way

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

Introduction to the Walk

This varied circular walk starts in Pateley Bridge and follows the Nidderdale Way through open countryside, woodland and quiet hamlets to the extraordinary gritstone formations of Brimham Rocks. The return route descends through Smelthouses and Low Laithe before joining the River Nidd at Glasshouses for an easy riverside finish along the Six Dales Trail.

Highlights of the Walk

Early in the walk, the route climbs through Pateley Bridge past the Oldest Sweet Shop in England, Fox's Head Well and the ruined Church of Saint Mary the Virgin before reaching The Rock viewpoint. The Nidderdale Way then crosses rolling farmland, passing Knott, Tiplady Farm and Blazefield, with wide views across the dale as Brimham Moor draws steadily closer.

At Brimham Rocks, the route winds through a remarkable landscape of weathered gritstone stacks and balancing formations before heading west through High Wood. The return journey passes Smelthouses and Low Laithe, crosses the River Nidd and continues through Glasshouses. A peaceful riverside section along the Six Dales Trail leads back towards Pateley Bridge, passing the weir, historic sluice gear and the striking Pillars Past sculptures.

Additional Information

Distance: 9 miles (14½ kilometres)

Duration: Approximately 4¼ hours (excluding stops and breaks)

Difficulty: Moderate. The route includes a steady climb out of Pateley Bridge and further climbing towards Brimham Moor, but much of the walk follows straightforward paths, tracks and quiet lanes.

Trail Conditions: A varied mixture of town streets, field paths, bridleways, stone and tarmac tracks, woodland paths and level riverside paths. There are stiles and footbridges along the way, as well as careful crossings of the B6265 and B6165.

Recommended Map: OS Explorer 298 Nidderdale

Parking: Nidderdale Agricultural Society car park in Pateley Bridge. The walk starts from the car park before crossing the River Nidd into the town centre.

- **Google Maps Link:** <https://maps.app.goo.gl/598acsUqHH9UfnP77>
- **What3Words:** ///eruptions.strange.crumble

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STEP-BY-STEP DIRECTIONS

Start your Brimham Rocks walk in Pateley Bridge, where there is parking in the **Nidderdale Agricultural Society car park (1)**. Leave the car park and turn right, following the road across the bridge over the River Nidd. Carry on along the main road, which is High Street, and head uphill through the town centre. At the top of High Street, just after the building once occupied by The Bradford Old Bank Limited, the road bends round to the right and becomes Ripon Road. Follow it past **Pateley Bridge Methodist Church (2)**, then turn left up some steps opposite Well House, passing the doorway of number 2, The Terrace. You're now on the route of the Nidderdale Way.

Follow the path uphill to reach Pateley Bridge Cemetery and the Commonwealth War Graves. Here the path widens and splits into two, so take the left-hand fork uphill. Almost immediately afterwards, instead of following the Nidderdale Way straight ahead, take the public footpath on your left up some steps. Follow this wall-enclosed path to reach the remains of the **Church of Saint Mary the Virgin (3)**.

Walk past the front porch of the church on the cobbled path uphill, then turn right almost straight away through a wooden kissing gate in the dry stone wall to enter the fields. Follow the path across the fields to rejoin the tarmac path of the Nidderdale Way and turn left. Keep an eye out for the Victorian viewing platform known as The Rock on your right as you go.

When you reach the crossroads at **Knott (4)**, continue straight ahead, signposted as a public bridleway to Blazefield and still following the Nidderdale Way. After Knott House Farm, turn left towards Hole House, again signposted as the Nidderdale Way to Blazefield, then immediately afterwards take the public footpath on the left-hand side through a gate in the dry stone wall. Follow this footpath along the edge of the fields to a crossroads with another bridleway and continue straight ahead, following the yellow waymarker arrows towards **Tiplady Farm (5)**.

Walk all the way through the farm, passing the old blue police telephone box as you go, then leave by the twin-track tarmac lane called Bottom Road. When you reach the main road, the B6265, cross with care and follow the public bridleway opposite, signposted Nidderdale Way and Sandy Lane. The path bears off to the left in front of a row of terraced cottages, some bungalows and houses.

At the **minor road (6)**, turn left and follow it, signposted as the Nidderdale Way. Where the road bends sharply to the left, take the footpath straight ahead between the dry stone walls, still on the Nidderdale Way. At the next minor road, turn right and head downhill, then as the road turns back sharply to the right, take the **left-hand stony track (7)** signposted to Nidderdale Llamas.

Follow this wide stone track, and when you reach the farm buildings at the top of the concrete driveway, take the public footpath on your left. Continue straight ahead on the route of the Nidderdale Way, ignoring two public footpaths on the right as you go. You're now about a quarter of the way round your Brimham Rocks walk.

You'll reach a crossroads at a small hamlet called **White Houses (8)**. Five routes join here, and the spot is appropriately known as Five Ways. Continue straight ahead, still on the Nidderdale Way, where a signpost indicates a public bridleway to Ripon Road. When you reach a large wooden shed and a row of stone terraced cottages, turn right, signposted to The Rocks and marked as a public footpath still on the Nidderdale Way.

Continue straight ahead on the footpath downhill into the valley. When you reach a stone track, turn left, again signposted as a public footpath on the Nidderdale Way, and go across a cattle grid. Just after the cattle grid, turn right and drop down to a clearing, then cross the **footbridge (9)**. Yellow public footpath waymarkers carrying the Nidderdale Way curlew symbol will guide you through this section.

Turn right and follow the path into the woodland until you reach a moss-covered, partly collapsed dry stone wall on your left. As you carry on, you'll notice a wall coming in from your right-hand side, so continue straight ahead and go through the gap using the stile. Look to your left and you'll see a farmhouse over the hedge, and shortly after that turn left onto a public footpath. You'll pass the **farmhouse and its farm buildings (10)** on your left-hand side.

When you meet the twin-track tarmac lane, turn right. The lane becomes a wide stone track, and you simply keep following it uphill for just under half a mile, passing a large stone house and some farm buildings on your left and another farm on your right. As soon as you pass the entrance to **Druid's Cave Farmhouse (11)** on your right-hand side, turn left onto a path that climbs through the woodland and leads you up to Brimham Rocks.

When you reach the signpost in front of the Brimham Rocks Visitor Centre, turn right along the tarmac path. This is signposted as the scenic route, and a nearby interpretation board will confirm that you're on The Rocks route, shown in blue on the board's map. Follow the tarmac path and turn right where it splits into two, staying on the blue scenic route through the central rocks.

Brimham Rocks has three main car parks, and the tarmac path will bring you to the northernmost one. This is about the halfway point of your Brimham Rocks walk. Turn right and continue on a track heading south downhill towards the **two southern car parks (12)**, which is where you'll find the Welcome Hut. Carry straight on between the car parks, with one on your left and one on your right, and the track becomes a wider road.

This wider road bends round to the left to meet the B6451, the main access road for Brimham Rocks. Rather than going as far as the main road, take the right-hand track on the bend, signposted to Druid's Cave Farmhouse. Almost straight away you'll reach a wooden signpost with two paths on the left-hand side, both signposted to the Nidderdale Way, and you need to take the second of the two.

Follow this path alongside a dry stone wall for about a quarter of a mile, then turn right at the **edge of the wood (13)**, signposted as a public bridleway. The curlew waymarker arrows will confirm that you're back on the Nidderdale Way. Continue downhill on this straightforward path, which becomes more clearly defined as you go, ignoring any footpaths to the left and right. Stay on this route for about three-quarters of a mile.

At the bottom you'll reach a **T-junction (14)**, where you turn left along the concrete lane. Make your way downhill, passing Blaireaux Ghyll on your right-hand side. When you reach the minor road, turn right and head down into Smelthouses. Just before the bridge over Fell Beck, turn left onto a **public bridleway signposted to Low Laithe (15)**, and follow the route down past Little Mill and Knox Hall.

When you reach the B6165 main road at Low Laithe, cross with care and take the public footpath directly opposite across the field. Cross the footbridge over the beck and turn left towards the River Nidd, then follow the path upstream beside the river for about a quarter of a mile before using the **footbridge to cross over the Nidd (16)**.

On the other side, rather than turning left or right, keep straight ahead across the large field and make your way up to the farmhouse, Harewell Hall, on the right-hand side. This is about the three-quarter mark of your Brimham Rocks walk. Walk through the farm and follow the concrete lane west across the countryside, staying on it for a mile until you meet the **River Nidd again at Glasshouses (17)**.

Cross Glasshouses Bridge over the river, then turn left onto the stone track signposted to Pateley Bridge. Follow this straightforward riverside route, known as the Six Dales Trail, for about a mile and a quarter. As you draw near to Pateley Bridge, look out for the sculpture called **Pillars Past (18)** on the other side of a high wall on your right. The path brings you out onto the B6265 in Pateley Bridge, where you turn left and cross the bridge over the river to return to the car park and finish your Brimham Rocks walk.

