

PUBS NEAR TO ARMATHWAITE HALL

Heading towards Keswick...

PHEASANT INN, DUBWATH (near BASSENTHWAITE LAKE)

Used to be very olde worlde inside - some would say run down! - nice beer garden and real ale but currently undergoing refurbishment (as at start of July). Used to put itself over as a bit upmarket and priced things accordingly.

MIDDLE RUDDINGS

Nice hotel bar with real ales, food reported to be good as well. Some building work going on so not sure how easy it is to visit (as at start of July).

PUBS IN BRAITHWAITE

There are 2 pubs in Braithwaite, our preference is the Coledale Inn which is very traditional in style and serves real ales and food (but we haven't been recently).

PUBS IN KESWICK

Take your pick, all will be busy and relatively expensive! The DOG & GUN is a regular haunt, they do a goulash speciality and a lot of real ales. You'll probably find as many dogs in their as punters. BANK TAVERN is also good, Lamb Henry used to be a favourite. Plus there's a WETHERSPOONS.

Heading towards Cockermouth...

THE WHEATSHEAF, EMBLETON

Recently re-opened with an up market approach, no real ale on when we visited and food pricey.

THE BITTER END, COCKERMOUTH TOWN CENTRE

Run by our neighbour, good real ales and good hearty food, not too fancy.

THE CASTLE INN, COCKERMOUTH TOWN CENTRE

Great for real ale, has a sports bar downstairs, nice restaurant and food upstairs and a lovely lounge area on the top floor that's not usually busy.

Heading towards Bassenthwaite...

THE CASTLE INN

Just up the road from Armathwaite but the bar is a bit 'motel' and there was no real ale on when we popped in. No idea about the food.

SUN INN, BASSENTHWAITE VILLAGE

Excellent pub, good and affordable food choices and real ales. Definitely need to book for food.

A bit further afield...

THE WHEATSHEAF, LOW LORTON

Run by a neighbour of ours, good real ale choices and famed for food - particularly huge stack burgers - but very busy so booking essential.

THE KIRKSTILE INN, LOWESWATER

A very popular tourist pub, good real ale and food, lovely spot. Essential to book.

The BRIDGE INN, BUTTERMERE

There are 2 pubs in Buttermere - we've had a drink at the BRIDGE and it was fine, decent real ales, but have never eaten at either.

NEARBY ATTRACTIONS AND WALKS

Heading towards Keswick...

There are a couple of places to stop and walk down to Bass Lake but you can't do a lakeside walk. You can drive up through Braithwaite to WHINLATER FOREST and do some walks there which are relatively gentle. Nice views on the way up.

If you carry on to Keswick you can drive up LATRIGG and a short walk gets superb views over Derwentwater - but its always busy and some of the route up is a single track road. Give yourself an hour for the walk.

An easier walk is to park in Keswick town and walk down to the shores of DERWENTWATER, from the boat landings to FRIARS CRAG and if you can do a bit of uphill then CASTLE HEAD is great for views. You can do both in an hour from the town centre.

You can drive right around Derwentwater and there are occasional places to park, but the western side is single track in places. Its always worth driving up to Ashness Bridge and Surprise view on the eastern side if you've not been there before. On the western side - if you can find somewhere to park nearby and have the energy - you could walk part or all the way up CAT BELLS mountain - you don't have to climb up far to get great views, so anything from half an hour to 3 hours needed. And you can get the launches around the lake, so you could do a short walk from one launch stop to the next if you want to take it easy and enjoy the lake more casually.

You could also pop out to CASTLERIGG STONE CIRCLE for something a bit different. A couple of minutes from Keswick, jump out the car and a 50 yard walk and you are among the stones.

Heading towards Cockermouth...

SALE FELL is a fairly easy walk to a great viewpoint across Bassenthwaite Lake and towards SKIDDAW mountain. A couple of hours needed.

Cockermouth itself is worth a visit, WORDSWORTH's birthplace is here. We are a couple of miles further out of town and I'd recommend a drive out to the Solway Coast - ALLONBY is nice (good ice cream shop!) - or at least drive up TALLENTIRE HILL for the view across to Scotland.

Heading towards Bassenthwaite...

If you go past the Castle Inn and carry on towards Uldale you can walk up a small mountain called BINSEY - the views are great across the northern fells and you can walk up as far as you can manage, but getting to the top is best as you can see over to Scotland. Half an hour to 2 hours maximum needed.

A bit further afield...

If you drive down to Low Lorton, you can walk up LOW FELL for some great views, it needs a good 2-3 hours to walk to the best viewpoint though. You can drive on to CRUMMOCK WATER and BUTTERMERE - it will be busy and the road is narrow in places, but there is great scenery all around and nice lakeside walks especially at Buttermere.

LANGTHWAITE WOODS car park is a good start to walk a little way around Crummock, and less busy than further into the valley.

RANNERDALE KNOTTS is the smallest fell you can access here, again give yourself a couple of hours.

LOWESWATER is also nice (the Kirkstile Inn is nearby) but there isn't much parking nearby. There are walks on the far side but some of the best views are from FANGS BROW path - called the coffin route. Give yourself an hour for this walk and its fairly flat.

If you want to see some dramatic scenery try WASTWATER but its a 1.5-2 hours drive each way from Armathwaite. Nice pub at the end of the valley though and its a scenic drive which needs to be taken slow, not a walk. Good narrow gauge steam railway near here too call THE RAVENSGLOSS & ESKDALE RAILWAY and there's a nice real ale pub at the end of the line.

If you are heading south from Keswick, you can visit GRASMERE and RYDAL WATER - always very busy here. There are some walks from the car parks near Rydal, including up to Rydal cave. There's also DOVE COTTAGE - Wordsworth stuff again!

If you are heading back towards Penrith on the A66 its worth diverting down to ULLSWATER which is very picturesque. If you want to spend a few hours then get the lake steamer from Glenridding to POOLEY BRIDGE or HOWTOWN. If you go to Howtown most people walk up HALLIN FELL for views and then either walk back (a long walk!) or get the steamer back afterwards. The Pooley Bridge trip is just a relaxing round trip. AIRA FORCE is a large waterfall but you need some rain for it to look good.

There are some lovely spots further south - ELTERWATER, LANGDALE VALLEY, CONSITON for example - but you are heading into the mega-touristy zone (most visitors make it up to Windermere and Ambleside and its horrendous at times) so I wouldn't recommend it. There's enough to see and do up North!