

## Kentmere circular (low level)

Parking is at a premium in Kentmere: There are a few roadside spaces near the Kentmere Institute, parking in fields is available on summer weekends, or as we preferred for our walk there is a small car park at Maggs Howe – this is chargeable via an honesty box, but proceeds go to local charities so please give generously.

To get to this car park, first drive to Staveley, then take the minor road signed for Kentmere. Pass the fire station (on the right) and the church (on the left), then 400m later the road crosses the Kent at a stone bridge on a sharp bend. Follow this (very narrow) road for about 2km, noting the occasional sign for the “H&V” works. The factory is on the left, but we carry on for a further 600m until the road forks – we go right onto Lowfield Lane, and then 200m later bear right again up to Maggs Howe. If you are using Satnav to get there, the postcode is LA8 9JP, but this covers a large area, so “Lowfield Lane Kentmere” might be safer. If you are using a paper map, then the OS grid reference is NY46230412, whilst the parking is pinpointed by the What-3-Words tag **shatters.zapped.vibe**

From the car park, we walk downhill and back to Lowfield Lane, where we go right to follow the road downhill with great views over the valley toward Kentmere. The road bears right and then forks – we go left and continue downhill, before looping back arriving at a road junction. We go right and take the bridge over the Kent. From here we have great views of Kentmere a short distance ahead with the church of St Cuthbert’s dominating the scene. Also worth noting here is that this final junction before the bridge is where the field parking is available during summer weekends. From here, the road bends to the left and then heads uphill to the church, and the Kentmere Institute.

In 100m we take the gate a well surfaced track heading north, and we are following the river valley up toward the reservoir at the top. This is not apparent at the lower reaches however, as the river is out of sight and about 250m to our right in these early stages. As we progress further, the view is dominated by a series of steep and imposing crags to our left. The first is Raven Crag, soon followed by Calhowe Crag, and then Scale Knotts. By the time we are walking around the base of Calhowe Crag, we are much closer to the river – it is about 100m over to the right and stays within sight for most of the way up to the reservoir.

We stay on the track for a while now – until we arrive at Hartrigg, to continue to the left, before the farm, and onto a rougher track, which takes us past some woodland (on our right) where you may be lucky enough to catch sight of deer. Even without the deer, this is a great place to stop and enjoy a break.

We press on, heading northwest on the same track for a while now, gaining great views across the valley to the spectacular quarry spoil heaps that we will walk through later in the day. We soon have Rainsborrow Crag to our left, along numerous streams coming down from the hillside.

Once we are beyond the bulk of Rainsborrow crag we catch sight of a white cottage ahead. This is surrounded by the spoil heaps from the long abandoned Steel Rigg quarry, so it’s tempting to assume that the cottage was part of the quarry infrastructure. However, it’s not – it was built to house the caretaker for Kentmere Dam and associated control gear, which we will meet soon.

The path now curves round to the right and rises through the spoil heaps, which despite being literally piles of industrial waste, are strangely beautiful.

As we round the last bend, we see a waterfall. This is fed by a spillway from the reservoir ahead – which as we get closer looks almost canal like in the sense that it has straight sides. As we walk further upstream however we see that there is a stepped overflow from the reservoir above feeding the spillway, and a corresponding stepped section leading back out into the river Kent.

The presence of a tranquil body of water at the head of this rugged valley is a great contrast and one that we should treasure – as we did whilst we enjoyed lunch.

Our return journey is on the other side of the Kent and starts by backtracking to the bottom of the spillway where we take the footbridge to the path down to the river Kent. Over to our left in the base of the dam we see a doorway. This gives access to the valve gear that feeds water into the Kent downstream at a controlled rate – the sole function of the much more visible spillway is to manage overflow during wet periods.

Once over a second much smaller footbridge we head right and follow the clear path downstream through further areas of quarrying waste – and with great views across to the crags that we walked next to earlier in the day. To our left on the way down is Tongue Scar, with precarious remnants of quarry structures still visible at the top. We follow the path down and soon arrive at a barn, identified on the OS map as Tongue House.

The path continues through a number of fields – where we met an intimidatingly large but entirely placid bull. There is a short riverside section of path – with an interesting arched bridge, and then we approach a cluster of houses at Overend. There is a spilt in the path here – we need to take the route through the gate and closer to the river rather than the metalled track – don't worry if you make a mistake here though – you will rejoin us later.

We follow the path from Overend for another 800m or so – the route is clear and obvious. At the lower end it is shown on the OS map as Low Lane and runs parallel to the metalled road out of Overend, known as High Lane. The two soon come together, so if you took the wrong path earlier, welcome back.

We head right at the junction, and in 100m recognise the route from the start of our walk. From here, all we need to do is complete the steep walk back up to the car park.

- **Total distance 11.1 km (6.9 miles)**
- **Total ascent 291 m**
- **Easy walk**