

Windermere Lake To and from Ambleside Moderate Challenge Trail

Route Summary

Windermere is the largest of the Lake District lakes, very popular, and very busy, often all year round. Parking is at a premium to get a boat anywhere near the lake, and this is a very convenient start point for a trip.

A warning has to be given about all of the lakes, in that the wind can get up very quickly, giving large waves. It is essential to watch, or listen to, a full weather forecast, so that winds might be predicted. If staying in local accommodation, these providers often are acutely aware of the weather, as they have many hill-walking customers.

The set-down point is across the road from the car park, on a fine shingle beach. Please avoid the many ducks and swans, which will crowd round you as you launch, as they are used to being fed by tourists. You are in one of the 'honey pot' sites in the Lakes here, with many Cafés nearby, and three Hotels within view.

Nearest Town - Ambleside

O.S. Sheets - Outdoor Leisure Map 7 – South-Eastern Lakes, or Landranger No. 90 – Penrith, Keswick and Ambleside

Start and Finish - Waterhead car park, Ambleside

Waterways Travelled – Lake Windermere

Type of Water - Lake, very prone to strong winds – take care

Distance – 4 miles

Licence Information – None required, public access

Local Facilities – In Ambleside, toilets at the car park

Vehicle Shuttle Required - No

Portages and Locks - None

Description

Things to see en route: The route is circular and can be done in either direction depending on wind, as this is open water with four miles of fetch from Bowness. It is described here clockwise. First obstacles are all the commercial craft to and froing from jetties with the lake steamers accessing the biggest jetty. Unlike other water, Windermere is a highway, and has special navigation rules (from LDNPA). The hierarchy of craft is different. Two are important for canoeists, the lake steamers have right of way over every craft, powered or unpowered, and canoes give way to everything. We are the lowest as the most manoeuvrable. Please remember this, and do not block up jetties as the large steamers come in!

We have taken great care to ensure the currency, accuracy and reliability of this information. We cannot accept responsibility for errors or omissions but where such are brought to our attention, the information will be amended accordingly. Users should be aware that environmental conditions outside of our control can change the nature of the Trail within a short space of time. It is recommended that weather and water conditions are checked beforehand, and tide timetables where applicable.

Once past jetties, and Ambleside Youth Hostel, (which isn't in Ambleside!) thread your way through moored craft on the east side of the lake to Holme Crag Field which is National Trust so landing is okay. A great place for a Picnic. Holme Crag quite obviously sticks out as a noticeable promontory.

From Holme Crag, look east at Lowwood hotel, an old coaching inn. Refreshments and landing on beach, although this has become very busy of late, due to many sailing craft moored on the hotel's jetties, which again, you should not use.

Before striking out for Green Tuft island, (under half a mile away across the lake) look around for commercial traffic who have right of way. This is across open water, look at the Langdale Pikes in distance to west, with Fairfield Horseshoe of fells to north. Wray Castle is just visible above oak trees. It's a modern folly, and in possession of the National Trust, as is the land behind Green Tuft Island, used as NT Low Wray campsite. Toilets and landing possible, although there are quite likely to be many anglers in your way here.

Follow shore through gap behind Bee Holme to emerge at mouth of Blelham Beck, and Pull Wyke. The timeshare visible is impressive mock Tudor building, Huyton Hill.

Large bay is Pull Wyke Bay, a water fowl refuge. Sandpiper, Red Breasted Merganser, Tufted Duck, Goldeneye, Pochard, Little Grebe, wagtail, Cormorant are all possible. The right hand headland Pull Wyke bay is called Brock Crag but there are no badgers. They are in conifers further back.

The little island is Seamew Crag. A gull colony with dwarf battered tree. In the 1980s this island was uninhabited by birds. Watch out for under water reefs extending out from shore to Seamew Crag.

The park land on shore from Pull Wyke to Brathay River mouth is privately owned, including Brathay Bay shore and Brathay's natural harbour, one of three natural harbours on lake. The large building looking down onto Brathay Bay is Brathay Hall, a Georgian mansion used commercially as an outdoor pursuits centre, and much more. Brathay graduates are now working all around the world in many different types of career. The River Brathay can be paddled up for a little while, adding a small amount of moving water interest.

Once across Brathay river mouth, rough marshy ground leads back to the start point. Borran's Park is public council park at very head of lake.

Windermere can obviously be paddled further to the south, but be warned that the area down near to Bowness is even busier, with one of the largest concentrations of power boats in the U.K.!

Useful Information

The route is circular and can be done in either direction depending on wind, be mindful that this is an open stretch of water and the wind can have a real bearing on time and ability to paddle.

The visitor is in a fabulous area for attractions, including those of the natural kind. Ambleside is a bustling place, with many hotels, guest houses and restaurants, and the one of the other main towns in the Lakes, Keswick, is only 14 miles to the north. Many hill walks commence in the area.

www.visitnorthwest.com/lakes/waterhead.htm

www.lakedistrict.gov.uk/index/visitng/plan

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www.amblesideonline.co.uk

Recommended Next Trail

If you have enjoyed this trail why not try out one of the many trails available.

Safety Information

Spending an afternoon canoeing can be a fun way to experience nature, get a great workout and spend time with family and friends. However, it can also be a dangerous journey, if safety guidelines are overlooked. Always follow these basic rules and comply with navigation rules- keep to the right of on-coming boats. Please be careful at points along the trail where there are sharp bends on the waterway and keep a look out at these points for oncoming traffic.

Wear appropriate clothing

Always wear shoes. Rocks, rough terrain and river beds present serious hazards to boaters without the proper attire. Nearly 90per cent of all boating injuries are attributed to lack of proper footwear. Other canoe safe clothing includes hats, additional dry clothing towels, and layered items which can easily be removed.

Be sure to

- Know the weather forecast before you set out canoeing.
 - Familiarise yourself with the local area, it's sensitive places and protected areas.
 - Leave the environment as you found it. Please read [You, Your Canoe and the environment](#)
 - Take your litter home with you.
 - Follow the navigation rules for the waterway you are on.
 - Keep noise to a minimum.
 - Do not damage bank side vegetation when launching or landing. (No Seal Launching)
 - Where possible keep to any designated paths or launching points.
 - Canoe a safe distance away from wildlife.
 - Check your equipment.
 - Observe the navigation rules for this waterway.
 - Check to see if there are any events on the waterways when you wish to travel.
- Use the checklist below to make sure you have everything you need.

Checklist:

1. Boat
2. Paddle
3. Buoyancy Aid
4. Bailer/sponge
5. Small First Aid Kit
6. Penknife
7. Mobile telephone (in a waterproof bag....Please note that in some areas due to the location mobile telephone reception might be nonexistent)

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8. Fresh drinking water
9. Sun cream, hat and sunglasses
10. Light waterproof jacket
11. Footwear
12. Licence

ALWAYS be certain to let others know where you're going and when you're expected to return.

Specific Environmental Information:

Please ensure you don't remove or damage any plants or animals from the waterway as they may be protected or harmful if transferred to other catchments.

Canoeists and kayakers take very seriously environmental concerns and already follow existing voluntary environmental codes of conduct, including Canoe England's own guidance notes outlined in the "You your canoe and the environment" publication.

By following the simple steps below you can ensure your presence is not detrimental to the freshwater environment, minimize and avoid accidentally disturbing wildlife and their habitats.

- Find out about the area before you go, noting its sensitive places, species and breeding seasons.
- Leave no trace of your visit and take your litter home with you.
- When clearing litter left by others, handle it with care.
- Leave the environment as you find it
- Keep noise to a minimum.
- Do not "seal" launch or drag boats to avoid wearing away natural banks. Float your canoe for launching, lift out when landing and carry it to and from the water.
- Do not damage bank side vegetation when launching or landing.
- Where possible keep to any designated paths or launching points.
- On rivers, avoid paddling over gravel banks in low water conditions – they may contain fish spawn.
- Constantly assess wildlife. If you see signs of disturbance move away quietly.

Be the eyes and ears on the water. Report pollution, wildlife problems, damage, incidents etc to the relevant authorities.

Canal & River Trust - Emergencies- Telephone 0800 47 999 47

RSPCA for wildlife and animals in distress – Telephone 0990 55 59 99 (24 hours)

Environment Agency - Telephone 0800 80 70 60 (24 hours)

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