



# Gods Bridge

A circular walk from Bowes village

**Terrain:** a mixture of riverside + meadow paths

**Start/Finish:** Bowes village hall car park (NY996134)

**Distance:** 8 miles/12.9 Km

**Climb:** 650 feet/200 metres

**Time:** allow 4 hours

**Maps:** Ordnance Survey 1:25K OL31, OS 1:50K Landranger 92

**Refreshments:** Crosslanes Organic Farm Shop on the A66



**A walk exploring the River Greta valley in the south of County Durham. Along a mixture of quiet country lanes, open moorland and riverside paths. Visiting the waterfalls of Huggill and Mill Force and the stunning 'Gods Bridge' a natural limestone bridge that spans the River Greta close to West Mellwaters Farm.**

From the car park, turn left and walk along the road towards Gilmonby as far as Gilmonby Bridge, turn right leaving the road to follow the path along side the River Greta, passing Mill Force to reach a field. Head right across the field to join the Pennine Way, turn left and go over the stile to reach a track. Turn left again and follow the track past Swinholme to reach a footbridge over the River Greta. Cross this and go diagonally right across the field to gate in the corner. Go through the gate onto a track, turn left and follow the track until a footpath sign on the right. Leave the track and head uphill across three fields heading for the Sleightholme road, a short detour is needed in the final field to view Huggill Force, which is located in a hidden rocky gorge on your right. Exit the field via a gate onto the minor road, turn right and follow it for roughly two miles over the open moorlands.

Eventually the Pennine Way is re-joined at Sleightholme, leave the road and follow the path on the right across a couple of pastures to Intake Bridge across Sleightholme Beck. Cross the bridge and then climb steeply up the bank behind to reach a stone wall. Turn right and follow the wall as far as a metal gate, go through this and continue across heather moorland to a marker post behind Trough Heads. Turn left and follow the path across the open moorland until a wall it reached, turn left and follow the wall to a gate. Go right through it and head down

the track to reach Gods Bridge over the River Greta. The bridge was formed by river water dissolving the limestone rocks to form caves beneath the bridge, and it's the best example in Britain of a natural bridge formed this way. It's also an ideal lunch/coffee stop.

At Gods Bridge, go through gate in wall to find a new graded track through the fields (permissive path not shown on OS map). This takes you along banks of river, past East Mellwaters to footbridge over Sleightholme Beck at West Charity. After crossing bridge, pass to L of farm, then go R through yard. The track then turns L and heads through fields towards Lady Myres. Pass through farm and continue on track to reach a finger post. This is where you re-join the outward route for a short section. Turn L and head across field to reach footbridge over River Greta.

Cross footbridge and climb to Swinholme to join lane heading back towards Bowes. There are good views of the castle from here. On reaching stile, cross fence and follow Pennine Way back into Bowes, crossing four fields to reach a lane beside the castle. Turn right along this lane passing the church to reach the car park.