

The

Monsal Trail

Jane Kelly and her dog, Tilly, reveal the many delights of the Monsal Trail

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The Monsal Trail follows the remains of the Midland Railway's line between London and Manchester then extends an extra 8.5 miles from Blackwell Mill near Buxton to Bakewell.

The trail attracts cyclists, walkers and horse-riders and can be extremely busy at peak times of the year, especially on weekends when the weather is sunny. The trail has become a popular leisure route, particularly since the

tunnels re-opened. There are plenty of opportunities to escape from the busier sections of the trail, simply by wandering along the banks of the River Wye, which boasts the most spectacular limestone scenery.

Those that enjoy a more adventurous route will like the steep rocky paths, whilst those less accustomed to such strenuous activity, can wander happily along the more gentle pathways.

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MILLERS DALE

Millers Dale station is the first station you see if you start

at the Wyedale end of the trail, and was once the largest station on the line.

The railway was used by local farmers bringing milk to 'the milk train' which carried it to bottling plants in Manchester and Sheffield. The railway also brought industry with it, as it provided access to the limestone deposits. Large quantities of stone were

transported which led to more quarrying, the construction of lime kilns and the production of quicklime which was in great demand in the nineteenth century. You can still see the kilns at either end of the station, where swifts have made their home. The crevices within the kilns are used by hibernating bats in the winter.

The Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, which manages the reserve next to the lime kilns requests that dogs are kept on leads, especially during the nesting season (April - July) and if cattle or sheep are present.

CHEE DALE TWITCHERS

Chee Dale, a limestone gorge, has been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest and the Monsal Trail cuts through it in a series of tunnels. You can often hear the woodpeckers that have made the slopes their home.

ENJOY MONSAL HEAD

The views of Monsal Viaduct, Dale and Trail are amazing and there are several paths down – these are steep in places but it's worth it, especially if you walk all the way to the waterfall. If you're thirsty, the hotel is dog-friendly.

Monsal Trail walks

BLACKWELL MILL AND MILLERS DALE

A charming walk – simply follow the signs to Chee Dale and explore the river. The track can be rocky and gets muddy. Details of a circular route, The Wild Rhubarb Walk which links Millers Dale and Blackwell Mill can be found on our website.

BAKEWELL STATION AND HASSOP STATION

A gentle linear walk of only one mile (and a mile back again) along the trail from Bakewell Station. Enjoy a drink at the cafe. There's a covered area where you can sit. **Hassop Station Bookshop & Café, Hassop, Bakewell** Tel 01629 815 668 or visit www.hassopstation.co.uk

If you prefer a circular walk, try the Bakewell Loop which is just over three miles in length. It uses the Public Bridleway which is just a short walk along the Monsal Trail from Hassop Station. Dogs can run off lead without worry. You can find details at www.dogfriendlypeakdistrict.co.uk.

MILLERS DALE AND MONSAL HEAD

A longer walk of three miles each way which includes both the Litton and Cressbrook Tunnels – you can sit inside or out at the Stables Bar or outside the cafe at Monsal Head. If you fancy a longer walk, wander down to Little Longstone (a five-minute walk from Monsal Head) and visit the dog-friendly Packhorse Inn.

You can avoid the tunnels if you leave the trail at Litton Mill and follow the concessionary pathway along the river until you reach Cressbrook Mill. This takes you through a lovely area known as Water-Cum-Jolly which is rich in wildlife. It can become impassable after heavy rain. The pathway leads across the weir then up and on to Monsal Head where it rejoins the Monsal Trail at the head of Cressbrook Tunnel.

WALKING THE TRAIL

It's probably best to walk the trail in sections, rather than the whole thing, because public transport links are somewhat limited, being in such a rural part of the country. It's also worth mentioning that there's a very slight uphill gradient if you start in Bakewell. I hadn't really noticed but cyclists say cycling back from Blackwell Mill is much quicker.

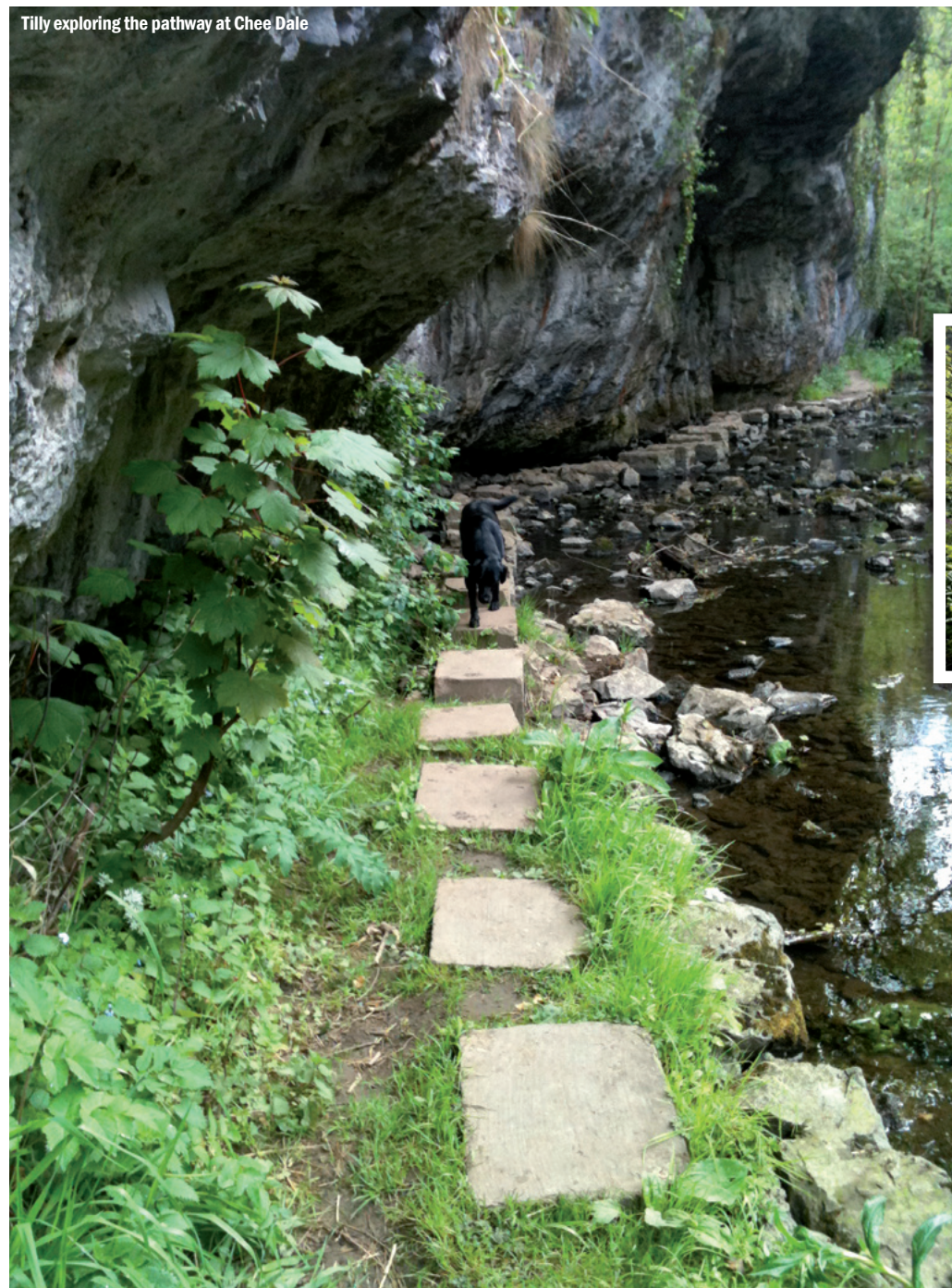
WARNING There's a misconception that the trail runs between Bakewell and Buxton but it actually finishes at Blackwell Mill.

If you're walking this section, there's a car park about ten minutes further on down an unmade road – this is often used by vehicles accessing the properties at Blackwell Mill. I wouldn't recommend parking at the Wyedale end of the trail because the car park's very small and you can't let your dog off-lead until you reach the trail itself. The car park at Millers Dale is more suitable. If you'd like more details you can download a free map at www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0012/112053/monsals-trail-map.pdf

CODE OF CONDUCT

Please take great care with your dog and follow the code – this states that 'Dogs must be kept under close control at all times and on short leads in the tunnels.'

Tilly exploring the pathway at Chee Dale



The waterfall at Monsal Dale



ENJOYING BAKEWELL'S DELIGHTS

There are plenty of dog-friendly eateries

The Castle Inn
Tel 01629 812 103 or visit
www.castle-inn-bakewell.co.uk

- An extremely dog-friendly pub in Castle Street – the only area that dogs aren't allowed is down the steps in the restaurant.

The Wheatsheaf
Tel 01629 812 985 or visit
www.lets-go-bakewell.co.uk/the-wheatsheaf-i601394.html

- Situated in Bridge Street, dogs are allowed in the bar and lounge but not the restaurant.

The Red Lion
Tel 01629 812 054 or visit
www.red-lion-bakewell.co.uk

- Dogs are welcome in the tap room at this pub which is situated in the centre of Bakewell on The Square.

Manners Hotel
Tel 01629 812 756 or visit
www.themannershotel.com

- Dogs are welcome in the pub and beer garden which is situated on Haddon Road.

Honey Bun Café
Tel 01629 815 150
● Dogs are welcome at 1 Water Street.

Eat out!

The Anglers Rest, Millers Dale, Buxton
Tel 01298 871 323 or visit
www.theanglersrest.co.uk

- Awarded 'District Pub of the Year' by the Sheffield & District branch of CAMRA, it's the perfect for walkers and their dogs.

Directions Leaving the station at Millers Dale, walk towards Bakewell, then take the pathway signed Millers Dale and, after dropping down the steep slope you'll find the pub, via a bridge, on the other side of the river.

The Stables Bar, Monsal Head, Nr Bakewell
Tel 01629 640 250 or visit
www.monsalhead.com

- The stables once housed the horses that brought people up the steep incline from what was Monsal Dale Station. Dogs are welcome inside but there's also a large seating area outside.

Directions Cross the Monsal Viaduct and, just before Headstone Tunnel, turn left up the steep pathway to Monsal Head. The bar is next to the hotel.

The Packhorse Inn, Main Street, Little Longstone, Nr Bakewell
Tel 01629 640 471 or visit
www.packhorse-longstone.co.uk

- Muddy owners and their dogs are welcome.

Directions If you fancy a little detour, leave the trail at Monsal Head and walk down the road opposite the Monsal Head Hotel, towards Little Longstone. The pub is on the left hand side as you enter the village.

CATCHING THE BUS

Services operate from Chesterfield and Sheffield to Tideswell and Millers Dale. The bus stop is on the main road through Millers Dale and Wyedale (Topley Pike). A limited service also operates through Monsal Head (Service 173). If you want more details, visit www.traveline.info or Bakewell Visitor Centre, The Old Market Hall, Bridge Street, Bakewell.



DOG-FRIENDLY ACCOMMODATION

Beechcroft Caravan Site
Beechcroft Farm, Blackwell-in-the-Peak, Nr Buxton
Tel 01298 85330 or visit
www.beechcroftfarm.net

- This site is open all year round and welcomes responsible owners. The Monsal Trail is less than a mile away along the Pennine Bridleway which passes by the site entrance.

Greenhills Holiday Park, Crowhill Lane, Bakewell
Tel 01629 813 052 or visit
www.greenhillsholidaypark.co.uk

- The park is between February and November.

Monsal Head Hotel, Great Longstone, Nr Bakewell
Tel 01629 640 250 or visit
www.monsalhead.com

- Well-behaved dogs are welcome.

Rutland Arms Hotel, The Square, Bakewell
Tel 01629 812 812 or visit
www.rutlandarmsbakewell.co.uk

- Dogs welcome in the courtyard and lounge.

Bolehill Farm Holiday Cottages, Bolehill Farm, Nr Bakewell
Tel 01629 812 539 or visit
www.bolehillfarm.co.uk

- A collection of eight converted cottages – dogs are welcome.

Jane runs the Dog Friendly Peak District website, an online guide of dog-friendly places in the Peak District
www.dogfriendlypeakdistrict.co.uk