

GREAT VALUE BEST-SELLING MOTORHOMER MAGAZINE

MMM

THE MOTORHOMERS' MAGAZINE



NEW MODEL

**INNOVATIVE
LUXURY SWIFT**

FANTASTIC ESCAPES

The exquisite Lakes • Sublime Cornwall • Dramatic Peak District
Iconic Liverpool • Wild northern Spain • Spellbinding France

PLUS

Ideal campsites
for city breaks

Essential guide to
first-time motorhoming

NEW SERIES

Simple and tasty recipes
to cook in your 'van



TESTED

All-new compact McLouis Fusion 331
Sunlight's latest budget campervan
Owner's report: La Strada camper

ADVICE Buying a used rear lounge camper • Easy door handle replacement



£4.75
FEBRUARY 2019



Our glorious NATIONAL PARKS

Join author, chef and campervan fanatic, Martin Dorey, as he explores the UK's national parks during the winter months

THE PEAK DISTRICT NATIONAL PARK

The journey

We headed south at Chatsworth on the A6. At Cromford we followed the A5012, Via Gellia Road. For Winnats Pass and Snake Pass, we began at Hope and headed west on the A6187 to Speedwell Cavern and up Winnat's Pass, with a short detour up the old A625 towards Mam Tor. From Winnats Pass, we took a right to the Blue John Caverns and on to Chapel-en-le-Frith via Rushup Edge. There we took the stunning A624 towards Hayfield and Glossop. This road takes you up to the lovely pass overlooked by Kinder Scout. We left Glossop on the A57 Snake Pass and then took a right turn at the junction with the A6013 to head into Hathersage.



I am on a quest for a perfect pitch and the ultimate pudding – in the Peak District National Park.

We arrive in Bakewell on a cold, late afternoon in January. We spent too long enjoying lunch on the Chatsworth Estate (in the farm shop café, not as guests of the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire) and ended up chasing glimpses of sun.

As usual I was looking for pictures to make the Peak District National Park look gorgeous. Sadly, each time we crest a rise, the sun had dropped and the light was too low to get the shot. Never mind.

We retire for a late dessert in the town famed for its puddings as it seems terribly apt. We park and wander into the town looking for somewhere to enjoy an authentic Bakewell experience.

We find The Old Original Bakewell Pudding Shop in a creamy coloured stone building. With a name like that we assume it's the best and oldest and most original so dive in. We learn that the Bakewell is not a tart and that it was made by accident by the cook of a local inn in around 1860.

Tart or pudding, it's not what I was expecting, but still fantastic nonetheless

with a cuppa in a car park on day one of a trip to explore the Peak District. Sometimes you learn to appreciate simple pleasures!

We retire to the Caravan and Motorhome Club Site at Chatsworth House before the darkness engulfs us completely. Set in a walled garden by the side of the River Derwent, it's a wonderful site that's out of the way and quiet. After dark we cycle to the local village, Bar Brook, and enjoy a pint or two at The Beggar's Roost Inn. The cycle home is a lot harder than the cycle there even though it's level! Funny that.

The next day we wake late and set off for a lunch date at a pub near Biggin with Liz's family. Snow is threatening. We are due to meet at a car park in Hartington and then set off on the Tissington Trail, a disused railway line, for the pub. It's a family get-together so our phones are pinging with travel news and the latest on who can and can't make it. We hear that it's started snowing higher up.

We climb out of Matlock on Via Gellia Road, a route that follows a steep-sided, wooded valley. The road twists and turns and feels more like we're travelling along a gorge than a valley. As we ascend, >

THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW

- The Peak District is separated into the Dark and Light Peaks. The Dark Peaks are limestone crags topped with millstone grit, a dark and sombre topping
- The original Bakewells are puddings, not tarts
- Howden Reservoir is where the Dambusters practiced their bombing runs
- Dovedale is a limestone gorge that's famous for its stepping stones, but also has caves and beautiful, ancient ash woodland
- Snake Pass is one of the main routes between Manchester and Sheffield. Despite being busy it is an exceptionally beautiful road



At times the gorge at Dovedale is steep sided

WATCH
the video!
motorhome.ma/
MMMthepeaks



Motorhome

Benimar Mileo 243

It has a rear fixed bed that can be raised to create a huge garage that can easily carry two mountain bikes

snowflakes begin to land on the windscreen. They are plump and it looks like they are going to stick around.

For the time being the road is clear but the further we go the more the snow is settling. We slow and drive cautiously on. By the time we arrive at the top of the valley, back in open country, the road is white and the flakes are more like dollops. It's almost a whiteout.

I drive onwards, ever more slowly, aware that the motorhome I am driving – a Benimar – is very new and would be very expensive to replace or fix if I drifted into a ditch. We drop down the gears and crawl along.

The phone pings. Liz checks the messages and reads them to me as they come in. The car park is too snowy to get into. Anthea is stuck. Katie has skidded all over the place. It sounds like they are having trouble at the meeting place, so Liz examines the map.

The further we go the heavier the snow falls. It's now an inch or so thick on the road and we are making new tracks.

We are the only vehicle to have passed this way recently.

To be honest I am starting to worry more than a little.

We arrive at the junction with the A515, the main trunk road between Ashbourne and Buxton. It's still snowing, but at least here there are tyre tracks in the snow. We take a left, opting to head for the pub rather than the meeting place. We shall have to forgo the walk. We round a corner and find cars blocking the road.

Ahead of us is a hill which a number of cars are slipping and sliding to get up.

We consider our options. We can leave the 'van here and walk to the pub. We can carry on. We can turn back. We can park up and stick the kettle on.

We realise that the right turn at the foot of the hill is the turn we want so we overtake the stopped vehicles and follow the road. Thankfully it's flat, and leads us beautifully to

our lunch stop, the Waterloo Inn. We park up, put on our snow clothes and go to see if they are open.

The manager is attempting to clear the snow from the car park. We ask him if they are still doing lunch and if we'd be OK to stay overnight, seeing as it looks like we'll be stuck otherwise. He says it's no problem as they have a campsite at the back of the pub and everyone is currently packing up to leave. This is brilliant news so we book in and wander round the back to the campsite to find a pitch. We notice that all the vehicles on the site are Land Rovers. It seems as if they've had a bit of a convention but are packing up in anticipation of worse snow to come! Ha!

We find a pitch, plug in to the electric, put the heating on and stroll off to the pub to await the rest of the family. It's a perfect outcome. We go in and order a pint or two. Whether we like it or not we're here for the next day or so. Could be worse.

Sadly, the thaw is swift, so the next day we are forced to depart. We head north to explore Hathersage, the Derwent Reservoir and Winnats Pass.

As the snow has turned to rain we figure a day in the famous caves of the 'dark peak' might offer us a little shelter.

Winnats Pass, the 'old route' from Hope to Chapel-en-le-Frith, passes through a steep limestone gorge where the wind, that gives the pass its name (windy gates), howls in mourning for the star-crossed lovers murdered by greedy miners in 1758. It took 10 years for their bodies to be found in one of the limestone caves that permeate this landscape. Grim.

The Dark Peak is so called because its lighter, limestone base is topped by dark millstone grit, a coarse sandstone. Mam Tor, to our right, looks like a steep wave with black crest about to tumble and slide into

the valley below. The highest edges of the pass bear down on us too, as we ascend. Dark towers of rock overhang the road as we snake our way up the gorge.

We take a right and follow the road to the Blue John Cavern, home to "eight of the 14 known varieties of Blue John stone, a beautiful and ornamental fluorspar" or so the sign says. I am excited, of course, to have the chance to explore the caves but find we are thwarted by the weather. The caves are closed ▶



Costs

Fuel 150 miles, 25mpg....£40
Food Bakewell puddings, lunch for two at Chatsworth House farm shop café£43.88
Site fees£65.80
Attractions Speedwell Cavern (two adults)£24
Parking Dovedale.....£3
TOTAL.....£176.68



THINGS YOU SHOULD DO


DOVEDALE

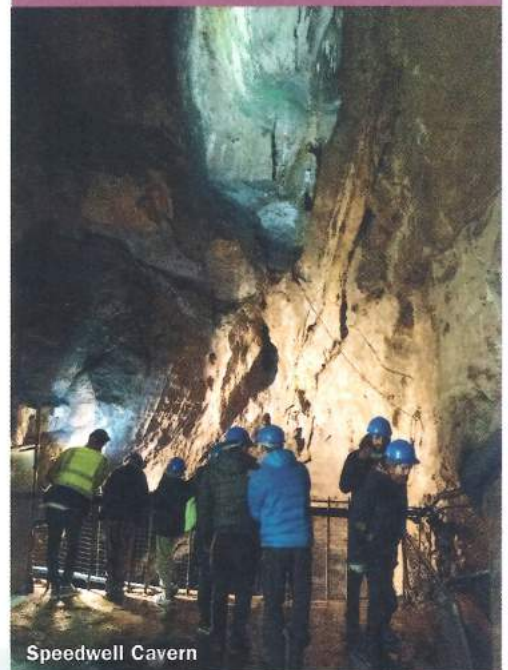
Dovedale is spectacular, lovely, inspiring. A great walk, even in the depths of winter. Some might say it's the best time to come to avoid the crowds. When we were there, there were none!

 nationaltrust.org.uk/ilam-park-dovedale-and-the-white-peak

HATHERSAGE POOL

With an average winter temperature of 28 degrees, the Hathersage Pool would make a brilliant, if daring, outing for intrepid campers who love to swim. Regrettably, when we were there it was closed as the temperature had dropped too much. But we will go again!

 hathersageswimmingpool.co.uk



Speedwell Cavern

richard sowersby / Alamy Stock Photo

SPEEDWELL CAVERN

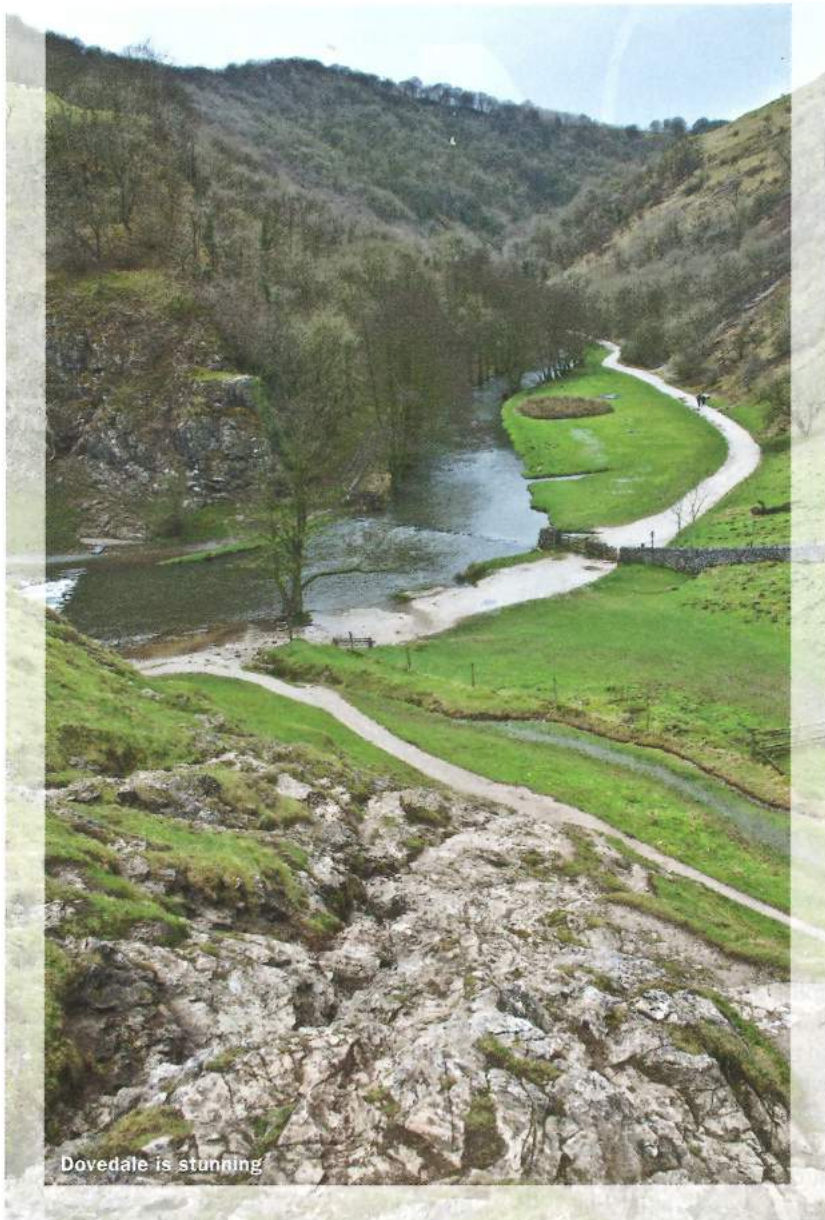
An old tin mine with plenty of stories to tell, including those of the small boys sent in to dynamite the rock 200 feet below the surface. The tour includes a boat ride along a pretty cramped tunnel, too. Win win...if you like small spaces and boats.

 speedwellcavern.co.uk

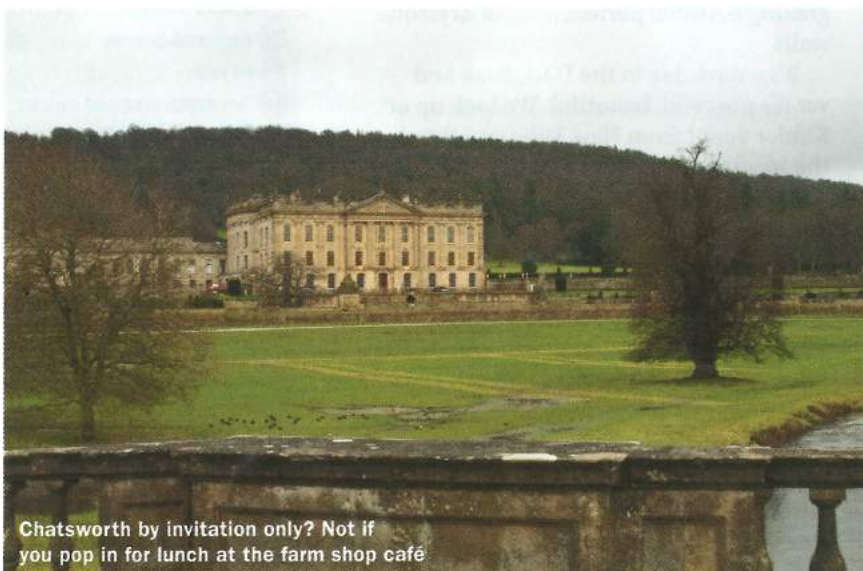
CHATSWORTH HOUSE FARM SHOP CAFÉ

Luncheon overlooking the grounds and gardens of this fantastic grand country house? Don't mind if I do! A great way to enjoy the ambience without an invitation or entrance fee.

 chatsworth.org



Dovedale is stunning



Chatsworth by invitation only? Not if you pop in for lunch at the farm shop café



The scenery is simply stunning, whatever the time of year

It's a bit of a scramble to explore the caves at Dovedale but they offer great views and are spectacular

because they are flooded after the heavy snow. It's warmed up quickly, causing meltwater to filter down through the limestone and into the caves.

We turn around and make our way back down the gorge to our second choice, Peak Cavern. It's also closed due to flooding, which forces us towards Speedwell Cavern, a disused lead mine and cave offering an "incredible subterranean boat journey". It sounds good, so we pay our entrance fee, don our hard hats and descend 105 steps into the heart of the limestone.

At the bottom we find a metal boat moored up at a landing stage. The water, so the guide tells us, is very high today, so we'd better watch our heads. We have to duck the whole way along the passage as the boat takes us along the underground canal. It's crushing being here, with the low ceiling bearing down upon us as we quietly move along the water. We hear about how young boys were used to set dynamite to blast the rock and how seams of lead were followed into the hillside.

At the end of our journey we land at a natural cave, the Bottomless Pit, an underground lake that was backfilled using the rock from the mining and is now just 11 metres deep rather than bottomless. The water is very heavy here, with huge

waterfalls of gushing water plunging into the not-so bottomless pit.

Above us another gaping hole in the rock spills tonnes of water into the pit. It's noisy, dark and spray filled and I can't wait to get to the surface. I feel as if the water levels, which are sloshing around my shoes, are rising all the time.

Driving on, after safely reaching the surface, we head back up the gorge and down into Chapel-en-le-Frith. Along the way we peer down into deep dales and see sheep grazing between perfect lines of drystone walls.

It's a dark day in the Dark Peak and yet it's peaceful, beautiful. We look up at Kinder Scout from New Mills and thank the trespassers of the 1932 mass civil disobedience for their efforts to make this land free for all, for the creation of the national parks, for open access.

We head into Glossop and then take Snake Pass to the Derwent reservoir, where we walk to the wall of water that's thundering over Howden Dam. It's 100 feet wide and over 100 feet tall so it looks like a breaking tsunami above our heads. I take pictures in the mist, loving the way the dam creates a solid backdrop, overshadows the trees and shrouds us in spray. It's moody, dark and dangerous. But we love it. **MMMM**

Campsites

Waterloo Inn, Biggin-by-Hartington, Buxton SK17 0DH

☎ 01298 84284

🌐 waterlooinnbiggin.com

📅 All year

£ Two adults, pitch and electric: From £23

Castleton Caravan & Motorhome Club Site, Castleton S33 8WB

☎ 01433 620636

🌐 caravanclub.co.uk

📅 All year

£ Two adults, pitch and electric: From £16.45 (members)

Chatsworth Park Caravan & Motorhome Club Site, Baslow, Bakewell, DE45 1PN

☎ 01246 582226

🌐 caravanclub.co.uk

📅 All year

£ Two adults, pitch and electric: From £21.70 (members)

Or why not try...

Longnor Wood

Holiday Park,

Newtown, Buxton SK17 ONG

🌐 longnorwood.co.uk

