

# Discover the Beauty of Lake Windermere

Windermere, the largest natural lake in the Lake District has been one of England's most popular places for holiday and summer home. Located within the Lake District National Park amidst foothills providing for pleasant walks, this ribbon lake formed in a glacial derives its name from the Scandinavian word for 'lake of a man called Vinandr'.



There are two towns on the lake – Bowness-on-Windermere and Ambleside. The beautiful Windermere town, a mile off from the lake bustles with people on weekends and holidays. It is dotted with Bed and Breakfasts, shops, cafes and a railway station – the hub for train connections to the surrounding areas.

There are several easily reached vantage points above the town offering excellent lake views in the summer and winter months. One is on the Gummers How from the south end of the lake. On your way, call in at the Mason's Arms at Strawberry Bank for fine food, wine and ales.

The other is up Orrest Head from Windermere village on the east and the delights of Claiffe Heights on the west. Yet another climbs onto the Kirkstone Pass at nearly 1500 feet with an inn near the top and dramatic views all around.

West of Windermere a small road winds up over Hard Knot Pass with its narrowness and steepness making it one of the most difficult ones. At its end are the ruins of the Hard Knott Castle and its only surprising to think where the Roman's built forts! The stony hillsides of Scafell (3210 feet) and the Great Gable (2949 feet) are favorites with serious walkers. The easy routes can be attempted by anyone fit enough; the difficult ones are for rock climbers!

Windermere can also be explored from one of the regular or vintage launches or by hiring a rowing boat and doing it yourself for fun and adventure. The Windermere Lake Cruise boats from Lakeside ply down the 10 mile length of the lake (as also Ambleside and Bowness) slowly and sedately providing views from its shoreline to the high tops.

Seasonal connections operate for the Lake District Visitor's Centre (Brockhole), Lakeside & Haverthwaite Steam Railway, Aquarium of the Lakes, etc., all idyllically situated on the lake's shores. Many of these with their educational focus teach adults and children alike the essence of conservation through interaction with flora and fauna sharing the planet.

Private charters, evening cruises, jazz/buffet cruises are also available in summer while winter has Santa Specials and Christmas lunch specials. The onboard coffee shop sells refreshments including sandwiches, confectionery, beers, wines and spirits. In addition, the old beautifully restored steamers (now driven by diesel engines) and gondolas retain their charm for children and adults alike while providing an unrivalled cruising experience. It may be mentioned herein that Windermere's long popularity for steam launches has given its name to the Windermere kettle, a steam-powered tea urn.



Casual anglers can try their hand in fishing in the lake waters or buy tackle, hire equipment (and the produce!) from local shops. For a more relaxed day, a barbecue on the lakeside is perfect in the summer sun. For children the Fell Foot Country Park is particularly interesting for family picnics, boat hires and adventure play.

Various discovery walks close to the lake and connected to the Lake Cruises network can also be done. Their guides can be purchased at the various piers or onboard the cruises. Yet others can try the Lake District Supertours with their full and half-day guided tours in luxury, mini-coaches. Many of their packages include cruises and steam rail journeys which cover many neighboring attractions.

Bowness-on-Windermere is halfway down on the eastern shore. The enchanting village has tiny streets lined with delightful shops, charming pubs and delicious Lakeland treats from the local delicatessen. Look out for artifacts on sale in the quaint art and craft shops or catch up on a chat with the owners or simply walk along the shore footpath to watch the ducks lazing idly in unsurpassed natural beauty.

Many believe that here, there is a lake monster, similar to the one alleged to live in Loch Ness and anomalous photos have been taken of the supposed creature affectionately nicknamed Bownessie. A must-see in Bowness is the Blackwell Arts and Crafts House with gardens overlooking the lake's tranquility. Its restored, furnished interiors with stained glass windows and carved oak paneling is a perfect setting for historical and contemporary exhibitions in the galleries.



The World of Beatrix Potter, a timeless family favorite is yet another attraction and great fun for children with its hands-on, interactive displays enabling them to see and meet the characters they know from the stories.

Ambleside about half a mile in the north end of Windermere is not strictly speaking on the lake but connected by the hamlet of Waterhead. A picturesque town and stop for the cruisers, it is bustling with cafes, restaurants and latest outdoor equipment stores attracting walkers and climbers with Ambleside being a great starting point for many excursions. A gentle stroll around the quiet western side of the lake takes one to the Drunken Duck Inn at Clappersgate while the side walk to the beautiful waterfall of Stockghyll Force is about a mile away.

Besides cruising on the lake waters, one can watch recent releases at Zeffirellis cinema post dinner at its contemporary and totally delicious restaurant. Do not miss Hayes Garden World; one of the largest and best cared for gardens in England by the Hayes family. The Lakes Discovery Museum is an opportunity to experience 2000 years of local history in its artifacts from Roman occupation, Beatrix Potter watercolours and information on John Ruskin, a historic Lake District library, interactive displays, workshops and talks. The museum shop sells 'Made-in-Cumbria' gifts, books and CD's.

The two famous Wordsworth memorials Dove Cottage, Grasmere and the Rydal Mount near Ambleside offer breathtaking views of the lakes and hills in addition to interesting features connected with the poet's life and works.

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