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## Stoodley Pike Walk

Starting point and OS Grid reference	Free car park at Withens Clough reservoir (SD 987233)
Ordnance Survey map	OL21 South Pennines.
Distance	5.5 miles
Traffic light rating	

**Introduction:** Stoodley Pike is a 1319ft (402 metre) high point on the moors of the South Pennines above Hebden Bridge and Todmorden in Calderdale. It is best known for the Stoodley Pike Monument, an obelisk, built in 1856 at the end of the Crimean War and replacing a collapsed earlier monument built to commemorate the defeat of Napoleon. The monument is a well known Yorkshire landmark and is visible from many vantage points around West Yorkshire in particular.

There are great views from Stoodley Pike and the Monument can be climbed to a viewing balcony but the stairs are very dark and if intending to climb up, a torch is advised.

This Stoodley Pike walk is not the shortest route to the monument but I wanted a slightly longer circular walk which would take in the views over the edges of the moors. Having said that, the walk is still only 5.5 miles. It is an easy fairly level walk which should not prevent any moderately fit person completing it and the views are well worth it. There is the interesting medieval Te Deum Stone en route and you may see a variety of birds (depending on the time of year) including Merlin, Golden Plover, Curlew and Lapwing to name but a few.

The walk starts from the free car park at Withens Clough reservoir. To get there, turn west off the B6138 Mytholmroyd to Rochdale road at Cragg Vale, along Church Bank Lane. The turn is not easy to spot and especially from the Rochdale direction is a very tight turn. It is indicated by a small road sign to St John's Church. Follow the lane past the church and The Hinchcliffe pub/restaurant to its end where you will find the car park. The road is potholed in places but easily passable with care.

As an aside, on leaving Mytholmroyd on the B6138, a sign informs you that this road is the longest continuous gradient in England!

There are no refreshments on this walk other than what you bring yourself.

**Start:** Walk out of the car park and up the lane immediately opposite. Stay on the lane, ignoring a path off to the left for Stoodley Pike. Turn right on the broad track immediately after another parking area (SD 993237). There is a yellow waymark arrow.

Ignore another footpath off to the left and continue along the track through a gate bearing a "Private Road" sign. There are good views along here down to Cragg Vale.

Ignore another footpath off to the left and as track bends to the right by a farmhouse. Just past here, the wall on the left stops and there is open moorland. Follow the track as it bends sharp left (SE 000243). From this corner are good views over Mytholmroyd.

You pass Coiners' Barn below you on the right (walkers' refuge and holiday accommodation) and the track starts to swing to the right and descend, take the footpath on the left which starts with some stone paving (SD 996245). It is quite easy to miss this.

The stone slabs are a little intermittent to start with. Ignore a track which climbs to the left.

Shortly after the stones end for the first time, there are posts with yellow tops marking the way. As you progress, the stones reappear. The path follows the contour of the land for a while, passing a woodland.

Turn right briefly at the end of the woodland (do not descend). Only 50 yards or so from the corner, there is a small banking on the left (SD 993250). Take the path which crosses it, heading gently uphill. If you get to a marker post, you have gone too far! This is another easy to miss turn.

The path climbs, swinging left. At a faint fork, stay right and cross a broader track, keeping straight ahead. There are far reaching views to the right to the moors beyond Hebden Bridge and the Ovenden Moor array of wind turbines are visible.

The Stoodley Pike Monument starts to come into view to the left.

The path reaches a wall with a wooden stile (SD 987252). Do not cross the stile but turn left to follow the broad track through the farm gate indicated by a blue bridleway arrow. At a junction of tracks, turn left. A fingerpost confirms you are now on the Pennine Way. Stoodley Pike is straight ahead.

Pass Swillington Farm – a sign on the gate says “Stoodley Pike Waymarked Trail”.

Not far beyond the farm is a three-way fingerpost. Turn left for the “Pennine Way” and “Stoodley Pike”.

The path passes through a gateway (you are one field away from a plantation). Turn right and progress to Stoodley Pike. If you want to climb to the balcony, the entrance is on the north side.

From the Monument (SD 973242), follow the Pennine Way fractionally west of south, along the edge of the plateau. The plateau edge falls away dramatically here and there are great views over Todmorden. On the south east horizon, the Emley Moor transmitter can be seen.

Follow the Pennine Way along the edge, ignoring a path off to the left which goes to a ladder stile. Look out for a large depression on the left and take the path which goes down into it (SD 969233). As you exit the depression, a derelict farm building is

ahead. On reaching a broader track, turn left to the 5 bar gate you can see. Note you join this path between two boundary marker posts.

Just through this gate on the left is the medieval Te Deum Stone with a cross and Latin script carved on it (SD 972230). The writing refers to Te Deum Laudamus, an early Christian hymn “We praise thee O God”. The stone is believed to have been a boundary stone and used as a coffin rest, for bearers taking the coffins across the Pennines from Cragg Vale to Lumbutts and Mankinholes.

The track now follows a wall on the right, descending gently and Withens Clough reservoir comes into view.

Go through a five bar gate and turn left following the waymarkers.

Stay on the main track and just after a plantation, go through another set of gates and turn right to go down to the water. There is a yellow topped post on the corner.

Turn left at the track by the reservoir and follow this to the dam. Here, keep straight ahead and join the tarmac road which returns you to the car park.

