

Meandering through the moody moors of Brontë country

Photos by Nancy Wigston



Yorkshire's mix of unusual geography and historically harsh living conditions inspired artistic genius

by Nancy Wigston

OUR WEST YORKSHIRE day begins with a traditional—meaning huge—English breakfast at the Old White Lion, a 300-year-old hotel and restaurant in the rural village of Haworth. The plan is to burn off the calories with a 13-kilometre hike over the Yorkshire Moors, retracing

the steps of many a literary pilgrim to Top Withens, a ruined farmhouse dating from 1800. Legend has it that this site inspired *Wuthering Heights*, Emily Brontë's 1847 saga about passionate love . . . and fierce weather.

"Wuthering," after all, is a Northern English description for a strong, roaring wind. And largely thanks to the

Brontës, the moors—and their unpredictable weather—have become synonymous with fiction's greatest romances.

Now into our trek, our hiking guide leads us through a 300-million-year-old delta in the mid-Pennines where grass, bracken and purple heather cover an undulating landscape made up of acidic soil and few trees. In a somewhat soggy state,

we reach Top Withens—singular for its wild hilltop location—when the light drizzle suddenly stops, mauves and blues now streaking the sky, as moorland sheep trot past. Distracted by the lonely topography, several of us linger behind and lose the rest of the group. Not to worry, though; signs signal the path to Brontë Waterfall, our rendezvous point. Haworth is just over

the hill, and we'll return there for lunch.

With its steeply cobbled main street and its slew of pubs, bookstores, tea rooms and restaurants, this tourist town exudes warmth and charm. However, its fame is derived from its bookish pedigree: The best-known Brontë siblings—sisters Charlotte, Emily and Anne, and their ne'er-do-well



AndroGel®
testosterone gel 1%



AndroGel® is indicated for testosterone replacement therapy in adult males for conditions associated with a deficiency or absence of endogenous testosterone (hypogonadism). AndroGel® should not be used to treat non-specific symptoms suggestive of hypogonadism if testosterone deficiency has not been demonstrated and if other etiologies responsible for the symptoms have not been excluded. For additional information please see Product Monograph available upon request.

© Abbott Laboratories, Limited
® Registered Trademark Unimed Pharmaceuticals, Inc., Licensed use by Abbott Laboratories, Limited
Saint-Laurent, Québec H4S 1Z1



www.abbott.ca
1-800-361-7852

Abbott
A Promise for Life



Set against a foreboding sky, Brimham Rocks' unusual landscape (left) has served as a backdrop for the Brontë sisters' Gothic novels. A guide on the hike (right) points to a mushroom-shaped rock's strange balancing act. Two moorland sheep (above) ramble on the moors near Top Withens, rumoured to be the inspiration for Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*.



brother Branwell—were raised in Haworth Parsonage. Writers from childhood, the girls all published novels that endure as classics, and today an elegant, artefact-filled Brontë Parsonage Museum honours their legacies.

When the Brontës lived and wrote here, however, village life was more perilous than romantic. Haworth was a “strange uncivilized little place,” according to Charlotte’s now famous description of her birthplace in a letter she wrote to her publisher in 1849. At the time, the average life expectancy was 26, tuberculosis, typhoid and cholera were rife, and water was polluted by sewage. Charlotte died at 38, with her mother and five siblings predeceasing her. In the Haworth church cemetery, as many as 10 coffins are stacked in a single family plot.

UNESCO site

After leaving Haworth, our next hiking stop is Saltaire, a utopian model village and UNESCO World Heritage Site. A century and a half ago, a wool baron named Titus Salt, distressed by the same foul conditions and meagre life expectancy that beset the residents of Haworth, enacted some large-scale Victorian philanthropy. He built his workers a new mill, new streets (named for his 11 “legitimate” children) and new brick homes on the outskirts of Bradford. With good sewage, a hospital, library, park and concert hall—but no pubs—among the model village’s amenities, life expectancy for Saltaire’s

3,000 millworkers increased dramatically.

In 1987, inspiration struck in Saltaire again: Jonathan Silver, a Leeds businessman, created the “1853 Gallery” on the now-derelict factory site. His school friend, Bradford-born artist David Hockney pitched in, and today the vast renovated woollen mill houses Europe’s largest Hockney collection—plus works by other Yorkshire artists—and a shop, restaurant and high-tech firms.

The next stop on our trail is Brimham Rocks, a tourist attraction for more than two centuries in North Yorkshire. These outcroppings, shaped by erosion in the last ice age, are so strange they are difficult to describe—although many have tried. Rambling through a landscape (400 acres in all) that has been compared to Stonehenge, we learn their history: 300 million years ago, mud flats became rocks that were slowly twisted by wind into bizarre shapes resembling giant mushrooms, leering devil’s faces and strange galaxies.

Legends about druids have long haunted this odd landscape, which is a great place to hike, take the kids, picnic or make a (usually gruesome) TV episode or film—for example, one based on the Brontës’ Gothic tales. Versions of *Jane*

Eyre and *Wuthering Heights* have borrowed Brimham Rocks in years past.

Leaving behind this weird landscape, we continue to the Yorkshire Dales, where we discover gentler, less challenging terrain. Turning into the Nidderdale Valley is like entering a children’s storybook: a rainbow arcs above grazing cows in a green meadow beside a white stone farmhouse. Our destination is the Yorke Arms, an 18th century coach house and shooting lodge, renowned for its food. As we enter this restaurant-with-rooms, we notice a character straight from a P.G. Wodehouse novel: Rifle slung over his shoulder, the fellow is clad in plus fours.

Soon we raise our champagne glasses and dive into Chef Frances Atkins’ menu: creamy wild mushrooms, roast grouse and melting-rich desserts. Atkins ranks among the world’s top female chefs; her kitchen has been named the best in England and eight years ago she was awarded a Michelin star.

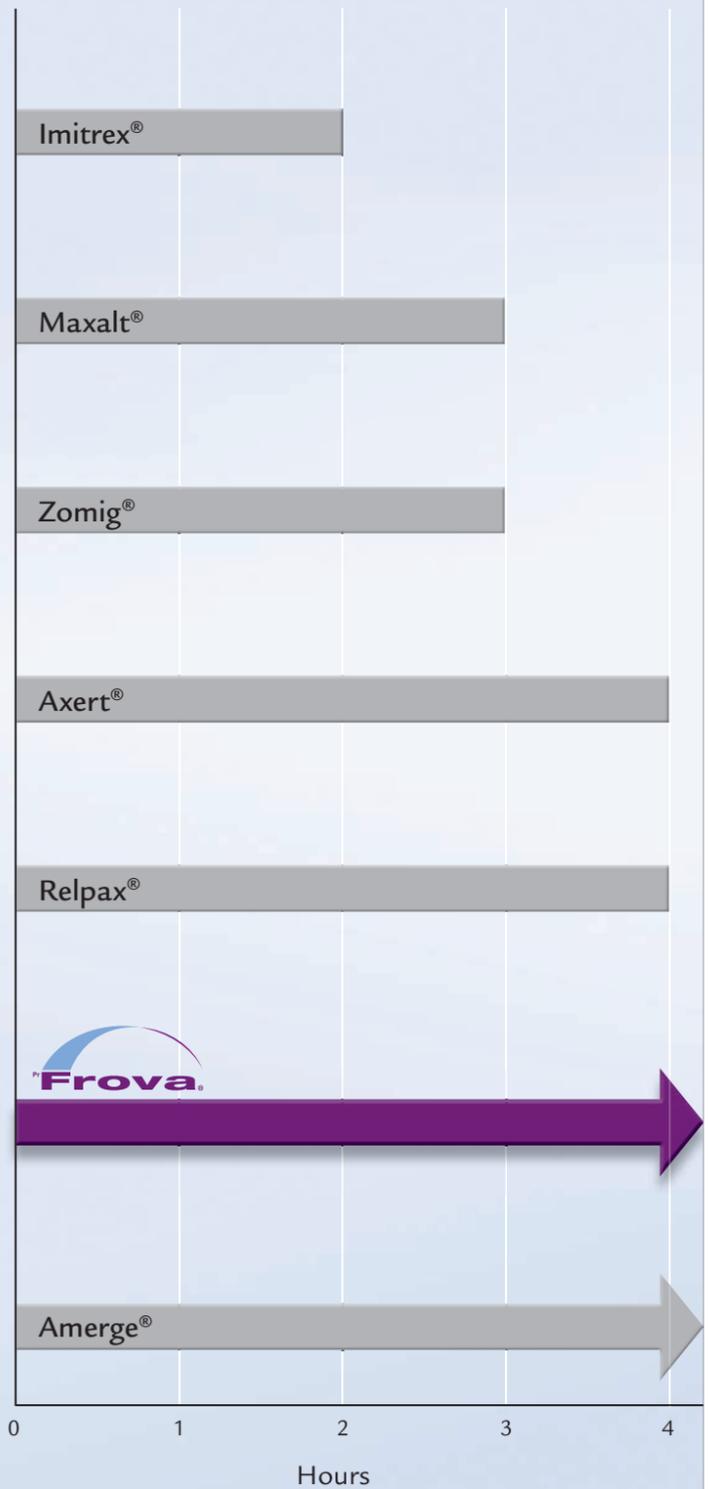
While much has changed in Yorkshire, artistry and memorable landscapes continue to shine. The Brontë sisters would be proud.

Nancy Wigston is a freelance travel writer living in Toronto.



COMPARISON OF APPROXIMATE HALF-LIFE IN THE BODY†‡

† Comparative clinical significance is unknown.
‡ The correlation between half-life and clinical effect has not been established.



– Adapted from Product Monographs^{1,7}

FROVA® (frovatriptan succinate) is indicated for the acute treatment of migraine attacks with or without aura in adults. FROVA® is not intended for the prophylactic therapy of migraine or for the use in the management of hemiplegic, ophthalmoplegic or basilar migraine. The safety and effectiveness of FROVA® have not been established for cluster headache, which is present in an older, predominantly male, population.¹

Frova® is a registered trademark of Vernalis Development Limited. Axert® is a registered trademark of McNeil Consumer Healthcare. Relpax® is a registered trademark of Pfizer Canada Inc. Amerge® is a registered trademark of GlaxoSmithKline Inc. Maxalt® is a registered trademark of Merck & Co. Inc. Imitrex® is a registered trademark of GlaxoSmithKline Inc. Zomig® is a registered trademark of AstraZeneca Canada Inc.

