

The Lake District

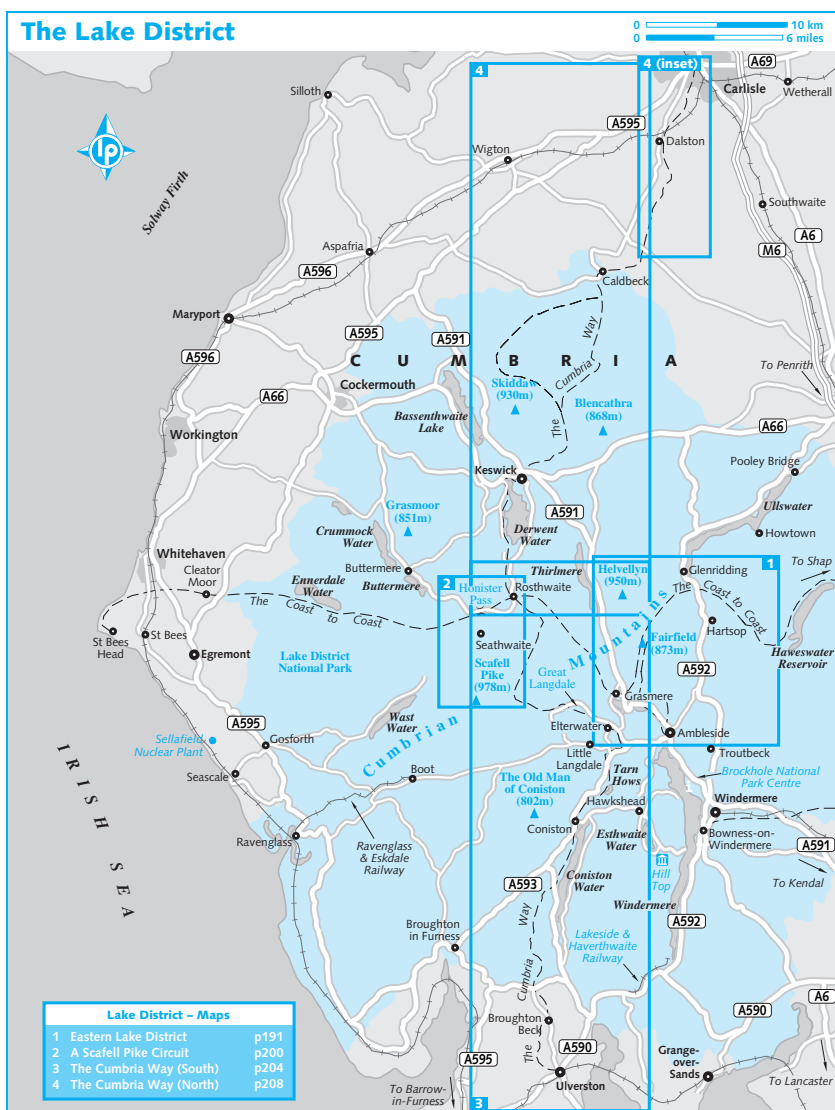
If anywhere is the heart and soul of walking in England, it's the Lake District – a wonderful area of high mountains, deep valleys and, of course, beautiful lakes. Why is it so popular? There may be a historic reason; this is where William Wordsworth and other 19th-century romantic writers were among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

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

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

HIGHLIGHTS

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



INFORMATION

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

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