

Following these basic route directions requires knowledge of the area, roads and footpaths. If you are unfamiliar with the area you should use the OS Explorer map 266 (Wirral & Chester) to assist in your enjoyment of this walk.

- 1 Start your walk from Hillbark Hotel and Spa.** The original Hillbark House that stood on this site was demolished and the existing building, erected in its place. This mock Tudor building was originally located 5 miles away in Bidston but the Royden family who lived there moved it brick by brick to its present site when they inherited this part of the Royden Estate. During the Second World War, Hillbark House became a safe haven for orphans of Liverpool seamen, providing them with a home until 1949. In 1960 the house was acquired by the local council, who managed it as a residential home for elderly people until 1984. The house was empty for several years and fell into disrepair. In 2002 Contessa Hotels acquired Hillbark and in June 2012 Hillbark Hotel & Spa was awarded its Five Star status.
- 2 Cross the main field at Royden Park, entering Thurstaston Common owned and managed by the National Trust. Follow the path through the mixed woodland and onto the heathland.** Thor's Stone has been the subject of various local legends and it was once believed that the stone had been a place of Viking worship and that the surrounding stone was blasted away by lightning bolts cast down by an angry god. Today it is widely accepted that this is evidence of local quarrying and that the remaining outcrop was the base of a lever used to extract the stone or that it not quarried as it was softer than the surrounding stone. It has for generations been a famous local landmark – hidden away and stumbled upon when crossing the common.
- 3 Walk up onto Thurstaston Hill following the path south across the sandstone ridge, past the viewpoint and the down into the car park and onto the pavement alongside the A540. Cross over Thurstaston Road by the roundabout and continue along the A540 and cross into Church Lane.** Thurstaston Village has been designated as a Conservation Area with the aim of conserving the historic settlement that was first mentioned in the Domesday Book. St Bartholomew's Church, Thurstaston Hall and the old Dawpool farm buildings are all grouped round the small green. The village has retained its existing stone walls and hedges protecting the surrounding fields and the wooded hillside of the former Dawpool Estate. Thomas Henry Ismay, ship owner and founder of the White Star Line, lived in Dawpool Hall (now demolished) and is buried in the cemetery. He was the father of Bruce Ismay who survived the Titanic disaster of 14th April 1912. Thomas Henry Ismay was also responsible for creating the cutting on the A540 and for the route of the railway that was originally going to run directly in front of his property.
- 4 Take the public footpath to the Dungeon.** The Dungeon place-name is thought to be derived from an old Welsh word for 'wooded valley'. Whilst land either side has been cultivated The Dungeon remains an oasis of old woodland and remnant heath and is a haven for tree nesting birds; all three species of British woodpeckers can be seen here along with Treecreeper, Nuthatch, Tawny Owls, Little Owls and Buzzards. The waterfall is the start of a fault line that runs as far as Thor's Stone.
- 5 Head north along the Wirral Way, past the Visitor Centre and where you'll see views across Thurstaston Beach and the Dee Estuary to Wales. (There are toilets available in the Visitor Centre or at GJ's Café on Station Road)** The Wirral Way is part of Wirral Country Park, Britain's oldest designated country park. Based on the old Hooton to West Kirby Railway, the narrow straight path along with Dawpool, the Dungeon and Cubbins Green is Wirral's most popular outdoor attraction. Rangers have managed the park since 1969 and apart from day to day maintenance they assist with event organisation, support school visits and manage the various habitats.
- 6 Continue along the Wirral way past Dawpool Nature Reserve to Croft Drive and walk to the top of the road and into Caldy Village.** Caldy is one of the area's most beautiful villages with many older buildings built from local sandstone. It is one of the region's most affluent areas with expansive and impressive properties. Mentioned in the Domesday Book as 'Calders' it became even more prosperous in the early 20th century when it was developed for residential housing by the Caldy Manor Estate Company.
- 7 Head north along Caldy Road where opposite Melloncroft Drive you'll see an entrance to Caldy Hill. Follow the footpath to the top of the hill and to the Mariners' Beacon.** Like Thurstaston, this is an area of lowland heath and woodland jointly managed by Wirral Council and the National Trust and also has stunning views over the Dee Estuary and including the Hilbre Islands. The Trustees of the Liverpool Docks erected the Mariners' Beacon in 1841 after the windmill at the site (used as a navigation aid for boats entering the Port of Liverpool) was destroyed by a storm in 1839.

From the Mariners' Beacon take the footpath that leads onto the A540 and follow the road crossing into Grange Cross Lane where the Public Footpath will take you to Birch Heys and Montgomery Hill. Cross the road and enter Royden Park following the fire access road back to Hillbark Hotel & Spa for some well-deserved refreshments!

The Hillbark Hike



Wirral Walkers
Wirral Walking Festival 2021
Wirral Welcomes



Hillbark

HOTEL & SPA

WWW.HILLBARKHOTEL.CO.UK