



Ordnance Survey Landranger
Maps 110, 119, 120

Peak PERFORMERS

Up and away... To the
Heights of Abraham
at Matlock Bath

John Bateman explores Matlock and neighbour Matlock Bath in Derbyshire's beautiful National Park

MATLOCK AND its chirpy neighbour, Matlock Bath, sit alongside the river Derwent on the edge of the Peak District National Park, in a remarkable area that functions happily as a cross between rural back garden and adventure playground for the many millions who live in the vast surrounding conurbations.

For CL lovers too, these hills, threaded by river valley greenery, are home to some fine sites from which it is easy to explore Derbyshire and the 550 square miles of protected land that form Britain's first and, unsurprisingly, busiest national park.

The park, with its harsh northern Dark Peak landscapes of moorland and gritstone edges (cliffs) and the more benign, southern White Peak area, where limestone hills are honeycombed with caves and caverns, is not alone in claiming a star attraction prize.

The river Derwent – not to be confused with the Derwent that flows through Cumbria – is Derbyshire's premier and longest river, mainly following a rural route for 50 miles before joining the Trent en route for the Humber estuary and the North Sea. Walkers, meanwhile, are lured by sections of the 250-mile Pennine Way – the country's first long distance path – which plots its muscle-straining journey from the Peak District's Kinder Scout all the way to Scotland.

This is a region where choice and contrast is almost limitless. Matlock, dignified and historic county town and former spa resort, takes itself a good deal more seriously than Matlock Bath, where you will find a host of lively tourist attractions. Soar by cable car above the Derwent Valley to the Heights of Abraham and explore the caverns, let your hair down at Gulliver's theme park or

wander Masson Mills textile museum and shopping village – the options at 'Bath-time' are as varied as the area's CLs.

Bakewell, six miles from Matlock, has character and history, and is one of several towns hereabouts with site options. Brundcliffe Farm, home to Barbara and John Broadley, is a carefully designed and immaculately

Below: after you –
on the High Peak
Trail alongside
Brundcliffe Farm CL



INFORMATION

SITES

Details of the CLs featured and many more in the Matlock area can be found under Derbyshire on pp328-334 of the *Sites Directory & Handbook 2009/10*

TOURISM

■ **Matlock TIC**, Crown Square, Matlock DE4 3AT.
Call 01629 583388 or see visitpeakdistrict.com



Above: on foot or bike, the High Peak Trail is a real treat

Below: white water sport is popular at Matlock Bath

maintained lawned acre. This is as good as it gets for walkers and cyclists, with only a dry-stone wall separating the site from the High Peak Trail, which follows a scenic and surprisingly undemanding 17 miles along the route of an old railway line.

The site, open all-year, has electrics, attractive, well-spaced pitches and, at one end of the lawn, a hardstanding for non-awning outfits.

John and Barbara, who cut their CL teeth at Whaley Bridge before moving here 18 years ago, are popular owners, happy to let caravanners watch the milking and take an interest in the 245-acre farm set 1100ft above sea level.

"There is rarely a day without somebody on site who has been here before," says John. It is not surprising and it says a lot about the site and its committed, welcoming owners who will even deliver a morning paper for you.

Matlock, which offers a swimming pool, riverside park, some good shops and fine buildings, lists 10 CLs and variety is plentiful. If you like to commune with nature, enjoy a farm setting with hook-ups and pastoral views, then look no further than the tiny village of Dethick, three miles from town. I opted for Manor Farm, secreted behind a church on the upper part of a 10-acre field which slopes away scenically to a richly wooded valley.

Not surprisingly, owners Simon and Gilly Groom are knowledgeable indeed about the church, manor and Dethick family, who lived here for 500 years. Another of its former owners, Anthony Babington, fought at Agincourt and was later hung, drawn and quartered for plotting to free Mary, Queen of Scots.

If history's not your thing, relax on site, snooze in the sun or step it out round the

fields to the Jug and Pitcher – what could be nicer? By the way, no twin-axle caravans are permitted here.

Also listed under Matlock, Alfreton House CL, four miles from town, is a flower lover's dream. This is Wooley Moor Nursery Gardens and the home of Ian and Janet Mansfield. The site, a pleasant part-sloping meadow behind the glasshouses, offers electrics and pitches sheltered by trees and hedging.

Hanging baskets and tubs that blaze out their vivid colours are the speciality here and, every year, Ian and Janet create some 10,000 individual displays. Visit in May and you will likely see 3000 baskets and tubs – so it's no surprise that businesses, councils, parks and caravanners snap them up. Alfreton House is open all year but visitors must stay a minimum of two nights.

Listed under Alfreton itself are a number of sites. A fairly recent addition to the network is David Green's Crich Lane Farm CL, an attractively-designed and neatly-maintained acre plot, with spectacular views across unspoiled and lush green countryside. The site has electrics and is gently terraced into two levels. Although the good book advises levelling blocks, all four caravans on site while I was there managed well enough without them. Another open-all-year site, this one has a fishing pond in the adjoining field and a host of caravanning friends established over the years at Irene Green's CL, which opened in 1987 and occupies a smaller plot back along the lane. ■

DID YOU KNOW?
The BBC's 2006 adaptation of *Jane Eyre* was filmed at Haddon Hall

ATTRACTIONS

- **Heights of Abraham, Matlock Bath** – cable car takes you to pleasure park, show caverns and fine views. Call 01629 582365 or see heightsofabraham.com
- **Gulliver's, Matlock Bath** – theme park. Call 01925 444888 or see gulliversfun.co.uk
- **Hall Leys Park, Matlock** – fine riverside park and attractions
- **Chatsworth** – magnificent house and park. Call 01246

565300 or see chatsworth.org

- **Haddon Hall, Bakewell** – medieval manor house. Call 01629 812855 or see haddonhall.co.uk
- **Matlock Farm Park** – call 01246 590200 or see matlockfarmpark.co.uk
- **Wirksworth** – charming town with farmers' market on the first Saturday in the month
- **Sir Richard Arkwright's Masson Mills, Matlock Bath** – working

textile museum with restaurant and shopping village. Call 01629 581001

