

Summary of main attractions on route (click on name for detail)

Distance	Attraction	Car Park Coordinates
0 miles	Hawkshead Village	N 54.37410, W 2.99679
2.6 miles	Tarn Hows	N 54.38708, W 3.03905
4.9 miles	Coniston Village	N 54.36892, W 3.07347
5.6 miles	Coniston Water	N 54.36460, W 3.06779
10.8 miles	Brown Howe	N 54.31026, W 3.09262
11.4 miles	Blawith Common	N 54.30409, W 3.09771
14.4 miles	Low Peel Near	N 54.31294, W 3.08336
17.1 miles	Machell's Coppice	N 54.34767, W 3.06338
17.6 miles	Brantwood	N 54.35263, W 3.06046
19.1 miles	Monk Coniston	N 54.37186, W 3.05400
22.5 miles	Hawkshead Village	N 54.37410, W 2.99679
25.9 miles	Grizedale Visitor Centre	N 54.33774, W 3.02253
29.0 miles	Low Dale Park, Grizedale	N 54.31704, W 3.00131
32.0 miles	Esthwaite Water	N 54.35029, W 2.98460
32.9 miles	Hill Top, Near Sawrey	N 54.35247, W 2.97133
35.0 miles	Hawkshead Village	N 54.37410, W 2.99679

The Drive

Tarn Hows & Coniston Water loop

Distance: 0 miles

Location: Hawkshead Village car park

Coordinates: N 54.37410, W 2.99679

Hawkshead is one of the most charming villages in the Lake District and worth a stop to explore its historic centre. The village dates back to medieval times, originally a prosperous wool market run by the monks of Furness Abbey which was near Barrow-in-Furness. There are a number of historic buildings around the village, including [Hawkshead Grammar School](#) which was founded here in 1585 and educated a number of notable pupils, including the famous local poet William Wordsworth who was sent here in 1778, aged 8, after his mother died. The school eventually closed in 1909 and the building is now a museum dedicated to its interesting history.



Hawkshead Village from the churchyard

Also in the centre of the village is the National Trusts [Beatrix Potter Gallery](#), a 17th century building housing displays of her famous watercolour illustrations and more about her work. The building was once the office of the solicitors W.H Heelis & Son, where William Heelis worked when he married Beatrix in 1913. No doubt Beatrix would have spent a great deal of time in and around Hawkshead when she lived nearby at Hill Top. Other notable buildings in the village include [St Michael and All Angels](#)

[church](#), most of which dates back to the 16th century and sits on the small hill overlooking the village. There is a lovely churchyard where you can find some peace and enjoy the surrounding views. Also, in the main village square is the old Market Hall which dates from the late 18th century when the village thrived as a local market.

It makes an enjoyable stroll around the timeless and mostly car-free village centre with its jumbled collection of whitewashed houses, archways and alleyways, courtyards and squares. There are a number of tourist shops, cafes and pubs. The car park is pay and display with nearby toilets and tourist information centre.

Travelling:

Turn right out of the village car park, then quickly left at the T junction on the B5285 towards Ambleside. The road soon leaves the village behind and after approx 0.5 miles, take the left turn (still the B5285) towards Coniston. Continue up the hill through pleasant countryside for approx 0.8 miles to the small village of Hawkshead Hill where you take the minor right turn to Tarn Hows. After approx 200m, there is a T junction where you turn left and then immediate right towards Tarn Hows again. This minor road winds up through the trees for approx 0.7 miles before a wonderful panorama opens up with the tarn down below and various Lakeland peaks in the distance. Just as you leave the trees, there is a small free car park on the right which provides a fabulous view from the car. The main car park is a short distance beyond the tarn on the left.



Tarn Hows

Distance: 2.6 miles

Location: Tarn Hows

Coordinates: N 54.38708, W 3.03905

[Tarn Hows](#) is one of the wonders of Lakeland and a beauty spot not to be missed. Historically the area was rough open common grazing land with three smaller natural tarns but in 1862 the local estate at Monk Coniston gained possession of all the land and started improving it. This included landscaping and building a dam at the lower tarn which raised water levels so the three tarns became the one you see today.

In 1930 the 4000 acre Monk Coniston Estate came up for sale and was bought by Beatrix Potter who was keen to buy local land so she could save it from unwanted development and preserve it for future generations. She soon sold the part containing Tarn Hows to the National Trust who have further improved the area over the years.

The [main path](#) around the tarn is well made and well worth an hour of your time. Higher paths on the eastern side give some fabulous long distance views towards the Lake District mountains. The main car park is National Trust pay and display with toilets and an information display.

Travelling:

From the car park, turn left and continue on the picturesque minor road which is now one-way. This road descends and loops back to the B5285 Coniston road. Turn right on this road and soon meet the tree-lined shores of Coniston Water on the left. The road then bends away from the lake, past [The Coniston Inn](#) on the left and soon enters Coniston village. Once in the village, take the first left turn and the car park is immediately on the right.

Distance: 4.9 miles

Location: Coniston Village car park

Coordinates: N 54.36892, W 3.07347

The village of Coniston is in a picturesque location nestled between Coniston Water and The Old Man of Coniston, the mountain directly behind. Historically, it grew up due to the local copper and slate mines which flourished from the 17th century with workers being housed in the village. In 1859 a railway line was opened to the village from the main Cumbrian Coast line near Broughton in Furness. The main purpose of this at the time was to transport the copper ore, but as copper demand declined in the late 19th century the railway line became more popular with Victorian tourists. A local tourist industry soon grew up which has become more and more popular over time. The railway closed in 1962 and there is little trace of the old line and station now but it certainly helped to put Coniston on the map in its heyday.



Coniston Village

Probably the most notable local resident was John Ruskin, the famous Victorian visionary, artist, art critic and writer, who lived nearby at [Brantwood](#) on the shores of Coniston Water from 1871 until his death in 1900, aged 80. He was buried at [St Andrew's Church](#) in the centre of the village. Following his death, the [Ruskin Museum](#) was established in Coniston in 1901 and is still going strong today, containing a wealth of local history.

The village itself has a few tourist shops, cafes and pubs where you can spend some time and fully appreciate the surrounding scenery. The car park is pay and display with a [Tourist Information Centre](#) and toilet facilities.

Travelling:

From the village car park, turn left and continue on the B5285 which shortly meets the A593 at a T junction in the village centre. Turn left, over the river and past a service station & shop, then immediately take Lake Road on the left which leads 0.5 miles down to a dead end at the lake. The car park is just before the lake on the left.



Coniston lakeside

Distance: 5.6 miles

Location: Lake Road car park, Coniston Water

Coordinates: N 54.36460, W 3.06779

Coniston Water is a scenic and relatively quiet lake surrounded by low and mostly wooded hills. It is well worth taking a trip on the lake to better appreciate the scenery and you can do this either on the historic [Steam Yacht 'Gondola'](#) or the [Coniston Launch](#). If you fancy hiring a boat yourself, the [Coniston Boating Centre](#) is adjacent to the car park with a good selection of small boats and paddle boards. Across the lake, you can just about make out [Brantwood](#) house where John Ruskin the famous Victorian visionary, artist, art

critic and writer, lived from 1871 until his death in 1900. You can visit the house and gardens via the Gondola or Launch boats which both stop at the jetty near the house.

The lake also has famous literary connections through the popular children's adventure book 'Swallows and Amazons', written by the author Arthur Ransome and published in 1930. The book is based on a number of locations around the lake, for example, Wild Cat Island in the book is said to be based on Peel Island towards the southern end of the lake.

Perhaps the most famous moment in the lake's history came on 4th January 1967 when Donald Campbell lost his life on the water during a world record water speed attempt. Film footage shows the boat summersault and break up but it was not until 2001 that his body was discovered on the bed of the lake and laid to rest in Coniston cemetery. The battered boat was also raised and taken away for restoration, but subsequently caught up in a legal battle of ownership for many years and not on show. All that changed in March 2024 when it was returned to Coniston and is now on show in the 'Bluebird Wing' of the Ruskin Museum in Coniston village.

You can learn more about 'The Campbells on Coniston' and about 'Swallows and Amazons' at the Ruskin Museum in the village and also on themed cruises around the lake aboard the Gondola or the Launch.

Also next to the car park and shore here is [The Bluebird Cafe](#) which provides refreshments with a lovely view over the water and there are several picnic tables adjacent. The car park is pay and display with toilet facilities.

Travelling:

Return back up Lake Road and at the top turn left on the main A593. You soon leave Coniston village and the road starts to climb with some views across Coniston Water. Shortly, pass through a small settlement where the [Ship Inn](#) is on the right. The pleasing road runs parallel with the lake but views are limited by trees. Soon, enter the small village of Torver, pass the [Church House Inn](#) on the left and take the next left turn, signposted A5084 to Greenodd. [The Wilsons Arms & Torver Deli](#) are opposite this junction. After approx 0.4 miles there is a small layby on the right where it is worth a quick stop to look back at the wonderful views of the Coniston mountain range and Torver valley.

Continue to climb a short distance, passing a Land Rover garage, then descend steeply through Torver Common towards Coniston Water. Cross Torver Beck and soon the road joins the tree-lined shores of the lake. There are laybys at the roadside where you can stop and admire the views across the lake, which include Peel Island, famous for being Wild Cat Island in the film 'Swallows and Amazons'. Continue a short distance before crossing a cattle grid, the entrance to Brown Howe is just beyond on the left.

Distance: 10.8 miles

Location: Brown Howe

Coordinates: N 54.31026, W 3.09262

Brown Howe is a wonderful public access area on the shores of Coniston Water. There is a good area of grass bordered by trees and shingle beaches with fabulous views up the lake towards the central Lake District mountains. The area is perfect for a picnic, play and paddle in idyllic surroundings. Non powered boats can be launched here if you want to explore the lake and walks are available across the road, up the pleasant lane onto Blawith Common. The car park is adjacent to the grass and is pay and display with seasonal toilets.



Brown Howe

Travelling:

Leave Brown Howe car park and turn left on the A5084. The road meanders through woodland before the trees thin out and a more open section of road is reached. Approx 0.5 miles from Brown Howe is a rough layby parking area for Blawith Common on the left.



Blawith Common lakeshore

Distance: 11.4 miles

Location: Blawith Common

Coordinates: N 54.30409, W 3.09771

Blawith Common is a large area of attractive Common land either side of the A5084 road. Towards Coniston Water, a picturesque and peaceful lakeshore access area has some open grass and shingle beaches overlooking the southern end of the lake. The lakeshore in the vicinity has open access and is a great place to explore with rocky outcrops and trees overlooking the appealing shore. From the parking area it is a short walk down a rough path to the lakeshore. The area is

a real hidden gem being quite secluded and well away from the road. Across the road, some wonderful footpaths through bracken take you up into the low hills where you will find fabulous views, Beacon Fell and Beacon Tarn. There are a couple of additional rough parking areas further along the road which also have paths down to the shore. Free roadside parking but no facilities.

Travelling:

Leave the parking area and turn left on the A5084. The road continues across the attractive Blawith Common, past bracken covered hills with views over the southern end of Coniston Water. Shortly, cross a cattle grid and enter the small settlement of Water Yeat where you take a left turn at the minor cross roads, signposted to 'East of Lake'. This short section of very narrow road soon crosses the River Crake (which drains Coniston Water) and meets a T junction where you turn left.

The 'East of Lake' road gives good views towards the Coniston mountain range in the distance and soon passes through the small village of High Nibthwaite. Beyond this the southern end of Coniston Water appears again on the left and there are continued glimpses of the lake along the following attractive section through trees. The road is quite narrow and some care is needed. Approx 1 mile beyond High Nibthwaite, arrive at Low Peel Near with its open beach on the left and adjacent roadside parking.

Distance: 14.4 miles

Location: Low Peel Near

Coordinates: N 54.31294, W 3.08336

Low Peel Near is a fabulous National Trust lakeshore access area overlooking Coniston Water. The area is perfect for exploring and enjoying the scenery with a picnic. The main shingle beach is adjacent to the road and has wonderful views southwards down the lake. From there you can follow a rough path northwards along the shore, through attractive woodland and past a series of rocky outcrops overlooking secluded coves. Eventually, the shore overlooks Peel Island, famous for being Wild Cat Island in the film 'Swallows and Amazons'. If you have a small boat you can paddle or sail the short distance across to the island which again provides some great exploring. There is limited free roadside parking and no facilities.



Low Peel Near lakeshore

Travelling:

Continue northwards along the narrow road, following the attractive tree-lined shore with glimpses of the lake through the trees. After approx 0.7 miles, pass Parkamoor jetty where the [Steam Yacht Gondola](#) sometimes stops. A short distance beyond is Dodgson Wood car park on the right which is free and gives good access to the adjacent rough shingle shore where you can fully appreciate the wonderful views across the lake. Much of this shoreline has open access and there are a few free car parks along the way. Continue on for approx 0.6 miles to another car park, Bailiff Wood, on the right. The quiet road continues to meander along the pleasing shoreline for another 1.1 miles to Machell's Coppice car park on the right.



Machell's Coppice

Distance: 17.1 miles

Location: Machell's Coppice

Coordinates: N 54.34767, W 3.06338

Machell's Coppice is another wonderful lakeshore access area on Coniston Water. The large open shingle delta, formed around a stream, normally extends out beyond the trees into the lake and so provides fabulous views over the whole lake and towards the Coniston mountain range across the water. The large free car park allows easy access across the minor road to the adjacent shore and there are a few picnic tables. The wooded slopes above are the western

extreme of [Grizedale Forest](#) and there is a short [walk](#) up into the woods from the car park for better lake views. No facilities.

Travelling:

Turn right out of the car park and continue northwards along the lakeshore road for approx 0.5 miles to Brantwood car park on the right.

Distance: 17.6 miles

Location: Brantwood

Coordinates: N 54.35263, W 3.06046

[Brantwood](#) is a beautifully situated country house overlooking Coniston Water. The historic house was the home of the famous English art critic, artist and social commentator John Ruskin who lived there from 1871 until his death in 1900. Ruskin filled the house full of artwork and objects during his time and nowadays the house is basically a fascinating museum of his life.



Brantwood

Outside, as well as fabulous views across the lake, there are extensive and varied gardens within the 250 acre estate which stretches from the lakeshore up the wooded slopes behind the house. Adjacent to the house is a cafe and toilets. The house, gardens and cafe are open daily from March to November and February school holidays. Also, Wednesday to Sunday over the winter. Admission fee applies to house and gardens. Brantwood jetty is nearby where Coniston Water boats stop.

Travelling:

Leave Brantwood car park and turn right to continue northwards. The road climbs above the lake with great views towards Coniston village and mountains. After approx 1 mile the road bears left and descends steeply towards the lake. Just before the road meets the lake shore is Monk Coniston car park on the left.



Monk Coniston

Distance: 19.1 miles

Location: Monk Coniston

Coordinates: N 54.37186, W 3.05400

Monk Coniston is an attractive lakeshore access with a strip of shingle beach at the head of Coniston Water. The car park gives direct access to a footpath through trees which follows the shingle shore a short distance to a jetty where you can catch the [Steam Yacht Gondola](#). The shore has wonderful views across the lake to the Coniston mountain range. In the opposite direction from the car park is a more open narrow shingle beach which looks straight down

Coniston Water. A footpath over the road takes you a short distance to [Monk Coniston Hall gardens](#) which can be viewed from the footpath and have some attractive features. The Monk Coniston Estate includes Tarn Hows and was once owned by Beatrix Potter before she left it to the National Trust. Pay and display car park with a small picnic area and seasonal toilet facilities.

Travelling:

Leave Monk Coniston car park and turn left. The road follows the head of the lake shoreline for a short distance before meeting a T junction where you turn right towards Hawkshead on the B5285. The road soon climbs steeply through trees and eventually reaches the summit at High Cross. If you turn right at the minor cross roads here, there is some free parking with fabulous views towards the Coniston mountains, walks into Grizedale Forest or to Tarn Hows and a very well placed picnic table. Over the summit, descend through Hawkshead Hill with some good Lakeland views and soon meet a T junction where you turn right and enter the village of Hawkshead. After a couple of bends, the village car park is a short distance on the right.

Distance: 22.5 miles

Return to start point

Location: Hawkshead Village car park

Coordinates: N 54.37410, W 2.99679

Grizedale Forest & Esthwaite Water loop

Travelling:

Turn right out of Hawkshead village car park then quickly right at the following two T junctions, following signs for Grizedale. The road soon leaves Hawkshead and after approx 0.2 miles take the easily missed right turn towards Grizedale. The narrow, windy and sometimes busy road starts ascending quite steeply and some care is needed. The gradient soon eases as the road passes attractive forest before reaching a summit at Moor Top where there is a car park with picnic tables and forest walks.



Moor Top, Grizedale

Over the summit, the road gradually descends with wonderful views over surrounding Grizedale Forest. Shortly, pass Grizedale Lodge and Kennels 'pay on exit' car park is just beyond on the right. Continue a short distance to pass Grizedale Forest visitor centre on the right and the main car park is a short distance beyond on the left.



Grizedale Forest

Distance: 25.9 miles

Location: Grizedale Forest Visitor Centre

Coordinates: N 54.33774, W 3.02253

[Grizedale](#) is a large forest occupying much of the area between lakes Windermere and Coniston. There are plenty of activities for visitors including many [walking](#) and [cycling](#) trails, often along forest tracks. For the more adventurous there are some more technical mountain bike trails and a [Go Ape](#) experience which offers various forest activities, including a 'Tree Top Adventure' and 'Forest Segway'. Many of the trails lead from the visitor centre up the surrounding hills and offer fabulous views inbetween the trees. More

information can be found at the large visitor centre where there is also a [cafe](#), shop, [bike hire](#), picnic tables, play area and toilet facilities. These are open daily all year. The car park is 'pay on exit' and the first 20 minutes are free.

Travelling:

Turn left out of the main car park and continue along the attractive valley road through pastures overlooked by forested hills. Soon, pass Bogle Crag car park on the left where you can take a [forest walk](#). Continue a short distance to the small village of Satterthwaite where [The Eagle's Head pub](#) provides refreshments. Beyond the village, soon pass [Grizedale campsite](#), then descend alongside Force Beck to some buildings where you turn left towards Dale Park. The narrow road passes Blind Lane free car park and continues a short distance to a left turn which you take. Soon, cross a stream and just beyond is Low Dale Park car park and picnic site on the left.

Distance: 29.0 miles

Location: Low Dale Park, Grizedale

Coordinates: N 54.31704, W 3.00131

Low Dale Park is one of a number of roadside picnic sites dotted around Grizedale Forest and is arguably one of the more attractive. There is a small grassy area inbetween trees and next to a stream with a couple of picnic tables. The trees provide plenty of shade but it is also open enough to get some sunshine. Beyond the small footbridge upstream are some lovely views across open meadows surrounded by forested hills. The footpath over the footbridge soon leads to the [High Bowkerstead and Silurian Way forest walks](#). This side of the forest is off the beaten track and normally quite peaceful. Free parking but there is only space for a few cars. No facilities.



Low Dale Park, Grizedale

Travelling:

Leave the car park and turn left to continue up the attractive peaceful valley, again passing through pastures surrounded by forested hills. After approx 1.4 miles, the narrow road starts to climb quite steeply and soon passes over a summit to descend with views ahead towards Esthwaite Water and

central Lakeland. Shortly, meet a T junction and turn right towards Newby Bridge. After approx 0.3 miles, Esthwaite Water car park is in woodland on the left.



Esthwaite Water

Distance: 32.0 miles

Location: Esthwaite Water Visitor Centre

Coordinates: N 54.35029, W 2.98460

Esthwaite Water is one of the lesser known Lake District lakes, probably due to it being the only privately owned one with very little public access. However, it is still very attractive and is worth some exploring. This small visitor centre, set in woodland on the lakeshore with lovely views up the lake, offers a number of attractions for visitors and has developed from the original trout fishery. It remains a popular venue for [fishing](#), boats and kit can be hired for this

activity. Also on offer is an [Osprey Safari](#) where you can self-drive a small electric boat around the lake looking for the Ospreys that are normally in residence between April and September. At any time of year the boat ride gives a great view of the different wildlife on and around the peaceful lake.

The lake was a treasured place for Beatrix Potter, being so close to her house at Hill Top, and for the famous poet William Wordsworth, who went to school in nearby Hawkshead. No doubt the lake and surroundings gave them both plenty of inspiration for their interests as they explored it.

The visitor centre is a 2 minute walk from the main car park along the shingle shore and there are a few picnic tables around the car park. The small [Boathouse cafe](#) at the visitor centre provides refreshments with an attractive terrace overlooking the lake and nearby toilets. Open all year. The car park is pay and display.

Travelling:

Leave Esthwaite Water car park and turn left. Very shortly take the left turn to Sawrey. The narrow road follows the shores of Esthwaite Water before climbing a short distance to the village of Near Sawrey. Soon meet a T junction in the village where you turn right and Hill Top car park is immediately on the right.

Distance: 32.9 miles

Location: Hill Top, Near Sawrey

Coordinates: N 54.35247, W 2.97133

[Hill Top](#), in the attractive village of Near Sawrey, was once the home and sanctuary of Beatrix Potter and is still kept exactly as it would have been when she lived and worked there.

Born in London in 1866, Beatrix Potter is known across the world nowadays as the famous children's author who produced 23 little story books with much loved characters such as Peter Rabbit and Jemima Puddleduck. What many don't realise is just how talented and influential she was in many other varied fields, from land conservation and sheep farming to the science behind fungi.



Hill Top house

Hill Top was bought by Beatrix in 1905 with profits from her early work. At that time she still lived in London, this was her bolthole and sanctuary where she could escape to write her books. Even when she married in 1913 and moved in to nearby Castle Farm she continued to use Hill Top for her personal work and pleasure. Today the house is kept very much as she left it when it was donated to the National Trust after her death in 1943. Very atmospheric and filled with her personal possessions, you can get a real sense of her life and guides will tell you more. The garden is also wonderful and, along with the house and other nearby locations, provided Beatrix with many illustrations used in her books.

Hill Top is a short walk along the road from the car park. The house is open daily, except Fridays, from February to November, plus Fridays in school holidays. Closed in winter. There is an admission fee to house and gardens, free for National Trust members. The ticket office is in the car park. The house can be busy so entry is by timed ticket and booking recommended. Outside there are attractive gardens, a small gift shop, toilets and occasionally a pop up cafe. The small car park is free for visitors to the property. The [Tower Bank Arms](#) next door is a quaint looking pub which also has connections with Beatrix Potter.

Travelling:

From Hill Top car park, turn left on the B5285 towards Hawkshead. The road soon follows the picturesque eastern shore of Esthwaite Water with good views between the trees, across the water towards the hills beyond. Just beyond the lake, the road bends to the left and the village of Hawkshead is ahead. Take the right turn to Hawkshead village, still the B5285, then very soon the first left turn brings you back to the village car park on the left.



Hawkshead Grammar School

Distance: 35.0 miles

Location: Hawkshead Village car park

Coordinates: N 54.37410, W 2.99679

Return to start point.



Martin Wilson

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