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Bordley to Malham Cove and Malham Tarn

Starting point and OS Grid reference	Parking just beyond the cattle grid (SD 951653) at the end of Skirethorns/Malham Moor Lane, Threshfield
Ordnance Survey map	OL2 Yorkshire Dales - Southern and Western Areas
Distance	10.7 miles
Traffic light rating	

Introduction: Although over 10 miles, this is a relatively easy walk with just one section of moderate ascent, to the well known amphitheatre of Malham Cove and Malham Tarn. Some road walking is involved. The walk takes you through some classic limestone scenery with a dramatic view of the cove from above and its famous limestone pavement.

Arriving at Threshfield (near Grassington) from the South, look out for Skirethorns Lane on the left just after the filling station. Drive along here (keeping right at the junction) for two and a half miles until you reach a cattle grid. The metalled road runs out shortly after the cattle grid and it is recommended you park on the rough ground just after the grid.

Start: The walk begins by continuing along the road/track until you reach a gateway (SD 947655) indicating no through road for vehicles. Turn left here to Bordley, indicated by a finger post. The track remains broad and clear and briefly returns to tarmac status before arriving at the farming complex known as Bordley.

Passing in front of the farmhouse, the track bends round to the right and a finger post indicates Malham. Pass through the gateway which appears on the left. Remain on the clear track and ignore two paths which occur quickly to the right.

The track meets a stone wall on the left. Follow this wall. You pass a gateway with a stile next to it but ignore these. Shortly after this stile, the track becomes fainter and bears away slightly to the right heading for a gateway. Continue through this gate on the broad obvious track.

At the next farm (Lee Gate SD 927644) the track does zigzag through the farm buildings or there is a gate on the right just before the descent to the farm. A walled track cuts off the bends, coming out below the farm at a three finger signpost.

Continue straight ahead and you are quickly on the metalled road which leads to Malham. Descend this for about one and a quarter miles until you reach an obvious and signed track on the right into the gorge at Gordale Scar (SD 913635). It is worth following this path to see the gorge and the waterfall which flows at its end (about a third of a mile). As you can see from the picture, it is possible to climb up by the waterfall on another footpath which will take you to Malham Tarn although great care

needs to be taken if the waterfall is in full flow or if it is icy but our route involves retracing the path to the road.

You will immediately see a prominent lay-by on the right from which runs a footpath at a kissing gate which is your route to Malham Cove. At the next road, cross slightly right over a stile. The path appears to split but both routes come together again after a short distance.

Follow the wall on your left and where it turns left on a right angle, continue to follow it. It expires and becomes a fence. Follow this very carefully to the precipice (be very careful as it is a long drop!) from where there is a dramatic view of Malham Cove from above (SD 898641). Most people only see it from below.

After enjoying the view, retrace your steps to the main path and turn left parallel with the limestone cliff you have just left. You will soon be overlooking the limestone pavement with its "clints" (limestone blocks) and "grikes" (fissures). Below you are a wall and stile. Cross over the stile. The route turns right but the limestone pavement provides good opportunities to have lunch looking down the valley but take care if approaching the edge. Note also that limestone gets very slippery if wet.

Follow the wall along the gorge, part of the Pennine Way. After a short ascent, over a stile (SD 891649), turn right to Malham Tarn as indicated by the finger post.

On reaching the road (SD 893658), turn right. To catch sight of Malham Tarn, you need to branch off to the left for a quarter of a mile at the finger post by the small car park. Malham Tarn was created originally by glaciers (although has been dammed to increase its size) and is the highest lake in England. It is a wetland haven for wildlife and birds.

Return to the road and turn left. Continue until it bends sharply right (signed for Malham 2 miles) but you go straight ahead to a gate in a stone wall ahead (SD 905656). A sign on the gate reads Street Gate to Arncliffe Cote. Pass through the gate and stay on the broad track with the wall on your right. This is Mastiles Lane and you should remain on this ignoring any turns off. You cross a stone clapper bridge (SD 911656).

The track passes the site of the Mastiles Roman camp which is indicated by an information board. Eventually at a gate, the walled track reverts to a footpath. Bear right following the signs for Threshfield which will take you back to your car.

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