

WANDERER

KNARESBOROUGH AND THE NIDD GORGE

Distance:

5^{1/2}
Miles

Time:

2^{1/2}
Hours

Last month we wandered alongside the lower reaches of the river Nidd near Tockwith where the river flows sluggishly through the flat fields of the Vale of York towards its confluence with the Ouse. This walk of about five and a half miles to the west of Knaresborough includes another stretch beside the Nidd. Here it's a different river flowing, often quite fast, through a rocky, tree-fringed gorge. The walk also explores some of the other land between Knaresborough and Harrogate. If, travelling up the slope between Knaresborough and Harrogate on the main road, you wondered what lay between - here's your chance to find out.

Directions

1 At the platform exit go left uphill on Kirkgate (use the underpass if coming to the station from the car park). At the end of Kirkgate turn right, quickly coming to a gateway to the right of the police station. Go through this across the car park towards the ruined castle. Pass this to the left heading towards the war memorial. To the left of the memorial (almost at the back of the museum) there's a gap in the wall. Go through and down some steps. Cross a path in the old motte to go straight on up steps into Bebra Gardens. Here turn right then left to approach a pool. Just before this turn right down more steps. Go right again down more steps and at the bottom turn left onto the tarmac road Waterside. Where this forks keep right soon arriving at a busy main road.

2 Cross the road and go right over the river bridge. Proceed uphill. Just past the last house on the right cross the road at the 'Ringway Footpath' sign. Follow this path with a wire fence on the right to stile. Go over into a narrow grassy strip which quickly widens into a field. Keep left to find stile in the corner. Cross and continue with a hedge on the left to a further stile after which the hedge is on the right. At a dip pass through the gap and turn half right (not through the gate to the right) to follow the path alongside the hedge on the right. Continue into the next small field to approach the railway at a gate.

3 Cross carefully and go on along a clear path with a golf course to the right. Soon houses appear on the left and the path swings sharp left to pass between gardens to emerge onto a road. Turn right here soon coming to the main road (A59) on the edge of Starbeck.

4 To continue the walk cross the road and go right along the pavement for 250 metres to find Bilton Hall Drive (you can return to Knaresborough on frequent buses along the road or get back to York by going left to Starbeck station). Go down the tarmac drive turning left at the end onto the 'Beryl Burton Cycleway'.

5 About 200 metres after the cycleway kinks take the path signed 'Knaresborough Round' to the right down a stoned track. Follow this into Woodland Trust land. Keep on the track coming to a fenced area on the left and a steep bank on the right. At a path fork keep right ahead downhill. After some steps keep straight on towards the river where you turn left. The path continues coming to a boardwalk and then a footbridge over the river.

6 Cross the bridge and turn immediately right alongside the river. Keep to the riverside on a narrow path, quite rough in places, until steps take you up away from the bank to a stoned track. Take this to the right. Ignore a path to the right, soon going downhill and ignoring a further crossing path. The track comes back down to the river where you continue along the bank passing a seat. Eventually you leave the woodland with private gardens to the left but the river still on the right.

Where the path comes to a wire fence turn sharp left away from the river uphill between gardens. At the residential road turn right, then following it round to the left.



Getting there

Start in Knaresborough. If driving the best parking spot is the large car park to the right of the main road at the bottom of the hill just before the bridge over the river. Travelling to Knaresborough by train is easy with hourly departures from York taking about 30 minutes. The directions below are from the railway station. If parking join the walk by crossing the main road from the car park entrance, going down Waterside opposite then climbing up the footpath Water Bag Bank on the left to the station.

Refreshments

There are loads of options in Knaresborough for the start and finish of the walk including the Old Ticket Office tea room at the station. Mid walk refreshments can be obtained by diverting down the main road to Starbeck (as indicated at point 4 of the Directions).

What to see

There's a huge amount of variety to this walk. As well as its standard attractions (castle, viaduct, market square, etc.), Knaresborough has a lot more to offer in its backstreets, parks and riverside. The walk towards Starbeck is through quiet fields with good views back over the town. The main interest though, has to be the woodland and river of the Nidd Gorge. The mix of trees (this is a good walk for autumn colour), abundant wildlife and feeling of remoteness belie its proximity to Harrogate. Various birds frequent the river: there's a good chance of seeing heron, kingfisher, dipper and grey wagtail amongst other species.

7 Turn right at the main road following it back towards Knaresborough taking care on the often narrow pavement. To return to the station cross the road at the mini roundabout and go down Church Lane almost opposite (if returning to the riverside carpark go right at the roundabout downhill). Continue into the church grounds going to the right of the church taking the alleyway ahead back to the station.