

The Great British

Walk

 National Trust



A great walk for kids!

A secret walk at: Malham Tarn

Mark Rowe, our walking pro, has discovered this secret walk for you to explore. Now you can follow in his footsteps...

He fell in love with walking in the wilds of Hertfordshire, while growing up in the suburbs of north London.

Today, Mark has worked regularly for the Trust's Great British Walk and The Independent on Sunday. He is also a contributing editor to BBC Countryfile Magazine. He is however, still learning how to fold an OS map in a force eight gale.

A bit of background

Set in the south-west corner of the Yorkshire Dales National Park, the countryside around Malham is picture postcard territory: a mixture of sweeping valleys and tough, nuggety hills squared off by drystone walls contouring around their flanks. Such a landscape can seem daunting for adults planning to bring little people along, but there's one low-level walk to enjoy, with the promise of a magical end to the journey...

THE SECRET



A magical walk for children to a waterfall in the Yorkshire Dales - look carefully and you may just spot the Queen of the Fairies peeking out from a secret cave hidden behind the cascade.

Perhaps secrets really are only for children. The path to Janet's Foss is a well-trodden diversion off the Pennine Way, but for kids there's not only a magical waterfall to discover, but a secret cave hidden behind the water that is tantalisingly out of reach. If you see a more obvious cave to the right, you've not found it, so keep looking. Local legend says this cave is home to Janet, Queen of the Fairies (Foss is a Norse word for waterfall).

Distance: *approximately 3 miles and very flat*



The walk

Babbling by the beck

We've walked perhaps 100m along Malham Beck from the start of our walk, and we have paused perhaps 20 times. Jessica (8) and Madeline (3) are studying froglets and daisies, their imaginations in overdrive. Meanwhile I'm taking in the classic views with Malham Cove rising up behind the village and rolling hills in every direction.



Giant rhubarb



The walk winds through a succession of sweeping meadows that opens up views right across the landscape. The path follows Gardale Beck and enters National Trust woodland. It's a lovely, shaded place with half-submerged limestone boulders, giant rhubarb, or gunnera, and - if you come again next spring - the pungent smell of wild garlic.

Woodland faces

Excite the children with tales of the legendary Queen of the Fairies. Then why not try and pick out shapes - monkeys, ogres - in the folds of the woodland tree trunks.



THE SECRET Janet's Foss



As we reach the secret waterfall, Janet's Foss, the children are certainly away with the fairies. Madeline is paddling in the shallows while in a flash Jessica has shinned up the rocky flanks encircling the tarn. She spends a minute or two trying to pull herself up over the lip of the waterfall to the secret cave: but she either needs to come back when she's grown a few inches or pack a collapsible stepladder.

On a high

Jessica certainly has a head for heights. Undeterred she picks her way over tree roots that cling to almost perpendicular slopes. Now she's perhaps 50ft above the tarn. I can't make out a path, so she must be digging in with her toes.



The clapper bridge

After we've finished an ice-cream above the waterfall, it's time to retrace our steps back to the old smithy in Malham, where we can once again appreciate the delightful clapper bridge.



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