

# Buses in the Lake District: a walkers guide

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The information below was originally compiled for visitors to Ambleside, but will still be useful if you are staying in Windermere or Keswick. It is based on 2013 summer and 2012-3 winter timetables, which can often be picked up on the buses themselves, or if not at the Tourist Offices in Windermere, Keswick or Bowness. (In Ambleside there is a kind of tourist office next to the Salutation Hotel.) Currently the timetable is a booklet called "The Lakes Connection", but it changes its format from year to year.

The bus stop in **Ambleside** is in Kelsick Road, a small square just off the main high street. In **Keswick**, the bus stops are outside Booths supermarket: the same is true of **Windermere**, where the stop is also by the railway station

Buses marked with a \* operate year round: the others are only summer routes.

On longer journeys (eg to Keswick and beyond) you can reduce costs by asking for a **day ticket**, giving you unlimited bus travel in the Lake District. There are also **four day tickets**.

## Key routes

\* The trunk route in the Lake District is the hourly **555 from Windermere and Ambleside to Keswick** (556 when going to or from Lancaster). The last bus back from Keswick is after 7pm in the summer months. This

route is thus a useful one to end your walk on.

\* There are **555s from Grasmere to Ambleside** (and Bowness) even later – as late as 11pm in the summer, making it perfect for ending walks on long summer evenings.

**Open topped buses** also operate every 20 minutes during the day in summer between Bowness, Windermere, Ambleside and Grasmere until about 6pm. In winter there are hourly buses from Bowness to Ambleside only

\* Another key route is the 78 from **Keswick to Seatoller**: half hourly Monday to Saturday, roughly hourly on Sundays, this has late buses back from Seatoller (6pm in summer) which connect easily with the 555 from Keswick, making walking in **Borrowdale** very easy by bus from Ambleside. There are often open topped buses on this route in summer.

The 77A goes from Keswick via the foot of Catbells to Seatoller, up over the **Honister Pass, to Buttermere** and back via the Whinlatter pass to Keswick four times a day in summer: its sister bus, the 77, does the route in reverse. Last bus back from Buttermere is a slightly early 5.15pm, and from the Honister pass 5.30pm, connecting with the 555 at Keswick for the return to Ambleside.

\* The 516 bus also runs from **Ambleside to Old Dungeon Ghyll in Langdale** daily, though last buses back are only 4.15pm Monday to

Friday (as late as 6pm on summer weekend days, however). Langdale is thus a better place to start a walk than finish it from a bus point of view: an alternative if you want to stay out later is to finish your walk in Grasmere.

\* **Coniston** is also served by regular buses from Ambleside on the 505 route, with last buses back at 6pm on Monday to Saturday in summer, and 5pm on Sundays. There is enough time between the first and last buses to do the whole Coniston circuit if you don't dawdle too much.

There is also a **Kentmere Rambler** bus from Ambleside on summer Sundays and Bank Holidays only, opening up this remote valley, which has minimal parking, to walkers: last bus back is 5pm.

For **Patterdale**, you need the **Kirkstone Rambler** from Windermere: this runs daily in July and August, and at weekends from March to October, but from Ambleside involves a slightly awkward change, getting the bus to Windermere and changing: however, last buses are a reasonable 5.15pm from Patterdale

\* For the foot of **Skiddaw**, the 554 from Keswick to Carlisle is useful, serving Mirehouse and the Ravenstone Hotel (for Ullock Pike). There are only three buses a day, but one at 10.35 from Keswick connects well enough with the 9.28 bus from Ambleside, and there is a 16.58 bus back to Keswick.

\* The X5 from Keswick to Workington serves **Braithwaite**, at the foot of Grisedale Pike every hour, and buses on this route run well into the evening, with the last bus connecting to Ambleside at 19.05 Mon to Sat.

\* In the other direction, the X5 goes hourly from Keswick to **Threkeld** the foot of **Blencathra** and on to Penrith: buses run well into the evening from

Threkeld to Keswick daily, with the last bus connecting for Ambleside the 18.49 Monday to Saturday and 17.43 on Sunday in summer.

\* The very useful **boats around Derwentwater** should also not be forgotten: they bring Catbells, Newlands Valley and Grange within range, and connect quite well with the Keswick buses: it takes no more than 10 minutes to walk from the boat landing stage to the bus stop in Kewsick outside Booths.

## Popular peaks by bus

**SCAFELL PIKE** Buses enable you to go up Scafell Pike by one route and down another, which is impossible by car. Catch the 9.00 bus from Langdale, you will be starting up Mickleden at 9.30am. In summer you then have until 6.30pm to get down to Seatoller

**HELVELLYN etc** Late buses from Grasmere mean it is easiest, though less exciting, to climb Helvellyn from this side (you can use the bus to walk the whole ridge, for example, from Thirlspot, via the Stake Pass, up onto Helvellyn and down to Grasmere). But to climb it from the more interesting Patterdale side means a slightly awkward change of buses in Windermere. So as not to be in a rush on the way back, use this bus for the way out, and then descend into Grasmere in the evening. This technique can also be used for a number of interesting Patterdale ascents, for example onto the Fairfield range, or St Sunday Crag, with descents to Ambleside.

**SKIDDAW** You can climb this from Keswick, or use the 554 bus to Carlisle to Mirehouse or the Ravenstone Hotel for Dodd or Ullock Pike. This enables you to go up one of the more interesting routes up the front or north side of the mountain, and then down

the conventional route (which is dull in ascent, but easy in descent), bringing you directly down to Keswick. Another idea might be bus 74 which serves the Mirehouse Osprey Centre six times a day at weekends April to August and daily in school holidays, and it would also not be that expensive to take a taxi from Keswick to a point on the base of Skiddaw.

**BLENCATHRA** The X5 Penrith bus from Keswick passes Threkeld at the base of the mountain, and connections well with the 555. For variation, it is possible to walk back from the base of Blencathra over Latrigg to Keswick: a very nice gentle finish to the day

**LANGDALE PIKES** If the bus back from Old Dungeon Ghyll is too early, then try walking from **Harrison Stickle**, across Sergeant Man, and either down over Blea Rigg to Grasmere, or even down **Far Easedale**, or along the lovely ridge beyond. Finishing on Helm Crag, this is a favourite walk of mine. Another idea is to take the bus to Old Dungeon Ghyll, and walk back across **Lingmoor** to **Elterwater** (for lunch/tea) and then on over **Loughrigg** to Ambleside. There is a lovely path too from near Chapel Stile up onto **Silver Howe** and down to Grasmere.

**BOWFELL** and **CRINKLE CRAGS** are a trifle problematic by bus: unless you walk from Bowfell via Esk Hause to Seatoller you have no alternative to be down in time for the last bus from Dungeon Ghyll, which leaves at an even vaguely practical time only on summer weekends

**OLD MAN OF CONISTON** The Coniston Rambler gives you enough time to do the whole Coniston circuit, so long as you get up early. The Coniston bus also gives you access to walks in Little Langdale (get off about a mile beyond Skelwith Bridge)

**BUTTERMERE** The Buttermere peaks can be reached via the 77/77A routes described above, but you might be pressed to get down in time for the last bus. A creative alternative is to do a route from Buttermere to Seatoller (eg **Red Pike, High Stile, High Raise, Honister Pass** and down), which has later buses, or from Buttermere or the Honister pass to Derwentwater. Eg you can walk from the top of the Honister Pass up onto **Dale Head**, then **High Spy, Maiden Moor, Catbells** and get the Derwentwater boat back to Keswick. One could also walk from Buttermere up onto **Wandope, Eel Crag**, and then down **Grisedale Pike** to Braithwaite and Keswick, or via Sail and Barrow to Keswick, or via Causey Pike to Hawes End boat to Keswick.

**CATBELLS RANGE:** easily reached by Derwentwater boat to Hawes End, but a variation is to get the boat to High Brandlehow, and walk up onto High Spy or Maiden Moor and back along the ridge. The 77/77A bus also passes the foot of Catbells and Grange.

**BORROWDALE Grange Fell** and other favourites are easily reached via the Seatoller bus. A creative alternative is to get the 555 bus to Thirlspot, and then walk up over the wild central fells and down to Borrowdale – eg to **Watendlath** or to Walla Scar. Another favourite walk of mine is to get the bus to Rosthwaite, walk over the pass to Watendlath, and then on via the Surprise View to **Walla Scar**, and down to Castlerigg or Keswick to get the 555 bus home. Another really interesting walk is from **Rosthwaite** via the **Greenup Edge** pass, to Far Easedale and down to **Grasmere**.

**NEWLANDS VALLEY** While no bus serves the Newlands valley directly, it is not inaccessible. For **Causey Pike**, take the anti-clockwise Derwentwater boat to Hawes End, and then walk the

short lovely distance across the valley to the foot of the mountain (The 77/77A also serves the foot of Catbells, just by Hawes End). It is also a nice walk across the valley from Keswick via Portinscale to the foot of **Barrow**, from where you can access the Causey Pike ridge. If you want to do the whole **Grisedale Horseshoe**, use Hawes End on the way out, and from the foot of Grisedale Pike, catch the X5 bus (every hour, last connection to Ambleside at 19.05) from Braithwaite to Keswick.

For the **Hindscarth** and **Robinson** ridges, you can also use Hawes End, though the distance up the valley is a bit further: another idea is to take the Seatoller bus from Keswick to Rosthwaite, climbing up to **Dale Head** via the path over the shoulder of High Spy, and then down over the lovely long ridges of either Hindscarth or Robinson to the Newlands Valley: the walk along the valley to Hawes End is then a gentle ending to a lovely day. You could also start this walk from the Honistor Pass, of course, from where it is a short climb to Dale Head.

**GREAT GABLE.** The 78 from Keswick gets you to Seatoller from where one can climb up onto Great Gable, but a better idea might be to take the 77 or 77A to the top of the Honister Pass, and then walk the Gable ridge from there, descending to Seatoller for a latter bus back to Keswick.

**WASDALE** and **ENNERDALE** are not easily accessible by bus (or car for that matter). There is an Ennerdale Rambler bus from Cockermouth to the head of Ennerdale on Sundays and public holidays in high summer: in Wasdale there is no public transport.

The answer, therefore, is to make this a two day expedition, walking over to Wasdale, staying in the excellent Wasdale Head Hotel (019467 26229

[www.wasdale.com](http://www.wasdale.com)) and then walking back the following day.

An excellent day walk starting in Wasdale Head, taking the Black Sail pass up over the **Pillar** ridge brings you down into Ennerdale. You can then go via Scarth Gap to Buttermere, or via Haystacks to the Honister Pass.

The **KENTMERE RANGE** is best reached by the Kentmere Rambler. You can do the horseshoe, but for variation, walk from Kentmere up to **Thornthwaite Crag**, then down over **Caudale Moor** to the Kirkstone Pass, and via the path on the far side of the valley to Ambleside (though this last leg from the Kirkstone Pass to Ambleside is about five miles, note, so this is a long day). This is also a possible way to get up onto **High Street** or even to **Harter Fell** overlooking Haweswater.

If the Kentmere bus is not running, you can climb from **TROUTBECK** (on the 555 bus to Windermere) up onto the **Yoke, Ill Bell** and **Froswick** side of the Kentmere Horseshoe and then down from **Thornthwaite Crag** to the Kirkstone Pass and Ambleside. It is also nice to walk from Troutbeck over the hills to Ambleside, or vice versa.

## If you get stuck...

.... you might have to get a taxi. It might cost you £20 or so, but it is still cheaper than a tankful of petrol. (It is useful for this reason to take a local taxi number with you).

Taxis from Windermere railway station to Ambleside, if you arrive later than the last bus, cost about £10.

If you miss the last boat at Hawes End on Derwentwater, it is a pleasant hour's walk around the lake via Portinscale to Keswick.