



Bolam Lake and Shaftoe Crag

Distance 12km **Time** 3 hours 30

Terrain compacted woodland trails, wooden walkways, field paths, farm tracks and country roads

Map OS Explorer 325 **Access** no public transport to Bolam. Car park (pay and display) with facilities at the Boat House

Bolam Lake Country Park is the starting point for this signposted circular route through fine Northumberland countryside which takes in some weird and wonderful rock formations and great views.

From the Bolam Low House car park (pay and display) go out onto the road and head right towards the junction. Carry on along the road for a short distance before entering the field on your right by Bolam Low House.

Cross the field to reach a wooden bridge, then follow the field edge to the ladder stile at Curlybog Plantation. Go through the trees to another stile and

bear right after joining the track. Go through the gates and over the footbridge, then cross the field towards Sandyford Farm. Bear left when you reach the road and carry on past the house at West Toft Hill.

Before you reach the A696, turn right at the sign for the peel tower of East Shaftoe Hall. Follow the path along the field divide and turn left before the hall onto the track for Shaftoe Crag. Pass a disused walled garden on your left and follow the track up to a gate which leads to the fell. Pass through and carry on up the cobbled road to the crags, detouring off to enjoy the views and explore the crags and the rock basin known as the Devil's Punchbowl. (Take care climbing on the rock; there is a sheer drop to the south.) The Jacobite Earl of Derwentwater is said to have sheltered here before being captured, charged with high treason and executed on London's Tower Hill in 1716.

Continue on the path to pass Shaftoe

◀ Bolam Lake

Grange, bearing right of the wall. Keep with the wall to reach Salter's Nick, a big gap in the escarpment through which an old drove road passed. During the time of the Salt Tax it was used by smugglers who usually returned from their journeys north with illicit whisky. The remains of Iron Age and Romano-British settlements can be seen on top of the crags.

Turn right after the Nick on the path which crosses the moorland and meadow to reach a rough road which eventually leads back to Bolam West Houses. Bear right at the road and head back towards

Bolam Lake. Carry on down the road to the car park you started from or take a stroll around the lake first by entering the woods at the West Woods car park and following the signposts.

Red squirrels, badgers, foxes and roe deer can all be seen in the woodland around the man-made lake, which was designed by Tyneside architect John Dobson for the owner of Bolam House in 1816. More recently there were a number of sightings of a Yeti-type creature here in 2000; so look out for big footprints in the undergrowth on your way back to the start.

