

## Car free days out - Middleton Top and The National Stone Centre

(Distance 10½ miles on easy going trail, 5¼ miles there, and 5¼ miles back)

Take a hike or borrow our mountain bikes and take to the High Peak Trail.

Leave the cabins and head up through the horse paddock, over the hill and diagonally across the field to the left. Go through the small gate on to the High Peak Trail and turn right. Keep going for 5 miles, through the tunnel to reach Middleton Top.

Catch your breath, take in the views and visit the cafe for refreshments.

### Middleton Top Engine House



The High Peak Trail takes the line of the former Cromford and High Peak Railway between Parsley Hey and Cromford. This was one of the earliest railways built in 1830 and connected the canals at Whaley Bridge and Cromford. It ran up the Goyt Valley to Buxton and across the limestone plateau to Middleton by Wirksworth, then down to Black Rocks and down again to the Cromford canal in the Derwent Valley below.

In some sections of the line the hilly terrain was too steep for the trains. To overcome this problem 9 inclines were constructed where the trucks were hauled up or down the incline by stationary engines. The inclines are still visible but only one of the winding engines has survived - at Middleton Top, near Wirksworth. The Engine House is open throughout the summer and still contains its original pair of beam engines, built by the Butterley Company in 1829, together with its boilers and imposing chimney. The engines are in working order and are run on some weekends. Each incline was equipped with double track to enable wagons to be moved in both directions at the same time as well as being balanced for safety and economy of operation.



### National Stone Centre

If you fancy going a little further follow the steep incline down the trail for about ¼ mile to reach the National Stone Centre. The site is crammed with ancient tropical reefs, rocks and minerals, centuries of industrial history, and is full of wildlife treasures - a protected Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). There is an exhibition of the “Story of Stone”, a cafe, a small shop and you can take the children panning for gems or wander along one of the themed trails, before returning back to Hoe Grange for a well earned rest!

