

Yorkshire Dales Walking Holiday



In mid-June some 30 Thursday ramblers and spouses spent a week in the Yorkshire Dales organised by our leader Philip Shaw. Having grown up in Wharfedale, this was a trip to 'home' territory and was special for me. We met up at Bolton Abbey for a short walk to try out hill muscles hardly used around Cambridge. Was this an initiation test? If so, we all passed, despite one unwanted ducking while crossing the river by stepping stones.



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After a guided tour around Bolton Priory we moved to Malham, our base for the next five days - four walking and a non-walking day the middle. Walking days included a main walk and a shorter version or an alternative to allow people

choice. This set up was used on last summers' Italian trip organised by Philip and proved to be very popular.

On our non-walking day we made a round trip by train on the Settle-Carlisle line from Settle to Appleby-in-Westmoreland, famous for its' annual horse fair. This was the one really rainy day in the week and meant that our guide had to amuse us by describing what we would have seen but for the rain. In the evening we enjoyed a fine dinner at Amerdale House, a Michelin listed restaurant in Arncliffe, known for being where Charles Kingsley wrote part of The Water Babies.



We did two all day walks around Malham plus one from Buckden in upper Wharfedale and one more strenuous one in Dentdale. For me, the scenic highlights were on the first walk which included the spectacular gorge of Gordale Scar and the amphitheatre shaped 80m high cliffs of



Malham Cove where we had great views of a pair of Peregrine falcons with four young. The walk was led by Tony Parrott, a founder member of the Thursday ramblers, who now lives in the Dales. Being a geographer and having local knowledge he was able to explain the complexities of the local landscape with its' cliffs and limestone pavements plus disappearing and reappearing streams.

A different take:

As an 'I don't do hills', 'I don't walk fast ... or too far' wife, I had a thoroughly enjoyable week on a walking holiday with the Thursday walking group.



I wasn't the only spouse who for one reason or another didn't do some or all of the long or more 'challenging' walks. Our little band of changing members was usually led by Derek Smith who could read a map and looked after us but announced that it was 'like herding cats'! We were a happy, amiable group who enjoyed what we were doing. The usual format was that we would meet the striders partway round the walk, join up for a picnic lunch and complete the walk with them. This usually worked but not always: hence the umbrellas and the shopping bags whilst we searched for the walkers and/or the picnic spot!

The scenery around Malham is amazing: craggy limestone contrasting with flowering meadows. The recent restoration of traditional flowering hay meadows and far fewer cropping sheep in this area has softened the landscape and made it so much more attractive – to me at least.

We stayed in Malham itself, a few in B&B's but most of us in Beck Hall, where we all ate together in the evenings. Beck Hall did us proud. It is in a beautiful setting, we had comfortable beds, decent food and amiable hosts. I'd go back.

On Thursday as a 'not really' walker I opted to be part of a splinter group who went to Saltaire village, now a World Heritage Site, originally built by Titus Salt for the workers at his mill. Now the mill is a huge shop, mainly selling David Hockney prints and every kind of book. We ladies had a very enjoyable day.

All in all, good food, wonderful scenery and, most important of all, great company made this a most enjoyable week away.

