



# Get away for... THE WEEKEND!

Enjoy a short break full of pools, rivers, canals and waterfalls around beautiful Buxton

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY: Carol Kubicki

**W**ater put this Derbyshire market town on the map as long ago as the Roman Empire. The Romans marched into Buxton, found the spring water that emerges from the ground at around 28°C, built a bath and threw coins into the spring for luck.

In the sixteenth century visitors took the water and, in the Georgian era, the Duke of Devonshire developed Buxton into a spa resort. A 'Well Woman' was appointed to care for the well and assist tourists, a job that continued into the twentieth century.

This Peak District town sits around 305m above sea level. The high altitude means that, while it can be a refreshing place on a sweltering day, winters can be chilly. Although Buxton's rarefied air doesn't hold lots of moisture, it is surrounded by hills that soak up bucketfuls of rainfall, so I didn't

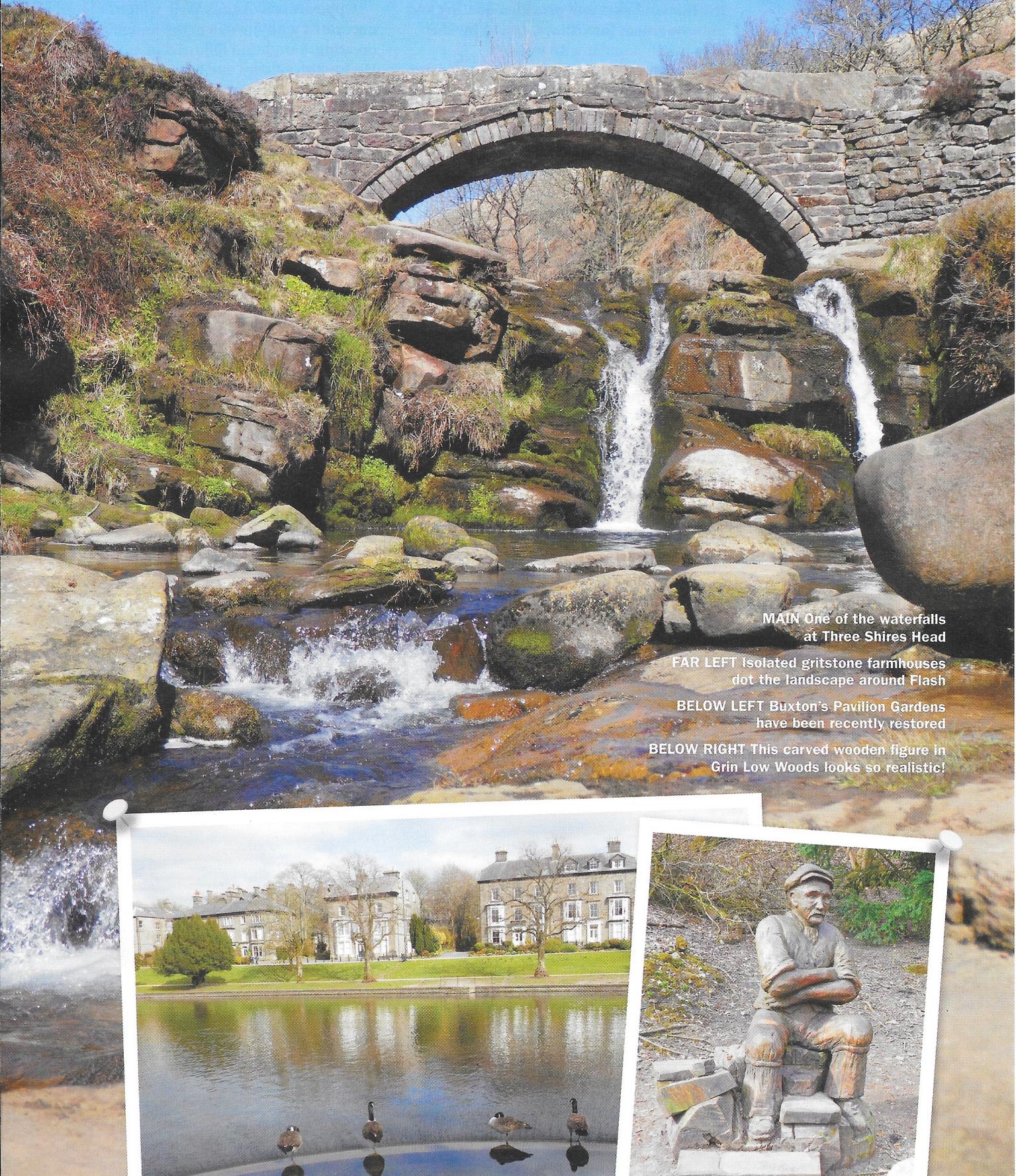
have high hopes of a dry holiday here and double-checked the waterproofs were packed in the Blue Bus before we set off.

Adding a watery theme to our trip, we broke our journey to Buxton in Marple on the edge of Greater Manchester for a sunny canal and lakes ramble. Marple's pretty stretch of the Peak Forest Canal has 16 locks leading to an aqueduct over the River Goyt.

From the towpath we watched a Canada goose carefully building a nest and cautiously avoided the aggressively hissing male. Clambering down to the River Goyt to admire the aqueduct's workmanship, I could see the circular piercings above the arches to reduce its weight.

Woodland paths lined with wild garlic took us to Marple Bridge where we picked up the lane to the Roman Lakes. For about 100 years, until Mellor Mill burnt down in ▶

*Why?...* To visit an attractive Derbyshire market town

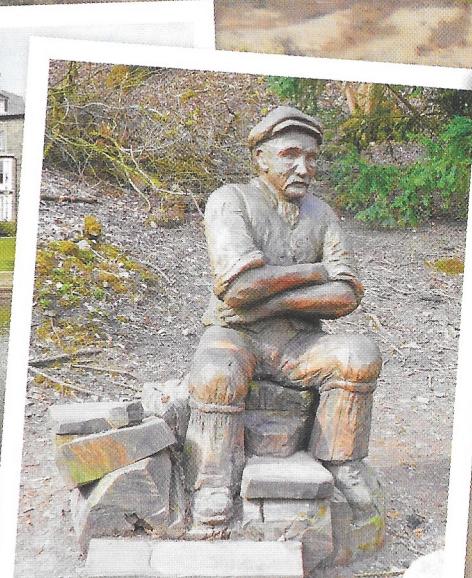


**MAIN** One of the waterfalls at Three Shires Head

**FAR LEFT** Isolated gritstone farmhouses dot the landscape around Flash

**BELOW LEFT** Buxton's Pavilion Gardens have been recently restored

**BELOW RIGHT** This carved wooden figure in Grin Low Woods looks so realistic!



## US AND OUR 'VAN



**Carol Kubicki...**

and her husband, Anthony, explore beautiful places in their Blue Bus whatever the season. Carol is a keen walker, fair-weather cyclist and improving birdwatcher



2015 Devon Tempest on a Renault Master MWB 2.3-litre. This is our third blue campervan and we have called them all the Blue Bus

## INFORMATION

Information about events in Buxton and maps and guides to download

[visitbuxton.co.uk](http://visitbuxton.co.uk)

Discover Buxton offers tram trips and walking tours of Buxton and the blog has lots of interesting local history

[discoverbuxton.co.uk/blog](http://discoverbuxton.co.uk/blog)

Mellor Mill and the Roman Lakes, Marple

[mellorarchaeology.org.uk](http://mellorarchaeology.org.uk)

## TOP TIPS

There is some street parking on Strines Road in Marple that is near to the Roman Lakes and the canal

Flash Bar Stores is open 8am to 4pm daily and offers homemade cakes and pies, good coffee, local foods, beers and basic groceries. There is parking, outdoor seating and a cosy indoor café with a wood burning stove that is dog friendly

[flashbarstores.co.uk](http://flashbarstores.co.uk)

1892, this was an industrial site and information boards tell the mill's history.

With the mill gone, local entrepreneurs romantically renamed the old mill ponds the Roman Lakes and provided boating and entertainment for visitors, and today the area is still popular with walkers.

Having settled into our Buxton campsite, we set off on foot armed with a heritage trail around the town's most noteworthy buildings. Campers immediately find themselves on delightful paths through Grin Low Woods and will spot Solomon's Temple, a picturesque hilltop tower. Climbing the tower's winding staircase, Buxton was laid before us, clustered around the dominating slate-grey Devonshire Dome.

Ambling through the town's Pavilion Gardens, we noted the park has been restored to its Victorian splendour and was packed with colourful flowers.

We watched ducks and tiny chicks on the lakes as they swam up hopeful for food and admired a tree trunk sculpted into figures and animals. The water-carrying Arnemetia caught my eye; in Roman times Buxton was named Aquae Arnemetiae after this Romano-British goddess.

We walked to The Crescent, a Georgian Grade I listed masterpiece and the pride of Buxton, recently restored as a luxury hotel.

The gracious symmetrical curve of the stone façade, the ground floor colonnade and fountains playing at the front all combine to form an elegant and breathtaking building.

Opposite is St Anne's Well, which is decorated with flowers in the annual well dressing, a tradition followed in many Derbyshire villages and towns.

The Pump Room has a tap and souvenir glass bottles, and I filled one with Buxton spa water to taste the lukewarm mineral-rich water.

We grabbed an outdoor table at a tea room for hot drinks before getting a close-up view of the Devonshire Dome. This building has had an interesting history, from stables to hospital and now a university. We climbed the paths up through The Slopes to the upper part of Buxton, where the town's oldest buildings surround England's highest market place.

Walking back along the promenade in the park, we noticed, through the full-length glass windows of the Octagon Hall, that local artists were selling their wares. We had been looking for a picture for our dining room for about 12 months, but had never managed to find anything we both liked! Amazingly, we both spotted and immediately fell in love with a striking black and white linocut of a couple walking in the



**Must do...** Have a taste of Buxton's famous spa water

rain, huddled together under an umbrella, exactly the sort of weather I had been expecting in Buxton! We walked back to the campervan in the sunshine carefully carrying our new picture.

We had tasted spa water and walked by pools and canals, it was time to immerse ourselves in Axe Edge Moor and the headwaters of four rivers, the Dane, the Goyt (that we had met in Marple), the Manifold and the Wye (that flows through Buxton). Away from the roads it was peaceful on the moorland, just us, gurgling streams and a few isolated farms and old mine workings.

At Three Shires Head, where Staffordshire, Derbyshire and Cheshire meet, we joined the throng at this popular picnic and wild swimming spot. Sitting by the waterfalls, I slipped off my shoes and dipped my toes in the gaspingly cold water of the River Dane.

Climbing the path towards the village of Flash, we met two ramblers who were confused by the different routes and had no signal to check online maps on their phones. They were both astonished when we flourished our paper map to help them out. "I can't understand maps," one said. I smiled sympathetically but, realising this wasn't the time to offer an impromptu map

reading course, I checked their route and pointed them in the right direction.

A sheltered lane full of butterflies took us to Flash Bar Stores, where we devoured two delicious home-made vegetable samosas at an outdoor table. A popular halt for cyclists, we chatted to a young Polish man who was fuelling up, having cycled from the West Midlands and was surprised how hilly the Peak District was!

Exuberant skylarks sang as we crossed the fields below Flash, almost drowning out the drawn-out calls of lapwings and the whistles of curlews. I had friends who lived in this moorland landscape in the 1980s and held legendary Boxing Day parties, attended by friends, colleagues and neighbours who, when you asked where they lived as they put their wellies on to go home, would point across the fields to a distant gritstone farmhouse. These fields are criss-crossed by footpaths and we wondered whether these rights of way were created by sociable locals attending each other's events.

In more sunshine, we caught the bus to the village of Taddington for a Derbyshire Dales and wells walk. Our first stop was Five Wells chambered cairn. What are known as wells in this area are often springs, rather than a well sunk into the ground and the cairn's remaining stones perch on high ▶

## ESSENTIALS

### HOW LONG

Three nights

### WHEN

Spring is a lovely time to visit, but Buxton has a year-round calendar of events

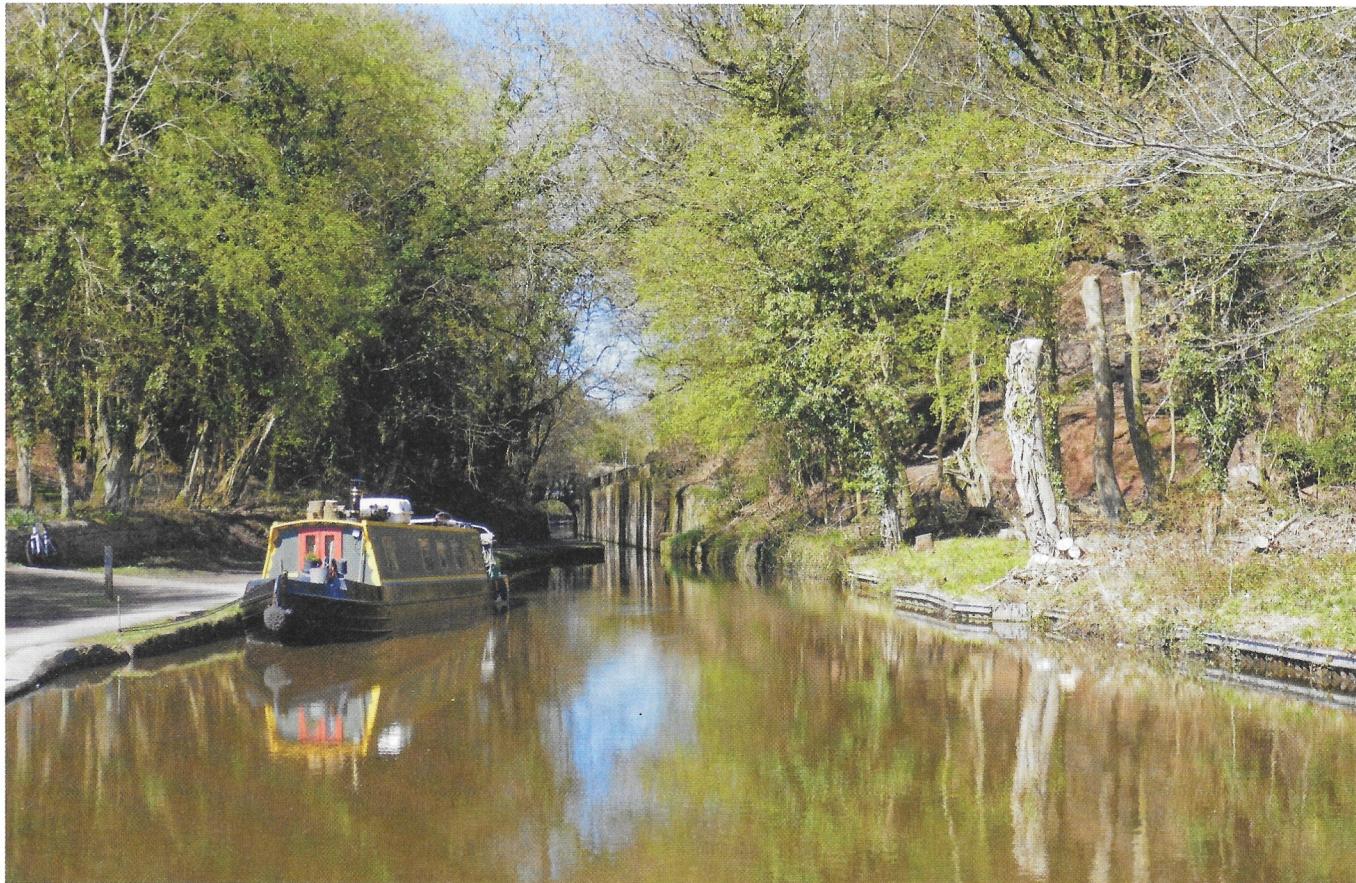
### HOW MUCH

Fuel Average 35mpg (From Morecambe to Buxton return, 190 miles) .....	£46
Site fees .....	£75.90
<b>TOTAL</b> .....	<b>£121.90</b>



**BELOW FAR LEFT** The gracious symmetrical curve of The Crescent in Buxton

**BELOW** The pretty section of the Peak Forest Canal in Marple





*Must see...* The dramatic 360-degree view of Buxton from Solomon's Temple

ground above the source of five springs. Although many of the ancient tomb's stones have been taken, the two back-to-back chambers are recognisable. Descending to the village of Chelmorton, we passed Bank Pit Spring, inexplicably and bizarrely known locally as Illy Willy Water.

The path into the wooded Deep Dale was steep, but the sheltered dale was perfect for a lunch stop.

The scenic uneven path along Deep Dale, over moss-covered stones and between trees, took us below the cave known as Thirst House before climbing up to King Sterndale and returning into Buxton under the 13 arches of Dukes Drive Viaduct. Back in Grin Low Woods, we found a thick carpet of wood anemone and picked up part of Buxton's Ring of Trees Walk, a circular route through surrounding woodland.

I have a vague aim to notch up visiting all of the Derbyshire Dales, those steep-sided limestone valleys formed by rivers that are characteristic of this area, but have yet to find a definitive list to tick off.

Our day's route would have been a good start as we walked through five dales, each beautiful and distinctive. Beginning in Tideswell Dale, its winding stream was lined with bright flowers and the limestone cliffs were draped with rock cress.

Millers Dale, not surprisingly, is home to many disused mills along the River Wye, often now converted to housing. I was concentrating on looking for kingfishers, but, noticing a couple with binoculars pointed to the skyline, I asked what they had seen. They weren't sure and Anthony found the grey bird with a yellow beak they had spotted with his own binoculars. The four of us watched the stationary bird for some time, eventually convincing each other it was a peregrine.

At Cressbrook we sat on a sunny bench by the millpond watching the climbers on the crags and then we went onto Cressbrook Dale, which is thickly wooded with pungent wild garlic and carpets of soft green moss covering the dry stone walls.

The landscape opened out as we reached the short Tansley Dale where we found cowslips just coming into flower. We climbed up to the patchwork of walled fields above the dales where lambs gambolled in the sunshine and the shallow Litton Dale led us back to the 'van.

At home we hung the picture and unpacked our rucksacks. At the bottom I found our scrunched up and unused waterproofs. Our trip had been saturated by beautiful sights but we hadn't felt even a drop of rain! **mmm**

**ABOVE** Solomon's Temple is an easy walk from the Buxton Caravan and Motorhome Club site

**B BELOW** Buxton Caravan and Motorhome Club campsite

#### THE CAMPSITE

Buxton Caravan and Motorhome Club Site, Grin Low Road, Ladmanlow, Buxton SK17 6UJ

01298 77735

[camc.com](http://camc.com)

10 March - 6 November

Two adults, pitch and electric: From £33.10

