

Presteigne and Norton Walk 6

This route heads east through Ackhill to join the Offa's Dyke path at Dolley Green and crossing the Lugg before climbing up towards Penn Offa and Hilltop Plantation, offered glorious views in all directions. It then skirts round Evenjob Hill returning via Thorn and Discoed, retuning via quiet lanes and footpaths to Presteigne. Be prepared for a strenuous climb; walking boots, suitable clothing and light refreshments are strongly recommended.

Strenuous; 14.3 km; ~ 3½ h; 405 m total ascent.

1. From the Assembly Rooms head down Broad Street, past the Judge's Lodging to the church. Walk through the churchyard following the blue sign to the Nature Trail and Picnic Area. Continue to follow these signs along the road and at the junction take the right-hand fork along West Wall. At the bend take the right-hand turn, again following the sign to the Nature Trail. Follow the rough track and then take the narrow footpath straight ahead. Ignore the steps down to the boardwalk and continue forwards across rough ground.
2. Leave at the gate adjacent to the allotments and cross the main road, turn northwards away from the town and take the lane on the left. Follow this round the bend and across the Lugg back to the main road and continue up the main road in the same direction, keeping to the grass verge on the left. Walk up the hill until you reach a gate on the left with a bridleway fingerpost.
3. Go through the gate and follow the green lane ahead. Continue in a roughly straight line through a series of field and walkers' gates for approximately 1.5 km until you reach a track. Go forward on the track and then a quiet lane until you arrive at a bend on the main road. Take the footpath to your right across a field and out through a field gate. Immediately on your left pass through a farm gate into a farmyard, where you walk diagonally right across the yard, then left after the next gate, turning left to walk along the tack with farm buildings either side. Follow the farm road all the way to the end, across two cattle grids.
4. At the main road, turn right and walk along the road for a short distance, past the houses until you join the Offa's Dyke Path. Continue on the main road and follow the OD path through a gate on the left across a field and footbridge. Immediately after the footbridge, keep straight ahead, don't take the left-hand footpath. You will now be following the well-marked OD path for approximately 3 km, initially across fields, then over a road and start to climb. As you head uphill, the dyke is clearly visible as a long low mound. Try to avoid walking on top of it, as this leads to erosion; for a while it will be easiest to keep to the left side. The climb gets very steep, but you can stop regularly to look at the views behind, a good excuse to catch your breath.

5. Eventually you cross a narrow lane, go straight across and continue diagonally left up the OD path to the hilltop plantation at the top of Pen Offa. The plantation is a haven for birds, and makes a sheltered lunch spot on a blustery day. Hares may also be spotted, and buzzards overhead. You will now start to descend, still following the OD path and eventually you will pass through a gate and down a steep flight of steps. At the bottom turn left and head up the track. At the top of the rise continue along the track, which is a marked bridleway, turning away from the OD path at this point (note this bridleway is not marked on the OS Explorer maps).

6. Follow this track until it abuts the road next to a house and take the track up to your left, marked with a red fingerpost. Follow this byway all the way to the road in Thorn, where you cross over and follow the quiet lane straight ahead. The lane descends steeply, follow it all the way to the bottom then turn right to walk along the main road for approximately 1.5 km (look out for oncoming traffic). At the second entrance to Gumma Farm, take the stile to your right and head diagonally left up the hill (last climb!), skirt round the oak tree and head for a stile in the corner of the next field. Once over this stile, you now have a long straight footpath ahead through gates and stiles towards Presteigne.

7. Finally, the footpath rejoins the road on the outskirts of Presteigne. Cross over the junction and continue to head into the town on the pavement, taking the left-hand fork just past the children's play area. Follow this road straight along the High Street and you will eventually return to the Assembly Rooms.