# Levisham Moor and the Hole of Horcum

**Be prepared for grand landscapes and big views on this North York Moors classic. Starting with the dramatic panorama from Saltergate over the Hole of Horcum, the 5-mile scenic walk follows a prominent track over Levisham Moor, past important archaeological remains. There's a possible diversion to the stunning viewpoint of Skelton Tower, after which the route drops into the rocky ravine of Dundale Griff and returns along the valley to the Hole of Horcum, climbing back out at Saltergate.**

## Hole of Horcum

The Hole of Horcum is one of the most spectacular features in the National Park – a huge natural amphitheatre 400 feet deep and more than half a mile across. Legends hang easily upon a place known as the 'Devil's Punchbowl' – the best-known says that it was formed when Wade the Giant scooped up a handful of earth to throw at his wife during an argument. Actually, it was created by a process called spring-sapping, whereby water welling up from the hillside has gradually undermined the slopes above, eating the rocks away grain by grain. Over thousands of years, a once narrow valley has widened and deepened into an enormous cauldron – and the process still continues today.

## Levisham Moor

The track across Levisham Moor runs through a landscape rich in archaeological remains – in fact the moor itself is the largest ancient monument in the North York Moors. Half-hidden in the heather are traces of human occupation stretching back thousands of years, from Bronze Age barrows to late Iron Age boundary dykes. These mounds, ditches, banks and ridges are evidence of burial sites, fortified farmsteads, enclosures and field systems – hard to spot at first glance but obvious once identified.

In medieval times, a monastic sheep farm (or bercary) was established at the head of Dundale Griff, and the foundations of stone buildings can still be seen. It's important to keep to the path on the route from Dundale Pond to Skelton Tower, in order to preserve the remains.

## Skelton Tower

Ruined Skelton Tower offers an extraordinary view down into Newtondale and over the track of the North Yorkshire Moors Railway. Built around 1830 by Robert Skelton, rector of Levisham, it was used as overnight lodgings after a day's shooting on the moors. The grassy headland is a wonderful spot for a picnic, and you'll hear the whistle of the steam trains below in plenty of time for a photograph.

### Did you know?

The Hole of Horcum is the most southerly place in Britain where you can see the rare dwarf cornel, an arctic-alpine plant usually found in much colder conditions.

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| **Great for:** | more than a stroll, history buffs, big-sky views, list-tickers |
| **Length:** | 5 miles/8km (7 miles/11km with diversion) |
| **Time:** | 3 hours (4 hours with diversion) |
| **Start/Finish:** | Saltergate car park, A169 (Pickering to Whitby road) |
| **Grid Reference:** | SE 853 937 |
| **Map:** | OS Explorer OL27 |
| **Refreshments:** | Lockton (3 miles/4.8km) and Thornton le Dale (7 miles/11km) |
| **Toilets:** | None on the route |

There's often an ice cream van at Saltergate car park, while the Fox and Rabbit pub is 3.5 miles (5.6km) south, on the A169. Nearby Thornton le Dale (7 miles/11km south) also has cafés and pubs.

National Park mobile information point at Saltergate car park, daily in Spring Bank Holiday week and daily from mid-July to mid-September.

# . . . natural wonders and ancient monuments . . .

## Route instructions

1. Cross the road from the car park (be careful of speeding traffic) and bear right along the path along the scarp edge.
2. Go through the field gate and follow the broad track ahead over the moor.
3. Continue down the track, past the earthworks.
4. At Dundale Pond*, turn left, signposted 'Dundale Griff to Hole of Horcum'.
5. Continue along the path, above the deep-cut ravine.
6. At the signpost, turn left (to 'Hole of Horcum'), crossing two small streams (a footbridge over the second), and follow the path with the wall on the right.
7. Pass to the left of the old farmstead, continue ahead and climb uphill to reach the path at point 2. Return to the car park.

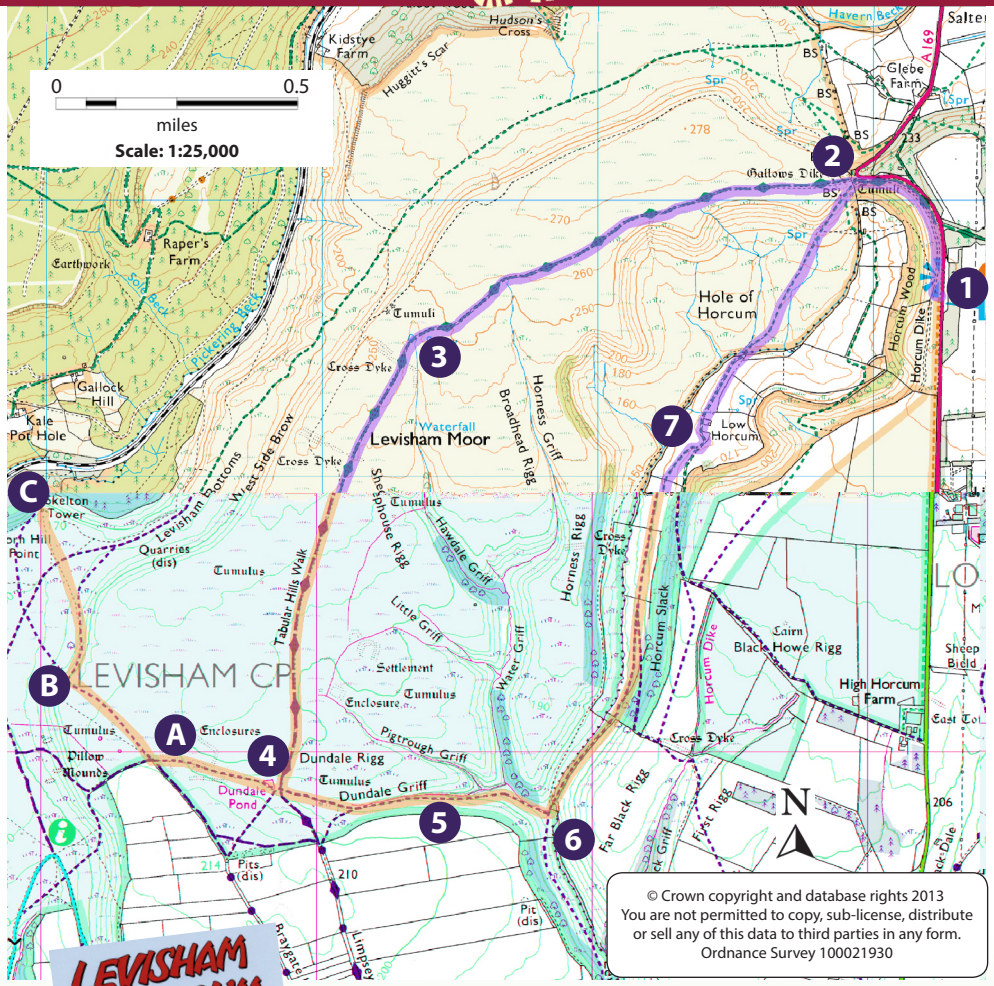
### Diversion to Skelton Tower

At Dundale Pond*, point 4, turn right instead (signposted 'Levisham Station').

A. At a signpost at a corner of a stone wall, turn right, following a track across the moor.

B. At the escarpment edge bear right down a path through a hollow way, with a clear path to the tower visible straight ahead.

C. Return along the same route to point 4, Dundale Pond.

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The broad track across Levisham Moor is easy to follow, but it can be muddy in places. Be prepared for poor visibility in bad weather. The ravine of Dundale Griff can be dangerous, with slippery surfaces and falling rocks – keep to the path at all times.

On moorland, it's important to keep your dog on a short lead (less than 2 metres) between 1 March and 31 July when rare birds are nesting on the ground. At all other times please keep your dog on a lead or to heel, and always on a lead near livestock.

### Like this walk?

Find out lots more about the local history, legends and wildlife with the 'Levisham & Horcum Guide for Adventurers', available from our online shop and Visitor Centres.

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