

Walking with THE WANDERER

Boston Spa and Thorp Arch Time: 3 hours | Distance: 6 miles

IS THIS WALK FOR ME?

While not especially long, this walk does have a few minor challenges. There's a climb at Direction Point 5, high stiles to cross at Direction Point 3, and sections that can be a bit overgrown in summer and wet in winter. About a kilometre of the walk (Direction Point 5) is on a road, but it carries limited traffic and has good visibility.

GETTING THERE

The recommended starting point is the centre of Boston Spa. There is a free car park adjacent to the start point. Alternatively, park considerably on nearby roads. It would also be possible to park and start near Direction Point 6, on the edge of Bramham. There are no direct buses from York to Boston Spa. It is possible to travel on the infrequent 412

service to Wetherby and change for the hourly Transdev service 7 to the start. Another option is to travel via Coastliner to Tadcaster and change for the infrequent 492 service. Neither operate on Sunday.

REFRESHMENTS

There are several bars and cafes in the centre of Boston Spa. The only option en route is the Pax pub in

There's lots of variety on this walk. A stretch of riverside, well-cared-for farmland, more views than might be expected, a repurposed railway viaduct, as well as the handsome village centres of Boston Spa and Thorp Arch.

Thorp Arch.

WHAT TO SEE

Boston Spa has some fine Georgian and Victorian buildings. The walk passes the spa buildings on the river. There are good views north on the ascent and descent to and from the edge of Bramham. The railway viaduct carrying the cycle track over the river is an impressive structure.

Directions

1/ Starting from the junction of High Street and Bridge Street, take the latter going downhill. Before the bridge, take the signed footpath right down slope to the riverside, at which turn right. Now follow the river, soon passing through the Spa Bath buildings, for about 800 metres until a signed footpath junction.

2/ Turn right away from the river on an enclosed path, which soon widens to a track and reaches a main road. Cross and turn left on the narrow pavement. Continue for about 300 metres, until a footpath sign points into a farmyard just over a bridge.

3/ Go through the gate and head straight through the yard, exiting at its right corner. In a few metres, go through a gate following tractor tracks over grass, with a pond to the left. Go right with the tracks up a bank, then turn left under power lines along the top of the bank. Continue with a wire fence to the left to double stiles. Over this, keep close to the left edge of the small fields, crossing further stiles. After climbing the final stile, you'll reach a tarmac lane at a bridge.

4/ Turn left over the bridge, but in 60 metres, take the signed footpath right with a wire fence left. At the corner, stay with the fence to reach a low stile. Over this, go right alongside the hedge to a gap giving access to a crossing path. Turn right and follow the enclosed path until it reaches a tarmac lane.

5/ Go ahead (left) on the lane. Now follow this for about 1000 metres, eventually climbing quite steeply. After cresting the hill, and just before a 20mph speed limit sign, turn left into Heygate Lane. (To visit

Bramham village, continue ahead then turn right into High Street.)

6/ Now follow Heygate Lane (a dead-end, unmade road with no traffic), ignoring a track off right and later an unsigned crossing footpath, for about 1600 metres until approaching a metal barrier. Here, ignore the signed path left before it, instead taking the signed path 25 metres beyond, which turns sharp right, initially alongside a hedge. Keep ahead with a farm away to the left, until meeting a track.

7/ Turn right on the track, but in 30 metres, go left through a metal hand gate sandwiched between larger gates. Keep to the wooden fence on the left. At the fence end, go left then right in the corner with trees to the left. At the end of the field, go through a metal gate and walk through a thicket to reach the left edge of a field. Follow this left, then right with buildings to the left. At a farm track, turn right, but in 25 metres, turn left beside a metal gate with a wooden fence, and then a marshy area/pond to the left. Go through a metal gate, cross a plank bridge in a few metres (take care, easy to misstep and go into the ditch), then continue alongside a garden wall. Cross a low stone stile, after which, go ahead on the tarmac drive to a staggered crossroads. Turn left, continuing to a main road.

8/ Cross and turn left on the pavement. Continue for about 150 metres, until

a gate on the right gives access to the 665 cycle route. Now take this tarmac track, soon passing houses on the left, then descending to cross the river on the disused railway viaduct.

9/ About 75 metres after crossing the viaduct, and just before a sign pole and pylons, leave the tarmac, turning left on a worn path that drops steeply down to a concrete track. Go ahead (right) on this, staying with it as it turns right. At a house, go left, now on a tarmac surface, to reach a road at Thorp Arch church.

10/ Turn right, but in about 100 metres, just before a 40mph limit sign, turn off left through a wooden gate. Keep ahead to another gate, after which, continue near the left edge of fields through further gates. After a tennis court, go through one further gate to pass houses and reach a road.

11/ Turn left through Thorp Arch village, keeping ahead at the green then descending with the road to the bridge over the river. Cross and continue uphill to the centre of Boston Spa and the starting point.

