The walk is 4-5 miles long and you should allow 2-3 hours to enjoy the scenery.

**Rudyard Lake**

Rudyard Lake is not in fact a natural lake but was built in 1796 as a feeder reservoir to supply the Caldon Canal. The lake feeds the canal via the Rudyard Lake feeder stream and is fed itself by the catchment areas on the north-east and north-west sides. Water can also be fed in from the River Dane to the north via a sluice and feeder system.

Rudyard Lake is an important site for wildlife. It provides vital habitat all year round for many birds such as Grebes, Coots and Herons. Flocks of colourful ducks including Teal, Goldeneye and Wigeon appear in winter along with wading birds such as Curlew and Snipe. The old trees at the north end are an important insect habitat.

The range of habitats from marshy grassland, willow carr, mature woodland and open water, result in the area of Rudyard Lake having a diverse variety of wildlife and wild flowers.

**To Enjoy The Walk**

The walk uses public rights of way for much of the route, however the disused railway line has been included with the permission of Staffordshire County Council. The route is waymarked with signs showing a black circle around a yellow arrow.

Car parking is available on the site of the old railway station. Take the A523 from Leek towards Macclesfield and after one mile, the B5331 to Rudyard. The car park entrance is on the left immediately after passing under the railway bridge. An additional car park is to be found by continuing along the A523 to Ryecroft Gate. Turn left for Congleton and left along the track after the railway bridge.

For information on bus times contact Traveline by telephoning: 0871 200 2233.

**Remember, these paths cross private land. Please follow the Countryside Code:**

- Be safe, plan ahead and follow any signs
- Leave gates as you find them
- Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home
- Keep dogs under close control
- Consider other people

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1. From the car park, follow the disused Churnet Valley railway track, which is now the focus of a miniature railway service, for 500 metres to the dam. Cross the footbridge over the overflow channel and onto the dam, allowing splendid views over the length of the lake. Continue across the dam and up the slope straight ahead and through a gate. Turn right on to Lake Road.

2. Follow the road and bear left onto a track behind some houses and then bear left again onto a footpath. From here it is possible to see Spithe Hall ahead. This property earned its name because of a family feud which started when one brother built Rudyard Villa on the bank of the lake and constantly boasted about the views. This angered his brother who built Rudyard Vale opposite so as to block the prominent views of the lake from Rudyard Villa.

3. Continue along the path swinging right to join a lane. Then branch left to join the Staffordshire Way before dropping steeply into woodland.

4. Turn right along Recliffe Road, and enter Recliffe Wood. The woodland contains a rich diversity of flora and fauna including woodpeckers and foxes.

5. Follow the path up a gentle incline to the highest part of the walk, through the grounds of Cliffe Park, a private residence and impressive house built in 1811 of a classic Gothic style. Please respect their privacy and keep to the track between the stone gate posts. Beyond the house the lime-bordered track offers good views over the lake.

6. Pass across farmland to the lake margin where an area of reed and scrub vegetation forms part of a Site of Biological Importance, and where it is possible to see Herons, Curlews and Tawny Owls.

7. At the car park turn right under the bridge and rejoin the old railway line, passing through birch-oak woodland. Approximately one mile along the track it is possible to see the Lady of the Lake Boat House on the opposite side of the reservoir, designed by Leek architect William Larner Sugden in 1893. The track then continues back to the car park.

Look out for the Lapwing emblem on a yellow arrow that marks the way.