

Discover the Manifold Valley



Photo: Cathy Bower



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Manifold Track

The Manifold Track, a favourite for walkers, cyclists and horse riders, follows the old route of the disused Leek and Manifold Light Railway, through the Manifold and Hamps Valleys, from Waterhouses to Hulme End. TOTAL DISTANCE 8½ MILES

For all but 2 miles, the track is car-free and shared by walkers, cyclists and pony trekkers.

The track is surfaced and fairly level throughout its length, making it ideal for wheelchair users, those with buggies or prams and people with limited mobility.

Car parking areas are at both ends of the track and at intermediate locations (see map).

Take care in Swainsley tunnel (shared with cars) and at the main road crossings at Waterhouses and Hulme End.

Walking

Paths and bridleways link the Manifold Track to the surrounding limestone plateau. From here, you can explore the rugged landscape and the picturesque villages with their ancient churches and welcoming old inns.

Other paths climb through the woods to the hills which tower high above the gorges and past the fascinating mining remains at Bincliff and Ecton.

Cycling & Horse Riding

The byways, old railway tracks and quiet lanes make the Manifold Valley ideal for safe cycling. Routes vary from the easy, level ride along the Manifold Track to more challenging routes.

Leek & Manifold Light Railway

This narrow gauge railway followed the river gorges for nearly 9 miles between Hulme End and Waterhouses. Opened in 1904, it served the tiny farming communities, brought in tourists and carried milk and cheese from the isolated dairy at Ecton.

Famously known as 'A line starting nowhere and ending up at the same place', the railway finally ran out of steam and closed in 1934. The old railway track was lifted and the route surfaced and turned into the Manifold Track making it ideal for walkers and cyclists.

Myths & Legends

Look out for the phantom white horse which gallops along the Manifold Valley bearing a headless rider on moonlit nights – described by one local in the 1930s as 'a man on a horse without a yedon, an awful gory sight!'

Fiddling Hob Hurst is supposed to have lived at Thor's Cave and is a folklore character likened to a wood fairy or elf. When annoyed, Hob would turn milk sour, smash crockery and generally upset the harmony between humans and nature. To keep Hob in good spirits, people would leave a bowl of milk for him on the hearth or leave offerings in sacred places at key dates in the farming calendar, to the pagan god of the fields and fertility.

Caves & Rivers

Watch out for the rivers of the Manifold and the Hamps as they disappear beneath the porous limestone of the Manifold Valley only to reappear again in Ilam Country Park.

Several caves can be found in the Manifold Valley. Best known is Thor's Cave which is approximately 76 metres (250 feet) up from the cycle/walking track. It is thought to have been named after the Viking God of Thunder, possibly because of the noises made by strong winds reverberating through the mouth of the cave and smaller fissures formed in the rock. A steep walk but the magnificent view makes it worth while.

The imposing Thor's Cave is a former home to both stone age dwellers and wild animals and dates back for at least 50,000 years.

The bones of mammoths and giant bears have been discovered amongst the other caves within the valley.

On the high ground are the burial and other religious sites of prehistoric people.

From more recent times, you can see the remains of lead mines which are located south of Wetton, around Bincliff, whilst Ecton was the site of the world's richest copper mines dating back over 300 years.

Photo: Cathy Bower



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Photo: Visit Staffordshire



Photo: Cliff Salt



Photo: Cathy Bower

Villages of the Manifold

Alstonefield

This chocolate box village, between the rivers Manifold and Dove, has an interesting history and is surrounded by paths and tracks. There is a village green, an Elizabethan manor house, a tithe barn and former coaching inn. St Peter's Church is of particular interest, having 17th Century box pews and a two-tier pulpit. The churchyard contains the grave of Ann Green who died in 1518 – reputedly the oldest legible gravestone in the country.

Butterton

A traditional Peak District village overlooking the Manifold Valley and Ecton Hill, which rises 1,212 ft above sea level. Its railway station, operated by the Leek and Manifold Valley Light Railway, is now the Manifold Way - a footpath and cycle route. It is also one of 17 doubly Thankful Villages that suffered no fatalities in both the Great War of 1914 - 1918 and in the Second World War 1939 - 1945.

Grindon

Situated above the junction of the Manifold and Hamps rivers and home to All Saint's Church, known as 'The Cathedral of the Moorlands'. Of more recent significance are the memorials to the crew and passengers of the RAF Halifax which crashed in the blizzards of February 1947 whilst bringing supplies to the stranded villagers of the Moorlands.

Hulme End

A beautiful village situated at the northerly starting point of the Manifold Track. Restored station buildings, of the Leek and Manifold Light Railway, house the Manifold Valley Information Point and The Tea Junction Cafe.

Ilam

This idyllic village has Swiss style cottages, a Gothic mansion and an interesting church. The restored cross in the centre of the village is said to be one of the finest Gothic revival monuments in the country. Enjoy sweeping views, woodland, an Italian Garden and wildlife on the river. Take a break in the Manifold Tea Room.

Warslow

A delightful, small estate village located within the Peak District National Park, remodelled and rebuilt in Georgian times by the Harpur Crewe family of Calke Abbey. An ideal starting point for walks to Revidge and Swallowmoss or the Manifold Valley.

Waterhouses

Situated at the southern point of the Manifold Track and the Hamps Valley, there is a cycle hire centre. The former Brown End Quarry is now a Geological Nature Reserve, providing a glimpse into the geology and fossils of the area.

Wetton

An ideal base for a short walk to Thor's Cave. Longer walks lead to the fascinating mining remains at Bincliff and Beeston Tor or walk down to the Manifold Track via Wetton Mill Tearoom.

Information Point

Information on the Manifold Valley and surrounding Staffordshire Peak District is available in the Manifold Valley Information Point, housed in the former ticket office at Hulme End (SK17 oEX).

Opening times:

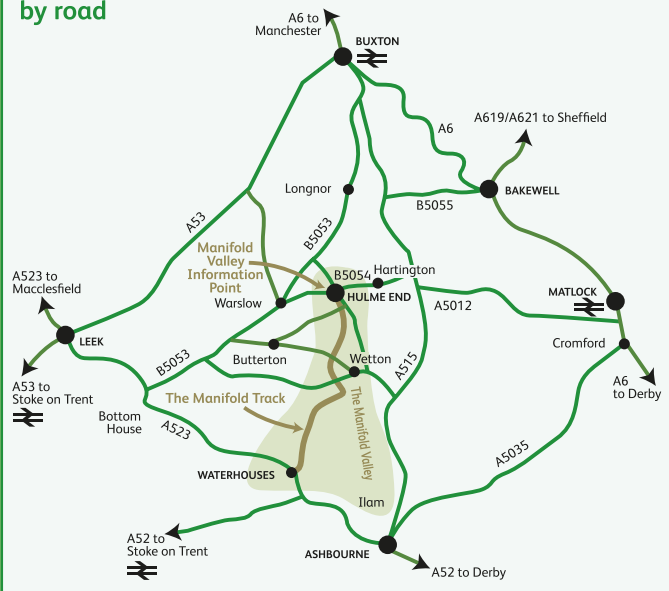
February to December, 10am – 4pm.

January the Information Point is closed.



How to get to the Manifold Valley

by road



To find out more about the
Staffordshire Moorlands email:
tourism@staffsmoorlands.gov.uk

Scan the QR code or go to:
www.discoverstaffordshiremoorlands.co.uk



All information was believed to be correct at the time of going to press, June 2026.
SMDC and their printer cannot be held responsible for any errors or changes.

G/June 2026



Explore the Manifold Valley



Photography by Roy Riley
Staffordshire Photo Shoot for RH Partners



Photo: Cathy Bower



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Photo: illexphotography



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Key	Cafe	Car park	Cycle hire	National Trust	Public house	Toilets	River
Camp site	Caravan site	Youth hostel	Nature reserve	Shop	Manifold Track	Dry river bed (seasonal)	
Camping barn	Church	Picnic area	Footpath (approx. route only)	Woodland			

Approximate scale
1 mile
1 kilometre



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