

# Cumbria & the Lake District



If it's grandstand views you're looking for, nowhere in England can measure up to the dumbfounding drama of Cumbria and the Lake District. Wedged against the Scottish border, trammelled by the Yorkshire Dales and the grey rollers of the Irish Sea, it's a place where the superlatives run dry – home to the nation's longest and deepest lakes, as well as the smallest church, steepest road, highest town and loftiest peak in England. The great glaciers which carved out this landscape during the last ice age have long since melted, leaving behind a spectacular string of razor crags, scree-strewn fells and sparkling tarns that form the heart of one of England's original national parks – the stunning Lake District, founded in 1951 and still the spiritual heartland of English hiking.

With so much natural splendour on show, it's hardly surprising that Cumbria and the Lake District is one of northern England's busiest corners. Over 14 million visitors flock to the national park every year to explore its hilltop trails, literary landmarks and lakeside towns, and on summer weekends that cloudlike feeling can feel frustratingly elusive. But even on the busiest days it's possible to find some solitude in the county's lesser-known corners – the lush and little-visited Eden Valley, the seaside ports and wind-battered sands of the umbrian coast, or the bleakly beautiful moorland of eastern Cumbria. And if all else fails you can always take refuge in a solid old Lakeland inn for a pint of homebrewed ale and a hearty plate of tattie hotpot, Cumberland sausage or Herdwick lamb. Reet grand, as they'd say round these 'ere parts...

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Conquering William Wordsworth's favourite mountain, **Helvellyn** (p732) or England's highest peak, **Scafell Pike** (p729)
- Plumbing the gloomy depths of the **Honister Slate Mine** (p730)
- Escaping the outside world in the remote valleys of **Wastwater** (p723) and **Eskdale** (p722)
- Chowing down on some first-class Cumbrian cooking at Hawkshead's **Drunken Duck** (p718) or Penrith's **Yanwath Gate Inn** (p741)
- Watching the wild ospreys at **Bassenthwaite Lake** (p725)
- Cruising Coniston Water aboard the steam yacht **Gondola** (p720)



■ POPULATION: 496,200

■ AREA: 2629 SQ MILES

■ NUMBER OF LAKE DISTRICT PEAKS  
OVER 900M: 5

## History

The earliest settlers arrived in the Lake District 5000 years ago, building stone circles like Castlerigg (p727) and quarrying flint and stone around Stonethwaite and Seatoller. The region was subsequently occupied by Celts, Angles, Vikings and Romans, and during the Dark Ages marked the centre of the kingdom of Rheged, which extended across much of modern Cumbria, Dumfries and Galloway, and was annexed by neighbouring Northumbria sometime in the 8th century.

During the Middle Ages Cumbria marked the start of 'The Debatable Lands', the wild frontier between England and Scotland. Bands of Scottish raiders known as Border Reivers regularly plundered the area, prompting the construction of distinctive *pele* towers, built to protect the inhabitants from border raiders, and the stout fortresses at Carlisle, Penrith and Kendal.

The area was a centre for the Romantic movement during the 19th century, and writers including Coleridge, de Quincey and William Wordsworth were among the first to champion the area's natural beauty above its potential for industrial resources (a cause taken up by other literary luminaries including John Ruskin and Beatrix Potter). The Lake District became one of the nation's first national parks in 1951, and the modern county of Cumbria was formed from the old districts of Cumberland and Westmorland in 1974.

## Activities

### CYCLING

Cycling is popular in Cumbria, especially mountain biking on the fells, but you'll need nerves (and legs) of steel on the more challenging routes. Cycle-hire shops are widespread, and tourist offices stock a cycling map showing traffic-free routes; bike hire starts at around £15 to £18 per day.

Long-distance bikers can follow the 72-mile **Cumbria Way** ([www.cumbriawaycycleroute.co.uk](http://www.cumbriawaycycleroute.co.uk)) between Ulverston, Keswick and Carlisle, and the Cumbrian section of the 140-mile **Sea to Sea Cycle Route** (C2C; [www.c2c-guide.co.uk](http://www.c2c-guide.co.uk)) from Whitehaven via the northern Lake District en route to the North Pennines and Newcastle.

### WALKING

For many people, hiking on the fells is the main reason for a Lake District visit. Trails range from low-level rambles to full-blown moun-

tain ascents; most tourist offices sell maps and guidebooks, including the Collins *Lakeland Fellranger* and Ordnance Survey's *Pathfinder Guides*, as well as Alfred Wainwright's classic hand-drawn, seven-volume set, *A Pictorial Guide to the Lakeland Fells*. If you're planning on anything more than a low-level stroll in the Lakes – especially if you're heading into the high fells – a decent quality map is absolutely essential. Walkers have a choice of two map publishers – traditionalists generally opt for the Ordnance Survey 1:25000 *Landranger* series, which are renowned for their clarity and accuracy and are used for reference by most official bodies. But many hikers prefer Harvey *Superwalker* 1:25000 maps, which are specifically made for walkers and clearly mark major trail routes (as well as all 214 fells detailed by Alfred Wainwright in his classic walking guides).

Wainwright also dreamt up the **Coast to Coast Walk** ([www.golakes.co.uk/map/walks.asp](http://www.golakes.co.uk/map/walks.asp)), which cuts west to east from St Bees to Robin Hood's Bay in North Yorkshire, a distance of 191 miles. The Cumbrian section passes through Honister Pass, Grasmere, Patterdale, Kirkby Stephen and Shap en route to the Yorkshire Dales, a five- to seven-day hike of 82 miles. Walkers also attempt the Cumbria way (see Cycling).

Door-to-door baggage services can be useful if you don't want to lug your pack along the whole route. Contact **Coast to Coast Packhorse** (☎ 017683-71777; [www.cumbria.com/packhorse](http://www.cumbria.com/packhorse)), **Sherpa Van** (☎ 020-8569 4101; [www.sherpavan.com](http://www.sherpavan.com)) or the YHA Shuttle Bus (see p704).

### OTHER ACTIVITIES

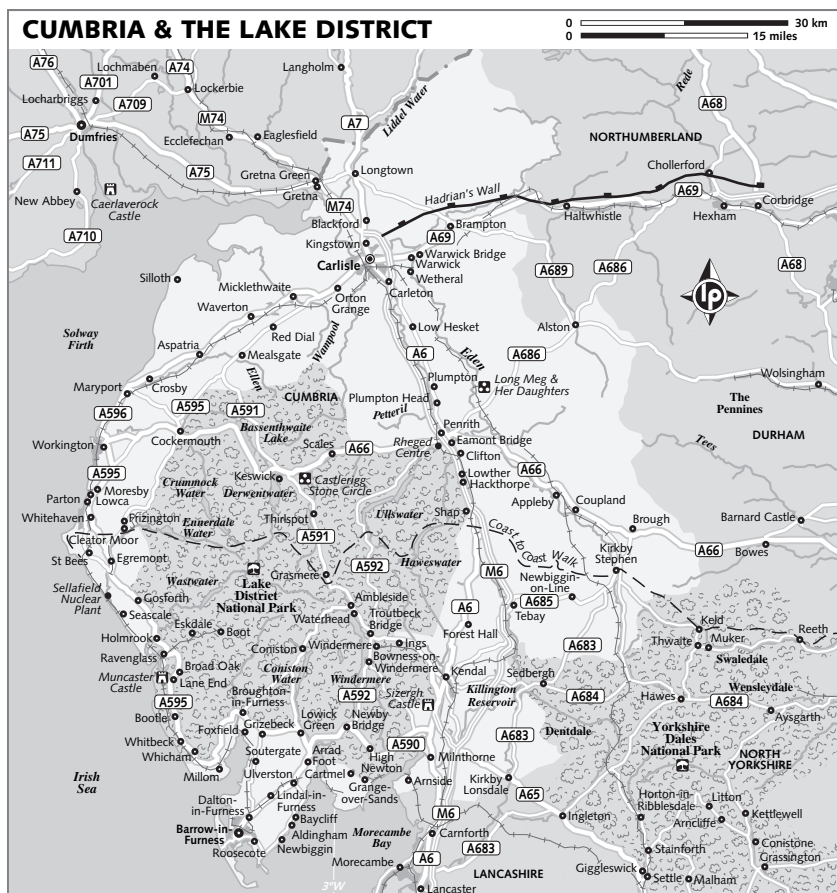
Cumbria is a haven for adrenalin-fuelled activities ranging from rock climbing and orienteering to quad biking, fell running and ghyll scrambling (a cross between coastering and river canyoning). Sailing, kayaking and windsurfing are obviously popular too, especially around Windermere, Derwent Water and Coniston.

Check out [www.lakedistrictoutdoors.co.uk](http://www.lakedistrictoutdoors.co.uk) for the lowdown.

## Getting There & Away

### TRAIN

Carlisle is on the main Virgin West Coast line from London Euston–Manchester–Glasgow, with trains running roughly hourly from both north and south.



To get to the Lake District, you need to change at Oxenholme, from where regular trains travel west into Kendal and Windermere. There are at least three direct trains from Windermere and Kendal south to Lancaster, Manchester and Manchester Airport.

For something more soulful, Carlisle sits along two of the UK's most scenic railways: the Cumbrian Coast line via Ulverston and Ravenglass (see Getting Around, p732), and the Settle-Carlisle Railway across the Yorkshire Dales (see p609).

In the Lakes, you can hop aboard chuffing steam trains on the Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway (p736) or the Lakeside & Haverthwaite Steam Railway (p710) from Bowness/Ambleside to Windermere.

Call ☎ 08457 484950 for information on Day Ranger passes covering the Cumbrian rail network.

#### BUS

National Express coaches run direct from London and Glasgow to Windermere, Carlisle and Kendal; count on seven hours between London Victoria and Windermere.

#### Getting Around

**Traveline** (☎ 0871 200 22 33; [www.travelinenortheast.info](http://www.travelinenortheast.info)) provides travel information. Tourist offices stock the free *Getting Around Cumbria* booklet, with timetables for buses, trains and ferries.

**BOAT**

Windermere, Coniston Water, Ullswater and Derwent Water all offer ferry services, providing time-saving links for walkers. Boats on Coniston and Windermere also tie in with the Cross-Lakes Shuttle (p178).

**BUS**

The main operator is **Stagecoach** ([www.stagecoachbus.com](http://www.stagecoachbus.com)). The North West Explorer ticket (one/four/seven days £9.50/21/30) gives unlimited travel on services in Cumbria and Lancashire. Twenty-four-hour Dayrider tickets can be purchased from the bus driver.

**Borrowdale Day Rider** (adult/child £5.25/4) Valid on Bus 79 between Keswick and Seatoller.

**Carlisle Day Rider** (adult £3) Unlimited travel in Carlisle.

**Central Lakes Rider** (adult/child £6.30/4.70) Covers Bowness, Ambleside, Grasmere, Langdale and Coniston; includes the 599, 505 and 516.

**Honister Day Rider** (adult/child £6.25/4.50) Valid on Bus 77 between Keswick and Borrowdale.

Useful bus routes include the 555 and 556 (Lakeslink) between Lancaster and Carlisle, which stop at all the main towns; bus 505 (Coniston Rambler), linking Kendal, Windermere, Ambleside and Coniston; and the X4/X5 from Penrith to Workington via Troutbeck, Keswick and Cockermouth.

We've given bus suggestions based on summer timetables; most routes run a reduced winter service. You can download timetables at [www.stagecoachbus.com/northwest/timetables.php](http://www.stagecoachbus.com/northwest/timetables.php).

From Easter to October, the YHA Shuttle Bus connects eight Lake District hostels, and provides a baggage transport service

for guests. Hostels on the route include Windermere, Hawkshead, Coniston Holly How, Elterwater, Langdale, Butharlp How and Grasmere. Hostel-to-hostel transport costs £3, or £2.50 for bags; transport from Windermere Station costs £2 to Windermere YHA, and £2.50 to Ambleside YHA.

**CAR**

Driving in the Lake District can be a headache, especially on holiday weekends; you might find it easier to leave the car wherever you're staying and get around using local buses instead.

Many Cumbrian towns use a timed parking permit for on-street parking, which you can pick up for free from local shops and tourist offices.

## THE LAKE DISTRICT

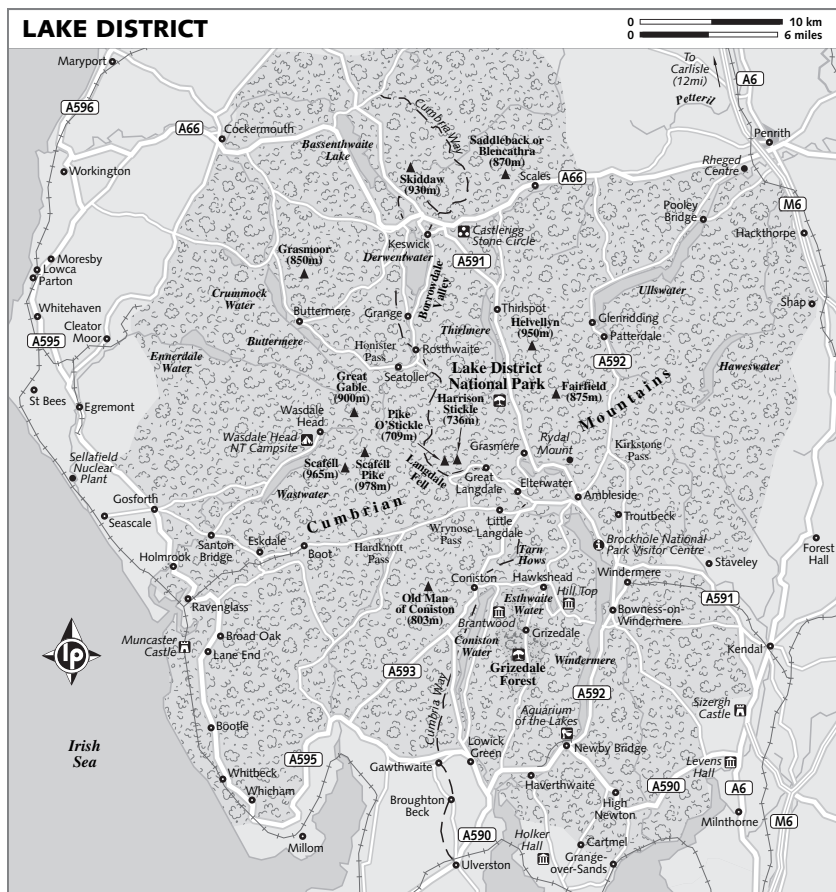
If you're a lover of the great outdoors, the Lake District is one corner of England where you'll want to linger. This sweeping panorama of slate-capped fells, craggy hilltops, misty mountain tarns and glittering lakes has been pulling in the crowds ever since the Romantics pitched up in the early 19th century, and it remains one of the country's most popular beauty spots. Literary landmarks abound, from Wordsworth's boyhood school to the lavish country estate of John Ruskin at Brantwood, and there are enough hilltop trails, hidden pubs and historic country hotels to fill a lifetime of visits. Time to get inspired.

### CUMBRIA ON A SHOESTRING

The Lake District has plenty of lavish country-house hotels and boutique B&Bs, but you don't have to break the bank to visit. There are several fantastic hostels, housed in everything from shepherds' huts to converted mansions; the flagship YHA establishments in Ambleside, Windermere and Keswick are superb. Reservations can be made at [www.yhbooking.org.uk](http://www.yhbooking.org.uk) or by calling ☎ 01629 592700.

Camping is also hugely popular in the Lakes, with lots of excellent sites dotted around the national park. The National Trust runs three sites at Low Wray, Wasdale and Great Langdale (the last two also offer funky wooden 'camping pods' for £20 to £35 per night); tourist offices publish an annual *Caravan and Camping Guide*, or you can visit [www.lakedistrictcamping.co.uk](http://www.lakedistrictcamping.co.uk).

The Lake District also has several camping barns (sometimes called 'stone tents'). Facilities are basic; you'll need the usual camping gear apart from a tent, although some places provide breakfast. Contact **Lakeland Camping Barns** (☎ 01946-758198; [www.lakelandcampingbarns.co.uk](http://www.lakelandcampingbarns.co.uk)).



## Orientation

The Lake District is shaped in a rough star formation, with valleys, ridges and lakes radiating out from the high ground around Scafell Pike. The busiest bases are Keswick, Ambleside, and Windermere and Bowness; Coniston and Ullswater make less hectic alternatives. Wasdale is the wildest and least accessible valley.

## Information

The Lake District's tourist offices are among the best in England, crammed with information on local hikes, activities and accommodation, and stocked with trail books, maps and hiking supplies. The main offices are in Windermere, Ambleside, Keswick and

Carlisle, and there's a fantastic visitor centre at Brockhole (p708). It's worth noting that Ullswater, Coniston and Derwent Water lakes have a speed restriction of 10mph, and powerboats are banned on Grasmere, Crummock Water and Buttermere.

## KENDAL

pop 28,398

Technically Kendal isn't in the Lake District, but it's a major gateway, so we've put it here. Mention Kendal to any seasoned hillwalker and they'll mumble a single word – 'mintcake'. The town has been famous for its peppermint treat since the mid-19th century, and it's been a staple item in England's backpacks ever since Edmund Hillary and Tensing Norgay

munched it during their ascent of Everest in 1953). But Kendal is more than its mintcake: it's one of the largest and busiest towns in the South Lakes, with great restaurants, a funky arts centre and intriguing museums to explore.

## Information

**Kendal Laundrette** (☎ 01539-733754; Blackhall Rd; ⌚ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat & Sun)

**Library** (☎ 01539-773520; 75 Stricklandgate; per hr £2; ⌚ 9.30am-5.30pm Mon & Tue, 9.30am-7pm Wed & Fri, 9.30am-1pm Thu, 9am-4pm Sat, noon-4pm Sun) Internet access.

**Post office** (75 Stricklandgate; ⌚ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, to 12.30pm Sat)

**Tourist office** (☎ 01539-725758; kendaltic@southlake land.gov.uk; Highgate; ⌚ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 10am-4pm Sun Easter-Oct, closed Sun Nov-Easter) Inside the town hall.

## Sights

Kendal's most famous resident is Alfred Wainwright, the accountant, writer and inveterate hillwalker who penned the classic handwritten *Pictorial Guides*. From 1945 to 1974, Wainwright was honorary curator at the **Kendal Museum** (☎ 01539-721374; www.kendalmuseum.org.uk; Station Rd; adult/child £2.80/free; ⌚ noon-5pm Thu-Sat), where you can visit a reconstruction of his old office, complete with the great man's rucksack, spectacles and well-chewed pipe. An eclectic collection of archaeological finds and spooky stuffed animals are dotted around the rest of the museum.

The **Abbot Hall Art Gallery** (☎ 01539-722464; www.abbothall.org.uk; admission £4.75; ⌚ 10.30am-5pm Mon-Sat Apr-Oct, to 4pm Mon-Sat Nov-Mar) houses one of the northwest's best collections of 18th- and 19th-century art, especially strong on portraiture and Lakeland landscapes. Look out for works by Constable, Varley and Turner, as well as portraits by John Ruskin and local boy George Romney, born in Dalton-in-Furness in 1734, and a key figure in the 'Kendal School'.

Opposite Abbot Hall is the **Museum of Lakeland Life** (☎ 01539-722464; www.lakelandmuseum.org.uk; adult/child £4.50/3.20; ⌚ 10.30am-5pm Mon-Sat Apr-Oct, to 4pm Mon-Sat Nov-Mar) which re-creates various scenes from Lakeland life during the 18th and 19th centuries, including spinning, mining, weaving and bobbin-making. There's also a reconstruction of the study of Arthur Ransome, author of *Swallows and Amazons*.

Kendal's old brewery is now **Brewery Arts Centre** (☎ 01539-725133; Highgate; www.brewery

## USEFUL WEBSITES

- [www.golakes.co.uk](http://www.golakes.co.uk) – official site of the Cumbria Tourist Board
- [www.lake-district.gov.uk](http://www.lake-district.gov.uk) – the main website of the National Park Authority
- [www.lakedistrictoutdoors.co.uk](http://www.lakedistrictoutdoors.co.uk) – all the advice you could ever need on hiking, biking, ghyll scrambling and kayaking in Cumbria
- [www.mountain-bike-cumbria.co.uk](http://www.mountain-bike-cumbria.co.uk) – excellent online guide to Cumbria's MTB routes
- [www.visitcumbria.com](http://www.visitcumbria.com) – excellent tourist site covering the whole county

arts.co.uk), an excellent arts complex with two cinemas, gallery space, cafe and a theatre hosting dance, performance and live music. It's also the main venue for the **Kendal Mountain Festival** (☎ 01539 738669; www.mountainfilm.co.uk), an annual celebration of all things mountain-themed, with prizes for the top new films, books and documentaries in the field of adventure travel.

## Sleeping

**Kendal YHA** (☎ 0845 371 9641; www.yha.org.uk; 118 Highgate; dm from £18; ⌚ Easter-Oct; 📺) Bang next door to the Brewery Arts Centre, this Georgian hostel is kitted out in functional YHA fashion. Bold colour schemes keep things cheery, and there's a choice of five doubles or bunks in four- to 10-bed dorms. There's a kitchen, lounge and cycle storage, plus evening grub on request.

**Heaves Hotel** (☎ 01539-560396; www.heaveshotel.com; Heaves; s from £40, d £62-72; 📺) Play lord of the manor at this mansion, surrounded by 4 hectares of grounds and woodland 4 miles south of Kendal along the A591. It's a true-blue country house, owned by the same family for the last half-century. The old-fashioned rooms are cluttered with antiques, old rugs and gilded mirrors, and most have bucolic views à la *Gosford Park*.

**Balcony House** (☎ 01539-731402; www.balconyhouse.co.uk; 82 Shap Rd; s/d £45/60) A cut above Kendal's other guesthouses, it's traditional but comfy nonetheless. Despite the name, there's only one balcony room; all are finished in rosy tones or smart stripy wallpaper, and big

comfy beds, DVD players and bathrobes are standard issue.

**Beech House** (☎ 01539-720385; www.beechhouse-kendal.co.uk; 40 Greenside; s £45-75, d £70-90; (P)) Another spiffing B&B with a dash of designer style, inside a creeper-clad house in central Kendal. Some rooms boast velour bedspreads and fluffy cushions, others LCD TVs, chequerboard bathrooms with rolltop tubs and drink-stocked minifridges; go for the larger Greenside or Penthouse rooms for maximum space.

## Eating

### CAFES

**our pick** **1657 Chocolate House** (☎ 01539-740702; 54 Branthwaite Brow; lunches £2-6) Got a sweet tooth? Then dip into this chocaholic honeypot, brimming with handmade candies and umpteen varieties of mintcake. Upstairs, waitresses in bonnets serve up 18 types of hot chocolate, including almondy 'Old Noll's Potion' and the bitter-choc 'Dungeon'. Take that, Willy Wonka...

**Waterside Wholefoods** (☎ 01539-729743; Kent View, Waterside; lunches £4-10; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Sat) Organic bread, vegie chillis, piping-hot soups and fair-trade coffee at a much-loved riverside cafe. Even committed carnivores won't be able to resist the wonderfully sticky homebaked cakes.

### RESTAURANTS

**New Moon** (☎ 01539-729254; 129 Highgate; mains £9.50-15; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) Kendal's fooderati flock here for Med flavours mixed with the best of English ingredients. The decor's contemporary – think clean lines and funky cutlery – while the menu ranges from lamb meatballs with couscous to a stonking great 'Cumberland skillet'. The two-course pre-theatre menu, served before 7pm, is great value at £9.95.

**Grain Store** (pizzas £6.50-8, mains £10-16.50; ☎ from 10am Mon-Sat) The Brewery Arts brasserie has recently had a decorative overhaul, but it's as buzzy and busy as ever. The gourmet pizzas are still in evidence, plus hefty club sandwiches and chargrilled wraps; things get more sophisticated by night, with enticing mains of Barbary duck and 'Cloonacool' char.

## Drinking & Entertainment

Kendal's arty crowd shoot the breeze over cappuccinos and real ales at the Vats Bar at the

Brewery Arts Centre, while hipsters head for metro-chic **Mint** (☎ 01539-734473; 48/50 Highgate; ☎ to 2am Fri & Sat), with club nights and DJs at the weekend.

If all you're after is a pint and a pie, try the **Black Swan** (☎ 01539-724278; 8 Allhallows Lane), or the **Ring O' Bells** (☎ 01539-720326; Kirkland Ave), where even the beer is blessed – the pub stands on consecrated ground next to the parish church.

## Getting There & Around

### BUS

Kendal's handiest bus is the Lakeslink 555/556 (hourly Monday to Saturday, 10 on Sunday), which leaves Kendal en route to Windermere (30 minutes), Ambleside (40 minutes) and Grasmere (one hour), or Lancaster (one hour) in the opposite direction.

There are two daily buses from Kendal to Coniston (bus 505; one hour) via Windermere, Ambleside and Hawkshead, while the X35 travels south to Grange before returning via Haverthwaite Station, Ulverston and Barrow (hourly Monday to Saturday, four on Sunday).

### TRAIN

Kendal is on the Windermere (£3.40, 15 minutes, hourly) line from Oxenholme, 2 miles south of town, which has hourly trains from Carlisle (£16.50, 1¼ hours) and London Euston (£121, 3¾ hours).

## AROUND KENDAL

Three and half miles south of Kendal along the A591 is **Sizergh Castle** (☎ 015395-60070; adult/child £6.40/3.20, gardens only £4.70/2.40; ☎ gardens 11am-5pm Sun-Thu mid-Mar–Nov, castle 1-5pm Sun-Thu mid-Mar–Nov), the feudal seat of the Strickland family. The castle is renowned for its *pele* tower and for the lavish wood panelling on display in the Great Hall.

Nearby, the farm shop at **Low Sizergh Barn** (☎ 015395-60426; www.lowsizerghbarn.co.uk) stocks some of Lakeland's finest home-grown produce – chutneys, honeys, jams, Cumbrian puddings and organic cheeses.

Two miles further south along the A6 is **Levens Hall** (☎ 015395-60321; www.levenshall.co.uk; house & gardens adult/child £10/4.50, gardens only £7/3.50; ☎ gardens 10am-5pm, house noon-5pm Sun-Thu mid-Mar–mid-Oct), another Elizabethan manor built around a mid-13th-century *pele* tower. Fine Jacobean furniture is on display throughout

## STAVELEY

This little village near Newby Bridge has become a hotbed of culinary creativity, with some of the Lake District's top foodie outlets dotted around the village's higgledy-piggledy streets. Start with doorstep sandwiches at **Wilf's Cafe** (☎ 01539-822329; Staveley Mill Yard) before sampling local brews at the **Hawkshead Brewery** (☎ 01539-822644; Staveley Mill Yard) beer hall. Try a hand-made cornet at **Scoop** (☎ 01539-822866; Unit 5a, Staveley Mill Yard), owned by the Windermere Ice Cream Co; pick up fresh-baked bread at **Le Pain de Paris** (☎ 01539-822102; Units 9-11 Mill Yard); and local sausages and picnic supplies at **Lakes Speciality Food** (☎ 01539-822713; 5 Bankside Barn, Crook Rd); then stop for culinary tips at **LucyCooks** (☎ 01539-432288; www.lucycooks.co.uk; Mill Yard) cookery school.

the house, but the real draw is the 17th-century topiary garden, a surreal riot of pyramids, swirls, curls, pom-poms and peacocks straight out of *Alice in Wonderland*.

The 555/556 bus (hourly Monday to Saturday) from Grasmere, Ambleside, Windermere and Kendal runs past the castle gates.

## WINDERMERE & BOWNESS

pop 8432

Of all England's lakes, none carries quite the cachet of regal Windermere. Stretching for 10.5 silvery miles from Ambleside to Newby Bridge, it's one of the classic Lake District vistas, and has been a centre for Lakeland tourism since the first steam trains chugged into town in 1847 (much to the chagrin of the local gentry, including William Wordsworth). The town itself is split between Windermere, 1.5 miles uphill from the lake, and bustling Bowness – officially 'Bowness-on-Windermere' – where a bevy of boat trips, ice-cream booths and frilly teasops jostle for space around the shoreline. It's busy, brash and a touch tatty in places, but the lake itself is still a stunner, especially viewed from one of Windermere's historic cruise boats.

## Orientation

The A592 travels into Bowness from southern Cumbria, tracking the lakeshore before joining the A591 northwest of town. The train and bus stations are in Windermere town. Most of the hotels and B&Bs are dotted around Lake Rd, which leads downhill to Bowness and the lakeshore.

## Information

### Brockhole National Park Visitor Centre

(☎ 015394-46601; www.lake-district.gov.uk; ☎ 10am-5pm Easter-Oct) The Lake District's flagship visitor centre is 3 miles north of Windermere on the A591, with a teasop, adventure playground and gardens.

**Library** (☎ 015394-62400; Broad St; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon, to 5pm Tue, Thu & Fri, to 1pm Sat, closed Wed & Sun) Internet access (£1 per half-hour).

**Post office** (21 Crescent Rd; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, to 12.30pm Sat)

**Tourist office – Bowness** (☎ 015394-42895; bownesssic@lake-district.gov.uk; Glebe Rd; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm Easter-Oct, 10am-4pm Fri-Sun Nov-Mar)

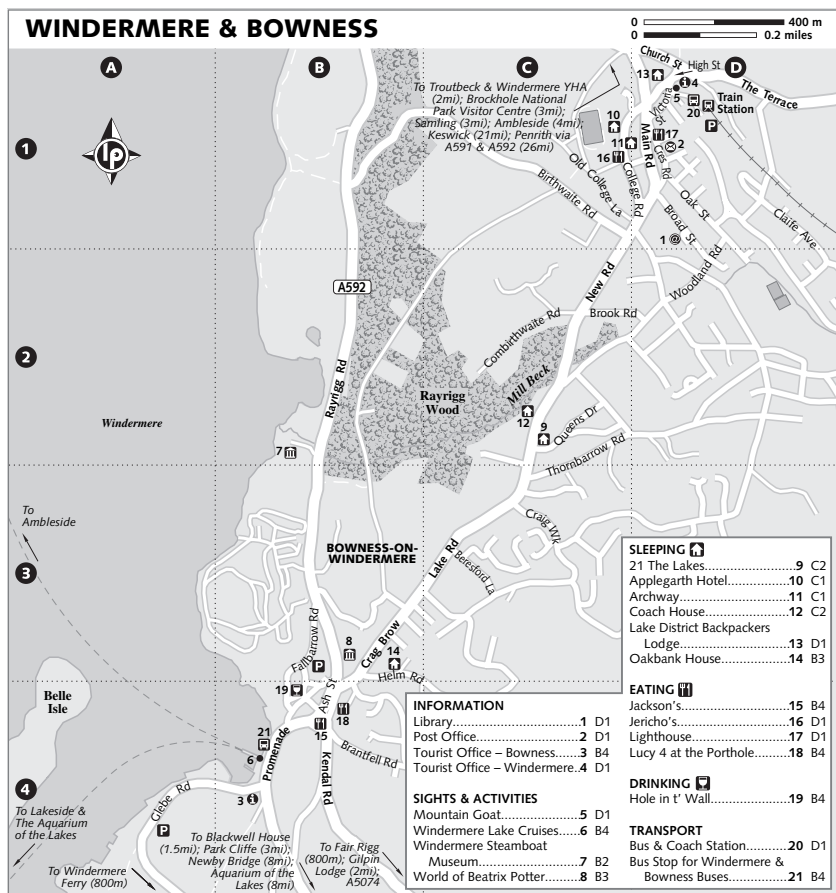
**Tourist office – Windermere** (☎ 015394-46499; windermeretic@southlakeland.gov.uk; Victoria St; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-5.30pm Sun Apr-Oct, shorter hours in winter) In a chalet opposite Natwest bank.

## THE LAKELESS LAKES

This may come as something of a shock (except to pub quiz enthusiasts), but the Lake District only has one lake – Bassenthwaite Lake, just northwest of Keswick. All the other lakes are actually **meres** (eg Buttermere, Thirlmere, Windermere), **waters** (Coniston Water, Derwent Water, Wastwater) or **tarns** (Sprinkling Tarn, Stickle Tarn, Blea Tarn).

Strictly speaking, a *mere* refers to a lake which has a large surface area relative to its depth; a *tarn* usually denotes a smaller pool of water left behind a retreating glacier; while a 'water' is simply the traditional local word for a pool or area of water. But you'll find the terms used pretty much interchangeably – and after all, Winderwater and Butterwater just don't have quite the same ring.





## Sights

Most attractions are dotted around the Bowness lakeshore. Top draw for Tiggywinkle fans is the **World of Beatrix Potter** (☎ 015394-88444; [www.hop-skip-jump.com](http://www.hop-skip-jump.com); adult/child £6/3; 🕒 10am–5.30pm Apr–Sep, 10am–4.30pm Oct–Mar), which brings to life scenes from the author's books (including Peter Rabbit's garden and Mr McGregor's greenhouse). The displays are unashamedly aimed at the younger crowd; seek refuge in the Tailor of Gloucester tearoom if it all gets a bit too button-cute.

The **Aquarium of the Lakes** (☎ 015395-30153; [www.aquariumofthelakes.co.uk](http://www.aquariumofthelakes.co.uk); Lakeside, Newby Bridge; adult/3–15yr £8.50/5.50; 🕒 9am–6pm Apr–Oct, to 5pm Nov–Mar), located at the southern end of the lake near Newby Bridge, explores underwater habitats

from tropical Africa through to Morecambe Bay. Highlights include a simulated diving bell and an underwater tunnel beneath Windermere's lakebed, complete with pike, char and diving ducks. You could arrive by ferry from Bowness or Ambleside (see below), aboard the Lakeside & Haverthwaite Railway (p710), or via bus 618 from Windermere.

The **Windermere Steamboat Museum** is closed while plans for a revamped national boating museum gather steam. Check [www.steamboat.co.uk](http://www.steamboat.co.uk) for the latest news.

## Activities

### BOAT TRIPS

Windermere is officially a public highway (the same as a motorway), a bizarre hangover from

when the lake was an industrial thoroughfare for barges ferrying coal, lumber, copper and slate from the nearby mines. The first passenger ferry was launched back in 1845, and **Windermere Lake Cruises** (☎ 015395-31188; www.windermere-lakecruises.co.uk) keeps the tradition alive with boat trips aboard modern vessels and a couple of period beauties dating from the 1930s. Cruises allow you to jump off at one of the ferry landings (Waterhead/Ambleside, Wray Castle, Brockhole, Bowness, Ferry Landing, Fell Foot Ferry and Lakeside) and catch a later boat back.

**Blue Cruise** (adult/5-15yr/family £6.20/3.10/17) Circular cruise around Windermere's shoreline and islands. Departs from Bowness with an optional stop at Ferry Landing.

**Bowness to Ferry House** (adult/5-15yr/family/£2.20/1.20/6.20) Ferry service which links up with the Cross-Lakes shuttle to Hill Top (p718) and Hawkshead (p717).

**Green Cruise** (adult/5-15yr/family £6.20/3.10/17) 45-minute cruise from Waterhead/Ambleside via Wray Castle and Brockhole Visitor Centre.

**Red Cruise** (adult/5-15yr/family £8.25/4.50/23) North lake cruise from Bowness to Ambleside.

**Yellow Cruise** (adult/5-15yr/family £8.50/4.70/24) South cruise from Bowness to Lakeside and the Aquarium of the Lakes.

A Freedom of the Lake ticket allows a day's unlimited travel and costs adult/5-15yr/family £15/7.50/40. Joint tickets are available with the Lakeside & Haverthwaite Steam Railway (return from Bowness adult/5-15yr/family £13.50/7.20/37.20, from Ambleside £18.70/9.35/52) and the **Aquarium of the Lakes** (return ferry & aquarium from Bowness adult/5-15yr/family £15.25/8.70/45.50, from Ambleside £21.75/11.50/61.50).

If you'd rather explore under your own steam, from April to October rowing boats can be hired for £5/2.50 per adult/child. Open-top motorboats cost £15 per hour, or there's a closed-cabin version for £18. There's a 10mph speed limit on Windermere.

#### LAKESIDE & HAVERTHWAITE RAILWAY

Classic standard-gauge steam trains puff their way along this vintage **railway** (☎ 015395-31594; www.lakesiderailway.co.uk; Haverthwaite Station; 🚗 mid-Mar–Oct) from Haverthwaite, near Ulverston, to Newby Bridge and Lakeside. There are five to seven daily trains in season, timed to correspond with the Windermere cruise boats. Standard returns are adult/5-15yr/family

£5.40/2.70/14.80, or you can buy combo tickets with the Aquarium and Windermere Lake Cruises (p709).

#### Sleeping

The main road from Windermere to Bowness is stacked with wall-to-wall guesthouses; you'll generally find better value uphill than down by the lakeshore.

#### BUDGET

**Lake District Backpackers Lodge** (☎ 015394-46374; www.lakedistrictbackpackers.co.uk; High St; dm £10-12.50; 📺) Rather underwhelming hostel with cramped bunk-bed dorms squeezed into a slate-roofed house down a little cul-de-sac near the station. Still, the beds are cheap, there's a cosy lounge (with Sky TV) and the managers organise biking and hiking trips.

**Park Cliffe** (☎ 015395-31344; www.parkcliffe.co.uk; Birks Rd; sites for 2 adults incl car & tent £19-25) Award-winning campsite midway between Windermere and Newby Bridge along the A592, with a choice of camping fields (fell-side or ghyll-side) and private bathrooms for an extra £12.50.

#### MIDRANGE

**Archway** (☎ 015394-45613; www.the-archway.com; 13 College Rd; d £46-60) Is this the best brekkie in Windermere? We think so – it's bursting with local produce from Lakeland tea to fresh eggs, homemade muesli, buttery pancakes and dry-cured bacon. The rooms are none too shabby, either – cool and uncluttered in white and pine, with hill views to the Langdale Pikes from the front.

**Applegarth Hotel** (☎ 015394-43206; www.lakesapplegarth.co.uk; College Rd; s £55-60, d £96-156; 📺) This fine mansion, built by the 19th-century industrial bigwig John Riggs, is one of Windermere's most dashing guesthouses. Polished wood panels, antique lamps and stained glass conjure a staid Victorian vibe; cheaper rooms are disappointingly bland, but the pricier ones feature four-posters and fell views.

**Coach House** (☎ 015394-44494; www.lakedistrictbandb.com; Lake Rd; d £60-80; 📺) Citrus yellows meet candy pinks and sky blues at this off-the-wall number, converted from a Victorian stables. The five rooms have cast-iron beds, bespoke decor and black-and-white en suite showers, and there's a cosy sitting room for guests' use. Ask nicely and they'll pack you a picnic for lunch on the fells.

**Fair Rigg** (☎ 015394-43941; www.fairrigg.co.uk; Ferry View; d £66-84; (P)) Pastel blues, country creams and checked duvets keep things fresh at this conventional B&B, set back from the touristy fizz of downtown Windermere. It's hardly groundbreaking, but a decent option for simple, spick-and-span rooms.

**21 The Lakes** (☎ 015394-45052; www.21thelakes.co.uk; Lake Rd; d £70-180; (P)) This place gives the English B&B a well-deserved boot into the 21st century. There's a dazzling choice of camped-up rooms: suites range from the wood-beamed Grasmere (with flouncy four-poster and outdoor hot tub) to the chic Contemporary, with stripped pine, floating bed, sunken TV and 'aqua-air' bath. Glitzy, gaudy and great fun.

**Oakbank House** (☎ 015394-43386; www.oakbankhousehotel.co.uk; Helm Rd; d £82-88; (P)) The pick of the Bowness B&Bs, inside a slate-topped house along Helm Rd. Rich reds, peaches and regal blues meet hefty wardrobes, wrought-iron bedsteads, plush sofas and rugs; the four superior rooms offer a smidgen more comfort. Lake views throughout, plus access to a nearby country club.

## TOP END

**Gilpin Lodge** (☎ 015394-88818; www.gilpinlodge.co.uk; Crook Rd; r £135-155, ste £170-195; (P)) This much-lauded country-house hotel languishes in 8 private hectares 2 miles from the lakeshore. The feel is formal (plenty of Audis and Mercedes in the driveway), but it's far from snooty. Rooms are classic, all with moorland views, Molton Brown bath goodies and upmarket furniture; top of the heap are the spanking-new garden suites, with cedarwood hot tubs, adventurous wallpapers and glass-fronted lounges leading onto private gardens. Mmm.

**Samling** (☎ 015394-31922; www.thesamling.com; Dove Nest; r Mon-Fri £200-490, Sat & Sun £230-520; (P)) Three miles north of Bowness, the Samling estate has been a local feature since the days of Wordsworth, and it remains one of Windermere's most posh addresses. These days the property, spread over 27 hectares, is a super-indulgent pamper-pad that's much favoured by the style mags and sojourning celebs. Ten rustic-chic rooms and self-contained cottages drip with designer trappings: split-level mezzanines and slate bathrooms in some, clawfoot tubs, rain showers and private lounges in others.

## Eating & Drinking

**Lighthouse** (☎ 88260; Main Rd; mains £8-20; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Continental cafe-bar at the top of Windermere, ideal for pastries and coffee, or something more substantial at lunchtime. Plate-glass windows keep things light and bright; opt for a street-side table if the outlook's sunny.

**Lucy 4 at the Porthole** (☎ 42793; 3 Ash St; mains £10-20; ☎ dinner Wed-Mon) The homely old Porthole has been overhauled courtesy of the Lake District's culinary trendsetter, Lucy's of Ambleside. It boasts the same laidback atmosphere, pick-and-mix menu and wine-bar feel as the original Lucy 4, only this time steps from the Windermere shoreline.

**Jackson's** (☎ 015394-46264; St Martin's Sq; mains £12-18) An old staple on the Bowness dining scene, Jackson's is small and unpretentious, with a dining room dotted with potted plants and wooden furniture. Straightforward bistro food – duck breast, pan-fried fish, hefty steaks – keep the local clientele well fed.

**Jericho's** (☎ 015394-42522; www.jerichos.co.uk; Waverly Hotel, College Rd; mains from £14-18; ☎ dinner Tue-Sun) Windermere's top table excels at modern British cooking, which makes it a fave with the foodie guides. Tuck into sophisticated dishes – Gressingham duck, Scotch beef and baked portobello mushroom – in refined new surroundings on the ground floor of the Waverley Hotel.

**Hole in t' Wall** (☎ 015394-43488; Fallbarrow Rd) Polish off pub grub and ales at this venerable boozer, with the all-essential flagstones and fireplaces, plus a beer garden in case the Lakeland weather plays ball.

## Getting There & Away

### BUS

There's a daily National Express coach from London (£32.50, 8½ hours) via Lancaster and Kendal.

The Lakeslink Bus (No 555/556) runs hourly to Kendal (30 minutes) and on to Lancaster, and to Brockhole Visitor Centre (seven minutes), Ambleside (15 minutes) and Grasmere (30 minutes).

The Coniston Rambler (Bus 505) travels from Windermere to Coniston (50 minutes, eight daily Monday to Saturday, six on Sunday) via Ambleside.

The open-topped Lakes Rider (Bus 599) travels half-hourly (including Sundays) between Bowness, Windermere, Troutbeck,

Brockhole, Rydal Church (for Rydal Mount, p715), Dove Cottage and Grasmere in summer.

### TRAIN

Windermere is the only town inside the national park accessible by train. It's on the branch line to Kendal and Oxenholme (£4, 30 minutes, 14 to 16 Monday to Saturday, 10 on Sunday), with regular connections to Manchester (£25.50, two hours, hourly) and London Euston (£123.50, four hours, eight to 10 daily Monday to Saturday, six on Sunday), and north to Glasgow or Edinburgh.

## AROUND BOWNESS

### Blackwell Arts & Crafts House

Two miles south of Bowness on the B5360, **Blackwell House** (☎ 015394-46139; www.blackwell.org.uk; adult/child £6.60/3.85; 🕒 10.30am-5pm Apr-Oct, to 4pm Feb-Mar & Nov-Dec) is one of the finest examples of the 19th-century Arts and Crafts Movement. Inspired by the aesthetic principles of John Ruskin and William Morris, Arts and Crafts was a reaction against the machine-driven mentality of the Industrial Revolution, placing emphasis on simple architecture, high-quality craftsmanship and natural light. Designed by Mackay Hugh Baillie Scott, the house has all the hallmarks of classic Arts and Crafts: light, airy rooms, serene decor, and bespoke craftwork ranging from Delft tiles to handmade doorknobs and wood panelling. There's a tearoom and gift shop for when you've finished moseying round the house.

### Troutbeck

The titchy hamlet of Troutbeck nestles on a hilltop a mile from Windermere. The main draw is **Townend** (NT; ☎ 015394-32628; adult/child £3.80/1.90; 🕒 1-5pm Wed-Sun Mar-Oct, to 4pm Wed-Sun Nov & late Mar), a beautifully preserved Lakeland farmhouse built for a wealthy yeoman farmer in the 17th century. Topped by cylindrical chimneys and grey slate tiles, the house contains rustic artefacts, books and vintage farming tools, plus original wooden furniture carved by the Browne family who owned the house until 1943.

**Windermere YHA** (☎ 0845 371 9352; www.yha.org.uk; Bridge Lane, Troutbeck; dm £12-14; 🕒 mid-Feb-Nov; 📍) This YHA hostel occupies a white-washed house with panoramic lake views.

The facilities are top-notch, with shipshape modern dorms, a well-stocked shop, a canteen and a gear-drying room. Buses stop at Troutbeck Bridge, a mile from the hostel; minibus pickups can be arranged between April and October.

**our pick Queen's Head** (☎ 015394-32174; www.queensheadhotel.com; d £95-120; 📍) is like a Lakeland Tardis. Outside, a solid old coaching inn; inside a bang up-to-date gastro-pub, where traditional slate and popping fires mix with offbeat decor and modern English cooking (braised lamb shank, celeriac pork, pan-fried pigeon). The upstairs rooms have bags of charm, with a mix of checks, stripes or flowery prints; space is tight in the 'La'al Doubles'; the 'Reet Grand' bedrooms and Four Poster suites offer more elbow room.

The village's oldest pub is the **Mortal Man** (☎ 33193; www.themortalman.co.uk; mains £8-14), overlooking the Troutbeck Valley. Hearty pub lunches are served in the battered bar or the outside terrace, but the old-fashioned rooms are overpriced.

Four miles north of Troutbeck along the A592 is Kirkstone Pass, where you can stop for sustenance and drink in the views at the **Kirkstone Pass Inn** (☎ 015394-33888), before plunging down the valley towards Ullswater (p730).

The Kirkstone Rambler (bus 517; three daily mid-July to August, weekends only mid-March to July and September to November) travels through Troutbeck to Bowness and Glenridding.

## AMBLESIDE

pop 3382

Sheltering among a dramatic cluster of fells at the northerly end of Windermere, Ambleside is one of the Lake District's main walking bases. Hill trekkers descend upon the town to stock up on hiking gear and supplies before tackling the classic trails nearby, and it can get uncomfortably crowded in the summer months. But despite its popularity, Ambleside feels a good deal less commercialised than neighbouring Windermere and Bowness, and, with a selection of top-notch B&Bs and restaurants dotted around its slate-grey streets, it makes an ideal launching pad for exploring the central Lakes.

## Information

**Laundromat** (☎ 015394-32231; Kelsick Rd; ☎ 10am-6pm)

**Library** (☎ 015394-32507; Kelsick Rd; per hr £3; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon & Wed, to 7pm Tue & Fri, to 1pm Sat) Internet access.

**Post office** (Market Cross; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat)

**Tourist office** (☎ 015394-32582; tic@thehubofambleside.com; Central Buildings, Market Cross; ☎ 9am-5pm) Sells fishing permits, guidebooks and bus passes.

## Sights & Activities

Ambleside's best-known landmark is **Bridge House**, which spans the tumbling brook of **Stock Ghyll** downhill from Market Cross. Nearby at the **Armitt Museum** (☎ 015394-31212; www.armitt.com; Rydal Rd; adult £2.50; ☎ 10am-5pm), artefacts include a lock of John Ruskin's hair, a collection of botanical watercolours by Beatrix Potter, and prints by the pharmacist-turned-photographer Herbert Bell.

Footy fans should check out **Homes of Football** (☎ 015394-34440; 100 Lake Rd; admission free; ☎ 10am-5pm Wed-Sun), displaying footy-themed photos amassed over two decades by the local photographer Stuart Clarke.

Down by the lakeshore, **cruiſe boats** set out from the Waterhead dock for Bowness (see p710). Self-powered vessels can be hired from **Low Wood Watersports & Activity Centre** (☎ 015394-39441; watersports@elhmail.co.uk), including row boats (one/four hours £10/25), kayaks (two/four hours £14/21), canoes (two/four hours £20/26), dinghies (two/four hours £35/53) and motor boats (one/four hours £18/45).

If you're feeling energetic, Ambleside marks the start of several well-known walks, including the wooded trail up to the 60ft waterfall of **Stock Ghyll Force**, or the three-hour round trip via **Wansfell** and **Jenkins Crag**, with views across to Coniston and the Langdale Pikes. Serious hikers can tackle the 10-mile **Fairfield Horseshoe** via Nab Scar, Heron Pike, Fairfield and Dove Crag.

## Sleeping

### BUDGET

**Low Wray** (☎ 015394-32810; lowwraycampsite@nationaltrust.org.uk; adult £4.50-5.50, 5-15yr £2-2.50, car £3-3.50; ☎ Easter-Oct) Quiet and spacious lakeside campsite run by the National Trust, with a supplies shop, bike rental and fab views. Advance bookings aren't taken, so pitch up early. It's 3 miles along the B5286; bus 505 stops nearby.

**Ambleside Backpackers** (☎ 015394-32340; www.englishlakesbackpackers.co.uk; Old Lake Rd; dm £16; ☎ ) This popular indie hostel occupies a converted Lakeland cottage a short walk south from Ambleside's centre. It's clean, smart and tidy, but the bunks are rammed in tight; thankfully there's room to spare in the cosy common room and huge stainless-steel kitchen.

**Ambleside YHA** (☎ 0845 371 9620; www.yha.org.uk; Windermere Rd; dm from £18; ☎ ) Further along Lake Rd, this is another supremely well-organised YHA hostel, popular for its activity breaks (which run the gamut from water sports to ghyll scrambling). Clean dorms, plenty of beds and top facilities (kitchen, bike rental, boat jetty and on-site bar) mean it's heavily subscribed in high season. At the time of writing, Ambleside YHA was due to close for a refurb and planning to reopen April 2009.

### MIDRANGE

**Compston House Hotel** (☎ 015394-32305; www.compstonhouse.co.uk; Compston Rd; d from £56) Take your pick of the Yankee-themed bedrooms at this entertaining B&B, run by an Anglicised New York couple. Choices include sunny Florida, chic Manhattan, cowboy-style Texas and maritime Maine (complete with Cape Cod bedspread), and even the breakfast has Stateside touches, including fresh-baked blueberry muffins and maple pancakes.

**Easedale Lodge** (☎ 015394-32112; www.easedaleambleside.co.uk; Compston Rd; d £70-96) Twisted willow, zingy cushions and wrought-iron bed frames decorate this immaculate guesthouse on the corner of Compston Rd. Some rooms are finished in cappuccino and creams, others in stripes, florals or cool greys; all have private bathrooms, although not necessarily en suite.

**Riverside** (☎ 015394-32395; www.riverside-at-ambleside.co.uk; Under Loughrigg; d £82-98; ☎ ) Lodged beside the clattering River Rothay half a mile from town, this detached Victorian villa is a cut above. It's the little luxuries that make it special: a lounge stocked with walking guides, bathrooms furnished with ethical bath products, fresh chutneys from the Hawkshead Relish Company on the brek-kie table. Two rooms have spa baths, one a pine four-poster.

**Lakes Lodge** (☎ 015394-33240; www.lakeslodge.co.uk; Lake Rd; r from £90; ☎ ) Don't be fooled by the stern slate exterior: inside this place is modern and

minimal, all cool colours, funky furniture and razor-sharp lines. Slate-floored bathrooms mix with stark white walls in the rooms, all with flat screens and DVDs. Local bangers and fresh fruit salad are served up for breakfast in the puce-and-lilac dining room.

**Cote How Organic Guest House** (☎ 015394-32765; www.bedbreakfastlakedistrict.com; Rydal, near Ambleside; single £98-£108, d £110-120; P ☑ wi-fi) You won't find a greener place in the Lakes than this ecofriendly cottage. Food is 100% local and organic, power's sourced from a green supplier, and they'll even lend you wind-up torches and candles (5% discount if you hang up your car keys, too). The three rooms are elegantly Edwardian, with cast-iron beds, roll-top baths and fireplaces; sophisticates will want the top-end Rydal Suite, once used by ex-president Woodrow Wilson. The house is in Rydal, 1.5 miles north of Ambleside.

#### TOP END

**Waterhead Hotel** (☎ 08458-504503; waterhead@elhmail.co.uk; r £106-256; P ☑) City slickers will feel right at home at this quietly swish townhouse hotel, revamped with all the boutique trappings: ice white walls, wall-mounted TVs, mountain-size beds, contemporary fabrics and a liberal smattering of leather, stripped wood and slate. The patio-bar is a beauty, nestled beside the lakeshore, and there's a similarly sophisticated vibe in the Bay Restaurant.

#### Eating

**Lucy 4** (☎ 015394-34666; 2 St Mary's Lane; tapas £4-8; ☎ 5-11pm Mon-Sat, to 10.30pm Sun) A snazzy wine-bar offshoot of Lucy's on a Plate down the street. There's a massive list of wines and beers, plus an eclectic 'sharing' giving Lucy's spin on traditional tapas.

**Apple Pie** (☎ 015394-33679; Rydal Rd; lunches £4-12; ☎ breakfast & lunch) This sunny cafe on Ambleside's main street is perennially popular for lunchtime sarnies, jacket spuds and afternoon cakes, not to mention its trademark pies (available in sweet and savoury concoctions).

**Zeffirelli's** (☎ 015394-33845; Compston Rd; pizza £5.50-7.45; ☎ lunch & dinner) Zeff's is a buzzy pizza and pasta joint which doubles as Ambleside's jazz club after dark. The owners also run Ambleside's cinema; book ahead for the popular £16.95 'Double Feature' menu, which includes a main meal and a ticket to the flicks.

**Lucy's on a Plate** (☎ 015394-31191; www.lucysofambleside.co.uk; Church St; lunch £6-12, dinner £15-25; ☎ 10am-9pm) Lucy's started life in 1989 as a specialist grocery, but over the last decade it's mushroomed into a full-blown gastro-nomic empire, with premises dotted all over Ambleside, as well as a Windermere outpost and a cookery school near Newby Bridge. This hugger-mugger bistro is still the best of the bunch. It's laidback and informal, with a handwritten intro courtesy of the great lady and offbeat dishes veering from 'fruity porker' to 'fell-walker filler'. The only drawback? It gets very, very busy, so plan ahead.

**Glass House** (☎ 015394-32137; Rydal Rd; lunch £8-14, dinner £13-19; ☎ lunch & dinner) Housed in a converted watermill (with the original millwheel and machinery still in situ), this ritzy restaurant is the town's top table. Asian, Med and French flavours are underpinned by top-quality local ingredients – Herdwick lamb, Lakeland chicken, and fish from the north coast ports. Eagle-eyed diners might remember the restaurant from Gordon Ramsay's *Kitchen Nightmares*.

#### Drinking & Entertainment

Ambleside has plenty of pubs: locals favour the **Golden Rule** (☎ 015394-33363; Smithy Brow) for its ale selection, while the **Royal Oak** (☎ 015394-33382; Market Pl) packs in the posthike punters.

Ambleside's two-screen **Zeffirelli's Cinema** (☎ 015394-33100; Compston Rd) is next to Zeff's, with extra screens in a converted church down the road.

#### Shopping

Compston Rd has enough equipment shops to launch an assault on Everest, with branches of **Rohan** (☎ 015394-32946) and **Gaymer Sports** (☎ 015394-33305) on Market Cross. **Black's** (☎ 015394-33197; 42 Compston Rd) is a favourite with hikers, and the **Climber's Shop** (☎ 015394-32297; Compston Rd) specialises in rock-climbing gear.

#### Getting There & Around

Lots of buses run through Ambleside, including the 555 to Grasmere and Windermere (hourly, 10 on Sunday), the 505 to Hawkshead and Coniston (10 Monday to Saturday, six on Sunday mid-March to October), and the 516 (six daily, five on Sunday) to Elterwater and Langdale.

**Ghyllside Cycles** (☎ 015394-33592; www.ghyllside.co.uk; The Slack; per day £16) and **Bike Treks** (☎ 015394-

## CHAT LIKE A CUMBRIAN

Like many corners of England, Cumbria has its own rich regional dialect. Celtic, Norse, Anglo-Saxon and the ancient Cumbric language have contributed to a wonderful repository of local words, many of which you're bound to hear on your travels. As well as the commonly-used *beck* (river), *ghyll* (ravine) and *force* (waterfall), keep your ears peeled for *la'al* (little), *lowp* (jump), *gander* (look), *yat* (gate), *cowie* (thing), *yam* (home), *lewer* (money), *blether* (gossip) and our personal favourites, *jinnyspinner* (daddy-long-legs) and *snotter-geggin* (miserable person).

Cumbria even had its own system of counting, sometimes called 'sheep counting numerals' since they were once widely used by shepherds throughout northern England. The exact words vary according across the county, but nearly all start with *yan* (one), *tyan* (two), *tethera* (three) and climb up to *dick* (ten), *bumfit* (fifteen) and *giggot* (twenty). Only in England...

31505; www.biketreks.net; Compston Rd; per half-/full day £14/18) both rent mountain bikes, including maps, pump, helmet and lock.

## AROUND AMBLESIDE

While most people flock to poky Dove Cottage (right) in search of William Wordsworth, those in the know head for **Rydal Mount** (☎ 015394-33002; www.rydalmount.co.uk; adult/5-15yr £5.50/2, gardens only £3; ☎ 9.30am-5pm Mar-Oct, 10am-4pm Wed-Mon Nov & Feb), the Wordsworth family home from 1813 until his death in 1850.

Still owned by the poet's descendants, the house is a treasure trove of Wordsworth memorabilia. Downstairs you can wander around the book-lined drawing room (look out for William's pen, inkstand and picnic box, and a celebrated portrait of the poet by the American painter Henry Inman). Upstairs you can nose around the family bedrooms (including one belonging to Wordsworth's sister Dorothy, who never married and remained with the family until her death in 1855). On the top floor is Wordsworth's attic study, containing his encyclopedia and a sword belonging to his younger brother John, killed in a shipwreck in 1805.

Most of the gardens around the house were laid out according to Wordsworth's own designs; you can even rest your legs in the little summerhouse where the poet liked to sound out his latest verse. Below the house is **Dora's Field**, which Wordsworth planted with daffodils in memory of his eldest daughter, who succumbed to tuberculosis in 1847.

The house is 1.5 miles northwest of Ambleside, off the A591. Bus 555 (and bus 599 from April to October), between Grasmere, Ambleside, Windermere and Kendal, stops at the end of the drive.

## GRASMERE

pop 1458

Even without its Romantic connections, gorgeous Grasmere would still be one of the Lakes' biggest draws. It's one of the prettiest of the Lakeland hamlets, huddled at the base of a sweeping valley dotted with woods, pastures and slate-coloured hills, but most of the thousands of trippers come in search of its famous former residents: opium-eating Thomas de Quincey, unruly Coleridge and grand old man William Wordsworth. With such a rich literary heritage, Grasmere unsurprisingly gets crammed; avoid high summer if you can.

## Sights

First stop is **Dove Cottage** (☎ 015394-35544; www.wordsworth.org.uk; adult/child £7.50/4.50; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm), where Wordsworth penned some of his great early poems and kick-started the Romantic movement. Originally an inn called The Dove and Olive, the house became Wordsworth's first Lake District base; William and his sister Dorothy arrived in 1799, joined in 1802 by William's new wife Mary and the three eldest Wordsworth children – John, Dora and Thomas – born in 1803, 1804 and 1806. The tiny cottage was a cramped but happy home for the growing family – a time memorably recounted in Dorothy's diary, later published as the *Grasmere Journal* – and after they were eventually forced to seek more space at nearby Allan House in 1808, the cottage was leased by Wordsworth's young friend Thomas de Quincey.

Covered with climbing roses, honeysuckle and tiny latticed windows, the cottage contains some fascinating artefacts – keep your eyes peeled for a pair of William's ice skates and a set of scales used by de Quincey to weigh out his opium. Entry is by timed

## GRASMERE WALKS

Wordsworth did some of his best composing while tramping around Grasmere, and it's worth following in the poet's footsteps. The most popular walk is the 4-mile circuit around Grasmere and the base of Loughrigg Fell. Redbank Rd leads from the village along the western shore: you can hire rowboats from the **Faeryland Tea Garden** (☎ 015394-35060; ☎ 10am-6pm Mar-Oct) or continue though Redbank Woods to **Loughrigg Terrace**, with views of the lake and **Loughrigg Fell**. The trail continues past **Rydal Water** before crossing the A591 near Rydal Mount. To get back to Grasmere, follow the old **Coffin Trail** (used by pallbearers bearing coffins to St Oswald's Church) for another hour back to Dove Cottage.

Hardier hikers could follow the two-hour trek to **Easedale Tarn**, or the tougher ascents up **Loughrigg Fell** (335m) or **Helm Crag** (405m), locally known as 'the Lion and the Lamb'. Wainwright described Helm Crag as 'the best known hill in the country': you can download an MP3 version of his guide to the route from [www.golakes.co.uk](http://www.golakes.co.uk); it's read by the narrator of the BBC series *Wainwright Walks*.

ticket to prevent overcrowding, and includes a half-hour tour.

Next door is the **Wordsworth Museum & Art Gallery**, which houses a fascinating collection of letters, portraits and manuscripts relating to the Romantic movement, and regularly hosts events and poetry readings.

You'll find several illustrious graves under the spreading yews of **St Oswald's churchyard** in the centre of Grasmere. William, Mary and Dorothy are all buried here, as well as the Wordsworth children Dora, Catherine and Thomas, and Coleridge's son Hartley.

Near the church, the village school where Wordsworth taught is now a famous gingerbread shop (opposite).

## Sleeping

### BUDGET

**Thorney How YHA** (☎ 0845 371 9319; [www.yha.org.uk](http://www.yha.org.uk); Easedale Rd; dm £13; ☎ Apr-Oct) Tucked away on a back lane 15 minutes from Grasmere, this rustic farmhouse is popular with families and walkers (the C2C route runs right outside the front door). The rooms are spartan, but you'll be staying in a historic spot – Thorney How was the first hostel purchased by the YHA, way back in 1931.

**Butharlyp How YHA** (☎ 0845 371 9319; [www.yha.org.uk](http://www.yha.org.uk); Easedale Rd; dm £15.50; ☎ daily Feb-Nov, weekends Dec-Jan; Ⓟ) You'll find more comfort at this Victorian house a mile nearer the village. Bright, modernish dorms (including plenty of doubles and quads), lovely grounds and a decent bar-restaurant (serving everything from puddings to Perry cider) make this another superior YHA.

**Grasmere Hostel** (☎ 015394-35055; [www.grasmerehostel.co.uk](http://www.grasmerehostel.co.uk); Broadrayne Farm; dm £17.50; Ⓟ) Quaint farmhouse turned excellent indie hostel, just off the A591 near the Traveller's Rest pub. It's brimming with backpacker spoils (en suite bathrooms for each dorm, two stainless steel kitchens, even a Nordic sauna), although it feels cramped when it's full. Bus 555 stops nearby.

### MIDRANGE & TOP END

**Raise View House** (☎ 015394-35215; [www.raiseviewhouse.co.uk](http://www.raiseviewhouse.co.uk); White Bridge; s/d £48/96; Ⓟ ☎ wi-fi) Look no further for fantastic fell views. Rolling hills and green fields unfurl from every window, especially from 'Helm Crag' and the double-aspect 'Stone Arthur'. The finish is elegantly English: Farrow and Ball paints, plumped-up cushions, puffy bedspreads and starchy linen.

**Beck Allans** (☎ 015394-35563; [www.beckallans.com](http://www.beckallans.com); College St; d £62-81; Ⓟ) Blending in seamlessly with the rest of the village, this grey-stone B&B is actually a modern build, so all the rooms are spacious, light and thoroughly up-to-date. Crisp whites and pine furniture predominate, all with gleaming bathrooms, some with power showers; self-catering apartments are available for longer stays.

**How Foot Lodge** (☎ 015394-35366; [www.howfoot.co.uk](http://www.howfoot.co.uk); Town End; d £66-76; Ⓟ) Wordsworth groupies will adore this stone cottage just a stroll from William's digs at Dove Cottage. The six rooms are light and contemporary, finished in fawns and beiges; ask for the one with the private sun lounge for that indulgent edge.

**Lancrigg** (☎ 015394-35317; [www.lancrigg.co.uk](http://www.lancrigg.co.uk); Easedale; r £140-210; Ⓟ) Originally the home of



Arctic adventurer John Richardson, Lancrigg now touts itself as the Lakes' only 100% vegetarian hotel. All the rooms have individual quirks: Whittington is lodged in the attic and reached via a private staircase, Franklin has Middle Eastern rugs and a four-poster, while Richardson has a plasterwork ceiling and claw-foot bath screened by lace curtains. It's half a mile along Easedale Rd.

**ourpick Moss Grove Hotel • Organic** (☎ 015394-35251; www.mossgrove.com; r £225-325; (P) (📶 wi-fi) Green credentials are second to none at this ecofriendly beauty: sheep-fleece insulation, natural-ink wallpapers and organic paints grace the walls, while the beds are made from reclaimed timber. This Victorian villa is sexy, too: bedrooms are massive and minimal, with bespoke wallpapers, duck-down duvets, Bose hi-fis and fantastic underfloor-heated bathrooms, and the buffet breakfast overflows with organic and fair-trade treats. Pricey, yes, but worth every penny.

## Eating

**Sarah Nelson's Gingerbread Shop** (☎ 015394-35428; www.grasmeregingerbread.co.uk; Church Stile; 12 pieces of gingerbread £3.50; 🕒 9.15am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 12.30-5pm Sun) Don't think about leaving Grasmere without sampling Sarah Nelson's legendary gingerbread, produced to the same secret recipe for the last 150 years, and still served by ladies in frilly pinnies and starched bonnets.

**Rowan Tree** (☎ 015394-43528; Stocks Lane; mains £3-10, pizzas £6-9; 🕒 lunch & dinner) Riverside cafe with an outside terrace above the brook. Lunch is mainly sandwiches, baguettes and pizzas, but supper also offers fishy dishes and veggie mains.

**Villa Colombina** (☎ 015394-35268; Townend; lunch mains £4-10, dinner mains from £12) The old Dove Cottage tearooms have had a rebrand: salads, sarnies and sticky cakes by day, with Italianate flavours after dark, including Tuscan chicken, steaks, pizzas and risottos.

**Miller Howe Cafe** (☎ 015394-35234; Red Lion Sq; mains £5-12; 🕒 breakfast & lunch) This chrome-tinted cafe-cum-art gallery serves up crusty sandwiches, baked spuds and handmade pies, plus the frothiest of cappuccinos and creamiest of cream teas.

**ourpick Jumble Room** (☎ 015394-35188; Langdale Rd; mains £13-23; 🕒 lunch & dinner Wed-Sun) You won't find a warmer welcome anywhere in Cumbria than at this boho bistro, run by an energetic husband-and-wife team with a died-in-the-

wool dedication to Lakeland produce. It's a bit like having a gourmet feast in your front room: the informal atmosphere (colourful cushions, local artwork, jumble-sale furniture) is matched by the down-to-earth menu, stuffed with local fare, from haddock in beer batter to handmade game pie.

## Getting There & Away

The hourly 555 runs from Windermere to Grasmere (15 minutes), via Ambleside, Rydal Church and Dove Cottage. The open-top 599 (two or three per hour March to August) runs from Grasmere south via Ambleside, Troutbeck Bridge, Windermere and Bowness.

## HAWKSHEAD

pop 1640

Wordsworth and Beatrix Potter both have connections to Hawkshead, an enticing muddle of rickety streets, whitewashed houses and country pubs halfway between Coniston and Ambleside. The village made its name as a medieval wool centre, overseen by the industrious monks from Furness Abbey (p735), but these days tourism is the main trade. Cars are banned in the village, so even on its busiest days it still feels fairly tranquil.

## Sights

Well-to-do young Lakeland gentleman from across the Lakes were sent for schooling' at the **Hawkshead Grammar School** (admission £2; 🕒 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Sat, 1-5pm Sun Apr-Sep, 10am-1pm & 2-3.30pm Mon-Sat, 1-3.30pm Sun Oct), including a young William Wordsworth, who attended the school from 1779 to 1787. Pupils studied a punishing curriculum of Latin, Greek, mathematics, science and literature for up to 10 hours a day; no wonder naughty young Willie carved his name in one of the desks.

Beatrix Potter's husband, the solicitor William Heelis, was based in Hawkshead. His former office is now the **Beatrix Potter Gallery** (NT; ☎ 015394-36355; Red Lion Sq; adult/child £4/2; 🕒 10.30am-4.30pm Sat-Thu mid-Mar-Oct), displaying a selection of watercolours from the National Trust's Beatrix Potter collection.

The **Hawkshead Relish Company** (☎ 015394-36614; www.hawksheadrelish.com; The Square; 🕒 9.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, from 10am Sun) sells award-winning chutneys, relishes and mustards, from the superfruity Westmorland Chutney to beetroot-and-horseradish and classic piccalilli.

## THE CROSS-LAKES SHUTTLE

To help cut down on the hideous summer traffic jams, the **Cross-Lakes Shuttle** (which runs from mid-March to October) allows you to cross from Windermere to Coniston without setting foot inside an automobile.

Boats operate from Bowness to Ferry House, from where a minibus travels to Hill Top and Hawkshead. From Hawkshead, you can catch the X30 bus to Moor Top, Grizedale and Haverthwaite, or catch another minibus to High Cross and Coniston Water.

Current singles from Bowness: to Ferry House (adult/child £2.20/1.70), to Hill Top (£4.70/2.50), to Hawkshead (£5.60/2.90), to Coniston (£9.70/5.10) and to Grizedale (£7/3.80). A return from Bowness to Coniston and back costs £16.60/9. The route operates 10 times daily from Bowness to Coniston, and nine times in the opposite direction (roughly hourly from 10am to 5pm).

The only drawback is that the buses get very crowded in summer, and if all they're full you'll have no choice but to wait for the next one (you can't prebook). Cyclists should note there's only space for five bikes on the minibuses.

For info and timetables, contact **Mountain Goat** (☎ 015394-45161; Victoria Rd, Windermere) or so a search on [www.lake-district.gov.uk](http://www.lake-district.gov.uk).

## Sleeping & Eating

**Hawkshead YHA** (☎ 0845 371 9321; [www.yha.org.uk](http://www.yha.org.uk); dm from £16; 📍) Hawkshead's hostel is a wonder, set inside a Regency house a mile along the Newby Bridge road. Grand features – cornicing, panelled doors, a veranda – make this feel closer to a country hotel than a hostel. Dorms are roomy, there's bike rental, and buses stop outside the door.

**Ann Tyson's Cottage** (☎ 015394-36405; [www.ann-tysons.co.uk](http://www.ann-tysons.co.uk); Wordsworth St; s £29-55, d £58-78) In the middle of Hawkshead, this geranium-covered cottage once provided room and board for the Wordsworth boys, but it's now a pleasant olde-worlde B&B. Rooms are snug and chintzy; one has an antique bed once owned by John Ruskin.

**Yewfield** (☎ 015394-36765; [www.yewfield.co.uk](http://www.yewfield.co.uk); Hawkshead Hill; d £78-120; 📍) Run by the owners of Zeff's in Ambleside, this swanky Victorian getaway reinvents the B&B experience. Ditch the doilies and tea-trays: here it's all Oriental fabrics, wool-rich carpets, DVD players and oak panelling (although the Tower Room has a more classic feel). Breakfast is 100% veggie (sourced from the kitchen garden), and the house is buried in orchards and wildflower meadows. It's 2 miles west of Hawkshead on the B5285.

**ourpick Drunken Duck** (☎ 015394-36347; [www.drunkeaduckinn.co.uk](http://www.drunkeaduckinn.co.uk); Barn gates; r £120-250; 📍) The deluxe Duck, two miles from Hawkshead on the B5285, takes the gastropub concept to new heights. It's a design mag's dream, blending the 400-year-old architecture of a Lakeland inn with the bespoke feel of a boutique hotel.

Flagstones and fireplaces mix with rich leather and slate in the bar (stocked with home-brewed beers from the on-site brewery), and the same antique-modern vibe runs into the restaurant (mains £18 to £25), renowned for its inventive English flavours. The rooms are bright and inviting, livened up by spoils such as Roberts radios, enamel baths and antique chairs; some overlook a private tarn. Golly.

## Getting There & Away

Hawkshead is linked with Windermere, Ambleside and Coniston by bus 505 (10 Monday to Saturday, six on Sunday mid-March to October), and to Hill Top and Coniston by the Cross-Lakes Shuttle (above).

## AROUND HAWKSHEAD

### Grizedale Forest

Stretching across the hills between Coniston Water and Esthwaite Water is Grizedale, a dense woodland of oak, larch and pine, the name of which derives from the Old Norse for 'wild boar'. The forest has been mostly replanted over the last hundred years; by the 19th century, the original woodland had practically disappeared thanks to the local logging industry.

Over 40km of trails criss-cross the forest, but Grizedale is best known for its outlandish **artwork**. Since 1977, artists have created over 90 outdoor sculptures around the forest, including a wooden xylophone, a wave of carved ferns and a huge Tolkienesque 'man of the forest'.

For information on the forest's trails, head for **Grizedale Visitors Centre** (☎ 01229-860010; www.forestry.gov.uk/grizedaleforestpark; 🕒 10am-4pm Easter-Oct), where you'll also find **Grizedale Mountain Bike Hire** (☎ 01229-860369; www.grizedalemountainbikes.co.uk; per day adult £20-30, child £15; 🕒 9am-5.30pm Mar-Oct, last hire 2pm).

Budding Tarzans can test their skills at nearby **Go Ape** (☎ 0870 458 9189; www.goape.co.uk; adult/child £25/20; 🕒 9-5pm Mar-Oct, plus winter weekends), a gravity-defying assault course through the Grizedale trees along rope ladders, bridges, platforms and hair-raising zip-slides.

The X30 Grizedale Wanderer (four daily March to November) runs from Haverthwaite to Grizedale via Hawkshead and Moor Top, meeting the Cross-Lakes Shuttle (opposite).

## Hill Top

Ground zero for Potterites is the picture-postcard farmhouse of **Hill Top** (NT; ☎ 015394-36269; adult/child £5.80/2.90; 🕒 10.30am-4.30pm Sat-Thu, garden 10.30am-5pm mid-Mar-Oct, 10am-4pm Nov-Feb, weekends only early Mar), where Beatrix wrote and illustrated many of her famous tales.

Purchased in 1905 (largely on the proceeds of her first few books), Hill Top is crammed with decorative details which fans will recognise from the author's illustrations. The house features in *Samuel Whiskers*, *Tom Kitten* and *Jemima Puddleduck*, while the garden and vegetable patch appeared in *Peter Rabbit*, and the cast-iron kitchen range graced many of Potter's underground burrows. Despite Hill Top's considerable charms, after 1909 Beatrix lived almost exclusively at nearby Castle Farm; Hill Top was mainly used as an administrative base for her expanding property portfolio.

Thanks to its worldwide fame (helped along by the 2006 biopic *Miss Potter*), Hill Top is one of the Lakes' most popular spots. Entry is by timed ticket, and the queues can be seriously daunting during the summer holidays.

Hill Top is 2 miles south of Hawkshead. Bus 505 travels through the village on its between Coniston and Windermere, or you can catch the Cross-Lakes Shuttle (opposite).

## CONISTON

pop 1948

Above the tranquil surface of Coniston Water, with its gliding steam yachts and quiet boats, looms the pockmarked peak known as the Old Man of Coniston (803m). The village grew up around the copper-mining industry; these

days, Coniston makes a fine place for relaxing by the quiet lakeside.

The lake is famous for the world-record speed attempts made here by Sir Malcolm Campbell and his son, Donald, between the 1930s and 1960s. Tragically, after smashing the record several times, Donald was killed during an attempt in 1967, when his futuristic jet-boat *Bluebird* flipped at around 320mph. The boat and its pilot were recovered in 2001; Campbell was buried in the cemetery near St Andrew's church.

The lake also famously inspired Arthur Ransome's classic children's tale *Swallows & Amazons*. Peel Island, towards the southern end of Coniston Water, doubles in the book as 'Wild Cat Island', while the Gondola steam yacht (p720) apparently gave Ransome the idea for Captain Flint's houseboat.

## Information

**Coniston Tourist Office** (☎ 015394-41533; www.conistonc.org; Ruskin Ave; 🕒 9.30am-5.30pm Easter-Oct, till 4pm Nov-Mar) The Coniston Loyalty Card (£2) offers local discounts, and there's wi-fi for a small donation.

**Hollands Cafe** (☎ 015394-41303; Tilberthwaite Ave; per hr £5) Internet access.

**Post office** (Yewdale Rd; 🕒 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, to 12.30pm Sat)

## Sights

### RUSKIN MUSEUM

Coniston's **museum** (☎ 015394-41164; www.ruskinmuseum.com; adult/child £4.25/2; 🕒 10am-5.30pm Easter-mid-Nov, 10.30am-3.30pm Wed-Sun mid-Nov-Easter) explores Coniston's history, touching on copper mining, Arthur Ransome and the Campbell story – the museum's latest acquisitions are the tail fin and the air-intake from Donald Campbell's fated *Bluebird* boat. There's also an extensive section on John Ruskin, with displays of his writings, watercolours and sketchbooks.

### BRANTWOOD

John Ruskin (1819-1900), the Victorian polymath, philosopher and critic, was one of the great thinkers of 19th-century society, expounding views on everything from Venetian architecture to the finer points of traditional lace-making. In 1871 he purchased **Brantwood** (☎ 015394-41396; www.brantwood.org.uk; adult/5-15yr £6/1.20, gardens only £4/1.20; 🕒 11am-5.30pm mid-Mar-mid-Nov, 11am-4.30pm Wed-Sun mid-Nov-mid-Mar) and spent the next 20 years expanding and modifying the house and grounds, championing his

concept of 'organic architecture' and the value of traditional 'Arts and Crafts' over soulless factory-made materials.

The result is a living monument to Ruskin's aesthetic principles: every inch of the house, from the handmade furniture through to the formal gardens, was designed according to his painstaking instructions (he even dreamt up some of the wallpaper designs). Upstairs you can view a collection of his watercolours, before stopping for tea at the nearby **Jumping Jenny** (☎ 015394-41715; lunches £4-8) cafe and catching a leisurely boat back to Coniston (see below).

## Activities

### BOAT TRIPS

For a dash of Victorian elegance, you can't top the puffing steam-yacht **Gondola** (☎ 015394-63850; adult/5-15yr £6.50/3.30), built in 1859 and restored to its former glory in the 1980s by the National Trust. Looking like a cross between a Venetian *vaporetto* and an English houseboat, complete with cushioned saloons and polished wood seats, it's a stately way of seeing the lake, especially if you're visiting Brantwood (p719). She makes five trips daily from mid-March to October. And you don't need to fret about carbon emissions from the Gondola's steam-plume; she's switched from mucky coal to ecofriendly waste-wood logs, cutting her carbon footprint by 90%.

Not to be outdone by the Gondola, the two **Coniston Launches** (☎ 015394-36216; www.conistonlaunch.co.uk) were converted to run on solar panels in 2005, making them just about the greenest ferries in England. The Northern route (adult/three to 16 years return £6.20/3.10) calls at the Waterhead Hotel, Torver and Brantwood, while the Southern route (adult/three to 16 years return £8.60/4.80) sails to the jetties at Torver, Water Park, Lake Bank, Sunny Bank and Brantwood via Peel Island. You can break your journey and walk to the next jetty; trail leaflets are sold on board for £1.80. Extra cruises available are the Campbells on Coniston (adult/five to 15 years £8/5; departing 1pm Tuesday mid-March to October) and Swallows and Amazons (adult/five to 15 years £9/5.50; 12.35pm Wednesday mid-March to October).

**Coniston Boating Centre** (☎ 015394-41366; Coniston Jetty) hires out rowing boats, Canadian canoes and motorboats.

## WALKING

If you're in Coniston to hike, chances are you've come to conquer the **Old Man** (7.5 miles, four to five hours). It's a steep but rewarding climb past Coniston's abandoned copper mines to the summit, from where the views stretch to the Cumbrian Coast on a clear day.

Another popular trail leads to **Tarn Hows**, a man-made lake backed by woods and mountains, donated to the National Trust by Beatrix Potter in 1930, and now a favourite hang-out for red squirrels. It's a 5-mile round-trip of around three hours. The tourist office has leaflets on more walks and the annual **Coniston Walking Festival** (www.conistonwalkingfestival.org), held in September.

**Summitreks** (☎ 015394-41212; www.summitreks.co.uk; 14 Yewdale Rd) arranges outdoor activities in the Coniston area.

## Sleeping

**Coniston Hall Campsite** (☎ 015394-41223; sites from £12; ☎ Easter-Oct) Busy lakeside campsite a mile from town, with plenty of showers, a laundry room and a small shop – although it can be tough to find a peak-season pitch.

**Coppermines YHA** (☎ 0845 371 9630; www.yha.org.uk; dm £14; ☎ Easter-Oct) Hikers tackling the Old Man get a head start at this former mine-manager's house, huddled a couple of miles into the mountains along an unmetalled road. The small dorms, battered furniture and cosy kitchen are all part of the backcountry charm.

**Holly How YHA** (☎ 0845 371 9511; www.yha.org.uk; Far End; dm £16) Coniston's main hostel occupies a slate-fronted period house along the road towards Ambleside, and offers the usual YHA facilities: kitchens, evening meals and bike hire, with a choice of four-, eight- or 10-bed dorms. It's a school-trip favourite, so book ahead.

**Crown Inn Coniston** (☎ 015394-41243; Tilberthwaite Ave; www.crowninnconiston.com; s £50, d £80-95; (P)) The bedrooms at this solid old inn have been given a spicy overhaul, and they're now spacious and comfortably equipped, with large beds and decent hot tubs for a posthike soak.

**our pick Yew Tree Farm** (☎ 015394-41433; www.yewtree-farm.com; s £70, d £100-114) Farmhouses don't come finer than this whitewashed, slate-roofed beauty, which doubled for Hill Top in *Miss Potter* (fittingly, since Beatrix Potter owned Yew Tree in the 1930s). It's still a working

## SOMETHING FOR THE WEEKEND

Start your weekend in Keswick with a romantic twilight cruise across **Derwent Water** (p727) before checking into the swish rooms at **Howe Keld** (p727).

On Saturday head south via Wordsworth's former houses at **Rydal Mount** (p715) and **Dove Cottage** (p715). After lunch at the **Jumble Room** (p717) energetic types could tackle the trail to **Helm Crag** (p716) or follow the easier stroll around the lake via the **Coffin Trail** (p716). Overnight in serious style at **Moss Grove** (p717) or the **Waterhead** (p714) in Ambleside, with an evening meal courtesy of **Lucy's** (p714).

On Sunday morning travel via the pretty village of **Hawkshead** (p717) and Beatrix Potter's house at **Hill Top** (p719), followed by a fantastic Sunday lunch at the **Drunken Duck** (p718), and an afternoon cruising on board the **Coniston Launches** (opposite) to John Ruskin's country estate, **Brantwood** (p719). If there's time, late afternoon tea at **Yew Tree Farm** (opposite) is a must. Finish things off with some culinary fireworks and boutique rooms at **L'Enclume** (p734) in Cartmel or at the **Queen's Head** (p712) in Troutbeck.

farm, but these days offers luxurious lodgings alongside the cowsheds. Cream of the crop is 'Tarn Hows' with its wood-frame rafters, slate-floored bathroom and regal four-poster bed. If it's fully booked, console yourself with a nutty flapjack or a Hot Herdwick sandwich at the delightful Yew Tree Tea Room next door.

**WheeleGate Country Guest House** (☎ 015394-41418; [www.wheelegate.co.uk](http://www.wheelegate.co.uk); Little Arrow; d £74-84) As long as you don't mind florals and frills, you'll be happy at this creeper-covered cottage in the centre of Coniston. The rooms are named after local lakes: try Derwent if you like oak-beamed character, Buttermere if you're a sucker for four-posters, and Coniston for countryside views.

## Eating

**Bluebird Cafe** (☎ 015394-41649; Lake Rd; lunches £4-8; ☺ breakfast & lunch) Beside the Coniston jetty, the busy Bluebird is a fine spot for tea and cakes or a quick ice cream before hopping aboard the cross-lake launch.

**Black Bull** (☎ 015394-41335; [www.conistonbrewery.com](http://www.conistonbrewery.com); Yewdale Rd; mains £6-14; ☺ lunch & dinner) Local punters and visiting hikers alike swing by the Old Bull for the best home-brewed ale in the Lakes, especially the trademark Bluebird Bitter and Old Man Ale. Pub grub is served in front of the log-fuelled fire: try the fantastic Cumberland Sausage platter, or tuck into locally hooked Esthwaite trout.

**Sun Hotel** (☎ 015394-41248; [www.thesunconiston.com](http://www.thesunconiston.com); mains £12-20; ☺ lunch & dinner) Squatting on the hillside, this old coaching inn has been whetting Coniston's whistles for centuries, but it's best known for its association with Donald Campbell, who was headquartered

here during his fateful campaign. Campbell memorabilia litters the inn, and you'll find solid, uncomplicated fare in the bar (which still boasts its original range and 16th-century flagstoned floor).

## Getting There & Around

Bus 505 runs from Windermere (10 Monday to Saturday, six on Sunday mid-March to October), via Ambleside, with a couple of daily connections to Kendal (1¼ hours).

The Ruskin Explorer ticket (adult/child £14.95/6.50) includes the Windermere bus fare, a Coniston launch ticket and entrance to Brantwood; pick it up from the tourist office or the bus driver.

## LANGDALE

Travelling north from Coniston, the road passes into increasingly wild, empty countryside. Barren hilltops loom as you travel north past the old Viking settlement of Elterwater en route to Great Langdale, where the main road comes to an end and many of the Lakes' greatest trails begin – including the stomp up the Langdale Pikes past Harrison Stickle (736m) and Pike o' Stickle (709m), and the spectacular ascent of Crinkle Crag (819m). An old road (now sealed with tarmac, although still one of the steepest and windiest in the entire country) leads through Little Langdale over Wrynose and Hardknott Passes to the coast, passing a ruined Roman fort en route.

## Getting There & Away

Bus 516 (the Langdale Rambler, six daily, five on Sunday) is the only scheduled bus service to the valley, with stops at Ambleside, Skelwith

Bridge, Elterwater, and the Old Dungeon Ghyll Hotel in Great Langdale.

## Elterwater

Ringed by trees and fields, the small, charming lake of Elterwater derives its name from the Old Norse for 'swan', after the colonies of whooper swans that winter here. With its maple-shaded village green and quiet country setting, it's a popular base for exploring the Langdale fells.

**Langdale YHA** (☎ 0845 371 9748; www.yha.org.uk; High Close, Loughrigg; dm £12; ☺ Mar-Oct; (P) (Q)), halfway between Grasmere and Elterwater, has an impressive Victorian facade, but the rooms are standard YHA. Lots of dorm-size choice though, and good amenities including laundry, shop and games room.

**Elterwater YHA** (☎ 0845 371 9017; www.yha.org.uk; dm £14; ☺ Easter-Oct; (Q)) is lodged inside an old barn and farmhouse opposite the village pub. It's institutional – easy-clean fabrics, boarding-school bunk beds and a functional kitchen – but dead handy for local trails.

The smart **Eltermere Country House Hotel** (☎ 015394-37207; www.eltermere.co.uk; d from £90; (P)) near the village YHA has 15 pleasant, modern rooms and lovely lakeside grounds, and a private jetty onto Elterwater.

The lovely old **Britannia Inn** (☎ 015394-37210; www.britinn.net; d £94-114; (P)) is a longstanding walkers' favourite. All the rooms have been redone with fresh fabrics and shiny en suites, and hikers cram into the downstairs bar for hearty steaks, pints and pies (mains £8 to £16). The Sunday roast is rather fine, too.

## Great Langdale

Hemmed in by towering hills, this little hamlet is one of the Lake District's classic walking centres. Some of the most famous (and challenging) Lakeland fells are within reach, including Pike o' Blisco (705m), Crinkle Crag (859m) and the chain of peaks known as the 'Langdale Pikes': Pike O' Stickle (709m), Loft Crag (682m), Harrison Stickle (736m) and Pavey Ark (700m).

Many hikers choose to kip at the **Great Langdale Campsite** (☎ 37668; langdalecamp@nationaltrust.org.uk; adult £4.50-5.50, child £2-2.50, car £3-3.50), a typically well-run NT campground a mile up the valley.

The classic stay in Great Langdale is the **Old Dungeon Ghyll** (☎ 015394-37272; www.odg.co.uk; d £100-110; (P)), backed by soaring fells and built from

sturdy Lakeland stone. It's been the getaway of choice for many well-known walkers and it's still endearingly old-fashioned: country chintz, battered armchairs and venerable furniture in the rooms; oak beams, wood tables and a crackling fire in the walker's bar; and more history per square inch than practically anywhere in the Lakes.

For more contemporary trappings, try the ivy-clad **New Dungeon Ghyll** (☎ 015394-37213; www.dungeon-ghyll.co.uk; d £108-120; (P)) next door.

The **Stickle Barn** (☎ 015394-37356; Great Langdale; mains £4-12) is a popular choice for a posthike dinner, with curries, casseroles and stews to warm those weary bones. There's basic dorm accommodation in the bunkhouse out back.

## Little Langdale

Separated from Great Langdale by Lingmoor Fell (459m), Little Langdale is a quiet village on the road to Wrynose Pass. There are many little-known walks nearby, and at the head of the valley is the **Three Shire Stone**, marking the traditional meeting point of Cumberland, Westmoreland and Lancashire.

The only place to stay is the **Three Shires Inn** (☎ 015394-37215; www.threeshiresinn.co.uk; d £76-106; (P)), ideally placed for walkers on the route to Lingmoor Fell via Blea Tarn. There are lunch mains for £7.25 to £8.75, and dinner mains from £14.

## ESKDALE

Strap yourself in: the road west from Little Langdale into the Eskdale Valley is a rollercoaster, snaking across glacial valleys and empty hills all the way to the Cumbrian coast, traversing two of the country's steepest roads, Wrynose Pass (1 in 4 – 1m up for every 4m forward) and Hardknott Pass (1 in 3) en route. If you don't feel up the challenge of the twin passes (a seriously wise decision on busy summer weekends and icy winter days), you can also reach Eskdale from the west via the turn-off near Gosforth, or via bus or the Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway (p736).

Perched above Eskdale are the ruins of **Hardknott Roman Fort**, which once guarded the old pack route from the Roman harbour at Ravenglass (p736). You can still make out the foundations of the commandant's house, watchtowers and parade ground, and the views are eye-popping, but you can't help feeling sympathy for the legionaries

stationed here – it's hard to think of a lonelier spot in the entire Roman Empire.

Three miles further down the valley is shoebox-sized **Boot**, which hosts a hearty **beer festival** ([www.bootbeer.co.uk](http://www.bootbeer.co.uk)) every June. It's also handy for **Dalegarth**, the eastern terminus of the Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway (p736).

Hunkering under the hills, the purpose-built **Eskdale YHA** (☎ 0845 371 9317; [www.yha.org.uk](http://www.yha.org.uk); Boot; dm £16; ♿ Easter-Oct) is a favourite waypoint for walkers and Ravenglass railway travellers. Zingy pinks, yellows and tangerines liven up the dorms and TV lounge, there's bike rental and a decent kitchen, and endless walks start right outside the front door.

**Boot Inn** (☎ 0845 130 6224; [www.bootinn.co.uk](http://www.bootinn.co.uk); Boot; mains £7-12; ♿) Boot's boozier is a beauty, offering hale and hearty Lakeland food and local ales served at the green-slate bar. The beer garden's particularly nice, with great views and play-areas to keep the nippers happy. There are also single rooms available for £50, doubles £100.

Just east of Boot, the **Woolpack Inn** (☎ 019467-23230; ♿) has its own microbrewery concocting homemade ales for the two higger-mugger 'baas', both covered in sporting prints and country memorabilia. The grub's good and there's often live music (think fiddles and guitars), but the upstairs rooms are overpriced (£65 to £120).

Apart from the Ravenglass steam railway and Shanks' pony, there's no public transport to Eskdale.

## WASDALE

Hunched at the end of a twisting road, the valley of Wasdale is as close as you'll get to true wilderness in the Lake District. Surrounded by a brooding circle of scree-scattered peaks, including the summits of Scafell Pike and Great Gable, it's a world away from the bustling quays of Windermere: the only signs of human habitation are a couple of cottages and a sturdy inn, dwarfed by the green-grey arc of **Wastwater**, England's deepest lake. For many walkers this is the quintessential location for Lakeland hiking – classic routes to the summits of Great Gable, Lingmell and Scafell Pike all start off from the Wasdale Head area. Little wonder that Wasdale recently topped a television poll to find Britain's favourite view: you won't find a grander spot this side of the Scottish highlands.

### WASDALE'S WHITE LIES

Cumbrians are renowned for their tall tales, but Will Ritson, a popular 19th-century publican, took the propensity and finessed it into an art, telling porkies about giant turnips and a cross between a foxhound and a golden eagle (it could leap of drystone walls, see). In honour of Ritson, the Bridge Inn at Santon Bridge holds the **World's Biggest Liar Contest** ([www.santonbridgeinn.com/liar](http://www.santonbridgeinn.com/liar)) every November.

The only place for supplies is the **Barn Door Shop** (☎ 019467-26384; [www.wasdaleweb.com](http://www.wasdaleweb.com)) at Wasdale Head, right next to the Wasdale Head Inn.

### Sleeping

**Wasdale Head Campsite** (☎ 019467-26220; [www.wasdalecampsite.org.uk](http://www.wasdalecampsite.org.uk); adult £4.50-5.50, child £2-2.50, car £3-3.50) This NT campsite is in a fantastically wild spot, nestled beneath the Scafell range a mile from Wastwater. Facilities are basic (laundry room, showers and not much else), but the views are fine.

**Wastwater YHA** (☎ 0845 371 9350; [www.yha.org.uk](http://www.yha.org.uk); Wasdale Hall, Nether Wasdale; dm £12; ♿) year-round by advance booking) Another stunning Lakeland hostel in a half-timbered 19th-century Gothic mansion in Nether Wasdale, at the lake's western end. There's a restaurant serving Cumbrian nosh and real ales, and many dorms have outlooks across the water.

**Rainors Farm** (☎ 019467-25934; [www.rainorsfarm.co.uk](http://www.rainorsfarm.co.uk); s £30-40, d £55-65) Three sweet rooms in a whitewashed farmhouse cottage, prettied up with checks, crimson spreads and country views. There's a choice of traditional or veggie breakfasts, and campers can bunk down in a back-garden yurt (£550 per week). It's in Gosforth, about 5 miles west of Nether Wasdale.

**Strands Inn** (☎ 019467-26237; [www.strandshotel.com](http://www.strandshotel.com); Nether Wasdale; s/d £50/75) This unpretentious inn does a decent supper (pigeon breast, braised rabbit pâté, black pudding stack) and brews its own ale, but the white and pine rooms are on the simple side.

**Lingmell House** (☎ 019467-26261; [www.lingmellhouse.co.uk](http://www.lingmellhouse.co.uk); Wasdale Head; d £60; ♿) If you're really looking to escape, this stern granite house is the place, perched at the end of the valley's road. The rooms are sparse – don't expect

creature comforts, or even much furniture – but at least traffic noise won't be a problem.

**ourpick Wasdale Head Inn** (☎ 019467-26229; www.wasdale.com; d £108-118; **P**) This historic inn can stake a claim as the spiritual home of English mountain climbing: one of the inn's early owners, Will Ritson, was among the adventurous gaggle of Victorian gents who pioneered the techniques of early mountaineering in the late 19th century. Dog-eared photos and climbing memorabilia are dotted around the inn, and upstairs you'll find simple, snug rooms crammed with character: for more space, ask for one of the barn-conversion rooms across the way. Home-brewed ales, hearty food and a genuine slice of Lakeland history – what more could you ask for?

### Getting There & Away

The **Wasdale Taxibus** (☎ 019467-25308) runs between Gosforth and Wasdale twice daily on Thursday, Saturday and Sunday; ring to book a seat.

## COCKERMOUTH

pop 8225

Plonked in flat fields beyond the northerly fells, Cockermouth is best known as the birthplace of William Wordsworth and the home base of one of Cumbria's largest beer makers, Jennings's Brewery. It's a quiet, workaday kind of town; Georgian houses and old coaching inns line the main street, and the valleys of Borrowdale and Buttermere are within easy reach.

### Information

**Cockermouth** (www.cockermouth.org.uk) Useful town guide.

**Library** (☎ 01900-325990; Main St; per 30 min £1; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Wed & Fri, 9am-noon Thu & Sat) Internet access.

**Post office** (South St; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-12.30pm Sat) Inside Lowther Went shopping centre.

**Tourist office** (☎ 01900-822634; cockermouthtic@co-net.com; ☎ 9.30am-5pm Mon-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun Jul-Aug, 9.30am-4.30pm Mon-Sat Apr-June & Sep-Oct, 9.30am-4pm Mon-Fri & 10-2pm Sat Jan-Mar & Nov-Dec) Inside the grand town hall.

### Sights

Cockermouth boasts two famous sons. Fletcher Christian, lead mutineer on the *Bounty*, was born outside town in 1764, but the town is better known as the birthplace of William

Wordsworth. Cockermouth's main attraction is **Wordsworth House** (NT; ☎ 01900-824805; Main St; adult/child £5.60/2.80; ☎ 11am-4.30pm Mon-Sat mid-Mar–Oct), where all five Wordsworth children were born (William was the second to arrive, born on 7 April 1770, followed a year later by Dorothy). Built around 1745, the elegant Georgian mansion has been painstakingly restored based on family accounts from the Wordsworth archive. Highlights include the flagstoned kitchen, the grand 1st-floor drawing room and the beautiful walled garden, immortalised in Wordsworth's epic poem *The Prelude*.

For something less cerebral, head for **Jennings's Brewery** (☎ 01900-821011; www.jenningsbrewery.co.uk; adult/over 12yr £5.50/2.50), which has been plying Cumbria's pubs with traditional ales and bitters since 1874. Tours of the brewery include a tasting session in the Old Cooperage bar; try the golden Cocker Hoop, malty Cumberland Ale or the extravagantly named Sneak Lifter.

**Castlegate House Gallery** (☎ 01900-822149; www.castlegatehouse.co.uk; ☎ 10.30am-5pm Fri, Sat & Mon, 2.30-4.30pm Sun) exhibits local artwork in a Georgian house opposite the 12th-century Cockermouth Castle, now a private residence.

### Sleeping

**Cockermouth YHA** (☎ 0845 371 9313; www.yha.org.uk; Double Mills; dm £14; ☎ Apr-Oct) There are just three dorms inside this converted 17th-century watermill, so it's much quieter than many Lakeland hostels. Camping space and cycle storage are available, but there's no cafe, so you'll be cooking your own meals.

**Six Castlegate** (☎ 01900-826749; www.sixcastlegate.co.uk; 6 Castlegate; s £35-45, d £60-75; **Q** wi-fi) Grade-II listed mansion that's had a comprehensive facelift, retaining its Georgian interiors while bringing the rooms bang up to date. Feather pillows, flat-screen TVs (all with Freeview), lofty ceilings and sparkling showers make this Central Cockermouth's choicest sleep.

**Croft House** (☎ 01900-827533; www.croft-guesthouse.com; 6/8 Challoner St; s/d £38/65; **P** **Q** wi-fi) This fancy number boasts chicly styled rooms in creams and purples, reclaimed timber floors and wall-mounted LCD TVs (one room has funky bunk beds for the kids). Vegie options and locally sourced bangers grace the morning table.

**ourpick Old Homestead** (☎ 01900-822223; www.byresteads.co.uk; Byresteads Farm; d £70-90; **P**) If you've got wheels, this posh farm conversion 2 miles west of Cockermouth is an utter delight.



## THE BASSENTHWAITE OSPREYS

In 2001 the first wild ospreys to breed in England for 150 years set up home at Bassenthwaite Lake, near Keswick. These magnificent birds of prey were once widespread, but were driven to extinction by hunting, environmental degradation and egg collectors. The last wild breeding pair was destroyed in Scotland in 1916, but following years of careful conservation the ospreys have slowly recolonised several areas of the British Isles.

Over the last few years, the birds have usually arrived at Bassenthwaite in April, spending the summer at the lake before heading for Africa in late August or early September. There are two official viewpoints, both in **Dodd Wood**, about 3 miles north of Keswick on the A591 (follow signs for Dodd Wood and Cattle Inn). The **lower hide** (📍 10am-5pm) is about 15 minutes' walk from the car park at Mirehouse, and the new **upper hide** (📍 10.30am-4.30pm) is half an hour further. There's an informative osprey display and live video feed at the **Whinlatter Forest Park visitor centre** (☎ 017687-78469; Braithwaite, near Keswick; 📍 10am-5pm Apr-Aug).

A special Osprey Bus (six on weekends April to mid-July, daily mid-July to August) runs from Keswick; alternatively catch the X4 from Penrith or Cockermouth, or the X5 or 77 from Keswick. Disabled visitors can arrange for access to the lower hide by calling the Whinlatter Visitor Centre. Find out more at [www.ospreywatch.co.uk](http://www.ospreywatch.co.uk).

The farmhouse clutter has been cleared to leave light, airy rooms with just a few rustic touches for character (a wood rafter here, a stone tile or hardwood mirror there). Top choices are the Cruck rooms (with burnished leather sofas) and the Master's Room (with handcrafted four-poster bed), both with vistas across 73-odd hectares of working sheep farm.

## Eating & Drinking

**Merienda** (☎ 01900-822790; 7a Station St; mains £4-8; 📍 breakfast & lunch, to 10pm Fri) Savour light bites, authentic tapas and open-faced sandwiches at this sunny Med-style diner, with an admirable penchant for fair-trade goods, local producers and specialist coffees.

**Quince & Medlar** (☎ 01900-823579; 13 Castlegate; [www.quinceandmedlar.co.uk](http://www.quinceandmedlar.co.uk); mains from around £14; 📍 dinner Tue-Sat) Who ever said veggie food had to be bland? Forget your clichéd quiches and nut roasts, here at the Quince things are rather spicier. Depending on the season, you could find yourself tucking into Indian spinach globes, Cumberland cheese roulade or butternut-and-bean bakes wrapped in vine leaves, all served in the august surroundings of a Georgian dining room. Take that, you carnivores...

**Bitter End** (☎ 01900-828993; Kirkgate) From the sublime to the ridiculous; alongside king-size Jennings is this miniature microbrewery and village pub, where the beers are brewed in time-honoured fashion using barley, wheat, hops and Cumbrian spring water (pint o' Cuddy Lugs, anyone?)

## Getting There & Away

The X4/X5 (13 Monday to Saturday, six on Sunday) travels from Workington via Cockermouth on to Keswick (35 minutes) and Penrith (1¼ hours).

## KESWICK

pop 5257

Ask many people for their picture-perfect image of a Lakeland town, and chances are they'll come up with something close to Keswick. This sturdy slate town is nestled alongside one of the region's most idyllic lakes, Derwent Water, a silvery curve studded by wooded islands and criss-crossed by puttering cruise boats. Keswick makes a less frantic Lakeland base than Ambleside or Windermere, but there's plenty to keep you occupied: classic trails rove the surrounding hilltops, and the town is home to a clutch of oddball attractions including an original Batmobile and the world's largest pencil.

## Information

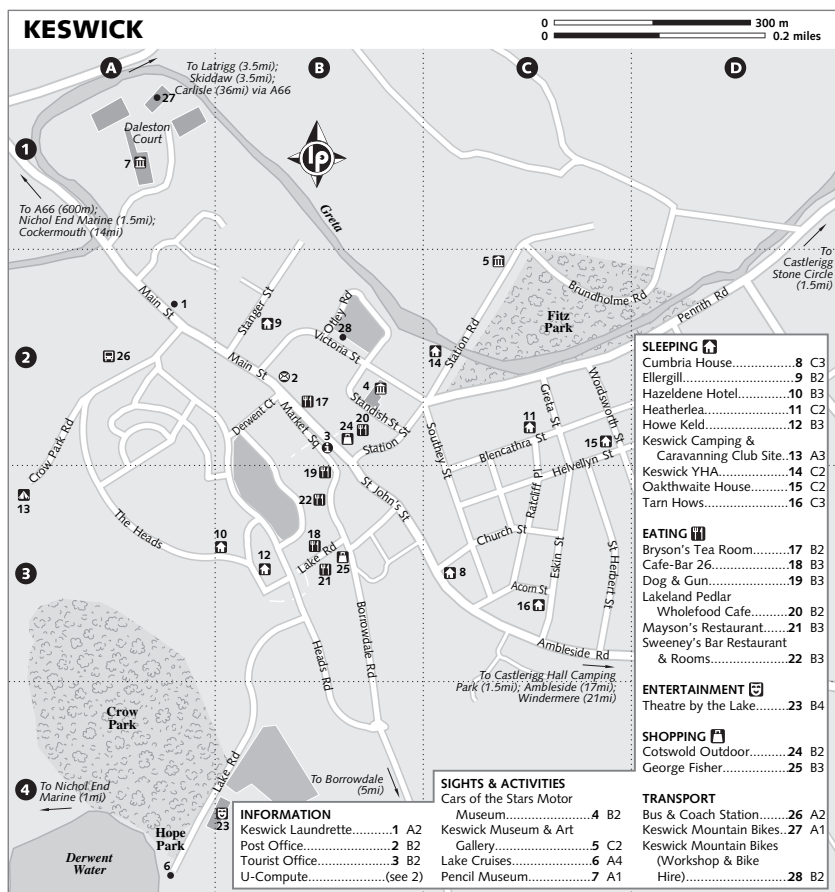
**Keswick Laundrette** (☎ 017687-75448; Main St; 📍 7.30am-7pm)

**Keswick & the North Lakes** ([www.keswick.org](http://www.keswick.org)) Comprehensive guide to all things Keswick.

**Post office** (☎ 017687-72269; 48 Main St; 📍 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, to 12.30pm Sat)

**Tourist office** (☎ 017687-72645; [keswicktic@lake-district.gov.uk](mailto:keswicktic@lake-district.gov.uk); Moot Hall, Market Pl; 📍 9.30am-5.30pm Apr-Oct, to 4.30pm Nov-Mar) Sells discounted launch tickets.

**U-Compute** (☎ 017687-72269; 48 Main St; 📍 9am-5.30pm; per hr £3) Internet access above the post office.



## Sights

The heart of Keswick is the old Market Pl, in the shadow of the town's former prison and meeting rooms at the **Moot Hall** (now occupied by the tourist office).

The River Greta runs parallel to Main St, overlooked by the green expanse of **Fitz Park**. Nearby is the **Keswick Museum & Art Gallery** (☎ 017687-73263; Station Rd; admission free; 🕒 10am-4pm Tue-Sat Feb-Oct), which has hardly changed since its opening in 1898. Dusty cases fill the halls: exhibits on display include a Napoleonic teacup, a centuries-old stuffed cat and a set of musical stones once played for Queen Victoria.

Back across the river, the equally odd **Cars of the Stars Motor Museum** (☎ 017687-73757; www

.carsofthestars.com; Standish St; adult/child £5/3; 🕒 10am-5pm) houses a fleet of celebrity vehicles: Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, Mr Bean's Mini, a Batmobile, KITT from *Knightrider*, the A-Team van and the Delorean from *Back to the Future*, as well as lots of Bond cars.

At the southern end of Main St is the old Cumberland Pencil Factory, now the **Pencil Museum** (☎ 017687-73626; www.pencilmuseum.co.uk; Southy Works; adult/child £3/1.50; 🕒 9.30am-5pm). Keswick was once a centre for graphite mining; the museum's exhibits include a reconstruction of the old Borrowdale slate mine and the world's longest pencil (measuring 8m end to end). The factory still produces luxury colouring pencils under the 'Derwent' brand.

A mile east of Keswick stands **Castlerigg Stone Circle**, a group of 48 stones between 3000 and 4000 years old, set on a hilltop surrounded by a brooding amphitheatre of mountains. The purpose of the circle is uncertain (current opinion is divided between a Bronze Age meeting place and a celestial timepiece), but one thing's for certain – those prehistoric builders knew a good site when they saw one.

## Activities

Keswick has plenty of outdoor shops. There's a huge branch of **Cotswolds Outdoor** (☎ 017687-81030; 16 Main St), but the traditionalists' choice is **George Fisher** (☎ 017687-72178; 2 Borrowdale Rd).

## BOAT TRIPS

Lake Rd leads west past Crow Park to the lovely lake of Derwent Water, where you can catch a cruise with **Keswick Launch Company** (☎ 017687-72263; www.keswick-launch.co.uk). Boats call at seven landing stages: Ashness Gate, Lodore Falls, High Brandlehow, Low Brandlehow, Hawse End, Nichol End and back to Keswick. Boats leave every hour (adult/child £8.50/4.25, 50 minutes); single fares to each jetty are also available. There are at least six daily boats from mid-March to mid-November, with extra sailings in summer, plus a twilight cruise at 7.30pm (adult/child £9/4.50, one hour, July and August). Only two boats run from mid-November to mid-March.

**Nichol End Marine** (☎ 017687-73082; Nichol End; ☎ 9am-5pm) hires out kayaks, rowboats and motorboats.

## WALKING

Keswick has enough hikes to fill a lifetime of tramping. The most popular walk is the ascent of **Lattrigg Fell**, along an old railway path that's now part of the C2C cycle trail. Other possible routes climb **Walla Crag** (379m), **Skiddaw** (931m) and **Blencathra** (868m), or you can catch the boat to Hawse End for the supremely scenic hike up **Catbells** (451m).

## Festivals & Events

Keswick needs no excuse for a shindig.

**Keswick Mountain Festival** (www.keswickmountainfestival.co.uk) May

**Keswick Beer Festival** (www.keswickbeerfestival.co.uk) June

**Keswick Agricultural Show** (www.keswickshow.co.uk) August Bank Holiday; held every year since 1860.

## Sleeping

### BUDGET

**Keswick YHA** (☎ 0845 371 9746; www.yha.org.uk; Station Rd; dm £23; ☑) Fresh from a refit, this former woollen mill is now one of Lakeland's top YHAs. Some of the dorms, doubles and triples have balconies over the river and Fitz Park, and the hostel has all the facilities a discerning backpacker could wish for.

Tent-pitchers can try **Castlerigg Hall Camping Park** (☎ 017687-74499; www.castlerigg.co.uk; Rakefoot Lane, off A591; sites £14.50-16.50) and **Keswick Camping & Caravanning Club Site** (☎ 017687-72392; Crow Park Rd; adult £6.60-8.60, child £2.25-2.35, tent £2.90; ☎ Feb-Nov), down beside the lake.

### MIDRANGE

**our pick** **Howe Keld** (☎ 017687-72417; www.howekeld.co.uk; 5-7 The Heads; s £45, d £80-90) On the edge of Hope Park, this old workhorse has had a glamorous makeover and now boasts some of Keswick's most impressive rooms. Gone are the chintzy wallpapers; in come luxury pocket-sprung beds, Egyptian cotton sheets and goose-down duvets, plus designer wall hangings and handmade furniture courtesy of a local joiner. Bathrooms sparkle, the clutter's minimal, the key-fobs are made of local slate, and the brekkie's up for a national award. Seriously good.

**Cumbria House** (☎ 017687-73171; www.cumbria-house.co.uk; 1 Derwent Water Pl; r £52-64) Charming Georgian surroundings and an admirable eco-policy (fair-trade coffee, local produce, and a 5% discount for car-free guests) make this another smart option. Families can rent the top three rooms as a single suite, with views all the way to Blencathra.

**Heatherlea** (☎ 017687-72430; www.heatherlea-keswick.co.uk; 26 Blencathra St; d £54) One of the best choices in the B&B-heavy area around Blencathra St. Tasteful decor (pine beds, crimson-striped cushions, beige throws) distinguishes the rooms; it's worth bumping up to superior for the sparkling shower and gargantuan flat-screen TV.

**Ellergill** (☎ 017687-73347; www.ellergill.co.uk; 22 Stanger St; d £56-64) Velour bedspreads, plumped-up cushions and either regal purples or fiery reds give this B&B an opulent edge, marrying well with the house's Victorian features (including tiled hearths and a lovely hallway floor).

**Oakthwaite House** (☎ 017687-72398; www.oakthwaite-keswick.co.uk; 35 Helvellyn St; d £58-68) Just four rooms at this upper-crust guesthouse, but all scream achingly good taste. Digital TVs, power showers, white linen and cool shades throughout, with a cosy dormer room for that attic hideaway feel, or two swanky king-size rooms if you're a sucker for fell views.

Also recommended:

**Tarn Haws** (☎ 017687-73217; www.tarnhaws.co.uk; 3-5 Eskin St; s £33, d £58-70) Cast-iron bedsteads and fancy quilts in a traditional Eskin St guesthouse.

**Hazeldene Hotel** (☎ 017687-72106; www.hazeldene-hotel.co.uk; The Heads; d £75-95) Pick of the Victorian villas opposite Hope Park, with cheery doubles and a spacious suite with stone fireplace. Ask for park views.

## TOP END

**Lyzick Hall Hotel** (☎ 017687-72277; www.lyzickhall.co.uk; Underskiddaw; r £120-144; (P) (☎)) Lyzick (meaning 'little oak') is pricey, but you're really paying for the setting, wedged on lower Skiddaw 3 miles from Keswick, with jaw-dropping views to the Eden Valley. Rooms are simple, unfussy and just a smidge old-fashioned (the Garden and Derwent suites are the most spacious); the panoramic patio and the sexy indoor pool are tailor-made for basking.

## Eating CAFES

**Bryson's Tea Room** (☎ 017687-72257; 42 Main St; cakes £2-5) A historic Lakeland bakery turning out fruit cakes, Battenburgs, plum breads and florentines. Bag 'em up and take 'em home, or stop for afternoon tea at the upstairs cafe.

**Lakeland Pedlar Wholefood Cafe** (☎ 017687-74492; www.lakelandpedlar.co.uk; Hendersons Yard; mains £3-10; ☎ 9am-5pm) Bikers and vegies are both well catered for at this homely cafe, noted for doorstep sandwiches, homemade soups, vegie chillis and ultracrumblly cakes. If you need to work off the calories, bikes are hired upstairs.

**Cafe-Bar 26** (☎ 017687-80863; 26 Lake Rd; mains £3.25-7.50) Big-city style in little-town Keswick. Bag a streetside table for authentic cappuccinos, wines and beers from across the globe, or bistro burgers, bruschetta and Cajun chicken tortillas.

## RESTAURANTS

**Mayson's Restaurant** (☎ 01768 774104; 33 Lake Rd; mains £6-10; ☎ lunch & dinner) If you're looking for a quick sit-down meal, this relaxed little buffet diner takes some beating. Choose your meal from the woks lined up on the bar (anything from Cajun chicken to chow mein), pick a drink and a table, and your meal will be dished up in double time. Potted plants and posters on the walls keep things cosy.

**Sweeney's Bar Restaurant & Rooms** (☎ 017687-772990; 18-20 Lake Rd; mains £7-12) Count on decent Brit cooking in comfortable surrounds at Sweeney's. It's half chic wine bar, half restaurant-with-rooms: leather sofas and polished tables spread over two floors, with a beer garden for soaking up the rays.

**Dog & Gun** (☎ 017687-73463; 2 Lake Rd; mains around £8) Russet-faced farmers rub shoulders with trail-weary hikers at Keswick's top pub, a wonderful place dotted with hunting prints, faded carpets and well-worn wood. The grub's honest and uncomplicated – mainly goulash, stews, steaks and pies – and there are Cumbrian ales to wash everything down.

## Entertainment

**Theatre by the Lake** (☎ 017687-74411; www.theatrebythelake.com; Lakeside) Drama both new and classic is performed here, on the shores of Derwent Water.

## Getting There & Away

The Lakeslink bus (555/556) runs hourly to Ambleside (40 minutes), Windermere (50 minutes) and Kendal (1½ hours), or the hourly X4/X5 travels from Penrith to Workington via Keswick (eight on Sunday). For buses to Borrowdale, see p730.

## Getting Around

Hire full-suspension bikes, hardtails and hybrids at **Keswick Mountain Bikes** (☎ 017687-75202; 1 Daleston Ct) for £15 to £20 per day. They have a second branch on Otley Rd.

## BORROWDALE & BUTTERMERE

Views don't get any more breathtaking than the one from the B5289 into Borrowdale. Historically, the valley was an important centre for two crucial local industries – farming and slate-mining – but these days Borrowdale is walkers' country, with countless paths crossing the surrounding fells, including landmark routes up to the summits of Great

## THE ROOF OF ENGLAND

In Scotland it's Ben Nevis (1344m), in Wales it's Snowdon (1085m), and in England it's **Scafell Pike** (978m): collectively the three highest peaks of the British mainland. While they might not be on quite the same scale as the French Alps or the Canadian Rockies, many a hiker has set out to conquer this sky-topping trio, the ultimate goal for British peak-baggers (especially for hardy souls attempting the Three Peaks Challenge, in which all three mountains are conquered in 24 hours).

The classic ascent up Scafell Pike is from Wasdale Head (p723), but the more scenic route starts near Seathwaite Farm. The trail travels past Styhead Tarn before cutting along the Corridor Route towards the summit, descending via the neighbouring peaks of Broad Crag, Ill Crag and Great End, or the easier route past Esk Hause. It's a challenging 8-mile, six-hour round trip, and not for inexperienced hikers; don't even think about tackling it without proper supplies (rucksack, OS map, compass, food and water, and decent hiking boots) and a favourable weather forecast.

Gable and Scafell Pike, and an idyllic panorama of tree-clad fells, patchwork pastures and rickety barns.

## Borrowdale

The B5289 tracks Derwent Water into the heart of Borrowdale Valley, overlooked by the impressive peaks of Scafell and Scafell Pike. Past the small village of **Grange-in-Borrowdale**, the valley winds into the jagged ravine of the **Jaws of Borrowdale**, a well-known hiking spot with wonderful views, notably from the summit of **Castle Crag** (290m).

From here, the road curls into the stout hamlet of **Rosthwaite**, which marks the starting point for the annual **Borrowdale Fell Race**. Held on the first Saturday in August, this muscle-shredding 17-mile slog makes the Iron Man Challenge look like child's play; you can see a list of previous winners in the bar at the Scafell Hotel.

## SLEEPING & EATING

**Borrowdale YHA** (☎ 0845 371 9624; [www.yha.org.uk](http://www.yha.org.uk); Longthwaite; dm £15.50; ☞ Feb-Dec) Purpose-built chalet-style hostel further up the valley, specialising in walking and activity trips. The facilities are great, but it's often booked out throughout the summer.

**Derwentwater YHA** (☎ 0845 371 9314; [www.yha.org.uk](http://www.yha.org.uk); Barrow House; dm £16; ☞ Feb-Nov, weekends Nov-Jan; ☐ ☑) Originally built for the 19th-century notable Joseph Pocklington, this lakeside mansion 2 miles south of Keswick boasts high-ceilinged dorms, a billiard room, playgrounds and a man-made waterfall that runs the hostel's hydrogenerator.

**Yew Tree Farm** (☎ 017687-77675; <http://www.borrowdaleherdwick.co.uk>; Rosthwaite; d from £60; ☐) Not to

be confused with the *other* Yew Tree Farm (p720), this fine old farmhouse is a sanctuary of chintz. Floral motifs run riot in the three rooms, all snuggled under low ceilings; bathrooms are titchy, and there are no TVs, so you'll have to make do with the views. For brekkie, there's Cumbrian bacon and Herdwick bangers, and you'll find home-baked cakes across the road at the Flock Inn tearoom.

**Scafell Hotel** (☎ 017687-77208; [www.scafell.co.uk](http://www.scafell.co.uk); Rosthwaite; d £124-175; ☐) Rosthwaite's former coaching inn makes for a cosy stay. Period furniture and musty rugs conjure up an antique air (the newer annexe is more contemporary). En suite bathrooms and country views are (nearly) universal, and the fire-lit Riverside Bar makes the ideal place to sink a brew.

**Borrowdale Gates Hotel** (☎ 017687-77204; [www.borrowdale-gates.com](http://www.borrowdale-gates.com); Grange; d £150-210; ☐) There's no arguing with the spacious rooms, gourmet restaurant (mains £16 to £22) or sweeping 0.8-hectare grounds at this country retreat, but if you can't stand country clutter and Laura Ashley furnishings, you'll be better off elsewhere.

**Hazel Bank** (☎ 017687-77248; [www.hazelbankhotel.co.uk](http://www.hazelbankhotel.co.uk); Rosthwaite; r £170-190; ☐) Oozing English luxury from every corniced corner, this Lakeland mansion is another fancy getaway, reached via its own humpbacked bridge and ensconced in private gardens, with upmarket boudoirs stuffed with swags, drapes, ruffled curtains and half-tester beds.

## Seatoller

The last stop before Honister, Seatoller was originally a settlement for workers employed

in the local slate quarries, and still feels one step removed from the outside world.

Rooms at the family-run **Langstrath Inn** (☎ 017687-77239; www.thelangstrath.com; Stonethwaite; d £75-90, tr £75-79; ☑ ☑ wi-fi) have been stripped to the essentials. Forget net curtains and geranium-print wallpaper, here it's crisp white sheets and neutral tones set off by slate grey blankets, crimson cushions or chrome fixtures. The bar is more olde-worlde, but the food is reassuringly modern – Herdwick lamb on olive oil mash, or Cumberland tattie pot with local steak (mains £10.75 to £15.50).

A charmingly Potteresque hidey-hole beneath Honister Pass, the 17th-century **Seatoller House** (☎ 017687-77218; www.seatollerhouse.co.uk; s/d £55/110; ☑) brims with period features, and the rooms have their own decorative tics. Ground-floor Badger has a massive hearth and garden views, while Osprey is jammed into the rafters with a Velux skylight. Rates include a four-course dinner and hearty breakfast.

Just before the upward climb to Honister, take a break at the **Yew Tree** (☎ 017687-77634; mains £8-18; ☑ lunch Tue-Sun) and fortify yourself with a ploughman's lunch or a gravy-filled pie. Pitch up after dark and you'll find rather more sophisticated fare – ostrich steak, perhaps?

## Honister Pass

This bleak, wind-battered mountain pass into Buttermere was once the most productive quarrying area in the Lake District, and still produces much of the region's grey-green Westmorland slate.

Claustrophobes should steer well clear of the **Honister Slate Mine** (☎ 017687-77230; www.honister-slate-mine.co.uk; adult/child £9.75/4.75; ☑ tours 10.30am, 12.30pm & 3.30pm Mar-Oct), where tours venture deep into the bowels of the old 'Edge' and 'Kimberley' mines (a tour into the 'Cathedral' mine runs on Friday by request, but you'll need eight people).

Honister's latest attraction is the UK's first **Via Ferrata** (Iron Way; adult/under 16yr/16-18yr £19.50/9.50/15). Modelled on the century-old routes across the Italian Dolomites, this vertiginous clamber follows the cliff trail once used by the Honister slate miners, using a system of fixed ropes and iron ladders. It's exhilarating and great fun, but unsurprisingly you'll need a head for heights.

**Black Sail YHA** (☎ 07711-108450; www.yha.org.uk; Ennerdale, Cleator; dm £14; ☑ Easter-Oct) This gloriously isolated shepherd's bothy is the place to

escape the madding crowd. It's only accessible on foot 2.5 miles west of Honister Pass, and the facilities are scarily spartan: the hostel's solar-powered, there's no electricity in the kitchen, and only a very basic shower-loo – but the mountain setting is unforgettable. Bring a torch...

**Honister House YHA** (☎ 0845 371 9522; www.yha.org.uk; Seatoller; dm from £14; ☑ Easter-Oct, weekends Nov) Next to Honister, these former quarry-workers' lodgings have been turned into another bare-bones walkers' hostel, with functional cooking facilities and a lounge that doubles as a drying room (expect stinky socks).

## Buttermere

From the high point of Honister, the road drops sharply into the deep bowl of Buttermere, skirting the lakeshore to Buttermere village, 4 miles from Honister and 9 miles from Keswick. From here, the B5289 cuts past Crummock Water (once joined with its neighbour) before exiting the valley's northern edge.

Buttermere marks the start of Alfred Wainwright's all-time favourite circuit: up **Red Pike** (755m), and along **High Stile**, **High Crag** and **Haystacks** (597m). In fact, the great man liked it so much he decided to stay here for good: after his death in 1991, his ashes were scattered across the top of Haystacks as requested in his will.

Buttermere has limited accommodation. Walkers bunk down at the **Buttermere YHA** (☎ 0845 371 9508; www.yha.org.uk; dm £17.50), a slate-stone house above Buttermere Lake, while those looking for more luxury try the upmarket **Bridge Hotel** (☎ 017687-70252; www.bridge-hotel.com; r incl dinner £148-210; ☑) or the historic Fish Hotel (see opposite).

## Getting There & Away

Bus 79 (the Borrowdale Rambler) runs hourly (eight times on Sunday) between Keswick and Seatoller, while the 77/77A (Honister Rambler) makes the round trip from Keswick to Buttermere via Borrowdale and Honister Pass four times daily March to November. For day tickets, see p704.

## ULLSWATER & AROUND

☎ 017684

Second only to Windermere in terms of stature, stately Ullswater, in the east of the Lake District, stretches for 7.5 miles between Pooley

## THE MAID OF BUTTERMERE

The **Fish Hotel** (☎ 017687-70253; www.fish-hotel.co.uk; 2-night minimum stay d £190; (P)) in Buttermere is famous as the home of the legendary beauty Mary Robinson, the so-called 'Maid of Buttermere'. A visiting hiker named Joseph Palmer spied this 15-year-old glamour puss during a stopover in 1792; he later wrote about her in his book *A Fortnight's Ramble in the Lake District*, and soon visitors were trekking from across the Lakes to see if Mary's beauty lived up to its reputation. Wordsworth was suitably impressed, devoting several lines to her in *The Prelude*, although the rakish Coleridge was apparently rather underwhelmed.

Mary later became doubly notorious for being duped by the unscrupulous conman John Hatfield, who passed himself off as an army colonel and MP in order to win her hand; within a year Hatfield had been exposed as a bankrupt and a bigamist, arrested by the Bow Street Runners in Swansea, and sentenced to death by hanging. Despite her terribly public embarrassment, Mary soldiered on and married again, this time to a more reliable type from Caldbeck; together they ran the inn until Mary's death in 1837. The local author Melvyn Bragg relates the tale in his novel *The Maid Of Buttermere*.

Bridge, and Glenridding and Patterdale in the south. Carved out by a long-extinct glacier, the deep valley in which the lake sits is flanked by an impressive string of fells, most notably the razor ridge of Helvellyn (p732), Cumbria's third-highest mountain. Historic steamers have sputtered around the lake since 1859, and there are lovely woods and gardens to explore nearby if the summer crowds are too much.

## Pooley Bridge

elevation 301m

Sitting along a pebble-strewn shore at the northern corner of Ullswater, the pocket-sized village of Pooley Bridge makes a useful base, with a couple of country pubs and a village shop where you can stock up on supplies.

**Ullswater 'Steamers'** (☎ 017684-82229; www.ullswater-steamers.co.uk) set out from the Pooley Bridge jetty for the southern reaches of the lake, stopping at Howtown and Glenridding before looping back to Pooley Bridge. The company's two oldest vessels have worked on Ullswater for over a century: *Lady of the Lake* was launched in 1887, followed by *Raven* in 1889. These two grand old girls have been joined by a couple of younger fillies: the *Lady Dorothy* (transported from Guernsey in 2001) and the *Totnes Castle* (launched in 2007, and rechristened the *Lady Wakefield*).

Up to 12 daily ferries run in summer, dropping to three in winter. Current returns from Pooley Bridge are £4.80 to Howtown, or £11.30 to Glenridding and back. Children travel half price.

Campers are spoilt for choice. **Hillcroft Park** (☎ 017684-486363; Roe Head Lane; sites £11-20) is closest to the village, while **Park Foot** (☎ 86309; www.parkfootullswater.co.uk; Howtown Rd; sites incl 2 adults, tent & car £12-24) has the best facilities (including tennis courts, bike hire and pony trekking).

Break out the lederhosen, the weird **Pooley Bridge Inn** (☎ 017684-86215; www.pooleybridgeinn.co.uk; d £75-100; (P)) looks like it's upped sticks from the Alsatian Alps and set up shop in Pooley Bridge. Hanging baskets, cartwheels and wooden balconies decorate the exterior, and inside you'll find dinky rooms heavy on the florals and oak beams. The stable restaurant is worth a look for baked trout and solid sausage-and-mash.

You'll need deep pockets to stay at **Sharrow Bay Country House Hotel** (☎ 017684-86301; www.sharrowbay.co.uk; d £185-400; (P) (wi-fi)), but if you can afford it you'll be treated to the last word in luxury: 5 hectares of woods and lakeside gardens; king-sized rooms crammed with antiques, chaise-longues, canopied beds and gilded mirrors; and a Michelin-rated restaurant worthy of a French chateau.

For something less lavish, there's always the homely **Sun Inn** (☎ 486205; mains £5-12) with the usual range of ales and a beautiful beer garden.

## Glenridding & Patterdale

elevation 253m

Seven miles south as the crow flies from Pooley Bridge are the neighbouring villages of Patterdale and Glenridding, the favoured starting point for the challenging ascent of Helvellyn (p732). If your legs won't stretch

### THE HIKE TO HELVELLYN

Alongside Scafell Pike, the hike up **Helvellyn** (950m) is the most famous (and challenging) Lake District trail. Wainwright adored it, and Helvellyn exercised a peculiarly powerful hold over William Wordsworth: the mountain crops up frequently in his work, and he continued to climb the mountain well into his seventies. One of the most famous portraits of the poet, completed by the painter Benjamin Haydon in 1842, depicts Wordsworth deep in thought with Helvellyn as a broodingly Romantic backdrop.

The classic route up Helvellyn is the gravity-defying ridge scramble along **Striding Edge**, a challenging route for even experienced walkers, with dizzying drops to either side and a fair amount of hand-and-knee scrambling (don't consider it if you're even slightly wary of heights). Beyond the summit and its glorious 360-degree views, the usual descent is via **Swirral Edge** and **Red Tarn**. Count on at least 7 miles and six hours on the mountain, and, as usual, come suitably prepared unless you fancy coming down in the rescue chopper.

to the main event, you can tackle lower-level trails nearby: the easy amble to **Lanty's Tarn** starts just south of Glenridding, while the popular walks up to **High Force** and **Aira Force** start in the wooded surroundings of **Gowbarrow Park**, 3 miles north.

The **Ullswater Information Centre** (☎ 017684-82414; ullswater@lake-district.gov.uk; Becks car park; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Apr-Oct) details local hikes, hotels and events.

The high-altitude **Helvellyn YHA** (☎ 0845 371 9742; www.yha.org.uk; Greenside; dm £12; ☎ Easter-Oct, phone ahead at other times) is perched 274m above Glenridding along a mountain track, and is mainly used by Helvellyn hikers; guided walks can be arranged through the hostel staff.

Cream walls and pinewood beds grace the smallest rooms at **Mossrag** (☎ 017684-82500; www.mossrag.co.uk; Glenridding; s £42.50-47.50, d £64-80; (P) B&B, but you'll have to pay extra for an en suite).

Apart from the Glenridding Hotel (now owned by Best Western), **Inn on the Lake** (☎ 017684-82444; www.innonthelakeullswater.co.uk; d £128-184; (P) ☎) is the only passable hotel in the village. It feels corporate, but as long as you can look past the generic decor, you'll be treated to top-notch facilities: Jacuzzi baths, tennis courts, sauna and gym, plus a choice of mountain or lake views from the rooms.

**Traveller's Rest** (☎ 017684-82298; mains £5.50-15) is a typically friendly Cumbrian pub with fire-lit lounges, a lovely fell-view patio and a hearty bar menu. Hungry hikers come from miles around for the 'Traveller's Mixed Grill' (£14.70) of rump steak, lamb chop, gammon, black pudding and Cumberland sausage, all crowned with a fried egg.

### Getting There & Around

Bus 108 runs from Penrith to Patterdale via Pooley Bridge and Glenridding (six Monday to Friday, five on Saturday, four on Sunday). The 517 (Kirkstone Rambler; three daily July and August, otherwise weekends only) travels over the Kirkstone Pass from Bowness and Troutbeck, stopping at Glenridding and Patterdale.

The **Ullswater Bus-and-Boat** ticket (£13.60) combines a day's travel on the 108 with a return tip on an Ullswater Steamer.

## CUMBRIAN COAST

While the central lakes and fells pull in a never-ending stream of visitors, surprisingly few ever make the trek west to explore Cumbria's coastline. And that's a shame: while it might not compare to the wild grandeur of Northumberland or the rugged splendour of Scotland's shores, Cumbria's coast is well worth exploring, with a cluster of sandy bays and a gaggle of seaside towns including the old port of Whitehaven, the Edwardian resort of Grange-over-Sands and the Roman harbour at Ravenglass, starting point for the La'al Ratty steam railway. Less attractive is the nuclear plant of Sellafeld, still stirring up controversy some 50 years after its construction.

### Getting Around

The Cumbrian Coast railway line loops 120 miles from Lancaster to Carlisle, stopping at the coastal resorts of Grange, Ulverston, Ravenglass, Whitehaven and Workington.



## THE MORECAMBE BAY CROSSING

Before the coming of the railway, the sandy expanse of **Morecambe Bay** provided the quickest route into the Lake District from the south of England. The traditional crossing is made from Arnside on the eastern side of the bay over to Kent Bank in the west, but it's always been a risky journey. Morecambe Bay is notorious for its fast-rising tide and treacherous sands; even experienced locals have been known to lose carts, horses and tractors, and there have been numerous strandings, most recently in 2004, when 18 Chinese cockle pickers were caught by the tide and drowned (an incident that inspired Nick Broomfield's 2006 film *Ghosts*).

It's possible to walk across the flats at low tide, but only in the company of the official **Queen's Guide**, a role established in 1536. Cedric Robinson, a local fisherman, is the 25th official Queen's Guide, and leads walks across the sands throughout the year. You'll need to register a fortnight in advance; ask at the Grange tourist office for details of the next crossing. The 8-mile crossing takes around 3½ hours. You get back to your start point by train on the Cumbria Coast Line.

Find out more about this unique waterway at [www.morecambebay.org.uk](http://www.morecambebay.org.uk).

## GRANGE-OVER-SANDS

pop 4098

Teashops, manicured gardens and Victorian villas line the winding streets of Grange, which established itself as a seaside getaway for Edwardian day-trippers following the 19th-century arrival of the railway. The town's heyday has long since faded, but as long as you don't mind your sea air stiff and bracing, Grange makes a fine spot to sample the peculiar charms of the English seaside, stroll the elegant seafront and drink in the sweeping views over Morecambe Bay.

### Information

**Library** (☎ 015395-32749; Grange Fell Rd; ☏ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-12.30pm Sat)

**Post office** (☎ 015395-34713; Main St; ☏ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 12.30pm Sat)

**Tourist office** (☎ 015395-34026; [grangetic@southlakeland.gov.uk](mailto:grangetic@southlakeland.gov.uk); Victoria Hall, Main St; ☏ 10am-5pm Easter-Oct)

### Sleeping & Eating

**Lymehurst Hotel** (☎ 015395-33076; [www.lymehurst.co.uk](http://www.lymehurst.co.uk); Kents Bank Rd; s £35-38, d £76-90; (P)) Splendid guesthouse harking back to Grange's good old days. The rooms are mostly modern, with light colours, contemporary furniture and white bed linen, although the top-of-the-range Premier room is more Victorian in style. Breakfast is a wonder, prepared by renowned chef Kevin Wyper, who also oversees things at the Limestone Restaurant.

**Thornfield House** (☎ 015395-32512; [www.grangeguesthouse.co.uk](http://www.grangeguesthouse.co.uk); Kents Bank Rd; d £58-70; (P)) Nothing ground-breaking, but if you're happy with rooms in lemon yellows and peachy pas-

tels, plus a decent fry-up for breakfast, then you'll be comfy enough. On-site parking is a bonus.

**Graythwaite Manor** (☎ 015395-32001; [www.graythwaitemanor.co.uk](http://www.graythwaitemanor.co.uk); Ferhill Rd; s/d £126/139; (P)) A chimney-topped pile brimming with polished wood panels, leather armchairs, ticking grandfather clocks and antique knick-knacks. Rooms are stately and stuffy: expect huge beds topped with flowery quilts, and latticed windows overlooking trimmed lawns.

**Hazelmere Cafe** (☎ 015395-32972; 1-2 Yewbarrow Tce; sandwiches £4-6, mains £6-10; ☏ 10am-5pm summer, to 4.30pm winter) This delightful cafe doubles as the town's top bakery, and offers Cumbrian delicacies such as potted Morecambe Bay shrimps, rabbit pie and crumbly cheese toasties.

### Getting There & Away

Both the train station and bus stop are downhill from the tourist office.

Bus X35 from Kendal stops at Grange (30 minutes, hourly) on its way to Ulverston (one hour).

Grange is on the Cumbrian Coast Line, with frequent connections to Lancaster (30 minutes, hourly) and Carlisle (£24.50, 1½ hours, hourly).

## AROUND GRANGE

### Cartmel

pop 1798

Tucked away in the countryside above Grange, tiny Cartmel is known for three things: its 12th-century priory, its miniature racecourse and its world-famous sticky toffee pudding, on sale at the **Cartmel Village**

## LIVING THE GOOD LIFE

**Howbarrow Organic Farm** (☎ 015395-36330; www.howbarroworganic.co.uk; d £57.50; ☒ farm shop 10am-5pm Wed-Sat; ☐) If you've ever fantasised about growing your own, you'll want to pick up tips at this wonderful 100% organic farm outside Cartmel. The farm shop is stocked with organic goodies straight from the fields; self-caterers can pick up a Howbarrow vegetable box, or choose from damson jams, marmalades, fruit and fair-trade choccies. If you fancy staying, there are two simple but sweet farmhouse rooms (with a shared bathroom).

**Shop** (☎ 015395-36201; www.stickytoffeepudding.co.uk; The Square; ☒ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 10am-4.30pm Sun).

The heart of the village is the medieval market square, from where a winding lane leads to **Cartmel Priory** (☎ 015395-36261; ☒ 9am-5.30pm May-Oct, to 3.30pm Nov-Apr), one of the few priories to escape demolition during the dissolution. Light pours in through the 15th-century **east window**, illuminating the tombs set into the flagstoned floor; note the memento mori of skulls and hourglasses, intended to remind the pious of their own inescapable mortality.

## SLEEPING &amp; EATING

**Prior's Yeat** (☎ 015395-35178; priorsyeat@hotmail.com; Aynsome Rd; s/d £32/64; ☐) Cartmel's B&Bs are on the flouncy side, but the three rooms at this redbrick Edwardian house are smarter than most. One's sky blue with twin beds, the other two are doubles with flower prints and pine. Vegie options are available for breakfast, and the owners will make packed lunches if you ask the day before.

**Cavendish Arms** (☎ 015395-36240; www.thecavendisharms.co.uk; mains £10-15) The pick of Cartmel's pubs, a venerable coaching inn plonked on the village square. The 10 rooms (doubles £60) are plainly furnished, but full of atmosphere, and the bar menu is crammed with lip-smacking mains such as venison steak and roast guinea fowl.

**L'Enclume** (☎ 015395-36362; www.lendume.co.uk; Cavendish St; lunch 2/3 courses £18/25, dinner menu £65; ☒ lunch Thu-Sun, dinner Tue-Sun) Gird your gastronomic loins – this Michelin-starred wonder is an assault on your senses. The foodie critics have gone ga-ga for its boundary-pushing cooking, dreamt up by one of the nation's

most adventurous chefs, Simon Rogan, but you might need an interpreter to make sense of the menu (unless you're already au fait with egg drop hot and sour soup or eel-veal ragout). Rooms (£98 to £188) are surprisingly understated, mostly in cool whites and beiges, mixed up with the odd Toile de Jouy fabric or wet-room bathroom.

## GETTING THERE &amp; AWAY

Bus 530/532 travels from Cartmel to Grange (40 minutes) 10 to 12 times from Monday to Saturday.

## Holker Hall &amp; Lakeland Motor Museum

Arguably the finest stately home in Cumbria, **Holker Hall** (☎ 015395-58328; www.holker-hall.co.uk; admission house & grounds £8.80, grounds only £5.70; ☒ house 10.30am-4.30pm Sun-Fri, grounds 10am-6pm Mar-Oct) has been the family seat of the Cavendish family for nigh on 400 years. Though parts of Holker Hall date from the 16th century, the house was almost entirely rebuilt following a devastating fire in 1871. It's a typically ostentatious Victorian affair, covered with mullioned windows, gables and copper-topped turrets, and filled with historic portraits, wood-panelled rooms and an elaborate central staircase. But Holker's real attraction is its wonderful grounds, stretching for 10 hectares and encompassing a rose garden, woodland, ornamental fountains and a 72ft-high lime tree.

The **Lakeland Motor Museum** (☎ 015395-58509; adult/6-15yr £7/4.50; ☒ 10.30am-4.45pm), inside the old stables, contains a collection of classic cars (from Jaguars to Bentleys) and a replica of Donald Campbell's boat, *Bluebird*. There's also a fantastic **food hall** (☎ 015395-59084) stocking Lakeland produce.

## ULVERSTON

pop 11,670

It's not the prettiest town in Cumbria, but at least Ulverston has an excuse for its workmanlike appearance – the town was once an important industrial centre for leather, copper and iron ore. Ulverston makes a cheap, quiet base for exploring the surrounding coastline, especially for those setting out for the long-distance Cumbria Way (p702), which has its official starting point in the town.

## Information

**Library** (☎ 01229-894151; Kings Rd; per 30 min £1) Internet access.

**Tourist office** (☎ 01229-587120; ulverstontic@southlakeland.gov.uk; County Sq; ☹ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat)

**Ulverston Online** (www.ulverston.net) Town website.

## Sights

Silent film fans will already know Ulverston's main claim to fame: Stan Laurel, the spindlier half of Laurel and Hardy, was born here in 1890. The **Laurel & Hardy Museum** (☎ 01229-582292; www.laurel-and-hardy.co.uk; 4c Upper Brook St; adult/child £3/2; ☹ 10am-4.30pm Feb-Dec) was founded by an avid Laurel & Hardy collector in 1983, and now houses floor-to-ceiling memorabilia relating to the bumbling duo, and a little cinema where you can view some slapstick flicks. At the time of writing there were plans to relocate the museum; check the website for info.

The tower on **Hoad Hill** commemorates Ulverston's other famous son, the explorer, author and Secretary to the Admiralty Sir John Barrow (1764-1848). It's usually open on summer weekends.

Ulverston's lively **market** fills the town's streets every Thursday, with a smaller market on Saturday and a local **food fair** every third Saturday of the month.

## Sleeping

**Walkers Hostel** (☎ 01229-585588; www.walkershostel.co.uk; Oubas Hill; dm £20) New owners are in charge, but this friendly townhouse hostel remains a hikers' haven, run on ecofriendly lines with clean dorms, a good sized kitchen and corridor bathrooms. The hostel's 10 minutes' walk from town on the A590 to Kendal.

**St Mary's Mount Manor House** (☎ 01229-849005; www.stmarysmount.co.uk; Belmont; s £35, d £45-75; (P)) Brass beds, half-tester canopies and original fireplaces distinguish this slate-roofed manor house on the hill above town.

**Lonsdale House Hotel** (☎ 01229-581260; www.lonsdalehousehotel.co.uk; 11 Daltongate; r £85-110; (P)) Georgian townhouse with 20 bright rooms furnished in checks and rosy drapes. Top rooms have four-poster beds and Jacuzzis, and the quietest ones overlook the lovely back garden, enclosed by a Gothic wall.

**Bay Horse Hotel** (☎ 01229-583972; www.thebayhorsehotel.co.uk Canal Foot; d £85-120; (P) (W) wi-fi) Our top Ulverston tip is this riverside restaurant-with-rooms, beautifully positioned beside the Levens estuary (follow signs to Canal Foot from the A590). There's a choice of garden or river-view rooms, and the restaurant is

known for its upmarket nosh: venison, ostrich and saltmarsh lamb shank.

## Eating & Drinking

**Hot Mango** (☎ 01229-584866; 27 King St; lunch £5-8; ☹ lunch Tue-Sat) Lively bistro-café with zesty lunchtime mains – try a saddleback pork burger or a Mediterranean sea-bass fillet, accompanied by homemade salsa and hand-cut chips.

**Farmer's Arms** (☎ 01229-584469; 3 Market Place; mains £6-14) Ulverston's best pub is on the market square. The trappings are traditional (white-washed frontage, wood beams, beer-stocked bar), but the menu's bold, encompassing Greek meze, Morecambe Bay shrimps and stir-fried Cajun chicken.

**World Peace Cafe** (☎ 01229-587793; www.worldpeacecafe.org; 5 Cavendish St; mains £3-6; ☹ 10am-4.30pm Tue-Sat) If you need to knock your *chi* into shape, this holistic cafe (an offshoot of the Conishead Priory, below) is ideal. Organic lunches, fair-trade coffee and lunchtime meditation sessions make it popular with Ulverston's alternative crowd.

## Getting There & Away

Regular trains from Carlisle (£27.50, two hours) and Lancaster (£6, 40 minutes) stop at Ulverston station, five minutes' walk south of the centre.

The hourly X35 travels from Ulverston via Haverthwaite, Newby Bridge, Grange and Kendal from Monday to Saturday (three times on Sunday).

## AROUND ULVERSTON

### Conishead Priory

Two miles south of Ulverston, **Conishead Priory** (☎ 01229-584029; www.manjushri.org.uk; admission free; ☹ 2-5pm weekdays, noon-5pm weekends & bank holidays Easter-Oct, 2-4pm Nov-Easter) is one of the UK's main Manjushri Buddhist Centres, and the site of Europe's only Kadampa Temple. There are weekend tours at 2.15pm and 3.30pm, and meditation retreats are available if you're bitten by the Buddhist bug.

### Furness Abbey

Eight and a half miles southwest of Ulverston, the rosy ruins of **Furness Abbey** (EH; ☎ 823420; admission £3.40; ☹ 10am-6pm Apr-Sep, to 5pm Oct, to 4pm Wed-Sun Nov-Mar) are all that remains of one of northern England's most powerful monasteries. Founded in the 12th century, the abbey's

lands and properties once stretched across southern Cumbria and the Lakes, but like many of England's monasteries, it met an ignominious end in 1537 during the dissolution. You can still make out the abbey's basic footprint; various arches, windows and the north and south transept walls are still standing, alongside the remains of the abbey bell tower. An informative audio guide is included in the admission price.

Several buses, including the hourly X35 from Ulverston, stop nearby.

## RAVENGLASS & AROUND

Halfway along the coast road toward Whitehaven is Ravenglass, a tiny seaside port established by the Romans in the 4th century (you can see the remains of a Roman bathhouse half a mile from the train station). Ravenglass is also the start of the steam enthusiast's dream come true, the **Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway** (☎ 01229-717171; www.ravenglass-railway.co.uk), built in 1875 to ferry iron ore from the Eskdale mines to the coast. Affectionately known as La'al Ratty, the pocket-sized choo-choos chug for 7 miles into Eskdale and the Lake District foothills, terminating at Dalegarth Station, near Boot (p723). There are up to 17 trips daily in summer, dropping to two in winter; single fares are adult/five to 15 years £6/3, or day tickets cost £10.20/5.10.

There's an interesting **museum** exploring the railway's history, and you can find good pub grub at the sepia-tinted **Ratty Arms** (☎ 01229-717676; mains £8-15), covered with railway memorabilia and black-and-white photos plucked from the railway's heyday.

A mile south of Ravenglass is **Muncaster Castle** (☎ 01229-717614; www.muncaster.co.uk; adult/5-15yr incl owl centre, gardens & maze £7.50/5.50, castle extra £2.50/1.50; ☎ gardens 10.30am-6pm/dusk, castle noon-4.30pm Sun-Fri Feb-Nov), built around a 14th-century *pele* tower, and home to the Pennington family for the last seven centuries. Highlights include the dining room, great hall and an extraordinary octagonal library, but the house is most renowned for its spooks – countless spectres stalk the castle's corridors, including a malevolent jester known as Tom Fool (you can arrange for your own overnight 'ghost sit' for £405 to £475). The castle's gardens contain an ornamental maze and an owl centre.

North of Ravenglass, the coast sweeps past the gloomy chimney stacks of **Sellafield**, Britain's largest nuclear reprocessing plant, to-

wards **St Bees Head**, site of an RSPB bird reserve and official starting point for Wainwright's C2C route, which ends 190 miles east at Robin Hood's Bay (p649).

Ravenglass is on the Cumbrian Coast Line, with frequent links north and south. Bus 6 from Whitehaven stops at Ravenglass and terminates at Muncaster (70 minutes, five daily). Bus X6 travels the same route on Sunday (four daily).

## WHITEHAVEN

pop 23,795

During the 18th century the pretty port of Whitehaven was the third largest in England, with a fortune founded on the lucrative trade in coal, iron and slaves. These days it's a sleepy pleasure marina, with refurbished Georgian houses and smart yachts lined up along the polished-up harbourside. The town is at its liveliest during the biennial **maritime festival**, the next on at the time of writing scheduled for 2009.

The main **tourist office** (☎ 01946-598914; tic@copelandbc.gov.uk; Market Pl; ☎ 9.30am-5pm Mon-Sat Apr-Oct, 10am-4.30pm Nov-Mar) is in Market Hall in the town centre.

Whitehaven's most notorious incident occurred during the American War of Independence, when the town was attacked by the American naval commander John Paul Jones (actually a Scot, born in Arbigland in 1747). Jones convinced his reluctant crew to mount a daring night raid on Whitehaven, hoping to strike a fearsome blow against one of Britain's key ports. Unfortunately, strong winds and tides, coupled with a shortage of ammunition, a semi-mutinuous crew and the troublesome distractions of Whitehaven's taverns, meant the raid was a total flop; of the 200-odd ships stationed in Whitehaven's harbour, Jones sank just a single lowly coal barge.

You can find out more about Jones' bungled raid at the **Beacon** (☎ 01946-592302; www.thebeacon-whitehaven.co.uk; West Strand; adult/under 16yr £5/free; ☎ 10am-4.30pm Tue-Sun), fresh from a £2.2 million refit, with lots of displays on local history, smuggling and the sugar, rum and slave trades.

**Rum Story** (☎ 01946-592933; www.rumstory.co.uk; Lowther St; adult/child £5.45/3.45; ☎ 10am-4.30pm) explores Whitehaven's rum-running history using waxwork models. It's fun, if slightly tacky – look out for an 18th-century sugar

workshop, a debauched 'punch tavern' and a weird exhibit showing Nelson's body being pickled in brandy following the Battle of Trafalgar.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Glenfield** (☎ 01946-691911; www.glenfield-whitehaven.co.uk; Back Corkickle; s £35, d £55-65; (P)) In the middle of Whitehaven's conservation area, the six rooms of this trad-brick B&B ooze Victorian atmosphere. Our favourites are maritime St Bees, with power shower and town views, and Corkickle, with period fireplace, DVD player and bay window.

**Georgian House Hotel** (☎ 01946-696611; 9-11 Church St; www.thegeorgianhousehotel.net; s £79, d £89-99; (P) (wi-fi)) Georgian by name, Georgian by nature, this converted merchant's house offers elegant hotel accommodation, decked out in shipshape fashion with wooden bedsteads, designer-print wallpapers and flat-screen TVs.

**Moresby Hall** (☎ 01946-696317; www.moresbyhall.co.uk; Moresby; s £80-100, d £100-140; (P)) For aristocratic atmosphere, head 2 miles north along the A595 to this stunning manor house, Grade I-listed and overflowing with historic curiosities. A lavish oak staircase leads to traditionally styled B&B rooms, all with huge beds, hydromassage showers and Gilchrist & Soames bath stuffs; 'De Asby' and 'Copeland' have four-posters and views across walled grounds.

**Zest** (☎ 01946-66981; 8 West Strand; mains £8-12) (☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Fresh harbourside brasserie with a nice line in lunchtime wraps, panini and salads.

For more complicated British cooking, head to its sister establishment on **Low Rd** (☎ 01946-692848; mains £14-20; ☎ dinner Wed-Sat).

### Getting There & Away

Whitehaven is on the Cumbrian Coast Line with hourly trains in each direction. Bus 6/X6 travels to Ravenglass (one hour, four daily).

## NORTHERN CUMBRIA

Many visitors speed through the northern and eastern reaches of Cumbria in a headlong dash for the Lake District, but this is an area that's worth exploring – a bleakly beautiful landscape of isolated farms, barren

heaths and solid hilltop towns, cut through by the Roman barrier of Hadrian's Wall.

### CARLISLE

pop 69,527

Precariously perched on the tempestuous border between England and Scotland, in the area once ominously dubbed the 'Debatable Lands', Carlisle is a city with a notoriously stormy past. Sacked by the Vikings, pillaged by the Scots, and plundered by the Border Reivers, Carlisle has stood in the frontline of England's defences for the last 1000 years. The battlements and keeps of the stout medieval castle still stand watch, built from the same rosy red sandstone as the city's cathedral and terraced houses; but Cumbria's only city is a more peaceful place these days, with a buzzy student population that keeps this old city young at heart.

### History

A Celtic camp (or *caer*) provided an early military station for the Romans, and Carlisle became the northwest's main administrative centre following the construction of Hadrian's Wall. After centuries of intermittent conflict between Picts, Saxons and Viking raiders, the Normans seized Carlisle from the Scots in 1092.

The English developed Carlisle as a military stronghold throughout the Middle Ages, enlarging the walls, citadels and the great gates, and the city became an important strategic base for Royalist forces during the Civil War.

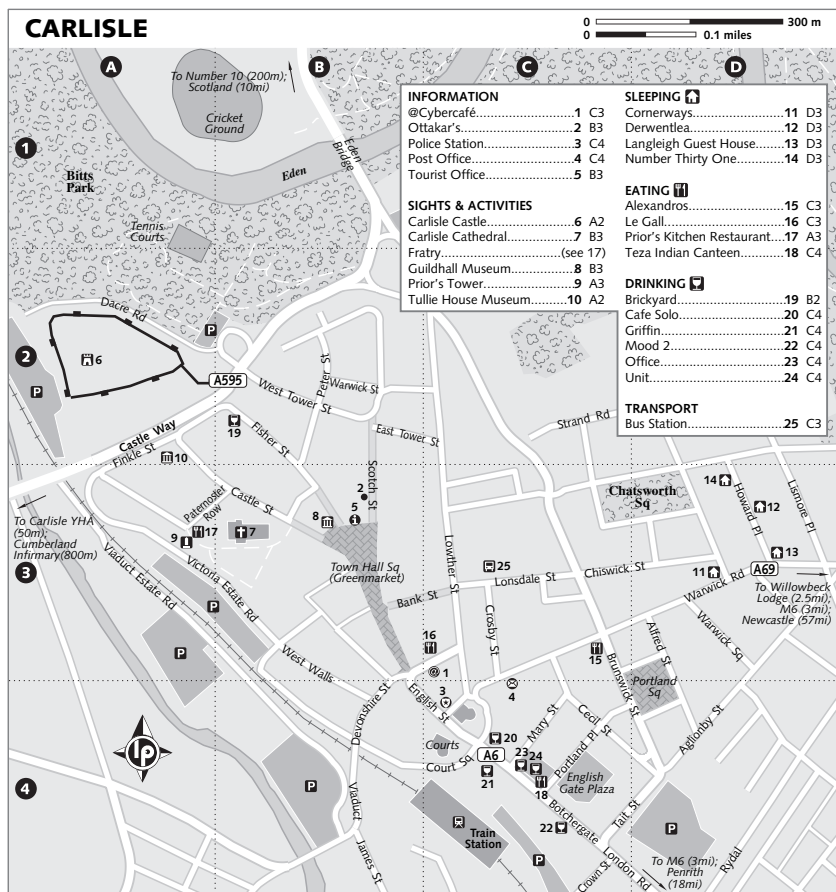
Peace came to the city with the Restoration, and the city developed as an industrial centre for cotton and textiles after the arrival of the railway in the mid 19th century.

### Orientation

From the M6, the main routes into town are London Rd and Warwick Rd. The train station is south of the city centre, a 10-minute walk from Town Hall Sq (also known as Greenmarket) and the tourist office. The bus station is on Lonsdale St, about 250m east. Most of the town's B&Bs are dotted along Victoria Pl and Warwick Rd.

### Information

@**Cybercafe** (☎ 01228-512308; www.atcybercafe.co.uk; 8-10 Devonshire St; ☎ 10am-10pm Mon-Sat, 1-10pm Sun; per hr £3)



**Cumberland Infirmary** (☎ 01228-523444; Newtown Rd) Half a mile west of the city centre.

**Ottakar's** (☎ 01228-542300; 66 Scotch St; 9am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-4pm Sun) Large chain bookshop stocking new titles and local books.

**Police station** (☎ 0845 33 00 247; English St; 8am-midnight)

**Post office** (20-34 Warwick Rd)

**Tourist office** (☎ 01228-625600; www.historic-carlisle.org.uk; Greenmarket; per 15min £1; ☎ 9.30am-5pm Mon-Sat, 10.30am-4pm Sun) Offers internet access.

## Sights & Activities

### CARLISLE CASTLE

The brooding, rust-red **Carlisle Castle** (☎ 01228-591922; adult/child £4.50/2.30; ☎ 9.30am-5pm Apr-Sep, 10am-4pm Oct-Mar) was founded around a Celtic

and Roman stronghold, with a Norman keep added in 1092 by William Rufus, and later enlargements (which included the supposedly cannon-proof towers) added by Henry VIII. The castle has witnessed some dramatic events over the centuries: Mary Queen of Scots was imprisoned here in 1568, and the castle was the site of a notorious eight-month siege during the English Civil War, when the Royalist garrison survived by eating rats, mice and the castle dogs before finally surrendering in 1645. Look out for the 'licking stones' in the dungeon, which Jacobite prisoners supposedly lapped for moisture.

Admission includes entry to the Kings Own Royal Border Regiment Museum, which explores the history of Cumbria's

Infantry Regiment. There are guided tours from April to September.

### CARLISLE CATHEDRAL

Carlisle's scarlet **cathedral** (☎ 01228-548151; www.carlislecathedral.org.uk; 7 The Abbey; donation £2; ☎ 7.30am-6.15pm Mon-Sat, to 5pm Sun) was founded as a priory church in 1122. During the 1644-45 siege by Parliamentary troops, two-thirds of the nave was torn down to repair the city walls. Serious restoration didn't begin until 1853, but a surprising amount survives, including the 14th-century east window and part of the Norman nave. Other features include the 15th-century misericords, the lovely Brougham Triptych and some ornate choir carvings.

Surrounding the cathedral are other priory relics, including the 16th-century Fraternity (see Prior's Kitchen Restaurant, p740) and the **Prior's Tower**.

### TULLIE HOUSE MUSEUM

Carlisle's main **museum** (☎ 01228-534781; Castle St; www.tulliehouse.co.uk; adult/under 18yr £5.20/free; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, 11am-5pm Sun July-Aug, 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, noon-5pm Sun Apr-June & Sep-Oct, 10am-4pm Mon-Sat, noon-4pm Sun Nov-Mar) is a treat for history buffs, with exhibits exploring the foundation of the city, life under Roman rule and the development of modern Carlisle. The museum has a strong archaeology collection, including a Bronze Age spear-mould, Roman tablets collected from Hadrian's Wall, and artefacts recovered from Viking burial sites in nearby Ormside and Heskett.

### GUILDHALL MUSEUM

This tiny **museum** (☎ 01228-532781; Greenmarket; admission free; ☎ noon-4.30pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct) is housed in a wonky 15th-century townhouse built for Carlisle's trade guilds. Among the modest exhibits are a ceremonial mace, the city's stocks and a section of exposed wall showing the building's wattle-and-daub construction.

### Tours

**Open Book Visitor Guiding** (☎ 01228-670578; www.greatguidedtours.co.uk) offers tours of Carlisle and the surrounding area from April to September, including visits to Carlisle Castle and Hadrian's Wall. Tours leave from the tourist office.

## Sleeping

### BUDGET

**Carlisle YHA** (☎ 0870 770 5752; www.yha.org.uk; Bridge Lane; dm £21; ☎ Jul-Sep) Lodgings at the old Theakston brewery now provide student digs for Carlisle University; rooms are usually available during the summer hols. It's just west of the centre.

### MIDRANGE & TOP END

**Cornerways** (☎ 01228-521733; www.cornerwaysguesthouse.co.uk; 107 Warwick Rd; s £30-35, d £55-65; (P) (Q) wi-fi) In the heart of Carlisle's conservation district, this cheery corner guesthouse offers reliable B&B rooms (not all are en suite). Period touches (including a tiled Victorian hallway) keep it a cut above Carlisle's bog-standard B&Bs.

**Langleigh Guest House** (☎ 01228-530440; www.langleighhouse.co.uk; 6 Howard Pl; s/d £35/70; (P)) Gilded mirrors, armchairs and porcelain knick-knacks cover every inch of this terrific-value guesthouse. All rooms are decorated in well-to-do Edwardian fashion – think brass bedside lamps, marble fireplaces and watercolour prints.

**Derwentlea** (☎ 01228-409706; www.derwentlea.co.uk; 14 Howard Pl; s/d £35/70; (P)) Red leather armchairs and ticking mantle clocks set the period vibe at this small, trad-brick B&B. Big, soft beds, full-length mirrors and dressing tables distinguish the smartest rooms, and there's a ground-floor room for mobility-restricted guests. Storage is available for bikes.

**Number Thirty One** (☎ 01228-597080; www.number31.freesevvers.com; 31 Howard Pl; s/d from £65/95; (P)) Dig out the glad rags – Number 31 oozes opulence from every nook and cranny. The three colour-coded rooms all have keynote decor: Blue is classically old-fashioned with polished wooden bed frame and upmarket wallpaper; Yellow is cosily countrified, with flower-print quilt and half-tester bed; Red has a touch of Zen sophistication thanks to its Japanese-print bedspread and decorative dragon headboard.

**Willowbeck Lodge** (☎ 01228-513607; www.willowbeck-lodge.com; Lambley Bank, Scotby; d £100-120; (P) (Q) wi-fi) The architects have gone doolally at this palatial B&B, 3 miles east of the city centre. It's a modernist marvel, boasting six deluxe rooms furnished in creams and taupes, with luxury spoils including corner tubs, broadband and LCD TVs. The centrepiece is the 7m-high gabled lounge, which overlooks

a private pond frequented by kingfishers and herons. Fabulous.

## Eating

**Alexandros** (☎ 01228-592227; 68 Warwick Rd; meze £3-6, mains £10-16; ☺ dinner Mon-Sat) Go Greek with authentic meze, grilled kebabs and calamari at this ever-popular restaurant on Warwick Rd – just remember that smashing your plates is reserved for special occasions...

**Prior's Kitchen Restaurant** (☎ 01228-543251; Carlisle Cathedral; lunches £4-6; ☺ 9.45am-4pm Mon-Sat) Hidden in the old monk's mess hall, this cosy little cafe is always a favourite stop for jacket spuds, club sandwiches and homemade quiches – and it does a mean cream tea, too.

**Le Gall** (☎ 01228-818388; 7 Devonshire St; mains £5-12; ☺ lunch & dinner) Despite the Gallic name, this town-centre bistro brims with world flavours. Italian panini and pastas, Mexican wraps and Cumbrian standards fill the specials board.

**ourpick Teza Indian Canteen** (☎ 01228-525111; 4a English Gate Plaza; mains £8-14; ☺ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Wave goodbye to those tired old vindaloes – this 21st-century Indian stands out from Carlisle's other curry houses like a Bollywood superstar in a crowd of extras. It shimmers with chrome, plate glass and modern art, and champions a new breed of Indian cuisine – Kerala fish curry, tiger prawns with coriander and cloves, and slow-cooked lamb in pickled ginger.

**Number 10** (☎ 01228-524183; 10 Eden Mount; mains £13-21; ☺ dinner Tue-Sat) Arguably the city's top spot, this classy Brit brasserie north of the centre takes its cue from the culinary produce it finds on its doorstep, from Thornby Moor goat's cheese to farm-bred lamb and Morecambe Bay shrimps. Tables are limited, and it gets busy.

## Drinking

Botchergate's the place for late-night action, but it gets notoriously rowdy after kicking-out time, so watch your step.

**Office** (☎ 01228-404303; Botchergate) Industrial pipes, cube lights and stripped style define this hipster hang-out, with DJs spinning break-beat, chunky house and hip-hop.

**Unit** (☎ 01228-514823; Botchergate) Another metro-style bar decked out in retro garb, with DJs and deep leather sofas to pull in Carlisle's trendy set.

**Griffin** (☎ 01228-598941; Court Sq) The pick of the town centre pubs, housed in a converted

bank. Jennings ales on tap, street tables for when the sun shines, and a half-decent Sunday roast to boot.

**Cafe Solo** (☎ 01228-631600; 1 Botchergate) Sink lattes by day, chased down with Sol beers, margaritas and late-night tapas after dark at this Balearic corner bar.

**Mood 2** (☎ 01228-520383; 70 Botchergate) Concept club fresh from a £1m refurbishment. Charty choons in the main room, hip-hop and R&B in the annexe, plus a cocktail chill-out bar when you're done shaking your booty.

**Brickyard** (☎ 01228-512220; www.brickyard.com; 14 Fisher St) Carlisle's main gig venue, housed in the former Memorial Hall.

## Getting There & Away

### BUS

Carlisle is Cumbria's main transport hub. National Express coaches travel from the bus station on Lonsdale St to London (£33, 7½ hours, three direct daily, with extra buses via Birmingham), Glasgow (£17.20, two hours, 14 daily) and Manchester (£24, 3¼ hours, seven daily).

The most useful services to the Lakes are the 600 (one hour, seven Monday to Saturday) to Cockermouth and the 554 to Keswick (70 minutes, three daily), connecting with the 555/556 LakesLink to Windermere and Ambleside.

The 104 operates to Penrith (40 minutes, hourly Monday to Saturday, nine on Sunday), and Bus AD122 (the Hadrian's Wall bus; six daily late May to late September) connects Hexham and Carlisle.

### TRAIN

Carlisle is on the London Euston (£123.50, 3¼ to 4¼ hours) to Glasgow (£43.20, 1¼ to 1½ hours) line, with hourly connections in either direction. It's also the terminus for several regional railways:

**Cumbrian Coast Line** Follows the coastline to Lancaster (£23, three to four hours).

**Lakes Line** Branches at Oxenholme near Kendal for Windermere (£19.50, one to two hours depending on connections).

**Settle-Carlisle Line** Cuts southeast across the Yorkshire Dales (£15.80, 1½ hours).

**Tyne Valley Line** Follows Hadrian's Wall to Newcastle-upon-Tyne (£12.10, 1½ hours).



## Getting Around

To book a taxi, call **Radio Taxis** (☎ 01228-527575), **Citadel Station Taxis** (☎ 01228-523971) or **County Cabs** (☎ 01228-596789).

## PENRITH

pop 14,882

Traditional butchers, greengrocers and quaint little teashops line the streets of Penrith, a stout, redbrick town which feels closer to the no-nonsense villages of the Yorkshire Dales than to the chocolate-box villages of the Central Lakes. Once the region's capital, Penrith remains a busy commercial centre for eastern Cumbria; life still revolves around the centuries-old market square, from where a tight warren of colonnaded alleyways and cobbled streets radiate out towards Beacon Fell, where warning fires were once lit to warn of impending border raids.

The **tourist office** (☎ 01768-867466; pen.tic@eden.gov.uk; Middlegate; ☏ 9.30am-5pm Mon-Sat, 1-4.45pm Sun) houses a small town museum displaying archaeological finds.

Opposite the station is the ruined 14th-century **Penrith Castle** (☏ 7.30am-9pm Easter-Oct, to 4.30pm Oct-Easter), built by William Strickland (later Bishop of Carlisle and Archbishop of Canterbury) and expanded by Richard III to resist Scottish raids, one of which razed the town in 1345.

Penrith's name derives from an old Celtic word meaning 'red fell', and the area's crimson sandstone can be seen in many town buildings, including the 18th-century **St Andrew's Church**. A legendary giant (the 'rightful king of all Cumbria') is said to be buried in the churchyard, but the stone pillars supposedly marking his grave are actually the weathered remains of Celtic crosses.

## Sleeping

**Brooklands** (☎ 01768-863395; www.brooklandsguesthouse.com; 2 Portland Pl; s £30-35, d £65-75) This top-notch Victorian guesthouse distinguished by its richly furnished rooms and thoughtful decor. Some feature huge pine four-posters and rich purples, while others go for soothing magnolias and flower prints. For the full swank-factor you'll want the fluffy-pillowed suite, with brass bedstead and wall-mounted TV.

**Brandelhow** (☎ 01768-864470; www.brandelhowguesthouse.co.uk; 1 Portland Pl; s £32.50, d & tw £65) Next door to Brooklands, there are plain, uncom-

plicated rooms at this Portland Pl staple, all in pine and neutral beige, with lots of little luxuries (minifridges, bickies, bath-robos). Tuck into a sit-down tea on arrival, topped off with a slice of Grandma's Courting Cake or Lanie's Expedition Flapjack.

**Bank House** (☎ 01768-868714; www.bankhousepenrith.co.uk; Graham St; s £38, d £68-76; ☑ wi-fi) Unpretentious Cumbrian guesthouse which does all the basics right (including a kingly breakfast of coiled Cumberland sausage and fresh-baked granary loaf). The rosy pink twin room might be too lacy for some, but the other doubles are more neutral, with DVD players and wooden bed frames.

**Hornby Hall** (☎ 01768-891114; www.hornbyhall.co.uk; Brougham; d £50-84; ☑ P) Aspiring aristocrats should head for this amber-stone manorhouse, 3 miles south of Penrith in Brougham. The five sunny rooms overlook the manicured grounds; two are reached via a Hogwart-esque spiral staircase, and breakfast is served in the 16th-century dining hall with its original stone hearth and Victorian range.

## Eating

**No 15** (☎ 01768-867453; 15 Victoria Rd; lunches £6-10; ☏ daily) Look no further for lunch in Penrith than this zingy little cafe-cum-gallery. There are 15 specials to choose from behind the counter, plus a bevy of artisan teas, cakes and sarnies, and you can check out local art and photography in the gallery annexe.

**ourpick Yanwath Gate Inn** (☎ 01768-862886; Yanwath; mains £16-19) Two miles south of town, this award-winning inn has scooped a clutch of culinary prizes for its gastro-grub. Wood panels and A-frame beams conjure a convincingly rural atmosphere, and the menu ranges the fells in search of local smoked venison, salt lamb and crispy pork belly, chased down by a delicious selection of Cumbrian cheeses.

## Getting There & Away

### BUS

The bus station is northeast of the centre, off Sandgate. Bus 104 runs between Penrith and Carlisle (45 minutes, hourly Monday to Saturday, nine on Sunday).

Bus X4/X5 (13 Monday to Saturday, six on Sunday) travels via Rheged, Keswick and Cockermouth en route to the Cumbrian Coast.

## TRAIN

Penrith has frequent connections to Carlisle (£6.70, 20 minutes, hourly) and Lancaster (£12.50, 50 to 60 minutes, hourly).

## AROUND PENRITH

Cunningly disguised as a Lakeland hill 2 miles west of Penrith, **Rheged** (☎ 01768-686000; [www.rheged.com](http://www.rheged.com); 🕒 10am-6pm) houses a large-screen IMAX cinema and an exhibition on the history and geology of Cumbria, as well as an excellent retail hall selling Cumbrian goods from handmade paper to chocolate and chutneys.

There's a revolving line-up of movies show. A new film starts hourly; one film costs £4.95/3 per adult/child, with each extra one costing £3/2.

The frequent X4/X5 bus between Penrith and Workington stops at the centre.

## ALSTON

pop 2227

Surrounded by the bleak hilltops of the Pennines, isolated Alston's main claim to fame is its elevation: at 305m above sea level, it's thought to be the highest market town in England (despite no longer having a market). It feels much closer to the stout market towns of the Pennines than the cosy rural settlements of the Lake District, and the views in all directions are sublime. It's also famous among steam enthusiasts thanks to the **South Tynedale Railway** (☎ 01434-381696, talking timetable 01434-382828; [www.strps.org.uk](http://www.strps.org.uk); adult/3-15yr return £5.50/2.50; 🕒 Apr-Oct), which puffs and clatters through the hilly country between Alston and Kirkhaugh, along a route that originally operated from 1852 to 1976. The return trip takes about an hour; there are up to five daily trains in midsummer.

Alston's **tourist office** (☎ 01434-382244; [alston.tic@eden.gov.uk](mailto:alston.tic@eden.gov.uk); Town Hall, Front St; 🕒 10am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, to 4pm Sun Apr-Oct) is south of the town square.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Alston YHA** (☎ 0845 371 9301; The Firs; dm £12; 🕒 Easter-Oct) Basic hostel with three dorms overlooking the South Tyne Valley. It's popular with walkers and cyclists on the C2C route, so book ahead.

**Lowbyer Manor** (☎ 01434-381230; [www.lowbyer.com](http://www.lowbyer.com); Alston; s £33, d £66-90) Handmade quilts (woven by the owner's relatives) and an endearing mix-and-match decor make this lovely manorhouse Alston's cosiest B&B. The nine rooms range from a titchy single to a king-size four-poster suite overlooking Alston Moor. It's especially handy for the steam train – the station's just a stroll away.

**Yew Tree Chapel** (☎ 01434-382525; [www.yewtreechapel.co.uk](http://www.yewtreechapel.co.uk); Slaggerby; s/d £39/68; 📍) Funky B&B in a converted church, overflowing with wit and style – the original organ and stained-glass windows feature alongside flea-market furniture and globe lights in the lounge. The style is boho-chic – colourful furnishings, bric-a-brac and scatter cushions, plus fresh-baked bread, cinnamon toast and gourmet muesli for brekkie. It's in Slaggerby, 3 miles north of Alston.

**Lovelady Shield** (☎ 0871 288 1345; [www.lovelady.co.uk](http://www.lovelady.co.uk); Nenthead Rd; d £100-170; 📍) The country hideaway par excellence, overflowing with swag-draped beds, flouncy curtains and posh wallpapers in white and gold. All rooms have sofa suites, widescreen TVs and wonderful views across the grounds, but it might be a bit too stuffy for some.

## Getting There & Away

Bus 888 travels twice daily to Newcastle (£8, 80 minutes), and once to Penrith (£6, 1½ hours) and Keswick (£7, 1½ hours). Bus 680 runs from Nenthead to Carlisle via Alston (four Monday to Saturday).

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