

Wells and the Mendips

From Annouska Evans , Manager of the SSE Outdoor Education Center at Charterhouse

Ebbor Gorge / Deer Leap BA5 1AY

A relatively short but stunning walk. Takes about an hour if you take time to enjoy the atmospherics. You will need good footwear and the ability to negotiate a couple scrambles. Keep dogs on a lead and children under close control as there are some dramatic sheer drops at the top. The path is marked from the Car Park. There are caves on either side where evidence of Neolithic dwelling have been found and 2 standing stones just to the side which have an uncertain history! Ebbor Gorge itself was formed 200,000 years ago when a huge cavern collapsed forming the dramatic cliffs and limestone scree slopes you see today. The varied age and canopy structure of woodland encourages a high diversity of butterflies, including many nationally scarce species. The dramatic landscape creates fantastic thermals which many species of Birds love to ride, Buzzards in particular. Amazing views, take the short spur to the highest point for the most panoramic view.

The walk can be lengthened by starting and finishing at Wookey Hole AE

Cheddar Reservoir BS26 2DL or you can also access at BS27 3DR

A perfectly level walk on a solid path all the way around this beautiful almost circular reservoir. Walk as far as you like then turn around or keep going all the way round for the approximate 3.5 mile walk. Popular at weekends but the path is plenty wide enough to distance yourselves from people coming the other way. The reservoir stands above the surrounding land so gives fantastic views of Cheddar Gorge and the Mendips or the Somerset Levels to the south. The water itself buzzes with interesting watersport activity, particular at weekends but this doesn't seem to concern the duck and wading bird life, all of which abound. AE

Priddy Mineries and / or Stockhill Woods BA5 3AS

2 very different walks from the same start point at the Car Park. On both you can choose how far you want to walk Stockhill woods is a lovely area of well managed Coniferous Forest crossed by numerous wide and reasonably level well conditioned tracks. There are 2 routes marked from the car park or make up your own. Even if the carpark appears busy the area is big enough to avoid people totally if you wish to and the paths wide enough to distance from anyone coming the other way. In the cold winter months Roe Deer like to shelter in the woods.

Cross the road to the nature reserve of Priddy Mineries. The Romans established a large lead mine here which to sometimes a greater, other times a lesser degree continued to be worked well into the 19th Century. Nature has now reclaimed the area to form a rolling heathland type landscape of upland grasses, winding paths and amphibian filled ponds and marshes. The rolling nature of the area is caused by the lead mining, the ponds being the excavation pits and the mounds the spoil heaps. Numerous paths enable you to choose your own route and distance. Alive with damsel and dragonflies at the right time of year and if you are lucky you might spot Deer drinking from the ponds. AE

Priddy 3 Groves BA53BB

A circular walk 90ish minutes starting and finishing right in the middle of Priddy. Local legend has it that Jesus walked this way with Joseph of Arimathea and these are the "Walked upon Mountains Green" referred to in Jerusalem. You can make your own mind up on that! But it is beyond doubt that Charles II used these droves whilst escaping in 1651. The Drovers were created in Medieval times for farmers to drive their livestock (mainly sheep) to Priddy Market. Priddy sheep fair in late summer is a reminder of these times.

Start from Priddy Village Green and head south along Pelting Drove for just over 1km until you find the entrance to Dursdon Drove on your left. Follow the Drove for 2km, until it is bisected by the Monarch's Way. Turn left and follow the Monarch's Way north (please be aware of grazing animals) until you meet the Wells Road. Turn left, leaving the Monarch's Way and walk for 200m (if you wish you can short cut back along the road to Priddy here) and then turn right along East Water Lane Drove. At the end of the lane, turn left onto Nine Barrows Lane and walk to the crossroads. Turn left on to the lane leading back to Priddy. AE