

Cumbria & the Lakes



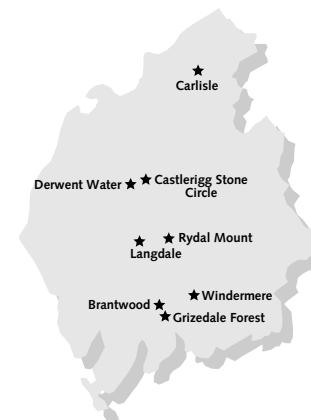
Tucked away on England's northwestern frontier overlooking the Scottish Borders, Cumbria has one of the most dramatic and varied landscapes in Britain, stretching from the lush Eden Valley in the east across the peaks and valleys of the Lake District all the way to the windswept coastline along its western shore. Formed from the old districts of Cumberland and Westmorland in 1974, this compact county is best known as the spiritual home of British hill walking: many of the country's highest peaks and most challenging hikes are crammed between its borders, acting as a magnet for rock climbers, mountain bikers and weekend walkers alike.

It's also a region that's brimming over with history and tradition: grey-slate villages, old market towns and country houses huddle in the shadow of snow-capped mountains, while crumbling castles, lonely farmsteads and slate-topped Lakeland inns are littered across the rolling fells. Cumbria is one place that's guaranteed to bring out the poet in you, and you'll certainly be in good company: this corner of England has been a favourite escape for generations of writers, artists and painters ever since the first Romantic poets arrived here in the early 19th century.

The only drawback to such a beautiful region is its inevitable popularity, and on busy summer weekends it can feel like half of Britain has decided to take to the hills around the Central Lakes; but time your visit for early spring or late autumn and you might find you have many of the county's classic trails all to your self. It's worth taking the time to explore some of Cumbria's less-visited sights, too, including the redbrick battlements of Carlisle Castle, Wordsworth's boyhood home in Cockermouth and the classic steam train journey from Ravenglass to Eskdale aboard *La'al Ratty*.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Discovering the wild wooden sculptures of **Grizedale Forest** (p602)
- Drinking in the dramatic views from the **Langdale Valley** (p603)
- Gazing out at the English frontier from the walls of **Carlisle Castle** (p612)
- Exploring the literary landmarks of **Brantwood** (p602) and **Rydal Mount** (p599)
- Taking a leisurely cruise on the lakes of **Windermere** (p593) or **Derwent Water** (p604)
- Pondering Britain's mysterious past at **Castlerigg Stone Circle** (p606)



■ POPULATION: 487,607

■ AREA: 2629 SQ MILES

Activities

CYCLING

Cycling is popular in Cumbria, especially mountain biking on the fells. Cycle-hire shops are dotted across the region, and tourist offices stock a useful Cumbria cycling map showing all the best traffic-free routes. Marked trails include the 140-mile Sea to Sea Cycle Route (C2C) from Whitehaven to Newcastle via the northern Lake District, and the 259-mile circular Cumbria Cycle Way around Ulverston, Keswick and Carlisle.

WALKING

The Lake District is one of Britain's favourite hiking spots. The region is covered by a network of footpaths and walking trails,

ranging from low-level rambles to full-blown mountain ascents. Guidebooks and walking maps are available at most tourist offices and bookshops, including Alfred Wainwright's classic hand-drawn, seven-volume work *A Pictorial Guide To the Lakeland Fells*.

Wainwright also dreamt up one of northern England's classic walks, the C2C, 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.

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 Pack**

horse (☎ 017683-71689; www.cumbria.com/packhorse), **Sherpa Van** (☎ 020-8569 4101; www.sherpavan.com) or **Brigantes Baggage Couriers** (☎ 01729-830463; www.pikedaw.freereserve.co.uk/walks).

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Cumbria is a haven for adrenaline-fuelled activities ranging from rock climbing, orienteering and quad biking to the traditional sport of fell running, and newer variants such as ghyll scrambling (a cross between coasteering and river canyoning).

Sailing, kayaking and windsurfing are obviously popular too, especially around Windermere, Derwent Water and Coniston.

Check out www.lakedistrictoutdoors.co.uk, which also publishes a useful brochure available from tourist offices.

Tours

Tailor-made holidays and specialist tours are provided by many companies.

Cloudberry Holidays (☎ 01539-733522; www.cloudberry.co.uk; Kendal) Specialist company that provides hiking trips for the YHA.

Contours (☎ 017684-80451; www.contours.co.uk)

Well-organised walking-holiday provider with a selection of self-guided Cumbrian packages.

High Points (☎ 015395-30386; www.highpoints.co.uk; Newby Bridge) Outdoors centre specialising in hill walking, orienteering, climbing, ghyll scrambling and canoeing.

Knobbly Stick (☎ 01539-737576; www.knobblystick.com; Kendal) Small walking-holiday company with routes through Ullswater, Wasdale, Kendal and the Eastern Lakes.

River Deep Mountain High (☎ 015395-31116; www.rdmh.co.uk; Haverthwaite) Multi-activity company offering archery, climbing, sailing and cycling tours.

Getting There & Away

There's a direct rail link from Manchester Airport via Preston and Lancaster to Barrow-in-Furness (2½ hours) and Windermere (2¾ hours). To both Windermere and Carlisle, coaches from London take about 6½ hours, trains 3½ hours.

Getting Around

Traveline (☎ 0870 608 2 608; www.traveline-cumbria.co.uk) 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. The **Cross-Lakes Shuttle** (☎ 015394-45161) runs shuttle boats and minibuses between Windermere, Esthwaite Water, Grizedale and Coniston Water; cyclists and hikers are welcome. See the Windermere & Bowness, Coniston and Keswick sections for details.

BUS

The main operator is **Stagecoach** (www.stagecoachbus.com). The Explorer ticket (one/four/seven days £8.50/19/26.50) allows unlimited travel on services in Cumbria. There are also Dayrider tickets to various districts in Cumbria, including Carlisle, Barrow and the Western, Eastern and Central Lakes.

Stagecoach operates several useful cross-county buses, including bus 555/556, (Lakes-Link) between Lancaster and Carlisle, which stops at all the main towns, and bus 505 (Coniston Rambler), linking Kendal, Windermere, Ambleside and Coniston.

The free *Lakesrider* booklet has comprehensive timetables.

TRAIN

Aside from the Cumbrian Coast Line and the branch spur from Oxenholme to Windermere, several steam railways chug their way around the region, including the Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway (p610) and the Ambleside/Bowness to Haverthwaite Steam Railway (p594).

LAKE DISTRICT

Oh there is blessing in this gentle breeze
That blows from the green fields and
from the clouds

And from the sky: it beats against my
cheek,

And seems half-conscious of the joy
it gives.

*William Wordsworth, The Prelude
(1805)*

For sheer scenic splendour, few places in England can measure up to the outlandishly beautiful Lake District, where Wordsworth, Coleridge and their Romantic compatriots famously sought their poetic muse in the 19th century. The landscape of the Lakes is as breathtaking as any you'll find in Switzerland or the French Alps – a sweeping panorama of humpbacked mountains, razorblade



crags and scree-covered hillsides, strewn with mountainous tarns and some of the largest natural lakes anywhere in England. With such a wealth of natural riches, it's hardly surprising that the Lake District is one of the country's favourite places for savouring the great outdoors, but there's much more to this region than fine views – it's also packed with history and culture, from the abandoned slate mines around Honister and the ruined abbey of Furness to the literary landmarks of Dove Cottage and Rydal Mount, both former homes of one William Wordsworth.

Orientation

The Lake District is shaped in a rough star formation, with valleys, ridges and lakes ra-

diating out from the high ground at its centre. The main bases are Keswick in the north and Windermere and Bowness in the south. Ambleside and Conistone are less hectic alternatives. Windermere is the biggest, busiest lake. Ullswater, Conistone and Derwent Water lakes have a speed restriction of 10mph, and powerboats are banned on Grasmere, Crummock Water and Buttermere. Wastwater is the wildest and least accessible valley.

Information

The region's network of tourist offices stocks mountains of information on accommodation and exploring the Lake District, whether by bus, bike, or on foot. The branches in Windermere and Keswick are the most efficient, or

there's a flagship **tourist office** (☎ 015394-46601; www.lake-district.gov.uk) at Brockhole, on the A591 near Windermere.

Sleeping

There's more than 30 YHA hostels in the Lake District. The main point for information is **Ambleside YHA** (☎ 0870 770 5672; ambleside@yha.org.uk). Bookings for most hostels can be made direct via phone, email or the YHA reservations website (www.yhabooking.org.uk). The YHA provides a useful shuttle bus around the eight main hostels, and offers free pick-up from Windermere train station – contact Ambleside YHA for details and bookings.

Camping barns – sometimes called 'stone tents' – are run by both the National Park Authority and the YHA, costing from £6 per person per night; you need all the usual camping gear apart from a tent. Contact **Lakeland Camping Barns** (☎ 01946-758198; www.lakelandcampingbarns.co.uk) for more information.

WINDERMERE & BOWNESS

☎ 015394 / pop 8203

Framed by fells and encircled by a wooded shoreline, Lake Windermere is the largest natural lake in England, stretching in a silvery north-south line from Ambleside to Newby Bridge for a distance of some 10.5 miles. Ever since the arrival of the steam railway in 1847 – something that was passionately opposed by William Wordsworth – Windermere has served as the main gateway to the Lake District, and it remains one of the region's busiest spots. The town itself is split into two main areas – Windermere town, 1.5 miles uphill from the lake, and Bowness-on-Windermere, from where cruise boats have been chugging across the waters of the lake since the early 19th century.

Orientation

Windermere town is where you'll find the most restaurants and B&Bs, as well as the main train and bus station. The main road leads 1.5 miles downhill to Bowness, which is packed with tearooms, ice-cream shops and boat companies selling tickets for cross-lake cruises.

Information

Brockhole National Park Visitor Centre (☎ 46601; www.lake-district.gov.uk; ☎ 10am-5pm late Mar-Oct) Flagship visitor centre 3 miles north of Windermere on the A591.

Library (☎ 62400; Broad St; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon, 9am-5pm Tue, Thu & Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) Internet access.

Post office (21 Crescent Rd; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Sat)

Tourist offices Bowness-on-Windermere (☎ 42895; bowness@lake-district.gov.uk; Glebe Rd; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm Easter-Oct, 10am-4pm Fri-Sun Nov-Mar); Windermere (☎ 46499; windemeretic@southlakeland.gov.uk; Victoria St; internet access per 10min £1; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-5.30pm Sun Apr-Oct, hours vary in winter)

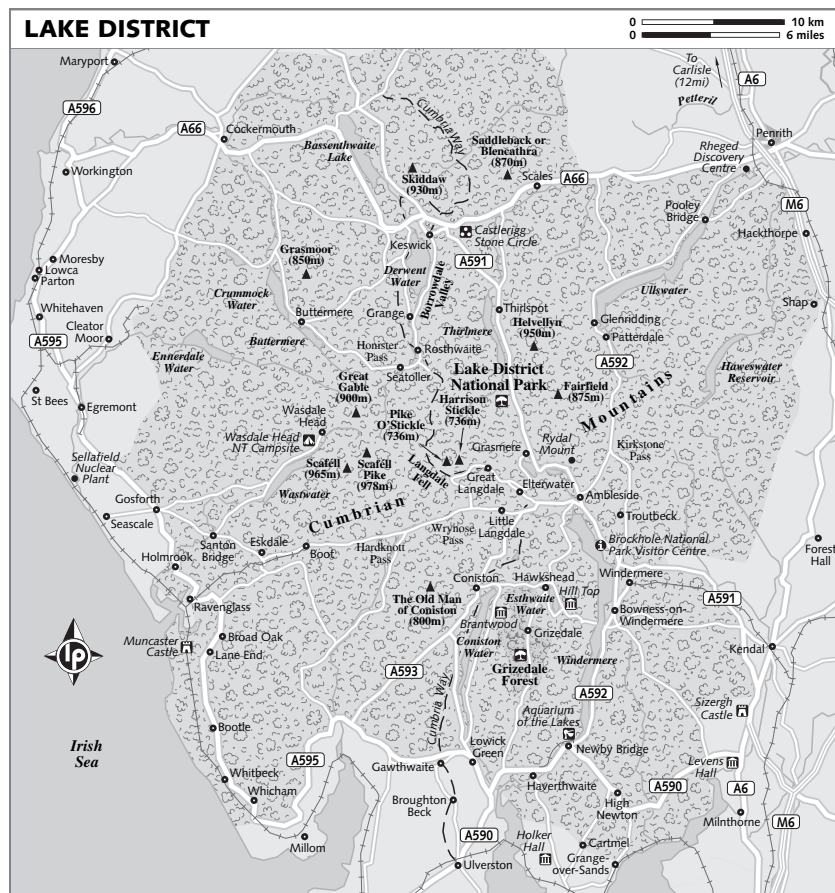
Sights

Blackwell Arts & Crafts House (☎ 46139; www.blackwell.org.uk; admission £5.45; ☎ 10.30am-5pm Apr-Oct, 10am-4pm Feb, Mar, Nov & Dec) is one of the finest examples of the Arts and Crafts movement, distinguished by its simple, elegant architecture and sense of space. The house was designed by Mackay Hugh Baillie Scott in the 19th century for a wealthy brewer, and contains many of his trademark designs, including Delft tiles and some gorgeous 18th-century oak panelling. A collection of antiques and furniture from the Arts and Crafts movement is also on display.

The **Windermere Steamboat Museum** (☎ 45565; www.steamboat.co.uk; Rayrigg Rd; admission £3.50; ☎ 10am-5pm Jul-mid-Sep, 10.30am-4.30pm Apr-Jun & mid-Sep-Nov) will delight closet steamboat Willies, with a marvellous collection of vessels including Beatrix Potter's rowing boat and the *Esperance*, which doubled as Captain Flint's houseboat in the BBC adaptation of *Swallows and Amazons*. The museum offers lake trips on vintage boats (£5.50) from July to September.

Tucked away off Lake Road, the **World of Beatrix Potter** (☎ 88444; www.hop-skip-jump.com; adult/child £6/3; ☎ 10am-5.30pm Apr-Sep, 10am-4.30pm Oct-Mar) is always packed with Beatrix Potter enthusiasts of all ages, as well as an astonishing number of camera-toting Japanese tourists. Various scenes from Potter's books are brought to life inside, including Peter Rabbit's garden and Mr McGregor's greenhouse, and there's a shop with enough Potter-themed memorabilia to satisfy even the most ardent fan.

Aquarium of the Lakes (☎ 015395-30153; www.aquariumofthelakes.co.uk; Lakeside, Newby Bridge; admission £7; ☎ 9am-6pm Apr-Oct, 9am-5pm Nov-Mar), at the lake's southern end, re-creates more than 30 freshwater habitats, including an underwater tunnel through the lakebed, complete with pike, Arctic char and diving ducks. As usual, though, the mischievous otters steal the show. The best way to arrive is by boat from Bowness or Ambleside (see p594), or there are regular buses to Newby Bridge, a mile from the aquarium.



Activities

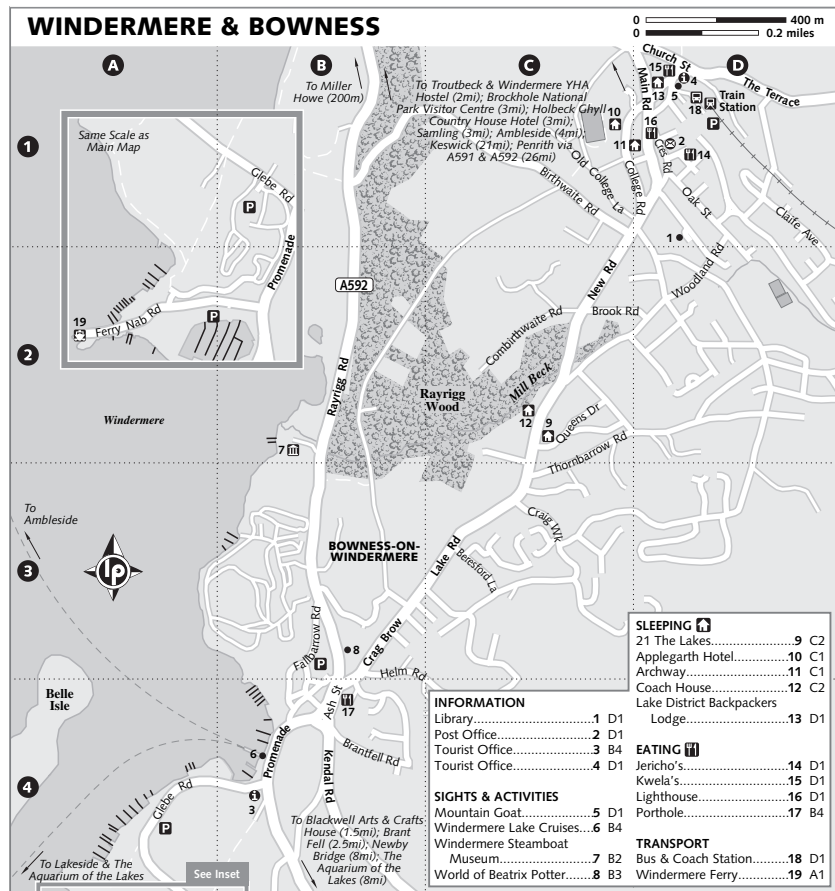
Somewhat bizarrely, Lake Windermere is officially a public highway, and in the early 19th century cargo ships carrying coal, lumber, copper and slate were a common sight on its waters. The first steam passenger ferry was launched on the lake in 1845, and lake cruises quickly became one of the town's biggest earners.

Windermere Lake Cruises (☎ 015395-31188; www.windermere-lakecruises.co.uk) offers trips on both modern launches and a couple of period beauties dating back to the 1930s. Regular colour-coded cruises depart from Bowness Pier. The Yellow Cruise runs to Lakeside and back (£7.60 return, hourly), while the Red Cruise runs to Ambleside (£5.50 return, half-

hourly). The Blue Cruise offers a leisurely 45-minute cruise around the lake's shoreline and bays (£5.50 return, half-hourly). There are also launch services to Brockhole, Waterhead, Fell Foot and Ferry Landing, from where a shuttle bus departs to Beatrix Potter's cottage at Hill Top and Hawkshead in summer. A Freedom of the Lakes ticket allows unlimited cruises (one/three days £13.25/24).

Joint tickets tie in with the **Ambleside/Bowness to Haverthwaite Steam Railway** (☎ 015395-31594; return from Bowness £12, from Ambleside £16.50; ☎ Apr-Oct) and the **Aquarium of the Lakes** (return ferry & aquarium from Bowness £13.10, from Ambleside £18.75).

You can hire open-/closed-top boats (£14/16) from beside the tourist office on Bowness Pier.



Sleeping BUDGET

Lake District Backpackers Lodge (☎ 46374; www.lakedistrictbackpackers.co.uk; High St; dm £13.50; ☎) A cramped, basic and rather spartan backpackers, squeezed into a converted slate-roofed house near the train station. Cycling and walking tours can be arranged on site.

Windermere YHA Hostel (☎ 43543; windermere@yha.org.uk; Bridge Lane, Troutbeck; dm £13.95; ☎ mid-Feb–Nov, book ahead at other times; ☎) This large white-washed hostel stands in private grounds and offers roomy, modern dorms, as well as a drying room for hiking gear and a well-stocked shop. It's 2 miles from the station, and offers free pick-up if you phone ahead.

MIDRANGE

Archway (☎ 45613; www.communiken.com/archway; 13 College Rd; d £40-48; ☎) A Windermere favourite, located inside a solid grey-stone terraced house along College Rd. The rooms are comfy and understated, with nary a floral pattern in sight, but the real draw here is the gargantuan breakfast of dry-cured bacon, Manx kippers and homemade pancakes.

Applegarth Hotel (☎ 43206; www.applegarthhotel.co.uk; s/d from £40/60; ☎) Formerly the home of the Victorian industrial magnate John Riggs, this grand manor house certainly shows signs of the splendour of yesteryear. Light streams through stained-glass windows into the wood-panelled foyer, and the house is full of polished period furniture and original corncicing; though the rooms aren't all quite as impressive, they're still a cut above the B&B norm.

Coach House (☎ 44494; www.lakedistrictbandb.com; Lake Rd; d £54-74; ☎) An extraordinary little B&B decorated with real flair – forget flowery bedspreads and magnolia walls, here it's all citrus colours, fairy pinks and duck-egg blues offset by chequerboard floors and cast-iron beds. If you're looking for something a little out of the ordinary, this funky little gem certainly won't disappoint.

21 The Lakes (☎ 45052; www.21thelakes.co.uk; Lake Rd; d midweek from £70, weekends £110; ☎) This newly opened boutique B&B is streets ahead of the other hotels around Windermere. Various rooms around the detached town house have been converted in their own unique style, from super-frilly four-poster suites to a futuristic beauty that comes with widescreen TV, abstract art and a groovy floating bed.

TOP END

Holbeck Ghyll Country House Hotel (☎ 32375; www.holbeckghyll.com; Holbeck Lane; s £135 d £190-370) The ever-so-slightly stuffy Holbeck Ghyll was once an aristocratic hunting lodge, and is now a favourite Lakeland country retreat. The rooms are big, posh and old-fashioned, mixing Laura Ashley wallpapers with matching furniture and the odd brass chandelier.

Ourpick Samling (☎ 31922; www.thesamling.com; Dove Nest; r weekdays £195-395, weekends £225-425; ☎) The venue of choice for A-list celebrities taking a break in the Lakes, this utterly bewitching country-house hotel pulls no punches in terms of luxury, sophistication and style. Set on 27 hectares of impeccably kept grounds, the bedrooms range from antique-heavy attic suites to a split-level cottage with mezzanine bedroom and an outdoor hot tub.

Eating

Lighthouse (☎ 88260; Main Rd; mains £8-20; ☎) breakfast, lunch & dinner) A buzzy Continental café-restaurant split over three floors. It covers practically all bases, from breakfasts of cappuccino and cinnamon waffles through to sophisticated suppers of fell-bred lamb and sirloin steak.

Kwela's (☎ 44954; 4 High St; mains £11-17; ☎) dinner Tue-Sun) African flavours underpin the menu of this unusual new restaurant, offering intriguing dishes such as morish skewers and South African bobotie (curried lamb with almonds) in an atmospheric dining area filled with canvas chairs and a sackcloth ceiling.

Porthole (☎ 42793; 2 Ash St; mains £11-25; ☎) dinner Wed-Mon) An old hand on the Windermere dining scene, this friendly restaurant specialises in fish and seafood, served at small tables in the hugger-mugger dining room and accompanied by a great selection of vintage wines.

Jericho's (☎ 42522; Birch St; mains from £16; ☎) dinner Tue-Sun) The atmosphere at Jericho's might be a little outmoded, but the food's thoroughly up to date, with a menu that ranges from shellfish risotto to pan-seared seabass. The small open-plan kitchen lets you watch the chefs at work.

Getting There & Away BUS

National Express coaches run from London (£29, eight to nine hours, three times daily), sometimes travelling via Lancaster or Birmingham.

Bus 555/556 travels from Lancaster (1½ hours) via Kendal (30 minutes) to Windermere,

before continuing to Ambleside (20 minutes), Grasmere (30 minutes) and Keswick (50 minutes). There are 10 to 12 buses daily Monday to Saturday, with five direct buses on Sunday.

Bus 505 travels from Windermere to Coniston (40 minutes, eight daily Monday to Saturday, six on Sunday) via Ambleside.

The open-topped, half-hourly 599 bus links Grasmere, Ambleside, Brockhole, Windermere, Bowness and Kendal.

TRAIN

Windermere is on the branch line from Oxenholme (£3.50, 30 minutes, hourly), near Kendal, which connects London Euston (£106.50, 3½ hours, eight to 10 times daily Monday to Saturday, four on Sunday) to Glasgow or Edinburgh.

KENDAL

☎ 01539 / pop 27,545

The sturdy, grey-slate town of Kendal is practically synonymous with its supersweet mintcake, a peppermint-flavoured bar that sustained Edmund Hillary and Tensing Norgay on their ascent of Everest in 1953, and still finds its way into the backpacks of many seasoned walkers in the Lake District. During the Middle Ages, Kendal was renowned as a centre for the cloth and wool trades, and the town remains the main commercial centre in the Southern Lakes, with some excellent museums and one of the best arts complexes in the county.

Information

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

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

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

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

Sights

Kendal Museum (☎ 721374; www.kendalmuseum.org.uk; Station Rd; admission £2.70; ☎ 10.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat Apr-Oct, 10.30am-4pm Mon-Sat Feb, Mar, Nov & Dec) displays local archaeological finds and explores the history of Kendal Castle. There's also a large natural history section, with lots of fossils and spooky stuffed animals. Alfred Wainwright, of *Pictorial Guide* fame, was honorary curator from 1945 to 1974; his former office has been reconstructed inside the museum.

The **Abbot Hall Art Gallery** (☎ 722464; www.abbot-hall.org.uk; admission £4.75; ☎ 10.30am-5pm Mon-Sat Apr-Oct, 10.30am-4pm Mon-Sat Nov-Mar) focuses on 18th- and 19th-century portraits and Lakeland landscapes, including work by John Ruskin (see p602) and local artist George Romney.

The **Museum of Lakeland Life** (☎ 722464; www.lakelandmuseum.org.uk; admission £3.75; ☎ 10.30am-5pm Mon-Sat Apr-Oct, 10.30am-4pm Mon-Sat Nov-Mar) retraces the region's past using reconstructed buildings, including an Edwardian street scene, and exhibits on local industries such as spinning, mining and bobbin-making. One room recreates the study of Arthur Ransome, author of *Swallows and Amazons*.

Sleeping

Kendal YHA (☎ 0870 770 5893; kendal@yha.org.uk; 118 Highgate; dm £17.50; ☎ Easter-Oct by advance booking; ♿)

A decent hostel inside a whitewashed house along the main street through Kendal, handily located for the Brewery Arts Centre. It's only available by advance booking, so phone ahead to make sure it's open.

Lyndhurst Guest House (☎ 723819; www.lyndhurst-kendal.co.uk; 8 South Rd; s/tw/d from £25/50/52; ☎)

Another reliable and welcoming B&B within easy reach of central Kendal, offering eight fluffy rooms decorated in shades of cream and peach.

Highgate Hotel (☎ 724229; www.highgatehotel.co.uk; 128 Highgate; s/d £39/58; ♿ ☎) Right in the middle of town, this black-and-white 18th-century townhouse was built for Kendal's first doctor, but inside it's been thoroughly modernised. The B&B bedrooms come with the usual selection of pine furniture, pale walls and bracket-balanced TVs, but there's not much period character around.

Heaves Hotel (☎ 560396; www.heaveshotel.co.uk; Heaves; s/d from £40/60; ♿ ☎) For something altogether grander, head for this glorious family-run mansion, set on more than 4 hectares of private grounds and woodland a few miles south of Kendal. It's a classic country-house hotel, all gleaming antiques, huge fireplaces and polished mirrors; the traditionally decorated rooms are large and comfortable, and several boast four-poster beds and views across the rolling parkland.

Beech House (☎ 720385; www.beechhouse-kendal.co.uk; 40 Greenside; s/£45-75, d/£70-90; ♿ ☎) This wonderful B&B is the best option in central Kendal, with a fab range of bedrooms kitted out in natural fabrics, tasteful tones and plasma-screen TVs. The deluxe rooms are worth the extra expense, with small sofa areas and honesty fridges stocked up with booze and cold drinks.

Eating

1657 Chocolate House (☎ 740702; www.thechocolatohouse.co.uk; 54 Branthwaite Brow; lunches £2-6) This Kendal tearoom is a chocoholic's dream come true. Handmade chocolates and umpteen varieties of Kendal mintcake are sold on the ground floor; upstairs the café serves ploughman's lunches, cream teas and speciality chocolate drinks – try the Scurvy Knave or the Queen's Corsage.

Waterside Wholefoods (☎ 729743; Kent View, Waterside; lunches £4-8; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Sat) Great vegetarian food served by the river, selling sandwiches, chillis, soups and quiches, with homemade cakes and organic teas to follow.

Green Room & Vats Bar (pizzas from £8, mains £8-14; ☎ from 10am Mon-Sat) The café-bar at the Brewery Arts Centre serves drinks, wraps and sandwiches during the day, and a more upmarket evening menu featuring crispy pizzas and hearty mains such as Grizedale venison and vegetable tian.

New Moon (☎ 729254; 129 Highgate; mains £9-15; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) This fresh, inviting restaurant is the top place to eat in town, serving classic French and modern British food in a bright, contemporary dining room filled with razoredge tables and stripped wood.

Eclectic (☎ 736184; 36 Kirkland; mains £10-16; ☎ Tue-Sat) Eclectic by name, eclectic by nature; this three-floored café-venue-bar has something of a split personality, with a funky beer and wine bar on the ground floor, a fusion restaurant on the 1st floor and a private party room on the top level.

Entertainment

Brewery Arts Centre (☎ 725133; Highgate; www.breweryarts.co.uk) An excellent arts centre housing a brace of cinemas, and regular programmes of theatre, dance and live music.

Getting There & Around

BUS

The most useful bus is the 555/556, which stops at Kendal, Windermere, Ambleside, Grasmere and Keswick (10 to 12 times daily). There are two daily return buses from Kendal to Coniston (bus 505; one hour 10 minutes) via Windermere, Hawkshead and Ambleside. Bus X35 travels along the coast to Grange, Newby Bridge, Ulverston and Barrow (hourly Monday to Saturday, three times on Sunday).

TRAIN

Kendal station is on the branch line to Windermere (£3, 15 minutes) from Oxenholme, 2 miles south of town, with hourly trains from Carlisle (£14.80, one hour) and London Euston (£107, four hours).

AROUND KENDAL

Sizergh Castle

South of Kendal is **Sizergh Castle** (☎ 560070; admission £6.20, gardens only £4; ☎ gardens 12.30-5.30pm, castle 1.30-5.30pm Sun-Thu Apr-Oct), home of the Strickland family for more than 700 years. The castle is renowned for its collection of antiques, portraits and fine furniture, collected by various members of the family over the centuries, and for its elegant Elizabethan interior.

Sizergh Castle is 3.5 miles south of Kendal along the A590. Bus 555/556 from Grasmere, Ambleside, Windermere and Kendal runs past the castle every hour from Monday to Saturday.

WORTH THE TRIP

Drunken Duck Inn (☎ 015394-36347; www.drunkenduckinn.co.uk; Barnegates, Ambleside; r weekdays £90-185, weekends £115-220; ♿ ☎) This much-fêted place is a gorgeous cross between a traditional Lakeland inn and a thoroughly modern gastropub. The heart of the Drunken Duck, unsurprisingly, is the main bar, where contemporary leather chairs sit happily alongside stuffed stags' heads and period posters, and a huge ale blackboard is chalked up behind the slate-topped bar. The award-winning country restaurant (mains £15 to £23) offers a menu stuffed with bold and inventive dishes – pigeon marinated in liquorice, perhaps, or venison with chestnut polenta – and the upstairs rooms are all delightful, packed with special little touches such as Roberts radios, unusual prints and bespoke fabrics.

Levens Hall

Five miles south of Kendal is **Levens Hall** (☎ 560 321; www.levenshall.co.uk; house & gardens £9, gardens only £6; ☞ gardens 10am-5pm, house noon-5pm Sun-Thu Apr-mid-Oct), another impressive Elizabethan manor built around a mid-13th-century *pele* (keep) tower. The beautifully kept house has historical connections to both Nelson and the Duke of Wellington. It's also famous for its 17th-century topiary garden, which looks like something out of *Alice in Wonderland*, and for its many ghosts – the spirits of Levens Hall include a grey lady, a black dog and a pink lady dressed in a printed dress and a mob cap.

Bus 555/556 from Grasmere, Ambleside, Windermere and Kendal stops near the hall roughly every hour.

AMBLESIDE

☎ 015394 / pop 3560

Standing at the northern end of Lake Windermere and backed by an impressive panorama of grey-green fells, the small town of Ambleside is a bustling hub for the region's hikers and trekkers, with more outdoors shops per square metre than almost anywhere else in the Lakes. Victorian villas and slate-fronted houses line the main street all the way to the central square, where you can stock up with new boots, emergency raingear or that all-important industrial-strength sleeping bag before setting out for one of the many walking trails nearby.

Information

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

Library (☎ 32507; Kelsick Rd; internet access per hr £3; ☞ 10am-5pm Mon, Wed & Thu, 10am-7pm Tue & Fri)

Post office (☎ 33267; Market Pl; ☞ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-12.30pm Sat)

Tourist office (☎ 32582; www.amblesidetic@southlaked.gov.uk; Market Cross; ☞ 9am-5pm)

Sights

The **Armitt Museum** (☎ 31212; www.armitt.com; Rydal Rd; adult £2.50; ☞ 10am-5pm) is worth a look for its local-interest exhibits – some of its unusual artefacts include a lock of John Ruskin's hair, Dorothy Wordsworth's scarf, and a gallery of photos by the local photographer Herbert Bell.

The town makes an excellent base for many well-known Lakeland walks, including the woodland stroll up to **Stock Ghyll Force**, an 18m waterfall plunging into a narrow canyon. Serious hikers are spoilt for choice – several classic

circuits start from Ambleside, including the 10-mile **Fairfield Horseshoe** via Nab Scar, Heron Pike, Fairfield and Dove Crag.

Activities

Low Wood Watersports & Activity Centre (☎ 39441; watersports@elhamail.co.uk) hires rowing boats (one/four hours £6/18), kayaks and canoes (two/four hours £10/15), sailing boats (two/four hours £30/45) and motor boats (one/four hours £10/33). It also offers sailing, water-skiing and wakeboarding tuition and a climbing wall (£3 per climb).

Ambleside is also on the **Windermere Lake Cruises** route (see p594).

Sleeping BUDGET

Low Wray (☎ 32810; www.lowwraycampsite.co.uk; sites per adult/car/tent £4.50/3/5; ☞ Easter-Oct) One of three National Trust (NT) camp sites in the Lake District, in a great woody location 3 miles south of Ambleside.

Ambleside Backpackers (☎ 32340; www.englishlakesbackpackers.co.uk; dm £15; ☞ ☒ ☒) This independent hostel offers 72 beds in a converted Lakeland cottage, but the bunk beds are packed in exceedingly tight; thankfully, there's more space to be found in the wood-floored lounge and the huge industrial kitchen.

Ambleside YHA Hostel (☎ 0870 770 5672; ambleside@yha.org.uk; Windermere Rd; dm £19.95; ☞ ☒ ☒) A fantastically organised YHA hostel right by the lake, a mile south of Ambleside town. It's the hub for many YHA activities, from walking to water sports – though it's very popular and can get a little crowded on busy weekends.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Compston House Hotel (☎ 32305; www.compstonhouse.co.uk; Compston Rd; d from £48; ☞ ☒) This imaginative place is as American as apple pie. All the rooms are named after US states, from flowery Hawaii to maritime Maine (complete with Cape Cod bedspread), and the breakfast features authentic American pancakes doused in maple syrup.

Grey Friar Lodge Hotel (☎ 33158; www.cumbria-hotels.co.uk; Clappersgate; d £56-116; ☞ ☒) A charming Victorian-era vicarage tucked away in secluded gardens in the hamlet of Clappersgate, near Ambleside. The period architecture of the house, with its gabled exterior and chimney-topped slate roof, is matched by the splendid olde-worlde rooms.

Gables (☎ 34734; www.thegables-ambleside.co.uk; Church Walk; r £59-90; ☞ ☒) This grand half-timbered house is one of Ambleside's most impressive places to stay. From the neat lobby filled with rattan chairs and willow arrangements, the winding stairs lead to a choice of rooms furnished with beige carpets, simple curtains and plain pine furniture.

Easedale Lodge (☎ 32112; www.easedaleambleside.co.uk; Compston Rd; d £60-80; ☞ ☒) On the corner of Compston Rd, this excellent B&B makes a great-value base. All the tasteful bedrooms have crisp white bed linen, country prints and the odd characterful extra, but it's worth holding out for a fell-view room if you can.

Lakes Lodge (☎ 33240; www.lakeslodge.co.uk; Lake Rd; r from £90; ☞ ☒ ☒) There's no sign of any HP sauce or lacy doilies at this swanky little gem – retro chairs, purple walls and laminate floors adorn the breakfast area, while the low-key bedrooms feature big white beds, in-room DVD players and superminimal décor.

Waterhead Hotel (☎ 08458-504503; waterhead@elhamail.co.uk; d weekdays £156-210, weekends £170-230; ☞ ☒) This lakeshore hotel has been given the full boutique makeover. The designer décor simply screams good taste, from the brown leather chairs, pale pine floors and canvas art in the lobby through to the stripped-back bedrooms, all named after a local waterfall and equipped with a matching photo print.

Eating

Apple Pie (☎ 33679; Rydal Rd; lunches £3-8) A sunny café serving sandwiches, jacket potatoes and lots of homemade cakes, including homemade apple pie smothered with vanilla ice cream.

Pippins (☎ 31338; 10 Lake Rd; lunches £4-10) Reliable café serving full English breakfasts, jacket potatoes, and sandwiches.

our pick **Lucy's on a Plate** (☎ 31191; www.lucysofambleside.co.uk; Church St; lunch £5-9, dinner £15-21; ☞ 10am-9pm) This fantastic little gastronomic emporium offers classic Cumbrian cooking with a quirky twist – the eclectic menu features dishes such as fruity porker, fell-walker filler and blushing cod. There's also a great deli next door and a funky wine bar across the road.

Zeffirelli's (☎ 33845; Compston Rd; pizza £5.50-7.45; ☞ lunch & dinner) Inventive pizzas and pasta served in a light, lively dining room with its own glazed 'waterfall'. Zeff's also runs an upstairs jazz club and the town's cinema;

the 'Double Feature' menu (£15.95) includes cinema tickets and a two-course meal.

Glass House (☎ 32137; Rydal Rd; lunch £6-14, dinner £11-18; ☞ lunch & dinner) Infamously featured on Gordon Ramsay's *Kitchen Nightmares*, the Glass House has since risen from the ashes and reinvented itself as one of Ambleside's top restaurants. The varied menu mixes Mediterranean flavours with the best of local produce, and the smart dining room is housed inside a converted 16th-century watermill, with original millwheels, cogs and machinery.

Drinking & Entertainment

Royal Oak (☎ 33382; Market Pl) This old white-washed inn is the best pub in Ambleside, with hearty pub mains, good ales and a busy outside terrace.

Zeffirelli's Cinema (☎ 33100; Compston Rd) A two-screen cinema next to Zeffirelli's Restaurant, 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** (☎ 32946) and **Gaymer Sports** (☎ 33305) on Market Cross. **Black's** (☎ 33197; 42 Compston Rd) is a favourite with hikers, and the **Climber's Shop** (☎ 32297; Compston Rd) specialises in rock-climbing gear.

Getting There & Around

Bus 555 (and bus 599 from April to September) regularly travels from Grasmere (20 minutes), to Windermere (15 minutes) and Kendal (45 minutes).

From April to October, bus 505 runs from Coniston (35 minutes, 12 times daily Monday to Saturday, six on Sunday), and from Kendal (30 minutes, twice daily) via Windermere.

Ghyllside Cycles (☎ 33592; The Slack) and **Bike Treks** (☎ 31505; Compston Rd) hire mountain bikes from £14 per day.

AROUND AMBLESIDE

Rydal Mount

Wordsworth moved to **Rydal Mount** (☎ 33002; www.rydalmount.co.uk; admission £5, gardens only £2.50; ☞ 9.30am-5pm Mar-Oct, 10am-4pm Wed-Mon Nov & Feb) in 1813 and remained here until his death in 1850. The house is packed with original furniture and possessions, including Wordsworth's pen, inkstand and picnic box, and his favourite pair of ice skates; you can also wander around

the book-lined sitting room, Wordsworth's bedroom and his top-floor study. Below the house is **Dora's Field**, which Wordsworth planted with daffodils in memory of his eldest daughter, who died of 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

☎ 015394 / pop 1458

Nestled at the base of a broad valley dotted with oak woods and peaceful fields, the little village of Grasmere is one of the prettiest in the Central Lakes. Wordsworth lived at nearby Dove Cottage for nine years and occasionally taught at the village school, which is now a famous gingerbread shop; he's buried in St Oswald's churchyard with his wife Mary and beloved sister Dorothy. Sadly, the Wordsworth connections have their drawbacks; the village is very much on the coach-tour trail, and is practically overrun with day-trippers in summer.

Wordsworth penned some of his greatest poems at **Dove Cottage** (☎ 35544; www.wordsworth.org.uk; adult £5.95; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm). He moved in with his sister Dorothy in 1799, and was later joined by new wife Mary and his three eldest children – John, Dora and Thomas – who were born here in 1803, 1804 and 1806. Covered with climbing roses and illuminated by tiny latticed windows, it's a fascinating place to visit, although it can get very busy. A half-hour guided tour is included in the admission price, and entrance is managed by timed tickets to avoid overcrowding.

Next door, the new **Wordsworth Museum** houses a fascinating collection of letters, portraits and manuscripts relating to the Romantic movement.

Sleeping BUDGET

Thorney How YHA Hostel (dm £13; ☎ Apr-Oct) This lovely little hostel has a real claim to fame – it was the first one purchased by the YHA, way back in 1931. The small stone house is popular with walkers on the C2C route. Contact Butharlyp How YHA Hostel for bookings.

Butharlyp How YHA Hostel (☎ 0870 770 5836; grasmere@yha.org.uk; dm £15.50; ☎ daily Feb-Nov, weekends Dec & Jan; P) Just to the north of Gras-

mere off Easedale Rd, this converted Victorian house has lots of modern rooms, a café and internet access; staff can arrange guided walks and activity trips.

Grasmere Hostel (☎ 35055; www.grasmerehostel.co.uk; Broadrayne Farm; dm £15.50) A great little independent hostel just off the A591, boasting a 'Nordic sauna' and a luxurious lounge lit by skylights and a round picture window. Bus 555 stops at the end of the road on request.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

How Foot Lodge (☎ 35366; www.howfoot.co.uk; Town End; d £64; P) Owned by the Wordsworth Trust, this mid-19th-century villa is just a stone's throw from Dove Cottage, and offers four light, flowery rooms including one with a private sunlounge. The décor's a smidgen chintzy, but it's excellent value for money.

Grasmere Hotel (☎ 35277; www.grasmerehotel.co.uk; Broadgate; d £70-110; P) An imposing three-storey Victorian mansion, perched on the banks of the River Rothay, and recently overhauled. Carved wooden beds, tasteful prints and expensive soft furnishings characterise every room, and downstairs there's a posh vaulted-roof restaurant decked out with padded chairs and chandeliers.

Lake View Country House (☎ 35384; www.lakeviewgrasmere.com; Lake View Drive; d £77-99; P) This stone-fronted house has the best view of any hotel in Grasmere, overlooking private gardens all the way to the lakeshore. The four rooms are all individually styled, with a couple of country beauties with private lounges and

WORTH THE TRIP

Lancrigg (☎ 35317; www.lancrigg.co.uk; Easedale; r £140-210; P) This vegetarian-only country house hotel is an utter gem, tucked away in private grounds half a mile from Grasmere. Formerly the home of surgeon and Arctic adventurer John Richardson, and once a favourite meeting place for the Lakeland poets, the stately house contains a jumble of character-filled rooms, ranging from a four-poster room equipped with Turkish rugs and mahogany furniture to a huge suite in Richardson's old library, complete with plasterwork ceiling, lace-draped bed and freestanding bath. Stunning fell views and a swish vegetarian restaurant are the icing on the cake.

whirlpool baths – ideal after a long day's slog on the fells.

White Moss House (☎ 35295; www.whitemoss.com; Rydal Water; d £170-188, cottage per person £218; P) This pricey pile trades heavily on its Wordsworth ties – William bought it for his son Willie, and often stayed here – but it's a lovely place to stay in its own right, with plenty of rambling rooms filled with period trinkets, well-worn armchairs and burnished furniture, as well as a detached cottage with lake views.

Eating

Rowan Tree (☎ 435528; Stocks Lane; mains £3-10, pizzas £6-9; ☎ lunch & dinner) This peach-coloured riverside café does a mean cream tea by day, with a menu of pizzas, fish and veggie-friendly mains by night.

Sarah Nelson's Gingerbread Shop (☎ 35428; www.grasmeregingerbread.co.uk; Church Stile; 6 pieces of gingerbread £5.25; ☎ 9.15am-5.30pm Mon-Sat) You can't leave Grasmere without visiting this classic cake shop, where the ladies still dress in frilly pinnies and the gingerbread has been made to the same recipe since 1854.

Travellers Rest Inn (☎ 35604; www.lakedistrictinns.co.uk; mains £8-14; P) This sturdy 16th-century pub on the A591 road from Grasmere has all the trappings of a quintessential Lakeland inn, including slate-fronted fireplaces, oak-beamed ceilings and a bevy of real ales. It also offers accommodation (double room weekdays £84, weekends £104).

our pick **Jumble Room** (☎ 35188; Langdale Rd; mains £11-20; ☎ lunch & dinner Wed-Sun) This boho bistro recently scooped a top national award from Les Routiers, and it's hard not to be swept up in the sheer energy and enthusiasm of the place. Letter-print tablecloths, porcelain knick-knacks and spotty seats are packed into the tiny dining room, and the menu wanders at will from England to the Far East.

Getting There & Away

The hourly 555 bus runs from Windermere to Grasmere (15 minutes), via Ambleside, Rydal Church and Dove Cottage. The open-top 599 runs from Kendal via Windermere and Bowness (one hour, five daily April to October).

HAWKSHEAD

☎ 015394 / pop 1640

Lakeland villages don't come much more picturesque than Hawkshead, with its huddle of cobbled streets, whitewashed pubs, arched

alleys and rickety cottages. It's hardly changed since the days when Wordsworth arrived here to attend the village school, and was once a bustling centre for the local wool trade; until the 12th century, the village was owned by the monastery at Furness Abbey. Cars are banned in the village centre throughout the year; sadly, the same can't be said for tourist traffic.

You can almost imagine a young William Wordsworth gazing out of the windows of the **Hawkshead Old Grammar School** (admission £2; ☎ 10.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-5.30pm Apr-Oct), which the young poet attended from 1779 to 1787. Here Wordsworth would have studied the traditional classical curriculum (especially Latin and Greek), as well as mathematics, science and contemporary literature – he began writing his first poetry at the age of 14 while at Hawkshead. The ground-floor classroom still contains much of its original furniture (including a desk in which naughty young William carved his name) and upstairs you can visit the old headmaster's study.

The **Beatrix Potter Gallery** (NT; ☎ 36355; Red Lion Sq; admission £3.60; ☎ 10.30am-4.30pm Sat-Wed Apr-Sep, open all week in Oct) contains lots of original illustrations from the author's children's books, with an annually changing exhibition drawn from the NT's Beatrix Potter collection. The museum is housed in the old offices of Beatrix's husband, solicitor William Heelis. Entry is by timed ticket.

Sleeping & Eating

Hawkshead YHA Hostel (☎ 0870 770 5856; hawkshead@yha.org.uk; dm £13.95; P) A beautiful hostel in a fine Regency house with its original staircase crowned by an ornate cupola. It's a mile south on the road to Newby Bridge; the cross-lakes shuttle and bus 505/506 both pass nearby.

Ann Tyson's Cottage (☎ 36405; www.anntysons.co.uk; Wordsworth St; s £45, d £58-66; P) For the full Wordsworth experience, you could stay in the house in which he lodged with his brother John while attending Hawkshead School. The old cob-walled cottage is tucked away down one of Hawkshead's narrow lanes; the rooms are on the cosy side, but very atmospheric.

Ivy House Hotel (☎ 36204; www.ivyhousehotel.com; Main St; d lodge/main house £70/80; P) A Grade II-listed Georgian house in British racing green, with six plush rooms in the main house and five more in the detached lodge. All are decorated in classic country style, with a surfeit of china, cushions and antique clocks.

Red Lion (☎ 36213; www.redlionhawkshead.co.uk; mains £6-15) This beautiful 15th-century coaching inn serves up local dishes such as Cumberland sausage in Yorkshire pudding and steak and Hawkshead bitter pie. There are pleasant, unfussy B&B rooms upstairs (double room £70 to £80).

Getting There & Away

Hawkshead is linked with Windermere, Ambleside and Coniston by bus 505 (12 times daily April to October). The **Cross-Lakes Shuttle** (☎ 45161) climbs to Hill Top (£2.30, 10 minutes, nine times daily April to September, weekends only October) before connecting with Windermere cruise boats from Ferry House; a couple of daily buses also travel to Grizedale (£3.15, 15 minutes).

AROUND HAWKSHEAD Grizedale Forest

Stretching out across the hills between Coniston Water and Esthwaite Water is Grizedale Forest, a dense woodland of oak, larch and pine; its name derives from the Old Norse for wild boar. Since 1977 artists have been fashioning outdoor sculptures in the forest, and there are now more than 90 scattered throughout the park, including a wooden xylophone, a wave of carved ferns and a huge 'man of the forest'.

Grizedale Forest is a popular destination for walking and mountain biking. Bikes can be hired from **Grizedale Mountain Bike Hire** (☎ 01229-860369; www.grizedalemountainbikes.co.uk; bikes half-/full day £14/24; ☎ 9am-5pm Mar-Oct, Sat & Sun Nov-Feb), at the **Grizedale tourist office** (☎ 01229-860010; www.grizedale.org; ☎ 10am-5pm Easter-Oct, 11am-4pm Nov-Easter). There's also a small café where you can refuel.

The **Cross-Lakes Shuttle** (☎ 015394-45161) runs from Hawkshead to Grizedale (£3.15, two daily April to September, weekends only October).

Hill Top

Beatrix Potter wrote many of her best-known stories in this picture-postcard **farmhouse** (NT; ☎ 36269; adult £5.10; ☎ 10.30am-4.30pm Sat-Wed Apr-Oct) surrounded by a flower-filled garden and vegetable patch in the quiet village of Near Sawrey. If you're a Potter fan, you might well recognise the house already – it was used in many of her tales, including the *Samuel Whiskers* stories. Tickets are sold for set times; expect long queues during school holidays.

The house is 2 miles south of Hawkshead; bus 505 (15 minutes, hourly) travels through the village, or you can catch the **Cross-Lakes Shuttle** (£2.30 from Hawkshead, nine daily).

CONISTON

☎ 015394 / pop 1948

Above the tranquil surface of Coniston Water, with its gliding steam yachts and quiet boats, looms the craggy, pock-marked peak known as the Old Man of Coniston (801m). The nearby village grew up around the copper-mining industry; these days, there are just a few sleepy streets, with two fine pubs and some tourist shops, making Coniston an excellent place for relaxing by the quiet lakeside.

Coniston is best known for the world-record speed attempts made on the lake 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 found in 2001; Campbell was buried in the cemetery near St Andrew's church.

Information

Summitreks (☎ 41212; www.summitreks.co.uk; 14 Yewdale Rd) Arranges outdoor activities and hires out walking gear, as well as kayaks and canoes (£16/23 per day).

Tourist office (☎ 41533; www.conistonc.org; Coniston Car & Coach Park; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm) Sells the Coniston Loyalty Card (£2), which offers local discounts.

Village Pantry (☎ 41155; Yewtree Rd; internet access per 30min £2)

Sights

The **Ruskin Museum** (☎ 41164; www.ruskinmuseum.com; admission £4.25; ☎ 10am-5.30pm Mar-Nov) explores Coniston's history, touching on copper mining, Arthur Ransome and the Campbell story; the museum's newest acquisition is the tailfin of the fated *Bluebird* boat, recovered in 2001. There's also a section on John Ruskin, with displays of his writings, watercolours and sketchbooks.

Ruskin bought the country estate of **Brantwood** (☎ 41396; www.brantwood.org.uk; admission £5.50; ☎ 11am-5.30pm mid-Mar-mid-Nov, 11am-4.30pm Wed-Sun mid-Nov-mid-Mar) in 1871 and spent the next 20 years redesigning the house and grounds in pursuit of his concept of 'organic architecture'. The end result is undoubtedly the finest country estate in the Lake District, incorporating the

lavish mansion and 101 hectares of woodland and landscaped gardens. Both of the Coniston launches (see below) stop at Brantwood.

Activities

The steam yacht **Gondola** (☎ 63850; adult £5.90; ☎ 5 daily Apr-Oct) was launched on Coniston Water in 1859. The luxurious saloons have been completely refurbished by the NT, and the boat still runs like clockwork between Brantwood and Coniston Pier.

The **Coniston Launch** (☎ 36216; www.conistonlaunch.co.uk) also offers lake cruises. The Northern cruise (return £5) calls at the Waterhead Hotel, Torver and Brantwood, while the Southern cruise (£7.40) sails to the jetties at Torver, Park a Mor, Lake Bank, Sunny Bank and Brantwood. There are also special cruises exploring the Campbells on Coniston and the *Swallows* and *Amazons* story, as well as a twilight trip (bring your own wine).

The **Coniston Boating Centre** (☎ 41366; Coniston Jetty) hires out rowboats (£8 per hour), motor boats (£16), canoes (two hours £15) and dinghies (two hours £35).

Sleeping

Coniston Hall Camp Site (☎ 41223; sites from £11; ☎ Easter-Oct) This lovely lakeside camp site unsurprisingly gets very busy, so book ahead.

Holly How YHA Hostel (☎ 0870 779 5770; conistonhh@yha.org.uk; Far End; dm £11.80; ☎ weekends & school holidays) The closest hostel to town is inside an old slate house, right on the main walking trail up to the Old Man; all the accommodation is in dorms with four to 10 beds. It's friendly and efficient, if a little bland; bikes can be hired on-site.

Coppermines YHA Hostel (☎ 0870 770 5772; dm £11.95; ☎ Easter-Oct) This old mine-manager's house is a couple of miles into the mountains along an unpaved road. The facilities are pretty basic – a kitchen, common room and showers is about all the luxury you'll get – but it makes a good base for hikers looking to get an early start.

Sun Hotel (☎ 41248; www.thesunconiston.com; s £35-50, d £70-80; P ☎) Coniston's most historic inn stands on a hillside just above town. Most of the 10 bedrooms have lake outlooks, but the real attraction is the fantastic 16th-century pub next door, with its original stone floor, timber pillars and range fireplace (mains £8.50 to £16). Donald Campbell had his headquarters here during his fateful campaign.

Old Rectory Hotel (☎ 41353; www.theoldrectoryhotel.com; Torver; r £60-74; ☎) Frilly, frippy rooms inside a former vicarage surrounded by rolling fields. It's cosy and welcoming, and the owners will make sure you stock up with a gutbusting Cumbrian breakfast.

Wheelgate Country Guest House (☎ 41418; www.wheelgate.co.uk; Little Arrow; r £68-78; ☎) The pastel rooms at this old whitewashed farmhouse are all named after local lakes; the nicest is Buttermere, with a mauve-canopied four-poster bed and wicker chairs, but Derwent is also worth a look, with its oak beams, low ceiling and hefty wooden furniture.

Eating

Black Bull (☎ 41335; www.conistonbrewery.com; Yewdale Rd; lunch £4-6, dinner £8-14) This creaky coaching inn has welcomed many famous guests over the years (including Coleridge, de Quincey and Donald Campbell), but it's best known for its home-brewed Bluebird Bitter and Old Man Ale.

Bluebird Café (☎ 41649; Lake Rd; lunch £4-6; ☎ breakfast & lunch) This busy café is right by the main Coniston jetty, and makes an ideal spot for a quick sandwich or a slice of cake before hopping onto the cross-lake launch.

Harry's (☎ 41389; 4 Yewdale Rd; lunches £6, dinner £8-12; ☎ all day) A lively wine bar and bistro with a decent menu of all-day breakfasts, doorstep sandwiches and evening mains, and deep sofas to sprawl out on after a long day's hike.

Getting There & Around

From April to October, bus 505 runs from Windermere (50 minutes, eight daily Monday to Saturday, six on Sunday) via Ambleside; it also runs from Kendal (one hour 10 minutes, two daily Monday to Saturday).

The Ruskin Explorer ticket includes travel on the 505 Coniston Rambler between Windermere, a return ticket on the Coniston launch and entrance to Brantwood. It's available from bus drivers and the tourist office.

LANGDALE

☎ 015394

Surrounded on all sides by towering peaks and saw-tooth ridges, the Langdale Valley is one of the most dramatic sights in the Lake District. The main road snakes past Elterwater into the valley of Great Langdale, starting point for some of the region's classic trails – including the trek into the Langdale Pikes past Harrison

Stickle (736m) and Pike o' Stickle (709m), and the ascent of Crinkle Crags (819m). An ancient packhorse trail leads through Little Langdale over Wrynose and Hardknott Passes to the coast, passing the ruins of Hardknott Roman Fort en route.

Sleeping & Eating

Stickle Barn (☎ 37356; Great Langdale) A popular walker's pub tucked at the foot of the Langdale Pikes in a converted barn. As you'd expect it specialises in generous hiking food: Hungarian goulash, sausage and mash and nourishing soup are all on the menu. There's a basic bunkhouse, with breakfast served in the main inn.

Great Langdale Camp Site (NT; ☎ 37668; langdalecamp@nationaltrust.org.uk; sites per adult/car £4.50/3) A well-run National Trust camp site about a mile up the valley.

New Dungeon Ghyll Hotel (☎ 37213; www.dungeon-ghyll.co.uk; d £90-104; P ☒) For something modern but still with some local character, this ivy-clad place is the perfect choice. Outside it's all stone chimneys and grey slate; inside it's a thoroughly current country hotel, offering spacious rooms with all the mod cons and a fine-dining restaurant serving local game, meat and fish.

Old Dungeon Ghyll Hotel (☎ 37272; www.odg.co.uk; d £96-100; P ☒) You couldn't ask for a more welcome sight at the end of a long trek than this famous Lakeland inn. It's been the favourite getaway for many well-known climbers and walkers over the years, and continues to pull in the punters thanks to its reassuringly old-fashioned ambience and its timeless walker's bar. The rooms are showing their age in places, but with views like this, do you really care?

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

WASDALE

☎ 019467

Framed by a brooding crown of mountains and scree-strewn slopes, the inky black lake of Wastwater is the deepest in England (79m). It's one of the wildest locations in the Lakes, home to just a few houses and a single sturdy inn, all of which are dwarfed by the majestic

peaks of nearby Scafell Pike and Great Gable. It's a world away from the hustle and buzz of Lake Windermere, which makes Wastwater a favourite spot for walkers looking to experience the Lake District's more untamed side.

The **Barn Door Shop** (☎ 26384) sells maps and guides and oversees the Wasdale website (www.wasdaleweb.com).

Sleeping

Wasdale Head Campsite (NT; ☎ 26220; www.wasdalecampsite.org.uk; sites per car/tent £3/4.50) The NT's third Lakeland camp site is perhaps the pick of the bunch, nestled in a fantastic spot beneath the Scafell Range.

Wast Water YHA Hostel (☎ 0870 770 6082; wastwater@yha.org.uk; Wasdale Hall; dm £11.95; ☒) year-round by advance booking) This lakeside hostel is a real beauty, a half-timbered 19th-century mansion that still boasts many of its original Gothic features. Accommodation is mostly in four- to eight-bed dorms, with a small library, convivial lounge and decent-sized kitchen, but it's the fantastic location that's the real draw.

Ourpick Wasdale Head Inn (☎ 26229; www.wasdale.com; d £48-98; P ☒) Renowned as the spiritual home of British rock climbing, this wonderful inn has everything the discerning hillwalker could possibly wish for: cosy rooms with big, soft beds; a homely restaurant decorated with old mountaineering photos; and a firelit bar where you can rest those weary bones and down a few muscle-soothing drams.

In Santon Bridge, 2.5 miles southwest of Wastwater, the **Bridge Inn** (☎ 26221; www.santonbridgeinn.com; s £55-58, d £60-75) is a whitewashed country inn that offers decent food and rooms, and hosts the World's Biggest Liar Competition each November.

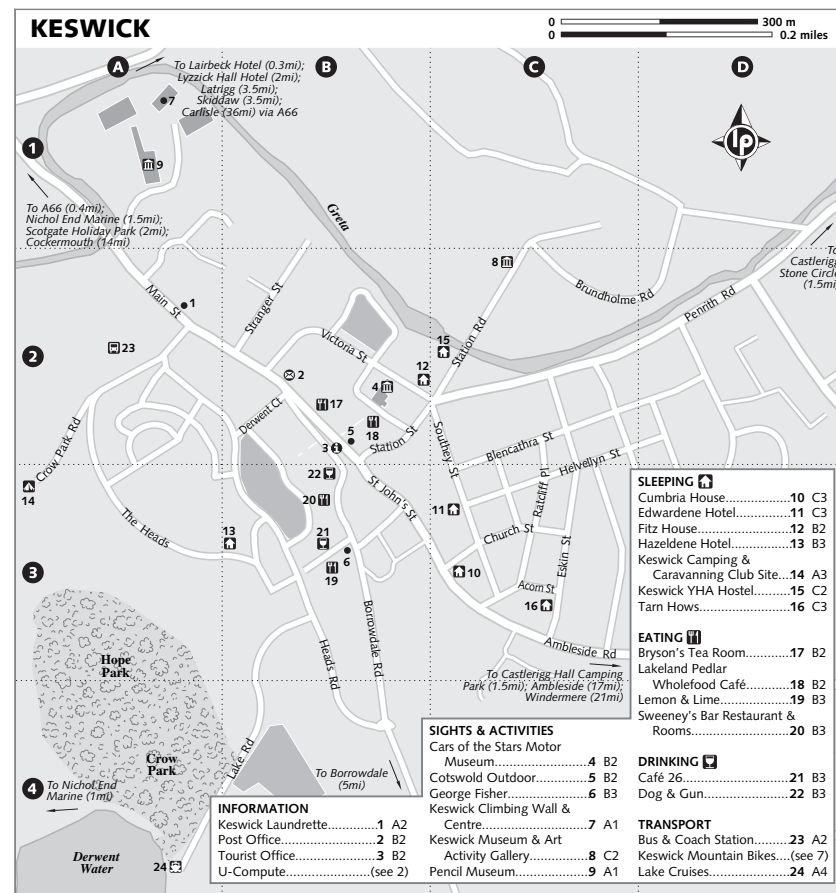
Getting There & Away

The only public transport to Wastwater is the **Wasdale Taxibus** (☎ 25308), which runs between Gosforth and Wasdale Head on Thursday, Saturday and Sunday – ring to book a seat.

KESWICK

☎ 017687 / pop 4958

Standing at the head of the island-studded, tree-lined lake of Derwent Water, the grey slate town of Keswick is the busiest tourist centre in the Northern Lakes, and a humming hub for outdoor activities of all descriptions, ranging from fell walking to water sports.



Several classic walking trails wind their way across the surrounding hilltops, including the long-distance Cumbria Way and the hilltop climbs to Catbells and Castle Crag, which makes Keswick a popular walking base; it's also famous as the place where graphite was discovered in the early 16th century, and for inventing the humble lead pencil.

Information

Keswick Laundrette (☎ 75448; Main St; ☒) 7.30am-7pm

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

Tourist office (☎ 72645; www.keswick.org; Moot Hall, Market Pl; ☒) 9.30am-5.30pm Apr-Oct, 9.30am-4.30pm Nov-Mar) Sells discounted launch tickets.

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

Sights

The pencil was first mass-produced in Keswick, and the curious **Pencil Museum** (☎ 73626; www.pencils.co.uk; Southy Works; admission £3; ☒) 9.30am-4pm explores its history through a variety of odd exhibits; the main draws are a reconstruction of the Seathwaite graphite mine and the world's largest pencil, measuring an impressive 8m from point to tip.

The **Cars of the Stars Motor Museum** (☎ 73757; www.carsofthestars.com; Standish St; admission £4; ☒) 10am-5pm is a must for motorheads. Its fleet of celebrity vehicles includes Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, Herbie the Love Bug, a Batmobile, KITT

WORTH THE TRIP

Wordsworth was born in the small market town of Cockermouth in 1770. His family home, now known as **Wordsworth House** (NT; ☎ 01900-824805; Main St; admission £4.70; 🕒 11am-4.30pm Tue-Sat Mar-Oct, plus Mon Jul & Aug), has been painstakingly restored by the National Trust 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 biographical poem *The Prelude*.

The X4/X5 bus travels from Workington via Cockermouth before travelling on to Keswick (one hour), Troutbeck (one hour 20 minutes) and Penrith (one hour 40 minutes). There are 16 daily buses Monday to Saturday, and six on Sunday.

from *Knightrider*, the A-Team van and the Delorean from *Back to the Future*, as well as a huge collection of Bond cars.

Keswick Museum & Art Gallery (☎ 73263; Station Rd; admission free; 🕒 10am-4pm Tue-Sat Apr-Oct) has remained largely unchanged since its opening in 1898. It's still decorated in typically austere Victorian style, with plenty of glass cases and dusty exhibits including a penny-farthing bike, a 'geological piano' and a 500-year-old cat.

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 breathtaking 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 certain – those prehistoric builders certainly knew a good site when they saw one.

Activities**BOAT TRIPS**

The **Keswick Launch Company** (☎ 72263; www.keswick-launch.co.uk) calls at seven landing stages around the lake: Ashness Gate, Lodore Falls, High Brandlehow, Low Brandlehow, Hawse End, Nichol End and back to Keswick. Boats leave every hour, clockwise and anticlockwise (return £6.50, 50 minutes); single fares to each jetty are also available. There are at least six daily boats from March to November, as well as an evening cruise at 7.30pm in summer (£7.50, one hour, May to September). There are only two daily sailings from November to March.

Nichol End Marine (☎ 73082; Nichol End; 🕒 9am-5pm) hires out kayaks, sailboards, rowboats and motor-boats.

WALKING

There are plenty of walks in the Keswick area. An old railway path (part of the C2C cycle

trail) leads up to Latrigg Fell; other popular routes travel to Walla Crag, Castle Crag and Skiddaw. The tourist office has booklets on many local walks, and organises a daily ramble that leaves from the main office at 10.15am (£8).

Sleeping**BUDGET**

Keswick YHA Hostel (☎ 0870 770 5894; keswick@yha.org.uk; Station Rd; dm £17.50; 🕒 📺 📶) One of the best hostels in the Lakes, recently refurbished and perched in a glorious spot overlooking the river and Fitz Park. Most of the beds are in small, modern dorms, some of which have private balconies above the river.

There are some excellent local camp sites around Keswick, including **Castlerigg Hall Camping Park** (☎ 74499; www.castlerigg.co.uk; sites £13.50-15.50) and **Keswick Camping & Caravanning Club Site** (☎ 72392; Crow Park Rd; sites £14-18) near the lake.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Tarn Hows (☎ 73217; www.tarnhow.co.uk; 3-5 Eskin St; s £29.50, d £59-64) Arguably the best of the B&Bs around Eskin St, this impressive B&B prides itself on its upmarket rooms, all of which are distinguished by a touch of baroque splendour – expect rich fabrics, wrought-iron bedsteads and plush quilts.

Cumbria House (☎ 73171; www.cumbriahouse.co.uk; 1 Derwent Water Pl; r £50-60; 🕒 📺 📶) This fine Georgian town house B&B has several warm-coloured bedrooms split over several floors, including three top-floor rooms that combine into a single suite. The massive breakfast has been voted the best in northwest England, and the house is admirably eco-friendly – it's carbon neutral and champions fair trade. The owners also organise guided walks.

Hazeldene Hotel (☎ 72106; www.hazeldene-hotel.co.uk; The Heads; d £70-80, ste £90; 🕒 📺) One of a string

of imposing villas overlooking Hope Park, with lots of excellent-value rooms finished in shades of lavender, turquoise and cream, as well as a glorious 'Dene Suite' with its own stone fireplace and sweeping views across the fells.

Lairbeck Hotel (☎ 73373; Vicarage Hill; www.lairbeckhotel-keswick.co.uk; d £94-123; 🕒 📺 📶) Ticking grandfather clocks, Oriental rugs and faded period photos sum up the atmosphere at this charmingly outmoded country hotel, where you almost expect some waistcoated gents to stroll out of the smoking room chugging on their Meerschaum pipes. Heavy curtains, dark-wood furniture and cast-iron beds are dotted around the spacious rooms, all of which continue the unmistakably Victorian vibe.

Lyzzick Hall Hotel (☎ 72277; www.lyzzickhall.co.uk; Underskiddaw; r £108; 🕒 📺 📶) Settings just don't get any better than at this fabulously situated hotel, huddled on the slopes of Skiddaw a couple of miles from Keswick. The plain rooms are unfussy, simply furnished and boast the kind of jaw-dropping Lakeland view you'd normally pay through the nose for; added extras include a heated pool and Jacuzzi, a country restaurant and a panoramic patio terrace that's out of this world.

Other reliable choices:

Edwardene Hotel (☎ 73586; 26 Southey St; www.edwardenehotel.com; s £35, d £68-72; 🕒 📺) Snug rooms in an end-of-terrace Victorian house.

Fitz House (☎ 74488; www.fitzhouse.co.uk; 47 Brun-dolme Tce; r £40-50; 🕒 📺) Lovely B&B with views across Fitz Park and a private guest conservatory.

Eating & Drinking

Bryson's Tea Room (☎ 72257; 42 Main St; cakes £2-5) Perhaps the most famous bakery in the Lakes, Bryson's Tea Room is renowned for its traditional fruitcakes, Battenburgs and chocolate sponges.

Lakeland Pedlar Wholefood Café (☎ 74492; www.lakelandpedlar.co.uk; Hendersons Yard; mains £3-8; 🕒 9am-5pm) This homely wholefood café-cum-bike shop dishes out generous portions of homemade soups, chunky sandwiches, Tex-Mex mains and crumbly cakes. Bikes are available for hire upstairs.

Lemon & Lime (☎ 73088; 31 Lake Rd; mains £6-14; 🕒 📺 lunch & dinner) This global bistro takes a mix-and-match approach to its wide-ranging cuisine – for starters you might choose falafels, spring rolls or Yakitori chicken, with Malay-

sian noodles, Thai curry or chicken schnitzel to follow.

Sweeney's Bar Restaurant & Rooms (☎ 772990; 18-20 Lake Rd; mains £7-12) This sophisticated wine brasserie-bar is the perfect marriage between modern style and classic Cumbrian cooking. Enjoy a predinner drink on one of the brown leather sofas before tucking into a plate of Cumberland sausage or steamed fish in the airy dining room.

Café 26 (☎ 80863; 26 Lake Rd) Knightsbridge comes to Keswick at this groovy wine bar, decked out with leather bench seats, burgundy paintwork and velour cushions. Oenophiles will appreciate the extensive wine list, and if you enjoy yourself just a little *too* much, there are several contemporary rooms above the bar.

Dog & Gun (☎ 73463; 2 Lake Rd; mains around £6) With its low ceilings, tobacco-tinted walls and wooden booths, this old Keswick boozier makes a fine place for a swift pint and a plate of nosh.

Getting There & Away

The ever-reliable bus 555/556 (the LakesLink) connects Keswick with Ambleside (40 minutes) Windermere (50 minutes) and Kendal (1½ hours) 10 times daily (including Sundays).

The hourly X4/X5 travels from Penrith to Workington via Keswick (17 daily Monday to Saturday, six on Sunday).

Getting Around

Off-road bikes can be hired from **Keswick Mountain Bikes** (☎ 75202; 1 Daleston Ct) and **Keswick Climbing Wall & Activity Centre** (☎ 72000; www.keswickclimbingwall.co.uk) for £15 to £17 per day.

BORROWDALE & BUTTERMERE VALLEYS

☎ 017687

Hemmed in by wooded fells, flat fields and pointy granite peaks, and sprinkled with the kind of remote farmhouses and sturdy cottages that grace many a Lakeland postcard, the valleys of Borrowdale and Buttermere are many people's idea of the quintessential Lake District landscape. Separated by the old Honister Pass – once the county's main slate-mining area – these twin valleys are hugely popular with walkers and hikers, with a network of walking trails and easy access to some of the region's highest peaks.

Borrowdale stretches for 6 miles from the western edge of Derwent Water to Honister

Pass. Buttermere runs northwest from Honister Pass along the shores of Buttermere Lake and Crummock Water towards Cockermouth.

Borrowdale

The main B5289 road tracks the edge of Derwent Water through the heart of the Borrowdale valley, dotted with small copses and rickety barns, and overlooked by the impressive peaks of Scafell and Scafell Pike.

A couple of miles south of Borrowdale is the small village of **Grange**. Nearby, the valley winds into the jagged ravine known as the **Jaws of Borrowdale**, a famous hiking spot with world-renowned views, especially from the 300m **Castle Crag**. From here, the road winds round into **Rosthwaite**, a rural hamlet scattered with stone cottages, slate-roofed farmhouses and a couple of hotels.

SLEEPING & EATING

Derwent Water YHA Hostel (☎ 0870 770 5792; derwentwater@yha.org.uk; Barrow House; dm £13.95; ☞ Feb–Nov, weekends Nov–Jan; (P) ☒) This lakeside mansion 2 miles south of Keswick once belonged to the local aristocrat Joseph Pocklington. It's now perhaps the poshest hostel in the entire Lake District, with huge rooms, children's playgrounds, a great TV lounge and even a manmade waterfall.

Borrowdale YHA Hostel (☎ 0870 770 5706; borrowdale@yha.org.uk; Longthwaite; dm £15.50; ☞ Feb–Dec) A little way up the valley is this excellent purpose-built, timber-clad hostel that specialises in walking trips and outdoor activities.

Scafell Hotel (☎ 77208; www.scafell.co.uk; d from £9; (P) ☒) This unpretentious Lakeland inn is slightly more affordable than its upmarket neighbours, and still boasts the same magnificent Borrowdale views. It's a popular overnight stop for walkers, thanks to its fuss-free rooms, inexpensive restaurant and the wonderful Riverside Bar – the village's only pub.

Borrowdale Gates Hotel (☎ 77204; www.borrowdale-gates.com; Grange; mains £16–22; d £134–180; (P) ☒) This seriously swish country mansion was built as a private residence in the mid 19th-century, and has now been converted into the finest hotel in the valley. The unusual P-shaped layout means all the rooms have slightly different views (ranging from pleasant to utterly awe-inspiring), but they're all cosily finished with antique chairs, heavy bedspreads and luxurious curtains.

Hazel Bank Country House (☎ 77248; www.hazelbankhotel.co.uk; r £158–178; (P) ☒) Another fine rural retreat built for a wealthy businessman in 1850, this award-winning stone-fronted hotel is accessed via its own humpbacked bridge and stands in spectacular private gardens. As you'd expect for the elevated price tag, the ambience is one of understated English luxury – silver trays, ruffled curtains and aristocratic furniture abound, and the service is first class.

Buttermere

From Honister pass the main road plunges down into the bowl-shaped Buttermere valley, skirting along the lakeshore all the way to Buttermere village, 4 miles from Honister and 9 miles from Keswick. From here, the B5289 cuts north along the eastern shore of Crummock Water.

Buttermere YHA Hostel (☎ 0870 770 5736; buttermere@yha.org.uk; dm £17.50) is a spectacularly situated hostel in a slate-stone house above Buttermere Lake, with views of Red Pike and High Stile.

The **Fish Hotel** (☎ 70253; www.fish-hotel.co.uk; 2-night minimum stay d £144; (P) ☒) is famous as the home of the legendary beauty Mary Robinson, the so-called 'Maid of Buttermere', whose admirers included Wordsworth, Coleridge and de Quincey, as well as notorious conman John Hatfield, who passed himself off as an army colonel and an MP in order to win her hand in marriage. Melvyn Bragg used the tale as the basis for his novel *The Maid Of Buttermere*.

The **Bridge Hotel** (☎ 70252; www.bridge-hotel.com; r incl dinner £130–190; (P) ☒) has a choice of standard rooms and some seriously lavish suites, complete with hill-view balconies and antique furniture.

Getting There & Away

Bus 79 (the Borrowdale Rambler) provides a regular service (at least hourly) from Keswick bus station to Seatoller at the foot of the Honister Pass, with eight buses on Sunday.

From Easter to October bus 77/77A – the Honister Rambler – makes the round trip from Keswick to Buttermere via Borrowdale and the Honister Pass four times daily. The Honister Dayrider pass costs £6.

ULLSWATER & AROUND

☎ 017684

Stretching in a glassy arc for 7.5 miles between Pooley Bridge and Patterdale, the tranquil lake of Ullswater is the second largest in the Lakes

after Windermere, and was one of Wordsworth's favourites. During an afternoon walk along the wooded shores of Ullswater with his sister Dorothy, William was inspired to write his 'Daffodils' poem, which begins with the immortal refrain, 'I wandered lonely as a cloud...' It's still an inspiring place, where quaint steamers chug along the lake against a backdrop of majestic hills and woodland groves, and although the western edge gets busy in summer, you can usually escape the traffic along the eastern side.

Ullswater Information Centre (☎ 82414; glenriddingt@lake-district.gov.uk; Becksides car park; ☞ 9am–5.30pm Apr–Oct) has plenty of tips on accommodation and local hikes.

Ullswater 'Steamers' (☎ 82229; www.ullswater-steamers.co.uk; adult return £7.40–10.30) plies the lake from Pooley Bridge to Glenridding via Howtown. The first paddle steamers were launched on Ullswater in 1859 but the current 19th-century vessels, *Lady* (in operation since 1887) and *Raven* (since 1889), have been converted to conventional power. A new steamer, the *Lady Wakefield*, was launched in September 2006.

Sleeping & Eating

Helvellyn YHA Hostel (☎ 0870 770 5862; helvellyn@yha.org.uk; Greenside; dm £11.95; ☞ Easter–Oct, phone ahead at other times) This high-altitude hostel is perched 174m above Glenridding and is mainly used by walkers setting out for Helvellyn. Guided walks can be arranged through the hostel staff.

Mossrag (☎ 82500; www.mossrag.co.uk; s £40, d £56–70; (P) ☒) A reliable B&B near the banks of Glenridding Beck, offering pleasant rooms in peaceful shades of white and peach.

Pooley Bridge Inn (☎ 86215; www.pooleybridgeinn.co.uk; d £65–90; (P) ☒) This comfy inn has a whiff of Alsatian atmosphere thanks to its hanging baskets, whitewashed exterior and wooden balconies. The rooms are pleasant and attractively rustic, with the odd brass horseshoe or watercolour print to cheer up the décor; 1st-floor bedrooms all have private balconies.

Glenridding Hotel (☎ 82228; www.glenriddinghotels.co.uk; d £120–130; (P) ☒) This modern hotel is owned by the Best Western chain, so the standard rooms are a little bland and anonymous; for something with a little more character, you can pay more for one of the feature rooms, which come with luxurious extras such as four-poster beds and duo baths.

Inn on the Lake (☎ 82444; www.innonthelakeullswater.co.uk; d £128–184; (P) ☒) Huge, extravagant rooms, regal quilts, bubbling Jacuzzis and palatial beds sum up this lakeside beauty, by far the best hotel anywhere near Ullswater. The bedrooms offer a choice of mountain or lake views, and you'll be more than happy with either.

Park Foot Camping (☎ 86309; www.parkfootullswater.co.uk; Howtown Rd; sites £10–21) is nestled on the edge of Ullswater, a mile south of Pooley Bridge. Alternatively, try **Hillcroft Park** (☎ 486363; Roe Head Lane; sites from £10), a little closer to the village.

Getting There & Around

Bus 108 runs from Penrith to Patterdale stops at Pooley Bridge and Glenridding (five daily Monday to Saturday). Bus 517 runs from Bowness Pier to Glenridding (three daily late July to September, weekends only end March to July).

CUMBRIAN COAST

Most visitors never make the trek out to the Cumbrian coast, and with such a wealth of spectacular sights to discover around the Central Lakes, it's not really surprising. But they're missing out on one of the county's hidden gems – a sweeping panorama of gentle fields, coastal trails and sandy bays, dotted with some of Cumbria's oldest and most historic towns. The Edwardian holiday resort of Grange-over-Sands and the medieval village of Cartmel are both within easy reach of Morecambe Bay, on the county's southern coast, while on the western coast you'll find the Roman settlement of Ravenglass – starting point for the classic La'al Ratty steam railway – and the ancient port of Whitehaven, as well as the controversial nuclear reprocessing plant at Sellafield.

Getting Around

The Cumbrian Coast railway line loops 120 miles from Carlisle to Lancaster (both on the main line between London and Glasgow). Trains run hourly, and a single costs £21.

CARTMEL PRIORY

The tiny village of Cartmel is known for three things – its beautiful 12th-century priory, its miniature racecourse and its world-famous sticky toffee pudding, which is produced at

the **Cartmel Village Shop** (☎ 015395-36201; www.stickytoffeepudding.co.uk; The Square; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 10am-4.30pm Sun) and sold all over Cumbria.

Cartmel Priory (☎ 015395-36261; ☎ 9am-5.30pm May-Oct, 9am-3.30pm Nov-Apr) was one of the few priories to escape demolition during the dissolution. Light pours in through the glorious 15th-century **east window**, illuminating the many tombs set into the flagstoned floor; look out for the engravings of skulls and hourglasses, intended to remind the pious of their own inescapable mortality.

Bus 532 runs from Grange to Cartmel (30 minutes, four daily).

FURNESS ABBEY

The rosy ruins of **Furness Abbey** (EH; ☎ 01229-823420; admission £3.40; ☎ 10am-6pm Apr-Sep, 10am-5pm Oct, 10am-4pm Wed-Sun Nov-Mar) are 1.5 miles north of Barrow-in-Furness and 8.5 miles from Ulverston. Founded in the 12th century, the abbey became one of the most powerful in the north of England, but finally met an ignominious end in 1537 during the dissolution; only the bell-tower and part of the north and south transepts are still standing. An audio guide is included in the admission price.

Bus 6 or 6A from Ulverston to Barrow-in-Furness passes by the abbey.

RAVENGLASS & AROUND

It's difficult to imagine the tiny village of Ravenglass, a quiet cluster of seaside houses 27 miles north of Barrow, as an important Roman port. The Romans were drawn to its sheltered harbour, but all that remains of their substantial fort are the walls of a 4th-century **bath house**, half a mile from the train station down a signposted track.

The **Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway** (☎ 01229-717171; www.ravenglass-railway.co.uk; adult £9), affectionately known as La'al Ratty, chugs along a beautiful 7-mile track into Eskdale and the foothills of the Lake District mountains. There's an interesting **museum** exploring the history of the railway beside the car park.

A mile south of Ravenglass is **Muncaster Castle** (☎ 01229-717614; www.muncaster.co.uk; gardens £6.50, castle £2.50; ☎ gardens 10.30am-6pm or dusk, castle noon-5pm Sun-Fri), built around the original 14th-century *pele* tower and later expanded during the 19th century. Its celebrated features include an imposing great hall and an extraordinary octagonal library; it's also stuffed with spooks, including the spirit of Tom Fool, once a court jester at the

WORTH THE TRIP

Ratty Arms (☎ 01229-717676; ☎ daily) Stepping into this extraordinary pub on the platform of Ravenglass Station is like stumbling onto the set of *Brief Encounter*. It's a relic from a bygone age; sepia-tinted photos and faded adverts cover the pub's tobacco-stained walls, railway memorabilia is scattered around the main bar, and there's a little galleried dining area that looks for all the world like it's been lifted straight from a 1950s train carriage. There's local ale on tap and a daily blackboard filled with non-sense pub food, but it's the unforgettable atmosphere that's the real attraction. All aboard...

castle. The surrounding gardens also contain an ornamental maze and an owl centre.

Five miles from Ravenglass is **Sellafield**, Britain's largest nuclear reprocessing plant. Long a source of controversy, Sellafield is still a huge local employer, though it's scheduled to be decommissioned over the next decade. In the meantime, the **visitor centre** (☎ 019467-27027; www.sellafeld.com; admission free; ☎ 10am-6pm Apr-Oct, 10am-4pm Nov-Mar) does its best to bring out nuclear power's more entertaining side.

Ravenglass is on the Cumbrian Coast Line, with frequent links north and south along the coast. 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).

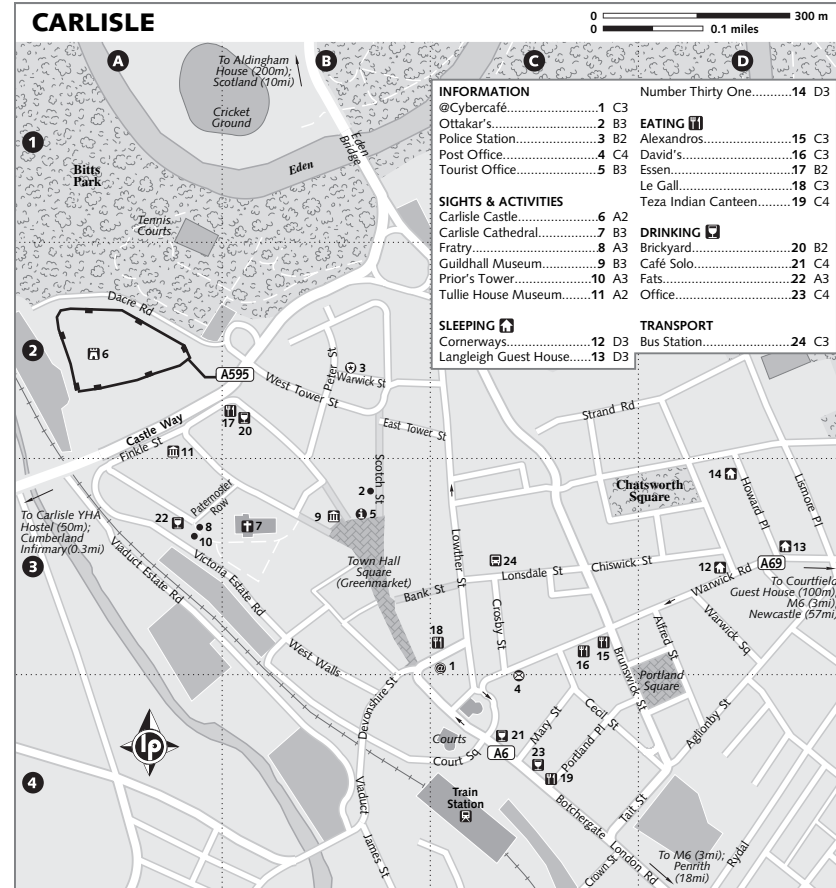
NORTH & EAST CUMBRIA

Many visitors speed through the northern and eastern reaches of Cumbria in a headlong dash for the Central Lakes, and if you're arriving by road or rail, chances are you'll skip this region altogether. But that's a shame, as this is an area that's well worth exploring in its own right – a bleakly beautiful landscape of isolated farms, barren heaths and solid hilltop towns, cut through by the Roman-built barrier of Hadrian's Wall.

CARLISLE

☎ 01228 / pop 70,409

Flung out on the very edge of England, the fortress city of Carlisle is certainly no stranger



to conflict: throughout its 2000-year history it's been the site of more sieges, skirmishes and sackings than almost anywhere else in the country. The city's massive castle still stands as a reminder of its tempestuous past. Carlisle is also home to Cumbria's only cathedral, built from the same rosy red sandstone that characterises the castle and many of the city's houses; during the 18th and 19th centuries, Carlisle became a bustling hub of the Industrial Revolution, and many of its neat redbrick terraces grew up to house the huge numbers of workers needed to keep the factories and mills running. These days, most of the heavy industries have moved on, and Carlisle is better known for its lively nightlife and busy shops, and as a handy base for exploring the Northern Lakes.

History

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

The English continued to develop Carlisle as a military stronghold throughout the Middle Ages, constructing the city walls, citadels and the great gates. During the Civil War, Royalist Carlisle was an important strategic base; the city was eventually taken, battered

and starving, by the Roundhead Scottish army after a nine-month siege.

Peace only came to Carlisle with the Restoration. The city's future as an industrial centre was sealed with the arrival of the railways and the first cotton mills during the Industrial Revolution.

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

@Cybercafé (☎ 512308; www.atcybercafe.co.uk; 8-10 Devonshire St; per hr £3; ☎ 10am-10pm Mon-Sun)

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

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

Police station (☎ 528191) Just north of Town Hall Sq off Scotch St.

Post office (20-34 Warwick Rd)

Tourist office (☎ 625600; www.historic-carlisle.org.uk; Greenmarket; internet access per 15min £1; ☎ 9.30am-5pm Mon-Sat, 10.30am-4pm Sun) Offers a free accommodation-booking service for personal callers.

Sights & Activities

CARLISLE CASTLE

English Heritage's rust-red **Carlisle Castle** (EH; ☎ 591922; admission £4.10; ☎ 9.30am-5pm Apr-Sep, 10am-4pm Oct-Mar) was built on the site of Celtic and Roman fortresses. The Norman keep was built in 1092 by William Rufus, and Mary Queen of Scots was briefly imprisoned here in 1568 after losing the Scottish throne. A maze of passages and chambers winds around the castle, and there are great views from the ramparts – you can also see some stones in the dungeon that prisoners licked to keep themselves hydrated. The castle also houses the **Kings Own Royal Border Regiment Museum**, which explores the history of Cumbria's Infantry Regiment. There are daily castle tours (£1.50) from April to September.

CARLISLE CATHEDRAL

The city's red-sandstone **cathedral** (☎ 548151; donation £2; ☎ 7.30am-6.15pm Mon-Sat, 7.45am-5pm Sun)

was originally constructed as a priory church in 1122. During the 1644–45 siege by parliamentarian troops, two-thirds of the nave was torn down to help repair the city wall and castle. Serious restoration didn't begin until 1853, but a surprising amount survives, including the east window and part of the original Norman nave.

Surrounding the cathedral are other priory relics, including the 16th-century **Fratry** and the **Prior's Tower**.

TULLIE HOUSE MUSEUM

This excellent **museum** (☎ 534781; www.tulliehouse.co.uk; Castle St; admission £5.20; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, 11am-5pm Sun Jul & Aug, 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, noon-5pm Sun Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct, 10-4pm Mon-Sat, noon-4pm Sun Nov-Mar) brings Carlisle's history to life with exhibitions exploring the foundation of the city, life under Roman rule and the development of modern Carlisle. The museum's collection of exhibits includes a Bronze Age spear-mould, a Saxon sword and lots of artefacts recovered from local Viking burial sites and Hadrian's Wall.

GUILDHALL MUSEUM

This tiny **museum** (☎ 532781; Greenmarket; admission free; ☎ noon-4.30pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct) is housed in a 15th-century town house that was later used by Carlisle's trade guilds. The various exhibits dotted around its wonky floors include a ceremonial mace, the city's stocks and an intriguing section of exposed wall showing the building's traditional wattle-and-daub construction.

Tours

Open Book Visitor Guiding (☎ 670578; www.guidedtours.co.uk) offers tours of Carlisle and the surrounding area from April to September, including visits to Carlisle Castle and Hadrian's Wall.

Sleeping

Carlisle YHA Hostel (☎ 0870 770 5752; dee.carruthers@unn.ac.uk; Bridge Lane; dm £17.50; ☎ Jul-Sep) The old Theakston Brewery has been converted into student digs for the university; rooms are usually available during the summer holidays.

Courtfield Guest House (☎ 522767; mdawes@courtfieldhouse.fsnet.co.uk; 169 Warwick Rd; s/d from £25/50; ☎) Another fine redbrick house in the guesthouse-heavy area around Warwick Rd, distinguished by its great-value rooms and friendly owners.

Cornerways (☎ 521733; www.cornerwaysguesthouse.co.uk; 107 Warwick Rd; s/d from £30/50; ☎ ☎) This Grade II-listed corner house still boasts its original Victorian tiled hallway and much of its original cornicing; the rooms are simple and inviting, with smart quilted bedspreads and pine furniture, although not all come with en suite.

Langleigh Guest House (☎ 530440; www.langleighhouse.co.uk; 6 Howard Pl; s/d £30/60; ☎ ☎) Victorian grandeur is the watchword at this beautifully appointed B&B, which positively brims with polished furniture, leather armchairs, oil paintings and gilt mirrors. More rooms are offered in a second town house along the street.

Aldingham House (☎ 522554; www.aldinghamhouse.co.uk; 1 Eden Mount; s/d £50/75; ☎ ☎) Just north of the city centre, this lovely B&B has three bedrooms splashed in checks, spots and stripes and furnished with rich fabrics and muted lighting. The sumptuous breakfast includes Loch Fyne kippers, crumpets and fresh smoothies.

Number Thirty One (☎ 597080; www.number31.free.servers.com; 31 Howard Pl; s/d from £60/85; ☎ ☎) An utterly ravishing B&B-cum-boutique hotel, with three bedrooms furnished with invention, wit and idiosyncratic style. Rooms range from an Oriental den to a cool blue boudoir, and the house is crammed with brassy antiques, period photos and Victorian ephemera. Why can't all B&Bs be like this?

Eating

Alexandros (☎ 592227; 68 Warwick Rd; meze £3-6, mains £9-14; ☎ dinner Mon-Sat) A lively Greek restaurant serving up huge, authentic plates of meze, seared chicken kebabs and grilled octopus.

Le Gall (☎ 818388; 7 Devonshire St; mains £5-8; ☎ lunch & dinner) Don't let the name fool you – this buzzy little bistro doesn't just do Franco-flavoured cuisine. The eclectic menu takes in flavours from practically everywhere, so you should be able to find something to take your fancy, whether it's an Italian panini or a Mexican fajita.

Essen (☎ 536336; 6-8 Fisher St; mains from £6; ☎ lunch & dinner) This groovy new bar-diner is the newest entry on Carlisle's culinary scene, split over two floors and decked out in spare, contemporary style. There's a light lunch menu or a more extensive evening menu offering mainly fish, chicken and fusion flavours.

Teza Indian Canteen (☎ 525111; 4a English Gate Plaza; mains £8-12; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) The good

old Indian comes crashing into the 20th century at this utterly contemporary restaurant. Forget flock wallpaper, fish-tanks and piped sitars – here it's all about clean lines, industrial styling and wire-frame chairs, with a menu of Indian standards supplemented by 'contemporary mains' such as *narangi nu duck*, marinated in cloves and orange juice.

David's (☎ 523578; 62 Warwick Rd; mains £10-18; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) Arguably Carlisle's top table, this refined French-British restaurant offers a carefully composed menu of *haute cuisine* dishes such as roast venison and monkfish in Parma ham.

Drinking

Loads of designer bars and drinking holes have sprung up around the newly renovated Botchergate area, so head there if you're after some after-dark action.

Office (☎ 404303; Botchergate) Sleek and chic, this is one of the favourite hang-outs for Carlisle's hip set, kitted out in urban style with cube lights, razor-sharp tables and a massive industrial bar. Breakfast, hip-hop and soul spin on the turntables.

Fats (☎ 511774; 48 Abbey St; ☎ 11am-11pm) Hidden away near the cathedral, this swish open-plan bar is another fine place for a night on the tiles, with a huge menu of 'classic' and 'bespoke' cocktails.

Café Solo (☎ 631600; 1 Botchergate) For something rather less exclusive, this corner coffee bar has a vaguely Spanish vibe and serves great coffee by day, and cool Sol beers by night.

Brickyard (☎ 512220; 14 Fisher St) Carlisle's main venue for gigs and live music, housed in the former Memorial Hall.

Getting There & Away

BUS

Carlisle is Cumbria's main transport hub. Direct National Express buses travel to London (£30.50, six hours, two direct daily, with extra buses via Preston and Birmingham), Glasgow (£15.60, two hours, 13 daily) and Manchester (£22, three hours, six daily).

Local buses include bus 554 to Keswick (one hour, three daily), where you can catch the 555 LakesLink into the central Lake District. The 104 travels 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

Regular trains run from London Euston (£111, four hours, nine to 12 daily).

Carlisle is the terminus for five scenic railways (call ☎ 0845 748 4950 for timetable details and information on Day Ranger passes):

Cumbrian Coast Line Follows the coastline to Lancaster (£21, 3½ hours), with views over the Irish Sea.

Glasgow–Carlisle Line The main route to Glasgow passes through spectacular Scottish landscape (£30.50, 1½ hours).

Lakes Line Branches off the main north–south line at Oxenholme near Kendal for Windermere (£17.50, 1½ hours).

Settle–Carlisle Line Cuts southeast across the Yorkshire Dales (£14.45, 1½ hours).

Tyne Valley Line Follows Hadrian’s Wall to Newcastle-upon-Tyne (£10.60, 1½ hours).

PENRITH

☎ 01768 / pop 14,966

Nestled at the head of the lush Eden Valley, the sturdy redbrick market town of Penrith was once the capital of Cumbria, and it’s still an important commercial centre, with a bustling high street and a network of colonnaded arcades packed with outdoors shops, cafés, tearooms and traditional grocery stores. High above the town stands Beacon Fell, where beacons have been lit in times of emergency since the days of Henry VIII, and where sentries were once posted to warn of Border raids.

Information

Library (☎ 242100; St Andrew’s Churchyard; ☎ Mon–Sat)

Tourist office (☎ 867466; pen.tic@eden.gov.uk; Middlegate; ☎ 9.30am–5pm Mon–Sat, 1–4.45pm Sun) Also houses a small town museum.

Sights

Penrith Castle (☎ 7.30am–9pm Easter–Oct, 7.30am–4.30pm Oct–Easter) was originally built by William Strickland (later Bishop of Carlisle and Archbishop of Canterbury) to resist Scottish raids, one of which razed the town in 1345. The castle was later expanded by Richard, Duke of Gloucester – better known as Richard III – but fell into disrepair in the 16th century.

Penrith’s name derives from an old Celtic word meaning ‘red fell’, and most of the town’s buildings are built from the same rusted sandstone, 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 that suppos-

edly mark his grave are actually the weathered remains of Celtic crosses.

Sleeping

Hornby Hall (☎ 891114; www.hornbyhall.co.uk; Brougham; s/d £30/80, tw £50–76; (P) ☒) Three miles south of Penrith in the hamlet of Brougham, this amber-stoned 16th-century mansion house still has a stunning assortment of medieval and Victorian features, including a huge dining hall, a massive cast-iron cooking range and a spiral stone staircase that dates from the days of Columbus. The rooms are quaint, sunny and delightfully simple.

Brandelhow (☎ 864470; www.brandelhowguesthouse.co.uk; 1 Portland Pl; s £30, d or tw £60; ☒) Just a few rooms are on offer at this dignified town house at the head of Portland Pl, all furnished in fairly typical style with lashings of pine and magnolia paint, as well as the odd antique rocking chair and wrought-iron bed. Tea and homemade cake greets guests on their arrival – try the Bootle gingerbread.

Brooklands (☎ 863395; www.brooklandsguesthouse.com; 2 Portland Pl; s £30–35 d £60–70; ☒) This three-floored Victorian residence houses an array of top-drawer rooms; some feature huge pine four-posters and scarlet fabric bedspreads, while others opt for more modest tints of cream and apple green. Best of all is the flashy, fluffy-pillowed suite, which comes with brass bedstead and wall-mounted plasma TV.

George Hotel (☎ 862696; www.georgehotelpenrith.co.uk; Devonshire St; s £55–71, d £96–156; (P) ☒) Smack bang in the middle of town is Penrith’s historic coaching inn. Pelmeted drapes, rich country furnishings and thick carpets find their way into every room, although they lack that all-important personal touch.

Eating

No 15 Café Bar (☎ 867453; 15 Victoria Rd; lunches £6–8; ☎ daily) Fifteen reasons to visit this café-bar-gallerie are chalked up on the blackboard behind the counter, but you won’t need much persuasion. It’s Penrith’s best place for lunch, cakes and coffee, with a light-filled dining room and displays of local photography and artwork.

George Hotel (☎ 862696; Devonshire St; mains from £11; ☎ lunch & dinner) For a sit-down meal in Penrith, you can’t do much better than the good old George, which has been feeding hungry wayfarers for well over two centuries. Country dishes are very much the mainstays here, served up in a semiformal dining room

embellished with candles, country prints and Victorian frosted glass.

our picks **Yanwath Gate Inn** (☎ 862886; Yanwath; mains £14–19) Two miles south of Penrith, and affectionately known to locals as the Yat, this wonderful 17th-century inn has scooped up a clutch of national pub awards for its imaginative cooking and creative use of local produce – Fell-bred lamb, organic guinea fowl and Bessyback trout all feature on the varied menu, and the interior is crammed with oak-beamed, stone-walled character.

Getting There & Away
BUS

The bus station is northeast of the centre, off Sandgate. Bus 104 runs between Penrith and Carlisle (45 minutes, 16 daily Monday to Saturday, nine on Sunday).

Bus X4/X5 connects Penrith to the Lakes and the Cumbrian coast hourly Monday to

Saturday and six times on Sunday, calling at Keswick and Cockermouth before terminating at Workington.

TRAIN

Penrith has frequent connections to Carlisle (£6.40, 20 minutes, hourly) and Lancaster (£11.50, 50 to 60 minutes, hourly).

AROUND PENRITH
Rhedeg Discovery Centre

Cunningly disguised as a Lakeland hill 2 miles west of Penrith, **Rhedeg** (☎ 01768-686000; www.rhedeg.com; 1 film or attraction £5.95; ☎ 10am–6pm) houses a large-screen IMAX cinema and the Helly Hansen National Mountaineering Exhibition, which includes a collection of artefacts belonging to George Mallory (the British mountaineer who died climbing Everest in 1924).

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

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