

Cumbrian Adventures, part 1; February Half Term

Ruby the VW campervan whisked us away at the earliest opportunity after breaking up for half term. By lunchtime on Friday we were passing Wetherby Services after an early start, and by 2pm we'd arrived at the exceptionally pretty little village of Dufton, Cumbria and were enjoying the February sunshine with our first al fresco beer of the year.



Our location for the first part of our half term trip was **Dufton Caravan Park**, also known

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as The Grandie. The reason we were here?
To attempt to walk England's Grand Canyon
- High Cup Nick. I saw this fantastic U shaped
valley featured on Julia Bradbury's 100 best
walks programme a few years ago, and it's
been on my bucket list ever since. I was be-
yond excited that we were here and that the
forecast looked fairly ok for our attempt to-
morrow.

We spent the afternoon stretching our legs
around the pretty village of Dufton before
grabbing a couple of beers in front of the
marvellous fire in the local, The Stag Inn, and
settling in for an early night.



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Saturday arrived rather earlier than I anticipated as I woke up at 06:15, however I was so excited I just couldn't wait to get up and start our walk! Keith managed to grab a couple of extra hours sleep, so I had to wait patiently to leave until 10.30, by which time we'd had a lovely omelette and packed some soup and food for the day.

The **route we chose** starts at the campsite and through a lovely section of woodland before taking farm paths up to where the gorge is.



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We approached the steep valley from the other side of the Pennine Way path and soon the path dropped down to the basin.



The steep sides of the gorge were impressive and the further in we walked the more spectacular it became.



As we got closer to the Nick – the head- we could see the route upwards was going to be tough but we'd come this far (5 miles) there was no way we were turning back now without the view I'd seen those years back on the tv!



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The last scramble goes near enough vertical, and you're on all fours, negotiating the loose boulders and stones under foot! I'm not going to lie, it was the toughest bit of walking I think I've ever done. There were a couple of areas to pause and appreciate the views looking back down the valley.



On this last pic above, you can see the people behind us on all fours!



Although the climb up is hard, it's relatively short, so before I could talk myself out of

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finishing the last bit, we'd made the final hurdle over the rim. Keith's first words to the couple looking down were "well that was an experience". Mine I think involved a swear word! The sheer elation at reaching the top made my legs turn to jelly and it took me about 5 minutes on the floor with my back to the view before I even turned round!

When I did turn around, the view quite honestly took my breath away. I've never seen anything like it in the UK- it's a perfect example of a U shaped valley and we reckon quite unique.



It was blowing an absolutely hooley, but the

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sun came out and we managed to sit right on the edge to enjoy our lunch before a local runner (yes he ran up behind us!) took our photo, and then we took theirs as they were in shorts! ☐



The wind chill up there was extreme, and we were thankful we had our waterproof jackets as they took some of the wind off us. But it was just too cold to hang around there for too long so once we had all our pictures, we hit the old miners trail (now the Pennine Way) for our 4 mile return to Dufton. The route followed the upper ridge for a couple of

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miles and we had a great view of our walk, before bearing right away from the valley back towards to exceptional marker of the pub, the smoke billowing out of its chimney!



It was a tough walk back, we were absolutely exhausted, in fact Keith had hit the wall I think, he said he felt like he'd ran the London marathon – he'd know, he's ran it 3 times! But luckily we had some chocolate and plenty of water, and the promise of a log fire and a pint of ale as soon as we got back to Dufton soon got us back down.

We passed a shepherd and his dog moving a herd of sheep up the track which was fun to watch.

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By 4pm, we'd made it back to civilisation- and wasted no time in celebrating our successful walk with a pint of the local ale and three packets of crisps! Jazz made full use of the fire to rest his weary paws. We booked a table for dinner that evening as I didn't fancy cooking plus the menu looked amazing.

So after a freshen up and a rest, we made our way back out again for our meal at 7.30pm. The pub is fantastic- a real walkers pub with slate flooring and thick stone walls. We ate a delicious meal of black pudding fritters and Appleby smoked cheese soufflé to start and then the stag baked suet pudding - crammed with venison and veg and absolutely huge. A perfect end to a fabulous day on

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the Pennines.



Sunday dawned sunny and despite our intentions of a duvet day at the van, we soon felt restless so whilst I cooked us a full English breakfast, Keith devised a small route that would take us low level around the base of the imposing Dufton pike, which is the backdrop to this tiny village.

The short circuit was lovely and we enjoyed the scenery all the way around the pike. We returned to the campsite through the very scenic Dufton Gyll woods which had banks upon banks lined with beautiful snowdrops. We whizzed through the walk, and were sur-

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prised that it was 5 miles- but after yesterday it seemed like a walk in the park!



The rest of the day has been spent chilling – we've got a joint of ham in the slow cooker and had Steak and Stilton panini's for lunch.

Duften Grandie Campsite is lovely and quiet and a perfect location. There are lots of lovely little touches, like a water tap on each pitch, free Wi-fi, and fairy liquid in the washing up area. However the showers could do with a bit of TLC, and actually a couple more for each sex. For a site that holds up to 40 units, 1 shower per sex is probably a little sparse. The chemical loo point is a little grim too. However as it's still out of season, it's

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very quiet here, and at only £20pn it's not bothered us for the short time we've been here.

Tomorrow we move on into The Lake District for some more walking and scenery.

We can't wait!

Until next time

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