



Walk on the WILD SIDE

JO VAUGHAN ENJOYS A WALK FROM THE CLUB'S NEWEST SITE AT CHEDDAR GORGE

When the Club acquires a brand new site in such a beautiful location it's hard to resist a peek, so it's to Somerset's Cheddar Gorge that I headed for this month's walk. There's still some work to do in the coming year to bring the site up to the Club's usual high standards, but there are views of the Mendip Hills, and it is just a five-minute walk away from Cheddar's town centre.

Our walk takes us along the Gorge's upper rim, passing the Lookout Tower on our way. The tower provides views over the Mendip Hills and the Somerset Levels to Glastonbury Tor (on a clear day). Our route doesn't take us up the famous Jacob's Ladder with its 274 steps, but if you do want to ascend the Gorge this way it takes you to the same path – once you're up the top, just continue to the Lookout Tower and continue as written.

All the while, beneath your feet is the huge network of caves for which the area is famous. Gough's Cave, Cox's Cave and the nearby Wookey Hole Caves are the best known, all dating back to the Stone Age. Then there's The Cheddar Gorge Cheese Company to visit, along with the Toy Museum and the Sweet Kitchen. If you have children with you, be careful of the unguarded cliff edges.



GENERAL INFORMATION

NEAREST CLUB SITE: Cheddar Caravan Club Site, Draycott Road, Cheddar BS27 3RL. Tel: 01934 740207. Open: Until 3 October
DISTANCE: 6.2 miles (9.9km)
TERRAIN: Mainly well-trodden paths, some steep and muddy
NUMBER OF STILES: Eight
ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT: OS Explorer map 141 (1:25,000)
LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY: Moderate with two steep climbs
REFRESHMENTS: Cheddar town centre
TOILETS: Opposite Gough's Cave and at Tweektown (just off Cliff Street). Toilets for disabled are found in the Cliff Street car park (a radar key is needed)



DIRECTIONS

- 1** Head out of the site's main gate and turn right. At the main road turn left – take care as there is no pavement. Follow the road and join the pavement, before crossing over to turn right up Union Street (by the covered market cross and the Market Cross Hotel).
- 2** Follow the road around to the left (sp 'Sharp left – The Gorge'), and continue as it becomes Cliff Street. Go past the pay and display car park, and keep straight ahead at the roundabout.
- 3** Follow the road around to the right and then turn right by the Edelweiss Restaurant into The Lippiatt. Walk up the steep, narrow road ahead of you before turning left into Lynch Lane.
- 4** Just before the black metal gates, where the road carries on into private land, turn left (sp 'Public Footpath'). Climb another steep hill. When you get to the top there's a little tower you can climb at certain times for a better view.
- 5** From the tower follow the path through a metal kissing gate, and continue as the way becomes rocky. There are many detours to your left offering great views of Cheddar Gorge and the town below, but make sure you return to our route so as not to get lost!
- 6** Continue following the green arrows marked 'Cheddar Showcaves – Gorge Walk', until you start to follow pink paint marks daubed on posts and trees. These mark the way along the steep and rocky path.
- 7** Continue up the hill, and where the path splits keep to the right, ignoring the route that follows the cliff edge. Again, follow the green arrow keeping to the left of a wire fence.
- 8** The path descends and heads through a gap in the fence before passing through a metal kissing gate. Go through a wooden gate, and keep on as the way continues to descend steeply.
- 9** When you get to the main road, at the Chew Valley Explorer Bus Stop, cross the road and head through a gate by a National Trust sign marked 'Black Rock'. Continue ahead up the wide path.
- 10** Go over a stile and keep straight on. You can see Black Rock on your left as you continue ahead, keeping the dry stone wall on your right. Ignore the turnings off to the right, following the path around to the left until you come to a wooden gate with a kissing gate at its side. Go through this and on up the hill.
- 11** Go over a stile. When you come to a track turn left over a cattle grid and follow the track until it turns sharply left. Turn right through a rusty metal gate and follow the path around the farmhouse, crossing two stone stiles. Then carry on straight ahead following the yellow footpath arrows.



LOCAL ATTRACTIONS

- Cheddar Caves and Gorge, Cheddar, Somerset BS27 3QF. Tel 01934 742343 or see cheddarcaves.co.uk. Cost: Explorer Ticket (entry into most of the Gorge's attractions, including Gough's Cave, The Cheddar Man Museum, Cox's Cave, The Crystal Quest, Jacob's Ladder, Pavey's Lookout Tower and The Open-Top Gorge Tour) £10.90 for adults, £7.50 for children. Disabled access: There's a lift in the museum, and access is possible to most of the cave network
- The Cheddar Gorge Cheese Company, Cheddar, Somerset BS27 3QA. Tel 01934 742810 or see cheddargorgecheese.co.uk. Cost: A guided tour around the visitor centre costs £1.75 for adults over 16 (free for children). Disabled access: Ramps provided throughout. The only working Cheddar dairy in Cheddar. A brand new visitor centre has just been opened, and there's a tasting area, a viewing balcony into the factory and a shop
- Cheddar Gorge Toy Museum, The Cliffs, Cheddar Gorge, Somerset BS27 3QE. Tel 01934 743244 or see cheddargorgetoymuseum.co.uk. Cost: £2.50 for adults, and £1.50 for children. Disabled access: Possible, but difficult

- 12** When you come to a wooden stile and two footpath arrows, cross the stile and go straight ahead. Go across the stone stile and continue down the hill (the reservoir is ahead of you). At the wooden post positioned at the end of a dry stone wall, follow the yellow arrows straight ahead (sp 'Cheddar').
- 13** When the path bends slightly to the left, cross the stile between two stone walls. Go through a wooden kissing gate and carry on down the hill.

OPPOSITE PAGE: Cheddar town
 TOP: Cheddar Club Site
 ABOVE LEFT: Market Cross
 ABOVE: Black Rock

- Eventually the path widens to a track past some houses. At the end turn left down the road. Then turn left again down Birch Hill. Where the road bends to the right, carry on down the tarmac footpath.
- 14** At the end of Waters Lane carry on round to the left until you come to the main road. Turn right here and follow the road down through Cheddar village to the market cross, where you turn left and retrace your steps back to the campsite.

CHEDDAR WALK: 6.2 miles (9.9km)

TOURIST INFORMATION

Cheddar Tourist Information Centre, The Gorge, Cheddar, Somerset BS27 3QE. Tel 01934 744071 or see somersebythesea.co.uk