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Walking the Trail from Manchester to Leeds

Josh Allen is a writer, contemporary historian, and occasional curator based in south Birmingham. He recently walked from Manchester to Leeds over 4 days mostly using the Trans Pennine Trail.

At about 09:00 on 17th April 2017 I left through the main door of Manchester Piccadilly and embarked on a more than 60 mile walk to Leeds. I had devised my own route, but along the way, I made good use of the trail created and lovingly tended by the Trans Pennine Trail, and the community of volunteers that has grown up around it.

Generally speaking the days whilst I was accompanying this feat when I walked more on the Trans Pennine Trail were the smoothest and most easy going of the walk. One of the objectives of the Trans Pennine Trail which especially resonate with me, is that in addition to creating an easy to follow, well maintained route for walkers, cyclists and horse riders, connecting communities in northern England on both sides of the Pennines, the trail seeks to be accessible to as many people as possible.

A little bit about me, I am in my early 30s and live in the Midlands, I work for a university down there four days a week, and also have a freelance practice as a historian, journalist and occasional curator. Having largely avoided any more walking than just getting around the place where I live for well over a decade, I got really into walking during COVID. So into walking in fact, that I decided to set-up [Walk Midlands](#), an online guide to day walks in the English Midlands doable without a car for walkers interested in all aspects of the region's people, landscape and history.

This said, whilst I have strong ties to the Midlands and am a keen booster of the Mercian region, I did spend a great four years studying and then working in York, and my Mum is from near Liverpool which makes me half northern. So I have always felt a strong affinity with the North of England, always love visiting, and this was a key impetus for me undertaking the walk.

Given that perhaps the most dramatic section of the Trans Pennine Trail, through Longdendale and then up and over the moors into South Yorkshire, is in Derbyshire, in the Midlands, as a Midlands walking guide producer how could I not walk it as I was passing through?



I am in good physical fitness, but a key attraction in choosing the Trans Pennine Trail as my way of getting across the Pennines, was the quality of the trail and how straight (largely following the line of the disused Manchester to Sheffield railway) it is. This would make it easy for me to get across the hills in good time, and get to Penistone seven or eight miles into South Yorkshire, where I could stay for the night. I'd also used a small slither of the Trans Pennine Trail on Day One, coming down from the foothills of the Peak District into Glossop, where I had stayed on the first night.

Using the Trans Pennine Trail was a great help to me. I barely had to refer to Ordnance Survey Explorer on my phone to navigate due to the clear paths and excellent signposting. As billed the quality of the path was excellent. I also appreciated the informative signboards dotted along the route explaining the industrial heritage of the areas I was passing through.



On Day Three when I walked from Penistone to Wakefield I took a route of my own devising cross country. It worked well and smoothly, however, it was noticeably harder going and required a lot more effort to navigate than the days when I incorporated the Trans Pennine Trail into my route.

Day Four, the shortest day of walking, from Wakefield to Leeds, saw me pick up the Trans Pennine Trail once more. I adapted it slightly, cutting off a corner at one point, but aside from that, the Trans Pennine Trail took me from Wakefield city centre right into the heart of Leeds.



So, all in all, a great venture across the heart of Northern England (and the northernmost slither of the Midlands to...). Would it have been possible without the Trans Pennine Trail? For me undoubtedly yes. However, the clear, well maintained, frequently very direct nature of the Trail made it invaluable, especially when crossing the Pennines and navigating the final miles into Leeds. I would definitely recommend the Trans Pennine Trail to others. I am already planning my next long distance walk in the North of England using it.

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