

This walk description is from happyhiker.co.uk

Washburn Valley and the Three Reservoirs Walk

Starting point and OS Grid reference	Free car park at Swinsty Reservoir (SE 199538)
Ordnance Survey map	OS Explorer Map 297 - Lower Wharfedale & Washburn Valley
Distance	8.5 miles
Traffic light rating	

Introduction: There are a multitude of walks in the Washburn Valley itself. This walk from Swinsty Reservoir starts in the valley but climbs very gently away from it to include Beaver Dyke and Scargill reservoirs, Little Alms Cliff (no doubt named because of its resemblance to the better known Almscliffe Crag) and Hunters Stones.

The walk goes through Haverah Park, formerly one of the royal parks of the Forest of Knaresborough created about 1117 and you can still see deer if you are lucky.

This is a very easy walk of water (reservoirs and babbling brooks) and forests and for little effort provides lovely far ranging views.

Please note that after rain, the route can be very muddy in parts.

There are no refreshment opportunities en route other than what you bring yourself. There are a couple of good spots to enjoy your sandwiches mentioned below.

Afterwards, the Sun Inn at Norwood is close by and open all day.

The walk starts from the free car park at Swinsty Reservoir. To get there, turn west off the B6451 between the A59 and Otley, signposted Fewston. The car park is on the left after crossing the causeway across the reservoir.

Start: Leave the car park (SE 199538) and walk back across the causeway. Turn left on to the public footpath with the fingerpost for "Dalesway Link" and "Brame lane" (SE 200536). Be sure to bear right here and follow the yellow arrow.

Follow the path as it winds its way through the trees. There are dilapidated walls at both sides. When the walls start to diverge and the path appears to fork, follow the path on the left which, for a while, follows the left hand wall.

At the edge of the woods, go through a walkers' gate where the path bears off very slightly to the left. Go over a stile and follow the left hand boundary of the field and through a gateway to the road (SE207538).

Turn left along the road for a few yards and at the Sun Inn (to its right) turn right following the fingerpost for "Dalesway Link" and "Bank Slack ¾ mile". The path passes the front door of the pub and through a gap in the wall passing a barn conversion named Twin Paddock Barn.

Follow the drive and as it swings right (SE 212543), bear left across the grass following the public footpath fingerpost to a kissing gate in the bottom left hand

corner. From here, the path bears slightly left across the next field to another kissing gate which you should be able to see. Through this and follow the direction of the arrow straight ahead.

Go through another gate and the route goes round the bottom of a banking on top of which sits Bank End Farm. You reach a dilapidated wall but do not make the mistake of climbing the banking here. Follow the right of the dilapidated wall until you reach a walkers' gate with yellow arrows. You cannot easily see the gate until you are almost at it.

Through this gate and the path does then climb the banking to a gate where another yellow arrow directs you along the left hand edge of the trees.

You come in sight of the first reservoir (Beaver Dyke – actually two reservoirs together) and the windmills. The path passes the left of the reservoir on top of a banking for a while, before descending right, to the wall.

Follow the course of the wall for a short distance and as you get to an old gateway, the path veers round to the left as indicated by the arrows. After quickly going through another gateway and a short section of walled track, turn right at a gatepost, indicated by yellow arrows.

Follow the obvious path along passing a ruined barn. There are a couple of useful seats here on which to enjoy your sandwiches with a fine view of the reservoir.

Eventually, the path drops down to the wall alongside the reservoir and follows it along to the dam.

Continue straight ahead at the dam (do not cross it). You soon come to a gate from where the path goes left through the trees. When you come out on a farm track just above another dam, go straight ahead on this, passing several farm buildings and under some power lines.

Immediately after passing under the power lines, turn right through a gate (SE 230548) and follow the right hand boundary of the field. At the bottom, a yellow arrow on the gate confirms the route.

Turn left when reaching the reservoir service road (SE 231546).

You now follow this service road for 1½ miles passing through Low Scargill Plantation (where I have seen deer), past and Scargill Reservoir with its ornate bridge across the spillway. As the road climbs, there are good views left, across to the North Yorkshire Moors.

As you pass a barrier across the service road, there are some rocks off to the left which provide another good lunch stop with good views over the Washburn Valley and to the Menwith Hill radar domes to the north.

When the service road reaches the “proper” road (SE 240524), turn right and walk along the road (there are wide verges), past the car park for just under ½ mile and look out on the left for the unmistakable rocky outcrop of Little Alms Cliff. Turn left off the road at a small rough lay-by (SE 234524) and take the path to and over the top of the outcrop. There are great views from the top.

Over the top and the path becomes indistinct. The path splits into two and you want to head left towards where the trees form a right angle (heading left of the tower). There is a stile at the corner but you cannot see it until you are almost there (SE 228520).

Over the stile and the path follows the course of the fire break between the trees, alongside a dilapidated wall. This section can be particularly muddy.

You come to an area of large rocks, Hunters Stones (SE 218516).

From Hunters Stones, you need to be careful to take the correct route as the jumble of rocks, tracks and trees can be quite confusing. The actual path is straight on from the route you followed along the fire break. Keep to the left of the stones (preferably use a compass to ensure you leave the stones at 245° (Trees make a GPS receiver unreliable). After crossing a broad track/firebreak, take the path ahead through the trees and you should arrive at a stone wall more or less opposite a trig. point perched on a rock in the field beyond – see photo.

If you go wrong and come to the corner of two walls with the radio mast in front of you. Turn left to follow the walk along the edge of the trees (no footpath – you have to make your own way). Eventually the trig. point mentioned above comes into view and when you reach a track from the left, you are back on course as at # below.

The radio mast is a useful reference point (whenever you can see it through the trees) as it should always be to your right. In effect, whichever of the routes you pick below, you are effectively walking clockwise round it.

Turn left here and follow the wall. At an old narrow gateway, go through the wall on the right and turn left. There are great views across Wharfedale here. Follow the path down to a wide track (SE 215514).

I followed the course of official footpaths here but I believe that if you turned right on this wide track then, at the next 'T' junction of tracks, turned left, then right at another 'T' junction, you would reach the B6451 as below. Try it if you like. Otherwise, continue as in the next paragraph.

To follow the “official” footpaths, on reaching the wide track, across the track and very slightly to the left, another footpath descends the slope alongside the wall. Follow this to a stile on the right (SE 215513). Cross this then go across the field to the bottom of the tress at the opposite side where there is a gate (SE 213511). Through the gate then go right at about 45° and follow the track through the trees.

Follow this track to join the main road – the B6451 at a rough parking area (SE 209515). Turn right here for a few yards then cross the road to turn left along a minor road (marked as Top Lane on the OS map). **Be very careful crossing the B6451 as there is a blind summit to the left and it is a very fast road.**

Take the first turning on the right following the finger post for “Brat Lane ½ mile” (SE 207516). As you arrive at the gateposts to the property, turn right through the walkers' gate and walk round the back of the property. At its rear, turn right through another walkers' gate heading downhill towards Swinsty Reservoir.

On reaching the road (Brat Lane), turn left then first right to Scow hall Farm (SE 202522). There is a public brideway fingerpost. Go straight through the farmyard following the track as it curves left.

You get to three gates. Go through the one on the left. Follow the track downhill and as it turns left, go right through a red gate. There is a blue arrow on a post indicating the direction. The path is now walled.

Follow this path down through another red gate until you reach a main reservoir road. Cross this slightly left through some iron gates and follow the path round the reservoir back to the car park.

