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Welcome to the Lakes

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The Lake District, with its quaint villages overlooking tranquil lakes in the shadow of spectacular fells, makes for a great riding location with plenty to offer on and off the bike.

There's a good reason why the Lakes are one of the most popular destinations for motorcyclists in the UK. There are fantastic roads with dramatic passes snaking through the mountains, picturesque villages with all the creature comforts that bikers need (an abundance of pubs and cafes, mainly), and stunning nature whichever way you look. There's not much to dislike.

In this publication we have picked three of our favourite places to ride, with an option of combining them into one big ride. We also cover what to do off the bikes if you want a break from riding or need to plan for a non-biking other half.

I hope you enjoy the read. If you haven't been there already, I hope this publication will inspire you to point the front wheel to the Lakes.

Enjoy the ride!

**Mikko Nieminen,
Motorcycle Sport & Leisure Editor**

MOTORCYCLE

FOR THE LOVE OF THE RIDE

SPORT & LEISURE

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This is the Lake District

The Lakes are one of the UK's top destinations for bikers – for a very good reason!

BELOW COPYRIGHT:
Andrew Locking

They say beauty is in the eye of the beholder. Perhaps that point was missed centuries past, when wild, remote areas were perceived as uncivilised and dangerous. Had it not been for the likes of the Romantic poets who found inspiration in the beauty of 'untamed' countryside, things may have remained so well beyond the 19th Century.

William Wordsworth described the Lake District as 'a sort of national property, in which every man has a right and an interest who has an eye to perceive and a heart to enjoy'. Beyond Wordsworth's host of golden daffodils lay miles of stunning countryside with towering fells and expansive valleys.

The movement towards creating National Parks gained momentum after the Second World War, and in 1951, the Peak District was the first area to be designated as such, followed that same year by the Lake District, Snowdonia and Dartmoor. By the end of the decade the Pembrokeshire Coast, North York Moors, Yorkshire Dales, Exmoor, Northumberland and Brecon Beacons had joined the list.



In 2017 the Lake District National Park was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Comprising a patchwork quilt of quaint villages overlooking moody lakes in the shadow of spectacular fells, the popular vacation destination covers 912 square miles and includes England's highest mountain, Scafell Pike, at 978 metres (3210 feet). Market towns such as Kendal, Windermere, Ambleside and Keswick are perfect bases for exploring the area with their traditional inns, local art galleries and outdoor equipment shops.

Bikers' Lakes

Aside from the millions of walkers that flock here every year, there is little wonder that the Lake District also is one of England's most popular destinations for bikers, thanks to its network of winding mountain roads and steep, narrow passes. Each and every journey conjures up a unique experience, whether it be cruising by idyllic lakes or heading over dramatic fells. And should you fancy a mega day out, you could always opt for a major loop around Cumbria, taking in the dramatic coastline and through lesser populated areas of the Western and Southern fells.

A natural hopping off point for those travelling northwards along the M6 is the town of Kendal, from where it is an enjoyable twisting ride onwards to Windermere. From here you can split westwards to Coniston or continue heading north through historic Grasmere and its associations with William Wordsworth, and on to Keswick, a magnet for tourists with its bustling market square, B&Bs, hotels, shops, pubs and restaurants. If you are heading either southbound on the M6 or westward on the A66, Keswick is possibly the best town to begin your tour of this dramatic landscape.





Our routes

The routes we rode for this publication take in what we consider the best of the Lakes. Of course, that's debatable. The beauty of the area is that there are so many great biking roads that there are as many favourite roads as there are riders. However, the routes covered here are all well worth riding. They are good biking roads with lovely scenery and plenty to do around them. You can base yourself in Ambleside, Keswick, Coniston (where we stayed) or any number of nice villages to be close enough to ride any of them. It's also easy to combine them all into a longer ride, which is still doable as a day ride if you don't want too much time off the bike. Putting the three routes together creates a great circular route that opens your eyes to the possibilities of venturing further. As you will see, this is just the beginning – there are plenty more routes and adventures in the Lakes.

Getting there

Depending where you are in the UK, it may take some time to get to the Lakes, but it's well worth it. The Lake District is about a five-hour ride from London and the South East, 1.5 hours from Manchester and two hours from York.

Ten largest lakes in the park

1. Windermere - 14.8 square kilometres
2. Ullswater - 8.9 square kilometres
3. Derwentwater - 5.5 square kilometres
4. Bassenthwaite Lake - 5.3 square kilometres
5. Coniston Water - 4.0 square kilometres
6. Haweswater - 3.9 square kilometres
7. Thirlmere - 3.3 square kilometres
8. Ennerdale Water - 3 square kilometres
9. Wastwater - 2.9 square kilometres
10. Crummock Water - 2.5 square kilometres



Find out more

If you want to find out more about the Lake District National Park, here are some good places to start with:

■ www.visitcumbria.com/tourist-information-centres

■ www.lakedistrict.gov.uk
■ www.visitbritain.com

■ www.nationalparks.uk
■ www.nationalparksengland.org.uk

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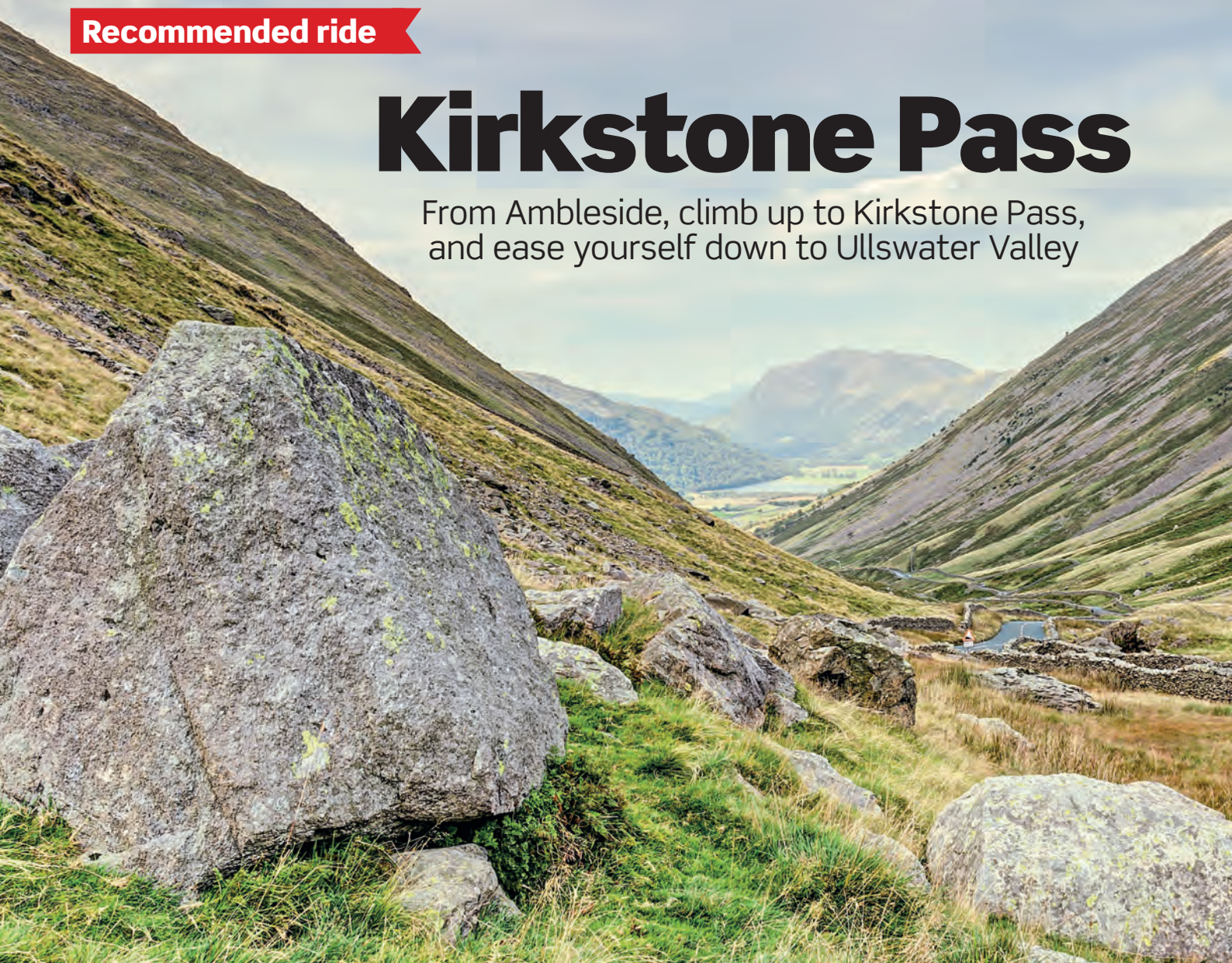
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Recommended ride

Kirkstone Pass

From Ambleside, climb up to Kirkstone Pass, and ease yourself down to Ullswater Valley



This route begins in Ambleside. On the A591 north of the town and almost opposite the unique Bridge House, turn right up Kirkstone Road. You are soon past the outlying cottages of the town and into the countryside as the road winds ever upwards. There is

little wonder that it is highlighted as ‘The Struggle’ on the Explorer OL7 –The English Lakes, South-Eastern Area map, as it narrows to a 1:4 gradient. Just be thankful you’re not on a bicycle!

Turn left on to the A592. Right, time for refreshments, so if you fancy a traditional inn with altitude, pop into the Kirkstone Pass Inn, a former important coaching inn and the third highest pub in the UK at 1,730ft. There is a large gravel parking area opposite the pub. You are now on Kirkstone Pass, the Lake District’s highest pass open to motor traffic, connecting Ambleside with Patterdale and the Ullswater Valley.

If you did not fancy tackling ‘The Struggle’, there is an easier route to arrive here by heading south on the A591 from Ambleside, through Windermere, to Troutbeck to a junction where the road doubles back on itself on to the A592.

Back at the inn, continue northbound, passing striking fells to your left and right, by Brothers Water, to eventually arrive in Patterdale, around the southern edge of Ullswater and on to Glenridding, the starting point for many hikers heading up Helvellyn. This is another good spot for refreshments or simply to chill



While you're there...

HILL TOP

Near Sawrey, Ambleside

Bought in 1905 with the proceeds from her first book, 'The Tale of Peter Rabbit', the 17th century farmhouse at Hill Top and the surrounding countryside inspired many of Beatrix Potter's books. When she left the house and farm to the National Trust, she stipulated that it be shown in the same condition as when she lived here, and in each room you can see objects that relate to her stories.

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/hill-top

DOVE COTTAGE

Grasmere, Ambleside

First family home of the poet William Wordsworth, Dove Cottage is a traditional Lakeland cottage with dark wood-panelled walls and stone floors, heated by coal fires. Still furnished with the Wordsworth family belongings, the cottage looks much as it did when the poet lived and wrote here, and is a mirror of life in the early 19th century. Next door in a separate museum, you can see memorabilia about the poet, his family, his travels and his work.

www.wordsworth.org.uk

THE GRASMERE GINGERBREAD SHOP

Church Cottage, Grasmere, Ambleside LA22 9SW

Tiny Lakeland shop in a former 1630s school, stocking gingerbread, rum butter, fudge and mint cake. Victorian cook Sarah Nelson invented Grasmere Gingerbread in 1854. A unique, spicy-sweet cross between a biscuit and cake, its reputation quickly spread and it is now enjoyed by food lovers throughout the world.

www.grasmeregingerbread.co.uk

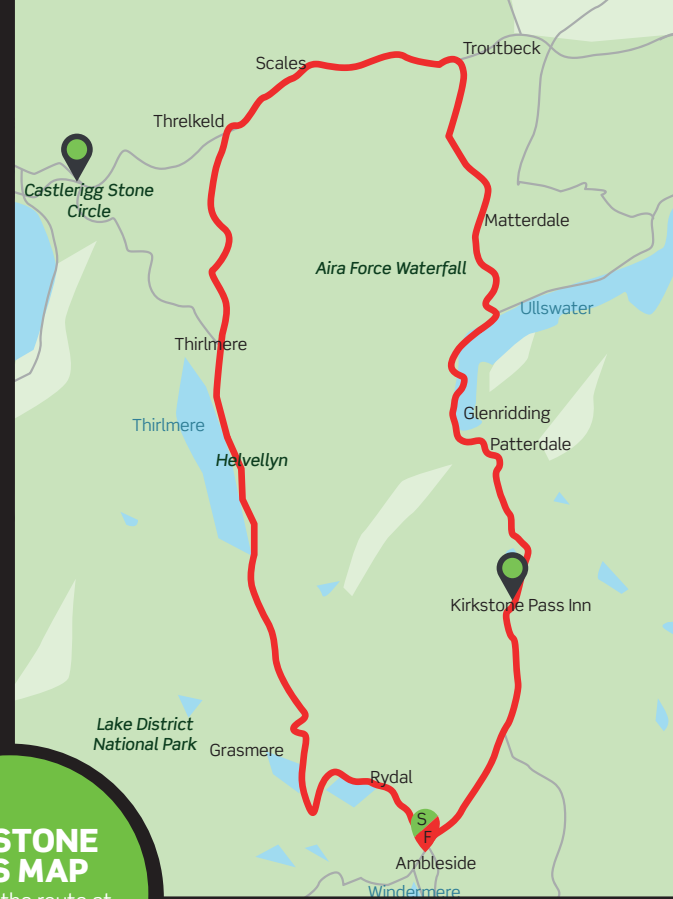


Recommended ride

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out. Now continue along the western edge of Ullswater, picking up the A5091 towards Dockray, Matterdale End and Troutbeck. Here we join the A66 for a brief sprint to Threlkeld, after which we pick up the B5322 southwards. Just past Legburnthwaite at the head of Thirlmere we join the A591, which skirts the eastern edge of the reservoir.

Our next major stopping off point is the village of Grasmere. Park up and visit the Gingerbread Shop, where Victorian cook Sarah Nelson invented Grasmere Gingerbread in 1854. A unique, spicy-sweet cross between a biscuit and cake, its reputation quickly spread and is now enjoyed by food lovers all over the world. On the southern edge of Grasmere is Dove Cottage, best known as the home of poet William Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy from December 1799 to May 1808. The poet is buried in St Oswald's Church in the centre of the village. Back on the bike, and it's back along the A591 to Ambleside, sweeping past the edge of Rydal Water to Bridge House, where we began our day trip.



KIRKSTONE PASS MAP

Download the route at
www.msllmagazine.co.uk/maps



Ten highest mountains in the Lakes

1. Scafell Pike at 978 metres (3210 feet)
2. Scafell at 964 metres (3162 feet)
3. Helvellyn at 950 metres (3114 feet)
4. Skiddaw at 931 metres (3053 feet)
5. Great End at 910 metres (2986 feet)
6. Bowfell at 902 metres (2940 feet)
7. Great Gable at 899 metres (2960 feet)
8. Pillar at 892 metres (2926 feet)
9. Nethermost Pike at 891 metres (2923 feet)
10. Catstycam at 889 metres (2917 feet)

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Does bike choice matter?

We took four very different adventure bikes to the Lakes to see if it matters what you ride

You don't need an adventure bike to ride in the Lake District. Of course you don't. But if you want to tackle the likes of Hardknott Pass and maybe add a little offroading to your tour, they will go a long way to make the ride a more pleasant affair. The long suspension travel, comfortable riding position and ability to carry lots of luggage make adventure bikes a good option for most touring trips,

especially ones where the going might get a bit rough.

Our choice for the Lakes trip was a quartet of adventure bikes. But not all of them were equal...

The smallest of the bunch, the KTM 390 Adventure, is a lightweight single-cylinder bike that didn't love motorways on the way to the Lakes, but managed to cover the distance without too many grumbles. Once we reached the Lakes, the Adventure was in its element on the twisty roads. It didn't mind the steep climbs, but you needed to be in the right gear all the time as it simply doesn't have the muscles of the bigger bikes to pull it up the mountains. In terms of comfort it scored big, as long as you kept your bum on the seat – riding standing up is not much fun on this bike as the bars are very low...

Almost twice the capacity of the KTM, but still seen as a middleweight machine, the Yamaha Ténéré 700 is the most offroad-focused bike of the lot here. It still handled well on the black top, but you felt like it would rather spin up some dust. With a very limited electronics package, the Ténéré is a simple bike,



Bridgestone
A41

BRIDGESTONE

and that's a big part of its charm – no bells and whistles needed, thank you very much. The twin-cylinder engine is a joy to ride, and the softish suspension keeps the ride smooth. Riding position is relaxed and commanding, and you can quickly get used to the bike.

Adding triple flavour to the fleet was the Triumph Tiger 900 Rally Pro. This is the more offroady version of the Tiger 900, while the GT variant is the more road-oriented one. Even so, it didn't feel as dirt-loving as the Yamaha, although for the kind of offroading that we did, the Triumph was more than capable. With a selection of ride modes, the Triumph can be set up to potter in town, attack the twisties or venture offroad. It is arguably the most versatile of the bikes we had. The riding position has you leaning forward a bit more than the other bikes, which has a tendency to make you ride a bit more sportily too.

The biggest bike we had was the Honda Africa Twin Adventure Sports. The name might suggest that it has the closest Dakar connection, and when you take the big twin offroad you are impressed with its capabilities. However, it's best at covering big Tarmac miles in comfort. It doesn't really matter what sort of Tarmac roads we are talking about either – the Honda was equally happy to clock up the miles on the motorway as it was negotiating the tight passes in the Lakes. It's a big bike, but a lot more useable than you might think. And it has more electronics than a fighter jet.

What about tyres?

For general touring, pretty much any decent rubber will do, but if you fancy venturing off the Tarmac, you need tyres that can cope with that. For the occasional gravel road, you will be fine with something like the Bridgestone A41, but if you want to get a bit more involved with the dirt you better up your game with a more offroad-biased AX41 that's still good on proper roads too.

**Bridgestone
AX41**



Honister Pass

Miles of smiles on a circular route from Keswick via Honister Pass

Well, if you are hankering after breathtaking scenery, then here it is. This is a fantastic run, taking in some of Lakeland's most amazing scenery. From Keswick, head south on the B5289 along the eastern edge of Derwent Water. Once past the southern edge of the lake, the route leads you into

the Borrowdale Valley alongside the River Derwent to your right (this is a delightful twisty section of the road).

Passing through Rosthwaite, the road swings right towards the village of Seatoller and on to Honister Pass where you will pass under the shadow of imposing Dale Head to the north. You are now on Honister Pass en route to Buttermere. To your left is Fleetwith Pike, and to your right the burbling Gatesgarthdale Beck.





HONISTER PASS MAP

Download the route at www.mslmagazine.co.uk/maps

While you're there...

CASTLERIGG STONE CIRCLE

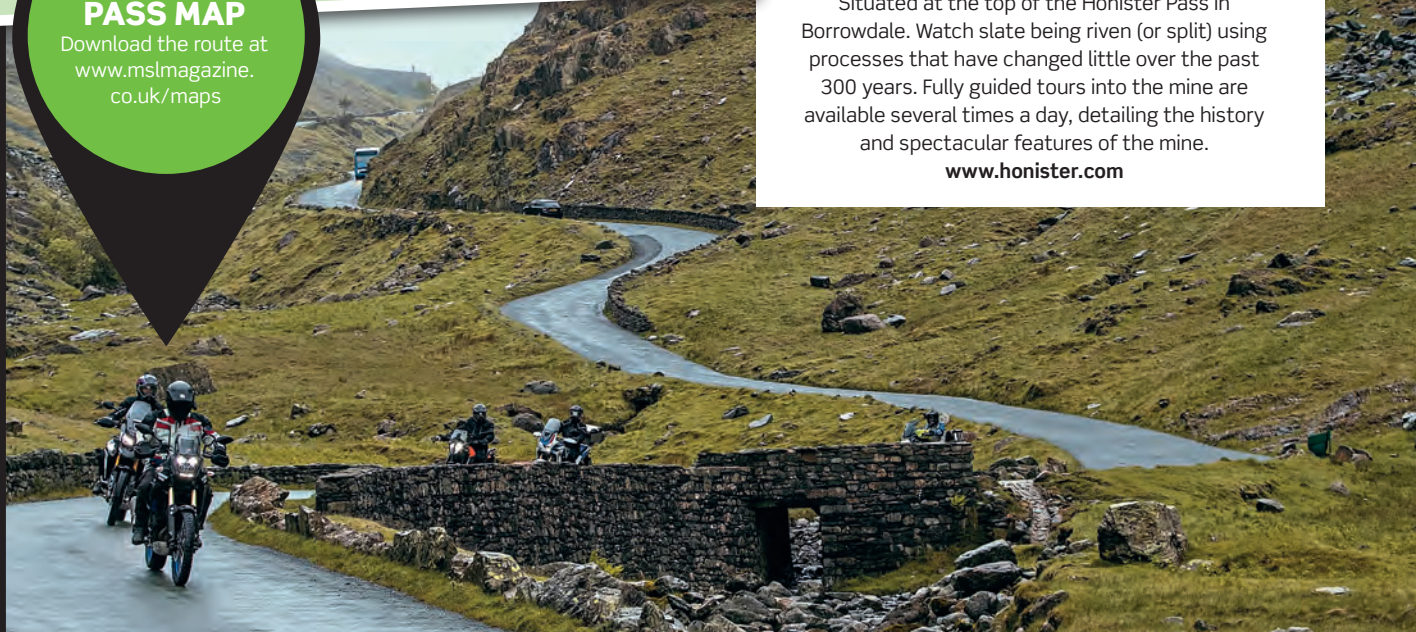
Castle Lane, Underskiddaw, Keswick, Cumbria

Of the more than 300 stone circles in England, Castlerigg is not only among the oldest, it is also one of the most atmospheric. It is dramatically sited, with 38 stones aligned with the tallest of the surrounding fells, and the scene uncluttered by admissions offices or souvenir stands.

HONISTER SLATE MINE

Situated at the top of the Honister Pass in Borrowdale. Watch slate being riven (or split) using processes that have changed little over the past 300 years. Fully guided tours into the mine are available several times a day, detailing the history and spectacular features of the mine.

www.honister.com





ABOVE COPYRIGHT:
Andrew Locking

A great stop for a brew is the Honister Slate Mine café at the top of the pass, with its magnificent slate entrance to the rest of the Pass.

Passing Gatesgarth Farm at the southern tip of Buttermere, the road runs alongside the lake to its northern tip where the village lies. This is a nice place to stop for refreshments. Carry on northbound along the B5289 past Crummock Water. The road now runs through Lorton Vale, eventually crossing the A66 and into Cockermouth. You can take the Whinlatter Pass, B5292, by swinging a right in Lorton before you get to the A66. This will take you to Braithwaite, and from there it's just a quick hop on the A66 to Keswick. For an easy run back to Keswick you can avoid the Whinlatter Pass, and take the A66 eastwards. Although far busier than the road you have just enjoyed, it does run alongside the western edge of Bassenthwaite Lake and past Thornthwaite Forest and Whinlatter Forest Park to the right. Either way, you will soon get back to Keswick.

Facts you (possibly) did not know about the Lakes

- Woodland covers 12 per cent of the National Park, around 28,500 hectares
- The deepest lake in England is Wastwater at 74 metres (243 feet)
- England's longest lake is Windermere at 10.5 miles long
- Bassenthwaite is the only official lake in the Lake District
- The National Park includes 26 miles of coastline and estuaries
- It is the home of Britain's 44th Protected Food – The unique cultural heritage of the Cumberland Sausage was recognised in 2011 when the pork coil-shaped snack was granted protected status
- There are 1,342 miles of footpath – equivalent to almost 360,000 unwound Cumberland sausages laid end to end
- If you find yourself in the midst of a zombie apocalypse and in need of somewhere to hide, look no further than Ennerdale, location of the most westerly of the lakes. It was here that the characters from the 2002 Danny Boyle film '28 Days Later' took refuge and managed to escape
- The graphite mine at Seathwaite, first discovered in the 1550s, provided the natural resource required to make the very first pencil and the history of this humble item of stationery is charted at the Pencil Museum in Keswick





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Riding offroad in the Lakes

Few places in the UK can match the Lake District with the scenic opportunities to hit the trails, so we talked Giles Cooper from Adventure Bike Rides into showing us some green and gravelly routes...



Most of us visit the Lake District for the great roads it has to offer, but if you fancy a bit of an adventure, you can find a lot of great riding away from the Tarmac too.

Although green roads are being closed across the country, there are still numerous gravel roads and green lanes to explore in the Lake District. Just remember to be polite to walkers if you go exploring them – we all want people to have a good impression of us motorcyclists if we are riding offroad.

Finding the lanes that are legal to ride is not as easy as you might think, so the best bet is to talk to the local TRF guys who know the area well, or do as we

did and engage the services of a company like Adventure Bike Rides (tel. 01652 462067, web: adventurebikerides.co.uk) who can not only tell you where to go, but also guide you through the lanes, so you don't miss the good bits.

Giles Cooper from Adventure Bike Rides, who joined us for the trip to the Lakes, spent years living there, so he knows the area like the back of his hand.

He guided us to a few different places that highlighted the variety of riding available, and also demonstrated that a lot of offroading is accessible even on the big (and mainly road-oriented) bikes that we had for the trip.

If you are at all curious about leaving the Tarmac behind for a bit, we can highly recommend sampling the lanes in the Lakes.



Leave the bike and walk this way

CATBELLS HIGH RIDGE HIKE

This short half-day climb takes you to the final fell on a long ridge that separates Derwentwater from the Newlands Valley. The peak is 451 metres high, and you can hike up and back from Keswick for a spectacular view. Although it's a short climb and the trail is good, it does become steep in places. If you are still feeling fit, once on top, follow the ridge along the fells of Maiden Moor, High Spy, Dale Head, Hindscarth and Robinson before descending into the Newlands Valley. The 14-kilometre hike offers dramatic scenery along the entire open ridge line.



Recommended ride

Hardknott and Wrynose Passes

Perhaps the most iconic, and most challenging, motorcycle route of the Lakes



Yes, there are bikers out there who just love to be taken to the limit, shaken and stirred, where fear succumbs to the adrenalin rush. Overkill? Well, you could always find out for yourself by taking on this most challenging of routes. Not for the faint-hearted, and not for rubbish weather days either. And if a gradient of 1 in 3 doesn't do it for you, then it is doubtful that anything will. So, with that in mind, let's crack on.

We begin in the Western lakes, where some of you may choose to camp at Wasdale Head, north of Wast Water, an iconic location with views to Scafell Pike and the mighty Great Gable. Head back along the lakeside road to Cinderdale Bridge by Nether Wasdale, heading south to Santon Bridge. Here we turn left, heading east.

Follow the road through Beckfoot, past Dalegarth Station and over Wharehouse Bridge. Passing a parking area on your right, you then ride over a cattle grid and on to Hardknott Pass. Further up the road and to your left lies the Roman fort of Hardknott Castle. It won't be long before you are faced with some hellishly steep, tight zigzags, and caution is recommended here, before you arrive in Cockley Beck.

While you're there...

CONISTON AND BRANTWOOD

About eight kilometres long and less than a kilometre wide, Coniston Water lies beneath the eastern slope of the Old Man of Coniston. Explore the lake on board the 1859 steam yacht Gondola or the solar-powered Coniston Launch. Scenic boat rides include a stop at Brantwood, home of John Ruskin, one of the most influential minds of the Victorian era. His former home offers insights into his work, as well as fine art and objects collected in his extensive travels.

www.brantwood.org.uk

LAKELAND MOTOR MUSEUM

With a collection of over 30,000 exhibits that trace the development of road transport throughout the 20th Century – cycles, motorbikes, motor cars and automobilia – the Lakeland Motor Museum is a must-visit attraction for most motorcyclists. Housed in a converted mill in the heart of the Lake District, the museum is just minutes away from Lake Windermere. Don't miss the Campbell Bluebird Exhibition, a tribute to the racing careers of Sir Malcolm and Donald Campbell, which is situated in a separate building on the site.

www.lakelandmotormuseum.co.uk

HARDKNOTT AND WRYNOSE PASS MAP

Download the route at
www.msllmagazine.co.uk/maps





Lakeland activities

- Hire a kayak at Windermere Canoe Kayak. www.windermerecanoeekayak.com
- The Via Ferrata Extreme at Honister Slate Mine. Honister's Via Ferrata is an adventure climbing system that uses a permanently fixed cable for safety and protection up the rock face of the old miners' route. www.honister.com/product/via-ferrata-xtreme
- The Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway, known as La'al Ratty ('little railway') runs from its own station in Ravenglass across the estuary and through the hills, to Boot in the Eskdale Valley. www.ravenglass-railway.co.uk
- Following the River Leven, the Lakeside & Haverthwaite Railway runs for 3.5 miles between the small village of Haverthwaite and Lakeside Pier at the southern end of Lake Windermere. There is one stop at Newby Bridge and the trains connect to Windermere Lake Cruises at Lakeside Pier, where the Lakes Aquarium is also situated. www.lakesiderailway.co.uk

At the junction, the road goes south towards Seathwaite, but we are not going that way. Oh no. Instead, follow the road left, which leads you on to Wrynose Pass, another steep, single track road, and to Little Langdale. Continue until you reach the A593, turning right. The road will lead you by Yew Tree Tarn, and through Coniston. This is a nice village to stop for refreshments before continuing south to Torver. Again, stay on the A593 to High Cross before turning right on the A595. Passing Duddon Bridge, follow this road through Hallthwaites until you reach the junction at Whicham where you turn right and head north. The road leads through Bootle and Waberthwaite, Holmrook, Gosforth and Calder Bridge. If you are camping at the head of West Water, Gosford is where you turn off and head via Wellington and Nether Wasdale. From there it is a gentle ride

through Woodhow and back to West Water. If you fancy a more adventurous route home, once reaching Duddon Bridge on the A593, turn right by Bank End before crossing the River Duddon to Ulpha. Turn right, go past the Post Office and then left and the road leads over Birker Fell. Follow the road through Eskdale Green and on to Santon Bridge. Turn right for Nether Wasdale and back to West Water. It will cut your journey time, but will certainly be a lot hairier – and more lonely!



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Route planning

You can just ride and figure out the route as you go, or you can have a plan. We went with the latter.

Route planning divides opinion: some love spending time picking the exact roads they want to ride, while others would rather spend that time riding and take the route as it unravels in front of them.

If you want to simply head over to the Lakes and make up your route as you go along, that's totally doable. There are so many great roads there, including many of the bigger ones, that you are more likely than not to be in luck.

For us, there was always going to be a plan. We wanted to ride the routes in this publication, and we made sure that we were ready to hit every single corner on the way.

There are plenty of ways to plan your route, from the good old atlas to an online tool. We used the TomTom My Drive web planner (mydrive.tomtom.com) as we had a TomTom Rider 550 satnav with us to keep us on the road. You can use it without owning a TomTom satnav, but having the Rider 550 we benefitted from wirelessly transferring the route to the satnav.

When planning the route, remember to keep the riding time sensible, so you have time for coffee breaks, unexpected delays (anything from roadworks to having to return to the previous stop to retrieve your lost mobile phone) that add to travel time. It's also nice to have time to visit places of interest.

Naturally, it's down to personal preference how long you want to spend in the saddle per day, but if you exceed the limits of your comfort zone the riding soon gets tiresome.

As much as we all hate reading a manual, it's worth figuring out how to get the best out of your satnav. Most satnavs can do much more than just show you the way. They can suggest either the fastest route or a 'winding' route, give you information about traffic on your route, and plenty more. As tedious as it may sound, it's worth dusting off that manual.

However you plan your tour, it's not just about setting the route – it can be a great way to get into the touring spirit.



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Getting the kit right

The Lakes' changeable weather means flexibility is key when choosing your kit.

There is no bad weather, only bad kit... Our trip to the Lakes coincided with the rest of the UK enjoying wall-to-wall sunshine, but where we rode, we enjoyed not only sunshine, but also rain, fog and pretty much everything that you can expect from a British summer. Luckily, we had got our kit right, so none of that mattered.

When touring on a motorcycle, you are restricted by how much you can carry, and also by how quickly you can get changed – there's no point in filling your top box with a waterproof jacket if by the time you have changed into it you are already wet. So, flexible riding gear is ideal. Packing light but smart means that you are carrying less weight, you spend less time changing your kit, and you can enjoy your trip more. Here's a few basic considerations...

Jacket and trousers

Although we saw plenty of bikers in the Lakes wearing leathers or denim jeans, we were quite snug (and a bit smug) in our waterproof, breathable, vented and all-day comfortable textile suits. If the jacket and trousers are water- and windproof, you won't need many layers under them most of the year, and you can wear them in any weather. It's a good idea to go for something that has plenty of vents to keep you cool, plenty of pockets so you don't need a rucksack, and ideally something that is properly waterproof.

Helmet

Most helmets will do the job, but there are a few features that are worth considering. Our helmets were all 'peaked', which helped us see when the sun was low, and they had a Pinlock anti-fog insert to keep the visor mist-free. You might also want to consider fitting a comms unit to the helmet if you are riding with mates and want to take the frantic arm waving out of any decision to stop for a brew.



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Boots

We opted for general touring boots as most of our riding was on the roads, and we didn't feel like the shortish gravel road excursions really merited a sturdier (and more uncomfortable) offroad boot. The idea, as with all the kit, is that they are waterproof and breathable. When you wear the same boots for a few long days, you want them to feel as good in the evening when you take them off as they do when you first put them on in the morning. Gore-Tex or similar breathable waterproof membrane is essential for this.

More information and choice of great kit at bikerheadz.co.uk

Gloves

Gloves are a very personal choice – long or short, leather or textile, thick or light? If you plan to go riding offroad it might be worth packing a separate offroad pair with you, and for road riding try to find something that will handle any weather long enough to keep your mitts dry before you decide to call it a day.



Accessories

This could be a very long list, but here are three key considerations for you:

Unless you have good panniers or a top box, you will need a good waterproof bag to get all your kit in. It's good to travel light, but you will need the basics, and you want them to be dry when you need them. A waterproof roll bag is a cheap investment to guarantee that you don't need to put everything on the radiator as soon as you unpack.

When you cover big miles it's essential to look after your hearing. Long days in the saddle can both damage your hearing and make you tired if you don't wear earplugs. Whether that's single-use foamies, multi-use filtered ones like the Pinlock plugs (£19.99) that we had with us, or custom-made earplugs is up to you.

Lastly, if you don't know the routes or destination of your trip, you can make navigation easy with a good satnav. We had a TomTom Rider 550 (£399.99) with us, and it kept us on route right from planning the routes before we set off to following the instructions in the Lakes.



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Joining the dots

The routes already covered here are all good, but put them all together and you get a real treat.

If you want to combine the three routes we have covered here, you can turn them into a fantastic circular route that covers all the passes, all the best scenery and plenty of places to stop for a brew.

This is the route that we put together to combine all the shorter ones, and we loved it! Starting from Coniston, we headed to Ambleside to pick up the start point of the Kirkstone Pass route (p. 8), climbed up the Struggle to Kirkstone Pass, and headed towards Patterdale and Glenridding by Ullswater. Staying on the original route we turned up to Troutbeck, but from there we took the direction towards Keswick, visiting Castlerigg Stone Circle on the way.

From Keswick, we jumped on the Honister Pass route (p. 14) heading south along the eastern edge of Derwent Water. After a break at the Honister Slate Mine café, we took on the Honister Pass itself. Instead of continuing to Low Lorton and the A66, we swung a left at Brackenthwaite. This took us past Loweswater to Mockerkin, where we took another left. We were now on transit to the Hardknott and Wrynose Passes, but the road is not too shabby at all. The road took us to Calder Bridge, where you could head over to Nether Wasdale where our Hardknott and Wrynose Pass route begins (p.20).



THE WHOLE ROUTE

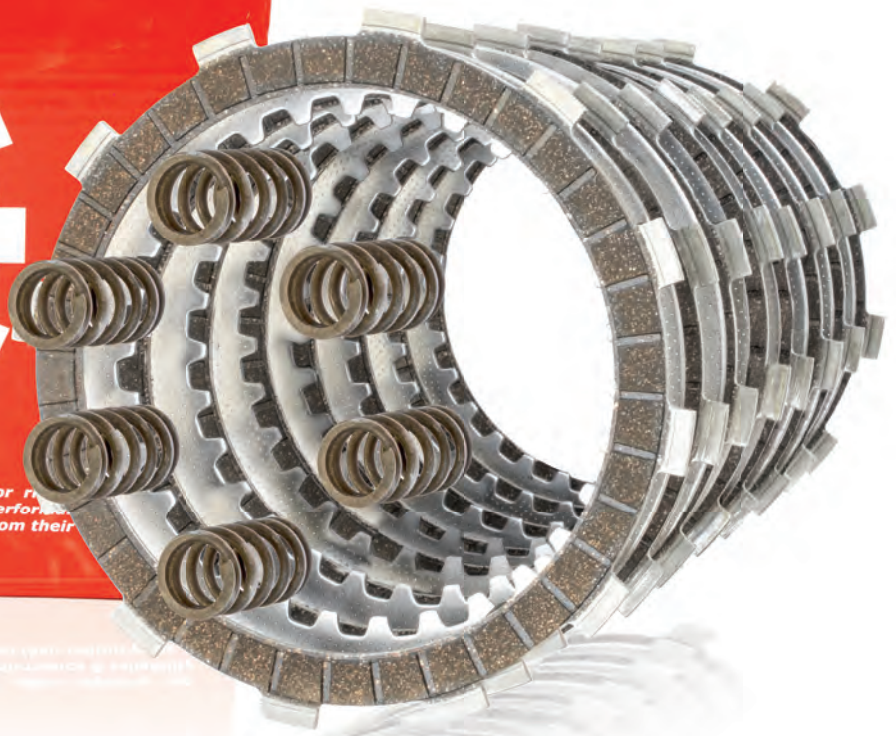
Download the route at www.msllmagazine.co.uk/maps

The last bit of our route followed the Hardknott and Wrynose Passes towards Coniston and Ambleside.

We based ourselves in Coniston, but you could just as easily stay in Ambleside, Keswick or any number of places along the route. One good thing about the Lake District is that it's not really that big, and if you select the (slightly) bigger roads, you can move from one place to another fairly quickly – just remember that in some cases the lakes and mountains mean that what looks like a short distance on the map, might be a long detour around natural obstacles.

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