Route Details

Start: Car park at the north-west corner of Thirlmere

Grid Ref: NY 306 189

Distance: 3 miles/5km

Terrain: Tarmac road, stony track and woodland trail

Ascent: 1500ft/460m

Difficulty and duration: A very easy-to-follow route with a long, slow ascent. Towards the top it steepens a little and the descent is short and steep.

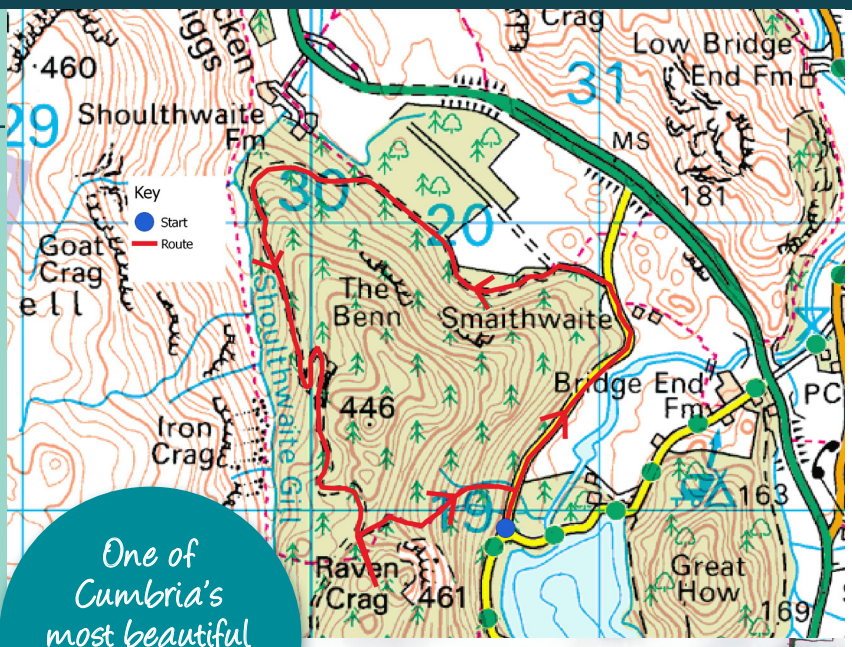
Parking: Parking available in the public car park, charges apply.

Public transport: Not available.

Directions: From Keswick follow the A591 south. Turn right just before Great How. **NB: The Dam triangle car park, where this walk starts, is currently closed (Feb 2020) but there is access from here for cyclists and pedestrians. Alternative car parks around Thirlmere are open.**

Facilities: No facilities along route.

OS Map: Explorer OL4 - The English Lake District, North Western Area.



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One of Cumbria's most beautiful and least-visited places



Raven Crag viewpoint, looking down Thirlmere

Climb from Thirlmere to Raven Crag

- Enjoy spectacular views of Helvellyn to the south and Blencathra to the north
- Explore Britain's first official refuge site for red squirrels
- Spot roe deer, our most common native species, in the woodlands

From the car park walk north from the lake along the road and after half a mile (0.8km) turn left to follow the way-marked route through the kissing gate along the edge of the forest boundary. Remain on this main route (clearly signed along the way to Raven Crag) for 1.5 miles (2.5km) where the route levels out into a clearing.

On your right is a footpath sign which leads to the remains of the fort (an interesting diversion). Bear slight left to follow the path as it rises steeply, up wooded steps, over walkways and out onto Raven Crag.

To descend, retrace your steps down to the clearing and turn right to follow a small woodland path down through the trees. Continue on crossing two broad forest tracks until you reach the road. (Note: this section is particularly steep and rubbly underfoot in places).

At the road turn right to return to the car park.

Continued...

Climb from Thirlmere to Raven Crag
continued



Roe deer can be seen in the woods and are most active at dawn and dusk



Raven Crag viewpoint looking north to Blencathra



St John's Common with Great Dodd in the clouds



Track around forestry plantation

Raven Crag walk photographs by Steve Pipe, Roe deer and red squirrel by Jon Hawkins/Surrey Hills Photography.

Before you set off

The weather in Cumbria can change quickly, particularly on the fells, so please be prepared as changes in weather can alter the difficulty of a route. Appropriate clothing can make all the difference – it is important to be warm, comfortable and dry when out exploring.

We suggest an Ordnance Survey map of the area, a compass and the knowledge to use them is invaluable.

Please observe the country code when out walking and, where possible, stick to public footpaths and bridleways. Stock is frequently grazing in these areas so dogs must be kept under control.

Wildlife highlights

This is possibly one of the most beautiful and least-visited spots in Cumbria. Sitting high above Thirlmere, there are spectacular views of Helvellyn to the south and Blencathra to the north and down along the length of this gorgeous glacial valley.

In September 2000 Thirlmere was selected as Britain's first official refuge site for **red squirrels**. Through a programme of habitat management and grey squirrel monitoring, the reds have thrived in the valley and, if you're quiet and keep your eyes peeled, there's a good chance of spotting one. Look out for the noticeboards for details of who to contact if you spot either a red or a grey squirrel.

The valley is also a great place for spotting **roe deer**, so tread quietly and peer deeply into the woods. They're pretty flighty but if you're there either early or late in the day, you stand a pretty good chance of spotting them. (It also means you need to keep your dog on a lead lest they take off through the woods chasing them.)

The area around the reservoir is owned and managed by United Utilities and The Forestry Commission who balance their management of the land with the needs of the wildlife and the requirements of the reservoir. Much of the local work is focused on keeping the water as clean as possible when it enters the reservoir and any sort of bathing or boating is prohibited.

Thirlmere Reservoir was created in the late 19th century to supply water to Manchester, which it does to this day. There was ferocious opposition at the time to the flooding of the valley, made famous by the likes of Wordsworth and Coleridge. The water leaves the reservoir via the outtake (a large castle-like structure half way along the eastern side) and travels nearly 100 miles to Manchester along the Thirlmere Aqueduct, using nothing but the power of gravity. There's a ceremonial fountain in Albert Square in Manchester marking the end of the aqueduct.



Red squirrel



Roe deer

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