

Presteigne and Norton Walk 5

Crossing the Lugg and heading north the route uses tracks and footpaths up past Stapleton Castle, through Stapleton Wood to The Colony. The return downhill gives glorious views as far as the Brecon Beacons, leading past Stocken Farm and across fields back to Presteigne.

Moderate with some climbs, 255m total ascent; 7.4 km; 2 h; walking boots recommended.

1. From the Assembly Rooms head North down Broad Street, past the Judge's Lodging, over the bridge and continue straight up the road. At the junction, look for the fingerpost on the right hand turning signing a footpath through a walkers' gate. Walk across the field through a kissing gate and continue diagonally across the next field to another kissing gate leading to a narrow track to the lane. Turn right for a short distance and look for a fingerpost indicating left, follow this between the hedges and pass through a field gate onto a grassy track ahead. Keep straight through two further field gates to enter Abley's Wood. In the winter you have a clear view of Stapleton Castle on the hill to your right.
2. Follow the track through the wood across a waymarked stile and onward. Eventually the path leads out into an open field, and continues in the same direction through the field heading for a house ahead. The path runs left of the house and garden and over a stile in the corner. Follow the waymark and fingerpost down and across a yard to the right of a log cabin. A waymark leads you across a small brook and out into an area that was once wooded but has now been cut. Follow the path, which is well trodden, to the waymark post which turns you right downhill and across a plank bridge back into a wood. Follow the trail through the wood across two more plank bridges and out onto the forest track. Turn left for a short distance until you reach a small clearing on your right. There is a (hard to spot) waymark on a tree trunk ahead, and you need to take the path from the far corner of the clearing.
3. Continue to follow this well-trodden (and often boggy) path through the undergrowth and trees until you reach a more wooded section. Keep straight until you spot a wire fence. The OS map shows the path crossing the fence and running to the left hand side of the field boundary, but in fact it continues on the right hand side to cross a stile at the end and re-join the OS marked path. Keep following the trodden path ahead until you emerge from the wood and see a farm ahead to your right.
4. Keep ahead and go through a field gate and approach the pond (at times you need to go through an extra metal temporary fence and gate across the path). At the waymark post take the arrow leading to the left of the pond. Once past the pond continue in a diagonal route left across the field aiming to pass just to the right of the oak tree in the middle of the field. You will cross a couple of ditches which may be muddy in wet weather. Head for the large dark grey barn and as you come over the top of the rise you will see a waymarked stile in the left hand corner of the field. Cross the stile and walk in the waymark direction with the hedge to your left. The path enters a wood and just past the start of the wood, cross the stile on your left with care, there may be live wires.

5. Continue to follow the track through the wood winding upwards. Leave the wood by another stile, again take care not to touch any wires, and climb the steep grassy bank ahead just to the left of the trees and shrubs. At the top of the rise, aim for a point a few yards to the left of the metal gates ahead. Cross a stile through the hedge which you will spot by the blue plastic wire cover. Turn left and head along the lane. At the top of the hill you can see a glorious view across Powys and Herefordshire. To your right is the distinctive rounded peak of the Whimble, ahead you can see Hergest Ridge with its monkey puzzle trees in the centre, and beyond that on a clear day, the Black Mountains and the Brecons. Now head downhill for some distance, here you are straddling the border of England and Wales as far as a house appropriately called Welsh Side, opposite Stocken Farm in England. In summer if you peer back through a metal gate beyond Stocken Farm you may catch a glimpse of their beautiful herbaceous borders.

6. Keep straight down the next part of the lane until you reach a right hand bend where you take the grassy footpath straight ahead between two hedges and follow the obvious track across the field towards a large oak tree. Once past the oak tree head down to the stile in the hedge ahead and cross into the lane (take care, it's steep down to the lane). Cross the road and over another stile, following the fingerpost direction across the field diagonally left towards a clump of trees in the far corner. At the trees head down the track across the small stream and round to the right to cross the stile in the hedge. In the next field the footpath heads diagonally left towards a stile by a couple of small trees in the left hand hedge. However, if the field is heavily cropped the farmer may ask you to use the outside verges. Cross the stile into the next field and follow the track diagonally right towards a cream painted house in the far right hand corner. Cross another stile and down a couple of steps (which can be slippery in wet weather) to the road. Turn right and head back towards Presteigne, crossing the Lugg Bridge and heading back up Broad Street to the Assembly Rooms.