
WALKING THE LAKE DISTRICT FELS

LANGDALE

THE LANGDALE PIKES AND BOWFELL

by MARK RICHARDS

CICERONE

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Front cover: *Walkers approaching Crinkle Crag backed by Pike o'Blisco*

Title page: *Pike o'Stickle from above Langdale Combe*

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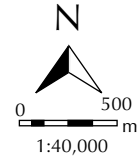
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


















Typical rough ridge trail on Crinkle Crag

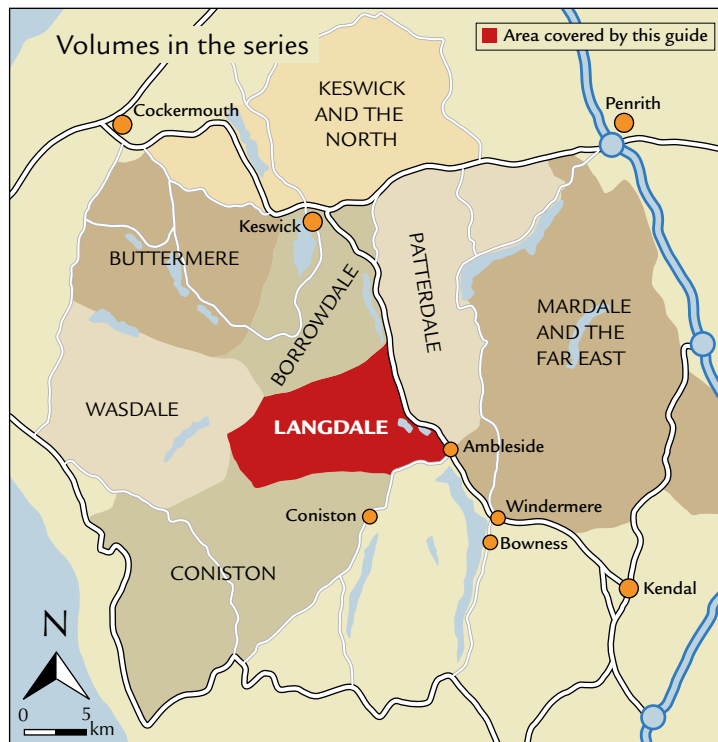
Key to route maps and topos

-  **Route on a defined path**
-  **Route on an intermittent or undefined path**
-  **Fell summit featured in this guide (on maps)**
-  **Fell summit featured in this guide (on maps)**
-  **Route number (on maps)**
-  **Starting point**
-  **Route number (on topos)**



Harvey map legend

- | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|
|  | Lake, small tarn, pond |  | Contour (15m interval) |
|  | River, footbridge | | Index contour (75m interval) |
|  | Wide stream | | Auxiliary contour |
|  | Narrow stream | | Scree, spoil heap |
|  | Peat hags | | Boulder field |
|  | Marshy ground | | Scattered rock and boulders |
| | Contours change from brown to grey where the ground is predominantly rocky outcrops, small crags and other bare rock. | | Predominantly rocky ground |
|  | Improved pasture | | Major crag, large boulder |
|  | Rough pasture | | O.S. trig pillar, large cairn |
|  | Fell or moorland | | Spot height (from air survey) |
|  | Open forest or woodland |  | Dual carriageway |
|  | Dense forest or woodland |  | Main road (fenced) |
|  | Felled or new plantation |  | Minor road (unfenced) |
|  | Forest ride or firebreak |  | Track or forest road |
|  | Settlement |  | Footpath or old track |
|  | Boundary, maintained |  | Intermittent path |
|  | Boundary, remains |  | Long distance path |
| | On moorland, walls, ruined walls and fences are shown. For farmland, only the outer boundary wall or fence is shown. |  | Powerline, pipeline |
| | |  | Building, ruin or sheepfold, shaft |
| | | | The representation of a road, track or footpath is no evidence of the existence of a right of way. |



Thirlmere from the north ridge of Steel Fell (photo: Maggie Allan)



AUTHOR PREFACE

This land of living dreams we call the Lake District is a cherished blessing to know, love and share. As we go about our daily routines, we may take a fleeting moment to reflect that someone, somewhere, will be tramping up a lonely gill or along an airy ridge, peering from a lofty summit or gazing across a wind-blown tarn and taking lingering solace from its timeless beauty. The trappings of modern life thrust carpet and concrete under our feet, and it is always wonderful to walk the region's sheep trods and rough trails, and to imprint our soles upon the fells. This series sets out to give you the impetus and inspiration to make space in your schedule to explore them time and again, in myriad different ways.

However, the regular paths of long tradition deserve our care. Progressively many of the main paths are being re-set with cobbles and pitching by organisations such as Fix the Fells, to whose work you have contributed by buying this guide. But in many instances, the best consideration we can give these pathways is rest. The modern fellwanderer should show a new 'green' awareness by choosing to tread lightly on the land and to find new ways around the hills. One of the underlying impulses of this guide is to protect these beloved fells by presenting a diversity of route options for each and every fell – and also, in this new edition, recommending 'fell-friendly' routes to each summit which are less susceptible to erosion.

Another feature of this latest incarnation of Fellranger, apart from the smaller size to slip in your pocket or pack, is the addition of a selection of inspiring ridge routes at the end of each volume for those of you who like to spend a little longer with your head and feet in the heavenly realms, relishing the summit views and the connections between the felltops, as well as some accompanying online resources for readers with a digital bent.

STARTING POINTS

| Location | | | GR NY... | Access | Fell ascents described from here |
|----------|------------------|--|------------|--------|--|
| 1 | Seathwaite | verge parking S of Seathwaite Bridge and before Seathwaite Farm, at the head of Borrowdale | 235 123 | FP | Esk Pike, Great End, Scafell Pike |
| 2 | Stonethwaite | large layby, before the village, at the head of Borrowdale | 261 139 | FP, B | Bowfell, Esk Pike, High Raise, Rossett Pike, Thunacar Knott |
| 3 | Steel End | pay-and-display car park, head of Thirlmere | 321 130 | PP, B | Calf Crag, High Raise, Steel Fell |
| 4 | Dunmail Raise | large layby near summit | 329 111 | FP, B | Steel Fell |
| 5 | Winterseeds | bus stop on A591, 1.5km N of Grasmere | 337 088 | B | Calf Crag, Gibson Knott, Helm Crag, Steel Fell |
| 6 | A591 layby | large layby, 1km N of Grasmere | 337 086 | FP, B | Blea Rigg, Calf Crag, Gibson Knott, Helm Crag, High Raise, Sergeant Man, Silver How, Tarn Crag |
| 7 | Broadgate Meadow | NP car park, Grasmere | 338 078 | PP, B | Blea Rigg, Calf Crag, Gibson Knott, Helm Crag, High Raise, Sergeant Man, Silver How, Tarn Crag |
| 8 | Red Bank Road | council car park, Grasmere | 335 073 | PP, B | Blea Rigg, Calf Crag, Gibson Knott, Helm Crag, High Raise, Sergeant Man, Silver How, Tarn Crag |
| 9 | Stock Lane | NP car park, Grasmere | 339 073 | PP, B | Blea Rigg, Calf Crag, Gibson Knott, Helm Crag, High Raise, Sergeant Man, Silver How, Tarn Crag |
| 10 | White Moss | 2 private car parks, either side of the road, by Rydal Water | 350 065 | PP, B | Loughrigg Fell |
| 11 | Pelter Bridge | NP car park, Rydal | 365 059 | PP, B | Loughrigg Fell |
| 12 | Rydal Road | council car park, Ambleside | 375 047 | PP, B | Loughrigg Fell |
| 13 | Clappersgate | large layby on B5286 (and bus stop nearby on the A593) | 365 033 | FP, B | Loughrigg Fell |
| 14 | Tarn Foot | parking at Tarn Foot Farm, by Loughrigg Tarn | 345 039 | FP | Loughrigg Fell |

| Location | | | GR NY... | Access | Fell ascents described from here |
|----------|----------------------------|--|------------|-----------|---|
| 15 | High Close | NT car park by the youth hostel | 337 053 | FP | Loughrigg Fell, Silver How |
| 16 | Elterwater | NT car park by the river (also free rough parking outside village) | 328 048 | NT, B | Lingmoor Fell, Silver How |
| 17 | Stickle Ghyll | Langdale NP car park and Stickle Ghyll NT car park | 295 063 | PP, NT, B | Blea Rigg, Bowfell, Harrison Stickle, High Raise, Lingmoor Fell, Loft Crag, Pavey Ark, Sergeant Man, Silver How, Thunacar Knott |
| 18 | Old Dungeon Ghyll | NT car park, head of Great Langdale | 286 061 | NT, B | Bowfell, Crinkle Crag, Esk Pike, Loft Crag, Pike o'Blisco, Pike o'Stickle, Rossett Pike, Scafell Pike |
| 19 | Three Shires Inn | verge parking to the E of the inn, Little Langdale | 318 034 | FP | Lingmoor Fell |
| 20 | Blea Tarn | NT car park above Little Langdale | 296 043 | NT | Lingmoor Fell, Pike o'Blisco |
| 21 | Castle Howe | rough parking for a few cars, 0.5km W of Castle Howe, E end of Wrynose Pass | 292 032 | FP | Pike o'Blisco |
| 22 | Wrynose Pass | rough layby parking on both sides of the road at the crest of the pass | 277 027 | FP | Cold Pike, Crinkle Crag, Pike o'Blisco |
| 23 | Wrynose Bottom | rough verge parking on the north side, just past Wrynose Breast, W end of Wrynose Pass | 266 023 | FP | Cold Pike |
| 24 | Cockley Beck Bridge | layby between Wrynose and Hardknott Passes | 246 016 | FP | Bowfell, Crinkle Crag, Little Stand |
| 25 | Brotherilkeld | layby at the foot of Hardknott Pass | 210 012 | FP | Bowfell, Crinkle Crag, Esk Pike, Scafell Pike |
| 26 | Wha House | small car park N of Wha House Farm, head of Eskdale | 200 009 | FP | Scafell Pike |
| 27 | Wasdale Head | NT car park | 183 075 | NT | Scafell Pike |
| 28 | Wasdale Head Village Green | lots of rough parking (but fills up in season) | 186 085 | FP | Great End, Scafell Pike |

FP – free parking

PP – pay parking (NP – National Park)

NT – National Trust (free to members)

B – on a bus route (in season)



INTRODUCTION

Valley bases

Two valleys dominate the area covered by this volume – Great Langdale and the Rydal/Grasmere catchment of the River Rothay. Since the birth of outdoor tourism Ambleside has been pivotal to the Langdale and Grasmere fells, and remains so. It's a rising crescendo of mountain drama to suit all levels of ability and aspiration. From the charming delights of Lingmoor and Loughrigg, which boasts the greatest concentration of paths per square mile of any Lakeland fell, to the majestic circle of summits rising above Mickleden, and beyond to Scafell Pike, these are the realms of serious mountaineering ambition.

Despite the narrow roads there is excellent access and car parking. And once you set forth from your car or bus stop you quickly escape the crowds, finding peace, beauty and worthy challenge on fells that are both steep and craggy. Walks from the Vale of Grasmere to Silver How, Helm Crag and Easedale Tarn draw you into a fabulous arena of wildness that extends higher and higher, culminating on the Langdale Pikes and High Raise. Fellwalkers ultimately cannot resist the wonderful combination of heights at the head of Great Langdale itself: Pike o'Blisco, Crinkle Crag and Bowfell, from where the Scafell massif can be seen in true perspective across the wild head of Eskdale. You can even contemplate climbing Scafell Pike from the Old

Dungeon Ghyll – a serious mountain day but enormously rewarding, as is all the fellwalking in this corner of Lakeland.

Facilities

The majority of walkers visiting Great and Little Langdale base themselves in Ambleside, a popular holiday destination for well over a century and well supplied with all styles of accommodation. There are also plenty of options in and around Grasmere and Rydal if that is the valley you are exploring. As long as you have a car there are also many hotels, B&Bs and self-catering cottages accessible, as well as hostels and camp sites, scattered all around this area. (The Visit Cumbria website – www.visitcumbria.com, click Accommodation –



The village of Grasmere from Silver How

seems to have the best database or you could just use a search engine.)

Both areas also have grocery shops, cashpoints and a range of places to eat or just savour the local real ales – as well as a high concentration of outlets for browsing the latest range of mountain clothing and gear.

Getting around

Public transport may be a problem elsewhere but in the heart of Lakeland one may confidently plan a day around a reliable rural service, given a proper study of the timetables. For many the first point of arrival is the end of the Lakes Line railway from Kendal at Windermere, right under Wainwright's first-found Lakes viewpoint, Orrest Head. When it comes to buses on from this point, regular Stagecoach services throughout the district are supplemented by the Mountain Goat minibus service. Pertinent to this guide is the 555 Freedom of the Lakes service, which runs along the A591 from Windermere via Ambleside and Grasmere, crossing Dunmail Raise bound for Keswick. This connects, at Ambleside, with the Langdale Rambler service 516 running via Elterwater to the Old Dungeon Ghyll Hotel and the Borrowdale Rambler service 79 from Keswick to Seatoller, giving access to Stonethwaite and Seathwaite. (Check www.traveline.info for train and bus information.)

Parking is not to be taken for granted anywhere in this popular national park. Always allow time to find an alternative parking place, if not to switch to a different plan for your day, unless you are fortunate enough to be able to set out directly from your door, which is perfectly possible if you find accommodation within any of the two valleys. Also take care always to park safely and only in laybys and car parks, not on the side of the narrow country roads. Depending on where you are basing yourself, consider joining the National Trust (www.nationaltrust.org.uk) in order to use their car parks for free. Consult the Starting points table to find out where they, and other parking places, are.

Fix the Fells

The Fellranger series has always highlighted the hugely important work of the Fix the Fells project in repairing the most seriously damaged fell paths. The mighty challenge

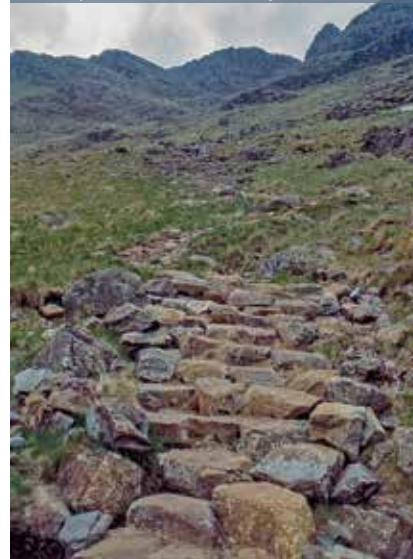


has been a great

learning curve and the more recent work, including complex guttering, is quite superb. It ensures a flat foot-fall where possible, easy to use in ascent and descent, and excess water escapes efficiently minimising future damage.

The original National Trust and National Park Authority partnership came into being in 2001 and expanded with the arrival of Natural England, with additional financial support from the Friends of the Lake District and now the Lake District Foundation (www.lakedistrictfoundation.org). But, and it's a big but, the

Pitched path taking the pressure of pedestrian traffic up Rossett Gill on the way to Rossett Pike





1 BLEA RIGG 556M/1824FT

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Climb it from | Stickle Ghyll 17 or Grasmere 6–9 |
| Character | Highest of a fascinating cluster of craggy tops along a broad ridge |
| Fell-friendly route | 9 |
| Summit grid ref | NY 302 078 |
| Link it with | Silver How or Sergeant Man |
| Part of | The Easedale Skyline |

From the curious knob of Sergeant Man, a long arm of fell draws southeast off the high plateau of High Raise terminating, after some 8km, on Loughrigg Fell, with Blea Rigg and Silver How the only notable summits. From the east, Blea Rigg, in dark silhouette, looks every inch a bastion and, on its northern face, Blea Crag forms a solid buttress commanding attention from Easedale Tarn, Tarn Crag and, surprisingly, from high on Sergeant Man. From other angles its profile is much less distinctive.

Not surprisingly, the best route climbs up from Easedale Beck and Easedale Tarn, from flower meadows to foaming falls, leading walkers by lapping waters and barren fellsides and culminating in the steady pull above Blea Crag. And

the summit is well worth reaching with majestic views from Helvellyn to the Coniston Fells as well as up close and personal insights on the mighty Langdales.

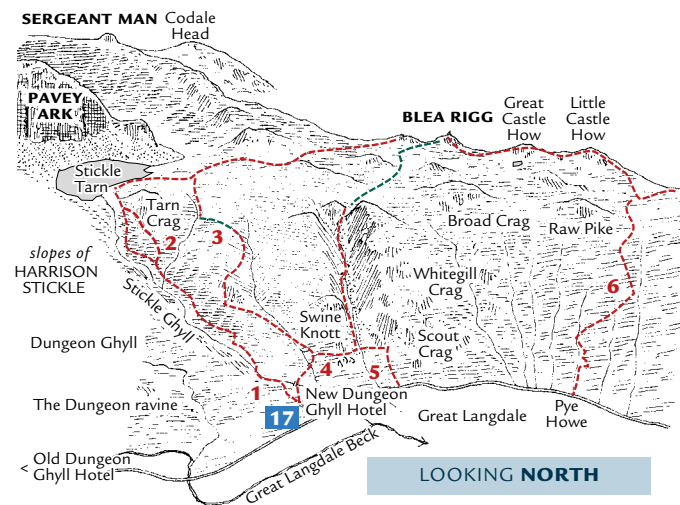
The shortest climbs lead up from Great Langdale and there are many to choose from, via Stickle Ghyll (Routes 1–3), White Gill (4–5) or Pye Howe (6). Approaches from Grasmere have great charm and scenic variety. You can wander up by Blindtarn Moss to Swinescar Hause (7 and 8), take the classic Easedale Tarn route (9) or sneak up from the northwest via Belles Knott (10).

Ascent from Stickle Ghyll 17

There are three basic lines of approach from this dramatic valley setting. In such surroundings you can be sure of scenic adventure whatever your objective.

Via Stickle Ghyll → 3.2km/2 miles ↑ 475m/1560ft ⌚ 2hr 10min

1 Walk up the lane past the **New Dungeon Ghyll Hotel**. From the gate head straight on through the small enclosures, and then on beside the tree-shaded beck as it rises to a footbridge. Cross this and then cross a stile to enter the



main amphitheatre of this hugely popular ravine. The path, on which much attention has necessarily been lavished over the years, passes up through an old fold and zig-zags via fenced saplings. From this point, by far the majority of walkers choose to keep beside the beck all the way to the tarn. At the top, turn right to follow the path running along the lakeshore. From the edge of the lake a clear, occasionally cairned path leads north, then east, onto the plateau of Blea Rigg.

2 Alternatively, take the path which branches right. This excellent path winds up to run under **Tarn Crag** and reach the outflow of **Stickle Tarn** and turn right with join Route **1**.

3 There is a far more pleasant and less well-known line. Directly after leaving the New Dungeon Ghyll, cross the footbridge located half-right after the initial gate. The path runs behind Millbeck Farm and enters a lane that rises onto the bracken ridge, keeping left to avoid an outcrop. There are two

options here. Contour onto the main zig-zagging path, climbing off this as it shapes towards **Tarn Crag**, and wind up to the left of a walled enclosure, or climb, with little initial evidence of a path, in the bracken. On finding a green path skirt the left-hand shoulder of a knoll above an incised gill and traverse the walled enclosure diagonally to join up with the upper section of the old shepherds' path. This then slips over a saddle depression to meet up with the path that runs along the southern shore of the tarn from the outflow. Here, turn right to follow Route **1** to the summit.

Via White Gill →2km/1¼ miles ↑465m/1525ft ⊕2hr

There are two approaches to Whitegill Crag – Route 4, the more direct route up behind the New Dungeon Ghyll Hotel, or Route 5, the climbers' approach to Scout Crag, off the valley road. The latter involves a little mild scrambling.



4 Pass up by the hotel to the bridle-gate, slant right in the triangular enclosure and cross the footbridge. The path rises above Millbeck Farm via a hand-gate with a walled gill gangway. Go through the kissing-gate on the right after 100m, keep the wall to the right and pass through the foot of a larch plantation to cross a low wall into the bouldery ravine of White Gill to join Route **5**.

5 Alternatively, go east along the valley road, passing the entrance to Millbeck Farm, to reach a stile/gate with a National Trust notice below a field-barn. Pass up above the field-barn to a wall-stile, climbing to the left of the lower but-tress, a popular training ground for novice climbers. Cross the ladder-stile, ignore the climbers' path rising right to **Scout Crag**, and

instead follow the wall immediately left, with little hint of a path, to enter White Gill. The combined effects of path and gill erosion make this a loose, clambering stretch. Above the tree trend to the left for bigger boulder steps and more secure footing. Much of the gill-bed is dry, with subterranean flow. The view out of the ravine is superb, leading the eye across Side Pike to Wetherlam. The natural exit draws into a short, tight gully to the right, requiring a spot of mild scrambling. Ignore the gill-head itself. The rock walls of Whitegill Crag are hugely impressive and can be best surveyed by wandering onto the open spur to the left once the hard work has been done. The summit of Blea Rigg beckons across undulating outcrops and slopes. While there is no evident path, a route is easily concocted. From this approach the perched summit cairn looks like a bird of prey.



Rock pool

Via Pye How →3.2km/2 miles ↑480m/1575ft ⊕2hr 15min

A pleasing path, especially allow time for frequent pauses to look back at the stunning surround of majestic fells.

6 Follow the road for about a kilometre east from the car parks to reach a footpath which starts just before **Pye Howe**. A kissing-gate gives entry into a pasture, the path initially keeping the wall to the left. Ascend following half-a-dozen waymark posts and cross broken intermediate walls with much mature scrub colonising the enclosures. A ladder-stile crosses the intake wall at the

top. The path, at first stony, becomes a pleasant turf trail, and, beyond the solitary, gill-shading holly bush, winds steadily to the ridge-top at Swinescar Hause. Joining the ridge path, track left up from the marshy hollow by the old fold and curious cramped shelter.

Traverse **Little Castle How** and **Great Castle How**, passing pools adorned with cotton grass and bogbean. From a cluster of quartz rocks admire a splendid view west to the striking dark profile of Blea Rigg, the obvious culmination of the northward-plunging Blea Crag. The summit is confirmed by the presence of a walled rock shelter directly below. The ridge path waltzes by to the right so that many a head-down fellwalker misses the summit and takes the next prominent cairnless outcrop to the west to be the ultimate point.

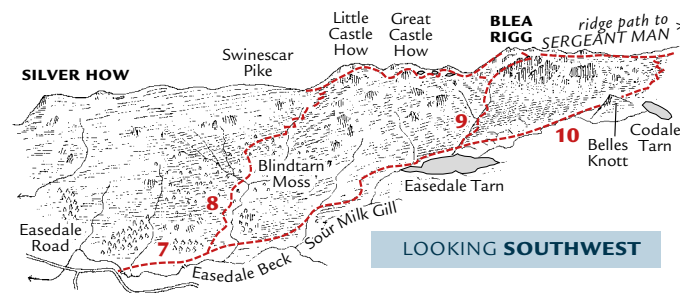
Ascent from Grasmere 6–9

Three good paths make use of the Easedale Road (7) to lead up the Easedale valley, towards (8), as far as (9) and beyond (10) the iconic tarn.

Via Blindtarn Moss →4.5km/2¾ miles ↑495m/1625ft ⊕2hr 20min

7 From Sam Read's bookshop in the middle of the village walk north along Easedale Road via Goody Bridge. A few paces short of Oak Lodge, cross the **Easedale Beck** footbridge. A long view of Sour Milk Gill backed by Tarn Crag beckons across flower meadows, the beginning of a fine wild trail. A part-paved path leads past New Bridge, and on reaching a gate (with a yellow waymark) the first route option begins.

8 Go through this gate, entering a meadow, and continue on by open woodland to join the access track at a gate leading to a pair of holiday



LOOKING SOUTHWEST

cottages. Glance by these to a gate. Beyond the gate, the path trends up by the beck and leftward to a footpath waymark post that guides right into the hollow of **Blindtarn Moss**. The abundance of bushes ensures plenty of bird-song. The scene is quite unique – a wild Chinese garden in the fells. The path climbs up through the juniper, and higher up, as the ground steepens, the cairned path is worn to loose stones.

Either follow the remnants of the path to the soggy saddle of Swinescar Hause or, just prior to the top, slant onto the right-hand side to follow the old green zig-zag path which offers sweeter footing to rise onto the westward-climbing path above the quaint stone bivvy shelter. Join the ridge path and Route **6** to bear northwest and west to the summit bluff.

Via Easedale Tarn →5km/3 miles ↑490m/1610ft ⌚2hr 30min

9 The popular path to Easedale Tarn leads to the next gate and over the **Blindtarn Gill** bridge, heading straight across the open meadow (ignore the farm track right to Brimmer Head). Go through a gateway and subsequent kissing-gate. The paved path enters a lane which funnels, then opens, winding up above **Sour Milk Gill**. The best view of the falls is from the base of the sheepfold but there is no ready path down. Only the upper fall can be easily reached from the path, and its plunge pool can be the scene of much splashing and excited chatter on hot summer afternoons. Thankfully the path has received considerable remedial paving.

Easedale Tarn itself continues to attract walkers, many of whom, as has long been the case, are quite content to make it the ultimate point of their walk, backtracking via the Stythwaite Steps footbridge at the foot of Far Easedale. Either side of the tarn, conical drumlins emphasise the glacial origins of this bleak amphitheatre. The domed top of Tarn Crag looms close right, while Blea Crag forms the southern sidewall, with the sub-edge peak of Belles Knott shielding Codale Tarn a little to its right. Follow the path above the tarn, and watch for a small cairn where the Blea Rigg path very evidently branches left. This winds up above the drumlins seeking the natural dip in the ridge. Either continue to the saddle, close to the perched boulder, or angle up right behind Blea Crag via a rake.

Via Belles Knott →6.5km/4 miles ↑500m/1640ft ⌚2hr 45min

10 As a final option, continue on the south side of **Easedale Tarn**. The path leads up beside the main feeder-gill, with several stepped sections beside the



Ridge cairn above Raw Pike

cascades, and is overlooked by the arresting peak of Belles Knott up to the right, a well-respected scramblers' route and object of photographic composition. Above the falls a side-path bears right, fording the gill, to visit the hanging waters of Codale Tarn, with its tiny outflow and picturesque isle set beneath the great slope of Codale Head. The main path zig-zags up to a ridge-top path interchange, where you turn left, southeast, and wander a kilometre to the summit.

The summit

Several rocky tops vie for pre-eminence here, and conventional mapping offers only slack captioning to add to the confusion. The one sure clue is the presence of a cairn sitting on top of a blade of rock, directly above the shelter passed on the eastern approach. This is the culmination of the outcrop above Blea Crag, and the high point seen from Great Castle How. The view is superb, with Pavey Ark and Harrison Stickle the mighty neighbours. The Helvellyn chain rises invitingly to the east above the serried ridges overlooking Easedale, and the Coniston Fells tantalise beyond Lingmoor Fell and Side Pike.



Pool with bogbean

Safe descents

With crags close to the northern brink, great care is required in poor conditions. The ridge path is plain enough in most situations, but the safest bet is to follow the ridge path running E (6). This leads under the summit by the walled shelter, down to the first depression. Bear left (9), descending northeastwards through a shallow hollow east of Blea Crag and down to the popular path running close to Easedale Tarn. This path leads by Sour Milk Gill, to the safety of the Easedale meadows (7) and into Grasmere.

Ridge routes

Silver How → 3.2km/2 miles ↓ 205m/675ft ↑ 45m/150ft ⌚ 1hr

The twists and turns of the ridge trail ensure an entertaining march. En route pass two sizable pools and a cluster of quartz stones by the path, prior to crossing Great Castle How. Deviate left to its top for a dramatic view of Codale Head, while the opposing and seldom-visited Raw Pike gives a fine view over Great Langdale. Beyond Swinescar Hause the ridge is of a more rolling nature, with more pools, the largest consumed by weed. The path runs

under the higher top of Lang How (by nearly 19m) and crosses the head-stream of Wray Gill to reach the scarp-top summit.

Sergeant Man → 2km/1¼ miles ↓ 15m/50ft ↑ 205m/675ft ⌚ 45min

The occasional cairn indicates a surprisingly modest ridge trail. Immediately after the fourth mock-summit knoll notice where a small section of marsh has been fenced off to evaluate the effects of non-grazing. Just short of the path interchange admire the rock basin formed by Harrison Stickle and Pavey Ark. Cairns now abound. From here the ridge narrows, with rocky outcrops, including one notable tilted slab. The path forks, then the two halves reunite, on the steady climb to the outflow of the marsh west of Codale Head. The summit is swiftly attained on the well-worn final stretch.

Blea Rigg from Redacre Gill

