

Buxton Circular via Combs Moss		
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## Buxton Circular via Combs Moss

**Start & Finish:** Buxton Station

Buxton Station, map reference SK 059 737, is 22 km southeast of Manchester, 299m above sea level and in **Derbyshire**.

**Length:** 16.2 km (10.1 mi).

**Cumulative ascent/descent:** 510m. For a shorter or longer walk, see *below* **Walk and Lunch Options**.

**Toughness:** 5 out of 10

**Time:** 4 ½ hours walking time.

**Transport:** Buxton Station is the terminus of the Buxton Line from Manchester, with two trains per hour Mon-Sat daytime and one per hour else. Journey time is 60 mins from Manchester and ca. three hours from London (chg. at Stockport). A faster connection can be obtained by taking a train to Macclesfield and bus 58 to Buxton.

**Saturday Walkers' Club:** The walk is doable as a daywalk from London with a train no later than 09.20 hours.

**OS Landranger Map:** 119 (Buxton & Matlock)

**OS Explorer Map:** OL24 (The Peak District – White Peak Area)

### Walk Notes:

This is an exciting but unchallenging circuit of a quiet moorland plateau about half the size of Kinder Scout in the north western corner of the Peak District, within easy reach of the spa town of Buxton. The route follows good – if sometimes mud-prone – paths and provides for fantastic views to surrounding hills and upland moors (in good weather) and into the green valleys below around Dove Holes, Chapel-en-le-Frith and Whaley Bridge. Further highlights are the gritstone scarps of Black Edge and Combs Edge with some dramatic views, the Iron Age promontory hillfort of Castle Naze and the views over Buxton from Corbar Hill before the final descent.

**Note:** Combs Moss is a privately owned grouse moor, and as a condition for declaring it Access Land, dogs are not allowed at any time. It may also be closed to the public at 28 days-notice during the shooting season.

### Walk Options:

**An Alternative Start from Chapel-en-le-Frith Station** is possible, by ascending up to the moorland plateau at Castle Naze, 1.4 km away and 160m above. You then join the walk route 6.7 km into it. Chapel is on the Manchester – Buxton line, with a journey time from Buxton of 10-14 minutes.

**Bus Line 76** (Buxton – Brownedge Town Service) stops at Corbar Road/Lightwood Road. Continue in the direction of travel and in 80m at a T-junction with Lightwood Road, *turn up to the left*. Pick up the directions on page 3 at the asterisk \*). This cuts 1.1 km.

**A Shortcut to Chapel-en-le-Frith Station** is possible: descend off the moorland plateau along the original causeway from Castle Naze hillfort, 6.7 km into the walk. The station is then 1.4 km away and 160m below.

## Lunch: Picnic

**Lunch off route** (details last updated 16/10/2021)

**The Beehive Inn & Farm Shop** Combs, High Peak SK23 9UT (01298 812 758, <http://thebeehiveinn.co.uk/>). Open all day every day. The Beehive is 1.8 km away from Combs Moss along a narrow lane and 200m below.

**Tea: Numerous options in the centre of town**; some of the ones on the route are mentioned in the pdf.

## Notes

### Buxton

Buxton, a spa town in Derbyshire on the edge of the Peak District National Park, is the highest market town in England, some 300 m above sea level. Sights include Poole's Cavern, a limestone cavern, St Ann's Well, fed by a geothermal spring bottled by Buxton Mineral Water Company, and Georgian buildings around Buxton Crescent, including Buxton Baths. Also notable is the Opera House.

The area has been inhabited for at least 6,000 years: a settlement at Lismore Fields was rediscovered in 1984. The Romans developed a settlement known as Aquae Arnemetiae ("Baths of the goddess of the grove") and linked it to South Yorkshire via Navio in the Hope Valley to the Templebrough fort.

Built on the River Wye and overlooked by Axe Edge Moor, Buxton became a spa town because of its geothermal spring, which emerges at a steady temperature of 28° C.

The Buxton lime industry has been important for the development of the town and it has shaped the landscape around the town. Limestone has been used in several ways over the millennia: quarried as building stone, heated to produce lime (or 'quicklime'), a base for either lime mortar (a mix of lime, sand and water) for building or as a soil improver in agriculture. And before electric lights, lime was even burnt to light theatrical shows, putting the stage performers 'in the limelight'.

Modern quarrying is a high-technology industry using advanced machinery, supplying concrete and cement to the construction industry. Several active limestone quarries are still located close to Buxton, including the "Tunstead Superquarry" in Great Rocks Dale. It is the largest limestone quarry in the UK, producing 5.5 million tonnes p.a., a quarter of which is used by the cement works on site.

### Combs Moss/Castle Naze

Combs Moss is a moorland plateau in the Peak District between Chapel-en-le-Frith and Buxton. Its summit, Combs Head, lies 503m above sea level. It is flanked by the slightly higher Black Edge to the east and Combs Edge to the west, with Combs village and reservoir in the valley below. It is a privately owned grouse moor without public rights of way across it. Legal access has only been possible since the CROW Act in the year 2000. In good weather, Combs Moss provides for very fine views in all directions to the surrounding higher hills and moorlands, including Kinder Scout, Shining Tor and Axe Edge Moor, as well as to Greater Manchester.

A Roman Road passes the Moss along its westerly edge.

The most striking features of the moor are the bi-vallate Castle Naze Iron Age promontory hillfort site at the north westerly tip of the plateau, triangular in shape and overlooking the wide valley towards Combs Reservoir and Whaley Bridge, and the (gritstone) Combs Edge to the south of it.

### The Peak District (National Park)

The Peak District is an upland area at the southernmost end of the Pennines.

The Peak District National Park is one of the UK's most popular, and is located within the boundaries of five counties (Derbys., Ches., Staffs., Yorks. and Greater Manchester). Founded in 1951, it was the first national Park in England. The Park spans an area of around 1,440 km<sup>2</sup> (550 mi<sup>2</sup>) and – despite its name – its terrain consists mainly of rolling hills, farmland, moorland and some gritstone escarpments (the "edges"). It is however significantly higher than much of the terrain in the surrounding area.

The Peak District is formed almost exclusively from sedimentary rocks dating from the Carboniferous period. They comprise the Carboniferous Limestone, the overlying Gritstone and finally the Coal Measures, though the latter occur only on the extreme margins of the area. In addition, there are infrequent outcrops of igneous rocks including lavas, tuffs and volcanic vent agglomerates.

The northern Dark Peak (whose geology is gritstone) is one of the most famous landmarks in the Peak District National Park, known for its exposed and isolated tracts of moorland, as well as its expansive rolling plateau which is covered by cotton grass bogs and heather moorlands. The soil of the area is composed of moorland peat which provides the perfect environment for the plant life in the area. The areas to the flanks of the high moorland host numerous copses which are composed of Oak and Birch.

The southern White Peak (whose geology is mainly limestone) is another distinctive area within the park due to its gently sloping Limestone plateau, crisscrossed by the Limestone Dales. The Dales provide the areas' drainage and vary in steepness throughout the area.

## WALK DIRECTIONS

[For a start from Chapel Station, refer to the end of this text.]

Leave **Buxton Station** onto its forecourt and *turn right* along the station building this side of **Station Road**. In 60m *turn right* at the building corner, passing the impressive Grade II listed **Fan Window**. In 25m, at the far end of the station building, *turn right* along a signposted public footpath along tarmac, with a wood on the left and the railway tracks on the right. In 280m *turn right* with the path by a row of cottages ahead and in 20m *turn left* with it to pass those cottages. In 70m *turn left* at a T-junction with **Lightwood Road** and in 20m *turn right* along **Hogshaw Drive** and in 60m cross the **Hogshaw Brook** on the road (you will broadly follow it high up onto Combs Moss). In 40m ignore a left turning path down some steps into **Hogshaw Wood** and in another 50m *turn left* up some steep railed steps into the wood with a Buxton Civic Association **Ring of Trees** marker. In 40m *fork right* on the level, ignoring a left fork eventually descending into the valley. In 50m descend between some houses and in 40m *turn left* along **Brown Edge Road**. In 60m you pass a bus stop for services from Buxton and in 25m, back on the very broad Lightwood Road, you *turn up to the right*. In 300m **Corbar Road** joins from the left, with a **bus stop for services from Buxton** visible about 80m away.

\*) Continue uphill along **Lightwood Road** and in 330m – by the last house on the left – you continue in the same direction along a car wide gravel track towards **Light Wood**. Away on the right rises **Brown Edge** with its prominent transmission mast. In 200m you pass a new stone building on the left (ignore a path past it and through a gate uphill); this is shielding a borehole that – as well as several other sources in the upcoming stretch – is a supply for **Nestlé Waters** that they turn into the bottled **Pure Life** mineral water. You enter Light Wood and in 80m cross a stream on the track. In 20m go through a metal gate to the left of a metal field gate and in another 20m pass another similar brick building as seen before and in 30m the **Old Pumping Station** that served the now disused and semi-re-naturalised **Lightwood Reservoirs**. You start a gentle ascent and cross the **Hogshaw Brook** (culverted here to flow around the former reservoir), with the former reservoir on the right behind trees and with views of **Combs Moss** up ahead.

In 90m, where the path bears to the right, you *turn left* over a two-railed footbridge across the brook into **Access Land** at the bottom of a wooded area. Ignore left and right turns, and *veer right* uphill (320°). In 70m *bear to the right* with the path and in 20m *fork right*. In 75m *turn right* at a T-junction along the top of the wood and then through bracken. In about 220m the path levels out, and you have views in the back to **Corbar Cross**, passed late in the walk, as well as to Solomon's Temple on Grin Low and to Axe Edge Moor to the right of it. Continue to a stile in a fence line 40m away and then along a clear path with the **Flint Clough** on the right below and the **Hogshaw Brook** flowing down it. In 150m from the stile, you descend with the path to cross the brook and *turn hard right* back on yourself along Flint Clough. In 200m cross a tributary to the Hogshaw Brook and *turn right* with the path. In 30m, with the drystone wall around Combs Moss and a stile ahead, *fork left* and in 20m *turn left* where a path joins from the stile. You now broadly follow Combs Moss' boundary wall for 2.8 km to its northeast corner.

**In more detail:** below the hill slope on the right, you have the **Nun Brook valley** (that brook is crossed on SWC Walk Buxton Circular via the Wye Valley), with the Buxton – Manchester railway as well as the A6 running through it. The **views on the right** beyond Brown Edge and its transmission mast include the chimney of the limeworks in the Tunstead Superquarry, and Chelmorton Low to the right and above of it (SWC Walk Buxton Circular via the Wye Valley). **On the left**, you can see Ladder Hill with its TV station mast, with parts of Greater Manchester visible to its sides. **Behind**, Axe Edge Moor and the Cat &

Fiddle ridge dominate the view, with Shining Tor visible late on along this gentle ascent. After 1.1 km you cross a crumbling wall by the remnants of a stone building on the left, which – at 506m above sea – is just 1 metre below the highest point of the walk. This is the beginning of **Black Edge**, with its steep rock cliffs dropping down into the valley. You can see a trig point ahead and have entered the **Peak District National Park**.

In 80m go through a dip and in 400m you pass a mire on the left. **Blackedge Reservoir** is visible down below on the hill slope. In 180m you pass a trigpoint at 507m above sea, the **highest point of the walk**. The ground to the left is gently dropping and does form two streams that you will cross later in the walk, on the return. In 370m, you pass by some transmission equipment on the right, overlooking **Dove Holes** village and its limestone quarries. Ahead across the valley rises Kinder Scout, with Rushup Edge pulling away to the right towards Mam Tor, the Great Ridge and Lose Hill. In another 230m, the path veers left away from the wall to stay on high ground and follow the gritstone edge of **Hob Tor**. The north easterly flank of Combs Moss is dropping down towards **Cowlow** hamlet and is called **Lady Low**, the site of a **Round Barrow**. In 100m pass a wall turning left across the moorland and in 330m *turn left* with the path at the northeast corner of Combs Moss.

You have the **Black Brook valley** on the right below, with the large conurbation of **Chapel-en-le-Frith**. In 250m you have a steep drop on the right at the start of **Short Edge**. In 350m go over a stile in a fence just to the right of a drystone wall cutting across the Castle Naze end of Combs Moss and in another 100m you can clearly see the castle ramparts ahead. In 90m, by a gritstone outcrop on the right, you can see all of **Combs Reservoir** ahead in the valley (a feeder reservoir for the Peak Forest Canal) and the south easterly castle entrance away on the left in its outer bank. In 100m go through the outer ditch of **Castle Naze** and in 20m the inner one. One of the historical causeways to the castle joins from the right behind. In 20m you go over a stile in a fence to continue to the right of a drystone wall, along the outer perimeter of the castle site. In 150m – at the nose of the promontory – *turn left* with the path along the wall. In 20m a clear and deep track turns hard right downhill. This is the other historical causeway to the castle.

**Here you have a choice:**

**For a Shortcut to Chapel-en-le-Frith Station or the route to the Beehive Inn**, *turn hard right* downhill and follow the route as described at the end of this text.

**For the Main Walk**, continue in the same direction to the right of the wall, with **dramatic views along Combs Edge** past a large promontory to the south westerly corner of Combs Moss. In 120m you pass the ramparts of the hillfort and continue in the same direction along the drystone wall, with a steep rock face on the right, and the boulder-filled hill slope further below dropping towards **Combs** village. In 380m climb through a wall and in 140m go over another one. In 50m the path and wall *turn left* up the flank of the valley of the **Pyegreave Brook**, which drains the area west of Hob Tor, and in 110m you descend with the path and in 40m cross the brook and *turn hard right* back on yourself with the path. Over the next 40m you cross a tributary clough and re-ascend to the previous level and in another 50m *turn left* with the path and wall to continue along the edge. There are quite a few boggy sections along this stretch, caused by moorland seepage under the wall and across the path. In 600m you reach the tip of the large promontory overlooking **Allstone Lee Farm**, with a seemingly landslipped area below.

*Turn sharply left* with the wall remnants on the left, up another clough along **Comb Edge**. You can see a track coming up the clough and eventually also a grouse butt down below and a shooters hut on the edge to the right, sure signs of the moor being owned by a shooting estate. The path converges with that track and you *turn up left* along it. In 20m

*turn right* with the track to cross a first stream. This and the following one drain the area west of Black Edge and form the **Meveril Brook**. The car wide grass track gently ascends to the left of the drystone wall with views ahead to two shooting lodges, once over the brow of the rise. In another 30m continue in the same direction along the minor of two tracks, ignoring the continuation of the more prominent one turning to the left, and in 20m go through some wall remnants (on the OS map). The track continues as a path and descends to in 150m cross a second stream on a plank bridge. In 60m cross another plank bridge over an often-dry stream and in 100m cross another stream by the **beaters and other staff hut** (somewhat open to the elements) to the left and in another 40m pass the **shooters' lodge** (enclosed and locked).

*Turn left* with the path, still to the left of the boundary wall. You rise steadily in a south westerly direction and in about 550m the terrain levels out. In 300m start the descent into a minor clough and in 80m *turn left* with the path to cross a stream and *turn right* again to reascend. The path is quite rough for a stretch, but there is a better path a little to the left. You ever so gently rise over 400m, where you have a cleft in the rockface on the right, then in 80m pass another one. There is a minor ridge ahead across the Combs Valley, which on the right rises to the TV mast on **Ladder Hill**. Beyond that ridge lies the **Goyt Valley**. In 100m *bear left* with the wall and in 240m, by a path coming up from the right through a wall gap, *turn left* with the wall in a southerly direction, still gently uphill. The **Midshires Way** (all the way to the Chilterns) runs along the track in the bottom of the valley below, along the course of a **Roman Road**.

In 250m *bear left* with the wall (a short wall juts out into the moorland on the left; in extension of it you can spot some of the **boundary posts** marked on the OS map) and in another 200m *bear right* with it. There is a fenced rectangular area on the slopes below on the right, and in 330m by some gritstone stacks on the right, you go over a minor brow (**Combs Head**, at 503m above sea the undramatic highest point of the actual moorland, is away to the left) and get views of the **Corbar Cross** (in line with a solitary wind turbine). You are leaving the **Peak District National Park** and in 80m have the drystone wall on the right again. Start a gentle descent, now back in the catchment area of the **Hogshaw Brook**, and in 260m *turn right* with the wall. In 80m *bear left* with the wall, now barbed wire fence topped. You continue towards the wind turbine on the edge of the Moss above **Moss House Farm**, and in 400m pass a mire on the left. In 160m pass the turbine and keep bearing left with the wall and in 140m *turn left* with it in a north easterly direction.

[!] In 100m, about 200m before the upper corner of **Light Wood**, *turn right* through a low wall gap followed by a metal sheep gate into a large dropping pasture. Follow a clear grass path along the wall on the left (155°, more or less in line with Corbar Cross and the rockface of the Harpur Hill quarry beyond) and in 50m commence a steep descent through the **Cuckoo Tors**. From the bottom of the steep drop, you follow a clear grass path broadly parallel with the wall towards a boggy tussocky area around an infant stream (you crossed it before, below on the left in Light Wood, near where it joined the Hogshaw Brook). Select one of several paths across the boggy ground and re-ascend on the far side, up **Corbar Hill** towards the top-left corner of this pasture and leave it through a gap between wall and fence (ignore a stile about 40m to the right), to then continue to the **Corbar Cross** and a trigpoint (at 437m above sea). [The 6m-high oakwood cross is a 2011 replacement for the previous one that had been chopped down in 2010 during a UK visit of the Pope by a protester against child abuse in a Catholic School in Yorkshire. The original 1950 cross was donated by the Duke of Devonshire to Buxton's Catholics to mark the Holy Year.]

In 270m, *turn left* over a stile 10m to the left of the fenced cross **out of the Access Land** and continue in the same direction away from the cross along a gently descending grassy ridge. The aim is a stone slab stile visible on the right below in a wall. You can either *turn*



*right* immediately steeply down a chute, or continue ahead for 130m (with views of Lightwood Road near the start of the route down below) and *turn hard right* back on yourself along a grass path that in 130m leads back to the stile. Go over the stile and follow a right-hand wall through a pasture. In 100m go through a wooden gate in a drystone wall to enter **Corbar Wood** and continue downhill along a public footpath, ignoring left and right turns. You follow several footpath and Buxton Civic Association **Ring of Trees** marker posts downhill and in 150m at a T-junction by a footpath signpost, you *turn right*. In 35m *turn hard left* back on yourself with a low Ring of Trees marker post and in 25m *turn right* with the path. In 60m *turn left* and in 65m another path joins from the left below and behind. In 30m you leave the wood through a wooden gate with a Ring of Trees marker.

Continue towards the audible A5004 **Manchester Road**, and in 30m *fork right* to in 50m descend gently to the road, by a bus stop on the right. Cross the road and *turn right* along its opposite pavement. In 20m *turn left* down **Park Road**. Ignore all ways off, and in 260m *bear left* at a T-junction (still Park Road). You *curve to the right* with this circular road and in 75m can see a cricket pitch to the right below, then a bowling green, with **Solomon's Temple visible beyond on Grin Low**. In 250m *turn left* off the circular road along another arm of Park Road back towards the audible Manchester Road, with the **Devonshire Dome** visible ahead. [The Grade II\*-listed 1785 stables block, at the time the largest unsupported dome in the world, was later converted to a hospital and is now used by the University of Derby.] In 60m *turn right* along a signposted footpath along a tarmac path between houses. You ignore a left turn into the churchyard of **St. John's Church** and at the bottom of the path, cross the A53 **St. John's Road** to **The Pavilion Arts Centre**.

*Turn left* along the pavement and in 25m *fork right* downhill away from the A road along **Water Street** to the left of Buxton's **Opera House**. In 90m pass **The Old Clubhouse** on the left and cross **The Square** to continue to the left of **The Crescent** building. There are several cafés in the building on the right, and further down **George Street** you pass the **Lone Star** restaurant, **Buxton Brewery's Taproom and Cellar** and **Bar René/Brasserie de la Cour** and eventually emerge on **Terrace Road**, with many other agreeable wining and dining options to the left and right. *Turn left* along the road, cross it at a convenient point and *turn right* at a four-way junction along **Station Road**. **Buxton Station** is 100m away on the opposite side.

### **Route from Chapel Station to Castle Naze**

Arriving from Buxton, leave the platform at the Manchester end through a white gate and *bear left* to continue to the right of a wooden field gate along a signposted footpath into a wood (ignore the other footpath up a tarmac drive to the right of a house). In 125m pass to the right of a wooden field gate and continue in the same direction along a tarmac drive at a bend, passing **Bank Hall Lodge** on its right. Ignore all ways off, en route passing **Top Lodge** and **Sunset View** cottage, until you reach a farm. Go through the farmyard and in 70m continue uphill along a grassy track and in 60m go through the middle of three field gates and follow a car wide track to **Cowlow Lane**. Go over a stone slab stile to the right of a field gate to cross the lane and go up some steps and over a stile into **Access Land** (No Dogs!) and *bear right* along a clear path that in 250m curves up around the nose of Castle Naze and to the left onto the edge of Combs Moss.

### **Route from Castle Naze to the Beehive Inn**

The path curves to the right and in 250m you **leave the Access Land** over a stile and down some steps onto **Cowlow Lane**. **For the Beehive Inn & Farm Shop**, *turn left* down the lane, ignoring all ways and tracks off, and in 1.5 km you reach the pub at a three-way junction in Combs village.

## **Route from Castle Naze to Chapel Station**

**For Chapel-en-le-Frith Station**, cross the lane and go over a stone slab stile to the left of a wooden field gate with a footpath signpost and follow a grassy track down to a farm. Go through the farmyard and follow its tarmac drive downhill, ignoring all ways off. You pass **Sunset View** cottage, then **Top Lodge**, and later **Bank Hall Lodge** in a right turn. [!] Here continue along a gravel public footpath through a gap to the left of a wooden field gate into a wood, ignoring the left turning drive that heads for a bridge under the railway 50m away. In 125m pass another wooden field gate and in 20m you reach the station.