



Yoredale Way

THE COMPLETE GUIDE



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Overview

Yoredale Way: A River Ure Walk Through Wensleydale

The Yoredale Way is a **116 km point-to-point walk in northern England**, following the River Ure through Wensleydale from Kirkby Stephen to Boroughbridge. The Low Route is usually walked in **6 days** and is **moderate**: manageable for experienced walkers, but with a high, exposed first day over the fells above Mallerstang. It suits hikers who want Dales villages, riverside paths, market towns and historic sites without the infrastructure of a fully waymarked National Trail.

Route Overview

The primary Low Route runs **Kirkby Stephen to Boroughbridge**, heading downstream after the opening climb to the source of the Ure near Hell Gill and High Seat. From there it drops through Cotterdale to Hardraw and Hawes, then follows Wensleydale through Sedbusk, Askrigg, Aysgarth, West Witton, Wensley, Leyburn, Middleham, Jervaulx Abbey, Masham and Ripon before finishing at Boroughbridge. Kirkby Stephen is on the Settle-Carlisle railway; York is the main rail hub for the eastern end. For a fully recognised National Trail nearby, compare the **Yorkshire Wolds Way**; other river-valley walks include the **Wye Valley Walk** and **Annandale Way**.

History of the Yoredale Way

The Yoredale Way was devised as a recreational long-distance walk in the 20th century. J.K.E. Piggin's 1981 Dalesman guidebook described a 100-mile route from York to Kirkby Stephen, tracing the Ure towards its Pennine source. The shorter Low Route from Kirkby Stephen to Boroughbridge was later published by Pocket Routes and is registered with the Long Distance Walkers Association. The name preserves the older Yore/Yoredale name for the River Ure and Wensleydale.

Notable highlights

- **Mallerstang and the source of the Ure:** The wild opening section climbs above Kirkby Stephen to the watershed near Hell Gill and High Seat, the route's highest and most remote ground.
- **Hawes and the Wensleydale Creamery:** Hawes is a key upper-Wensleydale stop with shops, pubs, the Dales Countryside Museum and the creamery associated with Wensleydale cheese.
- **Aysgarth Falls:** A broad triple flight of limestone waterfalls on the River Ure, with wooded gorge scenery close to the village of Aysgarth.
- **Middleham Castle:** A ruined 12th-century fortress and childhood home of Richard III, reached in lower Wensleydale near the racehorse-training town of Middleham.
- **Jervaulx Abbey and Masham:** The route passes the Cistercian ruins of Jervaulx Abbey before reaching Masham, a market town known for its brewing heritage.

Challenges to expect

The main challenge is the **first day over open Pennine fell**, where weather, exposure and navigation matter. The Yoredale Way is **not continuously waymarked**, so carry the guidebook and OS mapping, especially near Mallerstang. After that, the walking is mostly lower-level but still includes muddy field

paths, riverside sections, farm tracks and repeated day-after-day mileage. Book accommodation ahead in smaller villages.

Key Data

Country	United Kingdom, England
Distance	116 km
Duration	6 days
Difficulty	Moderate
Trail type	Point to point
Elevation gain/loss	1800 m
Highest point	709 m
Terrain & landscape	Mountain, Rural, Forest
Trail surface	Dirt, Grass, Gravel
Accommodation	Guesthouses, Hotels, Campsites
Average daytime temp.	14°C
Chance of rainfall	High
Estimated cost	\$
Optimal season	Spring, Summer, Autumn
Accessibility	Family Friendly, Pet Friendly
Facilities	Restrooms, Water Sources, Campsites
Permits & fees	No permits or fees

Introduction

The Yoredale Way is a 116 km point-to-point walk following the River Ure from Kirkby Stephen to Boroughbridge, tracing the historic line of “Yore” through Wensleydale. It suits walkers who want a quieter Dales journey: river paths, field tracks, market towns and limestone scenery, with one serious fell crossing at the start.

The route begins with its wildest day, climbing out from Kirkby Stephen over the Pennine fells towards the watershed near High Seat and Hell Gill Bridge. After that, the character changes sharply, dropping into the dale for lower-level walking through places such as Hawes, Askrigg, Aysgarth, Middleham, Masham and Ripon.

This is not a National Trail and it is not continuously waymarked, so it asks more self-reliance than its gentle riverside sections might suggest. A guidebook, OS mapping and sound weather judgement are especially important on Day 1 over Mallerstang, where the ground is open, exposed and remote.

For most reasonably experienced walkers, the six-day schedule is practical and rewarding, with accommodation in Dales villages and market towns along the way. Beds are thinner in the upper dale, and transport at both ends needs planning because neither Kirkby Stephen town centre nor Boroughbridge has a mainline station.

This guide covers the stages, daily planning, accommodation, food, transport, terrain and common mistakes to avoid.

Stage-by-Stage Guide

Distances below are approximate and follow the standard six-day Low Route itinerary from Kirkby Stephen to Boroughbridge. The Yoredale Way is not continuously waymarked, so every stage should be walked with the guidebook and OS mapping rather than relying on signs alone.

Stage 1: Kirkby Stephen to Garsdale Head — 23 km

This is the defining stage of the walk and the only truly high, exposed day. From Kirkby Stephen, the route leaves the River Eden and climbs out towards Mallerstang, crossing open Pennine fell to the watershed near the source of the River Ure.

The ground is rougher and more serious than the later dale stages: open moorland, rough grass, peat and exposed fell-top walking around Hell Gill Bridge and the high ground near High Seat, the route's high point at 709 m. In poor visibility this is a navigation stage, not a waymarked countryside stroll.

The main landmarks are Mallerstang, Hell Gill Bridge and the remote watershed where the Ure begins its long descent through Wensleydale. The reward is the sense of crossing from the Eden side of the Pennines into the headwaters of Yoredale.

Food and water should be carried from Kirkby Stephen. There are no reliable services to plan around on the fell crossing, and natural water should not be relied on without proper treatment.

Accommodation and services at Garsdale Head are limited. Some itineraries use a taxi link between Garsdale Head and Hawes after this stage, so overnight arrangements and any transfer should be booked in advance. This should be checked before travelling.

Public transport is unusually useful here because both Kirkby Stephen and Garsdale are on the Settle–Carlisle railway, although Kirkby Stephen station is a short distance from the town. Train times, station access and onward transfers should be checked before travelling.

Navigation is the key warning. Carry the Pocket Routes guidebook, OS mapping and a compass, and avoid treating this as a bad-weather option unless fully confident on open fell. The route is exposed to wind, rain and mist, and the lack of continuous waymarking matters most on this first day.

Stage 2: Garsdale Head to Askrigg — 19 km

After the high start, the route drops into the upper dale and begins to take on the gentler character of Wensleydale. The stage passes through Cotterdale and Hardraw before reaching Hawes, then continues by Sedbusk towards Askrigg.

Terrain is mostly lower-level field, lane and dale walking, with a clear contrast from the rough fell ground of Stage 1. Paths can still be wet and muddy after rain, especially where the route crosses fields or follows riverside ground.

Hardraw is the notable early stop, with Hardraw Force reached through the Green Dragon Inn. Hawes is the main settlement of upper Wensleydale and a useful place for resupply, with shops, inns, the Dales Countryside Museum and the Wensleydale Creamery.

Food and water are best planned around Hawes and the start/end points rather than assumed in smaller hamlets. Opening times in the dale can vary seasonally, so this should be checked before travelling.

Askrigg is a practical overnight halt, with accommodation in and around the village, though beds in the upper dale are thinner than in the larger towns. Book ahead, especially in busy walking months.

Garsdale gives rail access at the start of the stage, while Hawes has limited Dales bus services. These services are useful for section-walkers but should not be treated as frequent urban transport; timetables should be checked before travelling.

Navigation becomes less severe than on the Mallerstang crossing, but the route is still not continuously waymarked. Pay attention through field systems, around farms and at lane/path junctions, and keep dogs under close control where livestock is present.

Stage 3: Askrigg to Middleham — 19 km

This is a classic Wensleydale stage, following the dale downstream through a chain of villages and riverside landscapes. From Askrigg the route passes near Bainbridge, then on to Aysgarth, West Witton, Wensley and Leyburn before finishing at Middleham.

The walking is mostly low-level: field paths, riverside sections, farm tracks, parkland and quiet lanes. It is not technically difficult, but wet grass, mud and waterlogged riverside paths can slow the pace after rain.

Aysgarth Falls is the major natural highlight, where the River Ure drops over broad limestone ledges in a wooded gorge. Later, the route moves through the settled lower dale, with Leyburn providing a useful service point before the final approach to Middleham.

Middleham is a strong overnight stop, with the ruined Middleham Castle above the town. The castle is one of the major historical landmarks of the whole route and gives this stage a clear finish rather than just a convenient stopping point.

Food and water are easiest to plan around Askrigg, Leyburn and Middleham. Smaller places such as Aysgarth, West Witton and Wensley may be useful, but opening times and availability should be checked before relying on them.

Accommodation is available in Middleham and nearby Leyburn, giving some flexibility if the preferred overnight stop is full. Leyburn is also one of the more useful places on the route for buses and services, though Dales bus timetables remain limited and should be checked before travelling.

Navigation is mainly about staying disciplined through farmland and settlement edges. The lack of continuous waymarking can still cause missed turns, particularly where paths leave lanes, cross fields or rejoin the river corridor.

Stage 4: Middleham to Masham — 18 km

This stage continues down lower Wensleydale from Middleham to Masham, with the River Ure remaining the organising feature. It is a gentler day than the first stage, but it still needs proper attention to field paths, lanes and river margins.

The route passes Cover Bridge and Jervaulx Abbey, one of the most atmospheric historical sites on the walk. The abbey ruins sit in private parkland, and the surrounding landscape has a more open, estate-like feel than the upper dale.

Terrain is a mix of riverside walking, farm tracks, field paths, quiet lanes and parkland. After prolonged rain, expect mud in low-lying ground and slower going along field edges and near the river.

Food and water should be planned mainly around Middleham at the start and Masham at the end. Do not assume there will be reliable mid-stage supplies unless current opening times have been checked.

Masham is one of the best overnight stops on the route, with accommodation and town services. It is also known for both Theakston and Black Sheep breweries, making it a natural place to finish the day rather than push on.

Road access is straightforward at Middleham, Cover Bridge, Jervaulx Abbey and Masham, but public transport should be checked carefully. Local buses and taxis can be useful for section-walkers, but services in the dale are limited.

Navigation is generally easier than on the opening fell day, yet the route still needs map-and-guidebook attention. Watch for unsigned turns through farmland and avoid drifting onto estate tracks or lanes that feel obvious but are not the route.

Stage 5: Masham to Ripon — 21 km

This is the longest of the lower-dale stages and takes the route from Masham towards the Vale of York. The walking follows the lower Ure through a softer, more open landscape, passing West Tanfield and North Stainley before reaching Ripon.

Terrain is mostly low-level field, riverside and quiet-lane walking. There is little of the exposure found on Stage 1, but the distance still makes this a full day, particularly when paths are muddy or crops and livestock make field walking slower.

West Tanfield is the main village highlight, with the medieval Marmion Tower beside the lower Ure. The approach to Ripon then brings a clear change from dale village to small cathedral city.

Food and water should be carried from Masham, with Ripon the dependable end-of-day service point. Facilities in villages between the two may be limited or seasonal, so this should be checked before travelling.

Ripon has a wider choice of accommodation than the smaller dale settlements and is a practical place to build in flexibility. Ripon Cathedral, with its 7th-century crypt, is the key landmark, and the nightly hornblower tradition is part of the city's identity.

Ripon is also one of the more useful public transport points on the route, with buses serving the wider area, though frequencies are limited compared with mainline rail towns. Timetables should be checked before travelling.

Navigation is lowland rather than mountainous, but do not let that lead to complacency. The main risks are missed field-path exits, muddy riverside sections after rain and the general absence of continuous Yoredale Way waymarking.

Stage 6: Ripon to Boroughbridge — 13 km

The final stage is short by the standards of the route and continues through lowland countryside to Boroughbridge. It is a useful contrast to the long first day: modest distance, gentle terrain and a finish in a historic market town on the River Ure.

The walking is mainly field, riverside and quiet-lane terrain as the Ure approaches the Vale of York. Conditions can still be muddy after rain, but there is no fell exposure or major ascent to manage.

Boroughbridge is the formal finish, a short distance above the Ure's confluence with the Swale and Ouse. The Devil's Arrows, a row of prehistoric standing stones near the town, are the main landmark associated with the finish.

Food and water are straightforward to plan around Ripon at the start and Boroughbridge at the end. Carry enough for the stage rather than depending on minor intermediate options.

Boroughbridge has accommodation and end-of-walk services, but it has no railway station. The usual onward planning is by bus towards Harrogate or York, with York the nearest mainline East Coast hub. Current bus times should be checked before travelling.

Navigation remains important right to the end. The stage may feel easy, but the Yoredale Way is still not a National Trail and does not have continuous acorn-style waymarking, so keep the guidebook or map available until Boroughbridge is reached.

Recommended Itinerary

The Yoredale Way is normally walked in **6 days**, matching the standard guidebook and operator pattern. This is the most practical schedule for independent walkers because it keeps the exposed first day as a single fell crossing, then uses the main Wensleydale villages and market towns for overnight stops.

Accommodation should be booked ahead, especially in the upper dale. The route is not continuously waymarked, so daily distances should be checked against the guidebook, OS mapping or GPX before fixing non-refundable bookings.

Standard 6-day itinerary

Day	From	To	Approx. distance	Why this stage makes sense	Services/accommodation notes
1	Kirkby Stephen	Garsdale Head	23 km	This is the committing day: a long climb out of Kirkby Stephen onto open Pennine fell, crossing the Mallerstang watershed near the source of the Ure and the high ground around High Seat. Keeping it as a single stage avoids having to improvise on the exposed section, but it needs an early start and settled navigation.	Kirkby Stephen is the best place to stock up before starting. Beds are limited around Garsdale Head; some itineraries use a taxi link between Garsdale Head and Hawes, so any transfer must be arranged before walking. Garsdale is on the Settle–Carlisle railway, but timings should be checked before travelling.
2	Garsdale Head	Askrigg	19 km	After the high start, the route drops into the upper dale via Cotterdale, Hardraw and Hawes, then continues through classic Wensleydale country towards Askrigg. This stage links the remote head of the route with a more serviceable village stop.	Hawes is the main service point in upper Wensleydale, with shops, inns and visitor facilities. Askrigg has accommodation, but capacity is not unlimited, so book ahead. If using a Garsdale Head–Hawes transfer, make sure the start-point logistics still fit the walked route.

Day	From	To	Approx. distance	Why this stage makes sense	Services/accommodation notes
3	Askrigg	Middleham	19 km	This is a varied Wensleydale stage, passing near Bainbridge, Aysgarth Falls, West Witton, Wensley and Leyburn before reaching Middleham. It is a logical middle section because it follows the dale downstream while keeping the day to a moderate length.	Leyburn is a useful service town before Middleham. Middleham has accommodation and inns, but it is still worth booking rather than assuming walk-in availability. Allow time around Aysgarth Falls if visiting the falls properly rather than just passing through.
4	Middleham	Masham	18 km	A shorter and steadier day through lower Wensleydale, passing Cover Bridge and Jervaulx Abbey before reaching Masham. It gives a useful recovery after the longer opening and middle stages without making the next day unreasonably long.	Masham is one of the stronger overnight stops on the route, with town services and accommodation. Cover Bridge and Jervaulx Abbey are useful landmarks, but do not rely on intermediate services without checking current opening times.
5	Masham	Ripon	21 km	The route leaves the deeper dale character and follows the lower Ure towards the Vale of York, passing West Tanfield and North Stainley before reaching Ripon. It is one of the longer lowland days, but without the exposed fell character of Day 1.	Ripon has the broadest range of services on the latter part of the route and is a practical final overnight before Boroughbridge. Bus links in this part of North Yorkshire can be useful, but timetables are limited and should be checked before relying on them.
6	Ripon	Boroughbridge	13 km	A short final day to Boroughbridge makes the finish more manageable and leaves time for onward travel. It also avoids turning the lower Ure section into an unnecessarily long final push.	Boroughbridge has no railway station. Plan onward travel by bus towards Harrogate or York, with York the nearest mainline East Coast hub. Current bus times should be checked before booking trains home.

Slower variant

A slower version suits walkers who want more time in the villages, are carrying camping or heavier kit, or prefer not to string several 18–23 km days together. The most sensible places to break the route are the better-served settlements already on the line, especially **Hawes**, **Leyburn** and **Ripon**.

A common slower approach is to keep **Day 1 from Kirkby Stephen to Garsdale Head** intact, because the opening fell crossing has few simple break points, then split one or more of the Wensleydale stages. For example, Garsdale Head to Askrigg can be divided around **Hawes**, and Askrigg to Middleham can be eased by stopping around **Leyburn**. Exact revised distances should be checked against official mapping before booking.

This variant is best for walkers who value margin: time for Aysgarth Falls, Middleham Castle, Jervaulx Abbey or Ripon, and less pressure if riverside paths are muddy after rain. It also gives more flexibility if accommodation availability dictates where the overnights fall.

Faster variant

A 5-day itinerary is possible for strong, efficient walkers, but it is less forgiving. The cleanest compression is usually to combine the final two stages, walking **Masham to Boroughbridge via Ripon** in one long lower-level day of about **34 km**.

This avoids overloading the exposed opening day, which should not be treated as an easy distance to extend. It also preserves the logical upper-dale stages through Hawes, Askrigg, Middleham and Masham.

The faster option suits fit walkers with light packs, reliable navigation and an early start on the final long day. It is not ideal for walkers depending on uncertain bus connections at the finish, or for anyone who wants meaningful time in Ripon before continuing to Boroughbridge.

Planning the Route

How many days to allow

The Yoredale Way Low Route is normally planned as a **6-day walk**, and the natural overnight stops are strongly shaped by the available villages and market towns down Wensleydale. The standard stages keep the days reasonably even after the exposed opening crossing, with the final day into Boroughbridge being shorter.

A faster itinerary is possible only for fit walkers who are comfortable combining long lowland days and who have accommodation or transport arranged in advance. It is usually not worth rushing the first day: the crossing from Kirkby Stephen towards Garsdale Head is the highest, most remote and least forgiving part of the route, and poor weather can slow navigation significantly.

A slower itinerary suits walkers who want more time around Hawes, Aysgarth Falls, Middleham, Masham or Ripon. Adding rest or half-days is straightforward in the larger settlements, but extra overnight stops in the upper dale depend on accommodation availability and should be booked ahead.

Standard 6-day structure

Day	Stage	Approx. distance	Planning notes
1	Kirkby Stephen to Garsdale Head	23 km	The key committing day: open Pennine fell, rough ground, exposure and navigation over the Mallerstang watershed near High Seat. Check the forecast and carry proper mapping.
2	Garsdale Head to Askrigg	19 km	Some itineraries use a taxi link between Garsdale Head and Hawes because accommodation is thinner in the upper dale. Confirm any transfer before booking the rest of the walk.
3	Askrigg to Middleham	19 km	A lower-level Wensleydale day through the Ure valley, with Aysgarth, West Witton, Wensley and Leyburn on or near the line of travel.
4	Middleham to Masham	18 km	Rivers, field paths and quiet lower-dale walking via Cover Bridge and Jervaulx Abbey.
5	Masham to Ripon	21 km	A longer low-level day as the dale opens towards the Vale of York, passing West Tanfield and North Stainley.
6	Ripon to Boroughbridge	13 km	A short final stage, useful for onward travel by bus from Boroughbridge.

Treat these stages as a framework rather than a guarantee. Accommodation, luggage-transfer arrangements and the Day 1 weather forecast are the three things most likely to dictate the exact plan.

Direction and route choice

This page covers the **shorter Low Route from Kirkby Stephen to Boroughbridge**, not the older, longer York to Kirkby Stephen route that also uses the Yoredale Way name. When booking, downloading route

files or buying a guidebook, check that the material refers to the Low Route and the Kirkby Stephen to Boroughbridge itinerary.

Walking downstream makes practical sense. After the initial climb out of Kirkby Stephen to the high ground near the source of the Ure, the route generally follows the river down Wensleydale towards the Vale of York. Reversing the route is possible in principle, but it leaves the hardest, highest and most exposed terrain until the end and can complicate transport and accommodation planning.

Accommodation planning

Accommodation is mixed, with hotels, inns, guesthouses, B&Bs and some campsites in the Dales villages and market towns. The main overnight planning points are **Garsdale Head, Hawes, Askrigg, Middleham, Masham, Ripon and Boroughbridge**, depending on the chosen itinerary.

Beds are thinner in the upper dale than in the larger towns lower down the route. Day 1 in particular needs careful planning because Garsdale Head is a transport point on the Settle–Carlisle line, but not a large service centre. Some organised itineraries use a taxi link between Garsdale Head and Hawes, so walkers arranging their own trip should check whether they need the same solution.

Book accommodation before committing to travel tickets, especially in spring, summer and early autumn. If using baggage transfer, make sure each overnight stop is acceptable to the operator and that any Garsdale Head or Hawes transfer is included rather than assumed.

Food and water

Food planning is simple on paper but should not be left to chance. The route passes several villages and market towns, but services are not evenly spaced and not every small settlement should be assumed to have reliable supplies.

Carry lunch and snacks for each day, particularly for the first stage over Mallerstang and the longer lowland day from Masham to Ripon. Hawes has shops and inns, and the larger settlements later in the walk are better places to plan around for meals and resupply.

Water should be carried from the start of each stage. Although the route follows the River Ure for much of its length, river water should not be treated as a dependable or ready drinking source without proper treatment, and the open fell section on Day 1 requires enough water to be carried from the outset.

Navigation and maps

Navigation is one of the most important planning issues on this route. The Yoredale Way is a registered LDWA Long Distance Path, but it is **not a waymarked National Trail** and does not have continuous acorn signage.

Use the Pocket Routes guidebook by Stuart Greig together with OS mapping. The relevant OS Explorer sheets are **OL19, OL30 and OL302**. A GPS file can be useful as a backup, but it should not replace the ability to navigate with map and compass, especially on the Day 1 fell crossing above Mallerstang.

The lower Wensleydale sections are generally less serious, but field paths, riverside paths and farm tracks can still be awkward in poor visibility, after heavy rain or where trods are indistinct. Build in enough time for route-finding rather than planning every day as if it were a waymarked trail.

Weather and seasonal timing

Spring, summer and autumn are the normal seasons for the walk. The first day is the weather-sensitive one: High Seat and the Mallerstang watershed are exposed, high and remote compared with the rest of the route.

If the forecast is poor for Day 1, consider delaying the start or using transport to adjust the itinerary. Once in Wensleydale, the walking is mostly lower-level, but riverside and field sections can become muddy or waterlogged after rain.

Transport and section hiking

Section hiking is practical, but it requires timetable planning. Kirkby Stephen and Garsdale are on the Settle–Carlisle railway, although Kirkby Stephen station is a short distance from the town. The finish at Boroughbridge has no railway station, so onward travel is by bus towards Harrogate or York, with York the nearest mainline East Coast hub.

Dales bus services around Hawes, Leyburn and Ripon can help with shorter sections, missed stages or rest-day logistics, but they are limited. Timetables should be checked before travelling, especially outside peak visitor periods or if a connection is needed at the start or end of the day.

For a shorter trip, the most practical split points are the places with known transport or larger settlement services: Kirkby Stephen, Garsdale, Hawes, Leyburn, Ripon and Boroughbridge. Any plan that depends on a bus, taxi or rail connection should be checked before accommodation is booked.

What to prioritise before setting off

1. **Book the upper-dale nights early**, especially around Garsdale Head, Hawes and Askrigg.
2. **Resolve any Garsdale Head to Hawes taxi link** before relying on it.
3. **Carry the guidebook and OS mapping**, not just a phone route line.
4. **Check the Day 1 fell forecast** and be ready to adapt the start if conditions are poor.
5. **Plan food day by day**, carrying lunch rather than assuming village supplies.
6. **Check current train, bus and taxi options** for both trail ends and any section-hiking exits.

Towns, Villages and Overnight Stops

Accommodation is straightforward in the main Wensleydale towns, but less predictable in the upper dale and around the first night. Book the whole route in advance if walking the standard 6-day itinerary, especially if relying on a Garsdale Head finish on Day 1 or a taxi link onward to Hawes.

The most practical overnight stops for the standard itinerary are:

Stage	Usual overnight stop	Planning note
Before Day 1	Kirkby Stephen	Best placed for starting the walk without a morning transfer.
Day 1	Garsdale Head, or Hawes by taxi link	Beds are limited around the high first-day finish; many itineraries use a transfer.
Day 2	Askrigg	Good upper-Wensleydale village stop after passing Hawes.
Day 3	Middleham	Useful lower-Wensleydale base with accommodation.
Day 4	Masham	Market-town overnight stop with pubs and brewing associations.
Day 5	Ripon	Small cathedral city and the largest service centre near the end of the route.
Day 6	Boroughbridge	Finish town; good place to stay if not leaving immediately.

Kirkby Stephen

Kirkby Stephen is the start of the Yoredale Way, beside the River Eden, before the route climbs out towards Mallerstang and the source country of the River Ure. It is the most practical place to stay the night before starting, because Day 1 is long, exposed and navigation-heavy.

Kirkby Stephen is served by the Settle–Carlisle railway, although the station is a short distance from the town rather than in the centre. It is also served by buses, but current times should be checked before travelling.

Start Day 1 with food, water and weather protection already sorted. Once the route leaves town for the Pennine fell crossing there are no reliable town-level facilities until the far side of the high ground.

Mallerstang and Hell Gill Bridge

Mallerstang and Hell Gill Bridge sit on the wild opening section, where the route crosses high Pennine ground near the watershed and the source of the Ure. This is not a normal overnight stop for most walkers; it is a remote, exposed part of the first day rather than a service base.

The main planning issue here is not accommodation but self-sufficiency. Carry the guidebook, OS mapping and a compass, and do not depend on waymarks across this section.

Garsdale Head

Garsdale Head is the standard end point for Day 1 on the 6-day itinerary. It comes after roughly 23 km from Kirkby Stephen and after the hardest navigation and weather-exposed ground of the whole walk.

Accommodation is thin in this area, so do not arrive without a booking. Some organised or self-planned itineraries use a taxi link between Garsdale Head and Hawes; if relying on this, arrange it before the trip and reconfirm the timing.

Garsdale is on the Settle–Carlisle railway, which gives a useful bailout or access option on the first day. Train times should be checked before travelling, especially if planning to use it as a contingency.

Cotterdale and Hardraw

Cotterdale and Hardraw come early on Day 2 as the route moves from the high country into upper Wensleydale. They are useful landmarks and quieter places on the approach to Hawes rather than the main overnight bases for most itineraries.

Hardraw is worth noting because of Hardraw Force, reached through the Green Dragon Inn. If planning to visit the waterfall, allow time and check current access arrangements locally.

Food and accommodation availability in these smaller places should not be assumed. Hawes is the more reliable service centre nearby.

Hawes

Hawes is the chief town of upper Wensleydale and one of the most useful service points on the route. The Yoredale Way passes through this part of the dale on Day 2 between Garsdale Head and Askrigg.

This is a strong overnight option if splitting the first two days differently, or if using a taxi link from Garsdale Head after Day 1. Accommodation includes the typical Dales mix of inns, guesthouses, B&Bs and some camping options in the wider area, but beds should still be booked ahead in busy periods.

Hawes has shops and inns, making it the key resupply point in the upper dale. It also has the Dales Countryside Museum and the Wensleydale Creamery, but for walkers its main value is practical: food, beds and transport possibilities.

Dales bus services around Hawes can be useful but limited. Timetables should be checked before building an itinerary around them.

Sedbusk

Sedbusk lies on the upper-Wensleydale section between Hawes and Askrigg. It is best treated as a route village rather than a core planning base unless accommodation has been specifically arranged there.

Do not rely on Sedbusk for food or transport without checking in advance. Hawes and Askrigg are the stronger service points on this part of the walk.

Askrigg

Askrigg is the standard overnight stop at the end of Day 2, after roughly 19 km from Garsdale Head. It sits well for walkers following the 6-day schedule, with the next day continuing down Wensleydale

towards Middleham.

Accommodation is available in and around Askrigg and nearby Bainbridge, but the upper dale can be busier and thinner on beds than the larger towns lower down the route. Booking ahead is strongly advised.

Askrigg is a good place to finish a day because it avoids pushing too far beyond upper Wensleydale after the demanding first stage. Food and pub availability can change with season and day of week, so opening times should be checked when booking accommodation.

Bainbridge

Bainbridge is near the route in upper Wensleydale and is often considered alongside Askrigg for accommodation planning. It can work as an alternative overnight location if the walking day and any transfers are arranged sensibly.

Because the route's standard stage is to Askrigg, check the exact distance from your accommodation to the line of the walk before booking. A short off-route stay can be perfectly practical, but only if the access on foot or by taxi is clear.

Aysgarth and Aysgarth Falls

Aysgarth and Aysgarth Falls are passed on the Day 3 section between Askrigg and Middleham. The falls are one of the major natural highlights of the route, where the River Ure drops over broad limestone ledges.

Aysgarth can be used as a shorter-stage overnight stop if not following the standard 6-day schedule. For most walkers on the usual itinerary, it is a daytime stop rather than the end of the day.

If planning a longer break at the falls, build in time for the visit rather than assuming it is just a quick pass-through. Food, toilets, access arrangements and opening times should be checked locally before relying on them.

West Witton and Wensley

West Witton and Wensley sit on the middle Wensleydale part of Day 3, as the route continues downstream towards Leyburn and Middleham. They are useful route villages and potential pacing points.

They are not the main standard overnight stops for the 6-day itinerary. If using either village for accommodation, check exactly where the lodging sits in relation to the route and whether evening food is available.

Leyburn

Leyburn is one of the larger service centres near the route in lower Wensleydale. It is close to the Day 3 line before the route reaches Middleham, and it can be useful for accommodation, food and transport planning.

Leyburn is a practical alternative to Middleham if accommodation availability or personal stage lengths make it fit better. However, the standard itinerary continues to Middleham, so any off-route or between-

village transfer details should be planned before booking.

Dales bus services around Leyburn can be useful but are limited. Check current timetables if using Leyburn as a join, leave or rest-point option.

Middleham

Middleham is the standard overnight stop at the end of Day 3, after roughly 19 km from Askrigg. It is a strong walking base in lower Wensleydale, with accommodation available and a useful position before the route continues towards Cover Bridge, Jervaulx Abbey and Masham.

The town is also notable for Middleham Castle, associated with Richard III, and for its racehorse-training character. For route planning, the main advantage is simple: it sits at the right point for the 6-day schedule and has more overnight potential than the smaller villages immediately before and after it.

Book ahead, particularly if walking in the main spring-to-autumn season. Evening food should be checked when reserving a room, as rural pub and restaurant opening patterns can vary.

Cover Bridge and Jervaulx Abbey

Cover Bridge and Jervaulx Abbey lie on Day 4 between Middleham and Masham. They make good daytime landmarks on the riverside section, but they are not the usual overnight bases.

Jervaulx Abbey is set in private parkland, so access arrangements and any charges should be checked before planning a visit. Do not rely on this stretch for full walker services; start the day from Middleham with the supplies needed to reach Masham.

Masham

Masham is the standard overnight stop at the end of Day 4, after roughly 18 km from Middleham. It is one of the best service towns on the route and a sensible place to restock before the lower-Ure stages.

Accommodation is available in the town, with the usual mix of inns, guesthouses and B&B-style options. It is still worth booking ahead, as Masham is a popular market town and not just a walking stop.

Masham is well known for brewing and is home to both Theakston and Black Sheep. For hikers, that usually means good pub potential, but current food service and opening hours should still be checked when planning the evening.

West Tanfield

West Tanfield is reached on Day 5 between Masham and Ripon, where the dale opens out towards the Vale of York. It is a useful village landmark on the lower River Ure and is noted for Marmion Tower.

It can work as a break point, but it is not the standard overnight stop on the 6-day schedule. If planning a shorter stage to or from West Tanfield, accommodation and food must be checked in advance rather than assumed.

North Stainley

North Stainley lies on the Day 5 approach towards Ripon. It is best treated as a route village and pacing point rather than a primary overnight base.

The practical aim on this stage is usually to reach Ripon, which gives the strongest range of end-of-day services. Carry enough food and water from Masham to avoid depending on small-village facilities.

Ripon

Ripon is the standard overnight stop at the end of Day 5, after roughly 21 km from Masham. It is the largest service centre near the final part of the walk and is a good place to stay before the shorter last day to Boroughbridge.

Accommodation is available in Ripon, and the city gives more choice than the smaller villages on either side. It is also the best late-route point for food, resupply and onward transport options.

Ripon is known for its cathedral, including one of the oldest crypts in England, and for the nightly hornblower tradition. These are useful reasons to arrive with time in hand, but the main planning value is its services before the final 13 km stage.

Dales bus services around Ripon can be useful but limited. Check current times before using Ripon as a start, finish, rest-day or section-walk access point.

Boroughbridge

Boroughbridge is the finish of the Yoredale Way, on the River Ure a short distance above its confluence with the Swale and Ouse. The final day from Ripon is comparatively short at roughly 13 km, so many walkers can leave the same day if transport lines up.

The town has accommodation options, making it a sensible final-night stop if public transport connections are awkward or if finishing late. It is also close to the Devil's Arrows, the prehistoric standing stones associated with the area.

Boroughbridge has no railway station. Leave by bus towards Harrogate or York, with York the nearest mainline East Coast hub; current bus and train times should be checked before booking onward travel.

Getting to the Start

The Yoredale Way Low Route starts in Kirkby Stephen, Cumbria, in the market town beside the River Eden. The first walking day is a long stage over exposed Pennine fell to Garsdale Head, so aim to arrive the day before rather than trying to combine travel with the opening walk.

By train

Kirkby Stephen is served by the Settle–Carlisle railway. Kirkby Stephen station is outside the town centre, so allow time either to walk in, use a local bus if one fits, or pre-book a taxi. This should be checked before travelling.

Garsdale is also on the Settle–Carlisle line and is passed on Day 1, which can be useful for section-hikers or anyone shortening the route. Do not assume frequent services: Settle–Carlisle train times should be checked carefully before booking accommodation or committing to a same-day connection.

For travel from elsewhere in the UK, the practical rail plan is to join the national rail network to reach the Settle–Carlisle line, then continue to Kirkby Stephen. Exact interchange points depend on where you are travelling from, so check current rail planners before buying tickets.

By bus

Kirkby Stephen is served by buses, and Dales bus services are useful along parts of the wider route, including around Hawes, Leyburn and Ripon. Services in the Dales can be limited, especially outside peak times and seasons, so this should be checked before travelling.

If arriving by bus, build in contingency time. A missed connection can have a large impact here because the first stage is not a short lowland stroll: it crosses open, unsignposted fell country towards the Mallerstang watershed and Garsdale Head.

By car

Driving to Kirkby Stephen is straightforward in principle, but the Yoredale Way is a point-to-point walk finishing in Boroughbridge, not a loop. Leaving a car at the start means arranging a return from Boroughbridge at the end, normally by bus towards Harrogate or York and onward transport from there. This should be checked before travelling.

If parking in Kirkby Stephen for the full walk, arrange long-stay parking in advance through accommodation or a suitable local parking option. Do not assume that ordinary short-stay town parking is appropriate for a six-day hike.

Some walkers may prefer to travel by public transport to the start and leave the car at home, especially because neither trail end has a town-centre mainline station. If using taxis for any part of the journey, book ahead rather than relying on availability on the day.

From the nearest airport

No airport sits directly on the route. The most practical approach is to travel from the airport into the national rail or coach network, then connect onwards to the Settle–Carlisle railway for Kirkby Stephen.

This should be checked before travelling, as the best airport and connection will depend on flight times and origin.

For international arrivals, avoid planning a flight, rail transfer and the first walking stage on the same day. A late arrival into Kirkby Stephen risks putting the exposed Day 1 crossing under unnecessary time pressure.

Where to stay before starting

Kirkby Stephen is the sensible place to stay the night before starting. It puts you at the actual trailhead and allows an early start for the 23 km first stage to Garsdale Head.

This is particularly important because the opening day is the route's highest and most remote section, climbing out over the fells towards the source of the River Ure near High Seat. Start with food, water, guidebook, OS mapping and a weather forecast already sorted before leaving town.

When booking, make clear that you are walking the shorter Yoredale Way Low Route from Kirkby Stephen to Boroughbridge. The name "Yoredale Way" is also associated with an older, longer route, so clarity helps avoid confusion when arranging accommodation, baggage transfer or taxis.

Getting Home from the Finish

The Yoredale Way finishes in Boroughbridge, a market town on the River Ure. It has no railway station, so the normal exit is by bus or taxi to a larger transport hub, especially York for mainline rail connections.

Timetables are the key planning point here. Do not assume late-day services will line up with a final walking day, particularly on Sundays or public holidays; current bus and rail times should be checked before travelling.

By train

There is no train station at Boroughbridge. For long-distance rail travel, plan to reach York, which is the nearest mainline East Coast hub named for this route.

From York, onward trains connect with major destinations on the East Coast Main Line. Exact journey options and fares depend on the day and time of travel, so check rail times before booking accommodation or onward tickets.

If returning to the start, remember that Kirkby Stephen is on the Settle–Carlisle railway, but the station is a short distance from the town. A Boroughbridge-to-Kirkby Stephen return by public transport is likely to involve multiple legs and careful timing; this should be checked before travelling.

By bus

Boroughbridge is left by bus towards Harrogate or York. York is usually the more useful target for national rail connections, while Harrogate may suit some regional journeys or taxi pick-ups.

Do not treat the bus as a turn-up-and-go service. Rural and small-town services can be limited, and evening departures may be sparse or unavailable; check the current timetable for the exact day you finish.

If the final stage from Ripon to Boroughbridge is being walked late in the day, build in a realistic buffer. Missing the last useful bus could mean paying for a taxi or staying overnight in Boroughbridge.

By car/taxi

A pre-booked taxi is the simplest fallback from Boroughbridge, especially for walkers finishing after the last practical bus or travelling with heavy luggage. It is also useful if connecting to a pre-booked train at York and the bus timetable is too tight.

For car logistics, the Yoredale Way is a point-to-point walk rather than a loop. Leaving a car at Boroughbridge works well if transport to Kirkby Stephen has been arranged at the start; leaving a car at Kirkby Stephen and trying to retrieve it after finishing requires a planned public-transport or taxi transfer.

Taxi availability, journey times and prices should be confirmed before travelling. This is particularly important if finishing on a Sunday, in the evening, or outside the main visitor season.

From the nearest airport

No airport is a core part of the Yoredale Way finish logistics. The practical route home is first to reach York or Harrogate by bus or taxi, then continue by rail or other onward transport.

Airport transfers from York or Harrogate are timetable-dependent and should be planned separately. This should be checked before travelling.

Where to stay at the finish

Staying overnight in Boroughbridge is often the least stressful option if the final walking day ends late, if bus times are poor, or if onward rail connections from York do not line up cleanly. It also avoids rushing the last 13 km stage from Ripon.

Accommodation should be booked ahead rather than left to chance, especially at weekends and during busy walking periods. If an early train is needed the next morning, check the first practical bus or pre-book a taxi to the rail hub in advance.

Which Direction Should You Walk?

The Yoredale Way Low Route is best planned **west to east, from Kirkby Stephen to Boroughbridge**. This is the standard guidebook and operator direction, and it fits the logic of the route: climb from the Eden side to the Ure watershed, then follow the River Ure downstream through Wensleydale and into the Vale of York.

Walking in reverse is possible, but it is usually less practical. It puts the highest, most exposed and least waymarked ground at the end of the walk, when legs are tired and weather decisions can be harder to manage.

Standard direction: Kirkby Stephen to Boroughbridge

The main advantage of the standard direction is that the route makes geographical sense. After leaving Kirkby Stephen, the first day tackles the long, exposed crossing over Mallerstang towards the watershed near High Seat and the source of the Ure; after that, the walk steadily loses its upland character and becomes a lower-level journey down Wensleydale.

This direction also gets the hardest navigation day done first. Day 1 is the section where the lack of continuous waymarking matters most, with open fell, rough ground and exposure in poor weather. Once in the dale, the walking is generally lower, gentler and more settled, though still not a waymarked National Trail.

Accommodation planning also fits the established six-day pattern better in this direction: Kirkby Stephen, Garsdale Head, Askrigg, Middleham, Masham, Ripon and Boroughbridge. Beds are thinner in the upper dale, and some itineraries use a taxi link between Garsdale Head and Hawes, so those arrangements should be made before committing to dates.

The finish at Boroughbridge is not a dramatic mountain finale, but it is a practical and satisfying end point on the lower Ure, with onward bus links towards Harrogate and York. York is the nearest mainline East Coast hub for onward travel.

Reverse direction: Boroughbridge to Kirkby Stephen

Walking east to west gives a different psychological shape: the route builds from the lower Ure towards Wensleydale, then finishes with the high Pennine crossing to Kirkby Stephen. Some strong walkers may like that sense of increasing remoteness.

The drawback is that the toughest day comes last. The Mallerstang and High Seat area remains exposed and unsigned whichever way it is walked, so a reverse itinerary should not be treated as an easier option. A poor forecast near the end of the walk could also complicate plans, especially if accommodation or transfers have already been booked.

Reverse transport is workable rather than especially convenient. Boroughbridge has no station, so you would normally reach the start by bus via Harrogate or York; Kirkby Stephen is served by the Settle–Carlisle railway, though the station is a short distance from the town. Current bus and rail times should be checked before travelling.

Weather, wind and climbs

There is no reliable reason to choose a direction on the basis of wind alone. The exposed section over Mallerstang is the key weather-sensitive part of the route, and it needs a proper forecast check in either direction.

In the standard direction, the major ascent comes early as the route climbs out from Kirkby Stephen towards the watershed. In reverse, that upland crossing still has to be dealt with, but it becomes the final major test rather than the opening challenge.

Recommendation

Walk the Yoredale Way **Kirkby Stephen to Boroughbridge** unless there is a specific accommodation or transport reason to reverse it. The standard direction gives the cleanest route narrative, follows the River Ure downstream, matches the usual six-day itinerary, and gets the most exposed navigation section completed at the start of the walk.

Accommodation Along the Route

The Yoredale Way works well as an inn-to-inn walk, but it is not a route where every stage end has a large choice of beds. Accommodation is strongest in the main Wensleydale and lower Ure towns, especially Hawes, Leyburn, Middleham, Masham, Ripon and Boroughbridge, with a mix of inns, hotels, guesthouses, B&Bs and some campsites.

The main pinch point is the upper-dale section around the end of Day 1. The standard stage finishes at Garsdale Head after the long crossing from Kirkby Stephen, but beds are thinner here than in Hawes and the larger dale settlements. Some itineraries solve this by using a taxi link between Garsdale Head and Hawes, then returning to the trail the next morning; this should be arranged before travelling rather than left until the day.

Best overnight stops

For the standard 6-day schedule, the practical overnight pattern is:

- **Kirkby Stephen** before starting
- **Garsdale Head** after Day 1, or a taxi transfer to/from **Hawes**
- **Askrigg** after Day 2
- **Middleham** after Day 3
- **Masham** after Day 4
- **Ripon** after Day 5
- **Boroughbridge** at the finish, or onward travel by bus

Hawes and Leyburn are useful alternatives if the standard stopping points are full or if the itinerary is being adjusted. Leyburn is not the standard Day 3 finish on the route schedule, but it is a significant service town on the route before Middleham and can help with re-planning shorter or longer days.

Accommodation planning table

Place	Accommodation level	Best for	Notes
Kirkby Stephen	Limited	Night-before accommodation	Practical base for starting the route. The walk begins in the town before climbing out towards Mallerstang and the source of the Ure.
Garsdale Head	Limited	Standard Day 1 finish	The key booking pinch point. If no suitable bed is available, arrange a taxi link to Hawes or another base before travelling.
Hawes	Good	Taxi-transfer base, restocking, alternative upper-dale overnight	Stronger choice than the smaller upper-dale stops, with shops, inns and visitor services. Often used to solve the Garsdale Head accommodation gap.

Place	Accommodation level	Best for	Notes
Askrigg / Bainbridge	Limited	Standard Day 2 overnight area	Useful for the second night on the standard itinerary, but book ahead because upper Wensleydale has fewer beds than the larger towns.
Aysgarth / West Witton / Wensley	Limited	Itinerary adjustment	Useful if splitting or reshaping the Askrigg to Middleham section. Check current availability before building an itinerary around these smaller places.
Leyburn	Good	Flexible overnight, services, itinerary adjustment	One of the stronger accommodation and service centres on the route through lower Wensleydale. Useful if Middleham is full or if changing stage lengths.
Middleham	Good	Standard Day 3 overnight	A practical stage end with accommodation options before the route continues towards Cover Bridge, Jervaulx Abbey and Masham.
Masham	Good	Standard Day 4 overnight	One of the best overnight stops on the lower route, with town services and a good position before the longer walk to Ripon.
West Tanfield / North Stanley	Limited	Splitting the Masham to Ripon stage	Smaller settlements between Masham and Ripon. Availability should be checked before using either as a planned overnight stop.
Ripon	Good	Standard Day 5 overnight	The strongest city stop on the route and the obvious base before the final short day to Boroughbridge.
Boroughbridge	Good	Finish-night accommodation	Useful if not travelling onward immediately. There is no railway station in Boroughbridge, so onward bus plans should be checked before travelling.

Booking ahead

Booking ahead is strongly recommended, especially for the upper dale and for weekends or holiday periods in spring, summer and autumn. The route passes through small villages where a handful of closed, full or unsuitable options can create a real planning problem.

Do not assume that camping will be available at every stage end. The accommodation mix includes some campsites, but the route is better planned around named overnight stops with availability checked in advance.

Luggage transfer and taxis

A baggage-transfer itinerary is a practical way to walk the Yoredale Way with lighter day packs. Companies such as Brigantes Walking Holidays offer a 6-day Yoredale Way Low Route itinerary with baggage transfer, which suits walkers wanting an inn-to-inn format without carrying full overnight kit.

Taxi transfers are most relevant around **Garsdale Head and Hawes**. They can turn an awkward first-night booking problem into a workable plan, but timings and availability should be arranged in advance, particularly because Day 1 is long, exposed and navigation-dependent over the Pennine fell section.

Camping and Wild Camping

Camping is possible on the Yoredale Way, but it needs more planning than a hostel-and-B&B itinerary. The route passes through several Dales villages and market towns where campsites may be available on or near the line, but the trail is not a campsite-to-campsite route in the way some National Trails are.

The most realistic approach is to book formal campsites in advance around the main stopping places: Hawes, Askrigg or Bainbridge, Leyburn, Middleham, Masham, Ripon and Boroughbridge. Availability, opening dates and whether a site accepts one-night backpacking stays should be checked before travelling.

Does the route suit camping?

A camping itinerary suits walkers who are comfortable carrying a full backpack over the exposed first day from Kirkby Stephen to Garsdale Head. That stage climbs onto open Pennine fell near High Seat and the source of the Ure, with rough ground, peat, moorland and limited shelter, so a heavy camping load makes the hardest day noticeably tougher.

After the first day, the route becomes much more forgiving. The lower Wensleydale sections are mostly riverside paths, field paths, farm tracks, parkland and quiet lanes, so carrying camping kit is easier, though mud and waterlogged fields can still slow progress after rain.

The upper dale is the awkward section for camping logistics. Accommodation is thinner around Garsdale Head, and some standard itineraries use a taxi link between Garsdale Head and Hawes; campers should not assume there will be a convenient place to pitch at the end of Day 1 without arranging it in advance.

Formal campsites and likely planning points

Route section	Camping practicality
Kirkby Stephen to Garsdale Head	The most difficult section to plan. It is long, high and exposed, and services are limited. Do not rely on finding an informal pitch on the fell.
Garsdale Head to Hawes / Askrigg area	More practical once the route drops into Wensleydale. Hawes, Askrigg and nearby Bainbridge are the key settlements to investigate for formal camping.
Askrigg to Middleham	A lower-level dale stage with more settlements and road access. Leyburn and Middleham are sensible places to check for camping options nearby.
Middleham to Masham	Formal camping may be possible around the lower dale and Masham area, but locations and opening periods should be checked before building an itinerary around them.
Masham to Ripon	Easier for services than the upper dale, but still do not assume every village has a campsite. Ripon is the main end-point to check.
Ripon to Boroughbridge	Short final stage. Camping is usually only relevant if staying before or after the walk; Boroughbridge-area options should be checked before travelling.

Wild camping: legality and reality

The Yoredale Way is in England, where wild camping is not generally a legal right and normally requires the landowner's permission. Much of this route crosses working farmland, riverside pastures, moorland and private estates, including sections within the Yorkshire Dales National Park, so discreetly pitching without permission should not be treated as an accepted option.

The first day over Mallerstang and the watershed near High Seat may look like the most tempting wild-camping country, but it is also the most exposed and remote ground on the route. Weather, navigation and lack of shelter make it a poor place to rely on an unplanned camp, especially with no continuous waymarking.

Lower down Wensleydale, the route spends long periods on field paths, riverside corridors, farm tracks and parkland. These areas are generally unsuitable for wild camping without permission because of livestock, access routes, private land and the need to avoid disturbing farms and residents.

If permission is granted by a landowner, keep the pitch small, arrive late, leave early and camp well away from buildings, roads, livestock and the path itself. Fires should not be lit; use a stove only where it is safe and permitted, and avoid any cooking setup that could scorch grass or moorland.

Water and food for campers

The route follows the River Ure for much of its length, but river access does not remove the need to plan water carefully. Agricultural run-off, livestock and settlements mean natural water should not be drunk untreated.

Carry enough water for the exposed Kirkby Stephen to Garsdale Head stage, where services and shelter are limited. On the dale stages, refilling is more straightforward in settlements and at booked accommodation or campsites, but opening hours and access should still be checked, especially outside the main summer season.

Campers should also plan food around the larger settlements rather than expecting supplies in every village. Hawes, Leyburn, Masham, Ripon and Boroughbridge are the most important resupply points named on the route; smaller places may have limited or no suitable shop provision.

Seasonal considerations

Spring, summer and autumn are the sensible camping seasons for this walk. The opening fell section can be cold, wet and windy even when the dale is mild, so a proper three-season shelter, warm sleeping system and waterproof packing are important.

After prolonged rain, riverside and field sections can be muddy or waterlogged, which affects both walking pace and the practicality of keeping camping gear dry. In warm months, avoid camping close to livestock and watercourses, and take all litter, food waste and sanitary waste away from the route.

Food, Water and Resupply

The Yoredale Way is not a wilderness route after the first day, but resupply still needs planning. The dale has regular villages and market towns, yet opening hours can be rural, seasonal and reduced on Sundays or bank holidays. Do not assume every village passed during the day has an open shop, café or pub at the exact time you arrive.

The most straightforward food planning is to use overnight stops and larger settlements for evening meals, breakfast supplies and packed lunches. Hawes is the key upper-dale resupply point, with shops and inns, while Kirkby Stephen, Leyburn, Masham, Ripon and Boroughbridge are the other main places to plan around. In smaller places such as Cotterdale, Hardraw, Sedbusk, Wensley, Cover Bridge, West Tanfield and North Stainley, treat services as limited unless checked in advance.

Practical food strategy

Carry a full day's food for Day 1. The stage from Kirkby Stephen to Garsdale Head is long, exposed and crosses open fell near the Mallerstang watershed, so it should be treated as having no reliable en-route resupply.

From Day 2 onwards, the route passes more settlements, but gaps between dependable food stops can still be long. Packed lunches from accommodation, village shops or cafés should be arranged the evening before where possible, especially when staying in smaller villages or when walking on a Sunday.

If accommodation is booked on a bed-and-breakfast basis, check dinner options at the same time. In the upper dale, beds and services are thinner, and some itineraries use a taxi link between Garsdale Head and Hawes, so food logistics and any transfer arrangements should be checked together before travelling.

Water planning

The safest plan is to fill bottles at accommodation before setting off and top up at cafés, pubs or shops where available. Public water points are not a feature to rely on for this route. This should be checked before travelling if depending on a particular refill point.

Although the walk follows the River Ure and crosses a landscape of streams, natural water should not be assumed safe to drink untreated. Much of the route passes through farmed dale country, and the first day crosses open moorland and rough grazing. If taking water from streams or the river, filter or treat it first.

Most walkers should start each stage with enough water for several hours, commonly around 1.5–2 litres in normal conditions, and more in warm weather. Carry extra on Day 1 and on any day when cafés, pubs or shops have not been checked in advance.

Section	Food availability	Water availability	Notes
Kirkby Stephen to Garsdale Head	Stock up in Kirkby Stephen before leaving. Treat the fell crossing as having no reliable food resupply.	Fill before leaving Kirkby Stephen; carry enough for the full day. Natural water on the fell should be filtered or treated.	Long, exposed opening stage over Mallerstang and the watershed near High Seat. Carry lunch, snacks and spare food.
Garsdale Head to Askrigg	Limited in the upper dale until Hawes, where shops and inns make this the main resupply point. Askrigg has accommodation options, but exact food availability should be checked.	Refill at accommodation and in serviced settlements where available. Do not rely on streams without treatment.	If using a Garsdale Head–Hawes taxi link, coordinate it with breakfast, lunch and dinner plans.
Askrigg to Middleham	More settled dale walking, passing places including Aysgarth, West Witton, Wensley and Leyburn before Middleham. Leyburn is the main planning point on this stage.	Start full and top up where cafés, pubs or accommodation allow.	Rural opening hours matter; arrange a packed lunch if walking outside normal service times.
Middleham to Masham	Food options are most dependable at the stage ends. Services between Middleham and Masham should be checked before relying on them.	Fill at Middleham and refill only where a café, pub or accommodation can provide water.	The route passes Cover Bridge and Jervaulx Abbey before Masham; do not plan around unverified food stops.
Masham to Ripon	Masham and Ripon are the key food stops. West Tanfield and North Stainley are passed, but availability should be checked in advance.	Carry enough from Masham for the day unless a planned refill has been checked.	A 21 km stage, so take lunch and snacks even though the route is lower-level.
Ripon to Boroughbridge	Easy to start supplied from Ripon; Boroughbridge has end-of-walk services.	Fill in Ripon; the shorter distance makes water planning simpler, but still carry enough for the stage.	Short final day, but do not leave Ripon without food and water if onward travel from Boroughbridge is time-sensitive.

Navigation and Waymarking

The Yoredale Way is not a National Trail and does not have continuous dedicated waymarking. There are no National Trail acorn signs, and walkers should not expect a consistent Yoredale Way marker to confirm every junction.

Navigation is therefore part of the walk, not an optional extra. The Pocket Routes guidebook by Stuart Greig, OS mapping and a compass are sensible core kit, with a GPX file used as a backup rather than as the only source of navigation.

Maps and guidebook

Use the guidebook for the route line and day-by-day directions, then cross-check it against Ordnance Survey mapping. The supported OS Explorer sheets for this route are:

Map	Coverage relevant to the route
OS Explorer OL19	Howgill Fells & Upper Eden Valley, including the Kirkby Stephen / Mallerstang end
OS Explorer OL30	Yorkshire Dales – Northern & Central, covering much of Wensleydale
OS Explorer OL302	Northallerton & Thirsk, useful for the lower Ure / Vale of York end

A phone app that displays OS 1:25,000 mapping is useful, especially with the GPX loaded and maps downloaded for offline use. A paper map and compass are still strongly advised for the first day, where poor visibility on the open fell could make phone-only navigation a poor choice.

The main navigation challenge: Day 1

The opening stage from Kirkby Stephen to Garsdale Head is the section that demands the most care. The route climbs out over the Pennine fells above Mallerstang towards the watershed near High Seat, the source area of the River Ure and Hell Gill Bridge.

This is exposed, high ground with rough grass, peat and open moorland. In mist, rain or strong wind, the line can feel much less obvious than the later riverside stages, and there is no continuous waymarking to rely on. Check the weather before setting out and be prepared to navigate by map and compass if visibility drops.

Navigation after Garsdale Head

After the first day, the route becomes mostly lower-level walking down Wensleydale, using riverside paths beside the Ure, field paths, farm tracks, parkland and quiet lanes. This terrain is generally easier to interpret than the Mallerstang crossing, but it is still not a signed National Trail.

Expect to pay attention at field exits, farm tracks, lane junctions and riverside path changes, particularly where wet ground or trodden livestock lines can make a less-used public path look less obvious. After heavy rain, field and riverside sections may be muddy or waterlogged, which can also obscure the clearest walking line.

GPX files and route-name confusion

A GPX track is recommended, but it must be the correct Yoredale Way. Two different routes share the name: this page covers the shorter Low Route from Kirkby Stephen to Boroughbridge, not the older longer route between York and Kirkby Stephen.

Before loading a GPX, check that it follows the Low Route through places such as Garsdale Head, Hawes, Askrigg, Middleham, Masham, Ripon and Boroughbridge. Do not rely on a file simply because it is labelled "Yoredale Way".

Mobile signal and offline navigation

Do not plan the walk on the assumption that live mobile data will be available throughout. Download maps and the GPX in advance, carry a power bank if using a phone for navigation, and keep the phone protected from rain.

This is particularly important on the first stage over Mallerstang, where navigation matters most and where stopping to troubleshoot an app in poor weather is exactly what should be avoided.

Is it suitable for limited navigation experience?

The lower Wensleydale stages are not technically difficult, and many competent walkers will find them straightforward with a guidebook and map. However, the lack of continuous waymarking and the exposed first day mean the full route is not ideal for complete beginners who are uncomfortable reading OS maps.

Walkers with limited navigation experience should choose settled weather for the opening stage, carry both paper and digital mapping, and consider walking with someone confident in map-and-compass navigation.

Terrain, Conditions and Difficulty in Practice

The Yoredale Way is moderate overall, but the difficulty is uneven. The first day is a proper open-fell crossing where weather, visibility and navigation can change the character of the walk; the remaining days are mostly lower, gentler walking down Wensleydale and the lower Ure.

Do not treat this as a continuously signed trail. It is a registered LDWA Long Distance Path, not a National Trail, and there is no acorn signage or reliable end-to-end waymarking. The Pocket Routes guidebook and OS mapping are practical essentials, especially before leaving Kirkby Stephen for the Mallerstang watershed.

Day 1: the serious terrain

The opening stage from Kirkby Stephen to Garsdale Head is the crux of the route. It is around 23 km and climbs from the Eden valley onto open Pennine fell country, crossing the high ground near High Seat, the route's highest and most remote point at 709 m.

Expect open moorland, rough grass and peat around Mallerstang and the watershed near the source of the River Ure. This is not technical scrambling terrain, but it is exposed, can be wet underfoot, and becomes much more demanding in low cloud, strong wind or persistent rain.

Navigation matters most here. In good visibility the day is a long upland walk; in poor visibility it can feel like a hill route where map, compass and sound judgement are needed. Do not rely on occasional trods or a phone alone across the fell section.

The dale sections: easier ground, but not always fast

After Garsdale Head the route changes character. The walking is mostly low-level: riverside paths beside the Ure, field paths, farm tracks, parkland and quiet lanes through Wensleydale, then onwards towards Ripon and Boroughbridge.

These sections are generally non-technical and much less exposed than the opening day. The challenge is more about steady mileage, route-finding through field systems and keeping moving over six consecutive days than about steep or rocky ground.

Riverside and field paths can be muddy or waterlogged after rain. This is especially relevant on lower ground, where slow going through wet fields can make a nominally easy day feel longer than the distance suggests.

Quiet lanes form part of the walk, but the route is not primarily a road walk. Lane sections can be useful for faster progress after muddy fields, though normal care is needed on narrow rural roads.

Climbs, descents and effort

The route has about 1,800 m of ascent in total, but much of the hard climbing is concentrated early. Once the high ground near High Seat has been crossed, the general pattern is downstream and gradually lower, following the Ure through Wensleydale.

That does not mean the rest is flat. Expect small climbs and descents between riverside paths, villages, lanes and field routes, particularly where the line moves away from the river or crosses side terrain.

The standard six-day itinerary includes several days of roughly 18–23 km before the shorter final stage from Ripon to Boroughbridge. For most walkers, the physical difficulty comes from the long first day, repeated daily mileage and underfoot conditions rather than technical terrain.

Fields, gates and working countryside

Much of the dale walking is through agricultural countryside, using field paths, tracks and lanes rather than a built long-distance trail surface. Expect gates, field boundaries and changes of direction that require attention to the guidebook and map.

Treat all field sections as working farmland. Keep dogs under close control, leave gates as found, and give livestock plenty of space where present. Field exits and path lines can be less obvious than on popular National Trails, particularly where waymarking is sparse.

Seasonal conditions

Season	What it means in practice
Spring	Good walking conditions are possible, but rain can leave riverside and field paths muddy. The high opening ground can still feel cold and exposed in poor weather.
Summer	Usually the most straightforward season for daylight and underfoot conditions, though the exposed first day still needs a proper forecast and hillwalking kit.
Autumn	Often a good season for the dale, but shorter days, wetter ground and mist on the fells make navigation and timing more important.

What makes the route harder

- Poor visibility on the Mallerstang fell crossing.
- Wet peat, muddy field paths or waterlogged riverside sections after rain.
- The long first stage from Kirkby Stephen to Garsdale Head.
- Lack of continuous waymarking, especially away from villages and on open ground.
- Six consecutive walking days, with several stages around 18–23 km.

What makes it easier

- After Day 1, the route is mostly low-level and follows the dale downstream.
- There is no sustained technical or scrambling terrain on the described Low Route.
- Much of the walking uses field paths, tracks, parkland and quiet lanes.
- Villages and market towns such as Hawes, Askrigg, Leyburn, Middleham, Masham, Ripon and Boroughbridge break up the later stages.

In practice, the Yoredale Way suits walkers who are comfortable with traditional British route-finding: guidebook, OS map, compass skills and sensible weather decisions. Fit beginners may enjoy the lower

dale sections, but the full route is better approached with some experience of unsigned hill and field walking.

Weather and Best Time to Walk

The Yoredale Way is best planned for **spring, summer or autumn**. The route's main weather risk is not the lower dale, but the opening fell crossing from Kirkby Stephen towards Mallerstang, Hell Gill Bridge and Garsdale Head, where the path reaches the high ground near High Seat at 709 m.

For most walkers, **late spring to early autumn** gives the best combination of workable daylight, more forgiving ground conditions and easier logistics. Winter is realistic only for experienced, well-equipped walkers who are comfortable navigating unsignposted upland ground in poor visibility and cold conditions.

The key weather day: Kirkby Stephen to Garsdale Head

Day 1 is the section that should drive the weather decision. It is long, exposed and crosses open Pennine fell before the route settles into lower-level Wensleydale walking.

Low cloud, hill fog, strong wind or heavy rain can make this first stage significantly harder. There is no continuous waymarking to fall back on, so carry the guidebook, OS mapping and a compass, and check the mountain weather forecast before leaving Kirkby Stephen.

If the forecast is poor for the high ground, it is worth building flexibility into the itinerary rather than treating the first day as a fixed commitment. This is the one part of the Yoredale Way where weather and navigation can change the character of the walk quickly.

Seasonal conditions

Season	What to expect	Planning advice
Spring	A good walking season, but field paths and riverside sections can stay muddy or waterlogged after rain. The high opening ground can still feel cold and exposed.	Pack full waterproofs and warm layers, even if the forecast looks settled in the dale. Check conditions carefully before the Mallerstang crossing.
Summer	The easiest season for daylight and a practical choice for a 6-day schedule. Warm weather can make the lower field, lane and riverside stages feel hotter than the altitude suggests.	Start early on warm days, carry enough water between villages, and do not rely on shade. Book accommodation ahead, especially in the thinner upper dale.
Autumn	Often a good time for lower-level dale walking, but daylight reduces and wet spells can make fields, riverside paths and farm tracks heavy underfoot.	Keep the longer stages in mind, especially the 23 km first day and the 21 km Masham to Ripon stage. Carry a headtorch and allow time for slower going in mud.
Winter	Not the best season for this route. Short days, cold rain, hill fog, strong winds and possible snow or ice on the high opening ground make the first stage much more serious.	Suitable only for walkers with winter hill judgement and navigation skills. For most hikers, save the Yoredale Way for spring, summer or autumn.

Rain, mud and river conditions

The Yoredale Way follows the River Ure for much of its length, so wet weather affects more than comfort. Riverside paths, field edges and farm tracks can become muddy, slippery or waterlogged after rain, particularly once the route is down in Wensleydale.

Waterproof boots or shoes with reliable grip are more useful here than lightweight footwear chosen purely for dry tracks. Gaiters are worth considering after prolonged rain, especially on the field sections.

Heavy rain can also make the lower route slower, even where the navigation is straightforward. Build some slack into arrival times rather than assuming dry-weather pace across every day.

Wind, fog and storms

Wind matters most on the exposed Pennine ground on Day 1. Strong gusts on open fell can make progress tiring and can make navigation harder if combined with rain or low cloud.

Fog or low cloud is the main navigation issue. On the Mallerstang watershed, there is no continuous waymarking, so poor visibility can turn a moderate route into a serious map-and-compass day.

Thunderstorms are a reason to avoid committing to the highest ground. If storms are forecast, check conditions before setting out and be prepared to adjust the day's plan.

Daylight and stage timing

The standard Yoredale Way itinerary uses six walking days, with the longest and most exposed stage coming first. Short daylight is therefore a real planning factor, particularly outside late spring and summer.

In autumn and winter, do not underestimate how early a delay on the first stage can become a problem. Carry a headtorch, keep maps accessible, and avoid starting the Mallerstang crossing late in the day.

Accommodation and seasonal availability

Accommodation is available in the Dales villages and market towns, including Hawes, Askrigg or Bainbridge, Leyburn, Middleham, Masham, Ripon and Boroughbridge, but beds are thinner in the upper dale. Book ahead rather than relying on turning up, especially if walking in the main spring-to-autumn season.

Some itineraries use a taxi link between Garsdale Head and Hawes at the end of Day 1. If relying on this, confirm the transfer, accommodation and any seasonal service changes before travelling.

Safety Notes

The Yoredale Way is a moderate walk rather than a technical mountain route, but it has one serious upland day and several practical hazards that should be planned for. The main safety issue is the opening crossing from Kirkby Stephen towards Mallerstang, Hell Gill Bridge and Garsdale Head: this is high, exposed, unsignposted fell country, reaching the watershed near High Seat at 709 m.

For emergencies in the UK, call **999 or 112** and ask for **Police**, then **Mountain Rescue** if on the fells or in remote country. Give a grid reference if possible, or use the location tools available on your phone, but do not rely on having signal everywhere.

Navigation and remoteness

This is not a National Trail and it is not continuously waymarked. Carry the Pocket Routes guidebook, relevant OS mapping and a compass, and know how to use them; GPS is useful, but should not be the only navigation method.

Day 1 is the section where navigation matters most. In mist, low cloud, rain or strong wind, the open ground above Mallerstang can feel much more serious than the later riverside stages down Wensleydale. If the forecast is poor, allow extra time, set off early and be ready to change plans.

Mobile coverage should be treated as unreliable on the more remote upland ground and in parts of the dale. Download maps, route notes, accommodation details and transport information before setting off each morning.

Weather exposure

The high opening section is exposed to wind, rain, cold and poor visibility. Even in spring, summer and autumn, carry waterproofs, warm layers, hat and gloves, plus enough food and drink to cope with delays.

Later stages are lower and generally more sheltered, but long riverside and field sections can still be slow after rain. Mud, waterlogged grass and slippery stiles or stone flags can add time and increase fatigue, especially on the longer days into Askrigg, Masham and Ripon.

In hot weather, the lower dale can feel deceptively tiring because the walking is easier underfoot. Carry more water than seems necessary, use sun protection and do not assume every village or hamlet will have open services at the time you pass through.

Rivers, waterfalls and wet ground

Much of the route follows or approaches the River Ure. Stay on the path near riverbanks, especially after rain when banks can be muddy, undercut or slippery.

Take particular care around Aysgarth Falls and other river viewpoints. Wet limestone and polished rock are hazardous, and flood conditions can make the river far more powerful than it appears in settled weather.

There are no special tidal issues on this inland route, but ordinary river safety matters: avoid entering fast water, keep away from steep banks, and supervise children and dogs closely near the Ure.

Roads, lanes and crossings

The route includes quiet lanes and passes through market towns, villages and farmed countryside. Walk facing oncoming traffic where there is no pavement, use verges where safe, and take extra care on bends, narrow bridges and in poor visibility.

Do not rely on drivers expecting walkers, particularly on rural lanes between villages. A small rear light or reflective item is useful if finishing late, in heavy rain or in low light.

Livestock and dogs

Field paths and farm tracks are a major part of the lower route, so livestock encounters are likely. Keep gates as found, give animals space, and avoid walking directly between cows and calves.

Dogs should be kept under close control and on a lead where livestock are present. If cattle become threatening, release the dog rather than trying to hold it, then move calmly to safety.

Solo walking

Solo hikers should be especially cautious on Day 1. Leave your route plan and expected arrival time with accommodation or a trusted contact, and check in after finishing the stage.

A battery pack is sensible for anyone relying on a phone for maps, transport information or accommodation contact details. Keep the phone protected from rain and cold, as battery life can drop quickly in poor weather.

Daily checks before setting off

Before each stage, check:

- the weather forecast, especially wind, rain, visibility and temperature for the Day 1 fell crossing;
- that the day's route notes, map and any GPX file are available offline;
- accommodation check-in arrangements and any booked taxi transfer, particularly around Garsdale Head and Hawes;
- current bus or train times if planning to shorten a day or leave the route;
- daylight hours and realistic walking time for the stage;
- water, food, waterproofs and warm layers;
- whether river levels, heavy rain or waterlogged fields are likely to slow progress.

The safest approach is to treat the first day as a genuine fell walk and the remaining days as long rural walking where navigation, livestock, road sense and riverbank care still matter.

Gear Recommendations

The Yoredale Way needs kit for two different types of walking: a long, exposed Pennine fell crossing on Day 1, then mostly lower-level riverside, field, farm-track and lane walking down Wensleydale. The mistake is packing only for the gentler dale sections; the opening day over Mallerstang and the watershed near High Seat requires proper hillwalking equipment.

Footwear

Wear footwear with reliable grip on wet grass, peat, rough moorland and muddy field paths. Lightweight boots or robust trail shoes can both work in dry conditions, but the route is often better suited to waterproof walking shoes or boots because riverside and field sections can be waterlogged after rain.

Ankle support is useful on Day 1 over rougher open ground, especially with a full rucksack. Gaiters are worth considering in wet weather for the Mallerstang crossing and muddy pasture sections later in the walk.

Waterproofs and warm layers

Carry a proper waterproof jacket and waterproof overtrousers, not just a shower shell. The first stage climbs onto exposed high ground near High Seat at 709 m, where wind, low cloud and rain can make conditions significantly harsher than in Kirkby Stephen or Hawes.

A warm mid-layer, hat and gloves are sensible even in spring and autumn. In summer, still carry an insulating layer for the fell day and for slower walking in bad weather.

Navigation

Navigation is one of the most important gear considerations on this route. The Yoredale Way is a registered LDWA Long Distance Path, but it is not a waymarked National Trail and there is no continuous acorn-style signage.

Carry the Pocket Routes guidebook by Stuart Greig and OS mapping for the route. The relevant OS Explorer sheets are OL19, OL30 and OL302. A compass should be carried and usable, particularly for the unsignposted Day 1 crossing over Mallerstang towards the watershed near the source of the Ure.

A GPX track on a phone or GPS device is useful, but should not be the only navigation method. Take a power bank, keep offline mapping available, and protect electronics from rain.

Water and food carry

Do not assume there will be regular services between overnight stops. Carry enough water for a full day, especially on the opening Kirkby Stephen to Garsdale Head stage, where the route is high and exposed for a long section.

Hawes is the most obvious resupply point in the upper dale, and the route later passes through or near larger settlements such as Leyburn, Masham, Ripon and Boroughbridge. Opening times for shops, cafés and pubs can vary, so carry lunch and emergency snacks rather than depending on a mid-stage stop.

A water filter is optional rather than essential for most inn-to-inn walkers, but untreated river or stream water should not be relied on as the main plan.

Trekking poles

Trekking poles are useful but not essential. They help on the long first day over rough fell, on muddy field paths, and when carrying a heavier camping pack.

They are less useful on lane sections and through villages, so collapsible poles are the most practical choice.

Power, lighting and small essentials

A power bank is strongly recommended because navigation may depend partly on a phone or GPS device, and public transport or taxi arrangements may need checking during the walk. Carry charging cables in a dry bag or waterproof pouch.

A small headtorch is sensible even on a 6-day itinerary, particularly for early starts, late finishes, accommodation access, or short evening walks in villages. Also carry a basic first-aid kit, blister care, a whistle and an emergency bivvy or survival bag for the Day 1 fell section.

Sun, insects and seasonal extras

The route is usually walked in spring, summer or autumn. In summer, carry sun cream, sunglasses, a brimmed cap and enough water for exposed sections with little shade.

Insect repellent can be useful on warm, still days near rivers, damp fields and wooded sections around the Ure. After prolonged rain, expect mud and wet grass, so quick-drying trousers and spare socks are more useful than heavy cotton clothing.

For spring and autumn, add warmer gloves, a hat and a slightly heavier insulating layer. Daylight is shorter, and the first day should not be underestimated in poor visibility or strong wind.

Inn-to-inn hikers

Inn-to-inn walkers can keep luggage light, especially if using baggage transfer, but the daypack still needs to be hill-ready. Do not send waterproofs, warm layers, maps, food, water, first-aid kit or power bank in the main luggage.

A practical daypack for this route should have room for full waterproofs, spare insulation, lunch, two water bottles or a hydration bladder, navigation kit and emergency items.

Campers

Camping is possible in places along the route, but the accommodation pattern is mixed and pitches should be planned ahead. Beds and services are thinner in the upper dale, and the first day is a poor stage on which to be carrying unnecessary weight.

Campers should prioritise a stable, weather-resistant tent, warm sleep system and waterproof packing. Keep the pack compact enough for rough ground and stiles, and check campsite availability before setting off.

Fast and section hikers

Fast walkers and section hikers can travel light, but should not strip out safety kit for the Mallerstang stage. The opening day still needs full waterproofs, warm layer, map, compass, food, water and a charged navigation device.

For later lower-level sections, the focus shifts to mud management, reliable footwear and transport resilience. Carry a power bank and check onward buses or rail connections before relying on a same-day exit. This should be checked before travelling.

Budget and Costs

Costs on the Yoredale Way depend mainly on accommodation choice. The route passes through popular Yorkshire Dales towns and villages such as Hawes, Askrigg, Leyburn, Middleham, Masham and Ripon, so B&Bs, inns and hotels are the normal style of trip; campsites exist in some places but should not be assumed at every stage.

The figures below are practical planning ranges in GBP, not fixed tariffs. Prices vary by season, room type, day of week and how early beds are booked, so check current prices before booking.

Likely trip budgets

For a 6-day itinerary, most walkers need at least one pre-walk night in or near Kirkby Stephen, plus accommodation at the end of each walking day unless using evening transport. Add a finish night in Boroughbridge if onward buses and trains do not line up conveniently.

Style	Typical approach	Rough budget per person, excluding travel to/from the region
Budget	Camping where possible, simple pub/shop meals, carrying own kit, minimal taxis	£250–£450
Mid-range	B&Bs, inns or guesthouses, packed lunches, pub dinners, occasional taxi where useful	£650–£1,100
Comfortable	Better rooms or single occupancy, luggage transfer, more taxis, paid attractions and relaxed meal choices	£1,100–£1,800+

Single rooms can increase the cost sharply, especially in the upper dale where beds are thinner. A solo walker should budget more cautiously than two walkers sharing twin or double rooms.

Accommodation

Accommodation is the largest cost. Expect the best spread of beds in the main towns and larger villages, especially Hawes, Askrigg, Leyburn, Middleham, Masham, Ripon and Boroughbridge. The upper dale is more constrained, and the first stage to Garsdale Head needs particular attention because some itineraries use a taxi link between Garsdale Head and Hawes.

As a planning guide:

Accommodation type	Planning range
Campsite pitch	roughly £10–£25 per person per night
B&B / inn / guesthouse, sharing	roughly £60–£120 per person per night
Hotel or higher-comfort room	roughly £100–£180+ per person per night
Single occupancy	often significantly higher than a shared-room equivalent

Camping can reduce costs, but it is not the simplest way to walk this route. Sites are not guaranteed at every natural overnight stop, and a camping itinerary may require extra road walking, local transport or a different stage plan. This should be checked before travelling.

Food and drink

Food costs are moderate if using shops for breakfasts, snacks and packed lunches, but can rise quickly with pub dinners every night. Smaller villages and hamlets should not be relied on for full resupply, so buy food in the larger stops when available.

A realistic daily allowance is:

Food style	Planning range per day
Mostly self-catered / shop food	£15–£25
Packed lunch plus pub dinner	£30–£50
Café stops, pub meals and drinks	£50–£75+

Day 1 crosses exposed fell ground from Kirkby Stephen towards Garsdale Head, so carry enough food and drink from the start rather than depending on services during the crossing.

Transport to and from the route

Kirkby Stephen is served by the Settle–Carlisle railway, with the station a short distance from the town. Garsdale, passed on Day 1, is also on the Settle–Carlisle line. Boroughbridge has no railway station, so onward travel is normally by bus towards Harrogate or York, with York the nearest mainline East Coast hub.

Public transport is usually the cheapest option, but timetables in the Dales can be limited. Confirm current train and bus times before booking accommodation, especially for arrival at Kirkby Stephen and departure from Boroughbridge.

Taxis may be useful for the station-to-town link at Kirkby Stephen, for the Garsdale Head to Hawes link used by some itineraries, or as a fallback if buses do not fit. Rural taxi fares can be expensive for short-notice journeys, so pre-book and confirm the fare in advance.

Luggage transfer and packages

Carrying a full pack keeps costs down and gives the most flexibility. Luggage transfer adds comfort but needs planning because this is not a National Trail with continuous waymarking or the same density of standard trail services.

Companies such as Brigantes Walking Holidays offer Yoredale Way Low Route itineraries with baggage transfer. Package prices vary with accommodation grade, dates, single supplements and whether extra nights are included, so request a current quote before comparing it with a self-booked trip.

A self-booked trip with separate luggage transfer can work, but each overnight stop must be willing to handle bag collection and delivery. This is especially important around Garsdale Head, Hawes and the upper Wensleydale stages.

Optional paid extras

Allow a small extra budget for attractions and weather-day flexibility. Possible paid visits along or near the route include Hardraw Force, the Dales Countryside Museum in Hawes, Middleham Castle, Jervaulx Abbey and brewery-related visits in Masham. Opening times and entry prices should be checked before travelling.

A sensible contingency for this route is a taxi and accommodation reserve rather than specialist gear costs. The main financial risk is not the walking itself, but limited beds, limited buses and the exposed first day creating a need to change plans.

Luggage Transfer, Guided Tours and Support Services

Luggage transfer

The Yoredale Way is short enough for fit walkers to carry a full pack, but luggage transfer is useful if staying in B&Bs, inns and hotels rather than camping. It is especially helpful on Day 1, where the route makes its most exposed crossing over the Pennine fell ground above Mallerstang before dropping towards Garsdale Head.

This is not a National Trail with a large, standardised network of baggage couriers, so arrangements are best made as part of an accommodation package or directly through a walking-holiday operator. Companies such as **Brigantes Walking Holidays** offer the Yoredale Way Low Route as a 6-day self-guided itinerary with baggage transfer.

If arranging the walk independently, ask each accommodation whether they can accept bags during the day and whether they work with any local transfer drivers. Do this before booking, particularly in the upper dale around Garsdale Head, Hawes, Askrigg and Bainbridge, where beds and services are thinner than in the larger towns lower down the route.

Self-guided walking packages

A self-guided package is the most straightforward supported option for this route. It typically suits walkers who are happy navigating for themselves but want accommodation, luggage movement and any awkward transfers handled in advance.

Brigantes Walking Holidays offers a self-guided Yoredale Way Low Route itinerary based on the standard 6 walking days. Packages of this type commonly include accommodation booking and daily baggage transfer; exact inclusions, availability and current prices should be checked when booking.

This option is particularly useful because the Yoredale Way is not continuously waymarked. Even with a package, walkers should still carry the Pocket Routes guidebook and suitable OS mapping, especially for the first day over Mallerstang and the watershed near High Seat.

Guided options

The Yoredale Way is better established as an independent or self-guided walk than as a regular guided-group trail. Walkers wanting a leader should look for a bespoke guided arrangement rather than assuming scheduled departures will be available. This should be checked before travelling.

A guide may be worth considering for less confident navigators, particularly for the opening fell stage from Kirkby Stephen towards Garsdale Head. For experienced hillwalkers comfortable with map, compass and guidebook navigation, a guide is usually unnecessary on the lower Wensleydale sections.

Taxi transfers and awkward links

Taxi support is most relevant at the end of Day 1. Some itineraries use a taxi link between **Garsdale Head and Hawes**, because accommodation and services are limited around Garsdale Head and the following stage continues down through Cotterdale, Hardraw and Hawes towards Askrigg.

If relying on a taxi for this link, book it before starting the walk and confirm the pick-up point, time and luggage arrangements. Mobile reception and bad weather can complicate last-minute changes on the higher ground, so Day 1 logistics should not be left vague.

Taxis can also be useful for shortening a stage, reaching off-route accommodation, or dealing with injury or severe weather. Public transport exists around places such as Hawes, Leyburn and Ripon, but Dales bus services are limited, so timetables should be checked before relying on them as a backup.

What to book ahead

Book the following before setting out:

- Accommodation in the upper dale, especially around Garsdale Head, Hawes, Askrigg and Bainbridge.
- Any baggage transfer, either through a walking-holiday package or agreed directly with accommodation and local drivers.
- Any Garsdale Head ↔ Hawes taxi transfer used by the chosen itinerary.
- Start and finish transport, including the Settle–Carlisle railway links for Kirkby Stephen or Garsdale and onward buses from Boroughbridge towards Harrogate or York.

For strong independent walkers travelling light, support services are not essential. For most walkers using guesthouse or inn accommodation, however, pre-arranged baggage transfer and any Day 1 taxi logistics make the route much easier to manage.

Shorter Hikes and Best Sections

The Yoredale Way splits most cleanly into its published daily stages. Cutting it into smaller pieces is possible, but transport and accommodation are not evenly spread, and the route is not continuously waymarked, so even a short section needs the guidebook or OS mapping.

When using GPX files or printed route notes, make sure they are for the shorter Low Route from Kirkby Stephen to Boroughbridge, not the older longer Yoredale Way between York and Kirkby Stephen.

Best for	Start → End	Approx. distance	Why choose it	Transport notes
Best scenic day for experienced walkers	Kirkby Stephen → Garsdale Head	23 km	The wild opening crossing over Mallerstang, Hell Gill Bridge and the high ground near High Seat gives the most remote fell scenery on the route.	Kirkby Stephen and Garsdale are on the Settle–Carlisle railway, though Kirkby Stephen station is a short distance from the town. Check train times before travelling.
Best easier day / beginners	Ripon → Boroughbridge	13 km	The shortest official stage, with lower-level walking as the route approaches the Vale of York. It avoids the exposed Pennine terrain of Day 1.	Boroughbridge has no station; onward travel is by bus towards Harrogate or York. Ripon is also bus-served, but timetables are limited and should be checked before travelling.
Best weekend section	Garsdale Head → Middleham	38 km	A strong two-day taste of upper and mid Wensleydale, taking in Cotterdale, Hardraw, Hawes, Askrigg, Aysgarth Falls, Leyburn and Middleham.	Garsdale is on the Settle–Carlisle railway. Leaving Middleham usually means using local bus or taxi links, often via nearby Leyburn; this should be checked before travelling.
Best 3–5 day section	Garsdale Head → Ripon	77 km	Four days through the heart of the route, from upper Wensleydale to the lower Ure, including Hawes, Aysgarth Falls, Middleham, Jervaulx Abbey, Masham and Ripon.	Start at Garsdale by rail. Finish at Ripon, then use bus links for onward travel; Dales bus services are useful but limited.
Best villages and accommodation section	Askrigg → Masham	37 km	A practical two-day section with a good spread of villages and market towns: Askrigg, Aysgarth, West Witton, Wensley, Leyburn, Middleham and Masham.	Local bus and taxi planning is more important here than on the railway-linked sections. Check current services and accommodation availability before booking.

Best for	Start → End	Approx. distance	Why choose it	Transport notes
Best for public transport	Kirkby Stephen → Garsdale Head	23 km	This is the clearest rail-to-rail section, using the Settle–Carlisle line at both ends.	It is also the hardest single stage, with exposed, unsigned fell ground. Do not choose it purely for transport convenience unless weather, fitness and navigation are suitable.
Best camping section	Askrigg → Masham	37 km	The central dale is more practical for campsite-based planning than the exposed first day, with settlements at sensible intervals.	Use established campsites and book ahead. Campsites are not guaranteed at every overnight point, and seasonal opening should be checked before travelling.

Best day walk: Kirkby Stephen to Garsdale Head

This is the standout single-day section for hill scenery, but it is not the easiest. The route climbs out from Kirkby Stephen towards the Mallerstang watershed, reaching the high, exposed country near the source of the Ure and High Seat before dropping towards Garsdale Head.

Choose this only with a reliable forecast, proper navigation and enough daylight. There is no continuous waymarking, and this is the section where map-and-compass skills matter most.

Best easier section: Ripon to Boroughbridge

For a shorter and less committing taste of the route, the final stage from Ripon to Boroughbridge is the most manageable option. At about 13 km, it is the shortest of the standard stages and stays away from the high Pennine ground.

It is still a point-to-point walk, so transport must be planned in advance. Boroughbridge has no railway station, with onward travel by bus towards Harrogate or York.

Best weekend: Garsdale Head to Middleham

This two-day section gives a concentrated version of the Yoredale Way's dale walking. The first day runs from Garsdale Head through Cotterdale, Hardraw and Hawes to Askrigg; the second continues past the Aysgarth area, Wensley and Leyburn to Middleham.

It works well for walkers who want Wensleydale villages, riverside paths and one famous natural highlight at Aysgarth Falls without committing to the full 116 km. Accommodation should be booked early, especially in the upper dale, and any transfer between Garsdale Head and Hawes should be arranged in advance if needed.

Best 3–5 day section: Garsdale Head to Ripon

The best longer excerpt is the four-day run from Garsdale Head to Ripon, following the standard stages to Askrigg, Middleham, Masham and Ripon. It covers much of the route's most varied walking while

avoiding both the exposed opening day from Kirkby Stephen and the short final approach to Boroughbridge.

This section includes Hawes, Aysgarth Falls, Middleham Castle, Cover Bridge, Jervaulx Abbey, Masham, West Tanfield and Ripon. It is a strong option for walkers who want the essence of the route with easier logistics than the full end-to-end, though public transport remains limited and should be checked before travelling.

Highlights and Points of Interest

The Yoredale Way is strongest when treated as a journey down the whole character of the River Ure: from the exposed Pennine watershed above Mallerstang, through classic Wensleydale villages and waterfalls, then out into the gentler lower Ure and the Vale of York. The places below are listed in walking order and are the best candidates for extra time, short detours or a slower overnight stop.

Highlights in walking order

Place	Why it matters	Planning note
Kirkby Stephen and the River Eden	The walk starts in this Cumbrian market town beside the River Eden before climbing out towards the fells.	It is the last sizeable service point before the high opening stage towards Garsdale Head, so food, weather and navigation should be sorted before leaving town.
Mallerstang, Hell Gill Bridge and the source of the Ure	The opening day is the wildest section of the route, crossing open Pennine fell near the watershed and the source of the River Ure.	This is the most serious highlight as well as the most committing terrain: rough grass, peat, exposure and limited waymarking make map, compass and guidebook essential.
High Seat, 709 m	The highest and most remote point of the Yoredale Way, above the Mallerstang valley. It gives the route its one true high-fell day before the long descent into Wensleydale.	Save this section for a clear-weather day if possible. In poor visibility it is a navigation challenge, not just a viewpoint.
Cotterdale and Hardraw	After the fell crossing, the route enters a quieter side-dale landscape before reaching Hardraw, known for Hardraw Force .	Hardraw Force is reached through the Green Dragon Inn and is often described as England's highest unbroken above-ground waterfall. Access arrangements should be checked before travelling.
Hawes	The main town of upper Wensleydale, with shops, inns, the Dales Countryside Museum and the Wensleydale Creamery associated with Wensleydale cheese.	One of the best places on the route for a longer stop, resupply or a rest-day-style overnight. Accommodation in the upper dale should be booked ahead.
Aysgarth Falls	One of the route's major natural features: a famous triple flight of limestone waterfalls where the River Ure drops over broad ledges in a wooded gorge.	Worth allowing unhurried time here, especially if conditions are wet enough to give the falls more force. Paths around riverside sections may be muddy after rain.
Middleham and Middleham Castle	Middleham is a racehorse-training town dominated by the ruined fortress of Middleham Castle , a childhood home of Richard III.	A good place to slow the pace between upper Wensleydale and the lower Ure. If planning to visit the castle rather than simply pass through the town, opening arrangements should be checked before travelling.
Cover Bridge and Jervaulx Abbey	The route follows the Ure past Cover Bridge to the Cistercian ruins of Jervaulx Abbey , set in private parkland.	One of the best historic pauses on the middle part of the walk. Allow time here rather than treating this section purely as a link between Middleham and Masham.

Place	Why it matters	Planning note
Masham	A small market town strongly associated with brewing, home to both Theakston and Black Sheep breweries.	A practical overnight stop with strong local interest. If brewery visits are part of the plan, current opening and tour details should be checked before travelling.
West Tanfield and the lower Ure	A pretty riverside village as the dale opens towards the Vale of York, with the medieval Marmion Tower as its main landmark.	This is a good marker for the changing character of the route: less high-dale walking, more lower-river country.
Ripon	The small cathedral city is one of the most rewarding cultural stops on the route. Ripon Cathedral has one of the oldest crypts in England, dating from the 7th century, and the city is known for its nightly hornblower tradition.	A strong choice for extra time or a more comfortable final overnight before the shorter last day to Boroughbridge.
Boroughbridge and the Devil's Arrows	The route finishes in this historic market town on the River Ure, close to the Devil's Arrows , a row of prehistoric standing stones.	Leave enough time before onward bus connections to see the finish properly rather than rushing straight away from the trail.

Best places to spend extra time

Hawes is the most useful upper-dale stop for services and local interest. It works well for walkers who want time for the Dales Countryside Museum, the Wensleydale Creamery or simply a more relaxed resupply point after the exposed opening day.

Aysgarth Falls deserves time because it is not just a single viewpoint. The interest is in the River Ure itself: broad limestone steps, wooded surroundings and the way the river changes character as it drops through the gorge.

Middleham is the best stop for walkers interested in medieval history and the lower Wensleydale landscape. The castle gives the town a clear focal point, and the racehorse-training character makes it distinct from the smaller villages elsewhere on the route.

Masham is the obvious place to slow down for brewing heritage. The presence of both Theakston and Black Sheep makes it one of the most distinctive town stops on the Yoredale Way.

Ripon is the strongest cultural stop near the end of the trail. The cathedral, ancient crypt and hornblower tradition make it worth more than a quick overnight if the itinerary allows.

Landscape highlights

The most dramatic landscape contrast comes between **Day 1** and the rest of the route. The crossing above Mallerstang is high, open and remote, with the route reaching High Seat before dropping towards the headwaters of the Ure.

Below the watershed, the interest becomes more intimate: riverside paths, field walking, farm tracks, villages, waterfalls and historic sites strung along Wensleydale. The River Ure is the constant feature, and the walk is at its best when the route is seen as a gradual downstream journey from fell source to market-town finish.

Common Mistakes and Planning Tips

Mistake: assuming the Yoredale Way is fully waymarked

The Yoredale Way is a registered LDWA Long Distance Path, but it is not a National Trail and does not have continuous waymarking or acorn signage. Treat it as a self-navigation route, not a follow-the-signs trail.

Fix: carry the Pocket Routes guidebook by Stuart Greig, the relevant OS mapping and a compass, with a GPX track as a backup rather than the only navigation tool. This matters most on Day 1 over Mallerstang and the high ground near High Seat, where the terrain is open, exposed and less forgiving in poor visibility.

Mistake: confusing the Low Route with the original 100-mile Yoredale Way

Two different walks use the name Yoredale Way. This page covers the shorter Low Route from Kirkby Stephen to Boroughbridge, around 116 km / 72 miles, normally walked in six days. The older route runs broadly York to Kirkby Stephen and is about 100 miles / 160 km, with different eastern villages and logistics.

Fix: when buying a guidebook, downloading GPX files or booking luggage transfer, check that the route is the Low Route: Kirkby Stephen → Garsdale Head → Askrigg → Middleham → Masham → Ripon → Boroughbridge. Do not mix in York-end stages, villages such as Nether Poppleton or Myton-on-Swale, or the 100-mile distance.

Mistake: underestimating Day 1

The first day from Kirkby Stephen to Garsdale Head is the hardest stage for navigation and exposure. It is a long opening day over Pennine fell, rough grass, peat and open moorland, reaching the watershed near High Seat at 709 m.

Fix: start with a realistic margin for bad weather, slow ground and navigation pauses. Check the forecast before committing to the fell crossing, and have warm, waterproof clothing accessible even if the lower dale forecast looks benign.

Mistake: booking accommodation too late in the upper dale

Accommodation is mixed along the route, but beds are thinner in the upper dale than in the larger towns. Hawes, Askrigg, Leyburn, Middleham, Masham, Ripon and Boroughbridge have more options than smaller places, but availability can still be tight in walking season.

Fix: book the full itinerary before travel, especially around Garsdale Head, Hawes, Askrigg and Bainbridge. If using an itinerary that finishes Day 1 at Garsdale Head but sleeps in Hawes, arrange the taxi link in advance and confirm the pickup point and time before setting out.

Mistake: assuming every village has food and supplies

The route passes many villages, but not every place should be treated as a reliable resupply stop. Riverside and field sections can be surprisingly quiet between the larger settlements.

Fix: plan food around the known service centres such as Hawes, Leyburn, Masham, Ripon and Boroughbridge, and carry enough snacks and water for the full day between overnight stops. Opening hours for village shops, pubs and cafés should be checked before travelling, especially outside peak season or on Sundays.

Mistake: leaving finish transport vague

Boroughbridge has no railway station. The usual onward travel is by bus towards Harrogate or York, with York the nearest mainline East Coast hub.

Fix: check current bus times from Boroughbridge before fixing the final day's plans. Do the same for the start: Kirkby Stephen is served by the Settle–Carlisle railway, but the station is a short distance from the town, so allow time for the transfer to the trail start.

Mistake: relying on limited Dales buses as if they were urban services

Dales bus services around Hawes, Leyburn and Ripon can be useful for joining, leaving or adjusting the walk, but they are limited. A missed service can easily affect the rest of the day.

Fix: check current timetables before travelling and build in a fallback plan if using buses for section walking. Where a same-day connection is essential, allow a generous buffer rather than planning a tight handover from path to bus stop.

Mistake: planning stages that ignore the route's two very different characters

After the opening fell day, the route becomes mostly lower-level walking down Wensleydale, using riverside paths, field paths, farm tracks, parkland and quiet lanes. That does not make every later stage effortless: field and riverside sections can be muddy or waterlogged after rain, and the daily distances remain substantial.

Fix: treat the six-day itinerary as a sensible standard, not an unnecessarily slow schedule. Strong walkers may be able to combine sections, but the practical constraints are accommodation, transport and slow ground after wet weather rather than distance alone.

Mistake: wearing footwear only for dry valley paths

Much of the route is low-level, but the first day crosses rough, wet fell ground and later field paths can be muddy. Lightweight footwear that works on dry lanes may feel inadequate on peat, wet grass and churned field edges.

Fix: choose footwear with reliable grip and enough support for mixed ground. Gaiters can be useful after rain, particularly on Day 1 and on muddy field or riverside sections.

Mistake: treating the total ascent figure as the main difficulty measure

The route's total climbing is modest for a 116 km walk, but that can be misleading. The main difficulty comes from the exposed, unsignposted opening stage and the need to navigate independently.

Fix: judge readiness by navigation ability, bad-weather decision-making and comfort with a long first day over open fell. If precise ascent matters for training or itinerary planning, check the current guidebook or GPX figures before relying on a single number.

Final Advice

The Yoredale Way is best for walkers who want a quieter Dales long-distance route with real variety: one serious Pennine fell day, then several days of lower, gentler walking beside the River Ure through Wensleydale and into the Vale of York. It is not technically difficult for most of its length, but it is a poor choice for anyone relying on constant waymarking or wanting a fully signed National Trail experience.

The main planning priority is Day 1. The climb from Kirkby Stephen over the exposed Mallerstang ground towards High Seat and the Ure watershed is the committing section of the route, and poor weather can make navigation and timing much harder. Carry the Pocket Routes guidebook, OS mapping and a compass, and check the forecast before setting out.

Accommodation also needs early attention, especially in the upper dale. Beds are thinner around the first stages, and some itineraries use a taxi link between Garsdale Head and Hawes, so any transfer arrangements should be checked before travelling.

The route works well as a six-day thru-hike because the journey down the Ure gives it a clear beginning, middle and finish. It can also be split into sections using places such as Hawes, Leyburn, Masham, Ripon and Boroughbridge as practical bases, though Dales bus services are limited and timetables must be checked carefully.

The most rewarding aspect is the changing character of the walk: the wild opening over Mallerstang, the classic Wensleydale villages and falls, then the softer lower Ure through Masham, Ripon and on to Boroughbridge. Take care not to confuse this Low Route with the older, longer Yoredale Way associated with the York to Kirkby Stephen line; this guide follows the 116 km / 72-mile Kirkby Stephen to Boroughbridge route.