Jane Eyre Hathersage Trail

Trail Summary

This circular film and literature walk takes you to the places visited by Charlotte Bronte that appear in Jane Eyre. You can also recreate the famous scene from Pride & Prejudice ‘on location’ above Stanage Edge and visit the grave of Robin Hood’s sidekick Little John. Explore a Romano-British village, Norman fort, historic church and breathtaking moors on the way.

Moderate difficulty. Easy underfoot with some steep ascents and descents. Valley fields, high moorland paths, woodland path.

Start and finish:
The George Inn at the junction of the village Main Road (A6187) and the B6001 to Grindleford. OS Dark Peak Explorer Map, OL 1. SK230 815.

Access:
Buses from Sheffield and Bakewell stop on the Main Road. Sheffield to Manchester trains stop at Hathersage. Turn right out of the station. At the road (B6001) go right down to the village to arrive at the George Inn. Pay & display car park in village.

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Explore historical Hathersage village, with its ancient church and surrounding halls that are central to Charlotte Bronte’s Jane Eyre (above). Climb the cliff where Keira Knightley (below) surveyed the Peak as Elizabeth Bennet in Pride and Prejudice before stepping back down into polite society and marrying proud Darcy. Listen for rooks at North Lees Hall, and watch the attic windows for the ghostly face of a distressed captive, a sad vengeful wife no longer desired and destined to burn.

1. The George Inn
In 1845, Charlotte Bronte arrived at Hathersage by stage coach to stay with her friend Ellen Nussey at the Rectory, while Nussey’s rector brother was on honeymoon. The George (above right) was the village coaching inn, offering rest and refreshment to travellers and their horses. Bronte used pub landlord Morton’s name for her new novel. Morton is the village where Jane Eyre works as a schoolteacher, after fleeing from Rochester and Thornfield.

2. Brookfield Manor/Vale Hall
This is Brookfield Manor, which features as Vale Hall in Jane Eyre. In the novel, Mr Oliver of Vale Hall made his money from a needle factory and, in fact, Hathersage was famous for producing needles at the time. Daughter Rosamond Oliver funds the village school where Jane teaches under the false name Jane Elliott and pays Jane’s £30 a year salary.

Continue along the footpath and at the road, turn right onto Birley Lane. After about 200 metres turn left onto the public footpath. Follow this tarmac road up to North Lees Hall.

3. North Lees Hall/Thornfield

‘three stories high… a gentleman’s manor house… battlements around the top gave it a picturesque look.’ This is Thornfield, home of Edward Rochester, Jane’s destined love. In the book, Thornfield is
far to the south of Morton, but North Lees Hall is undoubtedly the template for the building Bronte describes. It is one of the many Eyre family homes in the area and we all know how Charlotte Bronte used their name!

Robert Eyre built North Lees Hall in the early 1590s, with a further wing added in 1750 after a fire. A persistent local legend has it that Agnes Ashurst, an early mistress of the hall, was imprisoned as a mad woman in the attic and died in a fire.

Continue along the footpath running behind the hall, and take a sharp right by an information board into a field, which is likely to have cows or sheep in it. About half way along the top field wall, to your left, is a stile. Cross it and follow the path about 50 metres till it kinks to the left.

4. Romano-British Village
Look right and you’ll see what looks like a standing stone (below). This was once the end of a wall marking out a terrace. The terrace is one of five that were filled with Romano-British houses almost 2,000 years ago. Archaeologists have found pottery made in the Derbyshire potteries set up after the Romans arrived. They also found a corn-grinding stone, so can be certain that back then villagers grew grain in the fields around you. Most probably the people who lived here were native local farmers. The invaders had a fort a few miles away. The ruined wall with the arched window across the field was once a Catholic chapel.

Cross back over the stile and head left and uphill along the woodland path. At the road, just before the public toilets, turn left and then right onto the bridleway. Cross the road and follow the bridleway up through woodland. Bear left, staying on the most obvious path and ascend up on to Stanage Edge.

5. Pride and Prejudice
Could you be Keira?! On Stanage Edge, Keira Knightley as Pride and Prejudice’s Elizabeth Bennet felt freedom and air to breathe. So can you find Keira’s rock?

Listen out for curlews and cackly red grouse on the high moorlands to your left. Rare ring ouzels are among the birds that nest in the cliffs at Stanage – a conservation success story!

Take the concessionary path to your right, which heads diagonally down off the edge. Turn left out of the car park and immediately right onto the Hathersage road. After about 200 metres take the righthand footpath across heather moorland. When you leave the moorland, turn right onto the

One of a suite of downloadable trails available from www.peak-experience.org.uk
8. When you leave the moorland, turn right onto the track and continue down through a wooden gate then a metal gate and into the grounds of Moor seats (house). It feels like private property, but it is OK to pass through on this public footpath.

7. Moorseats/Moor House
Charlotte Bronte created Moor House out of Moorseats. The Revd St John lived here with his sisters and it becomes Jane Eyre’s protection and retreat, dark, hidden away, sturdy.

‘They loved their sequestered home. I too, in the grey small antique structure, with its low roof, its latticed casements, its mouldering walls, its avenue of aged firs all grown aslant under the stress of mountain winds; its garden, dark with yew and holly and where no flowers but of the hardiest species would bloom found a charm both potent and permanent.’

Walk through the grounds and turn immediately right after you exit. The footpath is through a small wooden gate between 2 sets of stone gate pillars. After 50 metres or so, go through the blue-grey gate to your left and then follow the path down through Moorseats Wood. Continue straight on where the path forks, ignoring the left turn to the metal kissing gate. Immediately after the fork you will see the grass and tree covered ground rise up 2 or 3 times head height, in front and to your left (pictured above right). It blocks the view of the church.

9. Robin Hood and his Merry Men!

Hathersage churchyard is most famous for the grave of Little John, Robin Hood’s giant righthand man (above). Local legend claims Little John’s bow, hat and mail shirt once hung inside the church. There’s been a church here for at least 1,000 years.

You will also find many Eyre family graves in the churchyard, confirming the importance of this name and family to Hathersage.

Look out for gargoyles and ‘Celtic’-style carved heads adorning the church. The church you see today dates from 1460. Robert Eyre, then Lord of the Manor, restored the church and added the gargoyles. It was restored again in the mid 1800s.

Leave the churchyard by a gate more or less opposite where you came in. Take the path down to rejoin Baulk Lane to head back into the village. To return to the George, turn right out of Baulk Lane.

Credits.
Walk: devised by Bill Bevan & James Tolhurst as a Moors for the Future audio trail; adapted for print by Georgia Litherland. Photos: Bill Bevan, Jane Eyre still courtesy of www.VisitPeakDistrict.com, Pride & Prejudice still courtesy of EM Media. There are more Peak Experience self-guided trails for you to download at www.peak-experience.org.uk.

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