

THE CHALLENGE...

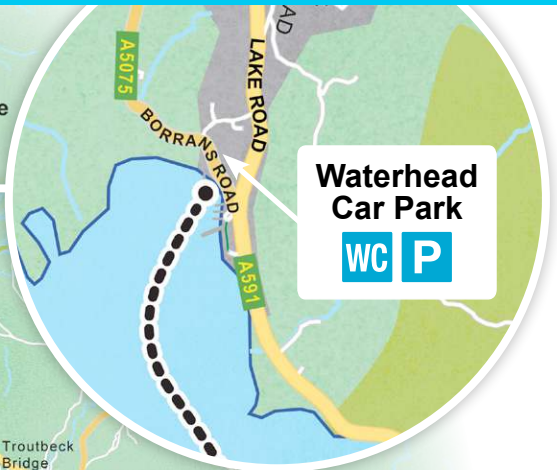
Paddle the length of Windermere

The route can be started at either end

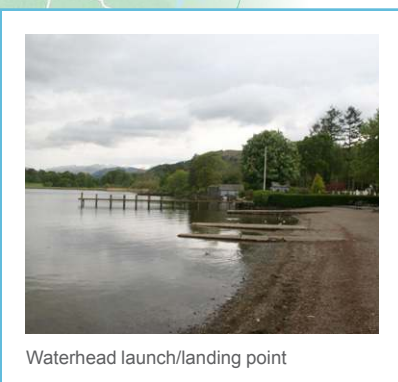
DISTANCE: 11 miles

START FROM: Fell Foot Park, a National Trust property. Park in their car park (fees apply) and walk down to the lake. The launch point is a small cut in the lake side, which is about 800 metres (south) along the bank from the coffee shop. Paddle north up the lake. As you head towards the island approximately half way up the lake, stay to the left hand side and keep an eye out for other water users, particularly the ferry.

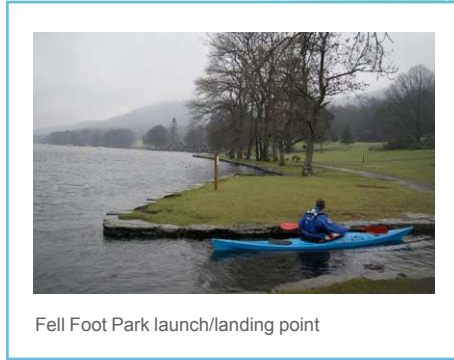
FINISH: Waterhead car park, Ambleside (fees apply). Land on a small beach section with short jetties on the north east end of the lake. The car park is situated just across the road.



Waterhead Car Park
WC P



Waterhead launch/landing point



Fell Foot Park launch/landing point



Fell Foot Park (National Trust)



Fell Foot Park
(National Trust)
WC

Map key			
	Canoe route		Go Canoeing Provider: Windermere Canoe & Kayak
	Ferry route		Car park
	Railway		Tourist information
	Main road		Camping
	Minor road		Fuel/Services
	Waterway		Public convenience
	Woodland		National Trust
	Build-up area		Forestry Commission
	Launch/landing point		Meeting point

THE CHALLENGE: Paddle the length of Windermere.

Distance: 11 Miles

Time: 2-4 hours (approx)

OVERVIEW:

This challenge route is situated within the beautiful surroundings of the Lake District National Park. The lake is nestled by the lower foothills of the Lake District with higher level fells to the north. At nearly 11 miles long, it is the largest natural lake in England. Being a very popular holiday destination, the area can attract large numbers of visitors throughout the year. The delight of this Challenge Route is that you can escape the hustle and bustle on shore, and enjoy the relative tranquillity out on the water (although it too can get quite busy in places). There are also plenty of sights and wildlife which can be seen from the water whilst completing the challenge.

With careful, sensible planning and ensuring you follow safety guidance, the Windermere Challenge Route is an enjoyable intermediate level challenge set in beautiful surroundings. Good luck and make sure you read all of the information below before embarking on your adventure!

Please Note: *The distances for our challenge routes are rounded up to the nearest mile. The distance you cover on the water will vary depending on the exact course your journey takes. The time to complete the challenges will depend on a number of factors including fitness levels, ability, stopping times and craft used. We have calculated the guidance times by assuming a leisurely pace in a recreational craft may travel at around 3mph and a fast pace in a racing craft may travel around 7mph.*

ABOUT WINDERMERE:

Windermere is one of the best known lakes in the Lake District National Park. Over the years it has influenced many well known authors and poets such as William Wordsworth, Beatrix Potter and the creator of Postman Pat, to name a few.

Due to its popularity, the lake can get busy and is used by a variety of different craft from powered boats to sail boats, as well as canoes and kayaks. There are regular ferry services which travel the length of the lake as well as the cable ferry which crosses the middle section. It is important to ensure you are always aware of the other water users and the main ferry routes, to avoid collisions.

The lake can reach up to one mile at its widest part and 67 metres at its deepest. Which means it can get rough at times when the wind is up. Dotted around the lake are 18 islands, the largest of which is the privately owned Belle Island, situated directly opposite Bowness on Windermere.

Along the north western shore you can see Wray Castle from the water. Wray Castle is a Victorian neo-gothic building, built in 1840 and handed over to the National Trust in 1929. Beatrix Potter, aged 16, stayed here in 1882 on a family holiday, beginning her long association with the Lake District.

On the eastern shoreline of the southern part of the lake, you pass Storrs Temple 'Temple of the Heroes'. This is a garden house built on the edge of the lake in 1804 to commemorate four British Naval Officers whose names are inscribed in tablets set in the walls (please note this is private shoreline, therefore landing or launching is not permitted). Also en route you may be lucky enough to see some of the nationally important wildlife found in the area such as otters, native white-clawed crayfish and a wide range of aquatic plants.

Windermere is known to have its very own lake monster! 'Tizzie Whizie' is said to have a hedgehog's body, the tail of a squirrel and the wings of a bee. A boatman in the 20th century started telling stories of this shy mythical creature, and sightings of Tizzie Whizie are still reported today along the shores of the lake.

ROUTE DETAILS:

This Challenge Route can be completed in either direction, however the following is written starting at Fell Foot Park and finishing at Waterhead. Both start/finish points have car parking (fees apply), public toilet facilities and cafés. It would be advisable to take into account the wind direction when choosing which direction to travel.

Start/ Finish locations

Fell Foot Park, National Trust Site

Newby Bridge

Windermere

Cumbria

LA12 8NN

Grid reference: SD 381 870

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/fell-foot-park

The car park entrance is signposted as you head along the A592.

Waterhead Car Park

Waterhead

Borrans Road

South Lakeland

LA22 0GS

Grid Reference: NY 376 032

[Website](#)

The car park is signposted and situated just across the road from the launch/ landing beach near the steamer pier.

ROUTE DESCRIPTION:

Start from Fell Foot Park, a National Trust property. There are several car parks within the site. If you park nearest the building you will have easier access to the toilets and café, but a longer walk to the lake. If you want to be nearer the landing/launch site, we recommend parking at the southern car park.

The launch point is a small cut in the lake side, which is about 800 metres south along the bank from the [boathouse cafe](#) (if you are coming from the direction of the building). Alternatively if you are walking from the southern car park, head towards the lake past the adventure playground.

Once on the water, head north keeping to the eastern shoreline. As you paddle out of Fell Foot Park, take in the view of the beautiful National Trust building on your right hand side. The southern end of the lake is a popular spot for mooring boats. Ensure you keep a considerate distance from them and be aware of any boats that are coming in to moor up as you paddle up the lake.

In order to take the most direct route north, we suggest continuing to paddle along the eastern shoreline all the way to Storrs Temple approximately 4 miles from the start, identifiable on the right hand side by a small headland with the Temple clearly visible. As this route is very similar to the ferry route, we recommend trying to stay close to the bank. This section of the lake is also quite open so it helps get a little shelter by keeping close to the shore.

After you have passed and enjoyed the sights of Storrs Temple, it is approximately one mile to Belle Island and the small cluster of surrounding islands. Approximately 500 metres before the island, look out for the cable ferry, which travels between Ferry House on the west shore and Ferry Nab on the east. At this point there are two routes you can take;

- Heading to the right of Belle Island, towards the Eastern shore line. We suggest meeting your support crew at Cockshott Point, the grassy headland sticking out just before Bowness Bay. You need to be very aware when paddling in this area as it is busy, with marina traffic and a couple of large passenger ferries that head out on regular sightseeing trips. Navigate carefully through this section of the lake.
- Alternatively you can head to the left of Belle Island and the Western shore line and meet your support team just past Claife Viewing station. Your team can park here, at the Harrowslack car park. This route will enable you to avoid the busy ferry traffic and other water users around Bowness. It will also help provide shelter from any wind. This central area of the lake is the narrowest section of water and the islands and bays can provide many calm spots. However this is still a busy section of the lake for water users and a popular spot for mooring boats, so stay alert when passing through!

Potential support crew meeting points are marked on the map with an 'MP' symbol.

After passing the islands, continue north. In approximately three miles you will see Wray Castle on the western shoreline. From here, start to head northeast, towards the finish point at Waterhead, situated at the north eastern end of the lake. The landing site is a small beach section beyond the steamer pier which has short jetties situated either side. On approach to your get out be careful, as the ferry also navigates this stretch into shore.

We hope you enjoy the experience of paddling beautiful Windermere!

PLANNING AND SAFETY ADVICE:

It is important to consider all aspects of the challenge when planning your trip; from choosing the appropriate equipment, logistics and itinerary to your support crew, fellow paddlers, nutritional and hydration requirements.

Firstly, you must be confident of your canoeing ability and experience. Windermere is a large lake and is quite exposed in sections; it has many other water users, which you need to be easily able to navigate around.

Make sure this challenge route is the right one for you. It should be challenging yet achievable without putting yourself or others at unnecessary risk.

When planning what type of craft to complete the challenge in, you need to ensure it is suitable for the environment and conditions you will encounter, bearing in mind weather conditions can change quickly and without warning. Due to Windermere being prone to getting rough when it's windy it is important that you feel confident in your boat in choppy/wavy conditions. If you are a racing paddler, who usually paddles a K1 we would suggest looking at a slightly more stable and higher volume boat and have a pump onboard, potentially even using a sea kayak if conditions are rough. Paddling on such a large lake can present very different conditions to a river or canal.

If doing this challenge as part of the Three Lakes Challenge, bear in mind that tiredness can affect your stability. As the challenge goes on you will become more tired and will get an advantage from feeling comfortable in a boat with greater stability, particularly if weather conditions are windy. When navigating the lake we advise you stay close to the shore line, so that if you do get into difficulty you aren't far from the bank. However be aware that water levels for the lake can fluctuate during the year. When the water level is lower some areas can be quite shallow and rocky close to the banks. Paddle sensibly according to the conditions you experience.

Having a support crew is advisable, particularly if you are attempting to complete Windermere as part of the Three Lakes Challenge. You should consider scheduling a stop in order to have a break to refuel and rehydrate. We have suggested two alternative points to meet your support crew in the route description.

A large proportion of the land on Windermere's shore is privately owned and there are restrictions on launching and landing. If you are planning on getting out of your boat for a break en route, it's important to check public access locations prior to setting off.

When planning your itinerary maintain some flexibility in the timings and consider staying in the area for longer than a day, perhaps combining it with a holiday. As this is such a popular holiday destination, there are plenty of places to stay and lots of things to see and do. If weather or water conditions are bad on the day you planned to complete the challenge, this gives you the option to postpone or rethink your paddle if weather or water conditions are bad on the day.

It is useful for your support crew to have some binoculars so they can spot you in the distance and keep track of your progress.

Windermere hosts several swimming events so it is worth double checking that your planned challenge date doesn't clash with one of these events.

There is no permit required to paddle on Windermere, but there are parking charges at the landing and launch site car parks. It is advised to check the [Fell Foot Park opening times](#) to ensure the gates to the car park will be open when you plan your trip.

To help make sure you remain safe at all times, consider the following safety advice when taking part in the Challenge Routes.

- Wear appropriate clothing- ensure you always wear shoes and a buoyancy aid. Also consider additional dry clothing, layered items, lightweight waterproofs, sun cream and hat.
- Know the weather forecast before you set out canoeing, take account of water levels, flow and weather conditions. Remember to be prepared for this to change, sometimes very quickly and without warning. If in doubt of ability to deal with the weather conditions leave the trip for another day.
- Ensure your equipment is in good condition, used correctly and your boat has sufficient buoyancy.
- Carry a small first aid kit, drinking water and food.
- Have a map of the lake/area with you on the boat. OS maps are recommended.
- Make sure the journey you plan is within your paddling capabilities and schedule planned stops to eat and drink.
- Do not paddle alone
- Follow safety recommendations provided
- Leave details of your trip with a responsible person including when you expect to return.
- Ensure you are confident in the type of boat you are paddling and it is appropriate for the type of water you will encounter when out on the lake.
- When offering assistance to those in need, on or off the water, do not put yourself or fellow canoeists at risk.
- Carry some form of communication such as mobile phone or radio.
- If completing this lake as part of the three lakes challenge, make sure you have a support crew and drive sensibly between the lakes. We do not take driving times into account; it's the time on the water that counts and we record on our leader boards.

AREA INFORMATION:

There are plenty of local amenities in Windermere, Ambleside and the surrounding area, providing a wide range of shops, cafés, restaurants, hotels, B&B and campsites, so you should be able to access supplies, a warm bed or a hot drink! Waterhead also has a large Youth Hostel with direct access onto the lake.

National trust site

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/fell-foot-park

Go Canoeing Tour Provider- Windermere Canoe & Kayak

www.windermerecanoekayak.com

Lake District National Park

www.lakedistrict.gov.uk/home

Go Lakes

www.golakes.co.uk

PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT:

Help minimise the spread of invasive aquatic species and disease by following the **CHECK, CLEAN, DRY** campaign before putting your canoe and equipment in and out of the water (some invasive species can survive in damp or wet conditions for five or six days on water recreation clothing and equipment).

CHECK: Check all your equipment and clothing for living organisms and plant fragments. Pay particular attention to areas that are damp and hard to inspect.

CLEAN: Clean and wash all equipment, clothing and footwear thoroughly, away from the water source. If you do come across any organisms, leave them at the water body where you found them.

DRY: When practical, completely dry out all equipment and clothing before going to a new site. Dry all equipment and clothing - some species can live for many days in moist conditions. Dry your kit with towels. Make sure you don't transfer water elsewhere.

- Familiarise yourself with the local area, noting its sensitive places, protected areas and breeding seasons.
- Leave the environment as you found it and take your litter home with you.
- Keep noise to a minimum.
- Do not damage bankside vegetation when launching or landing.
- Do not 'seal' launch or drag boats to avoid damage to the natural banks. Where possible keep to designated paths or launching points.
- Respect the freshwater and marine environment.
- Avoid paddling over gravel banks in low water conditions, as they may contain fish spawn.
- Paddle a safe distance away from wildlife to avoid causing disturbance and stress.
- Constantly assess wildlife. If you see signs of disturbance move away quickly.

CONSIDERATION TO OTHERS:

- Show consideration to other water users and treat them with courtesy and respect.
- Be aware that permission may be required to cross private land.
- Stay away from houses and private gardens.
- Change discreetly, using public facilities where possible.
- Drive sensibly at all times.
- Car parking - do not obstruct roads or entrances to buildings or farm property.
- Ensure your kit does not cause an obstruction when unloading.
- Leave gates positioned and property as you find it.
- Avoid damage to fences and walls.
- Show consideration to organised bank side activities, and give way as required to on-water events.
- Keep a look out for anglers while paddling. Anglers can be hard to spot on banks. Co-operate to avoid lines, nets, and swims. If it is unclear where to pass lines or swims, then quietly attract the attention of the angler and agree a route to follow.
- When an angler is playing a fish from the bank or wading, stop some way off and await their acknowledgement to proceed.
- Do not linger in pools or swims occupied by an angler.

We have taken great care to ensure the currency, accuracy and reliability of this information. We cannot accept responsibility for errors or omissions but where such are brought to our attention; the information will be amended accordingly. Users should be aware that environmental conditions outside of our control can change the nature of the route within a short space of time. It is recommended that weather and water conditions are checked beforehand, and tide timetables where applicable.

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