

There are four ruined, yet still magnificent, abbeys in the Borders at Melrose, Kelso, Jedburgh and Dryburgh. All founded in the 12th century, each was home to a different order; Cistercian, Tironensian, Augustinian and Premonstratensian respectively. Given the turbulent history of the area it is remarkable that they survived for as long as they did, although all of them had to be rebuilt at regular intervals after being overrun by marauding armies.

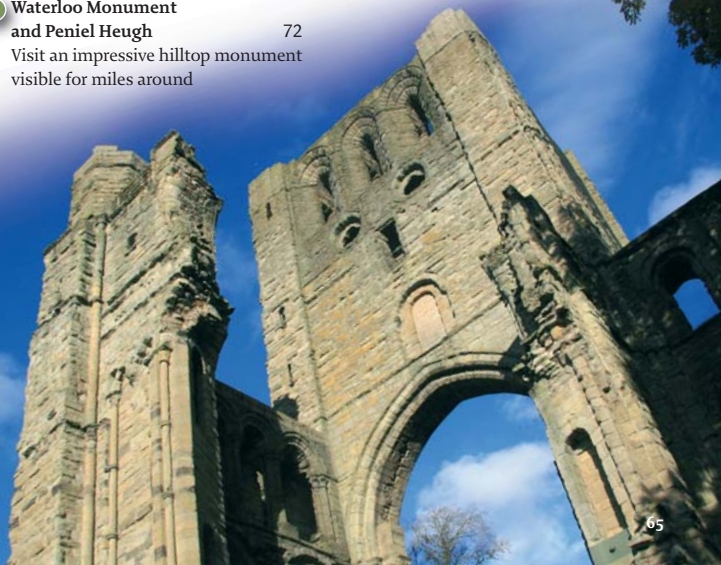
The Borders Abbeys Way, a long-distance walking route which links the four great sites, is utilised on some of the routes in this chapter. The other divinely-inspired route through the Borders is the St Cuthbert's Way which links Melrose to Holy Island. The coast-to-coast Southern Upland Way also briefly features, as does

the cross-border Pennine Way which terminates in Kirk Yetholm. The route which pre-dates them all was built by the Romans, however, and Agricola's Road, or Dere Street as it was later known, is joined for a walk into the Cheviot Hills.

It is not surprising that so many long-distance routes criss-cross this part of the Borders; as well as the abbeys, the towns of Melrose, St Boswells, Kelso and Jedburgh are full of history and interest, and there are many great country estates, such as those at Harestanes and Abbotsford, which have long been welcoming to walkers.

Melrose, Kelso and Jedburgh

- 1 Abbotsford and Melrose** 66
Jump on the old railtrack out of town and explore a serene loch before returning via a riverside path
- 2 The Eildon Hills** 68
Save these three legendary hills for a clear day to enjoy some of the best views to be had in the Borderlands
- 3 St Boswells and the Tweed** 70
Take a stroll down the water and perhaps visit the ancient Dryburgh Abbey which sits on a loop of the river
- 4 Waterloo Monument and Peniel Heugh** 72
Visit an impressive hilltop monument visible for miles around
- 5 Kelso to Roxburgh** 74
Pass by the site of a once important castle as you shadow the peaceful waters of the Teviot
- 6 Kirk Yetholm and Halterburn** 76
Ride this rollercoaster of a ridge walk before joining the Pennine Way back to the home of the gypsies
- 7 Woden Law and Dere Street** 78
Hit the high road and journey to the edge of a lost empire





The Eildon Hills

Distance 9 to 12km (depending on how many of the three peaks you visit)

Time 3 to 4 hours **Terrain** good paths and tracks **Map** OS Explorer 338 **Access** regular bus services link Melrose to Edinburgh, Kelso, Jedburgh and Tweedbank Station

The Eildon Hills are a mini mountain range of three rounded tops, just south of Melrose, that have long been shrouded in mystery and legend. According to one tale, they were formerly one peak which was split into three on the orders of a wizard, and in another King Arthur and his knights lie asleep beneath them waiting for the day they will arise and ride again.

From Melrose Abbey, one of the four great Border Abbeys, go up Abbey Street, across Market Square and on past the

Station Hotel on Dingleton Road.

Walk under the bypass and look for the signposted steps between houses on the left. Go down them, then up a long flight of wooden steps which lead to a path between fields. Soon bustling Melrose is left far behind as you head up the hillside farmland. At the end of the path ignore all the dogwalkers' trails and bear right to reach the saddle between the two main summits.

At the tangled crossroads of paths on more level ground, choose which top to tackle first: Eildon Hill North is on your left, Eildon Mid Hill on your right and Eildon Wester Hill straight ahead, then right. All of them are worth the effort; although the Mid Hill, a favourite of Sir Walter Scott, is the highest at 422m (and has the steepest path to the top).

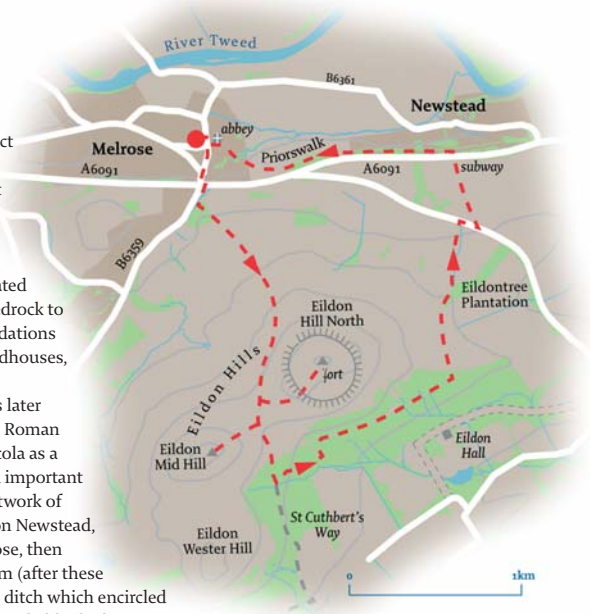
◀ Eildon Hill North

There is a good view of the Leaderfoot Viaduct over the Tweed from the summit of the North Hill and the remains of some 300 hut platforms, excavated from the solid bedrock to provide flat foundations for wooden roundhouses, can also be seen.

The hilltop was later developed by the Roman army under Agricola as a signal station, an important part of a large network of activity centred on Newstead, just east of Melrose, then called Trimontium (after these three peaks). The ditch which encircled the signal tower, probably the largest in Scotland, is still visible.

More fancifully, the Eildon Hills are where Scotland's very own Nostradamus, Thomas of Erceldoune, *aka* Thomas the Rhymer, met the Fairy Queen in a tale made popular by Sir Walter Scott. Carried off to Elfland under the Eildons by the queen, he returned with the gift of prophecy and the inability to tell a lie.

Once you have enjoyed all the diversions, leave the hills by branching off the St Cuthbert's Way path and heading down to the Eildon Hall woodland. In the trees, bear



left, then follow the good track as it bends right and contours around the hillside, enjoying the call of nuthatches and great spotted woodpeckers as you go. At a signposted gate leave the woodland and cross farmland at the foot of the North Hill. You soon arrive at a tarmac road; go right, then left down a grassy track enclosed by hedges to the subway under the busy bypass.

Follow the path under the old railway and join the Borders Abbeys Way back along Priorswalk to the abbey and the start.