

Lake District – only three hours from Scotland's Capital city

We woke to a sky rich in red over the undulating Lakeside countryside. It was stunning. It bode well for the day ahead. Two hours later the sun had broken through to warm the chill air.

The thermometer rose to 8C as Bowness-on-Windermere (pictured, early morning) came alive. It was January 3, but the attraction of Lakeland continues.

Cars poured in and the parking areas soon filled up. Queues formed for the first cruises at around 10.30am and the boats left the dock packed.

No wonder. The cloudless sky contrasted with the landscape still showing pencil-like trees bereft of foliage and autumnal tints on the hills.

Shops quickly filled and retail therapy was alive and well. The popular leather and knitwear shops, for example, boasted big discounts as did the huge garden centre at nearby Ambleside.

Cafes and fast-food outlets plus the pubs and hotels were busy and so were the roads.

Lakeland is obviously an outlet for the population dense North West but it is only three hours from Edinburgh.

There is much to see and do but on a windless early January day a walk along Lake Windermere seemed the best plan.

It was a short break for us but it provided a lift after a spell of horrible, damp weather in Scotland.

We stayed: The clean, comfortable, affordable Travel Lodge (sat nav LA8 8AA) with parking at Kendal. Easy to find behind the Shell petrol station on the A591. Wi-fi is free for 30 minutes of £3 for 24-hours and hair dryer on request.

We ate: dinner: Pizza Express in nearby Kendal. A one-way system operates in the town and we found parking difficult. The main one near the bus station was closed and the peripheral areas were either small and difficult to access or not easy to find. The restaurant was around 15 minutes by foot through the town centre from the car park area we eventually found but it was packed with diners of all ages. Service was slick and food good and it had a great atmosphere.

Breakfast: The Magic Roundabout: Bowness-in-Windermere: Open from 8.30am it is ideally placed on a busy roundabout only minutes from the boat pier. The service here was friendly and quick and the food good. Eggs benedict was first class as was the light fry-up breakfast with lots of vine tomatoes, tasty Cumberland sausage and delicious smoky bacon.



Photo Nigel Duncan

Things to do:

Windermere Cruises: autumn, winter and spring cruises are regular during the day with a number of options including a walkers ticket and deals include a combined islands and jetty museum and, during the season, there is a cruise and steam train option. Car parking at Bowness (300), Ambleside (200) and Lakeside (300) with up to ten hours for £4,

www.windermere-lakecruises.co.uk

Dogs: there is an official guide for lovers of our four-legged friend.

golakes.co.uk

Adventure: A Lake District adventure guide is available.

golakes.co.uk/adventure

Windermere Outdoor Adventure Centre at Bowness (t:01539 445926) and Windermere (01539 447183). Booking is essential for most activities which include sailing, kayaking, canoeing, windsurfing, paddle boarding, guided lake tours, watersports

taster sessions, segways and even outdoor swimming.

Better.org.uk/windermere

Windermere Canoe Kayak, The Boat House, Ferry Nab, Bowness-on-Windermere LA23 3JH (t: 015394 44451). Watersports and bike hire available

www.windermerecanoe kayak.com

Mountain adventure, Honister Pass, Borrowdale, Keswick CA12 5XN (t: 017687 77230) open seven days a week with a zip wire due to come into play in 2020 with a slate mine tour, a cliff-edge footpath to Fleetwith Pike, an infinity bridge strung across a gorge on the mountain high above the valley floor, climbing.

Cumbrian Heavy Horses, Baystone Bank Farm, Whicham Valley, near Millorn LA18 5LY (t: 07769 588565). The world's only heavy horse riding centre with all abilities catered for.

www.cumbrianheavyhorses.com

The Ruskin Museum, Yewdale Road, Coniston LA21 8DY (t: 015394 41164). The museum tells the story of the lake through the lives and achievements of John Ruskin and Donald Campbell. Daily from 10am to 4.30pm.

www.ruskinmuseum.com

Muncaster Castle, Ravenglass, Cumbria (T: 01229 717614) Stunning rooms, furniture, legends and tales and still lived in for more than 800 years. Gardens plus a hawk and owl centre and family fun in playgrounds and a maze.

muncaster.co.uk

Escaperooms, The Stone Barn, Lakeland Village, Newby Bridge LA12 8PX (t: 01229 846727): between two and six people are immersed into a themed room to complete a game within 60 minutes. Objects, codes and hidden puzzles.

Hire a bike: Country Lanes Cycle Centre, The Railway Station, Windermere LA23 1AH (t: 015394 44544).

www.countrylaneslakedistrict.co.uk

Fishing: Esthwaite Water trout fishery, The Boathouse, Hawkshead LA22 0QF (t: 015394 36541). A natural 280-acre water in the heart of the Lake District with year-round, boat and bank fishing. Regularly stocked. Windermere and Ambleside Angling Association offer day tickets from various locations including [Bigland \(Otter Tarn\)](#) with rainbow and brown trout, [Farletonview](#) with rainbow, brown and tiger trout, [Ghyll Head](#) offering rainbow and brown trout, [Grasmere](#) with pike and coarse, [Rydal Water](#) with pike and coarse, [Ratherheath](#) a mixed course fishery (carp, roach, bream, perch, tench) and [Castlehead](#), a mixed course fishery (carp, roach, bream, perch and tench)

[www.https://www.lakedistrictfishing.co.uk/day-permits/](https://www.lakedistrictfishing.co.uk/day-permits/)
www.hawksheadtrout.com

Lakes aquarium, Lakeside, Newby Bridge LA12 8AS (t:015395 30153), open daily. Britain's largest collection of freshwater fish with combined cruise and train tickets available (seasonal).

www.lakesaquarium.co.uk

Windermere Jetty, Rayrigg Road, Windermere LA23 1BN: a museum of boats, steam and stories which is open daily (times vary).

Windermerejetty.org

Hawkshead Brewery, Staveley Inn Yards LA8 9LR (t: 01539 822644). See award-winning brewers doing what they do best.

Lakes Distillery, Setmurthy, Bassenthwaite Lake, CA13 9SJ (t: 017687 88850): Restored from a crumbling former Victorian model farm this attraction uses water from the peaty foothills of Scafell Pike. Bistro and bar on site. Free parking.

www.lakesidedistillery.com

Holehird Gardens, Patterdale Road, Windermere LA23 1NP (t: 015394 46008), Run by volunteers, the garden is home of the

Lakeland Horticultural Society and the aim is to encourage visitors to learn from the experience and take the lessons back to their own garden.

www.holehirdgardens.org.uk

Osprey experience: The Boathouse, Hawkshead, LA22 0QF (t: 015394 36541) with safari tour along with wildlife photographer on Esthwaite Water.

Gingerbread, The Grasmere Gingerbread, Church Cottage, Grasmere LA22 9SW (t: 015394 35428). The only place in the world where you can buy this product invented by Victoria cook Sarah Nelson in 1854.

www.grasemeregingerbread.co.uk

Children's Chocolate Factory, Main Street, Hawkshead LA22 0NT (t: 015394 36075). Hours vary depending on time of year but visitors make their own chocolates and workshops last depending on how many children there are.

Beatrix Potter's Hill Top: near Sawrey, Hawkshead, Ambleside LA22 0LF (t: 015394 36269). Walk in the footsteps of the famous characters including Jemima Puddle-Duck.

The Peter Rabbit Experience, Crag Brow, Bowness-on-Windermere LA23 3BX (t: 015394 88444). Famous tales are brought to life in three dimensions.

www.hop-skip-jump.com