

The Langdale Trail

Leave the traffic and crowds behind to discover the glaciated valley of Langdale, tarns and waterfalls following riverside cycle paths and bridleways.

There are two recommended rides: a beginner's ride starting in Elterwater which is entirely free of traffic and ideal for young families, and a longer intermediate ride with some climbs and descents which starts at Stickle Ghyll car park in Great Langdale.

Elterwater to Skelwith Bridge via the riverside cycle path

Beginner: easygoing suitable for young families on any type of bike

Distance: 3.2 miles (5km) return

Nearest Town: Ambleside

Start Location: Elterwater village car park (pay and display).

Surface and gradients: graded stone surface and no hills

Refreshments: in Elterwater and at Skelwith Bridge

Bike Hire: Family bike hire available from Ghyllside Cycles, Ambleside, Tel: 015394 33592

Maps: Explorer OL6 and OL7

Directions to start:

From Ambleside by car - Follow signs for A593 Coniston then B5343 Elterwater. There is also free parking (signed) from the B5343 on the edge of the village.

From Ambleside by bike - Not recommended for beginners/intermediates.

The Route

Take the riverside cycle path directly from the car park, signed "Ambleside, route 37". The path goes through a gate onto a wide path with the crystal clear waters of Great Langdale Beck flowing alongside. You will be sharing this path with walkers so be sure to warn them of your approach and give them a wide berth.

The route leaves the river for a while as it goes through Rob Rash Wood. The route is easy to follow but "37" waymarkers help to mark the way. As you emerge from the wood Elter Water –the tarn as opposed to the village of the same name – comes into view on your right. Here is a good place to have a picnic and take in the dramatic view of the Langdale Pikes. But, a word of caution: watch out for the swans as they are rather partial to sandwiches!

The way opens out now across wide open meadows until you approach a gate and woodland. Go through the gate and you come to a beautiful wrought iron bridge known as the Trevor Woodburn Memorial Bridge. Cycle Route 37 crosses the bridge through the wood, with a view of the dramatic Skelwith Force on your left and continues to a short section of the busy A593. This gives access to Chesters by the River café and shop at Skelwith Bridge.

For a safer, traffic-free option do not cross the memorial bridge but dismount and push your bike ahead on the delightful riverside footpath. This also gives views of Skelwith Force before reaching Chesters by the River. Indulge yourself here – you've earned it!

Return leg

Just retrace your outward route, going upstream this time. Be sure to have some stops to take in the stunning views.

Great Langdale to Skelwith Bridge

Intermediate: steady ride appropriate for reasonably fit people on mountain or hybrid bikes

Distance: 8 miles (12km) return

Nearest Town: Ambleside

Start Location: Stickle Ghyll National Trust car park (pay and display), Great Langdale.

Surface and Gradients: graded stone surface, undulating with some significant climbs and descents

Refreshments: at the start/finish, Chapel Stile, Elterwater and Skelwith Bridge

Bike Hire: Family bike hire available from Ghyllside Cycles, Ambleside, Tel: 015394 33592

Maps: Explorer OL6 and OL7

Directions to Start:

From Ambleside by car - follow signs for A593 Coniston then B5343 Langdale. Main car park is on the right with a smaller one on the left.

From Ambleside by bike – Not recommended for intermediates.

The Route

Exit the main car park and turn left along the B5343 for about 200m before forking right through the smaller car park, following white-on-blue cycle route signs for Ambleside and Elterwater. Follow this wide byway down the valley, but be prepared to share the track with other users including farm vehicles. Eventually the byway turns left and starts to climb to the road but our route turns right along a bridleway/ cycle path signed Elterwater. Turn right again at the junction of paths and follow the bridleway/cycle path direction signs across the river and through Oak Howe Farm, climbing gradually to Baysbrowne Farm. Keep straight on, on a wider track until a cycle path sign directs you left down a bridleway which heads through a working quarry (beware of large vehicles) to a bridge over the river to Chapel Stile.

Here the main route turns right alongside Great Langdale Beck but if you fancy a break there is a café, food shop and the Wainwright's Inn in Chapel Stile. Feeling refreshed, rejoin the riverside path (there's a stone seat to eat you sandwiches on) which climbs a little to join a quarry access road. Keep following the cycle direction signs down this road but do take care and expect to meet large quarry vehicles. At the T junction in Elterwater follow the cycle route signs left over the bridge then right into the car park to the river side cycle path. Now continue by following the directions for the **Elterwater to Skelwith Bridge** route (above).

Return leg

Just retrace your outward route, going upstream this time. You will be facing the best views so you can take them in whilst you ride.



Elter Water

Consulting the map

Visit Lake District, Cumbria

visitlakedistrict.com