

The Lake District

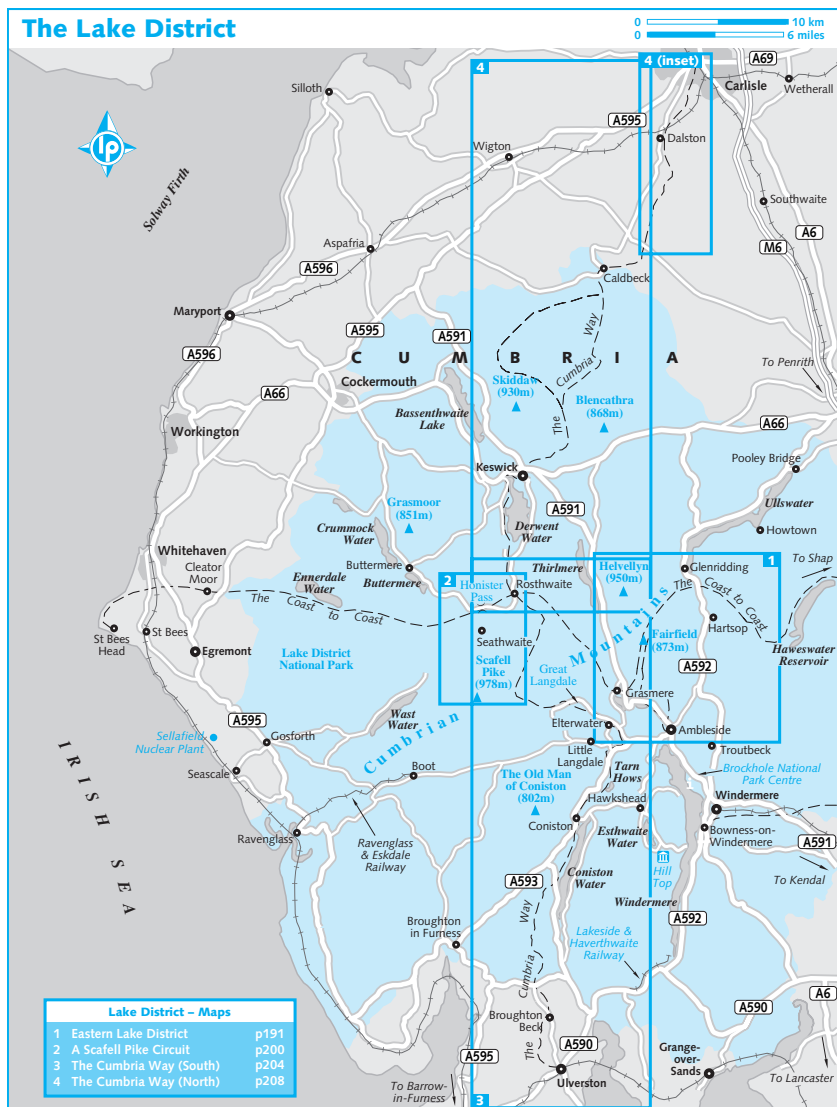
If anywhere is the heart and soul of walking in England, it's the Lake District – a wonderful area of high mountains, deep valleys and, of course, beautiful lakes. Why is it so popular? There may be a historic reason; this is where William Wordsworth and other 19th-century romantic writers were among the first people to take up walking for pleasure. But it's probably a matter of aesthetics. Whereas some other parts of England have rounded hills and moors, the Lake District has proper peaks – high, wild and rugged – or, as one fan put it, 'mountains with knobs on'.

Here in the Lake District, the choice of one-day walking routes is endless. There are hundreds of high walks, peak walks, ridge walks, valley walks and (naturally) lake walks. Even a list of classics would run to several pages, so picking just a few routes to represent the whole area is particularly hard, but we've made a brave attempt and selected a batch to include the area's best-known and best-loved mountains, such as Scafell Pike, Fairfield and Helvellyn. If your time is short, some routes can be done from the same base, so you won't have to move camp every night.

Also in this chapter we describe the Cumbria Way – a mainly lowland long-distance path (LDP) through the heart of the Lake District, dipping in and out of moorland, farmland and woodland, and taking in the shorelines of lovely Lake Coniston, Elterwater and Derwent Water. But whether you go high or low, after a week or two here you'll just have to agree that the Lake District is something special.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Wandering in Wordsworth's footsteps on the **Fairfield Horseshoe** (p189)
- Following the ancient Roman road over the summit of **High Street** (p197)
- Reaching the summit of **Scafell Pike** (p200) on a clear day – Scotland seems so close...
- Completing the central days on the **Cumbria Way** (p203); Coniston to Ullswater, lake to lake



INFORMATION

The Lake District (often called 'Lakeland' or simply 'the Lakes' – but never 'the Lakes District') has an irresistible attraction to walkers. They may moan about crowded footpaths and notoriously unpredictable weather, but many return year after year. And as well as the walkers, several million other visitors

come each year for fishing, sailing, mountain biking or to simply tour the area in cars and coaches. Over the years, various plans have been mooted to restrict the number of vehicles, but none have really been successful, so if you're on the roads during summer be prepared for a mighty crush – another reason to take to the hills on foot!

Most of the landscape is contained within the Lake District National Park. Like all national parks in England and Wales, this is not public land. It's made up of many privately owned farms and estates, and includes many villages and even a few towns – this is a living, working park. Some local people are employed in farming but many more depend on tourism for their income and welcome the annual influx.

Maps

All but the very outer reaches of the Lake District are covered by four Ordnance Survey (OS) Landranger 1:50,000 maps: Nos 85 *Carlisle & Solway Firth*, 89 *West Cumbria*, 90 *Pennrith & Keswick* and 96 *Barrow-in-Furness & South Lakeland*.

If you want greater detail, there are the OS Explorer 1:25,000 maps titled *The English Lakes*: No 4 *North Western Area*, No 5 *North Eastern Area*, No 6 *South Western Area* and No 7 *South Eastern Area*. Harvey Maps' excellent Superwalker 1:25,000 series covers the whole Lake District in six maps: *Central*, *North*, *East*, *West*, *Southwest* and *Southeast*.

If you want to carry just one map, recommended for most walks is the British Mountaineering Council's (BMC) excellent and award-winning 1:40,000 *Lake District* map.

For maps covering individual routes, see the Planning sections of each walk.

Books

If you piled up all the Lake District walking guidebooks available, there'd be another mountain to scale, so here are some of our favourite titles. Specific books for the routes described are listed in the relevant sections.

The classic series *A Pictorial Guide to the Lakeland Fells* by Alfred Wainwright is a set of seven pocket-sized volumes – *Eastern Fells*, *Western Fells*, *Central Fells* and so on (see also the boxed text, p188). For an overview, get *The Best of Wainwright* by Hunter Davies, describing 18 mountains lovingly selected from the original *Pictorial Guides* series, with handy little introductory sections giving a wider perspective.

Modern guidebooks include the *Ramblers' Guide to the Lake District* published by Collins; it's a selection of 30 walks with illustrations, Harvey map extracts and an

endorsement from the Ramblers' Association. The *Lake District Walks* and *More Lake District Walks* Pathfinder Guides, published by Jarrold, describe routes from a few miles to all-day treks, with extracts from relevant OS 1:25,000 maps.

The excellent spiral-bound guidebooks *Walk the Lake District, North* by Vivienne Crow and *Walk the Lake District, South* by Charles David, published by Discovery Walking Guides, cover a wide range of short and long routes across the entire region with OS map extracts, colour photos, handy tips and GPS information.

For a more relaxing option, there's a choice of guidebooks covering easier routes, with titles such as *Short Walks in the Lake District*, *Lake District Walking on the Level* and even *All-Terrain Buggy Walks*. Also good are titles such as *Pub Walks in the Lake District* (circular walks including a pub stop for lunch) and *Teashop Walks* (you can guess the concept). To make use of bus 555 (see Getting Around, p188) get the handy *55 555 Walks* by Robert Swain.

The Lakes scenery naturally inspires a whole stack of picture books too. Start with the splendid photos and fascinating background information in *The Lake District*, the official national park guide by Terry Marsh and Jon Sparks. Others include *The English Lakes* by Rob Talbot and Robin Whiteman, and *The Lake District* by Colin Baxter. A beautiful, informative and bargain-priced book is *Flora of the Fells* by Martin Varley, with proceeds going to the Friends of the Lake District (see www.fld.org.uk and www.floraofthefells.com).

Guided Walks

National park rangers organise a series of guided walks throughout the year – details are available from tourist offices. If these don't suit, the Lake District abounds with private mountain guides who can show you around on foot or arrange more energetic activities such as rock climbing. Most advertise in tourist offices, hostels and outdoor gear shops.

Information Sources

For general tourist information on central Cumbria and the Lake District, the main **tourist office** (☎ 015394-46499; www.lakelandgate.way.info) is in Windermere, next to the train

station. There are many other tourist offices in the region – those near specific walks are mentioned in the route descriptions.

The main national park website is www.lake-district.gov.uk. For general tourist information on the whole of Cumbria and the Lake District, see www.cumbria-the-lake-district.co.uk and www.golakes.co.uk. Especially good for walkers are www.lakedistrictoutdoors.co.uk/walking.htm and www.lake-districtwalks.com. Specific area websites are listed in the individual walk sections.

At tourist offices, hotels and shops you can pick up *Out & About*, a freebie newspaper produced by the national park authority, full of useful tourist information,

background articles and advertisements for places to stay and things to do.

GETTING AROUND

A very handy bus for walkers is Stagecoach Cumbria's Lakeslink service (bus 555), running through the heart of the Lake District at least 10 times daily between Keswick and Kendal, via Grasmere, Ambleside and Windermere, extending north to/from Carlisle three times per day and south to/from Lancaster about six times per day.

For more details on this and all routes in the Lake District, see *Lakes Rider*, a very useful booklet available free from tourist offices. It covers boats and trains too.

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF WAINWRIGHT

The Lake District is traditionally divided into several smaller areas – the Central Fells, the Northern Fells, the Eastern Fells and so on. These high areas are separated by large valleys and also based on divisions used by the iconic walker-writer Alfred Wainwright in his seven-volume *Pictorial Guide to the Lakeland Fells*. First published in the 1950s and 1960s, Wainwright's books have inspired countless walkers ever since.

Wainwright (or AW as he's universally known) combined a romantic devotion to wilderness and solitude with a scientific attention to detail – and an occasional dry wit – to produce unique, hand-crafted text, maps and illustrations. For walkers today, the original books are great for inspiration but need to be read alongside a modern map, as little details like following rights of way were less of an issue in AW's day.

Now published by Frances Lincoln, Wainwright's *Pictorial Guide* series is currently being lovingly revised and completely updated by author Chris Jesty; the second edition of the *Eastern Fells* was published in 2005 – a mere half-century after the first edition – and others will be produced in coming years.

As well as his guides to the Lakeland Fells, AW also wrote several other books for walkers. *A Coast to Coast Walk* was published in 1973 and has since inspired many thousands of walkers to cross the country on foot. The route, while not a national trail (yet), is one of the most popular long-distance routes in Britain. AW was careful to call his creation *A Coast to Coast Walk*, implying that it was only one of many options. However, most people doing Wainwright's route call it *The Coast to Coast* and follow the description very closely.

Wainwright's other long-distance classic is *The Pennine Way Companion*. It's fun, part of Pennine Way tradition and characteristically idiosyncratic – you have to read it backwards and follow the text *up* the page to stay in sync with the maps, which are designed to be followed south to north. As with all Wainwright guides, the text is (neatly) hand-printed and the intricate maps show every stile, gate and cow pat along the way – wonderful if you're on track, but useless once you're five steps off it. The original is now out of print and secondhand copies are collectors' items, so you'll be lucky to find one.

Many years ago, walkers who'd completed the whole Pennine Way in one go used to get a free drink in the bar of the hotel at Kirk Yetholm – on AW's tab. These days the hotel sometimes revives the tradition with sponsorship from a local brewery, so it's always worth asking – if you're a genuine Pennine Way walker of course!

AW is remembered today by the work of the **Wainwright Society** (www.wainwright.org.uk) and by walkers' attempts to bag 'The Wainwrights' – all 214 Lakeland Fells named in the famous seven guidebooks.

VOLCANIC LEGACY

The Lake District is the remains of an old volcano, with the high ground roughly in the centre, from where long ridges radiate like the spokes of a wheel. Between the ridges are valleys, many containing the lakes that give the area its distinctive scenery (and name). Roads lead up to the end of several valleys but few go right across the central part of the national park, meaning the high ground remains relatively remote and can only be reached on foot.

The YHA shuttle bus runs from Windermere train station to the YHA hostels at Windermere, Ambleside, Elterwater, Grasmere, Keswick and Patterdale, seven times daily Easter to October. Phone **Ambleside YHA Hostel** (☎ 0870 770 5672) for details.

For general information on public transport throughout the Lake District, use **Traveline** (☎ 0870 608 2608; www.traveline.org.uk) or check www.travelcumbria.co.uk.

GATEWAYS

The Lake District's main gateway cities and towns are Kendal, Windermere, Penrith, Keswick (p205) and Carlisle (p203), which all have good coach links to the rest of Britain, and are easy to reach by car.

The main railway line between London and Scotland goes through Kendal (with a branch off to Windermere) and Penrith (from where buses serve Keswick).

THE FAIRFIELD HORSESHOE

Duration	5–7 hours
Distance	10 miles (16km)
Difficulty	moderate
Start/Finish	Ambleside (p190)
Transport	bus

Summary A classic mountain circuit with fine, open walking and wonderful views. It's relatively straightforward in good weather, but potentially serious if conditions are bad.

Fairfield is the name of a large mountain close to the centre of the Lake District, and the Fairfield Horseshoe is a classic circuit, going up one ridge and down another on either side of a valley, with the summit of

Fairfield at the highest point of the route where the two ridges meet. The Fairfield Horseshoe provides top-class walking over a rolling landscape, and is relatively straightforward in good weather. If this is your first visit to the Lakes, and you're not a complete beginner, we can't think of a finer introduction.

At 873m, Fairfield is one of the highest peaks in the area, along with neighbours Helvellyn (950m) and the wonderfully named Dollywaggon Pike (858m). When conditions are kind, the panoramic vistas are excellent. To the west you can see Scafell Pike – England's highest peak at 978m – and to the east sits the long ridge of High Street. The view south is dominated by the vast lake of Windermere, usually dotted with sailing boats that, from this distance, look like scattered confetti.

Often, however, you'll get no view at all. The weather on Fairfield can sometimes be awful with wind, rain and mist making a walk unpleasant and navigation skills necessary. As with anywhere in the Lakes, the conditions can change very quickly so, even if it looks fine, take warm, waterproof clothes, plus a map and compass that you know how to use.

PLANNING

The Fairfield Horseshoe is not a waymarked route, so you'll need a map. You can do the circuit in either direction, but we suggest going clockwise as this way the walk ends in the centre of Ambleside – full of reviving teashops and pubs. The distance is 10 miles, but you gain around 800m in height so the walking time is five to seven hours. Allowing for lunch and photo opportunities, your overall time will probably be around six to eight hours.

Maps & Books

If you're using OS Landranger 1:50,000 maps, the Fairfield Horseshoe is on No 90 *Penrith & Keswick*. With OS Explorer 1:25,000 maps you need No 7 *The English Lakes – South Eastern Area*, and a small but important section is on No 5 *North Eastern Area*. The whole route is on the 1:25,000 Harvey Map *Lakeland Central*, and on the BMC 1:40,000 *Lake District* map.

Wainwright's classic *Pictorial Guide to the Eastern Fells* includes a section on

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

The poet laureate of the Lake District is William Wordsworth, a leading figure in the English Romantic movement, and still one of Britain's best-known writers, even if it is only for a couple of lines about daffodils. A true son of the Lakes, Wordsworth was born in Cockermouth in 1770 and went to school at Hawkshead, near Ambleside. In 1799 he and fellow-scribe Samuel Coleridge enjoyed a tour of the Lake District, the inspiration for much of his writing. Later the same year, Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy moved into Dove Cottage in Grasmere. In 1802 Wordsworth married and, as his family and fame grew, Dove Cottage became increasingly crowded, so in 1808 the family moved to Allan Bank, then to the Old Parsonage in Grasmere and, finally, to Rydal Mount near Ambleside (passed on the Fairfield Horseshoe route), where he lived until his death.

Fairfield, and is good for further inspiration. Many of the other local route guides mentioned under Books (p187) suggest routes on or around Fairfield. Most of the shops selling outdoor clothing and equipment also sell maps and local guidebooks. **Wearing's Bookshop** (Lake Rd, Ambleside) has a particularly good stock.

NEAREST TOWN Ambleside

Ambleside is a small but busy town and a very popular base for walkers. There are supermarkets, shops, banks (with ATMs), a laundrette, plenty of accommodation options and about a million outdoor gear shops to explore if there's too much rain on the hills. The large **tourist office** (☎ 015394-32582; www.lakelandgateway.info; 🗺️ daily Apr-Oct, Fri & Sat Nov-Mar) in the town centre has very helpful staff and shelves full of maps and leaflets.

SLEEPING & EATING

The nearest camping ground is **Low Wray** (☎ 015394-32810; www.ntlakescampsites.org.uk; sites per person £4), 3 miles south of Ambleside on the western shore of Windermere. **Ambleside YHA Hostel** (☎ 0870 770 5672; ambleside@yha.org.uk; dm £20) is 1 mile south of the centre, overlooking the lake.

There are plenty of B&Bs in the centre of town. On Church St these include **3 Cambridge Villas** (☎ 015394-32307; d from £48), **Croyden House** (☎ 015394-32209; www.croydenhouseambleside.co.uk; s/d from £30/50), **Hillsdale** (☎ 015394-33174; www.hillsdaleambleside.co.uk; s/d from £30/60) and **Norwood House** (☎ 015394-33349; www.norwoodhouse.net; d £55), the latter run by a member of the local mountain rescue team who is very knowledgeable about the surrounding area.

Lake Rd (the one towards Windermere) is another happy hotel hunting ground.

For food, Ambleside centre is full of cafés (most open from 8am or 9am until 5pm or 6pm, sometimes later in summer). Our favourites include **Apple Pie**, large, busy, bright and cheerful, with good food plus sandwiches to take away, and **Daisy's**, near the tourist office and popular with walkers.

For something more substantial, **Zeffirelli's Restaurant** (☎ 015394-33845; www.zeffirellis.com; Compston Rd; mains £7-9; 🍴 lunch & dinner), attached to the cinema, is a long-time favourite for pizza and pasta, also serving good coffee during the day and great live jazz in the evening. For traditional Lake District food and ambience, we like **Sheila's Cottage** (☎ 015394-33079; The Slack; mains £7-11; 🍴 lunch & dinner), in a narrow lane off the main street.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Ambleside is easy to reach by bus from the towns of Windermere and Keswick, in turn both well served by National Express coaches from all parts of the country (Windermere also by train). The most useful service is Lakeslink bus 555 between Lancaster and Carlisle via Ambleside (see p188). There's also the Coniston Rambler bus 505, running eight times per day (less on Sunday and in winter) between Bowness and Coniston via Ambleside, Rydal, Grasmere and Hawkshead; and bus W1, which operates two or three times per hour between Windermere train station and Grasmere via Ambleside.

Your other option between Windermere and Ambleside (or any other town with a hostel in this part of the Lakes) is the YHA Shuttle Bus – see p188.

By car, the usual route into the Lake District from the south is through Windermere.

Ambleside is 5 miles north along the A591, although in summer it can take an hour or more to drive this bit due to traffic jams.

From the north you can approach Ambleside by the A591 from Keswick or the A592 from Penrith. This latter route goes over the Kirkstone Pass, the highest A-road in England. It is very dramatic but the road hasn't been widened much since horse-and-cart days, so it's also frequently jammed and best avoided in busy times.

THE WALK Ambleside to Rydal

30–45 minutes, 1 mile (1.5km)

Leave Ambleside by walking alongside the busy A591 northwest towards Grasmere.

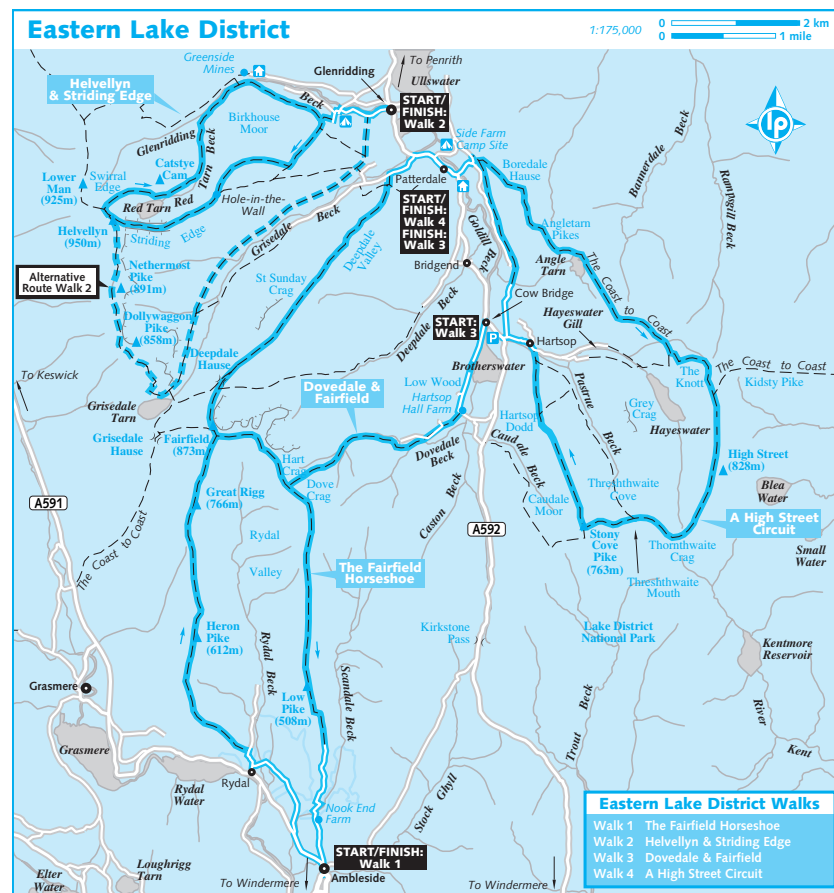
Map below

After about 800m the road crosses over a stream on a small bridge. Immediately after this, turn right through some gates onto a track signposted to Rydal Hall. Follow the main track through parkland, ignoring minor tracks branching off left and right, to reach the outbuildings of Rydal Hall. Go between the buildings and leave the grounds of Rydal Hall by a gateway to meet a steep lane leading up from the main road.

Rydal to Fairfield Summit

2½–3½ hours, 4 miles (6.5km)

Go right (north) up the steep lane, past an old house called **Rydal Mount**. This was the house of Lakeland laureate William Wordsworth (see opposite) until his death in



1850. Continue up the zigzags. Beyond the houses, at the top of the lane, go through a gate. The track goes straight on but you strike off left (northwest) on a path, steeply up over a few stiles and then up the ridge through open fell on a clear path, swinging round to the north to reach the first peak of the day, **Heron Pike** (612m).

From here the path undulates – although the ups are less steep than the first bit of the route – over a few more peaks, including **Great Rigg** (766m). The views to the left (west) are fabulous. Across the valley you can see the back of the Langdale Pikes, Bowfell and Scafell Pike. There's a final ascent to the top of the ridge and the broad summit of **Fairfield**.

Don't expect a peak here. The summit is actually more like a plateau. There are cairns all over the place but the largest one marks the highest point. The views are good but this plateau is so broad that you don't get a 360-degree view from just one spot; you have to walk a few hundred metres southeast to get the best view of Windermere, the same distance northwest to see Helvellyn, and so on. If it's misty there won't be any views at all – and you should take great care where you wander. Do not go too far to the northeast as the cliffs at the top of Deepdale are, as the name suggests, precipitous. If the wind is strong you can sit behind one of the dry-stone shelter walls to stop your sandwiches blowing away.

Fairfield Summit to Ambleside

2–2½ hours, 5 miles (8km)

From the summit retrace your steps slightly, tending left (southeast) to reach the main ridge between the top of the Rydal Valley, to your right (south), and the top of the Deepdale Valley, to your left (north). If the mist is down take great care here. Do not go too far left (east) towards the unforgiving cliffs at the top of Deepdale.

Once on the ridge, head east and then southeast to go up slightly, passing just to the east of Hart Crag summit and over **Dove Crag** (792m) before swinging to the south and heading straight down the ridge with Ambleside and Lake Windermere spread before you.

You pass **Low Pike** (508m) about 1½ to two hours from the top of Fairfield, and the path continues downhill, through fields and

over several stiles, to cross Scandale Beck at Low Sweden Bridge and pass Nook End Farm. From here a lane runs down into the centre of Ambleside, where cafés, teashops and pubs await.

HELVELLYN & STRIDING EDGE

Duration	5–6 hours
Distance	7.5 miles (12km)
Difficulty	moderate–demanding
Start/Finish	Glenridding (opposite)
Transport	bus

Summary A top-quality route up a classic Lakeland peak. The paths are clear but the gradients are steep, and one section requires the use of hands.

Helvellyn (950m) is the third-highest peak in England and dominates the Eastern Fells of the Lake District. Although this mountain can be reached relatively easily from near Grasmere via its smooth western slopes, the walking is far more rewarding (albeit harder) on the rugged eastern slopes overlooking the Patterdale Valley. It is this harder option we describe here – a great day out for keen walkers.

This route also includes a traverse of Striding Edge, a precipitous ridge adorning countless postcards and picture books, and a favourite walkers' challenge. To keep to the very crest of the ridge, you'll need nimble feet, careful hands and a head for heights – but if scrambling isn't to your taste, easier paths run nearby and still take you to the summit of Helvellyn.

PLANNING

This route involves an ascent of about 830m and requires about five to six hours' walking. Allowing for stops, this means about six to seven hours.

Alternative

If you're feeling strong and the weather is fine, we describe an alternative descent via Dollywaggon Pike (worth it just for the name) and the valley of Griesdale. This will take about one to two hours longer.

Maps

The route described here is on OS Outdoor Leisure 1:25,000 map No 5 *The English*

Lakes – North Eastern Area and on Harvey's Superwalker 1:25,000 map *Lakeland Central*.

Guided Walks

In summer there are about three guided walks per week, organised from the Ullswater tourist office (below) in Glenridding.

Information Sources

Good websites for local information include www.ullswater.com and www.visiteden.co.uk.

NEAREST TOWN Glenridding

The busy village of Glenridding sits at the southern end of the long lake of Ullswater. It's a main centre for walking, with a gear shop, food shop, pub, cafés and several places to stay. The very efficient **Ullswater tourist office** (☎ 017684-82414; www.lake-district.gov.uk) offers stacks of information on Helvellyn and surrounding peaks, plus maps and guidebooks, local weather bulletins and an accommodation booking service.

SLEEPING & EATING

Campers can head for **Gillside** (☎ 017684-82346; www.gillsidecaravanandcampingsite.co.uk; sites for 2 £12, bunkhouse £8; ☔ Mar–Oct), on the western edge of Glenridding. Nearby is **Helvellyn YHA Hostel** (☎ 0870 770 5862; helvellyn@yha.org.uk; dm £12), on the fellside in a sturdy old former mine building about 1 mile from the village. Also in the old mine area is **Swirral Barn** (☎ 01946-758198; www.lakelandcampingbarns.co.uk; dm £6), in a great position for heading out on the hills; advance reservations are essential.

Good walker-friendly B&Bs in Glenridding include **Beech House** (☎ 017684-82037; www.beechhouse.com; d £46), **Moss Crag** (☎ 017684-82500; www.mosscrag.co.uk; d £52) and **Fairlight Guesthouse** (☎ 017684-82397; www.fairlightguesthouse.com; d £48).

For more comfort, the **Glenridding Hotel** (☎ 017684-82228; www.bw-glenriddinghotel.co.uk; s/d £90/130; ☎ ☔) has a residents' bar-lounge and sauna, plus lunches, flasks, maps and advice for walkers, and discounts if you stay for two nights or more. Downstairs is the lively **Ratcher's Bar** (bar food around £10; ☔ lunch & dinner), open to all, with TV, a pool table and good bar food. For the same

food in quieter surrounds, there's **Ratcher's Restaurant** (☔ lunch & dinner). Also in the hotel is **Kilners Coffee Shop** (☔ 9am–6pm; ☎), with hot drinks and snacks.

Glenridding's only pub is the **Travellers Rest**, up the hill from the village centre. Bar food is served but this place gets very busy at weekends so you may need to fight for a table.

Also in the village is the **Glenridding Mini-market** (☔ daily), selling sandwiches, cakes and groceries, plus a very impressive range of traditional bottled beers.

There are more places to stay and eat in the nearby village of Patterdale (p195).

GETTING THERE & AWAY

It's easier (but not essential) to approach Glenridding and Patterdale from Penrith – the major gateway for the north side of the Lake District, easily reached by train and National Express coach from all parts of Britain. From Penrith, bus 108 ('the Patterdale bus') runs five times daily (four on Sunday) to/from Glenridding and Patterdale. In summer (late May to early September) bus 208 ('the Ullswater Connexion') runs between Keswick and Glenridding and Patterdale five times daily on weekends and bank holidays.

From Windermere, bus 517 runs over the Kirkstone Pass and down to Patterdale and Glenridding three times per day at the weekend April to July and in October, then daily in August and September. Through the rest of the year there's no bus service this way.

For more public transport information, see p188.

By car, Glenridding and Patterdale are on the A592 between Windermere and Penrith. From Ambleside you can join the A592 at the top of the Kirkstone Pass by taking the steep, narrow minor road to the west labelled 'The Struggle' on the map, so give it a miss if there's 10 of you in a campervan.

THE WALK Glenridding to Hole-in-the-Wall

Map p191

1½–2 hours, 2.5 miles (4km)

From the small row of shops in Glenridding village centre, keep Glenridding Beck to your right (with the tourist office on the other side of the stream) and follow the

track signposted to Helvellyn. After Gillside Farm (10 minutes from Glenridding) turn left up a track (still signposted to Helvellyn). After 100m, a path to Grisedale goes off to the left – ignore this, and the path branching off to the right to Greenside Mines. After another 100m another track branches off right and goes through a gate in a wall marking the boundary of the open fell – follow this. Once through the gate the path divides; go left (right goes to Red Tarn), following the path uphill beside Mires Beck.

The clear path now climbs steadily, with a few large zigzags, to reach a ridge top at a point marked on the OS map as **Hole-in-the-Wall**. From here you get a great view of the rest of the route: Helvellyn at the head of the valley, overlooking Red Tarn; with Striding Edge to the left (south) side and the pointed peak of Catstye Cam to the right.

Hole-in-the-Wall to Helvellyn Summit

1½–2 hours, 1 mile (1.5km)

Continue following the clear path uphill. After about 300m the ridge narrows to about 2m in width and you're on the jagged teeth of **Striding Edge**, with precipitous slopes on either side. You'll need to use your hands in places and less experienced walkers may feel decidedly vulnerable. However, much of the exposed area is optional; there are paths on the right (north) side of the ridge that avoid some of the most vertiginous sections. Note that at the end of the ridge there is a 2m vertical rock face to descend, which definitely requires the use of all hands and feet.

From the end of Striding Edge the path climbs steeply through rough ground, strewn with loose rocks, to the summit of **Helvellyn**. As with Fairfield, there is no lofty pinnacle here but a wide summit plateau – so wide, in fact, that in 1926 someone managed to land a plane on it; the spot is marked by a plaque. Near the centre of the plateau is a cross-shaped wind shelter, but the highest point is marked by a trig point 100m further on.

The views from the summit of Helvellyn, if the weather is clear, are tremendous. To the west loom the great peaks around Scafell Pike, while to the east the broad summit ridge of High Street can be seen. Both of

these mountains are described later in this chapter – see p197 and p196 respectively – and looking at them from here should provide plenty of inspiration!

Helvellyn Summit to Glenridding via Swirral Edge

2 hours, 4 miles (6.5km)

The usual descent from Helvellyn is via Catstye Cam. From the summit trig point, walk 100m northwest and then descend to the right (east), following another dramatic narrow ridge called **Swirral Edge**. Great care is needed to locate the correct place – in bad weather a wrong move can be potentially fatal. Scramble down the crest of the ridge until, after about 200m, the steepness eases. From this point you can divert up to the dramatic summit of Catstye Cam itself or continue descending the ridge, passing north of Red Tarn, then swinging north-east round the base of Catstye Cam, following the stream from Red Tarn (called, not surprisingly, Red Tarn Beck). Follow this down to meet Glenridding Beck and continue along the south side. The route passes old lead mines at Greenside (to reach the YHA hostel, cross the footbridge above the weir) and continues on the southern slopes of Glenridding Valley. Keep to the path beside the wall to meet your outward path and retrace the last mile or so back to Glenridding.

ALTERNATIVE ROUTE: HELVELLYN SUMMIT TO GLENRIDGING, VIA DOLLYWAGGON PIKE

3–4 hours, 5.5 miles (9km)

From Helvellyn summit aim southwards – along one of the finest broad ridges in the whole of the Lake District – with the smooth slopes of the Thirlmere Valley to your right (west) and steep cliffs falling away to your left (east). The views from here are even better than from the summit.

The path skirts the summit of Nethermost Pike (891m) – it's littered with a jumble of small rocks but you might want to bag it anyway – and then heads for the summit of **Dollywaggon Pike** (858m), although again you have to branch off the path if you actually want to reach the summit.

The path then zigzags steeply down to little **Grisedale Tarn**. Just before the stepping stones over the stream (Grisedale Beck),

the path curves away to the northeast and leads all the way down the Grisedale Valley, keeping north of the beck. Near the end of the valley, paths branch off left round the hillside to reach Gillside (if you're camping) and lead down to the pubs, cafés and other delights of Glenridding.

DOVEDALE & FAIRFIELD

Duration	5–7 hours
Distance	7.5 miles (12km)
Difficulty	moderate–demanding
Start	Cow Bridge
Finish	Patterdale (p196)
Transport	bus

Summary A hard but varied and very rewarding walk. Some ascents are very steep. It's a difficult route in bad weather.

The well-known Lake District mountain of Fairfield (873m) lies to the north of the town of Ambleside and to the west of the large Patterdale Valley. The most popular route up to the top is the Fairfield Horseshoe (p189), which is also probably the least serious approach. The ascent of Fairfield from Patterdale is very different; it leads initially through farms and woodland in the picturesque Dovedale Valley (not to be confused with the famous valley of the same name in the Peak District), then forces its way up a craggy fellside before finally reaching Fairfield summit via open tops and a dramatic ridge. The return is via St Sunday Crag, another splendid long ridge. This route is undeniably harder than the Fairfield Horseshoe, but it's a gem of a walk and well recommended.

PLANNING

This route starts at Cow Bridge, near the northern end of a small lake called Brotherswater (1.5 miles south of Patterdale), where the main road (the A592 between Windermere and Penrith) crosses the river running between Brotherswater and Ullswater.

The route can be followed in either direction but it's better to walk on the main road earlier in the day (when the traffic is quieter). Also, going up Dovedale is better than coming down, and finishing on St Sunday Crag leads you straight back to Patterdale.

The route includes at least 700m of ascent, so will take an absolute minimum of five hours to walk, and probably nearer to seven for most people. In reality, with stops, lunch and so on, you should allow at least eight hours. And don't forget the 1.5 miles along the road between Patterdale and Cow Bridge to get to the starting point of the walk. Your total day out will probably be nearer nine hours.

For details on guided walks and maps, see p192).

NEAREST TOWN Patterdale

The village of Patterdale sits just beyond the southern end of Ullswater. It's smaller and quieter than nearby Glenridding (p193), with just a few places to stay and eat.

SLEEPING & EATING

Campers should head for **Side Farm** (☎ 017684-82337; sites for 2 £12), on the eastern side of the valley next to Ullswater. There's also a café at the farmhouse, serving breakfast and snacks.

In the village itself, **Patterdale YHA Hostel** (☎ 0870 770 5986; patterdale@yha.org.uk; dm £14) is very comfortable.

B&Bs include small and welcoming **Grisedale Lodge** (☎ 017684-82084; d £48) and **Glebe House** (☎ 017684-82339; d £50) with en suite rooms.

About 1 mile south of the village, walker-friendly **Greenbank Farm** (☎ 017684-82292; per person £19-26) also serves evening meals for £9 and packed lunches.

About 400m northeast of the village, and neatly combining historic ambience with modern style and facilities, **Wordsworth Cottage** (☎ 017684-82084; www.wordsworthcottage.co.uk; d £56) is in a great location.

White Lion Inn (☎ 017684-82214; d £60) is Patterdale's only pub, with comfortable B&B in en suite rooms and good bar meals. For food and other supplies (including packed lunches), Patterdale also has a great little **shop** at the post office.

There are more places to stay and eat in the busy village of Glenridding about 1 mile along the main road. You can walk between the two villages on footpaths that are cut through woods on either side of the road for much of the way, keeping you a safe distance from the traffic.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Details on reaching Patterdale are as for Glenridding (see p193).

GETTING TO/FROM THE WALK

From Patterdale, the best way to reach Cow Bridge is to walk for 1.5 miles along the side of the road. It's quite busy, so take care.

THE WALK

Map p191

Cow Bridge to Fairfield Summit

3–4 hours, 4 miles (6.5km)

Near Cow Bridge, on the west side of the A592, is a small car park. Go through the gate at the back of the car park and take the rough vehicle track along the western shore of the small lake, Brotherswater. After 1 mile or so you pass **Hartsop Hall Farm**, a venerable old building dating from the 16th century. Here the path goes uphill beside a wall, through some old oak woodland, and then runs alongside a stream to open hillsides beneath the imposing cliff of **Dove Crag**, at the head of the valley.

The path then climbs steeply to the right of the crag and then 'round the back' to reach the top. Time for a breather and a look back down the valley the way you've just come.

From Dove Crag, follow the ridge top northwest for 800m to **Hart Crag**. You're on the traditional Fairfield Horseshoe route now, so you'll see more people, but you can feel smug because you walked here the hard way. One last little ascent takes you up to the summit of **Fairfield**.

Fairfield Summit to Patterdale

2–3 hours, 3.5 miles (5.5km)

From the summit of Fairfield head north over the minor summit of Cofa Pike, then descend about 200m to the broad pass of **Deepdale Hause**. To your right the ground drops very steeply into Deepdale, while to the left (west) you can see the steep side of Dollywaggon Pike, with Grisedale Tarn at its foot and the broad, flat top of Helvellyn behind.

From Deepdale Hause the path climbs to the top of St Sunday Crag (you'll be glad to know it's not as steep as the descent from Fairfield) and then follows the crest of the ridge – a very enjoyable section of gradual downhill giving you time to enjoy the views.

Near the end of the ridge, the path keeps to the left (north) and then drops quite steeply, offering excellent views along Ullswater. There's a nice final section, heading through a small patch of wooded farmland before you meet the lane leading down to Patterdale.

A HIGH STREET CIRCUIT

Duration	6–8 hours
Distance	12.5 miles (20km)
Difficulty	moderate
Start/Finish	Patterdale (p195)
Transport	bus
Summary	A long day out in the mountains, with excellent views and generally easy paths.

High Street (828m) is an unusual title for a mountain but it gets its name from a Roman road that once ran across the broad, flat summit ridge. Since the days of the legionnaires this route has been tramped by shepherds, farmers, travellers, traders, horses, hillwalkers and fell-runners, not to mention a lot of sheep, so a day out on this mountain has a historic feel, as well as spectacular views.

A walk along High Street is particularly satisfying because, once you've gained height initially, you stay fairly level for most of the day, to enjoy the wide open scenery with only a few steep ascents and descents.

This circuit is long, but route conditions are not especially difficult. Thick mists are not uncommon though, and the wind can really pick up speed over the summit, so you must be properly prepared.

PLANNING

This route starts and ends at Patterdale. The circuit can be followed in either direction, but clockwise is more pleasant as the ascent is more gradual. There's at least 800m of ascent so, allowing for stops, most walkers will take between seven and 10 hours to do this route.

Maps

The route described here is on OS Explorer 1:25,000 map No 5 *The English Lakes* –

North Eastern Area and on Harvey's Super-walker 1:25,000 *Lakeland Central* map.

Information Sources

The **Ullswater tourist office** (☎ 017684-82414; www.lake-district.gov.uk) in Glenridding is the nearest information source.

THE WALK

Map p191

Patterdale to High Street Summit

3–4 hours, 5.5 miles (9km)

From the main road that runs through Patterdale, about 50m northwest of the primary school, follow a track that leads east to Side Farm camp site.

Go past the farmhouse (with a **café**) and turn right along a track. About 250m from the farm, go through a gate and turn sharp left up a path.

The path climbs steeply across the open fellside to a gap called Boredale Hause, then keeps aiming southeast, past pretty little **Angle Tarn**, to finally skirt the summit of a small peak called the Knott. This section between Patterdale and the Knott follows the route of the Coast to Coast Walk (see p237) and you'll inevitably see more walkers than usual along here.

About 500m south of the Knott, the Coast to Coasters turn left (heading for Kidsty Pike and distant Shap), but our path continues southwards along the broad ridge, parallel to the route of the old Roman road, close to a dry-stone wall that runs across the mountain. This eventually takes you to the trig point that marks the summit of **High Street**, where it will be time to unpack the sandwiches, sit down for a rest and try to guess what all those distant mountains are called.

High Street Summit to Patterdale

3–4 hours, 7 miles (11.5km)

Leave High Street summit and continue southwards for 1 mile or so along the broad ridge until it swings west to reach **Thornthwaite Crag**, marked by a huge dry-stone pillar, labelled as a 'beacon' on the OS map.

From Thornthwaite Crag the main path descends steeply to a pass called Threshthwaite Mouth. (If time is short, you can go north from here, down into Threshthwaite Cove and along Pasture Beck to Hartsop.) Our route continues west from the pass,

climbing steeply to reach **Stony Cove Pike** (763m). From this summit, paths are not clear but you need to aim northwest, keeping to the west side of a dry-stone wall that runs along the ridge towards a small peak called Hartsop Dodd.

Take one last look at the view, because now it's time to start descending. A steep path zigzags down to a bridge over Pasture Beck and into the tranquil little village of Hartsop, with its old stone houses tucked away behind solid walls and neat gardens. **Hartsop** means 'valley of the deer' but you're unlikely to see any here these days.

Follow the lane down through Hartsop. Just before the main road, turn right into a small lane, which soon becomes a track and then a path, and leads you past the farms of Beckstones and Crookabeck, and then finally into Patterdale.

A SCAPELL PIKE CIRCUIT

Duration	5–6½ hours
Distance	8.5 miles (13.5km)
Difficulty	moderate–demanding
Start/Finish	Seathwaite (p198)
Transport	bus

Summary The hardest and most serious walk described in this chapter, but with the right conditions it's one of the finest and most rewarding.

The tall and airy mountain of Scafell Pike (978m) dominates the Lake District's Southern and Western Fells. It is also the highest peak in England and a natural magnet for keen walkers.

There are several routes up Scafell Pike, including those from the surrounding valleys of Langdale, Eskdale and Wasdale. We've chosen one from Borrowdale simply because we think it's the best. It's hard too, plunging right into the heart of the high Lake District's rugged and dramatic scenery that seems, at times, to engulf you. Once you get to the summit, though, any struggle is repaid as the top of Scafell Pike provides some of the finest views you could wish for.

Before setting out, take stock. In these wild and steep-sided fells, paths are steeper, the ground rougher and routes more circuitous than elsewhere in the Lakes. Weather conditions can also change quickly, so

there's far less room for error if the mist comes down and you have to rely on your map and compass to get home.

PLANNING

You could do the route in either direction but we have described it anticlockwise. The route is not waymarked and there are very few signposts, so you need to be competent with a map and compass.

Measured on the map, the distance is 8.5 miles. It doesn't seem far but, with one or two hours for lunch, photos and map reading added on, it will take around to seven to nine hours. On top of this you may have to allow more time for getting to the start from wherever you stay (eg Seatoller or Rosthwaite).

Alternative

If you have the time and energy, and the weather is kind, you can extend this walk by taking an alternative finish back to Stonehwaite via a peak called Glaramara (see p200). This extends the circuit by about 800m and adds an extra hour of walking.

When to Walk

The route we describe is long and should only be considered in spring, summer or autumn. In winter the days are too short to do it comfortably, while weather and ground conditions may make it dangerous for inexperienced walkers.

At any time of year, if the weather does turn bad while you're out, there are a number of short cuts and diversions that avoid the highest and potentially most dangerous section of this route.

Maps

The Scafell Pike route described here is on the OS Landranger 1:50,000 map No 90 *Pennrith & Keswick*. For more detail (highly recommended for this route), you'll need OS Explorer 1:25,000 maps No 4 *The English Lakes – North Western Area* and 6 *South Western Area*. Much handier is Harvey Maps' Superwalker 1:25,000 *Lakeland West*, with the whole route on one sheet, including an enlargement of the Scafell Pike area.

Information Sources

The nearest tourist office is in **Keswick** (☎ 017687-72645; www.keswick.org), where the

friendly staff can help with local accommodation and transport enquiries.

NEAREST TOWN

This walk starts at the head of the valley of Borrowdale, where the 'nearest town' is a collection of neighbouring hamlets: Seatoller, Seathwaite, Rosthwaite, Longthwaite and Stonethwaite (surely enough thwaites for anyone), listed here in order of distance from the start of the walk. This is a very popular walking area, so there's a wide choice of accommodation for all budgets.

Seathwaite

This former settlement is now reduced to lonely **Seathwaite Farm** (☎ 017687-77394; camp sites for 2 £6) with hot showers, a scruffy camping barn and a very good café (summer only). Seathwaite also has a phone box.

About 2 miles west of Seathwaite, via Seatoller and up a very steep hill, is **Honister Hause YHA Hostel** (☎ 0870 770 5870; honister@yha.org.uk; dm £12), a former quarry workers' building in a spectacular setting atop the pass between Borrowdale and the neighbouring Buttermere Valley.

Seatoller

The little settlement of Seatoller is about 1.5 miles from Seathwaite on the 'main road' (the lane that runs along the valley and up to Honister). There's good camping and B&B at **Seatoller Farm** (☎ 017687-77232; www.seatollerfarm.co.uk; sites for 2 £9, d £52), while the charming and walker-friendly **Seatoller House** (☎ 017687-77218; www.seatollerhouse.co.uk; B&B per person £42) charges £52 per person for bed, breakfast and a four-course dinner, including homemade truffles. Just outside the village, to the east, **Glaramara** (☎ 017687-77222; www.glaramara.co.uk; d £50) is a large old country house now converted to a walking and activity centre.

For drinks, snacks or meals in the daytime or evening, the **Yew Tree** (☎ 017687-77634; ☽ 11am-late Tue-Sun, daily in summer school holidays, mid-Feb–mid-Nov) is a stylish and welcoming café-bar-restaurant with low ceilings and some garden seating. It also sells outdoor gear.

Longthwaite

In Longthwaite, 1 mile northeast of Seatoller, **Borrowdale YHA Hostel** (☎ 0870 770 5706;

borrowdale@yha.org.uk; dm £15.50) is a long house nestling under the wooded hillside. There's B&B at **Gillercombe** (☎ 01768-777602; d £50) and the friendly people here also run nearby **Chapel Farm Campsite** (sites for 2 £10).

Stonethwaite

The hamlet of Stonethwaite is about 1 mile east of Seathwaite, off the main road. B&Bs include **6 Chapel Howe** (☎ 01768-777649; rjedmndson@aol.com; d £43), in a small row of modern houses; and the more cottage-like **Knotts View** (☎ 01768-777604; d £52), also offering dinner for £9.

At the end of the lane, the **Langstrath Hotel** (☎ 01768-777239; www.thelangstrath.com; d £60-70) supplies comfortable B&B, and has good beer and meals in the bar. It also offers packed lunches and evening meals to order.

Simple camping is available at **Stonethwaite Farm** (sites for 2 £6), and teas and snacks during the day are served up at the **Peat-house Café**.

Rosthwaite

In Rosthwaite, 2 miles northeast of Seatoller, your best bargain choice is the splendidly titled **Dinah Hoggus Camping Barn** (☎ 01946-758198; www.lakelandcampingbarns.co.uk; dm £6); bookings are essential.

Walker-friendly B&Bs include good-value **Nook Farm** (☎ 01768-777677; d £48-54) and **Yew Tree Farm** (☎ 01768-777675; www.borrowdaleyewtreefarm.co.uk; d £60), in a lovely position overlooking the valley. Nearby, the **Flock-In Tearoom** offers 'drinks if you're flock-in thirsty and food if you're flock-in famished', with big mugs and hearty portions.

On the main road, the **Royal Oak Hotel** (☎ 01768-777214; www.royaloakhotel.co.uk; dinner, bed & breakfast per person £47, mains around £7) serves good, hearty pub food in the back bar. Nearby, the **Scafell Hotel** (☎ 01768-777208; www.scafell.co.uk; d £100) offers 'Fell Break Weekends', combining fine food and comfortable accommodation with guided walks.

For supplies on the hills, Rosthwaite has a small but well-stocked village **shop**.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Seatoller and the other settlements at the head of Borrowdale are easily reached by bus from Keswick – the main gateway town for the northern Lake District, and well

served by National Express coaches from all parts of the country, as well as by buses from other nearby towns. (For more details on Keswick, see p206.)

Between Keswick and Seatoller, bus 79 ('the Borrowdale Rambler') runs around 10 times daily Monday to Saturday (with extra services in August) and seven times on Sundays and bank holidays.

For more public transport information, see p188.

By car, Seathwaite is 1.5 miles from the village of Seatoller, which is about 8 miles south of Keswick. Parking at Seathwaite and Seatoller is limited, so you should consider taking a bus from Keswick.

THE WALK

Seathwaite to Scafell Pike

2½–3½ hours, 4 miles (6.5km)

This route description starts in Seathwaite. Obviously, if you're staying at Seatoller or one of the other nearby settlements, you need to walk here along the lane.

In Seathwaite, go through the farmyard and past the café. Follow the bridleway to Stockley Bridge, then directly up the valley of Styhead Gill to pass small Styhead Tarn and reach **Styhead Pass**.

The route so far has been following the ancient packhorse route into Wasdale. In the days before road transport (and before walking became a leisure activity), packhorses carried goods across the mountains of the Lake District. Styhead Pass was on one of the busiest routes and a major junction for traders heading between the western, northern and southern parts of the area. Today you won't see any horses – just walkers and a large wooden box marked 'Mountain Rescue First Aid Kit'.

From Styhead Pass take the path branching to the left (southeast). About 300m from the rescue kit another path branches off right (southwest then south). This path is called the **Corridor Route** and it leads – always heading roughly southwest – through a complex landscape of shattered rocks surrounding the high peaks. Go above the southern end of a large and deep gully called **Piers Gill** and shortly afterwards the path becomes indistinct, eventually fizzling out completely as you reach the rocky outcrops below the summit. Keep going up (you need to take very great care here if the mist is down);

eventually the gradient eases and you reach the summit of **Scafell Pike**.

After the broad summits on some other mountains (like Fairfield and Helvellyn), this one feels like a real mountaintop. A trig point and large cairn mark the highest point in England. You'll also find several rock shelters dotted around – most welcome when the weather is bad. When conditions are good you'll get spectacular views over the whole Lake District: northeast across your route, over Derwent Water and Keswick with Skiddaw beyond; southeast to Crinkle Crag and Bowfell, with a glimpse of Windermere; northwest to Great Gable and Buttermere; and lots more. On a clear day you see the coast (and Sellafield Nuclear Power Station) and if you're lucky you'll see the Isle of Man rising from the sea, looking like it's a mere hop away. If you're extra-specially blessed, the coasts of Ireland and Scotland will also be visible. That's three countries from one mountaintop, four if you count the independent Isle of Man, five if you count the kingdom of Heaven. And why not? On this peak, you could be close.

Scafell Pike to Esk Hause

1 hour, 1.5 miles (2.5km)

But enough philosophy. It's time to move on. From the summit aim northeast, but take care, especially when the weather is bad, as the route is not obvious across the rocks. A path descends steeply on a rocky ridge, with cliffs and buttresses on either side, to reach a small pass between Scafell Pike and its neighbour Broad Crag. The path climbs up again, passing to the right (east) of the summit of Broad Crag and north of another neighbouring peak called Ill Crag.

The path curves down and to the right (east) below another peak called Great End to finally reach a pass and junction of paths called **Esk Hause**, where there's a cross-shaped wind shelter. (For peak-baggers it's possible to go on a quick detour up and down **Great End** for some more wonderful views. On long summer days this will be quite easy, but adds about 45 minutes onto your time.)

Esk Hause to Seathwaite

1½–2 hours, 3 miles (5km)

From Esk Hause take the path west towards the little lake of Sprinkling Tarn. After about 500m, before you reach the tarn, a path on the right (north) goes down beside a stream called Ruddy Gill, becoming Grains Gill a bit further down. At Stockley Bridge you'll meet the bridleway you came up on, and from here you simply retrace your steps to Seathwaite.

ALTERNATIVE ROUTE: SEATHWAITE VIA GLARAMARA

2½–3 hours, 3.5 miles (5.5km)

From Esk Hause, this is a longer, harder and much more enjoyable return route to Seathwaite. Aim northeast, over the top of a small peak called Allen Crag and then along a broad ridge with several ups and downs, to reach the fine summit of **Glaramara** (781m). Beyond the summit the path divides: left (northwest) takes you steeply down the fellside to Seathwaite and the finish.

(If you're staying at Seatoller or Rosthwaite, you could continue heading north from Glaramara along the ridge, descending through pleasant woodland on the lower section to finally reach Strands Bridge on the main road.)

THE CUMBRIA WAY

Duration	5 days
Distance	68 miles (109.5km)
Difficulty	moderate
Start	Ulverston (p202)
Finish	Carlisle (p203)
Transport	bus, train
Summary	An excellent route through the heart of the Lake District, keeping mostly to valleys but with a few high and potentially serious sections.

Although apparently steeped in tradition, the county of Cumbria is a new entity, created in the 1970s by joining the old shires of Westmorland and Cumberland, with some parts of Lancashire and Yorkshire's West Riding thrown in for good measure. For most visitors 'Cumbria' and the 'Lake District' are synonymous, although locals are often at pains to point out that there's more to their county than *just* lakes, and so the Cumbria Way presents a true cross section of all the area has to offer. It starts in southern Cumbria, winds through the heart of the Lake District, and ends in northern Cumbria, rewarding walkers with top-quality mountain views – but it's essentially a valley walk and doesn't cross any summits, making it ideal for less hardy types.

The scenery of the Lake District is the main draw of course. Outside the national park boundary, the other parts of Cumbria are perhaps not quite as stunning as the high mountain areas, but they're scenic nonetheless and far less crowded, so you're assured of some days of solitude as well as breathtaking views.

PLANNING

The Cumbria Way can be followed in either direction, but we recommend starting in Ulverston and going north to Carlisle. This way you should have most of the wind behind you (although don't bank on it).

The Cumbria Way is 68 miles long. That's measured on the map, so with the ups and downs it's probably 70 miles or more. Although it's mostly a low-level route, it goes near several tempting mountaintops so the possibilities for diversions are numerous, but these will of course add to your mileage (and time).

Many people take five days to cover the Cumbria Way and we have divided the walk accordingly:

Day	From	To	Miles/km
1	Ulverston	Coniston	15/24
2	Coniston	Great Langdale	11/17.5
3	Great Langdale	Keswick	15/24
4	Keswick	Caldbeck	13/21
5	Caldbeck	Carlisle	14/22.5

Note that the hours given for each stage in the route description are walking times only. You should allow an extra couple of hours for rests, photos, lunch stops and so on.

Alternatives

If you're a fast walker, you could possibly do the whole route in four days. If you're simply pushed for time you could consider cutting the last day. If you only have a couple of days to spare, we recommend all or any of Days 2, 3 and 4.

Relaxed walkers could easily take six days, with breaks at Coniston, Elterwater, Borrowdale, Keswick, Caldbeck and Carlisle. With more days you could branch off the Way for some high-level add-ons. For example, you could stay at Borrowdale for two nights and bag Scafell Pike on the day in between – see p197.

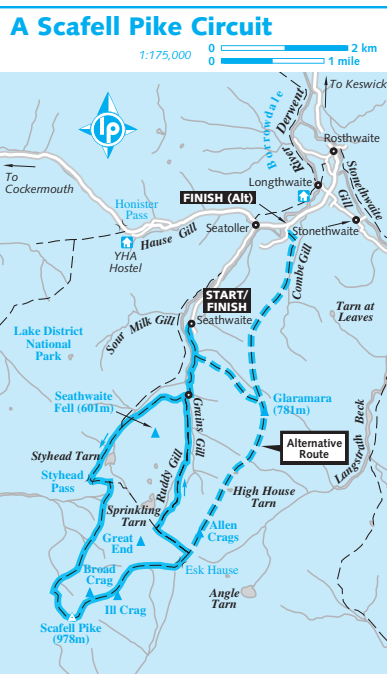
As with all LDPs, you don't have to do the whole thing. Many sections of the route can be incorporated into shorter one-day circuits.

When to Walk

You can do this route at any time of year, although in spring, summer and autumn there's more chance of better weather, and in winter the high sections may be blocked by snow. Many people start on a Saturday or Sunday, meaning a 'bulge' travels along the route. Nice and sociable, but on Thursday or Friday everyone reaches Caldbeck, where B&Bs are in short supply. It's worth starting on a weekday if you can.

Maps

A good map is essential for this route as there are very few specific Cumbria Way signposts or waymarks. The *Cumbria Way* strip map by Harvey is excellent and highly recommended.



If you want more detail (or want to know what's beyond the strip), you'll need Harvey Maps' 1:25,000 Superwalker sheets *South-West, South-East, Central and North Lakeland* – although the first and last sections of the Cumbria Way are not covered by these maps.

If you go for OS maps, the Cumbria Way is covered by Landranger 1:50,000 maps No 96 *Barrow-in-Furness & South Lakeland*, 90 *Penrith & Keswick* and 85 *Carlisle & Solway Firth*. For more detail, you'll need OS Explorer 1:25,000 maps No 4 *The English Lakes – North Western Area*, 5 *North Eastern Area*, 6 *South Western Area* and 7 *South Eastern Area*. Note that only a small bit of the route is on map No 6, and No 5 doesn't quite stretch as far as Carlisle.

Books

A detailed guidebook for the Cumbria Way is not essential but can be very handy. The guidebook that originally created this route, *The Cumbria Way* by John Trevelyan, is out of print but still available in some local shops and tourist offices. More recent alternatives include *The Cumbria Way* by Phillip Dubock, with lovingly hand-crafted Wainwright-style maps and instructions, and *The Cumbria Way* by Anthony Burton, with very detailed route descriptions and extracts from OS 1:25,000 maps.

Guided Walks

Many of the tour companies listed in the boxed text on p26 organise walking holidays on the Cumbria Way.

Information Sources

For specific information along the Cumbria Way, the local tourist offices are in **Ulverston** (☎ 01229-587120; www.ulverston.net), **Coniston** (☎ 015394-41533; www.conistonc.org), **Keswick** (☎ 017687-72645; www.keswick.org) and **Carlisle** (☎ 01228-625600; www.carlisle.gov.uk). From all of these, and other tourist offices in the Lake District, you can pick up the *Cumbria Way* information leaflet, with details on the route and places of interest, town plans of Ulverston and Carlisle, useful phone numbers and so on. You can also use the leaflet as your Cumbria Way 'passport' – getting it stamped at various points along the way.

Ulverston tourist office has friendly staff and, for a small charge, offers a booking service for B&Bs along the Cumbria Way.

Baggage Services

For baggage-carrying services, see p437.

NEAREST TOWNS

The start and end of the walk are at the Cumbrian market town of Ulverston and the large city of Carlisle – the latter is in Cumbria but has a feel of places further north.

Ulverston

At the start of the route, Ulverston is not a typical Lake District town. Its cobbled streets have yet to be lined with gift emporiums and other tourist paraphernalia. There are shops, a supermarket and lots of pubs – some get lively on Thursday (market day) and at the weekend. Somewhat bizarrely, there's a **Laurel & Hardy Museum** (☎ 01229-582292; www.laurel-and-hardy-museum.co.uk; admission £2.50; ☎ 10am-4pm Feb-Dec) in Ulverston – Stan was born here in 1890 – which is worth a short visit before you set off, especially if it's raining and you need cheering up a little.

SLEEPING & EATING

The nearest camp site to town is **Bardsea Leisure Park** (☎ 01229-584712; sites for 2 £10) on the outskirts of town; it's mainly for caravans but walkers are welcome. If you prefer a roof over your head, **Walkers Hostel** (☎ 01229-585588; www.walkershostel.co.uk; dm/d £14/28), on the edge of town as you come in from the east, is a recommended budget option. Facilities include free tea, coffee and toast, a nice lounge with lots of books, a garden, and evening meals for £10. The owners can advise on the Cumbria Way and other routes in the area. They also offer long-term parking for guests.

B&Bs catering for walkers include **Orchard House** (☎ 01229-586771; www.orchardhouseulverston.co.uk; Hazelcroft Gdns; d £52-64), near the train station; **Town House** (☎ 01229-580172; townhouse@tiscali.co.uk; d £50), a beautiful Georgian residence in the centre of town; and **Church Walk House** (☎ 01229-582211; churchwalk@mchadderton.freereserve.co.uk; d from £70), very near the Gill and the start of the walk.

For food in the evening there are a couple of fish and chip shops in and around the

centre, while both the **Rose & Crown** (King St) and the **Farmers Arms** on the marketplace do good pub food at reasonable prices.

For slightly more stylish eating and drinking, **Laurels Bistro** (☎ 01229-583961; ☎ dinner) is recommended. Or try **Amigos** (☎ 01229-587616; ☎ dinner), a lively Mexican restaurant opposite the tourist office.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Ulverston is easily reached by bus from the central Lake District gateway Windermere, itself linked by train and National Express coach to most parts of the country. From Windermere, local buses run to Barrow-in-Furness via Ulverston about six times per day. There are also National Express coaches direct to Barrow-in-Furness via Ulverston.

Ulverston is also on the Cumbria Coast railway line between Lancaster and Carlisle – both of which can be easily reached by train from all parts of Britain. The local train service runs every few hours Monday to Saturday, less often on Sunday.

Carlisle

At the end of the route, Carlisle is the capital of north Cumbria, with all the facilities you'd expect of a city and a surprisingly pleasant atmosphere. Historically it's fascinating, with a famous red-stone **cathedral** and dramatic **castle**. The **Tullie House Museum** (p218) is one of the best in Britain.

SLEEPING & EATING

As well as marking the end of the Cumbria Way, Carlisle is also on the Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail. For accommodation details, see p227.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Carlisle is well served by National Express coaches to many parts of Britain. If you're heading south, or plan more Lake District adventures, the 555 Lakeslink service runs between Carlisle and Lancaster, via Keswick, Ambleside and Windermere (from where a local bus runs to Ulverston, if you need to return to the start).

Carlisle also has frequent rail links with most parts of the country, including main-line services to London and Scotland, and the Cumbria Coast line back to Ulverston.

THE WALK

Day 1: Ulverston to Coniston

6–7 hours, 15 miles (24km)

This first day is quite long, but undulating rather than steep, and not too hard. Keep a close eye on your map, as the walk is a bit complex and not well signposted, and prepare for a full day out – there are no pubs or cafés en route for lunch. As you head north, the landscape changes from rolling farmland to rugged fells – a taste of greater things to come.

The start of the Way is in the corner of an open area (used as a car park) called the Gill, on the northern side of town, marked by an impressive steel Cumbria Way sculpture. There are also some public toilets – handy if you've just got off the bus and need to change into walking gear.

From the sculpture follow a footpath uphill, keeping close to the stream on your left. After five minutes go left across the stream on a small bridge and up another path to meet a lane. Don't cross the lane, but go sharply right instead, through a very narrow gap in the wall called a 'squeeze gate' – the first of many you'll encounter on this route – and then across the fields towards Old Hall Farm.

From here the Way is mostly straightforward, winding through more fields and farmyards. Places where you need to keep a particular eye on the map include the village of Broughton Beck (take a small 'no through road' and, just before the stream, turn left along a path) and near a large farm called Keldray (the Way goes left of the farmhouse then diagonally left and uphill to reach Gawthwaite).

Once past Gawthwaite, you enter Lake District National Park. This means a few more signposts and neater stiles, and after a few miles there's a slightly rougher edge to the landscape as you walk through the craggy moorland of **Torver Common**. Go past picturesque Beacon Tarn (take care in mist as there's a bewildering choice of paths in this area) before dropping to cross the A5084 and reach the shores of **Coniston Water**, the first of several major lakes you'll encounter on this walk.

The final section of today's stage follows a path through delightful lake-side woodland, with the glistening water just beyond your boots, and the forested fells leading up to



Grizedale on the other side of the lake forming a backdrop. You return to civilisation on the outskirts of Coniston, where a path leads to the road linking the town and the jetty.

CONISTON

The small town of Coniston has a manicured look, but the surrounding craggy hills give it an authentic edge. Attractions include the combined **John Ruskin Museum** (☎ 015394-41164; www.ruskinmuseum.com; ☒ 10am-5pm Mar-Nov) and Donald Campbell Museum, commemorating the world speed records attempted on the lake in the 1960s (see opposite for information about Ruskin). On the main street are the supermarket, post office, bank, cafés and several shops selling walking gear, maps and books.

The nearest camp site is **Coniston Hall** (☎ 015394-41223; sites for 2 £9), about 1 mile south of town beside the lake – very convenient as the Cumbria Way passes right through the site (but it's closed in winter).

Holly How YHA Hostel (☎ 0870 770 5770; conistonhh@yha.org.uk; dm £14) is an old country house on the town's north edge. **Lonely Coppermines YHA Hostel** (☎ 0870 770 5772; coppermines@yha.org.uk; dm £12) is just over 1 mile away, spectacularly set in the foothills.

B&Bs that welcome walkers include **Lakeland House** (☎ 015394-41303; www.lakelandhouse.com; Tilberthwaite Ave; s/d £20/40), **Beech Tree** (☎ 015394-41717; Yewdale Rd; d from £36) and **Oaklands** (☎ 015394-41245; d £56).

Of the pubs in town, the recently renovated **Crown Hotel** (☎ 015394-41243; www.crown-hotel-coniston.com; d £80) is good, although the **Black Bull Hotel** (☎ 015394-41335; www.conistonbrewery.com; d £90) is our favourite, with excellent beer, good food and charm that's not too olde-worlde.

Other options for accommodation, food or drinks are the **Yewdale Hotel** (☎ 015394-41280;

BOATING CONISTON

If you want to save a few steps on Day 1, or you just enjoy boating, the **Coniston Launch** (☎ 01539-436216; www.conistonlaunch.co.uk) stops at Torver Wood jetty (about 2 miles before Coniston town) about six times daily from 11am to 5pm, during summer. For £3 you can cruise along to Coniston jetty, via the Brantwood jetty.

www.yewdalehotel.com; d from £85) and the **Sun Hotel** (☎ 015394-41248; www.thesunconiston.com; d £80, mains £7-10), up the hill off the main street.

JOHN RUSKIN

John Ruskin (1819–1900), the poet, writer, painter, philosopher, conservationist, social reformer and visionary, was a major influential figure of the 19th century. He lived in a house called Brantwood, on the east side of Coniston Water, from 1872 until his death. The John Ruskin Museum in Coniston village covers some aspects of his life and work, and also includes exhibits relating to the lake and surrounding landscape. If you've got time before striding on to Langdale, you can reach Brantwood by public boat from Coniston village.

Day 2: Coniston to Great Langdale

5–6 hours, 11 miles (17.5km)

This day is a wonderful mix of farmland, woodland, hills and river plains, leading to the end of Great Langdale, a large valley penetrating into the heart of the high Lake District. Steep sections are rare, with just a few short, sharp shocks at the end of the day.

The Way leaves from the east side of Coniston and can be tricky to find. From the tourist office take Tilberthwaite Ave (towards Hawkshead) for 400m, go left (signposted to Ambleside) past the football field on the right, to reach a small, old stone bridge on the right. Go over this bridge and immediately left (not through the gate) over a stile to reach a path leading uphill through meadows and into woodland.

From here the Way is clear, past Low Yewdale Farm and Tarn Hows Cottages, then up a lane to reach little **Tarn Hows**. Go west of the tarn, then along a track to meet and cross the A593 main road.

After a short stretch near the road, the peaceful woodland theme continues as you follow lanes and paths, mostly downhill (with a possible diversion to view **Skelwith Force** – an impressive waterfall when the river is high) to Skelwith Bridge, where the Way goes through the yard of a slate factory. In the factory showroom (you'd be surprised how many things can be made from slate) is a **restaurant** with good home-made food at reasonable prices. Nearby, the

Talbot pub serves sandwiches and bar meals from £4.

Beyond Skelwith Bridge, the Way follows the north bank of the river upstream to **Elterwater**, a beautiful little lake. From here you get a fine view up Great Langdale, with rising fells on either side and the curiously conical Langdale Pikes dominating the end of the valley.

Follow the path close to Great Langdale Beck to arrive at **Elterwater** village, a good spot for a late lunch or an early overnight stop. The **Britannia Inn** (☎ 015394-37210; www.britinn.co.uk; d around £50) does B&B and good bar meals. Charming **Elterwater YHA Hostel** (☎ 0870 770 5816; elterwater@yha.org.uk; dm £12) is in a former farmhouse nearby. The village also has several other essentials – shop, post office, telephone, public toilet and bowling green.

Beyond Elterwater, the Way continues along the valley of Great Langdale.

GREAT LANGDALE

Near the head of the valley, campers can pitch at the **National Trust camp site** (☎ 01539-437668; www.ntlakescampsites.org.uk; sites for 2 £9); it's often busy but is in a lovely location. Nearby, the **Old Dungeon Ghyll Hotel** (☎ 01539-437272; www.odg.co.uk; d from £96) is a Lake District legend with a great atmosphere and a long-standing welcome for walkers. Next door is the no-frills **Hiker's Bar**, with stone floor, big fire, good beer and large helpings of food from about £5. Less than 1 mile down the valley, the **New Dungeon Ghyll Hotel** (☎ 01539-437213; www.dungeon-ghyll.com; d from £100, mains £10) does good-quality B&B, bar snacks and meals. Next door, the lively **Sticklebarn** (☎ 01539-437356; sticklebarn@aol.com; dm £10, mains £8; ☒ breakfast & dinner) has a spartan bunkhouse; there are no cooking facilities.

Day 3: Great Langdale to Keswick

6–8 hours, 15 miles (24km)

Until this point the route has mostly followed valleys, but today takes you into (and over) the fells proper. This is a hard stage, as you get a taste of the Lake District's splendid ruggedness before the Way returns to valleys once again.

Today's walk starts at the head of Great Langdale, where this valley splits into two branches. Take the right (north) branch, a valley called Mickleden, with the towering

buttresses of Langdale Pikes on your right. At the end of Mickleden there's a fork in the path. Go right and up fairly steeply to **Stake Pass**. From the top you can see back down Mickleden, with a range of wonderfully named peaks spread out behind – Pike of Blisco, Crinkle Crag, Bowfell – and on the other side the pointed top of the Pike of Stickle can also be seen.

All views briefly disappear as you cross the top of the pass, winding through grassy mounds and past the cairn that marks the highest point on this day's walk (about 480m). In misty conditions, make sure you take a compass bearing at the top of Stake Pass to ensure you get the correct path down into the quiet and narrow valley of Langstrath. Many people go wrong and arrive at Angle Tarn!

The path drops into Langstrath and this runs into another (larger) valley called Borowdale. Here the Cumbria Way crosses the Coast to Coast Walk, so you may see many fellow walkers heading in the opposite direction.

If it's time for a break, there's a welcome **café** in the tiny settlement of Stonethwaite, just west of the Way. There's also an inn and some B&Bs, with more options in nearby Rosthwaite, making this a possible overnight stop; for details see p199.

From Stonethwaite, the Way continues to Rosthwaite and then keeps fairly close to the River Derwent (one of many rivers in Britain with this name, so don't be confused) to reach the west bank of **Derwent Water** – one of the most scenic lakes in Cumbria. Make the most of the views because beyond Victoria Bay the Way leaves the lake and passes through woodland. Look out for **bears** among the trees – but don't worry, they're only big sculptures skilfully

cut by chainsaw from local logs and sold at a nearby workshop. Beyond the woods, the Way goes through Pontinscale, from where you follow clear paths into Keswick.

KESWICK

The town of Keswick is the hub of the northern Lake District and often very busy, but it has been a market centre for centuries and on the tourist map for over 100 years, so it easily copes with the crowds. The **tourist office** (☎ 01768-772645) is in the central market square. Keswick also has plenty of food stores, banks, a laundrette and main post office, plus several outdoor gear shops.

Keswick Camping & Caravanning Club Site (☎ 01768-772392; sites for 2 £12) has nice back-packer pitches. Cheap places to stay include the central **YHA hostel** (☎ 0870 770 5894; keswick@yha.org.uk; dm £17.50) and **Catbells Barn** (☎ 01946-758198; www.lakelandcampingbarns.co.uk; dm £6) at Skelgill, about 3 miles southwest of Keswick, less than 1 mile off the Cumbria Way route; advance booking is essential.

For excellent-value, no-frills B&B, you can't go wrong at **Bridgedale Guesthouse** (☎ 01768-773914; helen.taylor4@btconnect.com; Main St; s/d £14/28), around the corner from the main bus stop. The room price is bed-only; add £2 for a light breakfast or £4 for the works (including vegetarian options). If you need to make an early start, breakfast is served from 7.15am. There's a drying room, and the attached tearoom provides snacks or lunches. The friendly and laid-back owner can advise on local places for dinner.

The main cluster of B&Bs is just southeast of the town centre in the area around Southey and Blencathra Sts. On Eskin St, several places cater for walkers, including the very welcoming and well-equipped **Allerdale House** (☎ 01768-773891; www.allerdale-house.co.uk; d £56; ☎) and friendly **Clarence House** (☎ 01768-773186; www.clarencehousekeswick.co.uk; d £56). Crosthwaite Rd, north of the town centre, has another row of B&Bs.

If you want to reduce tomorrow's mileage, **Spooney Green** (☎ 01768-772601; spooneygreen@beeb.net; d £60) offers very comfortable B&B in a former farmhouse on the northern side of town, just beyond the footbridge over the A66 bypass at the foot of the path up to Skiddaw.

For something to eat, there's a huge choice of cafés and teashops in Keswick.

THE WRITING WAS ON THE WALL *David Else*

By geological good fortune, the rock around Keswick happens to contain the finest graphite in the world. This is ideal for making pencils, and a pencil industry has existed here since the 15th century. The 160-year-old factory of the Cumberland Pencil Company is in the centre of Keswick, also home to the Cumberland Pencil Museum and – wait for it – the world's largest pencil shop. For more details see www.pencils.co.uk.

It may not be fascinating for everyone, but I'll admit to a special fondness for this place. I have a vivid childhood memory of a set of colouring pencils. On the lid was written *Lakeland by Cumberland* below a hand-drawn illustration of a range of mountains. I lived then in the south of England and had never seen a real mountain. What struck me about the illustration was that the mountains were not green but shaded in purple. This image (and the pencil box) stayed with me for a long time. For many years I wanted to go to Lakeland by Cumberland, which I assumed was a place in the north, to see those amazing purple mountains.

Maybe the pencil set planted subliminal seeds that got me into walking. These days I understand about artistic licence but still find Lake District mountains constantly attractive – even if they are mainly green – and I even find obscure museums quite interesting.

Our favourite is the **Lakeland Pedlar** (☎ 01768-774492; www.lakelandpedlar.co.uk; Bell Close; ☎; 9am–5pm; ☎), off the main street near the car park, with tasty wholefood/veggie snacks and lunches, plus a bike shop.

Greensleeves Restaurant (St John's St; mains from £6; ☎ lunch & dinner) has good-value meat and veggie dishes, while the **Square Orange Café-Bar** (St John's St; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) does healthy breakfasts, light lunches and evening meals.

Of the pubs in town, the **Dog & Gun** (Lake Rd) does good food and is justifiably popular, though often crowded. The **Oddfellows Arms** (Market Sq) and the **George Hotel** (St John's St) are also recommended.

Day 4: Keswick to Caldbeck

5–6 hours, 13 miles (21km)

This day is not especially long, but it's the most serious on the route, as it crosses the open moorland of Skiddaw, where you're further from civilisation than at any other point on the Way. This has benefits – a splendid feeling of space and airy isolation. But it also has its dangers – paths are not always clear and mist is a frequent possibility. You definitely need to know how to use your map and compass here. If the clouds are low or you're not feeling intrepid, you can take an alternative low-level route to the west of the main route, following clear tracks and quiet lanes.

From Keswick town centre take Station Rd across the bridge near the YHA hostel. When this road bears right, take a

path straight on, past a swimming pool, to meet Brundholme Rd. Turn left, ignore a lane coming in from the right, then take a rough track on the right, uphill and over the A66 bypass on a footbridge. This goes up through a pine plantation to meet the end of a lane that comes from Applethwaite.

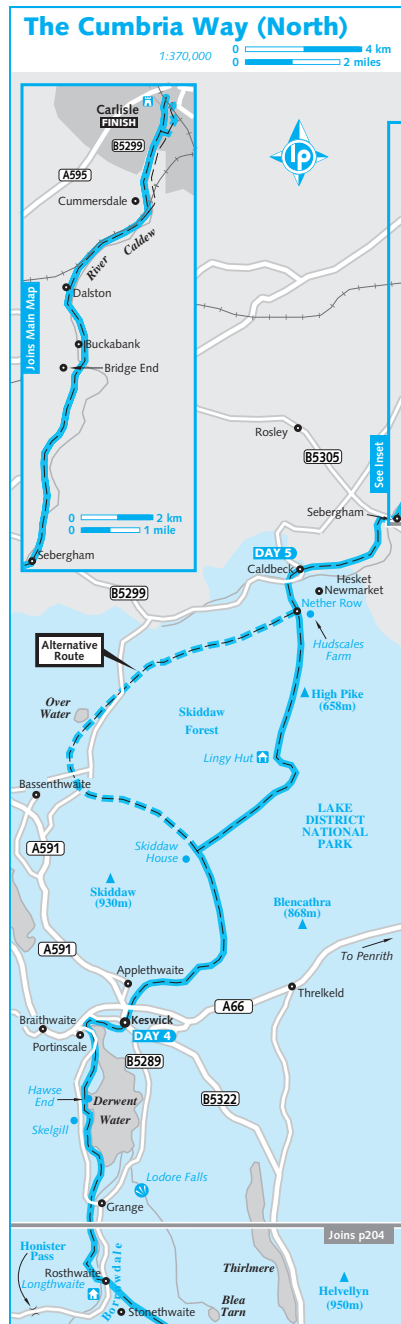
From here the Way strides out across the open fells, ignoring the well-worn route up Skiddaw and taking instead a quieter path along the steep side of Glenderaterra Valley. At remote **Skiddaw House**, the alternative low-level route branches off northwest towards Bassenthwaite. The main route heads northeast then up beside Grainsgill Beck before going steeply up the valley side away from the beck to reach **Lingy Hut** – a handy landmark and potentially life-saving mountain shelter.

Beyond the hut, head east of north on a faint path to the summit of **High Pike** (658m; the highest point on the Cumbria Way), marked by a cairn and a slate bench. This is an ideal place to rest and admire the view north to the Cheviot Hills and the silvery tongue of the Solway Firth, marking the border between England and Scotland. Below the view point, the wild fells drop steeply and suddenly to farmland. The Lake District ends here, almost as if cut by a knife.

To leave the summit of High Pike use your compass to take a bearing on the hamlet of Nether Row, then drop to meet farm tracks, lanes and a short section of path that leads you into the village of Caldbeck.

BOATING DERWENT WATER

If you want to cut the last few miles of Day 3, the **Keswick Launch** (☎ 017687-72263; www.keswick-launch.co.uk) passenger boat circumnavigates the lake (clockwise hourly in summer) via several jetties, including Hawse End and Nichol End (just before the route goes through Pontinscale). Cruising into Keswick is a splendid way to end the day's walk.



CALDBECK

The peaceful village of Caldbeck nestles below the fells. In the churchyard is the **grave of John Peel**, the famous huntsman immortalised in song. There's no tourist office, but www.caldbeckvillage.co.uk gives all the information you need. Facilities on the ground include a village store, a museum and some other interesting little shops at Priests Mill, near the church.

Hudscales Barn (☎ 01697-478637; www.lakelandcampingbarns.co.uk; Hudscales Farm; camp sites for 2 £6; dm £6), just under 1 mile east of Nether Row, is an excellent budget option and the people who run it are very friendly. Whether you're in the barn or a tent, hearty breakfasts (prebooked, please) cost £6. To get here, take the footpath from Nether Row straight to the farm. Don't follow the signposts as they take you a long way round on lanes and farm tracks.

B&Bs in and around Caldbeck include the **Briars** (☎ 01697-478633; d £50), frequently recommended by walkers, and **Swaledale Watch** (☎ 01697-478409; www.swaledale-watch.co.uk; s/d from £25/50), a working farm about 1 mile from the village offering great views and friendly service.

The **Oddfellows Arms** (☎ 01697-478227; www.oddfellows-caldbeck.co.uk; d from £60, mains £7-10) is a friendly inn with good beers and tasty evening meals to set you up for tomorrow's final stage.

Day 5: Caldbeck to Carlisle

5–6 hours; 14 miles (22.5km)

After the long upland sections, this final day looks deceptively easy on the map. But it's circuitous, with a more-than-generous helping of stiles and gates, and surprisingly tiring. There are also some sections that are not exactly scenic, so it's tempting to cut this day completely. If you're short of time and weighing up this day against an extra one in the high fells then we'd definitely recommend the latter. But this is the Cumbria Way, not the Lakes Way, and this final bit of the route shows you parts of the county rarely seen by visitors.

To leave Caldbeck, the Way takes a residential road along the north bank of the river, past Briars B&B. This road soon becomes a track, which you follow through fields into woodland and pine plantation. There's a maze of paths and tracks here;

don't be tempted to go too close to the river but go left at two forks, gradually uphill, then level through more fields to re-enter woodland on a wide track used by forestry vehicles. About 2 miles out from Caldbeck, a path branches off this track to the right, marked by a small stone cairn, and goes steeply down to meet the river.

The Way now follows the river (rarely more than a few hundred metres from it), using faint paths, clear tracks and some sections of busy lane through farmland. At the village of Bridge End, the **pub** has food and the nearby garage has a small **shop** (☒ closed Sun), and the Way crosses to the east side of the river, through Buckabank, then back to the west side over a white footbridge (built in 1999 to replace its predecessor, washed away in a flood) into the small town of Dalston.

From Dalston, the Cumbria Way follows the Caldew Cycleway (a well-surfaced cycle-footpath), keeping west of the river, for the last few miles into the outskirts of Carlisle. The final section (from about 1 mile beyond Cummersdale) is rather untidy and poorly waymarked, following a footpath along the west side of the river,

then ducking and diving round some suburban streets. Follow a former railway, now called the Caldew River Trail, under a road bridge, over a metal viaduct and along the back of some retail units, before finally going alongside a road up a ramp and over a footbridge across the main road to end at **Carlisle Castle** (see the boxed text, below).

For a neater finish to the walk, take the following alternative route: about 1 mile beyond Cummersdale, just after a weir and a pub called the **Bay**, cross the footbridge to the east bank of the river and walk along a street called Boustead Grassing, with houses on your right and the river still down to your left.

Pass between two large gas-tank towers to meet a main road at a mini-roundabout near the **Cumberland Wrestlers** pub. Turn left along the main road, then swing right over a railway bridge. Take the third left, leading to a pedestrian shopping street, where you'll see the old town hall (now the tourist office) and the famous **Carlisle Cross**, a fitting and welcome end to your walk along the Cumbria Way. For a more historical flourish, it's a short walk to Carlisle Cathedral and the castle.

CARLISLE BORDERLANDS

The city of Carlisle has a long and turbulent history. The Romans first built a military station here, probably on the site of a Celtic camp. Later, Hadrian's Wall was built nearby and Carlisle became an administrative centre (see the Hadrian's Wall Path, p227) on the border between the Roman Empire and the land of the 'barbarian' Picts. Even the mighty Roman army was hard-pressed to maintain control, however, and the Picts ransacked Carlisle in AD 181 and 367.

The town survived into Saxon times, and the Picts had been superseded by the Scots, but Carlisle was still under constant pressure from the folk across the border, and just for good measure was also sacked by Danish Vikings in 875.

The Normans seized the town in 1092 and began construction of the castle and town walls, although the Scots regained control between 1136 and 1157. Around 150 years later the city withstood a siege by the army of the famous hero William Wallace during the Scottish War of Independence.

From the late 13th to the mid-16th century, under the constantly shifting powers of English and Scottish forces, this area was called the 'Debatable Lands', and was effectively ungoverned and ungovernable. The local warlords and their ruthless armies were known as *reivers*, appropriately remembered in the modern word 'bereaved'. Carlisle was in the middle of this unstable territory, and the city's walls and the great gates that slammed shut every night served a very real purpose.

Today, you can visit **Carlisle Castle** (☎ 01228-591922; www.english-heritage.org.uk; adult/child £4/2; ☒ 9.30am–5pm Apr–Sep, 10am–4pm Oct–Mar) and get a real feel for Carlisle's turbulent history as you follow a maze of chambers and passages, shiver through the dungeons then stride out along the ramparts.

MORE WALKS

In this chapter we have described the high-profile mountains of Fairfield, Helvellyn, High Street and Scafell Pike, and a long route through the national park keeping mainly to the valleys. Of course, these mountains and valleys are just a taste of the Lake District and there are many more opportunities. This section outlines some of our favourites. With a map and a sense of adventure (and, ideally, a sense of direction) you can go off and explore this wonderful part of Britain on your own.

MOUNTAIN WALKS

Starting with the highest peaks, in the Scafell Pike area are several mountains that make excellent days out for experienced walkers. To the north is Great Gable, with scree-ridden sides that always look so sheer, while to the east lies the impressive peak of Bowfell, at the head of the Great Langdale Valley. Great Gable can be approached from Seatoller (p198) and Bowfell can be approached from Langdale (p205).

Great Gable can also be reached from Wasdale, one of the Lake District's more remote and hard-to-reach valleys. Wasdale also makes an excellent gateway to the Western Fells, which are usually much quieter than the popular central parts of the Lakes and worthy of a few days' exploration if you have the time, skills and inclination.

A good base is Wasdale Head, at the eastern end of Wasdale, where the **Wasdale Head Inn** (www.wasdaleheadinn.co.uk), with B&B, camping, good beer and food, has been a popular base for walkers and mountaineers for almost a century; early photos in the bar show leading climbers of the day limbering up on the inn's stable wall! For more details on the Wasdale area, including walking options (and the pub), see the pub website.

In the Eastern Fells are the peaks of Great Dodd and Stybarrow Dodd. These can be approached from the east from Patterdale (p195) or Glenridding (p193) or from the west from the settlement of Legburthwaite in the Thirlmere Valley. Probably the most pleasing way to bag these summits is as part of a spectacular ridge walk, along the 'Backbone of the Eastern Fells' between Clough Head (southeast of Keswick) and Grisedale

Tarn (north of Grasmere), also taking in Helvellyn and Dollywaggon Pike. You can even continue southwards and do Fairfield as well, to finish at Ambleside (where a bus takes you back to your starting point). The top-class route can also be done south to north, but either way it's long and potentially serious – perfect for the fine days of summer.

LOWLAND WALKS

There are many other high peaks in the Lake District to explore but, if the weather is bad or you just want to stay on flatter ground for a while, there's also a whole set of valley, woodland and lake-side walks.

The Cumbria Way (p201) winds through the Lake District via Coniston, Elterwater, Great Langdale, Borrowdale and Derwent Water, skilfully keeping to low ground for much of the way. Any of the stages of this route can be followed as a day walk or used as part of a circular route if you base yourself at, say, Coniston, Elterwater, Keswick or anywhere in the Langdale or Borrowdale valleys.

Other places for short or flat walks include the west bank of Lake Windermere. If you're staying in Bowness-on-Windermere you can take the ferry across the lake and follow the shore northwards on paths and tracks through woodland. You can either continue northwards to Ambleside (from where you can return to Windermere by bus or lake steamer) or you could return through the woods on the higher ground slightly further to the west. A small hill called Letterbarrow has surprisingly good views. Alternatively, base yourself in Hawkshead. Nearby, a place for easy walks is Grizedale Forest, with a good network of marked routes, including a Sculpture Trail, taking you past many large and imaginative outdoor works of art.

TARN WALKS

In between the large lakes in the valleys and the high peaks of the fells lie the many tarns (small upland lakes and ponds) that are so characteristic of the Lake District scenery. Many people include a tarn or two during their walk as it gives the satisfaction of a definite point to aim for (and is usually nice for a picnic). One outdoor magazine has even suggested that 'tarn bagging' might become as popular as 'peak bagging'. All

the Wainwright Pictorial Guides include coverage of tarns, and for more modern guidance you could get *The Tarns of Lake-land* by J and A Nuttall.

BOAT WALKS

Tying in your walk with a ride on a lake steamboat is always an enjoyable way to travel – see the boxed texts on p204 and p206 for information on Coniston and Derwent Water boats. As well as these, and the Windermere ferry (opposite), there's a boat service on Ullswater between Glenridding and Pooley Bridge via Howtown. A good walk from Glenridding goes round or over Place Fell to Howtown, from where you can return on the steamer to Glenridding. The tourist offices have boat timetables or you can visit www.ullswater-steamers.co.uk. This is an ideal lower-level option if you're based at Glenridding for the Helvellyn & Striding Edge and High Street Circuit routes.

LONG-DISTANCE PATHS

Apart from the Cumbria Way and the Coast to Coast Walk (p237), several other LDPs go through the Lake District. Even if you don't have the time or inclination to do

them end-to-end, you can follow a section for a day or two, or even for a few hours, tying in with a circular walk.

The Cumberland Way

Whereas the Cumbria Way crosses the Lake District north to south, the 80-mile (128km) Cumberland Way goes west to east. It starts at Ravenglass and goes mainly via valleys through Wasdale, Black Sail Pass, Buttermere, Keswick and near Penrith to finish at Appleby-in-Westmorland. At the finish there's a very handy train station on the Settle–Carlisle railway to take you onwards to Northumberland or the Yorkshire Dales. The route is described in *The Cumberland Way* by Paul Hannon.

The Wainwright Memorial Walk

Another one for Wainwright fans! This is a 102-mile (163km) comprehensive tour of the finest mountains in the Lake District, based on a route taken by AW himself over a long weekend in 1931. It has been split into 11 daily stages for today's softie walker. The route is described in *The Wainwright Memorial Walk*, including maps and text from Wainwright's famous Pictorial Guides.

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