

Keswick & Derwent Water



Pocked with islands, fringed by pebbled shores and overarching trees, and overlooked by the hulking dome of Skiddaw, there are few lakes with such an immediate wow factor as Derwent Water. Neither as touristy as Windermere or as wild as West Water, it's a place that sums up all that's green and good about the Lakeland landscape, and if you like nothing more than cruising the waters or wandering the hilltops, there are few corners of the Lakes where you'll be better served.

The attractive market town of Keswick makes the best base, handily plonked within reach of all the area's major sights. To the south and southwest of town are the twin valleys of Borrowdale and Buttermere, connected by the slate-strewn pass of Honister, while to the west are the towering conifer forests and mountain-bike trails of Whinlatter. The peaceful lake of Bassenthwaite, famous for the wild ospreys that have been soaring across its summer skies since 2001, lies a few miles to the north. Bookworms can check out Tennyson connections at the stately home of Mirehouse on the lake's eastern shore, while Wordsworth devotees can wander the halls of his childhood home in Cockermouth, lovingly restored by the National Trust after decades of neglect.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Feel the call of the wild watching the **Bassenthwaite ospreys** (p153)
- Test your nerve on the **Via Ferrata** (p163) at the Honister Slate Mine
- Trundle through the little-visited **Lorton Valley** (p156)
- Trace William's literary beginnings at **Wordsworth House** (p157) in Cockermouth
- Wander the gardens of marvellous **Mirehouse** (p153)
- Hop on the 77 bus into the **Buttermere Valley** (p163)



■ Area of largest lake (Derwent Water): 2.05 sq miles

■ Cumberland Pencil Museum visitors in 2007: 85,000

■ Batmobiles at the Cars of the Stars Motor Museum: 3

ITINERARY 1

CATBELLS WALK

3.5 miles/3 hours/Hawes End

The miniature mountain of **Catbells** (1481ft) packs an impressive punch considering its modest height. The fell is well known as one of the most family-friendly Lakeland summits, but that doesn't mean it's without its challenges – the trail is steep and rocky in places and follows a lofty ridge, but once you're at the top you'll be treated to a stupendous outlook across **Derwent Water**.

The traditional starting point up Catbells (thought to be a corruption of the Old Norse *cat bield*, or wild cat's lair) is at **Hawes End** on the lake's west side. Parking is problematic, so the easiest way to get there is aboard the Keswick Launch or the 77 bus; alternatively you can walk from Keswick through **Portinscale** and the Lingholm Estate.

From Hawes End the path crosses a **cattle grid** and then offers a choice of two trails: the standard path leads straight on or there's an alternative trail a little further along the old 'green road', which traces a zigzagging course up the fell-side. This second path – engineered by Sir John Woodford, a local resident and much-decorated veteran of the Battle of Waterloo – eventually joins the first before the final ascent.

The trail runs over a false summit and a series of small depressions before climbing along the spectacular **ridge** to Catbells' true peak. The **summit** is a fell-spotter's dream; the northern aspect is the most impressive, with views of Skiddaw's twin peaks, flanked by Carl Side and Ullock Pike to the west and Lonscale Fell to the east. Over on the lake's eastern side, you can spot Walla Crag, Bleaberry Fell and High Seat; to the west is the Newlands Valley; while far off to the south is the Borrowdale Valley and the distinctive point of Castle Crag.

From the summit, you can continue the ridge walk southwest to Maiden Moor. Alternatively, follow the trail downhill, turning back towards the lake via **Hause Gate** and on to the main road. A right-hand trail leads down through the woods past **Brandlehow Bay** and back to Hawes End.

