

# Tarn Hows

We start at the National Trust car park at Glen Mary bridge. From the M6 take junction 36 then follow the A590 signposted for Lakes. Just before Kendal, the A590 splits - and we need to stay on the main route – now numbered A591. If in doubt, follow “Windermere”. Continue until you get to Windermere and then stay on the A591 following signs for Ambleside, and then head left at a fork in the road onto the A593, signposted for Coniston. Stay on the A593 until you pass Yew Tree Tarn (on the right) then park at the well signposted Glen Mary car park (on the left). If you are using Satnav to get there, try the postcode LA21 8DP, or if you have access to What-3-Words, the tag is **promote.ready.crypt** for paper map users, the OS Grid reference is SD32139987.

We walk up a path to the left of the beck that tumbles down from Tarn Hows. The stream is not named on the OS map, but is generally referred to as Tom Gill, and the series of waterfalls which we soon start to see, are collectively known as Tom Gill Falls. At the top of Tom Gill, we meet a broad level track which runs over the top of a dam which controls the water in the tarn, and head left to walk around the tarn in a clockwise direction, so we later end up back just to the right above our starting point - so if a shortcut is needed, head right and make the NT centre your next destination.

As we come round the northeastern end of the tarns we cross a footbridge over a beck at Rose Castle, and then we start to climb, soon gaining views across the tarn and the dam where we started. The path then forks – the track to the right goes back down toward the dam, whilst we head left and uphill to the National Trust visitor centre.

The walk continues along the access road to the centre, heading west (left) over a cattle grid and then downhill with views to the right over Yewdale to the spectacular valley between Holme Fells and Coniston Fells. Our next landmark is a well signposted path leaving the road on the right – this goes through a gate and then along a track bearing slightly left. The track heads downhill and then swings right to Tarn Hows Cottage, and as it does so we take the pedestrian gate into Tarn Hows Wood.

Navigation through the woods is generally simple – there are a couple of branches where we need to be alert – the first is just into the woods at a sign for a very dilapidated footpath on the right – it’s so overgrown that most will not even see it, but if you do, ignore that option. Then toward the bottom end of the wood there is a clearer fork – identifiable at the moment by signage that explains the forestry works to address a phytophthora ramorum outbreak – a fungal disease of Larch.

The branch to the left goes up to Boon Crag Farm where you could turn right to come back to Low Yewdale via a longer route, or as we did, head right and directly to Low Yewdale where we find a stone bridge over the Yewdale Beck, which provides some shelter for a lunch stop.

We continue over the bridge and then immediately right to walk in front of the whitewashed cottages. The path then continues across a couple of fields and then heads left along a yew hedge back to the main road at High Yewdale. There are great views of Yewdale fell along here.

We turn left at the main road and walk (with care - this is a busy road) up to the signpost for Hodge Close, where we turn right and walk up to Shepherd’s bridge. We cross Yewdale Beck again and see a pedestrian path just beyond the bridge we take this and follow a well surfaces route which is part of a miles without stiles access scheme.

This path eventually comes back to the A593 within sight of the car park where we started, but we recommend looking for a path on the left where we head through a gate and into a paddock where we go North and up to Harry Guards Wood. We follow the path until we see a kissing gate and then head sharp right to follow the path downhill through the woods and down toward Yew Tree Tarn.

There is a fork in the path where we keep right – the path on the left goes up to Holme fell, and may be worth exploring another time, but for now we keep on the lower path down to a gate where we enter a stand of exceptionally tall trees next to Yew Tree tarn.

Ahead we see a finger post and take the path to the right which follows the edge of the tarn eventually ending up back at the A593. On the way through we enjoy great views across the tarn, and some interesting signage alerting us to invasive species of shrimp in the tarn.

At the South end of the tarn, we cross the dam with an attractive spillway managing the water levels, before returning to the A593. We cross with care and then take a clear path up into the woods opposite which tracks back to the car park where the walk ends.

- **Total distance 9.8 km (6.1 miles)**
- **Total ascent 261 m**
- **Easy walk**