Steel Rigg & Hadrian’s Wall Walk

Route: ..........................
Grade: Moderate
Distance: 4 miles / 6.5 km
Time: 2 hours - 2 hours 30 mins
Map: OS OL43 Explorer 1:25000 Hadrian’s Wall
Start & Parking: Steel Rigg - National Park Car Park

Start OS Grid Ref: NY 752 677
Local Services: Haltwhistle & Bardon Mill
Terrain: Footpaths, tracks, stiles, gates
Description: A circular walk along one of the most scenic sections of Hadrian’s Wall involves some short, sharp ascents

Please keep dogs under close control, livestock grazing.

A Leave the car park by the wicket gate in the far corner of the wall, signposted ‘Hadrian’s Wall’. Follow the footpath straight on.

B When you meet Hadrian’s Wall turn left through the gate. Follow the Wall down the grassy bank to the paved footpath. Turn left onto this path and climb steeply up the stone steps to the top of Peel Crags. Great views from here.

C Keep following the path alongside Hadrian’s Wall (it goes up and down a fair bit!) to Milecastle 39* and then the tree at Sycamore Gap. *Milecastles are fortified gateways, built every Roman mile, often protecting weak points along the Wall.

D Keep to the path alongside the Wall and then up to the top of Highshield Crags, where you look down to Craig Lough, a glacial lake. Take care along the crags - there are steep drops!

E Cross the farm track and keep to the paved path following it through the gate, signed ‘Housesteads’. Continue straight ahead up the grassy footpath to a stone step stile on your left by Hotbank Farm gate, near to the farm buildings.

F Cross the stone stile, and head straight on, keeping the farm buildings on your left. Go through the gate and follow the track to a ladder stile by a gate.

G Turn immediately to your left and go over a step stile by the footpath sign. Head straight across the field, and over the stile. Cross the next field to the footpath sign.

H Turn onto the farm track until you reach a ladder stile. Cross the stile and head across the next field to an enclosure and barn.

I Keep the dry stone wall on your right, and follow the path, which becomes a farm track. Continue along this track until you reach the tarmac road. Turn left onto the road, and head uphill back to the car park.
**Directions - To the walk start point**

**From Newcastle:** Follow the A69 west, just after Hexham take the A6079 (Acomb). At crossroads turn left onto the B6318 (Military Road) for approx 12 miles until you come to The Sill, National Landscape Discovery Centre/YHA. Turn right up the hill to Steel Rigg View Car Park which is on your right.

**From Carlisle:** Follow the A69 east for approx 18 miles. Turn left onto the B6318 (Military Road) at Greenhead. After approx 5 miles at The Sill, National Landscape Discovery Centre turn left up to Steel Rigg View Car Park which is on your right.

**Public Transport Information**

T: 0871 2002233  www.traveline.org.uk

Hadrian’s Wall Bus AD122

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**Local facilities**

The Sill: National Landscape Discovery Centre has an amazing interactive exhibition explaining how our landscapes have changed over thousands of years and continue to evolve. The shop sells a wide range of locally crafted gifts. You can relax in the cafe and savour the local food then take a walk up the whin grassland rooftop viewing area. Alongside is new B6 bed Youth Hostel. Hadrian’s Wall Bus AD122 calls in at The Sill.

The Twice Brewed Inn on the Military Road offers a wide range of refreshments and serves meals in the bar and restaurant. Bardon Mill is 4 miles south and has a village shop/cafe. There is also a pub, petrol and pottery in the village.

The small town of Haltwhistle is 4 miles west, and has cafes, hotels, small supermarkets, petrol, train station and, in the summer, an open air swimming pool!

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**A little bit of history**

The Emperor Hadrian gave orders for the Wall to be built in AD122, probably to act as a barrier that allowed Roman soldiers to control movements of people coming into or leaving Roman Britain. It is 73 miles (117 km) or 80 Roman miles long and took about six years to build!

The Vallum runs parallel to Hadrian’s Wall and is a flat-bottomed ditch (in some places a double ditch) with a mound either side. Originally it could only be crossed at a Roman Fort.

The Military Road (B6318) was built following the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745 when the bad condition of the road between Newcastle and Carlisle prevented General George Wade moving his troops to stop Bonnie Prince Charlie’s march south from Scotland. A new road was built and has been known since as the Military Road.

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**Wildlife to look out for**

This area is dominated by the dramatic whin sill ridge along which Hadrian’s Wall is built. This rock was here 295 million years before the Romans. Look out for rare whin grassland with species such as wild chive, thyme, biting stonecrop and mountain pansy.

Birds such as golden plover, curlew and skylark can often be seen over the moorland whilst kestrel fly around the crags on the Wall.

Pipistrelle and other bats use the local farmhouses and barns as roosts. Look out for them flying around The Sill at dusk!

Sycamore Gap on Hadrian’s Wall is a lovely photo spot. Although not a native tree it is worth walking to.

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*Photos ©: David Taylor, North East Wildlife, NNPA.*