

Keswick - Borrowdale - Buttermere drive

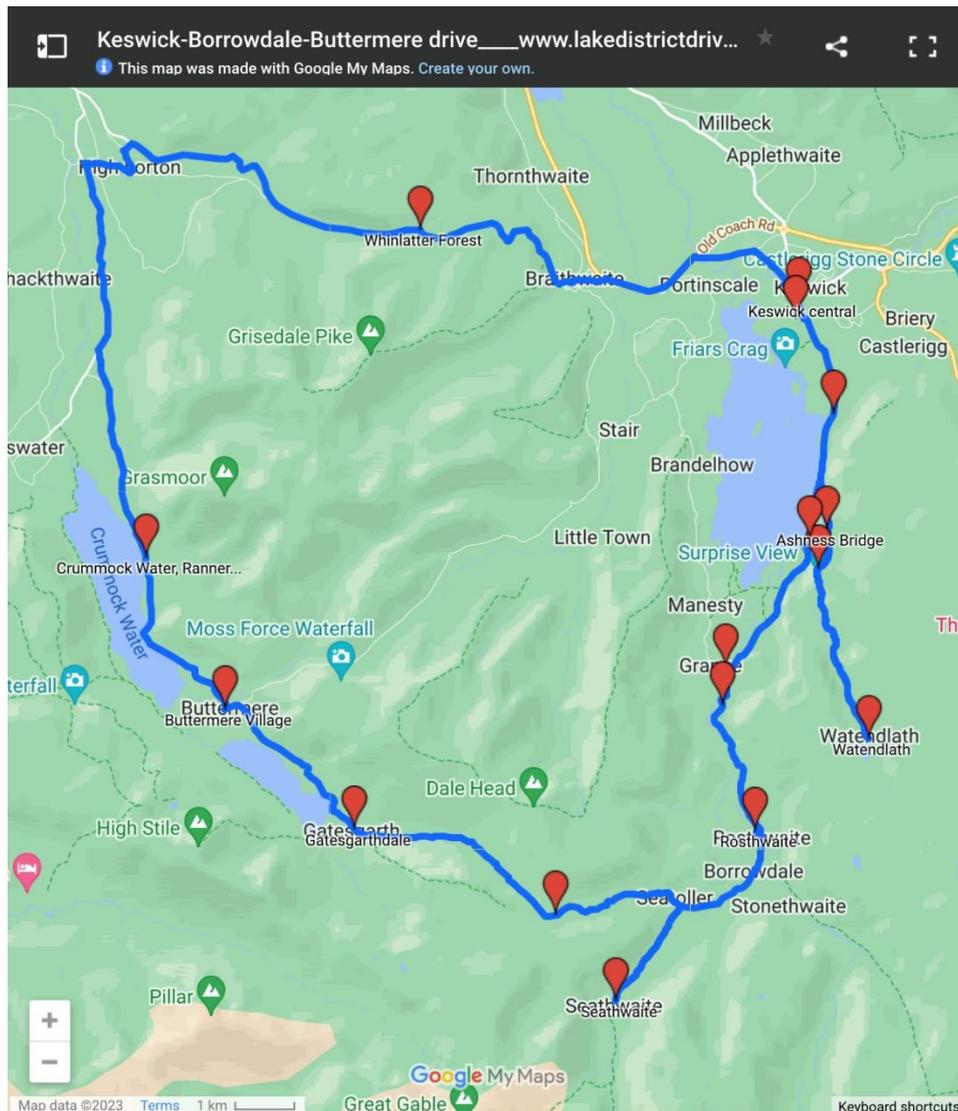


A drive of many natural wonders starting from Keswick visiting some of the most beautiful lakes, valleys and mountain passes in the Lake District. Highlights include Derwent Water, Borrowdale, Honister Pass, Buttermere, Crummock Water and Whinlatter.



Derwent Water from Surprise View

Route Map



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

Distance	Attraction	Car Park Coordinates
0 miles	Keswick	N 54.59936, W 3.13758
1.4 miles	Calfclose Bay	N 54.58325, W 3.12902
2.7 miles	Ashness Bridge	N 54.56663, W 3.13059
3.2 miles	Surprise View	N 54.56102, W 3.13284
5.1 miles	Watendlath	N 54.53684, W 3.12033
8.6 miles	Kettlewell / Lodore Falls	N 54.56537, W 3.13476
10.2 miles	Grange in Borrowdale	N 54.54705, W 3.15544
10.9 miles	The Bowder Stone	N 54.54158, W 3.15620
12.4 miles	Rosthwaite	N 54.52358, W 3.14818
14.9 miles	Seathwaite	N 54.49939, W 3.18212
17.5 miles	Honister Pass	N 54.51165, W 3.19697
19.9 miles	Gatesgarthdale	N 54.52381, W 3.24607
21.9 miles	Buttermere Village	N 54.54097, W 3.27756
24.0 miles	Crummock Water, Rannerdale	N 54.56267, W 3.29685
32.3 miles	Whinlatter Forest	N 54.60939, W 3.23012
37.1 miles	Keswick	N 54.59936, W 3.13758

The Drive

Distance: 0 miles

Location: Keswick, Central car park

Coordinates: N 54.59936, W 3.13758

Keswick is a popular and pretty tourist town nestled between Derwent Water and Skiddaw mountain. It has long been the main hub for the northern Lake District and boomed when the railway line from Penrith and west Cumbria was completed in 1864, bringing Victorian tourists to Keswick station. You can still see the station today in the northern town but the railway line was closed in 1972. The old railway line is now a popular cycle and walking path alongside the River Greta towards Threlkeld to the east.



Keswick town centre

An important part of Keswick's heritage is pencil making and you can visit the interesting [Pencil Museum](#) where you will learn all about historic graphite mining in nearby Borrowdale and the growth of pencil making in Keswick through the 19th century. Pencil manufacture moved to nearby Workington in 2008 but the museum remains and you can also see one of the largest colour pencils in the world at almost 26 feet long! Other interesting attractions in the town include [Keswick Museum](#) and [The Puzzling Place](#). There are abundant shops, outdoor specialists, cafes, pubs and restaurants around the town as well as some lovely parks. In the town centre is the pedestrianised market place where you might find the market in full swing. In the centre of that is the prominent old Moot Hall which now houses the Tourist Information Centre. Over the River Greta from the town centre, you will find the attractive Fitz Park with its vast open grassy areas next to the river where you can escape the crowds.

A 10 minute walk from the town centre is the lakeside area on Derwent Water which is always popular and you can explore the lake, either by boat or the fabulous 10 mile [footpath](#) which circuits the lake. The [Keswick Launch](#) cruise is a wonderful way to take in the lake and its surroundings. There are regular boats (less in winter) which stop here and at several beauty spots around the lake. It is definitely worth walking the short distance to [Friar's Crag](#) which offers beautiful views up the lake. Crow Park, opposite Lakeside car park, has a lovely open setting next to the lake where you can watch the boats come and go, again with great views. Between Crow Park and the town centre is Hope Park which has delightful landscaped grounds and miniature golf. There is a cafe, toilet facilities and the popular [Theatre by the Lake](#) which has its own facilities.



Derwent Water from Friar's Crag

Central car park is very close to the town centre. The lake is less than 10 minute walk but if you want to drive closer to the lake you can park at Lakeside car park which is a little further along the Borrowdale road and turn right at the next mini-roundabout. Central and Lakeside car parks are pay and display.

Travelling:

Leave the car park and turn left on the B5289 Borrowdale Road towards Borrowdale. Soon meet a mini-roundabout, taking the second exit leads a short distance to Keswick lakeside and parking. Otherwise, the drive takes the first exit, then the second exit at the following mini-roundabout towards Borrowdale. As you leave Keswick behind, a roadside sign tells you you're entering Borrowdale Valley and views open up ahead on the right looking up the mountainous valley. A tantalising glimpse of the spectacular scenery to come. Continue for approx 1 mile, with views of Walla Crag ahead, to Great Wood car park on the left.



Centenary Stone, Calfclose Bay

Distance: 1.4 miles

Location: Calfclose Bay, Great Wood car park

Coordinates: N 54.58325, W 3.12902

Great Wood is one of many National Trust car parks around Derwent Water and Borrowdale and is set amongst ancient woodland near Derwent Water lake shore. These woodlands are actually the last remaining fragments of English Rainforest which once covered much of the west coast of Britain before human interference. This Atlantic Oak woodland is the largest area of native broadleaf woodland in the Lake District and the ferns, mosses and lichens which grow here are all rainforest indicator species. It is also a good place to spot wildlife such as deer, red squirrels and birds of prey around the crags above. There is a circular walk from the car park through the woodland where you can appreciate it more. If you're here in May you may well see bluebells in the woods and in October or November the autumn colours are fabulous across the valley.

Derwent Water lake shore is a short walk through the trees across the road. This brings you out at picturesque Calfclose Bay, with shingle beaches and wonderful views across the lake. Offshore, you can see Rampsholme Island with St Herbert's Island behind. On the opposite side of the lake the mountain ridge containing the popular Cat Bells fell is prominent, with other mountains beyond that. At the northern side of the bay you will see the unusual Centenary Stone sculpture on the shingle shore, placed there in 1995 to mark the centenary of the National Trust. Just beyond that is a small headland with a very well placed seat to appreciate the views which are fabulous looking southwards, straight up the lake

towards the Borrowdale valley. You also get a good view of the Atlantic Oakwoods which cloak the craggy slopes and ravines on this side of the valley. The footpath continues northwards the relatively short distance back to Friar's Crag and Keswick.

The car park is free for National Trust members, otherwise pay and display. An information board in the car park tells you more about the local walks. There are a couple of picnic tables but no facilities. As many stops on this drive are National Trust car parks, if you aren't a member it might be worth purchasing a day ticket which can be used at all of their car parks for that day.

Travelling:

Exit the car park via the one way system and turn left on the B5289 towards Borrowdale. The road follows the wooded lakeshore and after approx 0.5 miles there is a left turn signposted to Ashness Bridge and Watendlath. If you take this left, the dead end road is single track with passing places, steep and tight in places and can be busy in season. However, the attractions along this road are well worth visiting. There is a small free car park immediately after the junction on the left giving access to the adjacent lakeshore and Ashness Gate jetty for the [Keswick Launch](#). Continue up hill for approx 0.5 miles to Ashness Bridge. Take care driving over the bridge which is very narrow. The car park is just beyond the bridge in the trees on the right.

Distance: 2.7 miles

Location: Ashness Bridge

Coordinates: N 54.56663, W 3.13059

Ashness Bridge is a traditional stone-built packhorse bridge dating from the 18th century which has become popular with tourists in more recent times due to its fabulous scenic location. Probably one of the most photographed scenes in the Lake District, you will find it on many souvenirs, cards and calendars. The best view is from upstream of the bridge, if you stand on the stones next to Barrow Beck you have the bridge in the foreground, Derwent Water behind and the mighty Skiddaw mountain range prominent behind that. The view has become a little obscured by trees over the years and would be better when there are no leaves but it's well worth a stop at any time of year to appreciate this famous scene.



Ashness Bridge

The car park is National Trust pay and display with no facilities nearby.

Travelling:

Turn right out of the car park to continue up the minor road. The trees thin out a bit as the road crosses a cattle grid and climbs through attractive pastures with craggy hills to the left. After approx 0.5 miles there is a car park on the left for Surprise View.

Distance: 3.2 miles

Location: Surprise View

Coordinates: N 54.56102, W 3.13284

Surprise View is probably one of the best easily accessible viewpoints in the Lake District and a must see on this drive. The surprise might be how unexpected it is, being completely hidden by trees from the road driving here. However, just across the road from the car park is a gap in the trees with an open cliff top offering stunning panoramic views across the whole of Derwent Water and beyond. The distant view

includes Skiddaw, Cat Bells and Maiden Moor mountains along with Bassenthwaite lake and even further beyond that towards the Solway Firth estuary and the hills of southern Scotland on a good day.



Derwent Water from Surprise View

Looking at Derwent Water, you can see the four main islands and Brandelhow wood below Cat Bells which was the first Lake District property acquired by the National Trust in 1902. Beyond Brandelhow are the lakeside wooded estates of Lingholm and Fawe Park where Beatrix Potter spent many holidays between 1885 and 1907. The surrounding area gave her much inspiration for her 23 enchanting children's tales which were published in the early 1900's and are still hugely popular today. Many background illustrations in the books are also recognisable from this area. Looking down below the viewpoint are Lodore Falls and Mary Mount hotels.

The car park is National Trust pay and display with no facilities nearby.

Travelling:

The minor road continues to wind up through the trees but shortly becomes more level and leaves the trees behind to pass along the scenic valley floor. At peak times the road can be quite busy and difficult. After 1.8 miles you reach the end of the road at the hamlet of Watendlath and there is a decent sized car park to the left.

Distance: 5.1 miles

Location: Watendlath

Coordinates: N 54.53684, W 3.12033

Watendlath is an ancient hamlet and tarn owned by the National Trust and located at the head of a remote high valley. It is a very picturesque place with the tarn set in a natural bowl surrounded by mountains. Pretty Watendlath Beck spills out of the tarn and down the attractive valley towards Lodore Falls and Derwent Water. The beck is spanned by a lovely old packhorse bridge and you can stroll along the banks of the beck and tarn soaking up the surroundings. There are a few old properties in the hamlet and also a cafe next to the car park.



Watendlath

The car park is National Trust pay and display with adjacent toilet facilities.

Travelling:

Retrace your steps all the way back down the Watendlath road to the B5289 Borrowdale road and turn sharp left to continue up the valley. There are some good views of the lake and surrounding hills inbetween the trees and after approx 0.5 miles, Kettlewell car park is on the right.

Distance: 8.6 miles

Location: Kettlewell car park and Lodore Falls

Coordinates: N 54.56537, W 3.13476

Kettlewell car park gives direct access to the picturesque lakeshore and is also the best place to park if you want to visit the famous Lodore Falls waterfall nearby. The lakeshore is just a few metres away, easy access and a good place for a picnic and paddle with a small shingle beach inbetween trees. There are

some wonderful open views across the water towards Cat Bells fell and northwards towards the Skiddaw mountain range, with ancient woodland and crags behind you.



Lodore Falls

The Lodore Falls were made popular by Victorian tourists in the 19th century and are about half a mile walk each way if you take the footpath across the road to the right. This is where Watendlath Beck tumbles down from the high hanging valley above, created by the Borrowdale glacier thousands of years ago. The falls are located behind the [Lodore Falls Hotel](#) with permitted pedestrian access. To be honest there's not much to see in dry weather, just a big pile of boulders in a lush green canyon! But in wet weather the water rampages down this cascade and makes an impressive sight from the viewing area at the foot of the falls.

Kettlewell car park is National Trust pay and display with no facilities.

Travelling:

Turn right out of the car park and continue along the Borrowdale road through woodland. Soon there is the [Mary Mount Hotel](#) on the right, followed by the [Lodore Falls Hotel](#) on the left. Both hotels offer refreshments and overlook Lodore jetty where the [Keswick Launch](#) stops. This marks the end of Derwent Water as you continue up Borrowdale. There are attractive valley views inbetween trees and you soon reach the [Borrowdale Hotel](#) on the left, another elegant looking hotel serving refreshments. Shortly, the road runs alongside the River Derwent on the right and you see a double arched bridge over the river. Turn right to cross this historic double arched stone bridge, which originally dates from 1675, to enter the village of Grange in Borrowdale. There is a small parking area over the bridge on the right.

Distance: 10.2 miles

Location: Grange in Borrowdale

Coordinates: N 54.54705, W 3.15544

Grange in Borrowdale is a small attractive village in a fabulous setting on the River Derwent in the Borrowdale valley. It is worth a wonder through the timeless village with its pretty slate and whitewashed old houses. In the village centre is a cafe and [Holy Trinity Church](#) which has some interesting 'dog-tooth' ceiling decoration. Next to the bridge is the Methodist Church which now houses '[The Borrowdale Story](#)' display, telling the interesting history of the valley and its human influences going back over 6000 years.



Grange in Borrowdale

Wherever you are in the village, the surrounding views are wonderful. Behind the village is a wall of mountains which includes Maiden Moor and High Spy. Back across the river are the wooded craggy slopes of Grange Fell. Looking up the river you can see the pointy peak of Castle Crag where the valley suddenly becomes very narrow and is known as 'The Jaws of Borrowdale', before opening up again further upstream. The river itself is normally shallow and crystal clear here with plenty of exposed shingle where you can picnic and paddle whilst enjoying the surroundings.

During the late medieval period, from the 13th century, much of the valley was owned by the Cistercian monks of Furness Abbey in southern Cumbria. Prior to that the land had been very poor quality but the industrious monks set about draining and cultivating the land. They established an outlying farm, or

grange, here in the valley, hence the name of the village. They grew crops such as rye, oats and barley but their main produce was wool from sheep farming. This produce was transported out of the valley to the monastery using a network of packhorse trails over the fells that are nowadays used as bridleways. More and more land was cultivated until the floor of the valley would look pretty much as it does today. The end of the period was marked in dramatic fashion by the dissolution of the monasteries by King Henry VIII in the 1530's, when he seized much of their wealth, destroyed most of their buildings and created the Church of England.

Parking is free but very limited in this area. There are public toilets by the river.

Travelling:

Travel back over the river and turn right to continue along the B5289 through the wooded valley. In approx 0.5 miles on the left is the Bowder Stone car park, up a short and steep hill.



The Bowder Stone

Distance: 10.9 miles

Location: The Bowder Stone car park

Coordinates: N 54.54158, W 3.15620

The Bowder Stone is a very famous boulder which has somehow come to rest in a gravity defying position perched on its edge in the woods of Borrowdale. The stone is about 30 feet high, estimated to be 2000 tons in weight and you can't help but feel a little intimidated when you stand under the massive overhang in case it topples over! Nobody seems able to confirm how the stone came to land in such a precarious position, but it either fell from the crags above or was

deposited by the Borrowdale glacier in the last ice age. There are steep steps to the top for the daring where you can get a better view of the area, although there are no barriers up there so you need to take care. This location is directly in the 'Jaws of Borrowdale' where the valley becomes very narrow before opening out again further upstream. You can see the wooded pinnacle of Castle Crag across the valley which doesn't look far away at all.

The Bowder Stone car park is set in an attractive location amongst trees overlooking the Borrowdale valley. The Bowder Stone itself is about 10 minutes [walk](#) if you follow the footpath down the steps towards the road and beyond. The footpath is well made and climbs for the first section past an old quarry which is now popular for rock climbing and abseiling. The path is then more level until you reach the big stone.

The car park is National Trust pay and display with a few pleasant picnic tables but no other facilities.

Travelling:

Leave the car park and turn left on the B5289. You now head through the 'Jaws of Borrowdale' where the wooded valley becomes very narrow for a short distance. The road cuts through rocky terrain with steep slopes on the left and the mesmerisingly crystal clear River Derwent on the right. You can also catch glimpses of the pointy peak of Castle Crag through the trees over the river.

This valley road wasn't completed until 1842 and before that access would have been on horseback along rough tracks. In the 1700's the valley was explored by early travel writers and artists, some of whom found it a frightening place with its wild and rugged scenery. Later, romantic writers and artists such as William Wordsworth found it a much more pleasurable place and drew much inspiration from the surroundings.

Shortly, the valley opens up again with great views in all directions and enters the village of Rosthwaite. Take the minor right turn in the village which soon leads to the village car park on the right.

Distance: 12.4 miles

Location: Rosthwaite

Coordinates: N 54.52358, W 3.14818

Rosthwaite is a small attractive village set in the heart of the Borrowdale valley, amongst wonderful mountain scenery. You can certainly admire the surroundings and the quaint old cottages, but there isn't a lot else to see in the village itself. If you need refreshments there are some good options, including the [Flock-in tea room](#), up the minor road from the car park, or the [Royal Oak Hotel](#) and the [Scafell Hotel](#), both on the main valley road.



Borrowdale from Castle Crag

This is superb walking country with numerous footpaths through the valley and up surrounding hills. You previously drove past Castle Crag in the 'Jaws of Borrowdale' and you can walk up it from here to enjoy one of the best views in Borrowdale, looking over the whole valley and Derwent Water. The walk is about 1.5 miles each way, following the River Derwent downstream, then a relatively short but very steep climb.

If you go back over a thousand years, the valley was a very inhospitable place, covered in dense woodland and boggy ground, but in the 10th century Scandinavian settlers came here looking for summer grazing for their cattle and started to create clearings, or thwaites, in the woods for settlements. Nowadays there are many place names with 'thwaite' in them, especially around here, for example Rosthwaite! All starting out as clearings and then settlements from this Scandinavian era. The Norse legacy is very evident in many local place names such as Fell (mountain), Beck (stream), Tarn (small lake) and even the name Borrowdale is a Norse derivation from the Iron Age fort on Castle Crag.

The small car park is National Trust pay and display with adjacent toilets.

Travelling:

Turn left out of the car park, then soon right at the T junction, back on the B5289 Borrowdale road. Continue through Rosthwaite and glorious countryside beyond. After approx 0.5 miles, a left dead end turn takes you a short distance to the quaint small village of Stonethwaite where you will find the [Langstrath Country Inn](#) and limited free roadside parking. Also here is the historic [St Andrew's Church](#), built in 1687 it was the first church in the Borrowdale valley. Prior to that, parishioners had to travel nearly 5 miles on horseback or foot to the nearest church at Crosthwaite in Keswick for services. Inside there is also an additional part to '[The Borrowdale Story](#)' display which focuses on local mining and quarrying.

Back on the B5289, continue approx 1 mile through spectacular mountain scenery to another dead end left turn, just beyond the [Glaramara Hotel](#). Take this left turn towards Seathwaite and continue up the narrow valley for approx 0.7 miles to cross a bridge over the upper River Derwent. Beyond here is roadside parking for approx 0.5 miles to the end of the road at the tiny hamlet of Seathwaite.

Distance: 14.9 miles

Location: Seathwaite

Coordinates: N 54.49939, W 3.18212

The remote and beautiful Seathwaite valley is about as close as you can get to the central Lakeland mountains by car and therefore a popular place to start some epic walks, including Scafell Pike which at

978m is the highest mountain in England. The small hamlet of Seathwaite at the end of the road is also the wettest inhabited place in England with over 3 metres of rain annually.

Mining in the valley goes back over 6000 years to when Neolithic man made stone axes high up on the surrounding fells. A little more recently graphite was found and mined from the 16th century. To the right of Seathwaite hamlet you can still see the remains of mine buildings by the river and spoil heaps on the slopes above. This quality graphite was later used to make pencils and that became the main industry in Keswick during the 19th century. The [Keswick Pencil Museum](#) tells you more. The mine was closed in the late 19th century as the graphite became too hard to find and therefore unviable.



Seathwaite valley

Near the mine workings on the right side of the valley are the ancient 'Borrowdale Yews' which are believed to be over 1500 years old. The original 4 evergreen trees were made famous by the poet William Wordsworth who celebrated them in his 1826 poem, Yew Trees, as "those fraternal Four of Borrowdale, Joined in one solemn and capacious grove". Unfortunately, the 4 became 3 during a storm in 1866 and the others have lost various limbs over the years but the massive twisting trunks and branches are still an impressive sight. They are a short walk along the footpath which follows the river between the road bridge and Seathwaite hamlet. Just beyond the Yews and the mine workings, Sourmilk Gill

waterfall tumbles down the steep slopes towards Seathwaite hamlet and is impressive after rain.

Roadside parking is free, or you can pay to park behind Seathwaite Farm at the end of the road which is available during busy periods. There are no facilities in the valley.

Travelling:

Turn around and retrace your steps back down Seathwaite valley. At the T junction with the B5289, turn left to immediately enter the small village of Seatoller. This marks the end of the Borrowdale valley road before it heads steeply up and over Honister Pass. There's not much to see in Seatoller itself apart from a few cottages that were built as homes for miners working at nearby Honister slate mine. The large car park is still popular, mostly for walkers with many low and high level walking routes setting off from here. The 78 Borrowdale bus from Keswick also terminates here and the open top deck provides a fabulous view of the valley on route. The car park is National Trust pay and display with toilet facilities.

The road passes through the small village before a sudden sharp climb up Honister Pass, one of the more notorious sections of Lake District road! It is quite narrow and steep so care needs to be taken, especially in poor weather. The first section passes through trees with Hause Gill cascading down below on the left. It's not too far before you leave the trees behind and the gradient eases through a more open section with good surrounding views. There is some free rough parking by the stream on the left where you can stop and appreciate the scenery. The summit of Honister Pass is just ahead, up a final climb. As you reach the summit there is a National Trust car park on the left, followed by Honister slate mine and car park also on the left.



Honister Pass towards Borrowdale



Honister slate mine

Distance: 17.5 miles

Location: Honister Pass

Coordinates: N 54.51165, W 3.19697

The road summit of Honister Pass is known as Honister Hause and at 356m altitude is one of the highest roads in the Lake District. There are some wonderful surrounding mountain views with many mountain walks in this area. It is also of historical importance, being the site of [Honister Slate Mine](#) which has been producing slate since at least 1643. There are strong indications slate was extracted here long before that, during Roman times and possibly also by the medieval monks of Borrowdale.

Slate mines were developed on both sides of the road here, you can see tracks and old tramways leading up Honister Crag beyond the end of the car park and on Yew Crag across the road. Originally slate would be taken away by ponies on the old packhorse routes across the fells which are often public bridleways nowadays. It was a tough life for the miners who would stay in local stone huts whilst working in the often inclement climate here. In the late 19th century miners cottages were built closer to the mine, such as those at Seatoller, giving the miners a more comfortable lifestyle.

Nowadays, Honister is the last working underground slate mine in England, still extracting Westmorland Green Slate to produce long lasting products such as worktops and memorials. There is a visitor centre where you can take a mine tour and learn more about its history. In recent years the slate mine has diversified by providing popular adventure experiences, including the 'Via Ferrata' which is a climbing experience on Honister Crag, plus 'Climb the Mine' which is a similar experience but underground in the old mine. There is a charge for these activities. The visitor centre also has a gift shop, cafe and car park.

Also next to the car park here is [Honister Hause Hostel](#) and nearby is Honister raingauge which is probably the wettest in the country with over 3.5 metres of rain annually. During the devastating storm Desmond flood in December 2015, the raingauge recorded 341mm of rain in 24hrs, a UK record. '[Live](#)' rainfall figures are available online if you want to see if its raining before you go!

The car park is National Trust pay and display. There are no other facilities in this area.

Travelling:

Turn left out of the car park and continue on the B5289. The road descends Honister Pass following Gatesgarth Beck with very steep and rocky slopes rising up on either side. High up on the left is Honister Crag which looks impressive from here. The road is quite narrow, but also relatively straight with a steady descent and great views ahead on a good day. In just over one mile the gradient eases with a bridge over the beck and rough free parking either side of the bridge. It is worth a stop here to appreciate the magnificent mountainous surroundings next to the pretty stream. Continue another picturesque mile, passing a few more places where you can stop by the road, before reaching Gatesgarth Farm. There is a car park on the right, or in season, behind the farm on the left.



Honister Pass from Gatesgarthdale



Gatesgarthdale

Distance: 19.9 miles

Location: Gatesgarthdale car park

Coordinates: N 54.52381, W 3.24607

Gatesgarth Farm is literally surrounded by high mountains in the beautiful valley of Buttermere. You can't see it from here but Buttermere lake is nearby and this car park is best placed for pedestrian access to the eastern end of the lake. It is a few minutes walk along the road, or for the southern shore follow the [footpath](#) for about half a mile across the valley floor. This footpath is part of the wonderful 4 mile walk around the lake which must be one of the best low level walks in the Lake

District, with fabulous views, shingle beaches and attractive woodland. You will see more of the lake as you continue the drive.

If you want a high level walk there are plenty of them around here too. Behind the farm and across the valley is the epic Buttermere ridge of mountains with the crinkly top of Haystacks mountain towards the head of the valley. Haystacks is famous for being the favourite summit of the local author Alfred Wainwright, best known for his seven-volume 'Pictorial Guide to the Lakeland Fells', published between 1955 and 1966. These small guide books were meticulously hand drawn and written with incredibly detailed maps and sketches for each fell walk. Today the books are still in print and still seen by many as the authoritative walking guide to the fells despite their age. In the end he covered 214 Lake District peaks in his books which are now known as 'The Wainwrights'. A popular fellwalking challenge is to climb them all and many hundreds of people have achieved that, often over many years. Wainwright also produced a number of other books, including a Pennine Way guide and the Coast to Coast walk which he devised. When he died in 1991 his wife performed his final wish for his ashes to be scattered at Innominate Tarn on top of Haystacks mountain.

There is a charge for parking with the nearest facilities in Buttermere village.

Travelling:

Continue along the B5289 which soon meets the eastern end of Buttermere lake and proceeds along the northern shore a little above the lake. Although narrow, this is a beautiful section of road, passing along steep craggy slopes with views of the lake and the surrounding mountains. After approx 1.8 miles, pass the turn to Newlands valley and the quaint church of [St James](#) in a wonderful setting on the right, before a short sharp descent into Buttermere village. The main village car park is down the lane on the left, immediately before the Bridge Hotel.

Distance: 21.9 miles

Location: Buttermere Village car park

Coordinates: N 54.54097, W 3.27756

Buttermere is a pleasant little village in an awesome valley setting, surrounded by high mountains and inbetween the picturesque lakes of Buttermere and Crummock Water. It is likely that the name Buttermere derives from Old English and means 'the lake by the dairy pastures'. Once upon a time the two lakes were joined but the land now between them where the village sits has been formed over thousands of years by debris washed down in the becks from the hills above. Mill Beck runs through the village alongside the car park and another Sourmilk Gill cascades down the steep



Buttermere lake

slopes on the opposite side of the valley from a glacial corrie and tarn high above. The fertile land created by this deposition has long been farmed going back over a thousand years to medieval times when the Scandinavians settled in this area, as you previously heard about in Borrowdale. Sheep farming has long been the main activity in the valley and you might well see some of the popular hardy Herdwick sheep on your travels.

If you follow the beck downstream from the car park the attractive shores of Crummock Water are about half a mile away. In the opposite direction a [good level track](#) leads a similar distance to the shores of Buttermere lake. There are excellent footpaths around both lakes, although Crummock Water is substantially bigger than Buttermere. This is also a popular centre for fell walking with footpaths heading up various local mountains. There's not a lot to see in the village itself but it provides a few choices for refreshments with a couple of cafes, the [Bridge Hotel](#) and the [Buttermere Court Hotel](#).

This car park is pay and display with adjacent toilet facilities. There is also a National Trust car park nearby, at the top of the hill as you leave the village following the drive.

Travelling:

From Buttermere car park, turn left on the B5289 past the Bridge Hotel and climb out of the village. In a short distance is a National Trust pay and display car park on the left. Beyond the village the road gradually descends towards Crummock Water and soon meets the shore of the lake. There is some free but limited roadside parking by the trees here and it is worth stopping to appreciate the spectacular scenery. There



Crummock Water road

is pedestrian access to the adjacent field with an open grass and shingle lakeshore giving fabulous lake and mountain views. A good place for a picnic and paddle.

Beyond here the narrow road runs alongside the open lakeshore providing wonderful views before it twists around a tight rocky headland called Hause Point. Beyond this is a small bay with some parking in a layby on the left, followed by a small free car park on the right. Continue another 0.6 miles with the mighty Grasmooor mountain ahead, past Rannerdale Farm to Cinderdale Common where there are two adjacent rough parking areas on the right. The second one gives better views.

Distance: 24.0 miles

Location: Crummock Water, Cinderdale car park

Coordinates: N 54.56267, W 3.29685

Similar to Buttermere, Crummock Water is a wonderfully attractive and relatively peaceful lake surrounded by impressive mountains and no discernible development near the shore. This parking area is set slightly back from the lakeshore but the adjacent grassy area gives some fabulous views over the lake and surrounding mountains, including Mellbreak across the lake. To the left of that is a steep valley which contains Scale Force, the Lake Districts highest waterfall with a fall over 50 metres, although you will struggle to see it from here. To the left of that again is the epic mountain ridge above Buttermere.



Rannerdale bluebells

Behind the car park, Cinderdale Beck tumbles down the high slopes of Grasmoor mountain. If you take the track which crosses the beck above the parking area, a 10 minute walk leads to the attractive Rannerdale valley, centred around the nicely named Squat Beck, with the pointy peaks of Whiteless Pike and Rannerdale Knotts on either side. This valley really comes alive in late April and May when the famous bluebells are in full bloom and form a wonderful blue carpet across the open valley. Rannerdale was also the site of an abandoned medieval village and shows signs of habitation as far back as the stone age, although there's no obvious sign of it now.

Back at the car park, slightly further along the road is a footpath leading the short distance down to the rough lakeshore if you want to get to the water. This footpath is part of the fabulous 8 mile walking route around the whole lake and the best way to appreciate the beauty of this area.

The rough parking areas are free but there are no facilities here.

Travelling:

Turn right out of the car park and continue along the B5289 with the lake on the left and the steep slopes of Grasmoor mountain on the right. There are wonderful views in every direction. As the road climbs away from the lake there are a few laybys where you can stop to appreciate the surroundings more. Eventually, the road crosses a cattle grid over a minor summit and descends through woodland following Liza Beck on the right, before meeting a T junction where you turn right towards Lorton, still the B5289.



Lorton Yew Tree

The road now continues along the valley of Lorton Vale. An attractive area with lush pastures and hills on each side which get progressively lower and less spectacular as we head away from the high mountains of the central Lakes. The River Cocker runs through the valley, draining Buttermere and Crummock Water. The valley can become flooded during very wet periods and so can the town of Cockermouth downstream. After approx 1.9 miles, as you enter the village of Lorton, take the first right turn towards Keswick and continue through the village. After approx 0.4 miles the village shop is on the right, followed by a long old stone building also on the right which is Lorton village hall. You can

park on the road here and walk around the back of the village hall where you will find an ancient yew tree, thought to be over a thousand years old. This is the Lorton Yew, also known as Wordsworth's Yew Tree as it was made famous by the poet in his 1803 poem 'Yew Trees'. You might remember the Borrowdale Yews at Seathwaite which also featured in this poem. Much like the Borrowdale Yews, the Lorton Yew has also suffered from storm damage over the centuries but is still very much alive and has no doubt witnessed much in its time.

Continue through the attractive village for another 0.2 miles and take the right turn towards Keswick. Shortly meet a T junction where you turn right again on the B5292 towards Keswick. The road now starts to climb up Whinlatter Pass. It is a slightly wider road than you are used to on this drive and although it is technically a mountain pass, the climbing is quite gradual with no significantly steep or tricky sections. Before long, attractive views open up over the valley on the right and ahead in the distance you can see the wooded slopes of Whinlatter forest. After approx 1.4 miles, pass a sign that says you're entering Whinlatter Forest and just beyond on the left is the Forestry Commission Spout Force car park. You can park here and walk to [Spout Force waterfall](#) which is a small but picturesque waterfall in a woodland setting about half a mile away. Beyond here the road continues to climb steadily and the views become more spectacular towards the forested mountain slopes. To the left are the steep slopes leading up Whinlatter Fell. After approx 0.7 miles there is a small free car park at Hobcarton on the right and approx

1 mile beyond that you reach the summit of Whinlatter Pass. The entrance to Whinlatter Forest Visitor Centre is on the left.

Distance: 32.3 miles

Location: Whinlatter Forest

Coordinates: N 54.60939, W 3.23012

[Whinlatter](#) sells itself as England's only true mountain forest and it is certainly in a spectacular location overlooking Keswick, Derwent Water and Bassenthwaite lake. This car park and visitor centre is at the summit of the Whinlatter Pass road, around 318m elevation. To each side of the road are forested hills and valleys with higher peaks emerging above the trees. The steepest slopes are on the opposite side of the road leading up to the popular peak of Grisedale Pike which overlooks the whole forest. The forest is now around 1200 hectares in size and includes some of the very first land to be planted by the Forestry Commission after they were formed in 1919 to combat timber shortages following the First World War. The coniferous forest is still harvested for commercial purposes but more recently it has developed as a tourist attraction with many recreational activities on offer.



Whinlatter Forest

There are some fabulous [walking](#) and [cycling](#) trails through the forest which provide picturesque views of forested valleys and surrounding mountains. Depending where you are you might also see Bassenthwaite lake, Derwent Water, Skiddaw mountain and Keswick in the distance. If you're lucky you might also catch a glimpse of local wildlife, including the popular red squirrels and Ospreys. The forest also offers some of the best mountain bike trails in the Lake District, catering for all levels from easy forest tracks to black graded single track for expert riders. There are further activities for all ages and abilities, including [Go Ape](#) tree top adventures, forest Segway and even guided [Alpaca walks](#).

It all starts from the visitor centre where you can find out more. Here you will also find a [cafe](#), shop, Osprey webcam, childrens play areas, [mountain bike hire shop](#) and toilet facilities. These are open daily all year. The car park is 'pay on exit', although the first 20 minutes are free. There are a couple more forest car parks as you continue the drive.

Travelling:



Whinlatter Pass towards Skiddaw

Turn left out of the Visitor Centre car park and continue on the B5292 which descends through the forest towards Keswick. You soon pass the pay and display forest car park at Revelin Moss which offers picnic tables and forest walks. The road is generally quite straightforward as it gradually descends through the forest. As you progress, good views open up ahead towards Skiddaw mountain in the distance. After approx 1.2 miles there is a big free layby on the left where it is worth stopping to appreciate the wonderful views over Bassenthwaite Lake and Skiddaw mountain. An interesting fact is that Bassenthwaite is the only true lake in the Lake District. The others are all called 'water' or 'mere' rather than lake, for example Buttermere! If you are lucky you

might see one of the Ospreys that normally reside in this area between April and September before heading to Africa for the winter. Opposite the layby is Noble Knott car park where further forest walking trails are available along with picnic tables and free parking.

Approx 0.6 miles further down the road is another small free parking area on the right which gives access to the picturesque Coledale valley nearby. You can't see it from the road but at the head of this valley is the historic [Force Crag Mine](#) which was the last working metal mine in the Lake District when it closed in 1991. Managed by the National Trust, the mine buildings are preserved and you can take guided tours on a few days through the year. The road then enters the village of Braithwaite and squeezes between buildings before you pass the Royal Oak Inn on the right, then a little further on is [Jaspers cafe](#) on the left. The pleasant village also has small shop in the centre and the [Coledale Inn](#) nearby but there's not a lot more to see or do. Continue through the village and shortly meet the main A66 at a T junction. Turn right towards Keswick. After approx 1 mile, turn right on the B5289 towards Keswick and soon enter the town with the historic [Crosthwaite church](#) off to the left. After crossing the River Greta, soon meet a mini-roundabout and turn right, still on the B5289. Keswick Central car park is a short distance on the left.

Distance: 37.1 miles

Location: Keswick, Central car park

Coordinates: N 54.59936, W 3.13758

Return to start point.



Hope Park, Keswick

Martin Wilson

www.lakedistrictdrives.com