

Castleton Geocross V31 revision B 28 June 2022

Text & photos for Facebook

Castleton is the Peak Districts most popular 'Honeypot' village.

It has several Show Caves, a Castle and lots of shops.

Its unique scenic setting is dominated by the landslip face of Mam Tor, The Shivering Mountain.

My personal list of other attractions are:-

Cave Dale, an almost hidden secret valley which is entered through a collapsed cave.

Winnats Pass, a dramatic limestone gorge

The Broken Road below Mam Tor

Odin Mine, the remains of a lead mine

Titan, the deepest cave shaft in Britain, but you can't see it because it is kept locked



On the approach to Castleton along the Hope Valley road, it is soon clear that you are heading into a cul-de-sac. Signs tell you that ahead there are caves:-

Speedwell Cavern

Blue John Cavern

Treak Cliff Cavern

Peak Cavern

The signs do not tell you that there is only one way out of this valley, the picturesque, very steep and narrow Winnatts Pass. The A class road which takes you into Castleton stops at the entrance to Winnatts Pass, and becomes a C class road.



Castleton's other attractions include its historic Peveril Castle and shops selling local crafts including the semi-precious Blue John jewellery.

Attractions

- **Show Caves:** Explore underground worlds at Blue John Cavern, Peak Cavern, and Speedwell Cavern, where you can see the semi-precious mineral Blue John.
- **Mam Tor:** Hike to the summit of Mam Tor for panoramic views of the Peak District.
- **Peveril Castle:** Visit the ruins of this 11th-century castle, one of the oldest in the Peak District.
- **Winnatts Pass:** Drive or walk through this impressive limestone gorge, offering dramatic scenery.

- **Cave Dale:** Enjoy a scenic walk through this valley, which was formed by a collapsed cave system.
- **Castleton Museum:** Discover more about the local history at the village's free museum.
- **Shopping:** Browse shops, many specializing in Blue John jewelry, and enjoy traditional tea rooms in the village.
- **St Edmund's Church:** Visit the historic St Edmund's Church, dating back to the 12th century.

Castleton is one of the Peak District's most popular honeypots. They are called 'honeypots' because tourists flock to these places like 'bees around honey'. Castleton receives over 2 million visitors every year.

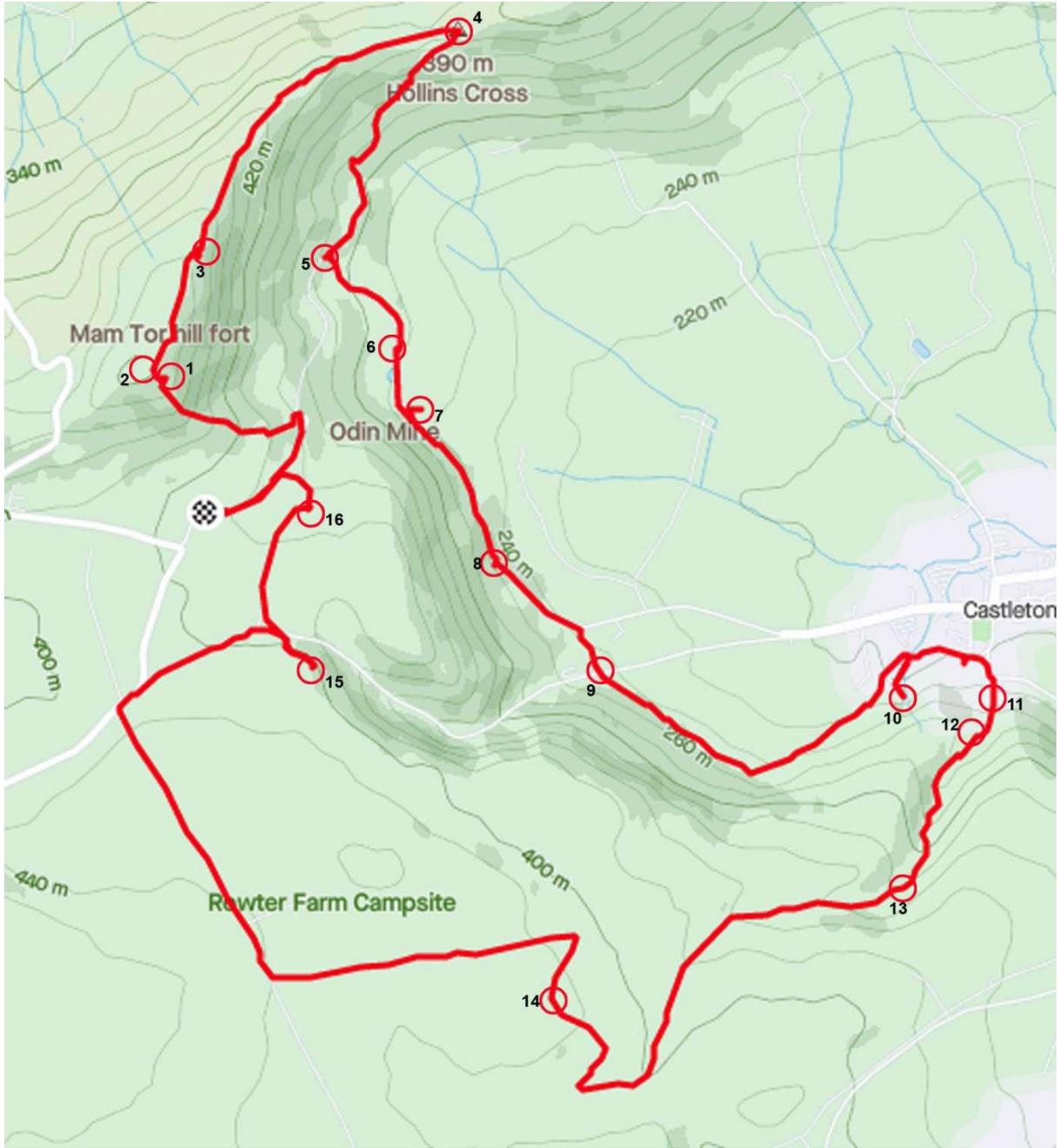
This large number of tourists causes many problems in and around Castleton. These problems include –

- **Litter** An increasing number of litter bins have been provided throughout the village
- **Traffic Congestion** There is a large car park, with space for coaches, and public toilets but at peak times, for example summer Sundays, the parking provision is not enough and the congestion spoils the character of the village and affects its enjoyment by all.
- **Footpath erosion** resulting from overuse. This is particularly the case around popular natural attractions such as Mam Tor and Winnats Pass.
- **Conflict with other land users** e.g. farmers and walkers

Location	OS grid reference	W3W		
		First word	Second word	Third word
1	SK 12800 83564	hopeless		
2	SK 12770 83612	rinsed		
3	SK 12890 83912	admiral		
4	SK 13589 84516	broccoli		
5	SK 13222 83895	figure		
6	SK 13424 83643	cools		
7	SK 13493 83485	racetrack		
8	SK 13696 83056	happier		
9	SK 13968 82763	spring		
10	SK 14808 82692	bleaker		
11	SK 15041 82698	safe		
12	SK 14961 82542	graceful		
13	SK 14827 82179	slimming		

14	SK 13866 81845	shared		
15	SK 13200 82771	opened		
16	SK 13182 83206	listening		

Each of the locations can be found on the route below. The locations are listed in order and sufficient background is included to help you triangulate your position to identify the location.



Start near Mam Tor.

Location 1 OS ref SK 13222 83895

Viewpoint end of road

W3W

Location 2 OS ref SK 13222 83895

The closed A625 road - gate

Contains "figure"



The turnpike from Sheffield to Chapel-en-le-Frith was built across the landslips of Mam Tor in 1800. It became the A625 but increased heavy traffic over landslip prone shales required continuing major repairs and closures. In 1979, after many years of problems, this major road was abandoned and allowed to continue to slide downhill for several more metres. It is still sliding. The A625 was diverted south to join the A623 through Stoney Middleton dale.

The repairs have had to continue for the bottom section of now 'unclassified' road because it serves farms at the foot of Mam Tor. The postman has a testing time delivering the daily post. Most recently, massive wooden kerbs have been laid to stop vehicles sliding off the road.

The renamed A6187 now stops abruptly at the foot of Winnats Pass, a rare example where an 'A' class road becomes a 'C' class road.

Winnats Pass was an unsurfaced track until 1939, when the second world war caused the highway engineers to develop a second option for safeguarding the east-west route. Winnats Pass was tarmaced but remained relatively unused until the A6187 closed in 1979. Suddenly Winnats Pass took all the traffic.







L



Location 6 OS ref SK 13424 83643

Cast iron milestone

Contains "cools"



Marking the main road between Sheffield and Chapel-en-le-Frith and at the foot of the Shivering Mountain is this relic milestone on the A625.

Still standing but the road was beaten by the forces of nature.

Location 7 OS ref SK 13493 83485

Odin Mine grindstone

Contains "racetrack"



This cast iron shod millstone was used to grind lead ore before smelting to extract the lead. The Odin Mine is immediately west of the processing area.

Lead mining has been ongoing for over 3000 years in the Castleton area. The mines followed veins of lead called 'rakes' and were hand dug by pick and shovel. Lead mining was a very dangerous activity, taking place in shafts where the miners constructed ladders to reach lower and higher levels. The abandoned workings are very dangerous. The Odin mine was one of the last to close and has recently been fenced off for safety. Other mines have found a new way of making money and became show caves selling Blue John products.

Location 8 OS ref SK 13696 83056

Treak Cliff Cavern

Contains “happier”



Treak Cliff Cavern is possibly the best of the four ‘Show Caves’ around Castleton.

Treak Cliff and Blue John Caverns are the only Show Caves which have deposits of a unique local gemstone mineral known as Blue John, anglicised from the French Bleu Jaune (blue yellow). They have developed a market for this as ornaments and jewellery and Treak Cliff produces 500kg annually. Blue John only occurs in the Castleton area on the flanks of Mam Tor where oil has been forced into fluorite resulting in a blue, purple, grey or yellow banded precious stone.

The oil deposits are from the Mam Tor shales.

Perched high above the abandoned A625 road and accessed by a flight of steps. Below the cave entrance is a very steep cable railway used to lower trucks of lead ore and Blue John down to the road.

Adult entry cost £12.50 in 2020.

Location 9 OS ref SK 13968 82763

Speedwell Cavern – footpath entrance

Contains “spring”



Speedwell Cavern is at the foot of Winnats Pass. It offers a unique experience of a boat trip along an 200 metre long underground canal to see parts of a 200 year old lead mine. Most of the lead mine is beyond the canal and is closed to the public due to instability of the mine workings.

Adult entry cost typically £15 in 2020.

Location 10 OS ref SK 14808 82692

Peak Cavern – sign

Contains “bleaker”



Peak Cavern is visually spectacular, the first part of the trip is past miners cottages and along a rope-works, following the emerging Peakshole Water. The water is 10 degrees all year round so feels warm in winter and often appears to steam on a frosty day.

The huge gash in the hillside is traditionally known as the Devil's Arse and is the largest natural cave entrance in Britain.

Adult entry cost typically £15 in 2020.

Location 11 OS ref SK 15041 82698

Cave Dale – gate

Contains “safe”



Cave Dale is a collapsed cavern system carved by water which now disappears into underground caves. Until 200 years ago the entrance was through a natural arch.

The first amphitheatre became the venue for the annual mass rallies of ramblers during the second world war 1939 – 1946. Winnats Pass had been the venue since 1926 and had once had 10,000 ramblers attend.

Location 12 OS ref SK 14961 82542

Peveril Castle – rock outcrop on valley floor below the keep

Contains “graceful”



Castleton's castle stands at the head of the Hope Valley, dominating the village below.

Built in 1176 by Henry II, it is an early Norman medieval keep, located on a well defended hilltop location above the steep crags of Peak Cavern and Cave Dale.

The public entrance is unimpressive but the view from the castle makes up for that.

Owned by English Heritage. Adult entry cost £7.60 in 2020.

The long distance footpath and bridleway, The Limestone Way goes through Cave Dale. It passes several small caves including one which has a locked gate, leading to mines behind Peak Cavern.

Location 13 OS ref SK 14827 82179

Cave Dale basalt columns

Contains "slimming"



A volcanic igneous intrusion through the limestone. Roughly hexagonal columns. Geologically quite interesting but a small scale feature and easily missed.

Location 14 OS ref SK 13866 81845

Titan Cavern entrance

Contains “shared”



Exploration of the Speedwell and Peak Cavern mines and caves led to the discovery of the deepest cavern in Britain, Titan. After years of digging a 46 metre deep entrance shaft, cavers were able to descent Titan's main shaft in 2006. The shaft is padlocked and access is only allowed to experienced parties.

At 141 metres deep, it is the tallest natural cave chamber in Britain, deeper than Gaping Gill. Together with it's entrance shaft, it totals 174 metres of descent. This is taller than the Blackpool Tower.

Location 15 OS ref SK 13200 82771

Winnat's Pass – wall corner

Contains “opened”



A steep and deep gorge cut by glacial meltwater, often wrongly described as a collapsed cavern system. Today it is a dry valley carrying a high flow of cars. In the 1960s cyclists set a target time of 6 minutes to make the climb from the bottom to top cattle grids. This is still a fast time despite technology improvements from heavysteel frames to lightweight carbon-fibre. The current record is just over 3 minutes.

Winnats Pass is an awe-inspiring natural feature. This dramatic overlook viewpoint is rarely visited. It is possible to walk along the skyline on both sides on Access Land, but not on designated footpaths.

Avalanches can occur in winter, blocking the road.

From 1926 to 1939 Winnats Pass was the venue for an annual open-air rally of ramblers campaigning for access to moorlands. The rally was held in the valley bottom and in 1932, the year of the Kinder Trespass, over 10,000 people attended. Eventually their efforts were successful in establishing the Peak District as the first National Park in Britain in 1951.

Location 16 OS ref SK 13182 83206

Blue John Cavern

Contains “listening”



The highest of the four Castleton show caverns, and close to the geological boundary between limestone and shales.

All the show caves make a good alternative on a rainy day, but the stay times are carefully controlled by guides so you only stay dry for an hour.

Adult entry cost £15 in 2020.