

Six County Tops Challenge

Distance 51 miles, total ascent approximately 9,000 feet (dependent on route choice).

Having previously completed the Dark Peak 4 County Tops, which is a wonderful circular route from Hayfield, I was wondering one day how many County Tops could be reasonably completed in a single outing. The answer is six, at least in the Peak District. The key difference being to add the extra two tops of Cheshire and Staffordshire and keep the mileage to a reasonable distance this is a linear route so suitable transport arrangements will need to be made.

The route was conceived by Steve Leach and first completed by Steve with Jon Kinder and Bryan Carr as an unsupported overnight walk over the 2/3 December 2011 in what turned out to be atrocious weather. The times for our round are given below. Comparing the route to the 4 County Tops, although this route is longer the extra two tops of Shining Tor and Cheeks Hill are on easier ground so as a challenge this is not much harder. Most walkers should comfortably complete the route in less than 24 hours and running it I would suggest 15-16 hours would be a reasonable target. Elite runners may well get round in 10-11 hours in decent conditions.

| Name | Height (m) | OS Grid Ref | Distance (miles) | Time (hh:mm) | Description |
|-----------------|------------|-------------|------------------|--------------|----------------------------------|
| Start | 210 | SK 172 893 | 0.0 | 00:00 | Fairholmes, Derwent Dams |
| High Stones | 548 | SK 188 943 | 4.5 | 01:28 | County Top of South Yorkshire |
| Black Hill | 582 | SE 078 046 | 17.0 | 06:56 | County Top of West Yorkshire |
| Black Chew Head | 542 | SE 056 019 | 19.5 | 07:55 | County Top of Greater Manchester |
| Kinder Scout | 636 | SK 085 875 | 34.0 | 13:59 | County Top of Derbyshire |
| Shining Tor | 559 | SJ 994 737 | 47.0 | 19:09 | County Top of Cheshire |
| Cheeks Hill | 520 | SK 026 699 | 50.5 | 20:12 | County Top of Staffordshire |
| Finish | 485 | SK 034 698 | 51.0 | 20:23 | Layby on A53 by Axe Edge Moor |

No specific route is stipulated, just that the 6 tops must be visited in a single outing. The suggested start point is the car park at Fairholmes visitors centre by the Derwent reservoirs and finish a layby on the A53 by Axe Edge Moor. Alternatively you could descend into Buxton.

For those who would prefer a supported round then the route crosses a number of major roads where car support could be arranged. Possible support points would be Salters Brook (A628), Holme Moss (A6024), Torside (B6105), Snake Top (A57) and the Cat & Fiddle (A537). There are also a number of café / shop options in Chapel-en-le-Frith for those desperate for sustenance after a hard night / day out.

For those who like a really long day out you could make it a circular route or perhaps someone could even add a seventh County Top?

Whichever way you decide to do it then I hope you have a great time. There is no formal register of completions but I would be very pleased to hear about your experiences. Also if anyone wants more information (e.g. a detailed route description) then I would be happy to provide.

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