

# Gorge walk – 5 miles

## Cheddar Gorge, Somerset


At almost 400 feet deep and three miles long, this is England's largest gorge, and with its weathered crags and pinnacles, one of our most spectacular natural sights. It plays host to a varied community of specialised plants and wildlife, many of which you'll get the chance to spot on this exhilarating circular walk.

**Start:** Cheddar Tourist Information Centre – grid ref: ST468543 – OS Landranger map 182

### Getting there & local facilities...

**By bus:** service 668 from Street to Lower Langford stops at Tweentown, Cheddar. Service 126 from Weston-Super-Mare  to Wells stops at Winscombe and Cheddar

**By bike:** the Strawberry Line (National Cycle Network Route 26) is an 8 mile trail linking Cheddar to Kings Wood, leading to Wavering Down and Crook Peak

**By train:** Weston-Super-Mare  9 miles

**By road:** for Cheddar Cliffs take the A371 to Wells from Weston-Super-Mare

Pay & Display car parks on both sides of the gorge (not NT). WCs, shops and refreshments (not NT) in town of Cheddar. Contact us on 01934 844518 for more information.

### Things to look out for...

#### Cheddar Gorge

This great, deep fissure cutting through the Mendips' hills would have begun forming about one million years ago during the last Ice Age. At the end of the last Ice Age, water from melting glaciers formed a river, which over time started to carve into the limestone rock creating the steep cliffs you see today. The Cheddar Yeo River gradually made its way underground, creating the famous Cheddar caves.

#### Cheddar cheese

It is thought the caves under the gorge were used for cheese-making as far back as prehistoric times! Cheddar cheese is still made here using the milk from cows which graze in the pastures around Cheddar.

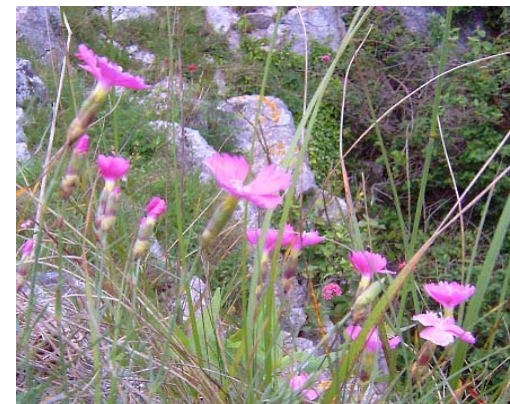
#### Ancient residents

Britain's oldest complete skeleton, the Cheddar Man, was found in Gough's Cave in Cheddar Gorge. It is estimated to be 9,000 years old. Other remains dating back even further suggest humans have lived here for a very long time.



Peregrine falcons are just one of the birds that call the cliffs home which, if you're lucky, you may be able to spot overhead. Buzzards, ravens and jackdaws also nest in the gorge.

© National Trust / David Palmer



The famous Cheddar pink, and other rare plants like rock stonecrop, grow on the cliff edges. Look out for rock rose and herbs such as thyme, wild basil and marjoram on the lower slopes, which have a pleasant scent in hot weather.

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Feral Soay sheep live in the gorge. They help to graze the grasslands and scrub, creating a healthy habitat for the rare plants. Originally native to the Scottish island of Soay, the species is a primitive ancestor of the present day domestic sheep.

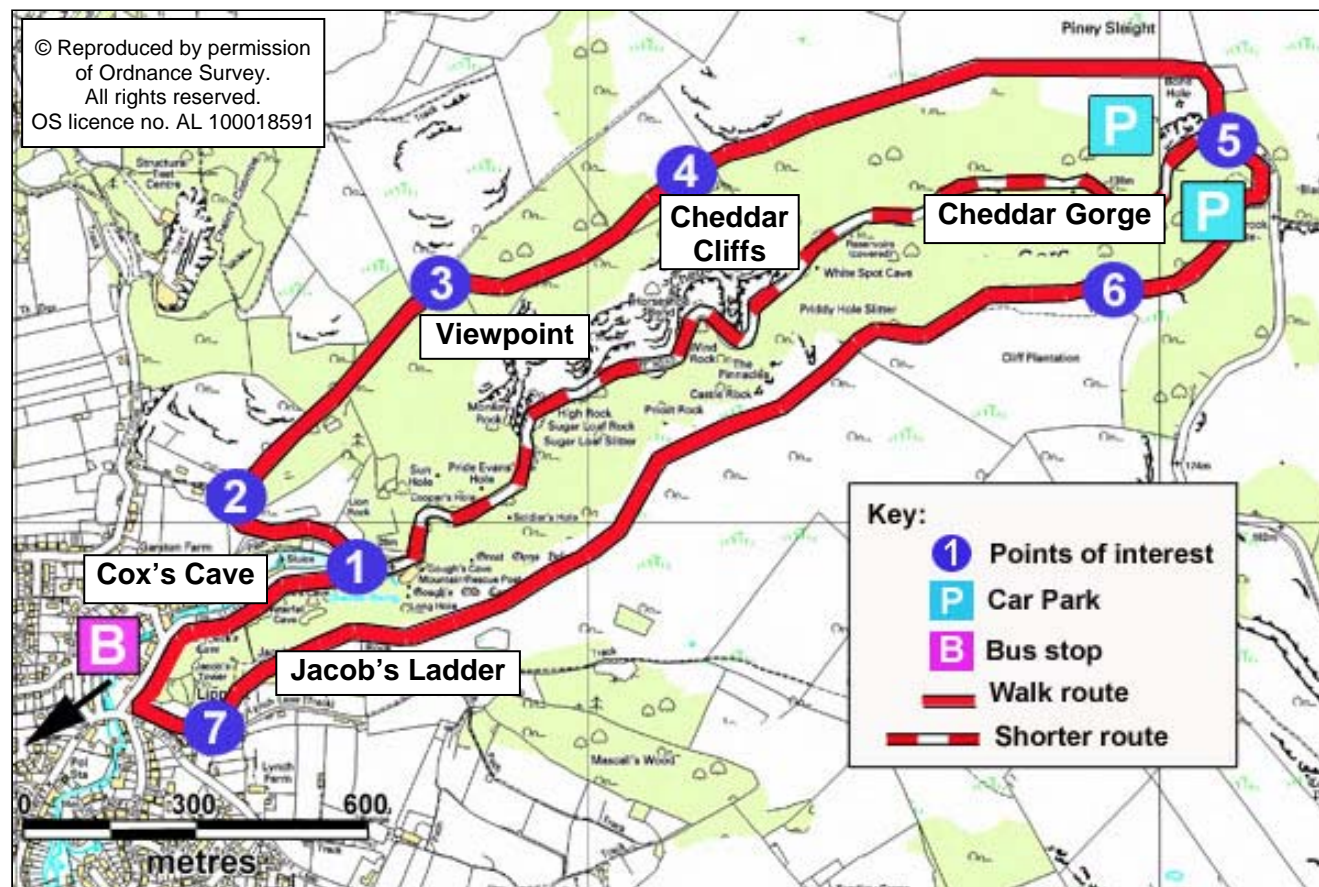
© Caroline Bott

## Directions...

1. Take the track, Cufic Lane, opposite Cheddar Tourist Information Centre (TIC). At the top of the track turn right and follow the path around the back of a white cottage called Cufic Cottage.
2. Keep to this track and turn right up a steep path beside a vineyard. Continue ascending and go through a kissing gate. Continue uphill until you come to a stile at a stone wall. Climb over the stile, turn right and follow the path uphill, with the gorge rim on your right.
3. You will eventually meet a wooden stake in the ground pointing towards the Cheddar Cliffs viewpoint. Climb over another stile to reach it. **GREAT CARE IS NEEDED** as the cliff edge is unfenced and there is a steep slope.
4. Retrace your steps to the wooden post and continue up the hill until you reach a kissing gate. Go through and follow the path until you reach another steep hill. At the bottom of the hill, turn right, cross over a stile and follow the track to reach the B3151.
5. For a shorter walk, turn right and follow the B3151 down the gorge and back to the TIC. Care is needed as there are no pavements and the road can be busy. Otherwise, turn left and continue up the road for a short distance until you see a footpath on the right side of the road heading steeply uphill through woods. Follow this and on reaching the top of the hill, continue walking until the path divides.
6. Bear right here and continue until you reach a stile and gate. You are now at the highest point of the Gorge. Follow the path downward, passing the top of Jacob's Ladder (a path of 275 steps running up the side of the gorge) and Pavey's Lookout Tower. Take the path through the trees to the left which brings you out on a lane called the Lippiat.
7. Turn right down the hill and right again at Gough's Craft Village onto the gorge road. Walk up this road, passing Cox's Cave on your right, arriving back at the TIC.

## Terrain and accessibility...

This is a moderate 5 mile (8km) route along paths. Several stiles and kissing gates, rough walking in sections and some steep climbs. It is not advisable to attempt this walk in foggy or very windy weather.



## SAFETY IN CHEDDAR GORGE:

Please do not stand under the cliffs as small rocks may fall at any time. Use only the footpaths signed for the gorge walk at the top and bottom of Cheddar Gorge. It is dangerous to depart from these footpaths.

As a charity, independent of government, the National Trust relies on the generosity of its supporters to continue caring for our countryside and wildlife, so that everyone can enjoy the beauty of the outdoors for generations to come.

Find out more at [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)