

Peak(s)	Pen-y-Ghent, Whernside, Ingleborough
Elevation(s) (ft/m)	Pen-y-Ghent (2,267ft/691m), Whernside (2,388ft/728m), Ingleborough (2,372ft/723m)
Date(s)	June 3 rd 2017 (Saturday)
Partner(s)	Solo
Elevation gain/loss (ft/m)	Approximately – 5200ft/1,585m
Distance (miles)	Approximately - 23 miles (36.5km)
Total time (hours/mins)	Approximately – 8 hours 5 minutes
Equipment	Brooks Cascadia tennis shoes, poles, rucksack with rain gear, snacks and water, emergency beacon and essentials
Weather Forecast	15C with a slight possibility of showers (10-20%)
Weather Actuality	Exact temperature unknown, but alternately blue and cloudy skies with a pleasant temperature most of the day. Rain the last 25 minutes.
Flora/Fauna	Some wild flowers on the side of one road and a field of yellow flowers.
Wildlife	Sheep, cattle and a mouse (only a handful of dogs though I was surprised)
Accommodations	N/A
Tourist Attractions	N/A

Day 1	
Drive time	Approximately – 1 hour 30 minutes
Daily Distance	Approximately – 23 miles (36.5km)
Daily Elevation	Approximately – 5,200ft (1,585m)
Daily Time	Approximately – 8 hours 5 minutes
Rise and Shine	7.30am
Depart Appletree	8.15am
Horton in Ribblesdale Church of England Drop	9.45am
Pen-y-Ghent	10.45am
Whernside	2.00pm
Th Old Inn Pub	3.10pm
Ingleborough	4.20pm
Crag Hill Rd	5.50pm
Pub – Talbot Arms	6.20pm
The Story	

I admit. I started the morning a little on the edgy side. I woke up on the wrong side of the bed and must have mistakenly, also, put on my cranky pants. The car ride up to Horton in Ribblesdale took about an hour and a half, for which about half, I bemoaned driving on British roads. I can't pin exactly what it was but somewhere between not feeling rested, running a bit behind and the roads it was best for me to just sit quietly. Fortunately, Kyle caught on and just let me be. The ride probably would have been put to better use if I actually read the information Kyle printed for me on the loop or the peaks. *But why would*

I do that when my lackadaisical approach has been rewarded thus far? Plus, it was a beautiful day, with what I was assuming would be three obvious peaks and crossed past several major roads. It was going to be fiiiine. I might get worked up over the roads but not the trails.

We pulled up to the Horton in Ribblesdale Church of England Primary School which is at the base of Pen-y-Ghent at 9.45am. I literally grabbed my pack, tied my shoes. *Yah, apparently those weren't on or tied when we arrived either.* And told Kyle I'd keep him in the loop, literally and figuratively. I also heavily suggested it might be best if he hung around the area and just enjoyed the nice day out of doors, poking around the local villages and seeing the sites. He wavered a bit, and since I wasn't really going to be around to object to whatever he decided to do I thanked him for the ride and headed on out. *Bitch factor go!* I took off up the road. The print out I had in my hand was certainly on the rougher side but there were a lot of people headed in this direction and it seemed correct so I took off in that direction. As my muscles adjusted to the movement I groaned and wondered what I was doing? *Lord, if I'm this out of shape should we even be considering the Torngats?* I was still in a very frustrated headspace but fifteen minutes into walking as I passed alongside a river, through a mottled sun and shade green space and out into open fields I found all of the stress and anxiety lifting. I felt almost inexplicably better. Except for the fact that it is explicable because that is what being outside provides me. The emotional and physical release and in its turn - relief. I instantly felt contrite about the poor morning attitude and was sorry that Kyle wasn't here to enjoy it with me. But, in all candor, there was a part of me that was exhilarated about the open road in front of me. The challenge and the ability to have some solo time for reflection and to go at my own pace. It felt just right.

I followed the road along the right until it veered right and then shortly after had a curve back left and that was where it veered into fields and straight up to the shoulder of Pen-y-Ghent. I passed a handful of people along the way but three male runners passed me! There were an astounding number of people along the trail. I passed several cute kids. One sweet little boy with glasses was scrambling up some large rocks on the trail and the dad was telling him it was an adventure. It was absolutely adorable. There were also several charity groups with matching shirts about. The trail is alternately grassy and rocky in sections but overall clear. There was one rocky section that may be considered Class 3 (US rating) but I didn't strictly have to use my hands at all times so perhaps a Class 2-3 (US rating) would be more apt. Since it is so well travelled it felt secure and stable so I wasn't overly concerned about loose rocks as well. This is a short section of perhaps a hundred feet. Above it the trail levels out and is a very gradual gradient to the summit which, is marked by a stone wall and summit cairn (or 'trig' as I heard them referred to). I reached the summit at 10.45am. I quickly shot off a text to Kyle to let him know I was on the first summit and slammed back most of a protein shake before helping a charity group and a group of women with summit photos. The ladies offered to take one of me but at that moment I wasn't feeling any great desire so I thanked them, grabbed my rucksack and headed off downhill. From the 'trig' it is essentially an immediate hop over a stone wall and downhill.

I was feeling so elated and free that I actually started skipping part of the way downhill. This may or may not have been related to the fact that I had recently watched *Pride and Prejudice* and the scene where Elizabeth Bennet skips down the country lane full of life. That being said, I also was keen to get my hustle on and use my downward momentum to move quickly. I lightly jogged some sections after I made my way around a section of the trail that was being worked on. In the distance I could see what I assumed was the next objective and it definitely looked fairly far away. It looked far enough that I had a moment in my brain where I told my brain to settle down, get comfortable and find an interesting way

to self-occupy for the next several hours. *Basically, buckle up. No need to shut up!* I popped in my ear buds and tucked my ipod into my bra strap for easy access and away I went. I felt the downhill fairly quickly and had to check the 'map' several times to reference where I was going but overall, I found that it wasn't too hard to follow between aiming for the far-off objective, following others and intuition it went fairly smoothly. I briefly tried to keep up with a woman who was running but eventually lost sight of her and took it back down a notch. At one junction, I turned to pull my map out of a side mesh pocket and realized it had fallen out. *Mother Mary! For serious?! Third trip I've lost the navigational tool! Better be the charm and I'm cured now because it's getting ridiculous!* As my luck was though, there was a group of individuals who I'd passed who caught up to me in my brief indecision on the way to go and I followed them. As is generally the case, my accent gave me away and I fell into step with this group for a while talking about the US, the UK, travel, jobs etc. The one woman in the group asked me if I was alone and I indicated that I was. And that she was the second person to ask me in short time and if it was unusual to do it alone. *Geez. It was like some horror film. Everyone asking me if I was alone. Creepy? Not even close enough to be deterred!* She told me it was more on the unusual side. They had one person drop out earlier in the day and made someone else go with them for safety. They were very nice and appeared to be around the same ages as myself. It was a group of NHS psychologists from Hull and one of their friends who was studying PhD Statistical Physics at the University of Edinburgh. I didn't think we'd stay together as long as we did but I visited with them for some time. As their group started to fall behind I moved forward and again had to ask directions as I hit the first major paved road. I turned right onto the road and followed it for some time. The NHS group caught me again and I started speaking with them again. We got speaking about what time we started etc and one of the guys asked me if I was feeling it yet. I indicated that I wasn't really feeling it yet but that I knew it could come on suddenly. He mentioned something about really feeling it in his muscles so I asked if he wanted some ShotBlocs. He wasn't so sure at first but then gave me a "go on then". Digging around in my pack, I pulled them out and handed him the packet of black cherry ShotBlocs I had brought. It was nice to share with someone. To visit and share. It had that trail camaraderie feel about it. *Crap! I brought those from the States. I hope they didn't have an expiration date on them. Not that sugar and gelatin blocks should ever go bad!* As soon as we reached a fork in the paved road near an elevated rail bridge I lost track of the group.



I briefly stopped to pull out my phone and take a couple pictures of the bridge. It was so beautiful. Someone mentioned that it was one of the bridges used in the Harry Potter films. I said I thought that the train scenes were done in Scotland to which I was told that one of the train scenes used this bridge. Fair enough, I'm not one to argue. Well at least not that point! It was a gorgeous bridge though and really stood out. Whernside mountain was right in front of me at this point. I just wanted to plough straight uphill whereas the trail continued to wind all the way over to the far shoulder. It seemed far. And for one brief moment I weighed the pro's and con's of just cutting cross country and heading straight uphill. But common sense told me the trail would be faster or at the very least would require less thought. I stayed on the trail and followed it as it continued alongside the train tracks for a distance. It was here that I ran into the group of ladies (three women) who I took the picture of on the summit of Pen-y-Ghent. Two of the ladies were older and I had been moving at what I thought was a fair pace. I was a bit flabbergasted. *What happened here? Something happened.* As I walked I mentioned I had seen them on the summit and they seemed to recognize me. I off-handedly mentioned that they must be moving at a fair clip and I was surprised I hadn't seen them until now. One of them just laughed and told me they drove over from Pen-y-Ghent. This was a practice round of doing the three peaks before their charity walk in a months time. Okay. I felt a bit better that I hadn't gotten absolutely spanked by this group!

The sun was out at this point and I was warming up. I found I was thirstier and could feel the first 'effects' of the day. Water revived me a bit but I was also trying to be cautious as I hadn't brought a filter and I wasn't sure what the story was with the stops ahead. Again, I never felt any real danger as there were enough people around and enough road crossings and homes etc that in a pinch I could go ask. But it's also good practice to self-regulate water and be aware of your needs etc. I felt myself slow a bit on the uphill portion and had to catch my breath a couple of times. *Uh oh. Was I losing steam already? Lord. I hope not.*

I took a break at the last turn of the trail before the last gradual rise to the 'trig' summit. I was getting hungry and knew I needed some food and water to replenish the fuel reserves. I was hoping I'd make it to the summit but I didn't want to crash. *Plus, what difference would it really make?* I really hadn't put a lot of thought or food into my bag. *Because. Preparedness.* But I was really looking forward to the cutie oranges I had managed to stuff in. Sweet, juicy fuel. I pulled one out, peeled it and without delay shoved it into my mouth. And just as soon as I had bitten down I spat it out. It was off. It tasted a bit on the fermented side. I felt a bit of a jerk as I spat it out right where someone else might want to sit so I used my poles to try and flick it back a bit further. But I was more than a little put out about the fruit as I desperately wanted the cool sweet relief. Instead I settled for some honey roasted peanuts and water. Just as I was packing up to continue onward the group of three next to me offered me some wine gum sweets. *Ah. The trail camaraderie.* I couldn't refuse. Nor, did I want to. *Food is food.* The wine gums tasted a little off. *Probably serves me right for possibly handing out old ShotBlocks.* But the brief respite and the snack helped power me up to the 'trig' summit of Whendside. I stopped for some water and a photo at the summit before I sent the photo to Kyle via WhatsApp to let him know I was alive and where I was in the journey. I was feeling better! I had a stretch of downhill ahead of me, I was feeling more rested and the sun was still shining! I took five steps in the direction of the offside and stumbled on a loose rock that pulled up under my foot and crashed into the ankle of my other foot. *For serious?! Moment gone.* I, actually, had to hobble forward for a minute as it did twinge a bit. But I didn't stop, just resolutely limped forward and after a while the pain diminished and I forgot. I did find a bruise there later though, so I know it happened. The trail off of Whernside was very clear. It was wide and easily discernable. There was one section of a couple hundred feet that was a bit steep and rocky in places but nothing too crazy. With poles it went fine. I could see where if it was wet it might be slick but certainly I'm sure it could still be done. It was just after this steep section that someone caught wind of my accent and started chatting to me and he said his wife was American and she was just up the trail. He then yelled up to her to wait. I briefly spoke with her and her husband. They were both very nice. And oddly, she had on the only other Brooks tennis shoes I noticed on the trail (Pink Ravenna's).



I passed two people who were walking oddly and briefly asked how it was going. Not that I had a first aid kit and was going to save the day but I thought I'd practice some trail manners and check in. One guy was just finishing up, hence the hobble. Another guy was just finishing his second peak, so essentially at the same place in the loop as me, but was hurting quite badly. He was going to stop at the next road crossing and call it. It was his second time he said where he has had to stop at this spot. I told him third time for three mountains and then proceeded on my way. It was at this point that I had a mental pick me up. The sun was still out, it was mostly downhill (albeit a lot on concrete or hard packed dirt) and I passed several beautiful fields and flowers. I was reveling in the moment. As I came out to just before The Old Inn I noticed tents set up and various support teams handing out supplies. I was very tempted to walk up to one group that had a bowl of some sort of candy or bars and ask for one but I didn't need it and didn't feel like begging off food if I didn't 'need' it. One stand was selling ice cream though, and egg on bread, I was very tempted by the ice cream but didn't want to stop and again didn't need it. I'd prefer my treat be post trip. So I just determinedly trucked through. I hit the main road and turned left to walk past The Old Inn. It was nuts. There were cars parked everyone on the narrow road and cars trying to go both ways with walkers on the sides of the road. I briefly stopped to take a picture of a sign post with a bull sign. *What was the sign telling me? Were the bulls a hazard?* Someone yelled I was going to get 'killed for a selfie'. I just yelled back that it wasn't a selfie. *Like that made holding up traffic on the side of the road better?* I just laughed to myself though. Nature was making me a better version of myself and both my humor and tolerance were high.



Just after The Old Inn pub I turned right to cross over a hedge via wooden steps and continued up towards Ingleborough. A combination of following other people and making my way towards the next mountain made route finding in beautiful weather easy at this point. I was feeling good until about halfway up and then I felt myself flagging. My muscles started to protest. The complaints of Whernside came back. I wasn't very excited about the peanuts but I knew I had to fuel up at least a little so partway up I stopped and threw back some and water. *Food as fuel not pleasure moment!* I tried to suckle off some more protein drink from the containers but I only managed a little. No time to wait around though. Stopping too long would just make it harder to get going again. And from where I'd stopped I could see that here was a steep section ahead that looked to be a couple hundred feet in height and was quite rocky. From my vantage it looked like the Hillary Step of the route as there was a line of people trying to go up. At least everyone was going up it. As I willed my feet onward I caught up to a group on the 'Hillary Step' and fell into line behind them. I started to feel really winded and my calves were starting to strain a little. There was also this mental pressure to keep pace with the rest of the group because stopping would hold up the line. Fortunately, no

one was moving outrageously fast and I pulled over at the top of this little scramble and had a couple more nuts and some water. It wasn't far to the summit but it took me a couple start and stops to get up. I reached the summit of Ingleborough at 4.20pm. I walked over to the far side and looked out over Morecambe Bay. It was beautiful. I then turned around and headed to the 'trig' marker. I asked someone to snap a shot with my phone and leaned back against the pillar. *Photo check!* I then looked around and it seemed to me that most of the women were sporting cute spandex outfits and Hollywood sunglasses and making cute poses. And here I was leaning up against the pillar in sweating polyester! *What was I doing wrong? Did I miss that day in outdoor school? I could probably more easily pass as a wild animal after half a day!* Alas! I did not stick around to ponder this deeper question of life in the outdoors. Instead I threw back a few more nuts and left a couple 'emergency nuts' since this was essentially the last of my food. I started dreaming about the ShotBlocs I gave away and hoping they helped that guy because they sure sounded tasty now!

I felt pretty certain I knew which direction I wanted to go and which trail to take down but I thought that maybe I should ask to be certain before I went ferreting off in the wrong direction. I asked a gent nearby

if the trail was the 'way down' and he asked me where I wanted to go. And I realized I had no idea what the town was called. *YIKES! That's what being underprepared looks like!* I told him I think it was Ribble something or other. And he told me he had no idea what I was talking about. *Tosser*. It turned out it was Horton in Ribblesdale. I don't think the connection was too hard to make there. *Deliberately being obtuse?* Either way, I knew I wanted to be back at the base of Pen-y-Ghent and I could see that peak off in the distance and the trail headed that way and had lots of people on it. *Sold*. I started cooking off down the trail. Rumor on the trail was it was five miles back into town. And as I marched food kept popping up in my mind. I saw a girl with a banana in the mesh part of her backpack and legitimately thought about asking for it. It wasn't like she was going to need it or likely even eat it this close to town. But I held my peace. The downhill was a nice break on my body again but I was starting to feel the muscles on the downhill side too. Nothing too drastic. I was also starting to feel a bit of rub from the shoes in a couple spots. Probably from the downhill motion. *Whatever!* I was nearly there and it didn't hurt near enough to make me want to stop and fix it. As I passed a sign that said two miles to town I pulled out my phone and tried sending Kyle a message. I estimated about 45 minutes or so into town and gave him the time since I wasn't sure if the message would actually go through with the minimal service.

It was on this last mile that I started thinking that all the water I'd consumed was making me start to have the internal debate on whether or not I wanted to pee. Here in the UK it seems to require strategy and planning to execute to somewhat private pee. The men along the trail just stood alongside a wall and faced inward but I don't think I saw another woman peeing. The wide open fields made it hard to find a good place for the most part and the walls were generally angled so you crossed perpendicular and it didn't provide privacy. So taking a slight lull in traffic I hopped further into a field of taller grass and crouched as low as I could and peed. Right next to a sheep. I was quick about it and then tore off towards town! I was quite proud of my brazen and quick pee! As I turned towards town I could see a cloud in the distance dumping out rain. The surprise 'deluge' to "wash my spirit" a little cleaner at the end. In all fairness though, we have been warned the weather can change rapidly here and this wasn't massively surprising as I saw the dark clouds rolling in about fifteen minutes before it hit. I was hoping I'd make it to town before it really struck or at least skirt the edges of the rain cloud but it was not meant to be. Since I was so close to the town, I could literally see it in front of me, I truly didn't care that much about being wet. At least, that's what I thought as I thought I'd packed a change of dry clothes. I did pull out my light rain jacket and through that on over my pack and myself. *No need to be completely stupid*. Alas, those were left at the house so getting soaked turned out to be a little more uncomfortable than I wanted but it was only my shorts and shoes. My shoes were sopping wet and I could feel the shorts running water and sticking to my legs. As I crossed the railroad to get into town and walked down the last hill I heard someone yell my name and looked up to see Kyle. He was waving from under an umbrella in someone's front yard. He had met a lady named June while he waited for me to finish and she let him stand outside under her umbrella while he looked for me. Even brought him a cup of tea. Lovely lady! They had a dog that looked at the rain and then turned around and went back inside to where her husband George presumably was. Since it was absolutely pissin' out still we headed for the car. Poor Kyle hobbling along in his medical boot! I promptly peeled off my shorts and stuck them on the air vents in the car and cranked up the heat. *No shame*. It helped incrementally. I mean. I was able to put my shorts back on and wander into a pub for some soup and sweet potato fries.

Wander free. Wander far.

Lessons Learned

1. Going 'solo' seems to be out of the ordinary.
2. 2 liters of water and 2 protein shakes was not enough hydration. A few more snacks besides peanuts wouldn't have gone amiss either but that was secondary to the hydration by far.
3. Peeing requires complex strategy and luck in the UK.



Yorkshire Three Peaks: Horton - anticlockwise