

Durham Dales, Tunstall Valley, Wolsingham in Weardale

DISTANCE: 11.8 KM (7.5 MILES)

GRADE OF WALK: MODERATE (Waterproof footwear recommended)

TIME: 3-4 HOURS



The walk takes you from Wolsingham, gateway to Weardale, to the wooded banks of Tunstall Reservoir, walking high on both sides of the valley. The Durham Prince Bishops developed Wolsingham from the 12th Century onwards as deer-hunting country and it is still well-wooded with pleasant grass.

RECOMMENDED ROUTE:

- 1 Leave the car park by the footpath near a gate. Ignoring a track going left, stay beside Waskerley Beck and cross a grassed area diagonally to a kissing gate. The path follows the beck to a small bridge over a mill leat. Cross a step-stile and turn right to a bridge and stile. Cross and keep right above the beck. At a kissing gate turn left along the edge of two fields, beside a hedge.
- 2 Reaching a narrow road, cross to a wide drive and follow it for more than 1.5km, passing Fawnless Hall, Middle Fawnless and Upper Fawnless. Ignore a path let to Upper Fawnless, and stay on the track. Pass through a gate and turn right, choosing the right-hand path leading to two ruins. Pass this, bear left to a stile in a drystone wall, then right to a gate.
- 3 Follow the track around two sides of a conifer plantation overlooking the valley of Waskerley Beck. A green lane descends into the valley, offering glorious views to Wolsingham, to meet a stony track. Bear left past Jofless Cottage to reach High Jofless. Swing right to enter the farmyard and circle the buildings. Descend past the card shed and farm and, after a gate, turn left along the top of a grass field. After another gate, aim half right to a stone stile, continuing in the same line to a gate. Pass the foot of Machine Gill Wood and go on to the gate and road. Turn left to the corner of Tunstall Reservoir.
- 4 Continue past the house. Then take the lakeside path. After the fishing lodge, join the broad briefly then return to the lakeside. Go through wooden kissing gate and turn right along farm road, cross stone bridge and then right through another wooden kissing gate into Backhouse Woods. Follow path through woods along edge of Reservoir and turn left onto a steep winding farm track climbing through Backstone Bank Wood (Site of Special Scientific Interest) to Backstone Bank Farm, and a fine view of the lower valley.
- 5 Just past buildings, bear right on a grass track below wall along the valley edge, then stay close to Fawn Wood. Ignoring side tracks, go on to cross Spring Gill Beck and up through two small gates. Go straight ahead across two large fields, after which there is a fence on the right. Approaching the farmhouse, the track bears slightly left, circle right past buildings of Baal Hill House, a large 16th Century Grade II listed building.
- 6 Take the route directly left across pasture below the farm and follow track cutting through woodland. Follow the left-hand field boundary to a road with executive housing. Turn right along the road for 50 metres and take the indicated footpath left. This path passes bumps in a field, said to be the remains of a hunting lodge. Go through the kissing gate, the cross-field path leads to another, and then a back lane. On reaching the main road, turn right, then right over a stone bridge and right again into the car park.



MAP KEY:

- I** ROUTE START
- TOWN/VILLAGE**
- PH** PUB
- P** PARKING
- C** CAFÉ

POINTS OF INTEREST

- A** Backstone Bank Wood (Site of Special Scientific Interest)
- B** Baal Hill House

TRAVEL & TRANSPORT:

HOW TO GET THERE

From the A1 take the A689 to join the B6296

START/PARKING

Demesne car park on the B6296 at Wolsingham.

OS Map Grid Reference NZ076376

EXPLORER MAP OL 31