

The Ultimate Lake District drive

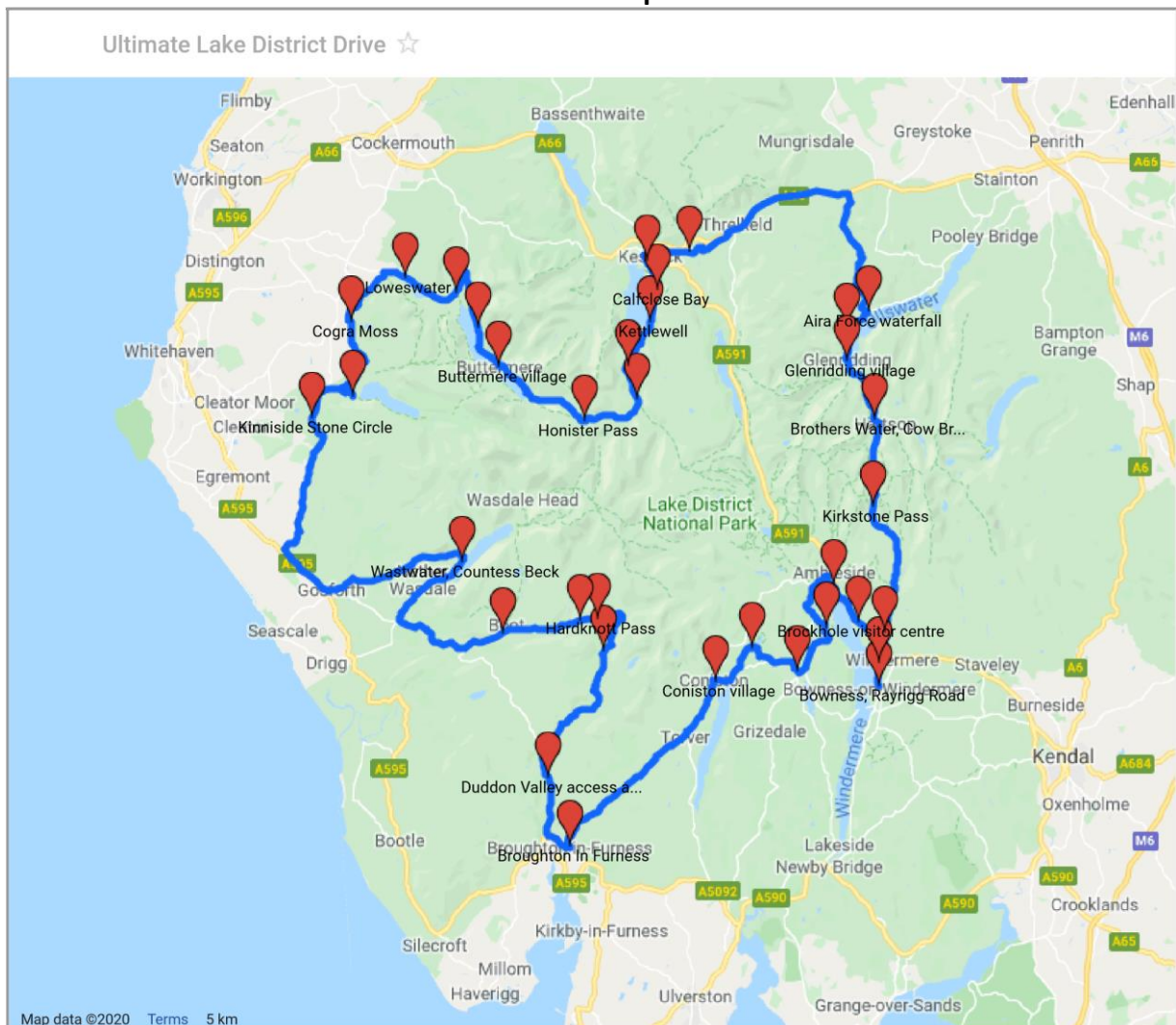


The ultimate drive around the English Lake District, including wonderful scenery and attractions throughout. The drive visits many popular towns, villages, lakes and valleys as it explores different corners of the National Park. An experience never to forget.



Wastwater

Route Map



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

Distance	Attraction	Car Park Coordinates
0 miles	Bowness-on-Windermere	N 54.36591, W 2.91993
0.8 miles	Rayrigg Meadow picnic site	N 54.37897, W 2.91924
2.9 miles	Brockhole Visitor Centre	N 54.40120, W 2.93914
4.8 miles	Waterhead, Ambleside	N 54.42116, W 2.96284
8.1 miles	Wray Castle	N 54.39822, W 2.96968
10.7 miles	Hawkshead Village	N 54.37410, W 2.99679
13.1 miles	Tarn Hows	N 54.38708, W 3.03905
15.4 miles	Coniston Village	N 54.36892, W 3.07347
24.5 miles	Broughton in Furness	N 54.27781, W 3.21128
28.0 miles	Duddon Valley access area	N 54.31561, W 3.23108
34.5 miles	Birks Bridge access area	N 54.38535, W 3.17944
37.3 miles	Hardknott Pass	N 54.40290, W 3.18488
38.1 miles	Hardknott Roman Fort	N 54.40241, W 3.20163
41.3 miles	Eskdale Railway & Boot	N 54.39505, W 3.27460
49.7 miles	Wastwater, Countess Beck	N 54.43443, W 3.31227
63.8 miles	Kinniside Stone Circle	N 54.51290, W 3.45370
66.4 miles	Ennerdale Water	N 54.52487, W 3.41480
70.6 miles	Cogra Moss	N 54.56583, W 3.41652
74.2 miles	Loweswater	N 54.58989, W 3.36659
76.5 miles	Lanthwaite Wood	N 54.58153, W 3.31840
79.5 miles	Crummock Water, Cinderdale	N 54.56266, W 3.29682
81.5 miles	Buttermere Village	N 54.54097, W 3.27756
85.9 miles	Honister Pass	N 54.51165, W 3.19697
88.7 miles	Rosthwaite, Borrowdale	N 54.52358, W 3.14818
90.1 miles	The Bowder Stone	N 54.54158, W 3.15620
92.2 miles	Kettlewell / Lodore Falls	N 54.56537, W 3.13476
93.5 miles	Calfclose Bay	N 54.58325, W 3.12902
94.9 miles	Keswick	N 54.59936, W 3.13758
96.9 miles	Castlerigg Stone Circle	N 54.60376, W 3.09811
109.2 miles	Aira Force	N 54.57142, W 2.92862
110.4 miles	Glencoyme, Ullswater	N 54.56140, W 2.94969
111.8 miles	Glenridding Village	N 54.54397, W 2.94965
114.7 miles	Brothers Water	N 54.51243, W 2.92396
118.3 miles	Kirkstone Pass	N 54.46445, W 2.92542
123.7 miles	Holehird Gardens	N 54.39602, W 2.91472
126.0 miles	Bowness-on-Windermere	N 54.36591, W 2.91993

The Drive

Distance: 0 miles

Location: Bowness-on-Windermere, Rayrigg Road car park

Coordinates: N 54.36591, W 2.91993

Bowness is an attractive and very popular tourist town on the shores of Windermere lake. Until the mid-1800's it was a small peaceful village but all that changed with the opening of the railway line from Kendal to nearby Windermere town in 1847. Victorian tourists started pouring in to the area and the towns of Windermere and Bowness grew massively to meet the tourist demand. Nowadays the two towns merge together and are regularly filled with tourist crowds but Bowness still retains a lot of charm by the lake with plenty of attractions and is worth exploring.



Bowness-on-Windermere centre

One of the most popular attractions is [The World of Beatrix Potter](#), opposite the car park. The famous children's author wrote 23 enchanting little books in the early 1900's, with characters such as Peter Rabbit, Squirrel Nutkin and Jemima Puddle-Duck still much loved across the world. This popular family attraction recreates 3D scenes from the stories which mesmerizes children and adults alike. The town centre itself is nearby and has numerous shops, cafes and pubs where you can easily spend some time exploring before wondering down past [St Martin's Church](#) to the nearby lakeside area.

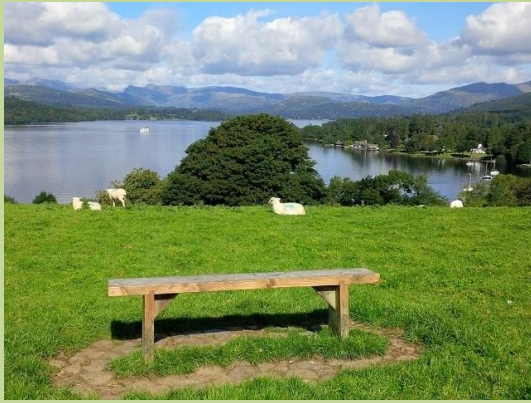
The picturesque lakeside area overlooking Bowness Bay is slightly separate to the town centre but often just as busy. There are a number of jetties where you can catch one of the many [Windermere Lake Cruises](#). Beyond the jetties is Glebe Road which forms a popular loop along the lake shore. Within this loop is a large open recreational area known as The Glebe. The grassy area provides lovely views up the lake and there are various activities available such as mini golf and tennis. Beyond The Glebe is Cockshott Point which also has some good open grassy areas with shingle beaches and a [footpath](#) along the attractive lakeshore. There are a number of shops, kiosks, cafes and pubs around the lakeside area. Rayrigg Road car park is pay and display with toilet facilities.



Bowness-on-Windermere lakeside

Travelling:

Leave the car park and turn right, following the 'All traffic' sign, then almost immediately turn left at the T junction which is the A592 towards Ambleside. Soon pass the impressive [Windermere Jetty Museum](#) where you can learn all about the last 200 years of Windermere's boating history, with fascinating displays and many historic boats. Continue for approx 0.6 miles to Rayrigg Meadow car park on the left.



Queen Adelaide's hill

Distance: 0.8 miles

Location: Rayrigg Meadow picnic site

Coordinates: N 54.37897, W 2.91924

Rayrigg Meadow is a pleasant recreational area next to Windermere lake with various attractions for visitors. Near to the car park is a good picnic and play area with adjacent grass in an open setting. The small grassy hill above the car park is known as Queen Adelaide's hill and the summit provides wonderful views across the lake and towards the mountains in the distance. Queen Adelaide apparently visited this fabulous viewpoint in 1840 and the hill was renamed in her honour from its original Rayrigg Bank. It is a short but steep

footpath to the top from the car park.

Towards the lake from the play area is a well placed bench overlooking the lake and a short drop down brings you to the tree-lined lakeshore where there are shingle beaches and a couple of boat jetties with attractive views across the water. There is a footpath along the lakeshore in both directions, if you turn right you soon reach Millerground which again has a few jetties and lovely views from the shingle shore. The easy access along all this lakeshore makes it a good place for paddling and bathing with the added benefit of fine sunset views across the lake. The car park is pay and display with adjacent toilet facilities.

Travelling:

Turn left out of the car park to continue on the A592. Shortly, on the left, is a layby with free parking from where a short pleasant footpath heads down to the lake. Beyond that, up the short steep hill, is Hammarbank pay and display car park which offers good views over Windermere lake. Shortly beyond this, meet a mini-roundabout and take the first exit on the main A591 towards Ambleside. The road descends and passes through Troutbeck Bridge village where there is a service station & shop. Continue beyond Troutbeck village for approx 1 mile to Brockhole visitor centre on the left.

Distance: 2.9 miles

Location: Brockhole Visitor Centre

Coordinates: N 54.40120, W 2.93914

Brockhole is the main visitor centre for the Lake District, where finding out about the National Park is only part of a fabulous visitor experience with many different attractions for the whole family on the shores of Windermere lake.

The main building and gardens were actually built as a private home in the late 19th century, one of many holiday or retirement homes built around the lake in the Victoria era for wealthy city industrialists. Some are still private homes today but many are now hotels or visitor attractions. As a private home, Beatrix Potter was a frequent visitor being related to the owners. After 1946 it was sold and became a nursing home until 1966 when it was bought by the Lake District National Park Authority who opened it to the public in 1969 as the UK's first National Park visitor centre.



Brockhole

Inside the house are exhibitions of the local area, a gift shop and information centre plus a restaurant and café where you can sit on the terrace overlooking the gardens. Outside there are plenty of different activities for visitors including boat hire on the lake, archery and an adventure playground. In the trees

above the car park you can see the [treetop adventure](#) which ends in an impressive zip line. If you don't fancy anything too strenuous you can just stroll around the wonderful 30 acres of grounds and formal gardens which are beautifully kept all year round. The [footpath](#) also follows the shingle lakeshore between trees with great views across the lake and various boat jetties. [Windermere Lake Cruises](#) land here on the red cruise between Bowness and Waterhead, plus the seasonal Green cruise between Waterhead and Wray Castle across the lake. There are additional stalls in the grounds where you can get refreshments and picnic tables near the lake.

There is a charge for activities and parking. Entrance to the visitor centre is free and includes toilet facilities. Attractions are open daily all year.

Travelling:

From Brockhole car park, turn left on the A591 towards Ambleside. Shortly, the road descends towards Lake Windermere and you pass the [Low Wood Hotel](#) on the right which is well known for water sports with spectacular views over the lake towards the central Lakeland mountains. The road continues to hug the lakeshore with good lake views for approx 0.6 miles before passing [Stagshaw Gardens](#) on the right and entering Waterhead village at the head of the lake. Turn left at the traffic lights and Waterhead car park is a short distance on the right, opposite the lake jetties.



Waterhead from Borrans Park

Distance: 4.8 miles

Location: Waterhead car park, Ambleside

Coordinates: N 54.42116, W 2.96284

As the name suggests, Waterhead marks the head of Windermere lake and you will find quite a few attractions in this attractive village near to Ambleside town. The most obvious feature is the lake and there is plenty of shoreline access with excellent views across the water. The small promenade opposite the car park makes a pleasant stroll and there are a few benches from where you can watch the boats coming and going. [Windermere Lake Cruises](#) call at the main pier here and you can take a scenic red cruise to Bowness and

Lakeside or a seasonal Green cruise to nearby Wray Castle and Brockhole.

Also near the car park is the [Wateredge Inn](#) which has a fabulous beer garden overlooking the lake. If you walk beyond the pub you soon come to Borrans Park which provides good open grassy areas and small shingle beaches overlooking the lake. Beyond the park is [Ambleside Roman Fort](#) which was probably built during the reign of the Emperor Hadrian (AD 117–138), around the same time as Hadrian's Wall was built in north Cumbria. It is free entry to the fort and although not much remains of it now, you can still see the foundations of the various buildings, with information boards around the site telling you more. The Romans certainly had a magnificent view from their fort with mountain and lake scenery all around.

It is about 20 minute walk from Waterhead to Ambleside town, or a short driving detour, if you want to explore the attractions there. There are many tourist shops, outdoor specialists, cafes, restaurants and pubs, plus the fascinating [Armitt Museum](#) which includes a display of beautiful botanical drawings and watercolours from Beatrix Potter.

The Waterhead car park is pay and display with toilet facilities. Beware, there are camera's in the car park so don't stay too long without paying! There are a few small gift shops, stalls and cafes in the Waterhead area.

Travelling:

Turn right out of the car park and continue past Borrans Park a short distance to take the first left turn on the A593 towards Hawkshead. Soon cross a tight bridge over the River Rothay and continue for approx 0.5 miles to take the first left turn on the B5286 towards Hawkshead. Cross another tight bridge, over the River Brathay, and continue through attractive countryside for approx 1.5 miles to take the left turn on the minor road towards Wray. The winding road is narrow in places and after approx 0.7 miles passes [Low Wray campsite](#) on the left. Just beyond this, up the short hill, is the ornate entrance to Wray Castle on the left. The car park is a short distance along the access road, behind the castle.

Distance: 8.1 miles

Location: Wray Castle

Coordinates: N 54.39822, W 2.96968

[Wray Castle](#) is a striking mock-gothic castle on the shores of Windermere lake. Built in 1840 as a private residence, the house has had an interesting history with many varied occupants. In 1882 a 16 year old Beatrix Potter holidayed here with her family from London. She was evidently very impressed and this was the start of her Lake District love affair which gave her so much inspiration in her later work. The castle was later acquired by the National Trust in 1929, although it only opened its doors to the public in 2011.



Wray Castle

Inside the castle you can explore the elaborate church-like interior with rooms that house different displays and children's activities. There are also occasional guided tours. Outside, the elevated views are wonderful from in front of the castle towards Ambleside and surrounding mountains. There are attractive wooded grounds stretching down to the picturesque shores of Windermere lake where there are some grassy areas and shingle beaches with panoramic views across the lake. There are some fabulous walks along the lake shore which provides a good place for a picnic and paddle. Other attractions include a small adventure playground and a mulberry tree planted by William Wordsworth in 1845. Between Easter and October you can take a [Green cruise](#) from the nearby jetty around the northern part of the lake, also calling at [Brockhole](#) and Waterhead. The adjacent mock-gothic boathouse was built the same time as the castle.

There is a [cafe](#) and toilet facilities with a charge for castle entrance and parking if you are not National Trust members. Castle open daily, except Fridays, from Easter to November. Closed in winter. Grounds and cafe are open daily all year.

Travelling:

Leaving the Castle, turn left on the minor road. Through a small wood, the road continues to the hamlet of High Wray. A left turn detour here takes you approx 1 mile down a dead end to Red Nab free car park on the wooded shore of Windermere from where there is a good path along the lakeshore. Otherwise, the pleasant minor road continues by traversing the slopes of Latterbarrow hill on the left with excellent views right towards the Lakeland mountains. Eventually start descending and pass through the hamlet of Colthouse to meet a T junction where you turn right towards Hawkshead. In quick succession take the first right turn and the next left turn, Hawkshead village car park is then immediately on your left.



Hawkshead Village from the churchyard

Distance: 10.7 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.

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. 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.

Distance: 13.1 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



Tarn Hows

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. Nearby is parking and lake shore access at Monk Coniston. 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.



Coniston Village

Distance: 15.4 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.

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 village car park is pay and display with a [Tourist Information Centre](#) and toilet facilities.

A short drive or walk from the village down Lake Road takes you to the shores of Coniston Water, 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



SY Gondola & Brantwood

John Ruskin's [Brantwood](#) house. 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 lakeside car park is pay and display with toilet facilities.

Travelling:

From the village car park, turn left and continue on the B5285 which soon meets the A593 at a T junction in the village centre. Turn left towards Broughton, over the river and past a service station & shop, before heading out of the village. 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. You soon enter the village of Torver which doesn't have much to offer visitors apart from the [Church House Inn](#) on the left and the [Wilsons Arms & Torver Deli](#) on the right. Continue on the A593 beyond Torver and the road soon becomes quite narrow and winding. After a small climb, the road continues down the valley with good views of the surrounding low hills and ahead towards the Duddon Estuary. Just over 6 miles from Torver, enter the town of Broughton In Furness and soon meet a T junction at the main Square where there are a number of parking spaces.

Distance: 24.5 miles

Location: Broughton In Furness

Coordinates: N 54.27781, W 3.21128

Broughton in Furness is a peaceful town with an attractive central Square and some interesting historical features. This old market town has a long history and the [Tourist Information Centre](#) is now housed in the old Town Hall overlooking the old Market Square. The obelisk in the centre of the Square was erected to mark the golden jubilee of King George III in 1810. The adjacent stocks are a reminder of what happened to miscreants in bygone days! The town is far enough away from the central Lakes not to attract masses of



Broughton in Furness Square

visitors but is worth exploring. The town centre has a few small shops and three pubs for refreshments. Public toilets can be found just off the north east corner of the main Square and just beyond these is Wilson Park which provides a good open area of grass for recreation. Beyond the park are some pleasant easy [walks](#), including the old railway line towards Coniston. Parking in and around the main Square is free.

Travelling:

Leave the Square by the road adjacent to the [Manor Arms](#), then take the immediate right turn (Brade Street). Turn right again at the end of this road and continue for a short distance, passing the Black Cock Inn on the right. Turn left at the T junction immediately after the pub. The road passes the [Old Kings Head Inn](#) on the left and continues up the hill, out of the town and soon meets the main A595 at a T junction. Turn right on the main road towards Ulpha. The road drops down a steep hill and shortly approaches some traffic lights where you turn right just before a narrow bridge over the River Duddon. This is now the Duddon Valley road which is quite narrow and winding but very scenic. Initially, there is a short steep climb but as the road levels out there are wonderful views of surrounding craggy hills covered in either bracken or trees. After approx 1.5 miles, cross a cattle grid and enter an open section which starts descending towards the river. Soon, the road meets the river and there are a number of layby parking areas where access to the river can be gained.



Duddon Valley access area

Distance: 28.0 miles

Location: Duddon Valley access area

Coordinates: N 54.31561, W 3.23108

A fabulous open access area adjacent to the road and the River Duddon. There are plenty of good grassy areas inbetween the bracken which are ideal for a picnic next to the river. The shallow, crystal clear water with small pools and cascades is perfect for a paddle on a good day and there are fine views of the surrounding hills. The Duddon Valley was also a favourite of the famous poet William Wordsworth, in 1820 he published "The River Duddon, A Series of Sonnets".

The access from the road is naturally a little rough but relatively easy. Free roadside parking but no facilities on site.

Travelling:

Continue along the minor road up the Duddon Valley. In a short distance you enter the small settlement of Ulpha where the road crosses the river. There's not much in Ulpha but soon after the bridge on the right is [St John the Baptist Church](#) which is in a lovely position next to the river and is normally open to visitors. Soon after this on the left is the Birker Fell road which provides a shorter and easier route to Eskdale, avoiding Hardknott Pass. Otherwise, continue up the picturesque Duddon Valley road, narrow in places, for approx 1.5 miles to cross the river again and in a further 1.1 miles enter the small hamlet of Seathwaite where you will find the quaint [Newfield Inn](#) and [Holy Trinity Church](#) with a small parking area just beyond. The narrow road then climbs through attractive woodland and past cascading streams before reaching a more open section and levelling out. The surrounding mountain and forest scenery is stupendous. Approx 2 miles beyond Seathwaite, pass Troutal Farm on the left and soon the road runs alongside the River Duddon with Birks Bridge on the left. Not far beyond is Hardknott car park on the left.

Distance: 34.5

Location: Birks Bridge access area

Coordinates: N 54.38535, W 3.17944

This Forestry Commission car park gives access to the attractive River Duddon and also some wonderful walking country. The car park overlooks the river and there is a picnic table and some grass where you can sit and paddle in the normally shallow clear water. It is quite open with a few trees and some good views towards nearby mountains. The adjacent bridge takes you into Dunnerdale Forest where there are a number of good walks. You can also walk down the riverbank a short distance to the old stone Birks Bridge



Birks Bridge

which spans a very impressive narrow gorge. Here the river is forced between vertical stone walls only a few feet apart. The cascading waterfalls upstream and the deep crystal-clear water under the bridge are mesmerising. It is also great for bathing although access is a little difficult. Free car park but no facilities.

Travelling:

Turn left out of the car park and continue up the Duddon Valley road. The scenery in this isolated valley is arguably some of the best in the Lake District. Soon pass an Outdoor Education Centre on the left and enter a more open and level section of road, following the river along the valley floor. There are a few rough parking areas alongside the river. Shortly, cross a cattle grid and continue through fields for approx 1 mile to take the left turn over the river for 'Eskdale via Hardknott Pass'. Here starts the notorious mountain road over Hardknott Pass which certainly provides a challenge to your driving skills but is rewarded with superb views. The first section of narrow road with passing places is relatively easy but it soon kicks up very steeply with numerous hairpin bends. This is not something to try in bad weather and you need to ensure your vehicle is in good working order, you think ahead and hope other drivers do the same! If all goes well, it is a relatively short ascent and before long you approach the summit hump. Just before this is a small rough parking area on the right.



Hardknott Pass

Distance: 37.3 miles

Location: Hardknott Pass

Coordinates: N 54.40290, W 3.18488

It is advisable not to look at the views behind you on the way up, but the summit area gives great views back across the beautiful upper Duddon valley, towards Wrynose Pass in the distance. Ahead, there are also great views down Eskdale valley and even to the Isle of Man on a good day. The parking area is small and rough but free. There isn't a great deal of room to stop at the top and you need to be careful not to block passing places. There are no facilities in the area.

Travelling:

Continue over the summit, the road soon begins to descend steeply with some hair-raising hairpin bends. There are some wonderful views ahead, down the Eskdale valley and you can see the outline of Hardknott Roman Fort to the right of the road further down, but concentration is required for driving! Soon the gradient eases and the parking area for Hardknott Roman Fort is a big layby on the right. There is a small plaque at the far end of the layby telling you a bit about the Fort.

Distance: 38.1 miles

Location: Hardknott Roman Fort

Coordinates: N 54.40241, W 3.20163

[Hardknott Roman Fort](#) was built between AD 120 and AD138 and is situated in a commanding position with fabulous views over Eskdale valley. The old Roman road followed Eskdale valley from the coast, up over Hardknott Pass and on to Ambleside. Although much of the Fort has gone, the foundations above ground still remain and you can see the outline of the buildings and the impressive outer wall. Small plaques around the Fort tell you more. You also get a good view of the road towards the top of Hardknott Pass. It is a short walk across rough ground to the fort from the parking area. Free entrance and parking but no facilities.



Hardknott Roman Fort & Eskdale

Travelling:

Continue to descend Hardknott Pass. There is a further steep and twisty section but you soon reach the foot of the pass where the narrow road levels out and continues through fields down the beautiful Eskdale valley. Shortly, cross the River Esk and then pass Wha House car park on the right before you reach the [Woolpack Inn pub and cafe](#) on the right. Continue along the scenic road for approx 1.2 miles, passing a minor right turn for Boot, to Dalegarth Station car park on the right.



Dalegarth Station, Eskdale Railway

Distance: 41.3 miles

Location: Dalegarth Station car park

Coordinates: N 54.39505, W 3.27460

Dalegarth Station is the terminus for the miniature [Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway](#) and is often a hive of activity with regular trains coming and going during the summer (less so during the winter). The line was originally opened in 1875 to transport Iron Ore down the valley but is purely for tourists nowadays. A ride on the small train is a great way to see the picturesque valley with several minor stations along the way and you can continue to the coast at Ravenglass which is about 7 miles away. If you don't fancy a train ride, it is still fascinating to watch the small steam engines at work, especially on the small turntable where they turn around for the trip back down the valley. The car park is pay and display with some picnic tables by the river and a small play area. The station building has a cafe and toilets.



Eskdale Mill, Boot

Dalegarth Station car park is also the best place to park for a visit to Boot which is approx 0.3 miles walk along the road. It is a pretty little village in a picturesque setting with a small shop and a couple of pubs providing refreshments at the [Boot Inn](#) and the [Brook House Inn](#). At the far end of the village, over the ancient packhorse bridge, is the fascinating [Eskdale](#)

[Mill](#) which still maintains its historic working machinery and is one of the oldest water powered corn mills in the country.

Walking back out of Boot, towards the main road, if you [walk](#) straight across the road a track takes you approx 0.3 miles down to the River Esk where the quaint old church of [St Catherine's](#) is in a lovely secluded riverside setting with some benches from where you can appreciate the surroundings.

Travelling:

Turn right out of the station car park and continue down the valley road which thankfully becomes a little wider. Soon, on the left is a short minor dead end road to the picturesque Trough House Bridge access area where the River Esk passes through a small gorge and there is a short walk to Stanley Force waterfall. Beyond this the valley road soon meets the miniature [Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway](#) at Beckfoot station on the right. If you are lucky you may see one of the small trains rattling along as you follow the railway down the attractive valley. It's not long before you lose sight of the railway and the road continues through fields, eventually meeting at T junction at the [King George IV Inn](#). Turn right and soon cross the Eskdale railway at The Green station where there is a small free car park and picnic tables. Beyond this the road climbs and enters the small village of Eskdale Green. There is a small free parking area and public toilets on the right where the road bears left and levels out. There is also a small [shop](#) in the village.

Continue through the village and soon pass the [Bower House Inn](#) on the left. The road climbs through attractive woodland before descending to the village of Santon Bridge where you take the first right turn to Wasdale, just before a river crossing and the [Bridge Inn](#). The road starts narrow but soon widens and begins to reveal some amazing views towards Wasdale valley. Approx 1.8 miles beyond Santon Bridge you cross a bridge over the River Irt which is the outflow from Wastwater lake. Take an immediate right towards the lake and the [Sawmill cafe and farm shop](#) is on the right. Very soon take another right turn at the T junction. The views get better and the road gets narrower before crossing a cattle grid and entering the open shoreline of Wastwater lake. This section of road is surely one of the most scenic in the whole Lake District with fantastic lake and mountain views. Shortly, you see the stone shelter which marks Countess Beck viewpoint with a small rough parking area on the right. If that parking is full, there are a number of other rough roadside parking areas if you continue.

Distance: 49.7 miles

Location: Wastwater, Countess Beck

Coordinates: N 54.43443, W 3.31227

Wastwater is a remote and beautiful lake, surrounded by dramatic scenery. The view from Countess Beck viewpoint, up the lake to the high mountains beyond, is outstanding and was once voted 'Britain's favourite view'. These mountains include the highest peaks in England, Scafell Pike and Sca Fell, along with the pyramid forms of Great Gable and Yewbarrow. The impressive high screes along the southern shore tumble down over 500m to the water and continue down below water level to a depth of around 80m. The lake is the deepest in England and one of the clearest, making it popular for diving. The whole effect is fabulous and makes the area such an awe-inspiring place.



Wastwater, near Countess Beck

The shoreline tends to be quite rocky with small shingle beaches every so often and areas of grass and bracken behind. This pattern begins around the Countess Beck shelter and continues towards Wasdale Head for approx 1 mile. The remoteness of the area means it rarely gets very busy and you can normally find a quiet place to appreciate the surroundings. Parking is free but there are no facilities nearby.

Travelling:

Continue past the viewpoint and descend to cross Countess Beck and meet a T junction. There are various rough parking areas where you can stop and enjoy the scenery. If you have time, a good diversion here is

to turn right and drive the 3 miles up the lake to Wasdale Head to fully appreciate the lake and surroundings. The road ends at Wasdale Head so you must return the same way. To continue the drive, take a left at the T junction towards Gosforth. The road heads away from Wastwater through further glorious countryside with glimpses ahead of the Irish Sea and the Isle of Man on a good day. Approx 5 miles from the lake the road descends to the village of Gosforth. Continue through the village and soon pass [St Mary's Church](#) on the right which has an interesting collection of Viking carved stones, including the tall stone cross in the graveyard. Not far beyond this you see the village shop on the left and opposite is the free village car park. Also nearby are toilet facilities, a couple of pubs and the ever-popular Gosforth bakery.

Just beyond the car park is a mini-roundabout where you take the second exit and continue a short distance out of the village to a T junction where you turn right on the main A595. It might make a refreshing change being back on a road with a white line down the middle. Continue on the A595 for approx 2 miles, with glimpses of the huge Sellafield nuclear site on the left, before entering the village of Calder Bridge. Pass the [Stanley Arms Hotel](#) on the right, cross the River Calder and almost immediately take the right turn for Ennerdale. Pass St Bridget's Church on the right and continue out of the village on the Cold Fell road.

The pleasant road follows the western boundary of the Lake District National Park as it climbs for approx 2 miles to cross a cattle grid and enter the open slopes of Cold Fell. The road undulates through low hills with pleasing views in all directions, especially left towards the Cumbrian west coast. Approx 1 mile beyond the first cattle grid is another one and a further 1 mile on are the conifers of Lowther Park Forest on the left. Soon there is some rough parking at the entrance to the Forest and there are some good walks through the trees. The picturesque road continues through open hills for a further 1.6 miles to Kinniside stone circle on the right. There are no signs for the attraction but it's very close to the road, just beyond a small rise with a green grit bin.



Kinniside Stone Circle

Distance: 63.8 miles

Location: Kinniside Stone Circle

Coordinates: N 54.51290, W 3.45370

Kinniside stone circle is an impressive monument, not just because of the ancient stones but also the wonderful surrounding views. The relatively small circle has clearly been reconstructed in modern times as the 11 stones are set in concrete, but these are apparently the original stones in the original positions. The circle is in a picturesque open moorland setting with distant views towards the west coast and also over the surrounding hills. The circle is adjacent to the road allowing easy access. There is free roadside parking and entry but no facilities.

Travelling:

Continue beyond the stone circle, the road soon crosses another cattle grid and becomes more enclosed. Descend for approx 0.8 miles to a T junction and turn right to enter the village of Ennerdale Bridge. Shortly, pass [The Gather cafe & shop](#), the [Fox & Hounds pub](#), [St Mary's Church](#) and a playground all on the left. Cross the River Ehen and take the first right turn to Ennerdale Water. Continue out of the village and in approx 0.5 miles take the first right turn signposted to Ennerdale Lake. Drive through Broadmoor Forest for approx 0.7 miles and cross the River Ehen again to meet Bleach Green car park on the left.

Distance: 66.4 miles

Location: Ennerdale Water, Bleach Green car park

Coordinates: N 54.52487, W 3.41480

[Ennerdale Water](#) is the most westerly and most peaceful of all the Lake District lakes. Due to its remoteness and lack of development it gets relatively few visitors, but it is certainly a beautiful lake and location. There are no public roads around the lake, but two car parks nearby and the one at Bleach Green gives easiest pedestrian access. From the car park, follow the good footpath through the trees and along the track for approx 0.2 miles to the lakeshore. At the lake you will see the river outflow weir and fish pass along with some fabulous views up the lake towards the mountains beyond. The grassy area nearby to the right is ideal for a picnic and paddle. There is a lovely path around the lake which is 6.5 miles in total, or [shorter walks](#) are possible. Free car park with no facilities.



Ennerdale

The picturesque and very remote Ennerdale valley continues for several miles beyond the lake and is home to the [Wild Ennerdale project](#) which seeks to "allow the evolution of Ennerdale as a wild valley for the benefit of people, relying more on natural processes to shape its landscape and ecology." You can walk or cycle along the forest track up the valley which eventually reaches Black Sail Youth Hostel, surrounded by mountains.

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Travelling:

Retrace your steps back out of Broadmoor Forest and turn right at the T junction. Soon the road becomes more open on the right with glimpses of Ennerdale lake before entering a narrow, twisty section between hedges. Shortly, take the first left turn signposted to Lamplugh. The narrow road climbs quite steeply and opens up with some wonderful views of Ennerdale behind you, before reaching a short undulating section followed by a steady descent with good views ahead towards the hills of southern Scotland in the far distance. Soon, pass a few properties on each side of the road and immediately beyond these is Lamplugh Felldyke car park on the right, just before a sharp left bend in the road.



Cogra Moss reservoir & forest

Distance: 70.6 miles

Location: Cogra Moss, Lamplugh Felldyke car park

Coordinates: N 54.56583, W 3.41652

[Cogra Moss](#) is a small reservoir and forest, tucked away in a remote corner of the Lake District, but still spectacular with the attractive reservoir backed by some impressive forested slopes and mountains. Although not used for water supply since the mid 1970's, it remains a wonderful amenity that is worth a visit. From the car park, a short path then a good track lead approx 0.5 miles to the reservoir. The track rises slightly, giving great views towards the coast and southern Scotland,

before descending to the reservoir dam and shore. There are some benches along the shore from where you can appreciate the views, or you can continue on a footpath around the reservoir, or up into the surrounding forest. The reservoir is popular for fishing but always tranquil. Small free car park but no facilities. A bench adjacent to the car park is dedicated to one of the local victims of the Cumbria shootings in 2010.

Travelling:

Turn right out of the car park, the narrow road continues through a few bends and soon meets a T junction where you turn right for Loweswater. A slightly wider road climbs steadily, passing [St Michael's Church](#) on the inside of a left bend. Very shortly, take the right turn to Loweswater. Pass through the small village of Lamplugh, soon the road climbs and becomes more open with good views left towards the coast and southern Scotland. Beyond a short tree lined section, views open up towards various mountains on the right and the road begins to descend quite steeply towards Loweswater. The road levels out as you enter the village of Loweswater and shortly there is a large layby with a telephone box on the right.

Distance: 74.2 miles

Location: Loweswater

Coordinates: N 54.58989, W 3.36659

Loweswater is a relatively small, remote and beautiful lake which is worth exploring. With no developments around its shores, the lake is very peaceful and is surrounded by some wonderful scenery. On the southern shore is Holme Wood, a pretty woodland area with lake access which is one of the few remaining strongholds of the red squirrel and also includes Holme Force waterfall set high above the lakeshore. This area can be reached via the obvious footpath at the start of the layby which follows an undulating route approx 0.5 miles through fields and tracks to the woods and lakeshore. You can also walk around the whole lake which is approx 3.5 miles. The free layby has lovely views between the trees towards the lake and the surrounding mountains but no facilities.



Loweswater

Travelling:

The narrow road continues towards Loweswater lake. Soon, there is another layby on the right, although views are restricted by trees. Beyond this, views are a bit more open before entering a wooded section along the lakeshore. Again, views are limited by trees and there is very little parking but if you're lucky you might see a rare red squirrel. The road soon becomes more open again and climbs away from the lake before descending towards picturesque Crummock Water with its spectacular mountainous surroundings. Shortly, there is a right turn signposted to [Kirkstile Inn](#) which is a worthwhile short detour to sample this popular pub in a glorious setting. Adjacent is [St Bartholomew's Church](#), again in a lovely setting. The minor road loops back to the main valley road where you turn right at the red telephone box. Continue through some very pleasing countryside for approx 0.5 miles to cross the River Cocker and Lanthwaite Wood car park is immediately on the right.



Crummock Water from Lanthwaite Wood

Distance: 76.5 miles

Location: Lanthwaite Wood, Crummock Water

Coordinates: N 54.58153, W 3.31840

Lanthwaite Wood is an attractive woodland area which gives [pedestrian access](#) to the shores of the Crummock Water and some fabulous views up the lake. From the car park, follow the peaceful forest road which leads approx 0.5 miles through woodland to the lakeshore. The shingle beach is backed by trees and has a well placed bench with wonderful views up the lake. From here it is possible to walk the 8 mile circuit of Crummock Water. Alternatively, approx 0.3 miles along the left shore leads to a pretty boathouse, again with good views, or a slightly longer walk along the

right shore leads over the outflow to the River Cocker, past a water company pump house to a wonderful large shingle beach with even better views. National Trust pay and display car park with no facilities.

Travelling:

Turn right out of the car park and climb steeply up before descending, with good views ahead down lovely Lorton Vale valley. The road levels out and soon take a right turn for Buttermere (there is a very minor short cut on the right before the main turn, either way takes you in the right direction). Continue on the narrow B5289 which climbs steadily through trees alongside Liza Beck before crossing a cattle grid over a minor summit to more open land. Beyond this the views are fabulous. To the left is mighty Grasmoo mountain, to the right is the not so high but equally impressive Mellbreak mountain overlooking the picturesque Crummock Water. In the distance are the mountains surrounding Buttermere. Continue to descend steadily, there are a few parking places to stop and admire the views. Approx 1.1 miles beyond the cattle grid is a larger rough parking area on the left at Cinderdale Common. There is a second similar parking area just beyond this on the left.

Distance: 79.5 miles

Location: Crummock Water, Cinderdale

Coordinates: N 54.56266, W 3.29682

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 Grasmoo 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 back 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 left out of the car park and continue towards Buttermere on the B5289, again with fabulous views. The road soon meets the lakeshore where there is limited parking, before twisting around a rocky headland. A more open section of attractive shore follows with more roadside parking by the trees ahead and pedestrian access to an open field on the right with wonderful views across the lake. Beyond the lake, the road climbs through trees and soon enters the village of Buttermere. There is a National Trust car park just before the village on the right, or continue to descend a short distance to the main village car park, immediately beyond the Bridge Hotel on the right.



Buttermere lake

Distance: 81.5 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. 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](#).

It is likely that the name Buttermere derives from Old English and means 'the lake by the dairy pastures'. 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. Mill Beck runs through the village and if you follow it 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. This car park is pay and display with adjacent toilet facilities.

Travelling:

Exit the main village car park to the T junction at the Bridge Hotel and turn right on the B5289. Up a steep little hill, you pass the quaint [St James Church](#) on the left. Continue on the narrow road towards Honister Pass which follows the shores of Buttermere lake from a distance. There are some fabulous views over the lake and the surrounding high mountains. Shortly, the road descends and briefly follows the shore at the end of the lake. Just beyond the lake is Gatesgarth Farm where you can park for a charge and access the lake on a good [footpath](#). Behind the farm is Haystacks mountain, the favourite summit of the famous walking guide author Alfred Wainwright and where his ashes were scattered after his death in 1991. The road then continues up picturesque Gatesgarthdale valley, following the river with high mountains either side. There are a few free laybys where you can stop and admire the scenery. The mountains get closer and the road gets steeper as you approach Honister Pass at the head of the valley. This mountain pass is one of the more notorious sections of Lake District road, steep and narrow in places and best avoided in very wet or wintry weather. However, this ascent is reasonable in normal circumstances and you soon reach the road summit of Honister Pass. Honister slate mine car park is on the right, followed by a National Trust car park, also on the right.



Honister Pass from Gatesgarthdale



Honister slate mine

Distance: 85.9 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, as far back as Roman times.

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 nearby 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 right out of the car park and continue over the summit of Honister Pass on the B5289. The following descent is steep and narrow in places and care needs to be taken. Descend quite steeply at first with views ahead towards Borrowdale valley. The gradient eases as the road follows a stream and there are a few places where you can stop and enjoy the surroundings. Beyond this, soon cross a cattle grid and descend steeply through trees alongside the stream. Before long, you reach the bottom of the hill at the small village of Seatoller which is in the beautiful Borrowdale valley. At the far end of the village on the left is a large National Trust pay and display car park with toilet facilities. There isn't much to see in the village itself but the area is very popular for walking.

Just beyond the village on the right is a turn to Seathwaite which is a short dead end road taking you further towards the central Lakeland mountains, again popular for walking. At the end of this road is a long since closed Graphite mine which supplied Keswick's pencil making industry in the 19th century, plus the ancient Borrowdale Yew trees which are believed to be over 1500 years old. The trees were made famous by the poet William Wordsworth who celebrated them in his 1826 poem, Yew Trees.



Seathwaite valley

Continue along the B5289 valley road, admiring the wonderful valley and mountain scenery as you go. Soon there is another right turn dead end, this time to the 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.

The main valley road soon enters the village of Rosthwaite which might be worth a stop for refreshments or exploring. There is a small National Trust pay and display car park if you take the minor left turn in the village.



Borrowdale from Castle Crag

Distance: 88.7 miles

Location: Rosthwaite, Borrowdale

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.

This is superb walking country with numerous footpaths through the valley and up surrounding hills. A popular walk leads up nearby Castle Crag, a relatively short but steep climb, which offers magnificent views over Borrowdale. The small car park is National Trust pay and display with adjacent toilets.

Travelling:

Turn left out of the car park and quickly left again, back on the B5289 Borrowdale road. Soon, the valley sides close in as you enter a pretty wooded section alongside the crystal clear River Derwent. This narrow valley section is well known as the 'Jaws of Borrowdale', before opening up again downstream. Shortly, after a few twists and turns, there is a right turn signposted to the Bowder Stone car park.

Distance: 90.1 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. You can see the wooded pinnacle of Castle Crag across the valley which doesn't look far away at all.



The Bowder Stone

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:

Turn right out of the car park to continue down the valley road through woodland. After a few more twists and turns you soon reach an impressive double arched ancient bridge over the River Derwent on the left which leads into the village of Grange in Borrowdale. The attractive village has a cafe, toilet facilities and the Methodist Church which houses '[The Borrowdale Story](#)' display, telling the interesting history of the



Grange in Borrowdale

valley and its human influences, including medieval times when the monks of Furness Abbey farmed the valley and built their farm, or Grange, here. The river is normally crystal clear and shallow with plenty of open shingle, making it ideal for a paddle. Back on the main Borrowdale road, the valley soon opens up again with good views of surrounding mountains. Soon, pass the [Borrowdale Hotel](#) on the right and beyond this you begin to catch views of Derwent Water lake and Skiddaw mountain ahead. Not far beyond is the impressive [Lodore Falls Hotel](#) on the right and nearby is Lodore jetty where you can catch the [Keswick Launch](#) lake cruise. Lodore Falls are behind the hotel, but no public parking here. Continue, past the [Mary Mount Hotel](#), a short distance to Kettlewell car park on the left.

Distance: 92.2 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. The car park is National Trust pay and display with no facilities.



Kettlewell shore

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.

Travelling:



Derwent Water from Surprise View

Turn left out of the car park and the road follows the attractive eastern shore of Derwent Water lake with some great mountain views across the water. After approx 0.6 miles is Ashness Gate jetty on the left and a right turn towards Watendlath. This 2.8 mile dead end road is single track with passing places, steep and tight in places and can be busy in season, but visits some of the most famous and fabulous viewpoints in the Lake District, including Ashness Bridge, Surprise View and Watendlath, so would be worth a detour if you have time. Back on the main Borrowdale road, continue along the wooded lakeshore for approx 0.7 miles to Great Wood car park on the right.

Distance: 93.5 miles

Location: Calfclose Bay, Great Wood car park

Coordinates: N 54.58325, W 3.12902

The ancient Great Wood is actually part of 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.



Centenary Stone, Calfclose Bay

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. 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 car park is National Trust pay and display with a couple of picnic tables but no facilities.

Travelling:

Leave the car park via the one way system and turn right, back on the B5289 valley road which heads away from the lake towards Keswick. After approx 1.2 miles, meet a mini-roundabout at the outskirts of Keswick. Take the first exit and soon meet a second mini-roundabout. Taking the first exit leads a short distance to Keswick lakeside and parking. For Keswick centre, take the second exit and just beyond this is Central car park on the right.



Keswick town centre

Distance: 94.9 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.

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.



Keswick lakeside

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.

Central and Lakeside car parks are pay and display.

Travelling:

Turn right out of Central car park, back on the B5289, then right at the next mini-roundabout to pass through the town centre on the A5271. The road soon meets the River Greta on the left and follows that before it climbs away from the river and you shortly turn left towards M6 and A66. After only 50m, turn right towards Castlerigg Stone Circle which is a further 0.7 miles uphill on the right.

Distance: 96.9 miles

Location: Castlerigg Stone Circle

Coordinates: N 54.60376, W 3.09811

[Castlerigg stone circle](#) is one of the oldest, most famous and most impressive prehistoric stone circles in the country. It is believed the 38 stones were brought to this elevated place by Neolithic farming communities around 4500 years ago. Quite how they got here and their purpose remain something of a mystery, but it would have been an important meeting place for the scattered Neolithic communities, possibly as a trading place, a religious centre or an astronomical observatory. The high open setting certainly enhances the experience, with fantastic 360 degree panoramic views over the northern Lake District, including many notable mountains such as Helvellyn, Skiddaw and Blencathra.



Castlerigg Stone Circle

It became a popular tourist attraction in Victorian times but some visitors would chip bits of rock away for souvenirs. This resulted in a campaign for its protection and it became one of the earliest ancient scheduled monuments in the country in 1882. Later, it was acquired by the National Trust and now remains a popular attraction where you can wonder inbetween the stones and soak up the wonderful

atmosphere. Pedestrian access is adjacent to the nearby minor road on the right. There is free parking on the roadside and free entry but no other facilities.

Travelling:

From the stone circle, continue eastwards along the minor road, passing [Keswick Climbing Wall](#). After approx 0.6 miles there is a T junction where you turn right and after a further 0.3 miles is another T junction where you turn right again. There are some good views ahead towards Blencathra mountain and right towards St John's in the Vale valley. In just under 1 mile the minor road descends to cross the River Greta where there is some roadside parking and a good woodland walk following the river downstream along the old railway line back towards Keswick. Beyond this the road joins the main A66 at a T junction and you turn right towards Penrith. You soon pass the village of Threlkeld on the left and its interesting [Mining Museum](#) nearby on the right. Continue beneath the lofty heights of Blencathra mountain to the left and on through pleasant countryside.

After approx 5 miles, turn right on the A5091 towards Ullswater. Immediately pass the [Troutbeck Inn](#) on the left and continue along the pleasant upland road for another 3.8 miles, through Matteredale End village and past the historic [Matteredale Church](#), to Dockray village and [The Royal Hotel](#) on the right. Matteredale is a picturesque valley that remains relatively peaceful and unspoilt. Approx 0.4 miles beyond Dockray on the right is High Cascades National Trust pay and display car park which gives access to the attractive High Cascades waterfalls nearby. Beyond this, the road descends towards Ullswater and after another 0.4 miles on the left is Park Brow National Trust pay and display car park which gives access to Aira Force waterfall. For the main Aira Force car park, continue to descend with some fabulous views up Ullswater before reaching a T junction with the A592 Ullswater shore road. Turn left and Aira Force car park is almost immediately on the left.



Aira Force waterfall

Distance: 109.2 miles

Location: Aira Force waterfall

Coordinates: N 54.57142, W 2.92862

[Aira Force](#) is probably the most famous waterfall in the Lake District and at 65ft high, one of the tallest. From the car park there are various [trails](#) leading up through attractive woodland to the waterfall viewing areas and beyond. The views from the bridges at the top and bottom of the main waterfall are impressive, especially after heavy rain. The main waterfall walk is about 1 mile return with some steep and uneven sections. It is also well known for red squirrels and you might see one in the woods if you are lucky.

Back across the road, you can walk down to the nearby lakeshore and shingle beach with fabulous views up the lake. Ullswater is the second biggest lake in the Lake District and one of the most scenic, especially towards the southern end where it is surrounded by high mountains. The adjacent pier is served by [Ullswater Steamers](#) in season and you can take a boat to Glenridding at the southern end of the lake from here.

If you are feeling fit, longer walks head through Gowbarrow Park and to the top of Gowbarrow Fell, a popular peak with superb views across the lake. There is a tea room, picnic tables and toilet facilities around the car park. The car park is National Trust pay and display. Free entry to waterfalls.

Travelling:

Leave Aira Force car park and turn right on the A592 towards Glenridding. The scenic road follows the tree-lined shore of Ullswater with glimpses of the lake and the surrounding mountains. After approx 0.9 miles on the left is a small free layby which gives easy access to a lovely bit of lakeshore. There is a rough grassy area amongst trees and a shingle beach with fantastic views up the lake towards the mountains. In spring the wooded area is full of daffodils. Just beyond this is the large Glencoyne car park on the right.

Distance: 110.4 miles

Location: Glencoyne, Ullswater

Coordinates: N 54.56140, W 2.94969

Glencoyne Bay provides a scenic lakeshore area with narrow shingle beaches next to the road and wonderful views across the lake. You can follow the good footpath in either direction adjacent to the road if you want to explore nearby shoreline. Behind the car park, the wonderful Glencoyne valley heads inland from the lake and you can explore it on foot on the [Glencoyne Farm trail](#).



Daffodils at Glencoyne

This area around Glencoyne Bay is well known for its fabulous golden daffodils in the spring and it is these which, on a visit in 1802, inspired Wordsworth to write the famous poem 'Daffodils'. Although the initial inspiration possibly came from his sister Dorothy, who had noted the spectacle in her journal and it was a few years later when William penned the poem, first published 1807. Many people will recognise the first verse;

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

The main car park is National Trust pay and display. Facilities in nearby Glenridding.

Travelling:

Leave Glencoyne car park and turn right on the A592. It can be difficult to negotiate the narrow lakeshore road given the fabulous views but there are a few places where you can stop and admire the scenery. After approx 1 mile, enter Glenridding village. Pass 'The Inn on the Lake' on the left and take the first right turn just beyond. The village car park is straight ahead.



Glenridding village

Distance: 111.8 miles

Location: Glenridding Village car park

Coordinates: N 54.54397, W 2.94965

Glenridding is a small village in a fabulous setting between Ullswater lake and the high mountains behind. It is a popular tourist centre nowadays with some wonderful lake and mountain walks, but historically the village grew up as an important centre for lead mining. The village has some attractive grassy areas with picnic tables and benches adjacent to Glenridding Beck. There are a few small gift shops,

tea rooms and bars around the village, including [The Inn on the Lake](#) with great views over the lake. The village car park is pay and display with toilets and an Information centre.

The old Greenside lead mine is in the hills above Glenridding, about a mile upstream if you follow Glenridding Beck. The village boomed as the mine produced vast amounts of lead and silver from around 1825 till its closure in 1961. There are significant remnants of the workings still visible with big spoil heaps across the mountain side and some of the old processing and smelting buildings, one of which is now Helvellyn Youth Hostel. Much of the mine area is now designated as a scheduled ancient monument, although the stability of the spoil heaps has been an ongoing concern.



Glenridding lakeside

A short walk or drive from the village leads to the shores of Ullswater lake. A car park is also available at Glenridding pier. This is a picturesque parkland area with a large expanse of open grass, shingle beaches and benches next to the lake. The impressive scenery makes this a wonderful setting and it is well worth taking a boat trip on the lake to fully appreciate the beauty of the area. [Ullswater Steamers](#) operate from the adjacent pier, with a reduced service out of season, and they call at Aira Force, Howtown and Pooley Bridge down the lake. The pier car park is pay and display with a small cafe and toilet facilities in the Steamers building. Across the grass from the pier, adjacent to the lake and the main road, is [St Patrick's](#)

[Boat Landing](#) where you can hire boats and there is a small cafe.

Travelling:

Leave the village car park via the one way system and turn right, back on the A592. You soon pass the access road to Glenridding Pier on the left, with St Patrick's Boat Landing a little further on. As you leave the village behind, there's a last glimpse of Ullswater on the left, before entering the adjacent village of Patterdale. Fabulous scenery is the main attraction in Patterdale, but there's also [St Patrick's Church](#) on the right, then [Patterdale Hotel](#) on the right which has a good looking beer garden. Just beyond that the road squeezes past the White Lion pub on the left. Beyond the village, you follow the very picturesque Goldrill Beck valley, surrounded by mountains, for approx 2 miles until you reach a small car park on the right adjacent to Cow Bridge.

Distance: 114.7 miles

Location: Cow Bridge car park and Brothers Water

Coordinates: N 54.51243, W 2.92396

This car park gives easy access to Brothers Water which is a 5 minute level [walk](#) along the footpath following Goldrill Beck. Brothers Water is the smallest of the official 16 Lake District lakes but it probably has one of the best settings, surrounded by high mountains and wonderful scenery. The footpath takes you to the shingle shores where you can picnic and paddle or just enjoy the scenery. The footpath continues along the western lakeshore, through ancient woodland and beyond to the historic Hartsop Hall, which is now a farmhouse, and beyond that to the Brotherswater Inn at the nearby [campsite](#). Despite the proximity of the main road, the lake remains relatively peaceful and is a great place to enjoy some real Lake District.



Brothers Water

The car park is free but has no facilities.

Travelling:

Turn right out of the car park to continue along the A592 which soon follows the eastern shore of Brothers Water and gives some magnificent views of the surrounding mountains. Shortly after the lake on the right is the [Brotherswater Inn](#). Beyond this you soon begin to see the full extent of the climb up Kirkstone Pass ahead. Although quite steep and twisty, it is a relatively good and wide road, normally quite easy in a car. As you get close to the summit, Red Pit car park on the right gives wonderful views back towards Brothers Water. Looking in the opposite direction to the road summit skyline, to the right of the road is a large standing stone. This is the Kirk Stone which the pass is named after. 'Kirk' being a Scottish word for church and the stone is said to resemble a church from a distance. Continue driving a short distance to Kirkstone Pass car park, just beyond the road summit on the right.



Kirkstone Pass towards Brothers Water

Distance: 118.3 miles

Location: Kirkstone Pass

Coordinates: N 54.46445, W 2.92542

At an altitude of 454m, Kirkstone Pass summit is the highest point you can take a car to in the Lake District and there are spectacular views of the surrounding mountains and towards Windermere. There are good walks from here up nearby mountains, made easier by the high starting point. The adjacent [Kirkstone Pass Inn](#) is the highest pub in Cumbria and the beer garden certainly makes the most of the views. Apart from the pub there are no other facilities at the summit. Large rough car park with donation box.

Travelling:

Turn right out of the car park and continue over Kirkstone Pass summit on the A592. The road begins to descend gradually with good views to the right towards Windermere lake. Soon the road turns towards Troutbeck valley with good views of surrounding mountains. The next section has a very steep and long drop to the valley floor on the left which might be off-putting but the views remain wonderful. The road is a little narrow but not too steep or difficult, although coaches can sometimes make things awkward. Continue to descend and eventually the first building on the right is the [Queens Head Hotel](#). The road behind the hotel takes you into Troutbeck village. The main A592 descends some more before levelling out, passing [Jesus Church](#) on the right and crossing Trout Beck. A better road continues down the valley with views towards Troutbeck village on the right, then ahead towards Windermere. Approx 1.5 miles beyond the Trout Beck bridge is the entrance to Holehird Gardens on the left. The car park is up the access lane on the right

Distance: 123.7 miles

Location: Holehird Gardens

Coordinates: N 54.39602, W 2.91472

[Holehird Gardens](#) are a spectacular attraction managed by the Lakeland Horticultural Society and maintained by volunteers. The 10 acre hillside site has a great variety of plants and features including a walled garden, rock gardens, water features and an impressive Hydrangea display. One of the best features are the superb views towards the central Lakeland mountains. The imposing Holehird House is adjacent which was built in the 1860's as a private home for the estate.

Beatrix Potter stayed at the house in 1889 and 1895. The gardens are open daily through the year, dawn



Holehird Gardens

to dusk, although reception is only open April to October during the day. Limited refreshments are available in the reception, toilets are nearby. A small donation is expected from visitors for upkeep of the gardens.

Travelling:

Leaving Holehird, turn left and continue on the A592 for approx 0.7 miles to a mini-roundabout where the main A591 crosses. Take the second exit to continue on the A592 towards Bowness. Continue just over 1 mile to the outskirts of Bowness and soon Rayrigg Road car park is on the right, adjacent to the road.



Bowness-on-Windermere lakeside

Distance: 126.0 miles

Location: Bowness-on-Windermere, Rayrigg Road car park

Coordinates: N 54.36591, W 2.91993

Return to start point.



Martin Wilson

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