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Haworth to Bronte Waterfalls and Top Withens

Starting point and OS Grid reference	Parking area on West Lane in Haworth (SE 027373)
Ordnance Survey map	OL21 South Pennines
Distance	6.7 miles
Traffic light rating	

Introduction: This walk from Haworth to Top Withens (or Withins) is part of the standard tourist fare for the thousands who come to the Haworth area where the famous Bronte sisters lived and wrote. For reasons I do not quite understand, the Japanese have taken to English literature to the extent that so many of them come to this area to follow the Bronte trail, that fingerposts have Japanese translations!

It is difficult to separate fact from myth/assumptions. Top Withens, a ruin, may (and I stress may) have been the inspiration for Wuthering Heights but even the plaque on the wall of the ruins acknowledges the “may” and stresses that the building bore no resemblance to the house portrayed in the novel.

The Bronte Bridge which you cross was swept away in a flood in 1989 then rebuilt so in reality, apart from the moorland itself and the waterfalls, there are few accredited Bronte associations to see on this walk. Nevertheless, Brontes or no Brontes, the walk would stand up as a pleasant, very easy walk in its own right, especially on a pleasant summer’s day when the heather is out.

Sadly, there was little water flowing down the falls when I visited.

There are a couple of pubs in Stanbury on route for refreshments or any number of pubs/cafes in Haworth itself, at the end.

The walk starts from free roadside parking on West Lane in Haworth (just before leaving the village on the west side, towards Stanbury). There is a long parking area but if it is full, there are free lay-by areas along Cemetery Road, along which the walk goes.

If you want to visit Haworth itself and other Bronte memorabilia, it is but a short walk back along West Lane. There is also a large municipal pay and display car park at the junction of West Lane and North Street but avoid the private car park at the junction of North Street and Changegate (known as the Changegate car park) as this has a notorious reputation for merciless implementation of its rules to the letter and has featured in TV consumer programmes.

Start: From the car parking (SE 027373), walk along the road west from Haworth for 300 yards or so and turn left along Cemetery Road.

Follow this road for just over half a mile and when it meets another at a ‘T’ junction, go straight ahead on the rough track (SE 016336), following the fingerpost for “Footpath to Bronte Waterfalls 1½ miles”.

The track eventually becomes a normal country footpath and you arrive at the waterfalls by a small footbridge (The Bronte Bridge) (SE SD 998358). Cross the bridge and climb the steps up the bank. You will see a fingerpost at the top ahead of you. On reaching it, turn left following the fingerpost for “Top Withens 1 mile” (SD 996389).

Cross a stream by some roughly laid stepping stones and beyond this the path is “manicured” with large stone slabs. When it joins another path with slabs, turn left to follow the finger post for “Top Withens” and “Pennine Way”.

You soon reach the Top Withens ruins (SD 981354), where there are pieces of stone and rough plank seats, where you can stay to admire the view/eat sandwiches. Note the stone plaque in the wall of the ruins, which explains their claim to fame (or not!).

From Top Withens, retrace your steps and at the junction with the path where you ascended from the waterfalls but this time keep straight ahead.

The path divides at a two-way fingerpost. Keep left signposted “Pennine Way, Stanbury 1 mile and Haworth 2½ miles”.

Stay on this main track, ignoring any turns off as it descends towards Lower Laithe Reservoir, crossing a cattle grid and joining a tarmac lane (SE 002366).

Pass and ignore a road junction on the left, then, on reaching a ‘T’ junction at Stanbury, turn right (SE 006370).

Walk through the village and as you leave its eastern end, turn right at the road junction in the direction of the road sign for “Oxenhope 2 miles”.

Cross the reservoir dam and turn left immediately after it along a track, following the fingerpost “Bridleway To Cemetery Road”. This track is initially the access road to the reservoir works. It branches left to the works and the public footpath is straight on.

When you arrive back at Cemetery Road, turn left to return to the car.

