



Keswick, Borrowdale & Buttermere

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Honister Pass from Gatesgarthdale

1. Introduction

A seasonal public transport adventure from Keswick around the spectacular Borrowdale and Buttermere valleys which includes magnificent scenery throughout and visits some wonderful villages, lakes and attractions along the way.

Itinerary summary

Starting at Keswick, you can explore the popular town and its various attractions before taking the Keswick Launch on picturesque Derwent Water. Alight at High Brandelhow jetty for an easy short walk to Grange in Borrowdale village where you can catch the bus through beautiful Borrowdale valley and over the notorious Honister Pass to Buttermere. Alight here to do another relatively easy short walk along the length of the lake to Buttermere village. Back on the bus, continue along the scenic shores of Crummock Water before heading up and over Whinlatter Pass and dropping back down to Keswick.

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. The whole itinerary can only be done between Easter and November when the seasonal 77/77A bus is running. Keswick Launch has a very limited service in winter. The 78 Borrowdale bus operates daily all year. See alternative [Borrowdale itinerary](#) which can be done all year.

The suggested start is Keswick, but of course it can be started anywhere along the route or done in a different order. 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.

3. Itinerary description

Stop 1. Keswick town.



Keswick town centre

Keswick is a popular and pretty tourist town nestled between Derwent Water and Skiddaw mountain. It has long been the main hub for the northern Lake District and boomed when the railway line from Penrith and west Cumbria was completed in 1864, bringing Victorian tourists to Keswick station. You can still see the station today in the northern town but the railway line was closed in 1972. The old railway line is now a popular cycle and walking path alongside the River Greta towards Threlkeld to the east.

There are plenty of attractions for visitors including the [Pencil Museum](#) which tells the interesting history of pencil making in the town and the opening of the UK's first pencil factory here in 1832. Pencil manufacture moved to nearby Workington in 2008 but the museum remains and you can also see one of the largest colour pencils in the world at almost 26 feet long! Other interesting attractions in the town include [Keswick Museum](#) and [The Puzzling Place](#). There are abundant shops, outdoor specialists, cafes, pubs and restaurants around the town as well as some lovely parks. In the town centre is the pedestrianised market place where you might find the market in full swing. In the centre of that is the prominent old Moot Hall which now houses the Tourist Information Centre. Over the River Greta from the town centre, you will find the attractive Fitz Park with its vast open grassy areas next to the river where you can escape the crowds.

A 10 minute walk from the town centre is the lakeside area on Derwent Water which is always popular and you can explore the lake either by boat or the fabulous 10 mile [footpath](#) which circuits the lake. The [Keswick Launch](#) cruise is a wonderful way to take in the lake and its surroundings. There are regular boats (less in winter) which stop here and at several beauty spots around the lake. It is definitely worth walking the short distance to [Friar's Crag](#) which offers beautiful views up the lake. Crow Park, opposite Lakeside car park, has a lovely open setting next to the lake where you can watch the boats come and go, again with great views. Between Crow Park and the town centre is Hope Park which has delightful landscaped grounds and miniature golf. There is a cafe, toilet facilities and the popular [Theatre by the Lake](#) which has its own facilities.



Derwent Water from Friar's Crag

All buses stop at the main bus station in the town centre. All boats stop at the lakeside jetties, approx 0.5 mile walk from the town centre.

Travelling:



Travel from Keswick lakeside to High Brandelhow jetty on board the Keswick Launch. The surrounding scenery from the water is breathtaking and includes several islands, Borrowdale valley, ancient Atlantic Oak woodland and spectacular mountains, including Catbells and Skiddaw. Boats travel both ways around the lake alternately. High Brandelhow is a 30 minute trip on a clockwise cruise or 20 minutes on an anticlockwise cruise.



Derwent Water

Route	Keswick lakeside to High Brandelhow jetty
Transport	Keswick Launch. Clockwise or anticlockwise cruise.
Start	Keswick lakeside jetties, Keswick, CA12 5DJ. ///flanked.majors.remotes
End	High Brandelhow jetty, Derwent Water. ///declining.client.outhouse
Duration	30 minutes clockwise cruise. 20 minutes anticlockwise cruise.
Frequency	Daily, every 30 minutes March to November, alternates between clockwise and anticlockwise. Limited service in winter. Closed December & January.

Notes – Alternatively, to avoid the following walk, disembark at [Lodore](#) jetty where you can catch the 78 bus outside Lodore Falls Hotel to continue up the Borrowdale valley. 78 bus runs every day all year, every 30 minutes Easter to November, every 60 minutes in winter.

Stop 2. High Brandelhow jetty, Derwent Water.



Brandelhow jetty

Very attractive wooded lakeshore on the south west side of Derwent Water. You can explore the lakeshore, have a paddle and a picnic and then continue towards Grange in Borrowdale village. The surrounding woodland, Brandelhow Park, was the first Lake District property acquired by the National Trust in 1902, following their formation in 1895. Beatrix Potter frequented this area when holidaying at the nearby Lingholm and Fawe Park Estates as a young woman. The area gave her much inspiration for many of her 23 enchanting children's tales which were published in the early 1900's and are still hugely popular today. Many background illustrations in the books are also recognisable from this area.

Travelling:



A lovely short and level walk from High Brandelhow jetty to the village of Grange in Borrowdale. A well-worn footpath initially follows the shingle shore and then takes the left fork towards 'Lodore' opposite a cottage. Follow the wooded lakeshore through Manesty Park, passing picturesque bays with wonderful views down the lake. Myrtle Bay is one of them. Near the southern tip of the lake, beyond a couple of boardwalk sections, turn right on a less distinctive path through rough grassland and bracken towards Grange. There are superb surrounding views including the 'Jaws of Borrowdale' and Castle Crag. After approx 0.5 miles, reach a minor road and turn left along the road. In another 0.5 miles reach the village of Grange.



Myrtle Bay bench

Route	High Brandelhow jetty to Grange in Borrowdale village
Transport	Walking
Start	High Brandelhow jetty, Derwent Water. ///declining.client.outhouse
End	Grange in Borrowdale village, Borrowdale, CA12 5UQ. ///samplers.image.leader
Duration	Walk is around 1.8 miles in length, around 45 minutes.

Stop 3. Grange in Borrowdale village.



Grange in Borrowdale

Grange in Borrowdale is a small attractive village in a fabulous setting in the Borrowdale valley. It is worth a wonder through the timeless village with its pretty slate and whitewashed old houses. There is a cafe in the centre of the village and [Holy Trinity Church](#) which dates from 1861 and has some interesting 'dog-tooth' ceiling decoration. Next to the bridge is the Methodist Church which dates from 1893 and now houses '[The Borrowdale Story](#)' display, telling the interesting history of the valley. There are public toilets by the river.

Wherever you are in the village, the surrounding views are wonderful. Behind the village is a wall of mountains which includes Maiden Moor and High Spy. Back across the river are the wooded craggy slopes of Grange Fell. Looking up the river you can see the pointy peak of Castle Crag where the valley suddenly becomes very narrow and is known as the 'Jaws of Borrowdale' with the valley opening up again further upstream. The river itself is normally shallow and crystal clear here with plenty of exposed shingle where you can picnic and paddle whilst enjoying the surroundings.

Signs of human activity in the area date back over 6000 years to the Neolithic period when stone axes were made high up on the fells. Signs of Iron Age activity include a fort on the summit of nearby Castle Crag where Roman remains have also been found. In medieval times, around the 10th century, Scandinavian settlers came to the valley and started to clear the densely wooded wilderness for settlements and agriculture. Many of the place names you see today came from them. From the 13th to the 16th century, the valley was largely owned and farmed by Furness Abbey in southern Cumbria and this is where the monks built their outlying farm or 'grange', hence the name of the village.

Buses stop on the B5289, across the bridge from the village.

Travelling:



Take the Honister Rambler 77A bus from Grange in Borrowdale village to Gatesgarth Farm, passing through the magnificent Borrowdale valley, then up and over the mighty Honister Pass. From Grange, the bus soon passes the [Bowder Stone](#) on the left and through the 'Jaws of Borrowdale' where the wooded valley becomes very narrow alongside the crystal-clear River Derwent with Castle Crag above on the right. The valley soon opens out again as you leave the trees behind and you pass through [Rosthwaite village](#). Continue to admire the wonderful scenery and surrounding mountains, passing Stonethwaite village and [Seatoller village](#), where you can alight to explore nearby [Seathwaite valley](#). The bus then ascends steeply up the notorious Honister Pass, possibly the steepest road on any Lake District bus route and you might be glad you aren't driving! The summit of [Honister Pass](#) is at 356m altitude and there are good surrounding views plus the historic [Honister slate mine](#) which still produces some slate and has various exciting adventure experiences on offer. The bus then descends quite steeply at first before following the attractive Gatesgarthdale valley. You can alight at Gatesgarth Farm to start a walk along the shore of Buttermere lake to Buttermere village.



Borrowdale from Castle Crag



Honister Pass

Route	Grange in Borrowdale village to Gatesgarth Farm
Transport	77A
Start	On B5289 at Grange bridge junction. ///stamp.senders.reapply
End	Gatesgarth Farm, Buttermere, CA13 9XA. ///congested.posts.fixtures
Duration	26 minutes
Frequency	Seasonal service, daily from Easter to November, every hour in the mornings and every 2 hours in the afternoons.

Notes - You can also catch the open top 78 bus from Grange to its terminus at Seatoller but would then need to catch the 77A from there. 78 is daily all year, every 30 minutes Easter to November, every 60 minutes in winter. To avoid the following walk, you can continue to Buttermere village and beyond on the 77A bus.

Stop 4. Gatesgarth Farm, Buttermere.



Gatesgarthdale

Remote farm and car park surrounded by high mountains at the southern end of Buttermere lake. Located on the round Buttermere lake walk. Across the valley is an epic ridge of mountains overlooking the lake, including the crinkly top of Haystacks mountain towards the head of the valley. Haystacks is famous for being the favourite summit of the local author Alfred Wainwright, best known for his seven-volume 'Pictorial Guide to the Lakeland Fells', published between 1955 and 1966. These small guide books were meticulously hand drawn and written with incredibly detailed

maps and sketches for each fell walk. Today the books are still in print and still seen by many as the authoritative walking guide to the fells despite their age. In the end he covered 214 Lake District peaks in his books which are now known as 'The Wainwrights'. A popular fellwalking challenge is to climb them all and many hundreds of people have achieved that, often over many years. Wainwright also produced a number of other books, including a Pennine Way guide and the Coast to Coast walk which he devised. When he died in 1991 his wife performed his final wish for his ashes to be scattered at Innominate Tarn on top of Haystacks mountain.

Travelling:



A fabulous easy lakeshore [walk](#) from Gatesgarth Farm to Buttermere village. From the car park, the well-worn footpath heads across the valley bottom and after 0.5 miles meets the shores of [Buttermere lake](#). The footpath along the southern shore is around 1.3 miles in length and has numerous places where you can sit on a shingle beach and admire the lake and wonderful mountainous surroundings. The lakeshore becomes more wooded before reaching the northern end of the lake where you turn right across the valley bottom, 0.5 miles to Buttermere village.



Buttermere lake

Route	Gatesgarth Farm to Buttermere village
Transport	Walking
Start	Gatesgarth Farm, Buttermere. ///congested.posts.fixtures
End	Buttermere village, CA13 9XA. ///wishing.tumblers.nosedive
Duration	Walk is around 2.3 miles in length, around 1 hour.

Notes - To avoid this walk, you can continue to Buttermere village and beyond on the 77A bus.

Stop 5. Buttermere village.



Buttermere village

Buttermere is a pleasant little village in an awesome valley setting, surrounded by high mountains and inbetween the picturesque lakes of Buttermere and Crummock Water. There's not much to see in the village itself but there are a couple of notable hostelries, namely the [Buttermere Court Hotel](#) and the [Bridge Hotel](#), plus a couple of cafes. Popular footpaths lead up surrounding mountains, but for something flatter and easier it is well worth taking the half mile walk to either [Buttermere lake](#) or Crummock Water if only to admire the views. There are more substantial walks around either lake which are also excellent. There are public toilets near the bus stop.

Buses stop in the village centre, behind the Bridge Hotel.

Travelling:



Take the bus from Buttermere village and return to Keswick via Whinlatter. From Buttermere village the bus soon meets the picturesque shores of [Crummock Water](#), still with wonderful surrounding views of lake and mountains. [Rannerdale](#) is an attractive small valley half way along the lake on the right, full of bluebells in early May. The bus leaves the lake behind and heads down the attractive Lorton Vale valley before turning right at Low Lorton village to head up and over [Whinlatter Pass](#) with its popular mountain forest, activities and excellent views. The bus then descends to Braithwaite village and a short hop via the main A66 back to Keswick.



Crummock Water

Route	Buttermere village to Keswick via Whinlatter
Transport	77A
Start	Buttermere village, CA13 9XA. ///wishing.tumblers.nosedive
End	Keswick bus station, Keswick, CA12 5EA. ///verifying.prowl.florists
Duration	53 minutes
Frequency	Seasonal service, daily from Easter to November, every hour in the mornings and every 2 hours in the afternoons.

Notes – You can also catch a 77 bus back to Keswick which returns the way you came, over Hardknott Pass and through Borrowdale. Seasonal service, daily from Easter to November, every two hours.

4. Example schedule

Summer 2024

Location	Transport	Example times
Keswick depart	Keswick Launch cruise	11:00
High Brandelhow arrive	Keswick Launch cruise	11:30
High Brandelhow depart	Walking	11:30
Grange in Borrowdale arrive	Walking	~12:15
Grange in Borrowdale depart	77A bus	13:50
Gatesgarth arrive	77A bus	14:16
Gatesgarth depart	Walking	14:16
Buttermere arrive	Walking	~15:15
Buttermere depart	77A bus	16:24
Keswick arrive	77A bus	17:17

5. Ticket information

Summer 2024

Combined bus & boat tickets can be bought on the bus or at the boat and include all day bus travel in the [North West Explorer zone](#) plus a single Keswick Launch boat cruise. This ticket covers all this itinerary;

[Derwent Water Bus & Boat Ticket \(North West Explorer zone\)](#)

Adults £17.90, Children & Concessions £11.90, Family £35.40 (up to 5 people, max 2 adults)

It may be cheaper to buy separate tickets for each leg of the journey as single bus fares are currently fixed at £2.

6. Timetables & Connections

- a. Timetables for transport used in itinerary; [Stagecoach buses](#) & [Keswick Launch](#)
- b. Public transport connections to itinerary route;

Keswick

Numerous bus connections. Further details of these connections [here](#).