

A Trip to Ripon

You can arrive in Ripon on the No. 36 bus from Harrogate or Leeds etc., but I assume that most people would be driving. If driving, go on the A61 Ripon bypass and park in Bondgate Green, in the vicinity of the Canal basin. You can do this easily by driving to the small roundabout at the end of Bondgate Green and coming back on yourself, to park in the direction of traffic flow.

Walk back to the bridge over the Skell, maybe 100m away towards the City Centre, and turn right off the path (before the bridge) to walk by the side of the river.

The start of the walk is very ordinary and quite shady, but you soon see Ripon Cathedral when you look back to your left. Then you come to a children's boating area with concrete water-calming "weir", where we saw either a young salmon or a rainbow trout in the shallow water. On the other side of the river is a park as well as river access and nearby is the old Water Rat pub; go over the river on the footbridge to the north side of the river and continue walking downstream. After a short distance, you come to the junction between Priest Lane and Firs Avenue, where you see a wooden footbridge and a ford. I believe that the bridge had been partially washed away by Skell flooding, and the new one is quite recent.

You turn left here along Priest Lane and turn right into the dead-end road Low Mill Estate to pass under the Ripon bypass and then onto the riverside path. Continue along the path to the Fisher Green area and after maybe 300m, and if it's the right time of year, you might be able to pick sloes for your home made sloe gin.

Coming up to the River Ure, you bear left along the main-looking grass path, which takes you to the riverside. At this point it is possible to continue walking upstream alongside the Ure, but we didn't and just turned round to take a small path across the grass to the confluence of the rivers. Children seem to jump into the rivers at this point, but I wouldn't recommend it.

This is the halfway point and there is a bench seat for rest or relaxation.

When you are ready to move off, turn right to walk back in the direction of Ripon, i.e. upstream, to re-trace your steps. After maybe 200 m the old and broken stepping stones can be seen and you will end up paddling if you try to cross the Skell at this point. These stones have been partially washed away by the raging torrent that the Skell sometimes becomes, with evidence for flooding shown by debris in the bushes about 10 m higher than current river level.

Instead, continue walking upstream and cross into Fisher Green at the new stepping stones. These stepping stones are flat concrete and not in any way uneven, but I advise caution if you have balance issues.

Fisher Green has some new properties, which you walk past. After walking under the bypass you reach the ford and wooden bridge again. You walk nearly directly across Firs Avenue at this point, down the footpath through the yard and carpark of the plant here. We saw the path on an Ordnance Survey map, but nearly missed it, thinking it would be a private yard. But it's not.

Continuing alongside the river, you come to the Water Rat again and could take a rest at the outside seating. If you walk towards Bondgate Green, and continue under the bridge, you come across a small weir and (probably) a great number of ducks feeding in the river and being fed by children in the park on the other side of the river. This bridge is near to where you parked.

Those wanting a longer walk can continue along the river for about 300 m, at which point you come to Williamson Drive, where you turn right on the Drive to then walk up a path to Water Skellgate and the market square area, where you will find the Unicorn Hotel, rescued and operated by Wetherspoons. The hotel has well-spaced tables and chairs, and you can order using the Wetherspoons app. Hand sanitiser is available near the entrance. Other fine, and not-so-fine, dining establishments are available in the area.