

3-5a Keswick to Caldbeck (main)

Map panel 3

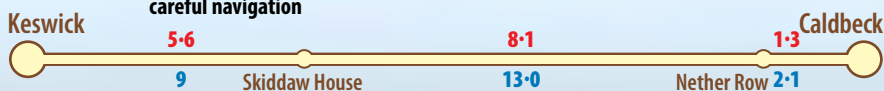
Distance 15 miles (24.1 km)

Terrain good tracks and paths into remote fells; rugged moorlands on the ascent of the highest point on the route, where careful navigation is required; good paths and tracks further downhill; road-walking near Caldbeck

Grade steep climb followed by ascending paths, narrow and rocky in parts; remote moorlands with faint paths; careful navigation needed on both ascent and descent of High Pike

Food and drink Mosedale (café off-route), Caldbeck (pubs and cafés)

Summary a steep track, gentler path and a rocky path lead into a remote area, with some riverside paths, but the broad slopes of High Pike are exposed and require careful navigation



- Leave the Moot Hall and turn a nearby corner at The Inn at Keswick, onto Station Street. Continue straight across Victoria Street at a crossroads and go down Station Road, across a bridge over River Derwent, and past Fitz Park and the Keswick Museum & Art Gallery.
- Turn left up a tarmac path and cycleway which passes the Keswick Leisure Pool & Fitness Centre, keeping right of the building. Pass a car park to reach a mini-roundabout where you turn left up leafy Brundholme Road.
- Ignore a junction where another road turns right, but step right to continue along the roadside path, keeping beside the road to pass houses at Briar Rigg. Within 150 m turn right along a gravel track signed 'Skiddaw 4 miles'. This is Spooney Green Lane, which climbs and crosses a bridge over the busy A66 road.

Looking back to Keswick from Lattrigg Woods



- There is a dip in the track, then it climbs past Spooney Green B&B and goes through a gate into Latrigg Woods, with information boards on the left. The track climbs steeply through mixed woods, with glimpses through the trees on the left to the towering Skiddaw Fells.
- Stay on the clearest track uphill, avoiding all paths and tracks to the right, and go through a gate. Later, the ascent becomes gentler, with wider-ranging views beyond Keswick and Derwent Water to Whinlatter, Grasmoor, Newlands and beyond.
- Pass a notice-board for Gale Ghyll Woods and a forest plantation on the left. Afterwards, ignore a path sharp right signed for Latrigg Summit, instead keeping straight ahead to follow the track across an open slope. Go through a gate to reach a road, and turn right to go to and through a road-end car park.
- Go through a gate and turn left, following a Public Bridleway signed for Skiddaw, parallel to a wall and fence that rises gently through another gate. Once through the gate, the path forks: turn right to follow a narrow path. (The broad path to the left climbs Skiddaw – one of the highest fells in England.)
- Follow the path down past a few larch trees and ford a beck, then walk up a broad, stony path. The steep slopes of Lonscale Fell are covered in grass, bracken and rushes. A fine panorama stretches from Blencathra to Whinlatter via the Helvellyn range, central fells and north-western fells.
- The broad path swings left into the valley of the Glenderaterra Beck, through a gate. The path abruptly becomes narrow, hacked from slate and following rocky terraces across a steep slope of heather and bilberry. Looking ahead through the valley, the conical form of Great Calva is seen. Afterwards, the path becomes easier again.

On Lonscale Fell, heading towards Great Calva





Skiddaw House

- Ignore another path rising from across the valley, and go straight ahead on gentler slopes. Go straight ahead through a gate in a fence to follow a path across heather moorland, soon sighting Skiddaw House Youth Hostel ahead, surrounded by stone walls and larch trees.
- Cross a footbridge over Salehow Beck and walk up to the far end of the hostel's stone wall, where the route divides. The main route turns right, heading north-east down a narrow path, whilst the alternative route goes ahead north-west along the access track away from Skiddaw House.



Skiddaw House

This remote house (altitude 472 m) was built before 1830 to accommodate gamekeepers and shepherds in separate dwellings, as well as to shelter grouse-shooting parties. The building has been altered many times. The last shepherd to live here was Pearson Dalton, who arrived in 1922, supposedly only for a month, but stayed until 1969. Since the 1990s the building has operated as the highest hostel in England, with an option to camp. Note that food and drink are available only to those who have booked to stay overnight: see www.skiddawhouse.co.uk.



- If cloud is obscuring the summit of Great Calva (the fell north of Skiddaw House), visibility will be poor on High Pike and you are advised to take the alternative route from here to Nether Row, described on pages 51-2. In fair weather, take the main route, described below, to enjoy outstanding views from the highest point of the Way.
- Just beyond Skiddaw House, turn right beside a tumbled stone wall and descend across soft ground. Cross a footbridge over the infant River Caldew, follow a stony path uphill, then level out on softer ground.
- The path runs gently downhill and passes left of a circular stone sheepfold. You'll pass another sheepfold where a footbridge crosses Wiley Gill, about 3 km after Skiddaw House. The distant fell with summit cairn ahead to your right is Carrock Fell.
- Go through a gate in a fence and follow a stony path gently uphill, then a gritty path gently downhill. Two more stone sheepfolds lie to the right, and the second incorporates a ruined hut. Continue along a grassy path and pass below a solitary Scots pine. Ford Burdell Gill to reach the end of a stony track.

- Ignore a grassy track climbing left, and bear right on the stony track parallel to the River Caldew to ford Wet Swine Gill. Later, ignore another track on the right that descends to the river past a barrier gate. Go ahead to cross a bridge over Grainsgill Beck. From the bridge, look upstream to spot Lingy Hut perched on the skyline – an important landmark on a stretch that is almost devoid of waymarks or signs.
- Swing right briefly along a road, then turn sharp left up a narrow road (a Public Bridleway) signed for Miller Moss, past a barrier gate to reach old mining spoil heaps. (A notice explains that mineral picking requires a permit.) In case of need for an escape route, follow the road down the valley for 3 km to Mosedale. It has two B&Bs, a café (limited opening hours) and the chance to catch an evening bus to Caldbeck or Carlisle.
- The CW route now follows Grainsgill Beck upstream, but the next kilometre is steep, awkward and wet with no proper path: you may need to use hands as well as feet in places and you will find it very slow going. A beck called Arm o' Grain is forded halfway up Grainsgill Beck.
- When you reach level boggy ground at the top of Grainsgill Beck, or as soon as you can see Lingy Hut, turn or bear right to head for the hut at around 600 m (1970 ft). The hut offers basic shelter in one of the most remote parts of the entire Way, and its ends carry the only CW waymarks for miles: you may wish to sign its visitor book.

Grainsgill Beck, with Lingy Hut on the horizon



Alternative route

An unofficial variant route heads directly for Lingy Hut, saving a distance of 500 m and with easier going underfoot. Instead of following Grainsgill Beck, watch carefully to find a narrow path rising parallel, but gradually drifting away from the stream. Ford the beck called Arm o' Grain, then climb steeply on a grassy path, making a bee-line for the hut when it comes into view.



Over memorial bench, towards Bowscale Fell



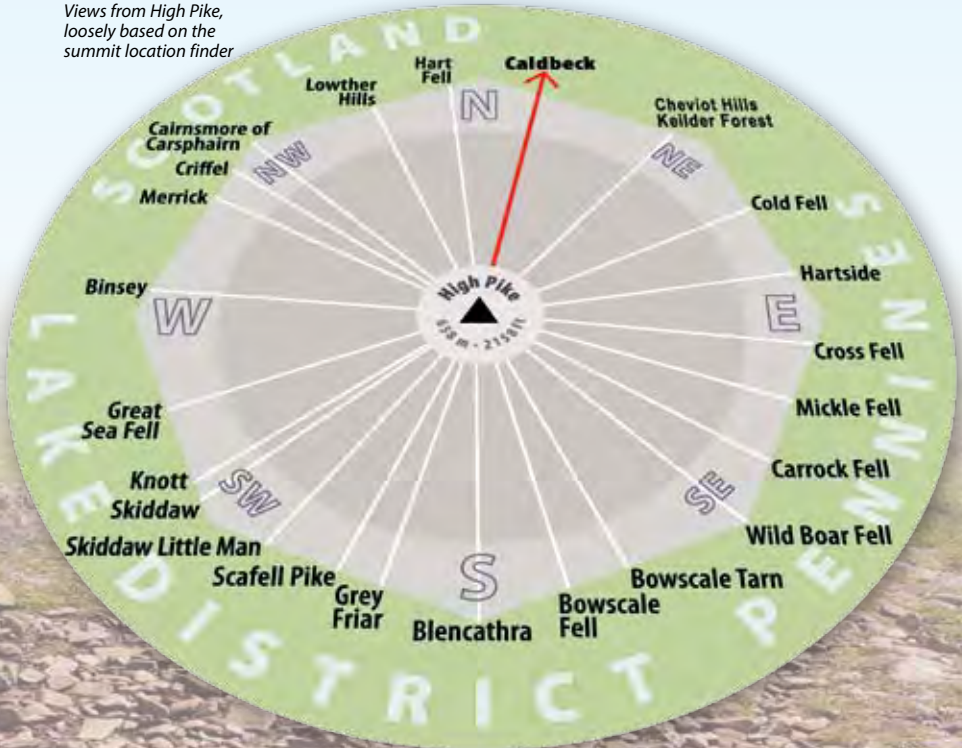
High Pike

At 658 m/2158 ft, this is the highest point on the CW, with exceptional views in clear weather.

Looking back into the Lake District, there are glimpses beyond Skiddaw and Blencathra to the Scafells and Eastern Fells. Parts of the Yorkshire Dales and North Pennines are in view across the Vale of Eden, with the Cheviot Hills far beyond Tynedale. The Southern Uplands of Scotland stretch from the Liddesdale Hills to the Lowther Hills and Galloway Hills, with Criffel rising prominently across the Solway Firth.

- Follow the clear undulating track that leads past Lingy Hut. From the brow of a rise, you'll finally see your goal: the rounded fell of High Pike marked by a summit cairn. Look ahead to the boggy dip in the moorland from which two grassy paths head uphill off the main track. Neither is waymarked, but take your pick to reach the broad summit of High Pike, with its cairn, trig point, viewfinder and stone memorial bench.

Views from High Pike,
loosely based on the
summit location finder



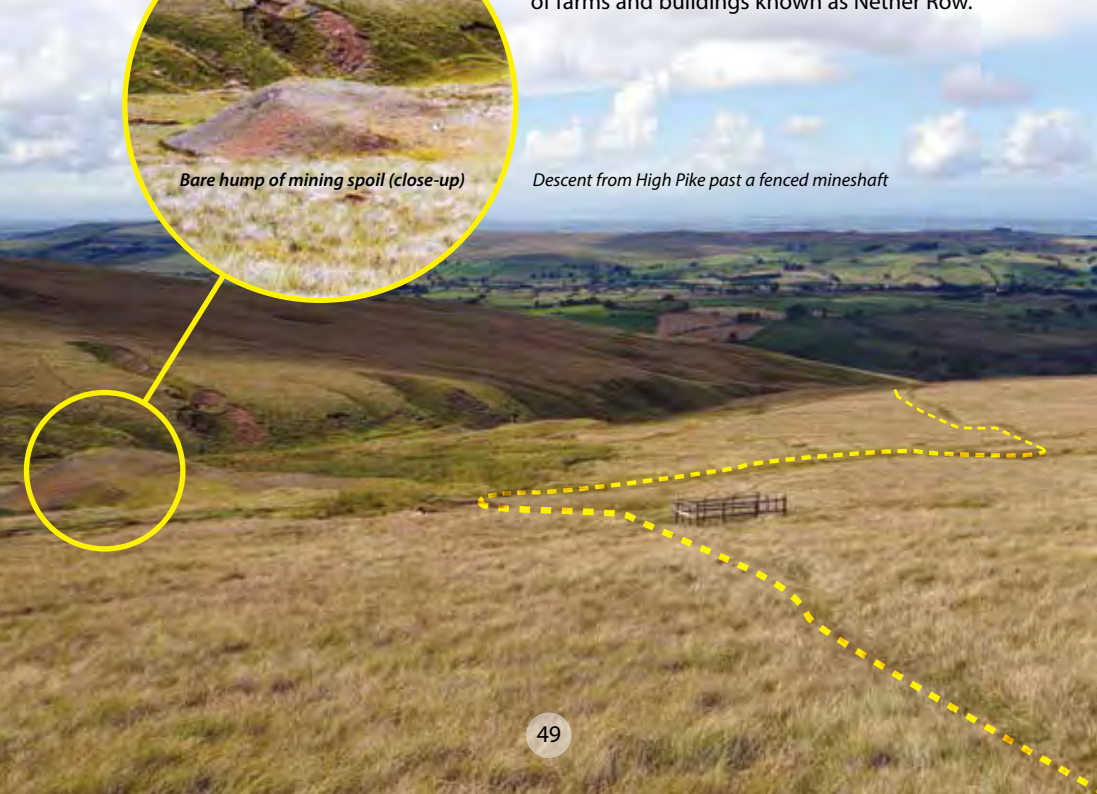
- Take great care on the descent from High Pike, especially if visibility is poor, as you cross featureless ground. Set off roughly northwards, and align the direction of the red 'Caldbeck' arrow in our diagram against the viewfinder itself. Walk 100 m to a pile of stones (the remains of a building), keeping just to the right of it.
- A grassy path veers slightly right (north-north-east) along a crest: follow this down a short steep slope, but only for 100 m until it levels out. It is very important then to turn left along a lesser grassy path to continue the descent. Two ill-defined paths head left: choose the most trodden down one to descend the featureless slope, and stick to it.
- Watch the ground ahead and if after 800 m you spot a fenced-off mining shaft to the right, you are on course: see main photograph below. You should also see a small, bare hump of mining spoil, at the far left and in close-up. Turn right, gently up a grassy track, then turn left down another grassy track.
- Next, cross a stony track near a larger bare area of mining spoil at Potts Gill Mine, and continue straight ahead down a clear track. The track drifts to the right, around another spoil heap, later bending left and right, through a gate and passing between buildings at Clay Bottom Farm.

- Walk down the farm road, straight over a complicated junction (where the CW alternative joins from the left) to the collection of farms and buildings known as Nether Row.



Bare hump of mining spoil (close-up)

Descent from High Pike past a fenced mineshaft





Oddfellows Arms, Caldbeck

- From Nether Row, follow a tarmac road straight ahead (north). When the road bends left, a right turn along a track could be used to reach a camping barn, 1.5 km off-route at Hudscales, but its sign (on a beech tree) may be overgrown.
- The road continues for 1 km down between fields. At a crossroads, go straight ahead along an overgrown former road flanked by hedges. Ignore the first footpath that turns right through a gate and walk on a further 75 m to the next turning, with CW marker. Very soon turn left over a step-stile into a field, watching for yellow marker arrows.
- Cross the field and go through a gate into another field, then look left of the telegraph pole for a step-stile to cross a farm track. Go through a kissing-gate and walk beside a hedge, down through a field and past a telegraph pole through a gate.
- Go down a tunnel-like woodland path and cross a beck using a stone-arch bridge. If it's unduly wet and muddy underfoot you can exit to the lane to reach a road junction.
- Turn left at the end of the path, then turn right to join the steep road (B5299) down to the village of Caldbeck where you reach a road junction with the Old Smithy Tearoom and the Oddfellows Arms.
- To continue the CW, turn left along the road signed 'Wigton 7, Carlisle 13'. Caldbeck has a little accommodation, including a campsite and also a shop; there are occasional buses to Keswick and Carlisle.