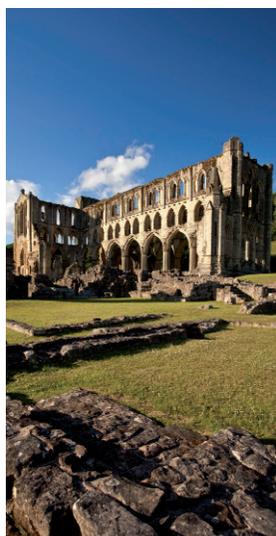


Helmsley and Rievaulx Abbey

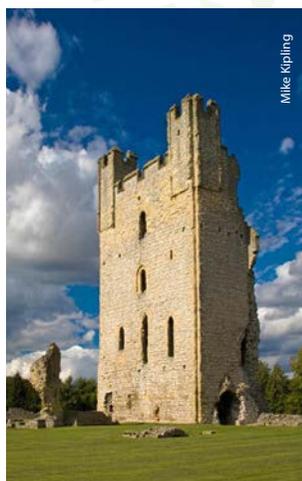


Rievaulx Abbey

In 1131 a group of twelve French monks clad in long white cloaks first set their eyes on a serene site located deep in a wooded valley, nestled in the curve of the tranquil River Rye. They and their abbot, Stephen, set to and laid the foundations of what was to become the largest and richest Cistercian house in England. The monks cleared wasteland and forest, and built outlying granges, or farms, that supplied the abbey with food. The intriguing humps and bumps near Griff Farm are all that now remains of Griff Grange, the abbey's original 'home farm', where crops were grown to feed the brothers. At its height Rievaulx Abbey probably supported 140 monks and 500 lay brothers and servants. Such great wealth, and the monastic obedience to Rome, led Henry VIII to dissolve the monasteries – Rievaulx was suppressed in 1538 and left to decay.

Evolution of an estate

In 1689, Sir Charles Duncombe, a wealthy London banker, bought the extensive Helmsley Estate, associated since medieval times with Helmsley Castle. The castle was deemed unfit for gracious living and, in 1713, Thomas Duncombe erected the mansion of Duncombe Park, giving it elegant gardens and beautiful terraces with an Ionic temple overlooking the castle. Not to be outdone, his son, Thomas Duncombe II, built a third terrace on estate land at Rievaulx in 1758, with a Doric temple at one end and an Ionic temple at the other. It's this terrace that's now owned by the National Trust – decked with wildflowers in spring and summer, including primroses and orchids, and perfect for picnics and panoramic views. The mansion is still the home of the Duncombe family, and while the house isn't open to the public the gardens and parkland are.



Classic country walk, romantic abbey ruins

The route from the market town of Helmsley to Rievaulx Abbey is a well-trodden one, but it never loses its capacity to delight and inspire. This 7-mile circular route climbs gently for sweeping views of town and castle before dropping down through charming bluebell woods to reach the peaceful village and tranquil ruins of Rievaulx Abbey. Either return the same way, or complete a circuit – and take in more stupendous views – via dramatically sited Rievaulx Terrace and Griff Farm, high above the abbey.

Did you know?

The International Centre for Birds of Prey at Duncombe Park contains northern England's largest collection of raptors.

Great for:

history buffs, woodland wanders, big-sky views, list-tickers

Length:

7 miles (11km)

Time:

4 hours

Start/Finish:

Cleveland Way car park, Helmsley

Grid Reference:

SE 609 838

Map:

OS Explorer OL26

Refreshments:

Helmsley, Rievaulx Abbey

Toilets:

Start/Finish of walk



There are lots of cafés, pubs and restaurants in Helmsley, while the start of the walk runs past Helmsley Walled Garden, whose Vinehouse Café uses ingredients grown in the garden. There's a tea room at Rievaulx Abbey, while you are welcome to picnic in the grounds of both Rievaulx Abbey and Rievaulx Terrace.



Helmsley Castle Visitor Centre, Castlegate, Helmsley.

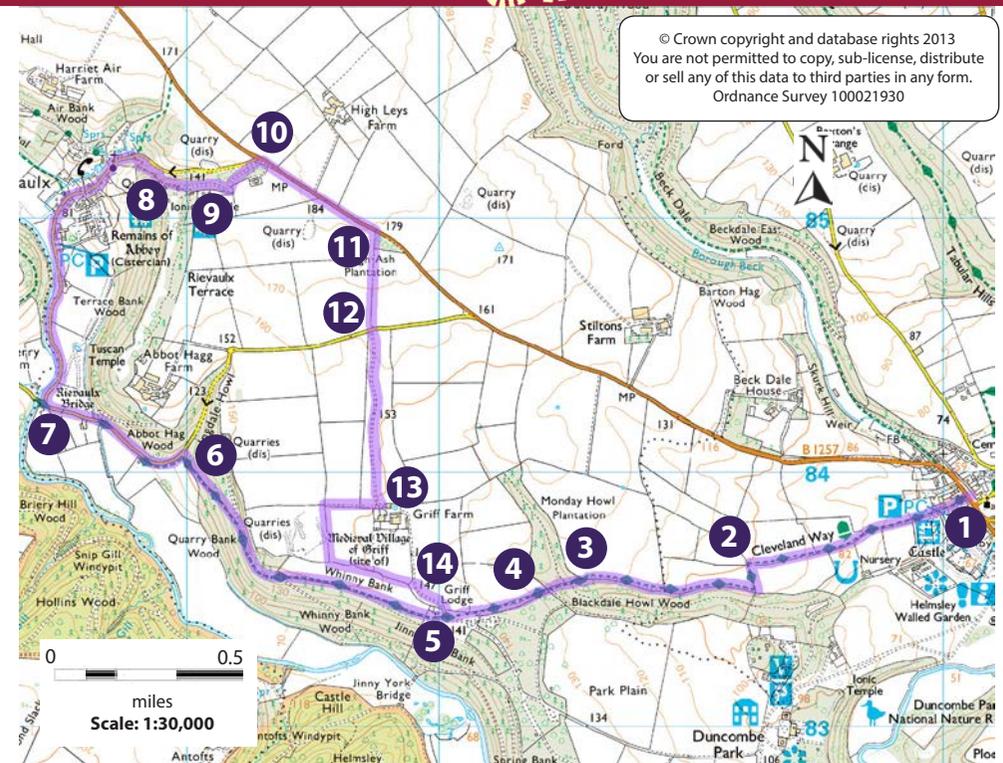
... classic country walk, romantic abbey ruins ...

Route instructions

- 1 Turn left out of the car park and follow the track (signposted 'Cleveland Way').
- 2 At the top of the track, go through the kissing gate and turn left down the field side. Then turn right, keeping the woodland on your left.
- 3 Go through the gateway and continue down into the wood.
- 4 At the edge of the wood, continue straight ahead up the slope.
- 5 Cross the track, pass to the left of Griff Lodge, and continue ahead (signposted 'Cleveland Way').
- 6 Turn left at the road, initially following a path and then the minor road.
- 7 Turn right on the Rievaulx road, passing the abbey on your right.
- 8 Just after the church, turn right up a path into the woods (signposted 'Permissive Path to Rievaulx Terrace'). (If the path isn't available, continue up the minor road to the B1257 and the Rievaulx Terrace driveway, and pick up the walk at point 10.)
- 9 At the top of the path bear left on a track, through the gate, passing the entrance to Rievaulx Terrace. Walk down the driveway to the main road.
- 10 Turn right at the main road (B1257), walk up the grass verge and cross a track to find a waymarked gate by a hedge. Continue along the side of the field, keeping the hedge on your left.
- 11 Bear right to follow the path around the edge of the trees and continue down the side of the field.
- 12 Cross the road and follow the wide track into Griff Farm.
- 13 At the farm, turn right at the waymark post and go through the gate ahead of you. Continue ahead. Turn left through the next gate, down the side of the field, and left again through another gate, keeping to the edge of the field.
- 14 Turn left through a metal gate (waymark sign on a telegraph pole) and then turn right on the track. At Griff Lodge, go through the gate to the track and turn left along the signposted path, retracing your route to Helmsley.

Like this walk?

Then soak up the history during the walk! English Heritage looks after Rievaulx Abbey and Helmsley Castle, while the National Trust is responsible for Rievaulx Terrace.



The outward walk forms the first part of the Cleveland Way National Trail and is well signposted and waymarked.

There are two woodland paths en route with steps in places. There's also a 1½-mile (2.4km) walk along a minor road to Rievaulx Abbey and up to Rievaulx Terrace – a concessionary footpath saves some road walking, but it is only available during the opening days and hours for the Terrace.

From Rievaulx Terrace, please don't return to Helmsley by walking along the busy B1257 – use the concessionary field paths via Griff Farm instead.

! You will need OS Explorer OL26 map for this walk.



The walk passes through fields where sheep and horses may be grazing.

Please keep your dog under control at all times, and always on a short lead when livestock are present.