

# DISCOVER BRITAIN

## THE PEAK DISTRICT

*The Peak District is a prime location for a mix of hiking, sightseeing and downtime as **Rob Slade** finds out on his first trip in a motorhome...*

When it comes to adventuring in the centre of England, nowhere stands out quite like the Peak District does. With it being in close proximity to most of the country's major towns and cities, the area has been dubbed the UK's most accessible national park, making it the perfect place to head to when you've got a spare weekend.

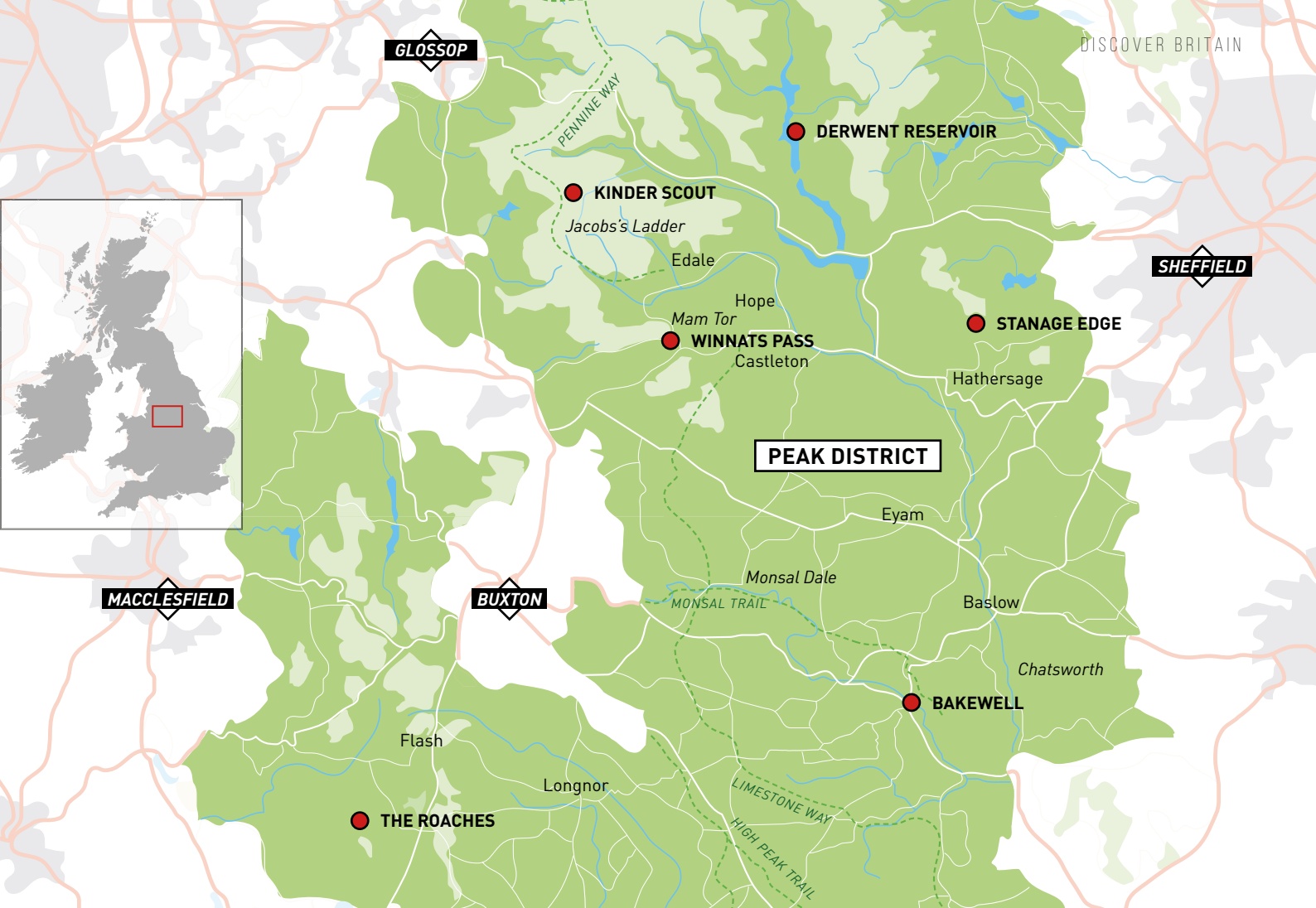
Our chance came along on a drizzly weekend in January when we managed to get our hands on an Auto-Trail V-Line 636 campervan. After picking the vehicle up from Grimsby, we headed straight to the Peaks for a weekend of discovering Britain's first area to be designated a national park.

We spent our two days exploring the fantastic mix of hiking trails, taking in some of the most spectacular viewpoints and discovering the locations that make this such a fascinating place to visit. The two days were so good that we've decided to put together a little route for you which allows you to experience the Peak District's finest. The purpose of this feature is to give you an itinerary to follow over two days, that's easily doable in a weekend so that you can head over after work on a Friday and be back in the office on Monday morning.

We start our weekend with an overnight stay in Bakewell, home to the famous Bakewell tart, before heading north to Stanage Edge for a fantastic short hike along the dramatic escarpment. Having got a taste of what the Peak District has to offer, the rest of the day is spent discovering Derwent Reservoir, the very place where the Dambusters practiced their bouncing bomb runs before heading to Germany to give Hitler a nasty surprise.

Day one finishes in the charming village of Hope, which provides the perfect staging point for day two, where a drive over to Edale gives you the opportunity to explore Kinder Scout before the dramatic and otherworldly Winnats Pass awaits on your way to the Roaches, for a fantastic short hike around this iconic rocky ridge.

While there are plenty of hotels and B&Bs to stay in the Peak District, we found our V-Line 636 to be the perfect base for a few days, and we certainly appreciated the cover and warmth that it provided against a weekend of miserable weather. I'd thoroughly recommend trying one out, even if it is just for a few days. And if you do, here are a few ideas of how you can spend a weekend in the Peak District...



## SEE



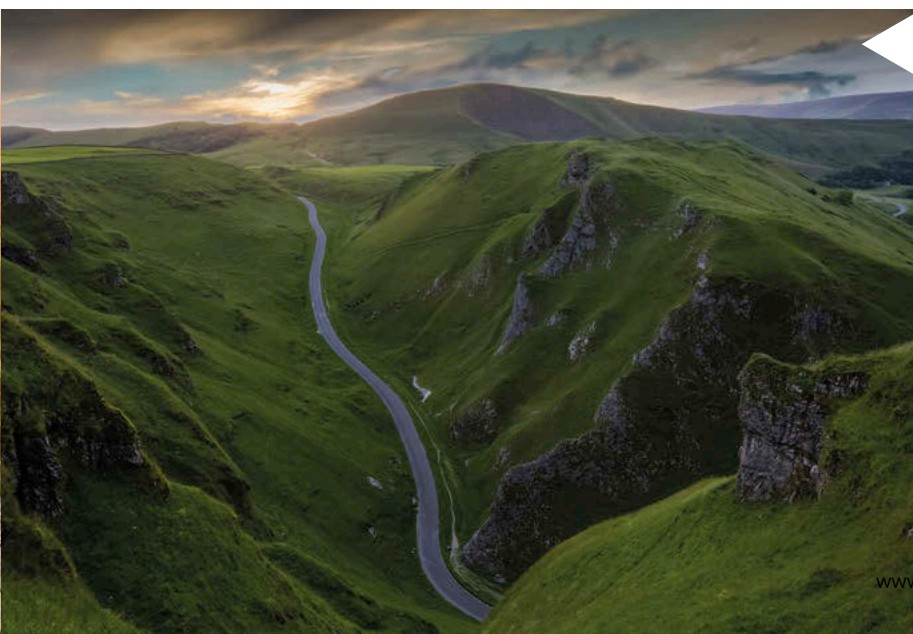
## 1. DERWENT RESERVOIR

Based in the Upper Derwent Valley between Sheffield and Glossop, Derwent Reservoir is one of three reservoirs that sit closely together with the River Derwent running through them. It was used as a training ground for pilots of the 617 Squadron during the Second World War in preparation for Operation Chastise – otherwise known as the Dambuster raids. Pilots would practise low-level flights here due to the similarity the dam held with the targets in Germany. There is now a commemorative plaque on the dam recognising its historical importance, and one of the towers on the dam now plays home to the Derwent Valley Museum.

## 2. WINNATS PASS

It might seem a bit strange to include a road as an item of interest, but such is the nature of Winnats Pass that I didn't want to miss it out. Heading west out of Castleton, you soon come to the start of the pass, and this is when it gets particularly tasty. The road winds its way through a cleft in the land, slithering between vast limestone pinnacles making for a really epic drive.

The narrow road twists and turns as it makes its way onto the ridge and as you pass along it, you really feel like you've been transported to another country altogether. Many people drive it, but we can imagine it would be that much more spectacular either on foot, or in the saddle of a bike. If on foot, there's a fantastic circular walk which starts and finishes in Castleton and goes via the pass as well as Mam Tor.





## HIKE



## 1. STANAGE EDGE

Head down the road from the popular villages of Castleton, Hope and Edale, and you'll come to the quaint village of Hathersage. This is the perfect spot to start an assault on Stanage Edge, a place which is widely known for its excellent climbing while also offering some fantastic hiking. Heading north east out of Hathersage, walking tracks will take you on the start of a 6.5-mile circular hike which takes you up onto Stanage Edge for fantastic views to the east of Hallam Moors and to the west of the beautiful Hope Valley. After a mile or two walking along the escarpment there are various tracks and country lanes that will lead you back toward Hathersage. On a pristine day, this is a really incredible place to be.

## 2. THE ROACHES

Situated near the town of Leek, the Roaches is a prominent rocky ridge on the edge of the Peak District that dominates the surrounding countryside. Rising to 505m, the ridge is another popular spot for both climbers and freerunners, but it also serves as a stunning location for hiking. Roaches Gate car park acts as the perfect starting point and an 8.6-mile hike will take you onto the ridge itself, before circling back through a quaint woodland of oak and beech trees. Once at the top you'll find fantastic views that stretch right across Cheshire. On clear days, you may even be able to see as far as both Snowdon in Wales and Winter Hill in Lancashire.





## 1. BAKEWELL AND THE MONSAL TRAIL

As well as the famous dessert (an essential part of any visit), there is plenty to see and do around the quaint market town of Bakewell. Just down the road, sitting beside the River Derwent, you'll find Chatsworth House, a stately home dating back to 1553 set among expansive parkland and backed by stunning views of rocky hills and heather moorland.

One mile south east of Bakewell, you will also find the Monsal Trail, a traffic free path that used to be part of a railway line from Manchester to London. The 8.5-mile route is well worth checking out, taking in railway tunnels and the stunning Headstone Viaduct at Monsal Dale.

## 2. KINDER SCOUT

Edale is a great base for exploring the northern part of the Peak District and it offers easy access to a range of fantastic walks and sightseeing opportunities. One of these is of course Kinder Scout and there is a web of tracks that are well worth checking out. Interestingly, the area was the scene of a mass trespass by ramblers in April 1932. The trespass came about as people wanted to highlight the fact that they were denied access to areas of open country. The trespass culminated in violent scuffles on Kinder Scout, but ultimately had a lasting effect, with the National Parks legislation coming in 1949. We recommend a nine-mile circuit starting and finishing in Edale, taking in Grindsbrook Clough, Edale Moor, Kinder Downfall and Jacob's Ladder. **AT**



**DISCOVER**



## CAMPER HIRE



### THE VAN

Auto-Trail is the UK's premier luxury motorhome manufacturer, dedicated to creating motorhomes and campervans as individual as people themselves. We had the pleasure of testing out the firm's V-Line 636 campervan and it was brilliant. The van came complete with four front-facing seats, a seating area at the rear which turns into a large double bed, storage space and a full bathroom with toilet, sink and shower. It also had a full kitchen area which included an oven, gas stove, sink, fridge and microwave, so even if you were in the most basic of areas you'd have plenty to keep you going.

The great thing is that you can drive it on a normal licence, and having taking it on a myriad of windy country lanes and narrow city streets, it seems to be able to cope with anything. Find out more about Auto-Trail's campervan V-Line range at [www.auto-trail.co.uk](http://www.auto-trail.co.uk).

### HOW TO HIRE

Motorhome and campervan hire is offered by many hire companies around the UK. For a week's hire of a family-sized motorhome, sleeping four, prices typically start around £600 per week in low season, rising to around £900 per week in high season. You can find a list of hire companies around the UK at [www.freedomtogo.co.uk/hirenter](http://www.freedomtogo.co.uk/hirenter).

