

# A QUICK TRIP TO THE HIGH STREET

MODERATE, 11 km, 5h, Grid Ref.: NY468107, North England

## WPT 1 [Grid Ref.: NY468107]

The long drive down Mardale takes you alongside the flooded valley, where once a scattering of cottages and a patchwork of fields lay divided by lines of stone walls. At the head of the valley there's a car park, although parking can often be a problem on weekends. So it's worth arriving early or, better still, take the bus from Penrith or Bampton and avoid the problem of parking. The walk begins by leaving the car park through the fell gate and turning immediately to the right to follow a path around the stone walls. Cross a small beck whose waters have trundled down the fellside from Blea Water and Small Water. Immediately after the beck turn right again to trace the stone wall above Haweswater Reservoir. Pause to look carefully into the water's edge, as you can sometimes see the remains of the original stone walls that once enclosed the fields of the valley before it was flooded. The path leads to a small wooded peninsula called The Rigg. Here you turn left on a path that climbs up the crest of the Rough Crag ridge. This is a steep walk in places, but there's never any danger of falling over the edge or of having to step across an airy void. In fact, it's relatively easy by ridge walking standards and brings a wealth of views as you climb higher. In particular, you gain aerial views over Blea Water to the head wall of High Street, with its vast summit plateau so often just hidden by a wisp of cloud. Behind you there are spectacular views down Haweswater to the distant rolling plains that dominate the far north-eastern quarter of the Lake District, with the Pennine backbone of England forming a dark line across the horizon.

## WPT 2 [Grid Ref.: NY443113]

The walk over the Rough Crag ridge ends with a fairly steep climb onto the plateau of High Street. Suddenly you are on grass and ahead there's a stone wall bounding the high ground. This wall traces much of the line of the High Street Roman Road and makes navigation to the top of the fell easy, as you simply follow it uphill. The summit of High Street is well-marked with a gleaming white OS trig point and a cairn, so there is no doubt that you are in the right place. The plateau is vast and was used as a shepherd's meeting point each July where they could exchange strayed sheep and enjoy some cakes and ale to celebrate. The meetings grew into large events with horse-racing and Cumberland wrestling taking place on the summit. Although these events only lasted until 1820, High Street is still sometimes referred to as Racecourse Hill.

## WPT 3 [Grid Ref.: NY440106]

Leaving the summit of High Street, you walk south around the head of Blea Water to Mardale Ill Bell. There's a good path to follow and fine views throughout the walk. Blea Water once again takes most of the attention, while the view down the length of Haweswater dominates the more distant scene. A steady descent takes you down from Mardale Ill Bell to the Nan Bield Pass. A stone cross-shaped windbreak stands in the pass, providing a welcome shelter from the winds that drive through this trench in the mountainside.

## WPT 4 [Grid Ref.: NY454095]

Some walkers descend to Mardale Head directly from the Nan Bield Pass and, for this purpose, a clear path leads the way past Small Water. A better but slightly longer version of this classic walk is to stay high and climb Harter Fell before descending. The path lies directly ahead, across Nan Bield Pass, and requires a steep walk up loose rock. It's a thigh-punishing way to end the day, but the views back over Haweswater, Small Water and Blea Water to High Street are outstanding and by far the best of the day. The summit of Harter Fell boasts a very unusual cairn that has its rocks entangled with rusting iron fenceposts. This isn't a result of vandalism, as they've been this way for many years and even Wainwright noticed them back in 1955 when he wrote his guide to the area.

## WPT 5 [Grid Ref.: NY461095]

To end the walk, head across the Harter Fell plateau to Adam Seat where you can descend to the Gatescarth Pass. A track here leads easily back to the valley and Mardale Head.

### Terrain

high-level mountain walk on clear paths, relatively easy navigation, some steep ascents and descents on loose rocky ground

### Suitable

x

### Parking

Mardale Head

### Town

Penrith

### Refresh

high-level mountain walk on clear paths, relatively easy navigation, some steep ascents and descents on loose rocky ground

### Transport

regular bus services link the railway station at Penrith with Mardale Head – tel. (01228) 606000

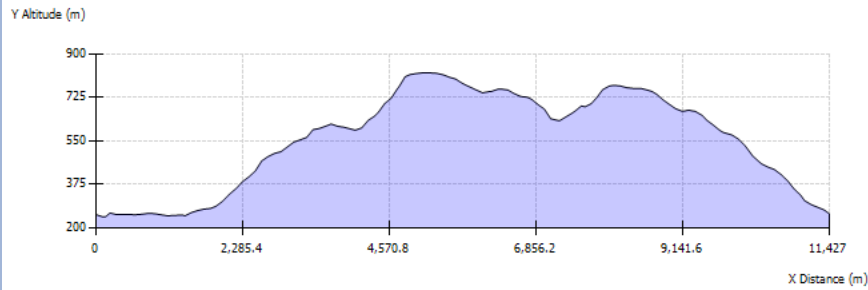
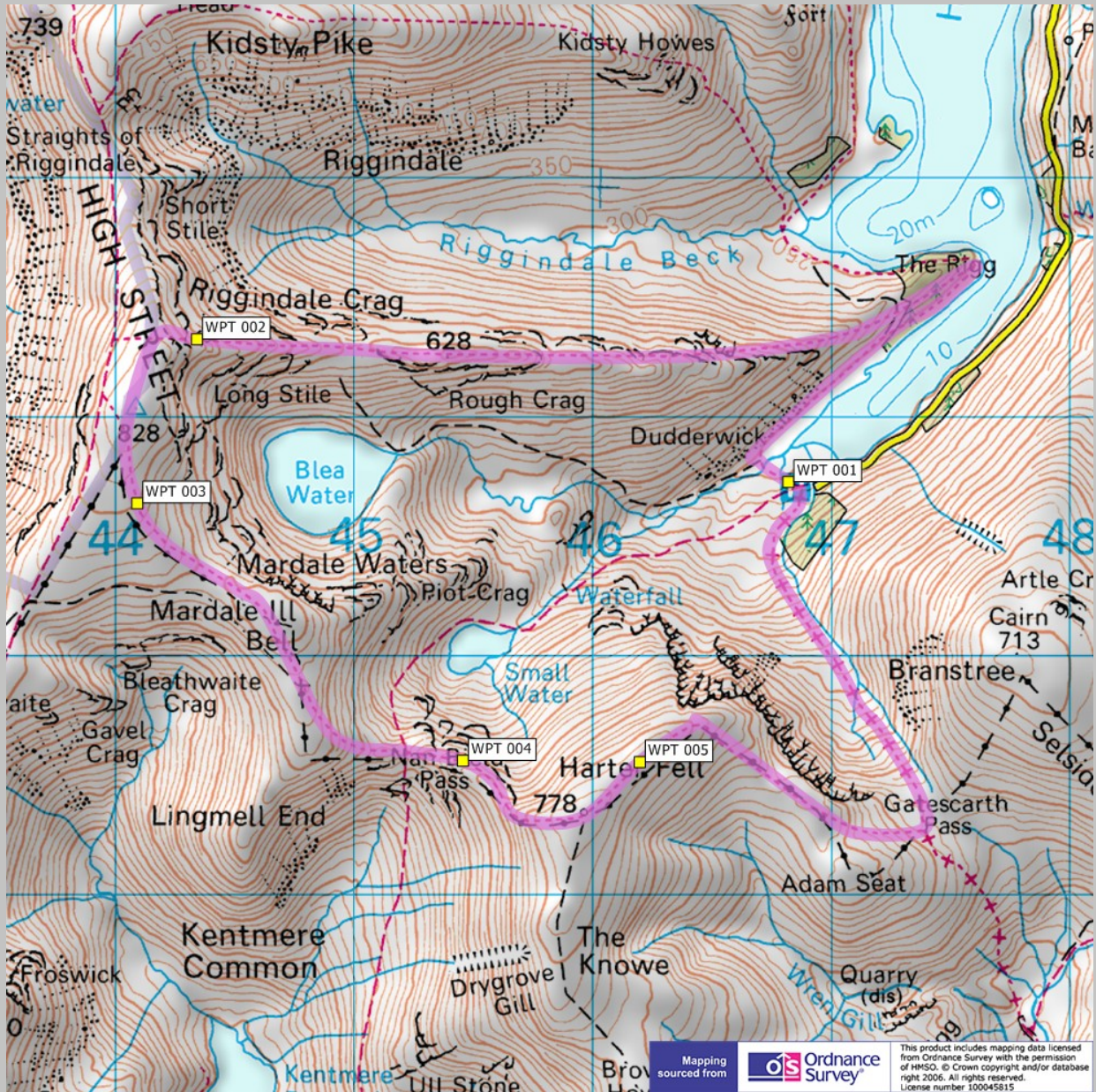


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Total Air Distance: 11,427 m  
 Total DTM Distance: 11,609.4 m  
 Min. Altitude: 245.7 m  
 Max. Altitude: 826 m  
 Avg. Altitude: 554.1 m  
 Total Ascent: 784.7 m  
 Total Descent: -779.8 m  
 Total Ascent Distance: 5,226 m  
 Total Descent Distance: 6,146.7 m  
 Total Level Distance: 236.6 m  
 Percent Ascent: 45%  
 Percent Descent: 52.9%  
 Percent Level: 2%



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