



Coniston, Hawkshead & Tarn Hows

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505 bus, Hawkshead Hill

1. Introduction

A public transport adventure around Coniston and Hawkshead which includes the famous beauty spot of Tarn Hows with fabulous scenery and attractions throughout.

Itinerary summary

Starting in the attractive village of Coniston, explore the village and nearby Coniston Water before taking the bus to the charming historic village of Hawkshead. Spend some time sampling the delights of the village before catching a bus back towards Coniston. Leave the bus at Hawkshead Hill for a walk to visit the famous beauty spot of Tarn Hows where you can walk around the tarn before walking back down the hill to Coniston village.

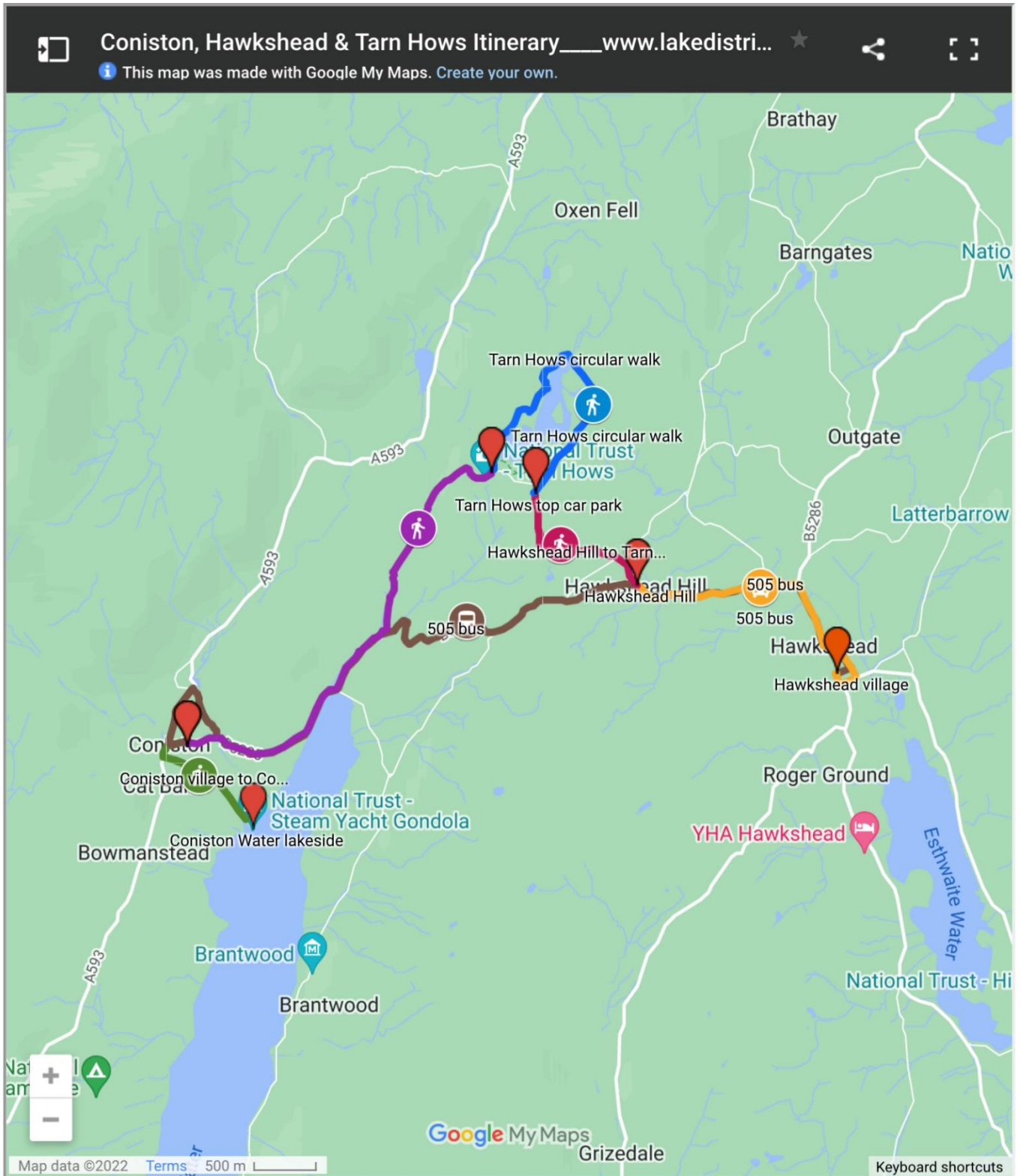
If you want to visit Coniston Water and Tarn Hows then some walking is required but it's relatively easy and will allow you to fully appreciate the wonderful surroundings.

This itinerary suggests a few of the best attractions to visit and lists others that you might want to include. It can easily be done in a day, allowing some time to explore attractions at each stop. An example schedule is included along with current prices. 505 bus is daily all year.

The suggested start is Coniston village, but of course it can be started anywhere along the route or done in a different order or you can just do part of the itinerary. A route map is included below, an interactive version is available via the website [here](#).

Bus, boat and train stop locations are given in [What3words](#) format, an easy and precise way to navigate if you download the app.

2. Itinerary map



An interactive map is available on the website [here](#).

3. Itinerary description

Stop 1. Coniston village.



Coniston village

The village of Coniston is in a picturesque location nestled between Coniston Water and The Old Man of Coniston, the mountain directly behind. Historically, it grew up due to the local copper and slate mines which flourished from the 17th century with workers being housed in the village. In 1859 a railway line was opened to the village from the main Cumbrian Coast line near Broughton in Furness. The main purpose of this at the time was to transport the copper ore but as copper demand declined in the late 19th century the railway line became more popular with Victorian tourists. A local tourist industry soon grew up which has become more and more popular over time. The railway closed in 1962 and

there is little trace of the old line and station now but it certainly helped to put Coniston on the map in its heyday.

Probably the most notable local resident was John Ruskin, the famous Victorian visionary, artist, art critic and writer, who lived nearby at [Brantwood](#) on the shores of Coniston Water from 1871 until his death in 1900, aged 80. He was buried at [St Andrew's Church](#) in the centre of the village. Following his death, the [Ruskin Museum](#) was set up in Coniston in 1901 and is still going strong today, containing a wealth of local history.

The village itself has a few tourist shops, cafes and pubs where you can spend some time and fully appreciate the surrounding scenery. There is also a [Tourist Information Centre](#) and toilet facilities at the main bus stop in the village.

A short walk from the village down Lake Road takes you to the shores of Coniston Water, a scenic and relatively quiet lake surrounded by low and mostly wooded hills. It is well worth taking a trip on the lake to better appreciate the scenery and you can do this either on the historic [Steam Yacht 'Gondola'](#) or the [Coniston Launch](#). If you fancy hiring a boat yourself, the [Coniston Boating Centre](#) is adjacent to the car park with a good selection of small boats and paddle boards. Across the lake you can just about make out John Ruskin's [Brantwood](#) house. You can visit the house and gardens via the Gondola or Launch boats which both stop at the jetty near the house.



Coniston lakeside

The lake also has famous literary connections through the popular children's adventure book 'Swallows and Amazons', written by the author Arthur Ransome and published in 1930. The book is based on a number of locations around the lake, for example, Wild Cat Island in the book is said to be based on Peel Island towards the southern end of the lake.

Perhaps the most famous moment in the lake's history came on 4th January 1967 when Donald Campbell lost his life on the water during a world record water speed attempt. Film footage shows the boat summersault and break up but it was not until 2001 that his body was discovered on the bed of the lake

and laid to rest in Coniston cemetery. The battered boat was also raised and taken away for restoration, but subsequently caught up in a legal battle of ownership for many years and not on show. All that changed in March 2024 when it was returned to Coniston and is now on show in the 'Bluebird Wing' of the Ruskin Museum in Coniston village.

Also next to the shore here is [The Bluebird Cafe](#) which provides refreshments with a lovely view over the water. There are several picnic tables and toilets facilities adjacent.

Buses stop at the Tourist Information Centre in the village.

Travelling:



Take the 505 bus from Coniston village to Hawkshead village. Pass along the northern shores of Coniston Water and past the head of the lake at Monk Coniston before climbing up Hawkshead Hill and descending to Hawkshead village. The South Lakeland scenery is wonderful throughout.



Coniston Water at Monk Coniston

Route	Coniston village to Hawkshead village
Transport	505 bus
Start	Tourist Information, Ruskin Avenue, Coniston, LA21 8EH. ///graphic.snipe.worlds
End	Main Street, Hawkshead village, LA22 0NT. ///unscathed.ocean.shampoo
Duration	20 minutes
Frequency	Hourly between Easter and November. Roughly every 2 hours in winter.

Stop 2. Hawkshead village.



Hawkshead village from churchyard

Hawkshead is one of the most charming villages in the Lake District and worth a stop to explore its historic centre. The village dates back to medieval times, originally a prosperous wool market run by the monks of Furness Abbey which was near Barrow-in-Furness. There are a number of historic buildings around the village, including [Hawkshead Grammar School](#) which was founded here in 1585 and educated a number of notable pupils, including the famous local poet William Wordsworth who was sent here in 1778, aged 8, after his mother died. The school eventually closed in 1909 and the building is now a museum dedicated to its interesting history.

Also in the centre of the village is the National Trusts [Beatrix Potter Gallery](#), a 17th century building housing displays of her famous watercolour illustrations and more about her work. The building was once the office of the solicitors W.H. Heelis & Son, where William Heelis worked when he married Beatrix in 1913. No doubt Beatrix would have spent a great deal of time in and around Hawkshead when she lived nearby at Hill Top. We will be visiting Hill Top next on the tour.

Other notable buildings in the village include [St Michael and All Angels church](#), most of which dates back to the 16th century and sits on the small hill overlooking the village. There is a lovely churchyard where you can find some peace and enjoy the surrounding views. Also, in the main village square is the old Market Hall which dates from the late 18th century when the village thrived as a local market.

It makes an enjoyable stroll around the timeless and mostly car-free village centre with its jumbled collection of whitewashed houses, archways and alleyways, courtyards and squares. There are a number of tourist shops, cafes and pubs.

Buses stop near the village centre, also near a tourist information centre and public toilets.

Travelling:



Take the 505 bus back towards Coniston village. Soon after leaving Hawkshead village the bus takes a left turn and starts climbing. After approx 0.8 miles the bus enters the small hamlet of Hawkshead Hill where you can disembark for Tarn Hows.

Route	Hawkshead village to Hawkshead Hill
Transport	505 bus
Start	Main Street, Hawkshead village, LA22 0NT. ///unscathed.ocean.shampoo
End	B5285, Hawkshead Hill, LA22 0PW. ///anchorman.immune.jogged
Duration	7 minutes
Frequency	Hourly between Easter and November. Roughly every 2 hours in winter.

Notes – To avoid Tarn Hows, stay on the bus and return to the start point in Coniston village.

Stop 3. Hawkshead Hill.

Start of walk to Tarn Hows.

Travelling:



A short and mostly uphill walk to Tarn Hows. From the bus stop, cross the road and take the minor road on the right. Follow the road a short distance to a T junction where you turn left and then turn immediate right on the road towards Tarn Hows. Very shortly on the left is a rough footpath which roughly follows the road to Tarn Hows and you can take to avoid the road, otherwise stay on the narrow road which climbs steadily through trees. You will need to watch out for vehicles as this is the main access road for Tarn Hows. Approx 0.8 miles from the bus stop you emerge from the trees over a crest and the small Tarn Hows top car park is on the right. The views ahead over Tarn Hows and the mountains beyond are amazing.

Route	Hawkshead Hill to Tarn Hows top car park
Transport	Walking
Start	B5285, Hawkshead Hill, LA22 0PW. ///anchorman.immune.jogged
End	Tarn Hows top car park. ///impulses.beanbag.starred
Duration	Walk is around 0.8 miles in length, around 30 minutes. Mostly uphill.

Notes – There is no public transport to Tarn Hows. To avoid the walk, stay on the 505 bus at Hawkshead Hill and continue back to Coniston village.

Stop 4. Tarn Hows.



Tarn Hows

Tarn Hows is one of the wonders of Lakeland and a beauty spot not to be missed. Historically the area was rough open common grazing land with three smaller natural tarns but in 1862 the local estate at Monk Coniston gained possession of all the land and started improving it. This including landscaping and building a dam at the lower tarn which raised water levels so the three tarns became the one you see today. In 1930 the 4000 acre Monk Coniston Estate came up for sale and was bought by Beatrix Potter who was keen to buy local land so she could save it from unwanted development and preserve it for future generations. She soon sold the part containing Tarn Hows to the National Trust who have further improved the area over the years.

From the top car park there are various options, including going no further and returning to catch the 505 bus to Coniston at Hawkshead Hill. Or wondering down to the nearby shores of the tarn for a picnic and paddle. However, it is well worth doing the wonderful and popular 2 mile circular [walk](#) of the tarn which you can start from the top car park and normally takes around 1 hour. You can follow the track beyond the top car park which eventually joins the tarn circuit footpath. You could also include a quick diversion to the adorable [Rose Castle Cottage](#).

There are toilets and an information display at the main car park but no other facilities.

Travelling:



A relatively easy walk from Tarn Hows to Coniston village. You can continue along the narrow access road from the top or main car parks, which descends with good views over Yewdale. Or you can take the good footpaths through pleasant woodland, either from opposite the top car park or adjacent to the main car park. All these routes descend for around 1 mile before meeting at the junction with the B5285. From here a good easy footpath follows alongside the B5285 through picturesque scenery to the head of Coniston Water where you can sit and dip your toes in the lake. The footpath then continues alongside the B5285, heading towards the Coniston mountain range and passing the [Coniston Inn](#), before reaching the start point in Coniston village.

Route	Tarn Hows to Coniston village
Transport	Walking
Start	Tarn Hows main car park. ///migrants.invisible.collide
End	Tourist Information, Ruskin Avenue, Coniston, LA21 8EH. ///graphic.snipe.worlds
Duration	Walk is around 2.4 miles in length, around 1 hour. Mostly downhill and level.

Notes – To avoid this longer walk, you can return to Hawkshead Hill from Tarn Hows and catch the 505 bus back to Coniston.

4. Example schedule

Summer 2024

Location	Transport	Example times
Coniston village depart	505 bus	10:43
Hawkshead village arrive	505 bus	11:03
Hawkshead village depart	505 bus	13:15
Hawkshead Hill arrive	505 bus	13:22
Hawkshead Hill depart	Walking	13:22
Tarn Hows top car park arrive	Walking	~13:50
Tarn Hows main car park depart	Walking	~15:30
Coniston village arrive	Walking	~16:30

Winter 2023/24

Location	Transport	Example times
Coniston village depart	505 bus	10:53
Hawkshead village arrive	505 bus	11:11
Hawkshead village depart	505 bus	12:34
Hawkshead Hill arrive	505 bus	12:40
Hawkshead Hill depart	Walking	12:40
Tarn Hows top car park arrive	Walking	~13:10
Tarn Hows main car park depart	Walking	~14:30
Coniston village arrive	Walking	~15:30

5. Ticket information

Summer 2024

Stagecoach bus

Bus fare currently £2 per person per bus trip. This itinerary would be 2 bus trips per person, £4.

6. Timetables & Connections

- Timetables for transport used in itinerary; [Stagecoach buses](#)
- Public transport connections to itinerary route;

Coniston

X7 bus from Barrow-in-Furness & Broughton-in-Furness
X12 bus from Ulverston

Hawkshead

505 bus from Ambleside & Windermere & occasionally Kendal
Further details of these connections [here](#).