



GUIDE TO UK HIKING



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GUIDE TO UK HIKING

Hiking is the easiest and most accessible way to get outdoors and enjoy the benefits of being in nature. All you need are a decent pair of boots and a thirst for adventure. Where the trail takes you is up to you.

Here in the UK, we're spoilt for choice when it comes to beautiful places to explore on foot. From Scotland's majestic Highlands, and the snow-capped peaks of Wales, to the welcome expanse of the Lake District, and England's sweeping coastline, there's something to suit all tastes and abilities.

Together with outdoor gear experts, Helly Hansen, we've put together the *Wired For Adventure Guide to UK Hiking*. Inside, you'll find details of six of the best hiking locations in the UK, as well as routes to try, places to stay, and travel tips to smooth your journey.

You'll also find specialist insight from Mountain Rescue volunteers, to help you stay safe on the trail and enjoy your hike to the full.

With the right gear and attitude, hiking's no longer the preserve of a sunny day. Some of the most breath taking vistas in the UK are better enjoyed out of season. In the words of John Muir, "the mountains are calling..." So why wait? Grab your waterproof and let's go!

Emily-Jane Cave

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The Valley of Rocks is a natural wonder

Hiking: EXMOOR

ENGLAND

With its rolling green hills, open moorland, and dramatic coastline, Exmoor is perfect for hikes all year round. Here are two to try...

LET'S GO

Getting there

By car: Exmoor is easily accessible from the M5.

By train: Head for either Taunton or Tiverton Parkway. From there, grab a bus to either Winsford or Lynton.

Accommodation

Camping is available at Wimbeball Lake Campsite. All the usual facilities are available, including toilets, showers, and a café. If you prefer a roof over your head, there are dozens of hotels and B&Bs in the area. The Gable Lodge Guest House is located just a mile from Valley of Rocks.

Explore

Lynton and Lynmouth are two quaint villages sat right next to each other. You'll find an abundance of restaurants, pubs, and cafés to spend your evening in. Another point of interest is the Lynton Cliff Railway Station that first opened in 1890 and now takes passengers between the two villages with stunning views across Lynmouth Bay. At a gradient of 57%, it's the steepest fully water-powered railway in the world.

Because of South-West big hitters like the Cornish coast, Exmoor is often overlooked. Here are two short hikes to enjoy in this spectacular English National Park with stunning scenery and superb points of interest guaranteed.



Hike 1: Valley of Rocks

Distance: 3 miles
Duration: 1-1.5 hours

The Valley of Rocks is a dry valley running parallel to the coast of north Devon. And it's easy to see why it's a popular point of interest. The rocks here are some of the oldest Devonian rocks in the area. Among them you'll find Mother Meldrum's Kitchen, a fictitious witch's cave made famous by *Lorna Doone*, a novel by R.D. Blackmore.

This short hike takes you along the coastal path all the way to the Valley of Rocks. Starting at Lynton Cliff Railway Station, turn out on Lynton's main street and turn left to descend to the church. At the bottom of the hill, cross a bridge and join the South West Coast Path. From here, you need to follow the 'North Walk' to the Valley of Rocks.

After about half a mile, you'll see the craggy tor of Rugged Jack on the left. And as you continue past, you'll soon see the towering Castle Rock, before entering the Valley of Rocks.

After a spot of exploring, we recommend you head back along the valley and make your way up to the summit of Hollerday Hill (244m). Make sure you have a camera on hand, because this hilltop offers an amazing vantage point over the entire valley, as well as Exmoor's dramatic coastline.

Return to Lynton by following the signposted footpath.



Hike 2: Winsford Hill & Tarr Steps

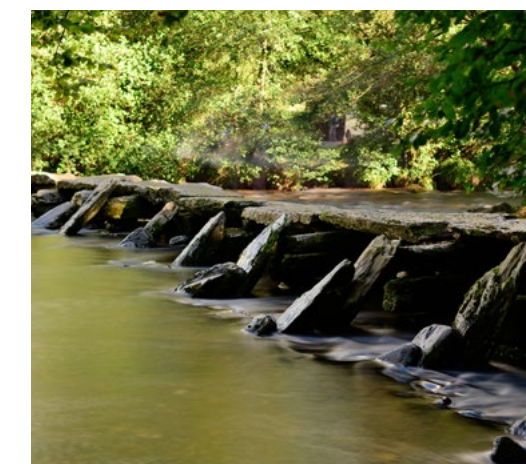
Distance: 3 miles
Duration: 1-1.5 hours

This nine-mile circular hike is certain to get the blood pumping as it takes you onto Winsford Hill and beyond to Tarr Steps. Start from the Royal Oak Farmhouse in Winsford and head west out of the village. From there, pick up a footpath up the hill and head along the valley, before switching south and skirting The Punchbowl on the way up to Winsford Hill (427m).

As you reach the top of Winsford Hill, you'll be greeted by dramatic moorland scenery. You'll also see the Wambarrows – a group of three Bronze Age bowl barrels that form an ancient burial site.

Picking up a footpath a few hundred metres to the east, you need to then make your way to the River Barle and the Tarr Steps, a picture-perfect clapper bridge with medieval origins. Hiking along the river is incredible and, if you're lucky, you might even spot a few otters playing in the water.

From here, follow the road east and pick up a bridle track that takes you back to Winsford.



Hiking: SKOMER

W A L E S

A short boat trip from the coast of Pembrokeshire in Wales lies the island of Skomer. A place where hikes are all about discovering its wildlife

LET'S GO

Getting there

By car: Take the B4327 from Haverfordwest towards Dale. When you get to Mullock Bridge (1 mile before Dale village), take the right hand turn signposted Marloes and Skomer Embarkation. Continue straight on for roughly 2 miles. Do not turn off this road until you reach Martin's Haven Car Park.

Accommodation

Westhook Farm Camping is set on the Marloes Peninsula and boasts glorious views of St Brides Bay. From the site, there are lots of coastal walks, pebbled sandy beaches, and high sandstone cliffs and rockpools. The nearest guesthouses and cottage hire can be found in Marloes and near Musselwick Beach.

Local fish dishes are available at The Griffin (a 15-minute drive from Westhook Farm) and Runwayskiln, a coastal café is just 1.5 miles away, serving up superb food.

Explore

The coastal paths on the mainland are great for exploring. And if you're after a quaint trip to a Welsh town, head for Milford Haven or the coastal village of Broad Haven.

Skomer is a National Nature Reserve

Hike: Skomer National Nature Reserve

Distance: 3.7 miles
Duration: 3 hours



Just off the coast of Pembrokeshire in Wales lies Skomer, a National Nature Reserve abundant with wildlife. Aside from its beautiful scenery, Skomer is especially famous both for its puffins and for being home to the largest breeding colony of Manx shearwaters in the world.

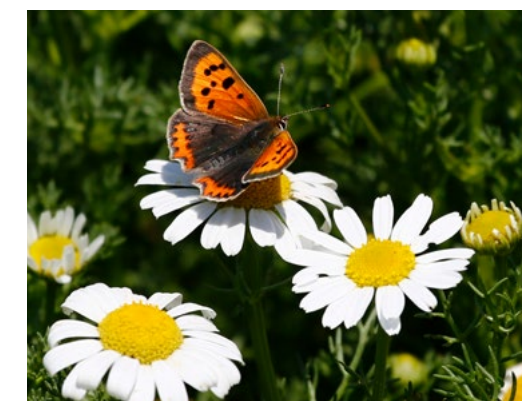
Due to its small size, only 250 visitors daily are allowed to visit the island, which is accessible via boat from Martin's Haven between April and late September. Tickets cannot be reserved beforehand, and sailings are hourly from 10am, every day of the week aside from Monday (excluding public holidays).

Upon arriving on Skomer, you'll be met with some steep steps to take you to the 3.7-mile trail that surrounds the island. And even during the ascent, you can expect to see a variety of different seabird species flying around and landing on the banks of the massive cliffs.

Head towards the Old Farm Complex (which was built around 1840) and then on to The Wick, a dramatic cliff face and one of the busiest nesting grounds for the puffins (and their babies, known as pufflings!). En route to The Wick, you'll see plenty of these colourful birds flying around, their little orange feet dangling comically underneath their bodies.

As you continue to walk around the island, be sure to keep your eyes peeled for Skomer's wildlife hopping in and out of the burrows hidden underneath the green, flowering bushes. You may spot voles, mice, rabbits, and shrews, as well as slow worms, lizards, toads, and frogs.

From the path, you'll also be able to view ocean panoramas, rugged cliffs, natural arches, and caves. Head west via Skomer Head and you'll reach the Garland Stone, one of the larger rock islets just offshore, where you can sometimes spot grey seals.



WATERPROOF. BREATHABLE. GUARANTEED.

The highly technical, lightweight and waterproof Traverse Boot HT has been built to keep hikers comfortable in the outdoors. It's loaded with technology to keep you stable and protected no matter the terrain. It has been designed and constructed in a responsible way, meaning that it's kinder to the planet too.

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MOUNTAIN HOME

Getting lost in a white-out while hiking inspired Philip Ó Condúin to join Mountain Rescue. Here, he shares insight into the work he does with the team to keep people safe in the mountains

Interview: John Kavanagh

When I first started hiking, I got lost out on Lugnaquilla, one of the tallest mountains in the Wicklow area. When you're up in the white clouds with snow on the ground, you lose any sort of reference point and even the shadows disappear. It becomes impossible to navigate; a whiteout. We knew we were lost, so we decided to descend the mountain from where we were - straight through an army firing range!

It was a terrifying experience. After that, I promised myself I'd learn how to navigate properly so it wouldn't happen again. I completed my mountain skills 1 and 2 assessments and then decided I should put them to good use. I joined Dublin Wicklow Mountain Rescue and recently received my long service award after 10 years on the team.

Boldly go

All Mountain Rescue team members are required to pass the mountain skills assessment and first aid training to an emergency responder. Specific training takes between 6 - 12 months. You're taught everything from night navigation and rope work through to the different types of rescues and how to judge what action is appropriate for the situation.

On top of the standard hiking gear that the public takes with them on the mountain, we also have specialised rescue equipment including harnesses, helmets, head torches, and an extensive first aid kit. Between the team, we also carry stretchers, storm shelters and more advanced medical equipment including defibrillators, oxygen, and other medicine. It's quite a lot of heavy stuff!

The most common incident we're called to is a lower leg injury, which can range from a sprained ankle to a broken leg. After that, our most common call out is someone who has got lost and needs help finding their way home.

One of the riskier callouts is when working in the crags. There's always a danger that something or someone slips and falls over an edge. Weather is one of the biggest determinators of risk. If you've been exposed to poor weather for a long period, then things can very quickly take a turn for the worse. Having the right kit is critical to keep you protected.

High rewards

There are so many amazing aspects to being on the Mountain Rescue Team. I thoroughly enjoy and appreciate all the training. You're placed in various difficult and high-pressure situations, such as having a helicopter hovering just above you on the side of a hill. However, you know you have all the experience and knowledge to best manage the emergency in the safest way possible.

One of the greatest parts is the sense of accomplishment. Being able to help people in their time of need is unique and something I don't take for granted.



HELLY HANSEN

The Three Lochs:
The Gareloch, Loch Long,
and Loch Lomond

LET'S GO

Getting there

By train / bus: Get the train to Balloch from Glasgow. You can also start at other points along the route if you don't have time to enjoy the whole trail with stations at Helensburgh Central, Helensburgh Upper, Garelochhead, and Arrochar. The end of the Three Lochs Way (Inveruglas) isn't serviced by trains is served by Citylink buses (citylink.co.uk).

Accommodation

Loch Lomond Youth Hostel is near the beginning of the route. Balloch, Helensburgh, Garelochhead, Tarbet, and Arrochar all have a variety of accommodation, too. Details can be viewed at visitscotland.com.

Explore

If you've got more time, or can't get enough of your adventures, return to Tarbet and join the Cowal Way for a further stretch of the legs, or even bag some of the soaring Arrochar Alps. From Inversnaid, across the Loch from Inveruglas, you can also join the West Highland Way, or scale Ben Lomond (974m).

Hike: Three Lochs Way, Scotland

Distance: 33 miles

Duration: 2-3 days

(or 1 day if you're up for a real challenge!)



The Three Lochs Way, one of Scotland's Great Trails, pitches the adventurer against the best of the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park.

Starting at Balloch (the southern end of Loch Lomond), the Way finishes at Inveruglas on the loch's western bank, about three-quarters of the way up the Loch. Two other lochs feature along the way, as the route's name suggests: the Gareloch and spectacular Loch Long. Unlike Loch Lomond, both of these are sea lochs – or fjords, as they'd be called across the North Sea.

Balloch is convenient as a starting point as it has a regular train service from Glasgow. Directly across from the station is a Tourist Information Centre with a Three Lochs Way display board outside it featuring a map of the route. The first section of the trail takes you past the static Maid of the Loch paddle steamer and through the sprawling Lomond Shores.

You'll then climb steeply on rough ground through Larch Forest to reach the Killoeter Plateau (300m). This marks the line of the Highland Boundary Fault; from now on, you're officially in the Scottish Highlands.

This first stretch of the Three Lochs Way has the gentlest landscapes on the route. Yet it also features its highest point and perhaps the most challenging section, with just a boot-wide path for much of the way.

When you reach Helensburgh, you'll be at the mouth of the route's second loch: the Gareloch. Beyond Helensburgh, the landscapes grow more

rugged, but the paths are mostly good here. On this quiet, single-track road you pass through Glen Fruin (scene of a celebrated clan battle in 1603). Then past the village of Garelochhead, the Way follows the Yankee Road, built by Americans in 1940 under the Lease-Lend scheme.

Eventually, you'll reach your third loch – Loch Long. At this point, the trail runs high above the loch with spectacular views across to the soaring peaks of the Arrochar Alps. The track then drops to the A83 between the two villages and heads for the underpass that gives access to their railway station.

Beyond the station is a magical area of forest and this two-mile section to Arrochar village is absolutely stunning. At first, across Loch Lomond, looms Ben Lomond. Then, from a point high above Arrochar at the head of Loch Long, you gain the best possible view of the finest of the Arrochar Alps, The Cobbler (884m).

The last segment of the Three Lochs Way takes you to Glen Loin. Here, you'll find large woodlands, as well as crags, bogs, and great ice-shorn outcrops. As you drop down the glen of the Inveruglas Water, you again reach the A82, where a path alongside it takes you into the Inveruglas Car Park, the official end of the Three Lochs Way.



Hiking: THREE LOCHS

SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS

Less popular – and quieter – than the more famous West Highland Way, Scotland's Three Lochs Way is ideal for those looking to up their hiking game

Sunset over Lake Windermere

Hiking: THE LAKES

ENGLAND

The Lake District is one of the UK's best-loved hiking destinations. Here's a plan to inspire a weekend of adventure for all abilities amid some of Britain's most spectacular scenery

LET'S GO

Getting there

By car: The Lake District is easily accessed from the M6. For Keswick, take Junction 40 and head onto the A66.

By train / bus: There are lots of train stations and bus routes for a range of locations across the Lake District. If it's Keswick you're after, use Penrith (the nearest train station).

Accommodation

You won't be short of accommodation options in the Lake District. You'll find B&Bs, hotels, and guest houses at just about every corner, as well as a whole load of camp sites, too.

There are also many beautiful restaurants and pubs to dine at. We recommend heading into the centre of Keswick to get your fill in the evening – you'll be spoilt for choice.

Explore

It has to be a trip to Beatrix Potter's Hill Top Farm. The farm has been kept exactly how Beatrix had it at the time. It has her own furniture and even some of the crockery she used. It's also set in a beautiful, traditional cottage garden – the one she used to sketch her stories in.

Alternatively, try a visit to Cathedral Cavern; a network of small, inter-linked quarries. The most impressive section is in the main chamber, which towers at around 12m high and includes jagged, intricately sculpted walls that are naturally lit up by a large opening at the top.

The Lake District is a fantastic place to hike for the weekend. It's accessible by car and equally so by train. And with so much to see and do, you'll more than likely struggle to fit everything in.

What you'll find here are suggestions for how to spend an amazing weekend in the Lake District. We haven't even included an ascent of Scafell Pike (978m) – England's highest mountain, but if topping Scafell is on your bucket list then a long weekend here would be enough to fit that in too.



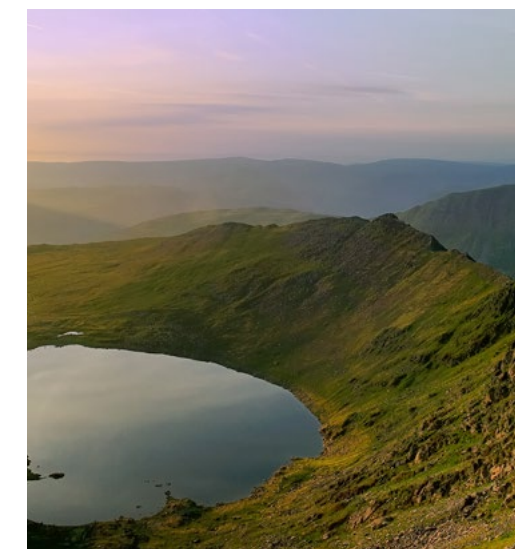
Hike 1: Helvellyn

Distance: 5.5 miles
Duration: 3.5 hours

If you love the thrill of ridge walks and the tantalising panoramic scenery that comes with scrambling them, then you'll love the ascent via Striding Edge to the summit of Helvellyn (950m). This is a classic grade one ridge walk, which the BMC defines as 'doable for most competent hill walkers given the right conditions'. So, you'll enjoy soul-stirring exposure and adrenaline-pumping ridge action without having to tackle any technical climbing – perfect for scramblers with a head for heights.

The hike starts from a large pay and display car park in the centre of the small village of Glenridding. The entire horseshoe route boasts spectacular views from start to finish, and you'll find the descent via Swirral Edge just as exhilarating.

Striding Edge is a knife-edge ridge and, if you love heights and getting your hands involved, is a whole lot of fun. If sheer drops aren't really your thing, there is the option of an easier side path a few metres down.



Hike 2: Cat Bells

Distance: 3.5 miles
Duration: 2-2.5 hours

Despite its modest height of 451m, Cat Bells is an English fell blessed with delightful 360-degree views and is a great option if you're looking for a shorter day hike in the Lake District.

Start at the small car park near Hawse End and head to the summit from there. The route is approximately 3.5 miles long and has a short, steep section and gentle ridges with very easy scrambling (nothing too technical or challenging).

And when you reach the top, you'll be met by glorious views of Derwent Water, thick forests, sparkly blue water, and luscious greenery that stretch all the way to the town of Keswick and across to the stunning mountains beyond.



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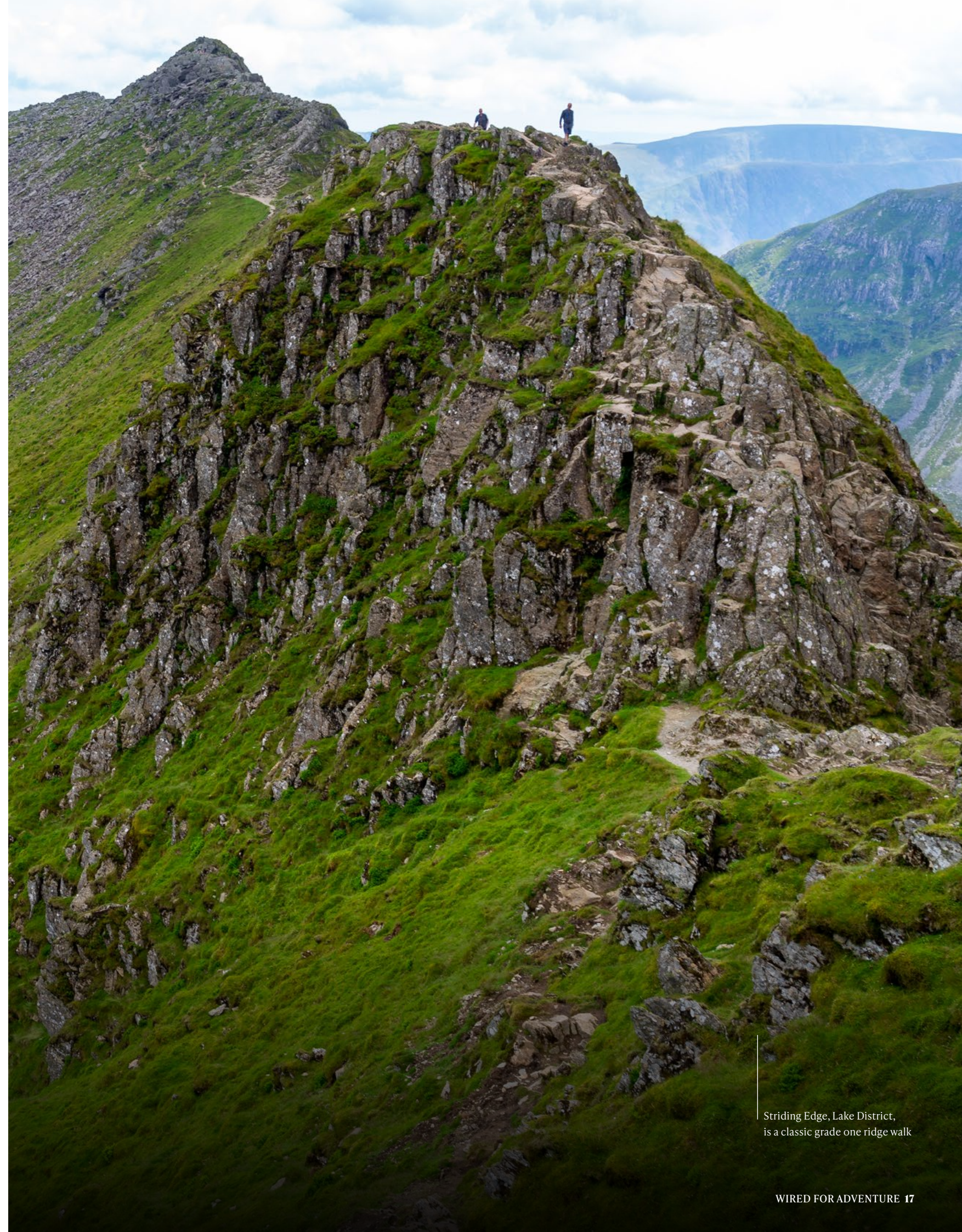


Odin Belay Jacket



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Striding Edge, Lake District,
is a classic grade one ridge walk



*“Layering is key,
particularly in variable
mountain condititons”*

Mike Margeson
OBE and Operations Director
for Mountain Rescue England and Wales

GEAR UP

Over the past two years, Helly Hansen has been working closely with Mountain Rescue Teams to gain an in-depth understanding of the work they do in the outdoors and the complex demands placed on their gear



This is your ultimate guide to hiking gear, courtesy of Mike Margeson OBE and Operations Director for Mountain Rescue England and Wales:

Layering

Layering is key, particularly in variable mountain conditions. Weather can change very quickly and the higher up you hike, the colder it can get – even on a warm, summer’s day.

Essentially, you should wear three layers – a moisture-managing baselayer, which sits next to your skin, a midlayer (fleece, hoodie, or light jacket) for insulation, and a shell jacket for protection against the elements. This is part of Helly Hansen’s renowned three-layer system:

A baselayer

This is a key element in the system and will ensure you are warm and comfortable throughout your time in the mountains.

Effective moisture management ensures professionals and hobbyists alike are comfortable doing what they love, whilst staying warm and protected. Think about the time of year and trail as this will determine which type of baselayer will best suit your needs.

Amid-layer

Depending on the weather, expected conditions and trail you are planning, this might be a hoody, a technical fleece, or an insulated, lightweight jacket.

A waterproof

Even if it looks to be glorious sunshine, always take a packable waterproof with you. You don’t know what the weather will be like as you climb higher or get further into your hike. Opt for a sturdy shell jacket that is waterproof and will keep you nice and dry.

Walking or waterproof trousers

These are much easier to walk, climb, and move in,

and have handy pockets and features to make your experience more comfortable. They tend to dry out quickly too in the event of a downpour or rapid weather change. Jeans are not suitable clothing!

A good pair of waterproof hiking boots

Rolled ankles and lower leg injuries are our most common injuries and it is often down to the wrong footwear. Boots with good grip will offer stability and support, especially across uneven and unknown terrain. Make sure you break in your boots before your first trip to alleviate any blisters and to ensure you’re comfortable. You get what you pay for, so if you can afford to pay for proper waterproof boots, invest. Do not wear trainers!

He also recommends taking:

A map and a compass

Ensure you know how to use them.

Walking poles

These come in handy on tricky or uneven terrain.

A torch

Though you may not plan to be out until dark, it’s best to be prepared.

A first-aid kit Some smaller incidents can be dealt with by your friends such as cuts, scrapes, and stings. Ensure your first aid kit is sterile and in date, and includes the basics such as antiseptic wipes, plasters, scissors, and bandages.

A tent or shelter

You don’t know what you’re going to experience on longer or more hidden trails. Having a shelter with you could be a lifesaver.

A camera or phone

You’ll want a picture at the summit to remember this awesome experience!

THE HIKER'S

The Helly Hansen bespoke Responder Kit is worn by Mountain Rescue teams across the UK. Who better, then, to deck you out for your next outdoor adventure?



Baselayer

A lightweight baselayer is sufficient for most UK hiking conditions. The Men's HH Lifa Crew High Performance Base Layer delivers lightweight insulation and wicking for everyday use and high-performance activities.

1. *HH Lifa Crew High Performance Base Layer*: £35
hellyhansen.com

2. *Pants*: £35
hellyhansen.com

For lower-level activities in colder climates, opt for a heavier baselayer, such as the Men's Lifa Merino Midweight Crew Base Layer.

3. *Lifa Merino Midweight Crew Base Layer*: £80
hellyhansen.com

Midlayer

The Odin Stretch Hooded Light Insulated Jacket has a flexible outer fabric to help you move more freely in the mountains, and super-light primaloft insulation to keep you warm without getting sweaty. The insulation is 55% recycled materials while the outer has a PFC-free, water repellent treatment to keep out light rain and snow.

4. *Odin Stretch Hooded Light Insulated Jacket*: £180
hellyhansen.com

Shell Jacket

This award-winning 3-layer shell uses Helly Hansen's LIFA Infinity Pro technology, a unique eco-friendly membrane, engineered to give everlasting water repellence without the use of chemicals.

5. *Odin 9 Worlds Infinity 3L Shell Jacket*: £500
hellyhansen.com

Insulated Shell

For those wanting a little more warmth there's the Odin Infinity Belay Jacket, an insulated, waterproof mountain jacket, developed in collaboration with professional Search and Rescue teams. It has a superior warmth to weight ratio for packability and boasts two different insulating technologies: LIFALOFT sheet insulation and PrimaLoft GOLD fibre balls. The outer is made from LIFA Infinity hydrophobic fabric.

6. *Lifa Pro Belay Insulated Jacket*: £400
hellyhansen.com

KIT LIST



Footwear

Built to keep hikers comfortable and safe outdoors, the Traverse HT is a mid-cut, lightweight shoe while the Traverse Boot HT is slightly taller, offering extra ankle support.

Both shoes use a combination of two different EVA compounds in the midsole: performance EVA for stability and protection in the lower midsole, and super lightweight EVA in the upper midsole for supreme comfort on long hikes. A rock plate is embedded in the midfoot for rigidity and added protection on uneven and rocky terrain. This is backed up by multi-directional lugs made from HH Max-Grip rubber compound for superior grip.

The upper is fully waterproof with sealed seams and hydrophobic-treated materials, so water repels off the surface when you're facing wet or muddy conditions.

7. *Traverse Boot HT*: £160
hellyhansen.com



Don't forget...

8. *Transistor Lightweight Backpack*: £150
hellyhansen.com

9. *Warm Crew Hiking Socks*: £25
hellyhansen.com

10. *Fleece Beanie*: £15
hellyhansen.com



Ingleborough (723m)

LET'S GO

Getting there

By car: Set your satnav for Horton-in-Ribblesdale. There's limited on-street parking and a National Trust Car Park 150m away from Pen-y-Ghent Café. Get there early as it fills up quickly.

By train: Horton-in-Ribblesdale train station is really close to the Pen-y-Ghent Café and you don't even need to walk along the main road with a dedicated footpath available

Accommodation

Because of the nature of the Yorkshire Three Peaks Challenge, we recommend staying in Horton-in-Ribblesdale the night after – and ideally before – the hike. You'll find a range of options, including B&Bs, guesthouses, inns, and larger group accommodation.

Explore

After finishing the challenge and resting up, why not explore the nearby Forest of Bowland or take a trip to any number of the quaint towns and villages along the A65.

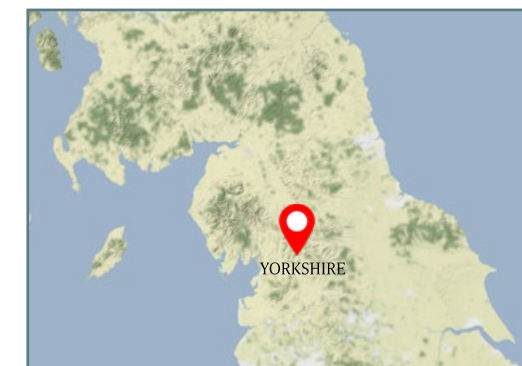
Hike: Yorkshire Three Peaks Challenge

Distance: 24 miles

Total ascent: 1,585m

Duration: 12 hours

(to successfully complete the challenge)



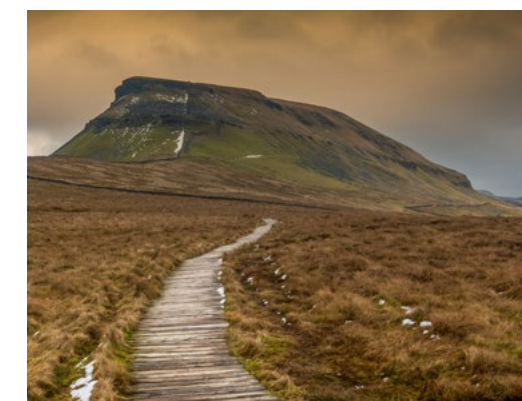
When you hear 'Three Peaks Challenge,' you probably automatically think of the popular feat of climbing Ben Nevis (1,345m), Scafell Pike (978m), and Mount Snowdon (1,085m) within the time limit of 24 hours.

But Yorkshire has its own classic hill-walking version: Pen-y-Ghent (694m), Whernside (736m), and Ingleborough (723m). These peaks are arranged in a triangle and form part of the Pennines. And instead of 24 hours, the Yorkshire Three Peaks Challenge requires you to summit all three within 12 hours.

The usual starting point for the challenge is Pen-y-Ghent Café in Horton-in-Ribblesdale. From here, the trail leads you through fields to the foot of Pen-y-Ghent. The hike is a gentle incline along an old stone wall for the first couple of hundred meters of ascent, before climbing steeply (requiring a bit of low-level scrambling) to the summit. As you catch your breath at the top, you'll be met by staggering views of rolling hills tumbling across the horizon.

After crossing a vast grassy plain and passing the famous Ribblesdale Viaduct, you'll find yourself at the second peak – Whernside. The path to the top of this peak sweeps you across rugged moorland as it leads you to a steep climb to the summit. Even better, the summit is roughly a two-mile ridge, boasting expansive views that rival those at the top of Pen-y-Ghent and picture-perfect photo opportunities.

Finally, the last and easily most picturesque peak is Ingleborough. The path winds through the stunning Ingleborough Nature Reserve (you'll find some boggy ground in areas here, so watch your footing), before a short and steep climb to the summit – an impressive plateau. Here, you'll be met by striking views that, on a clear day, stretch right out to the sea. The path descends and drops you back down through fields to your starting point of the Pen-y-Ghent café, the perfect pit-stop to refuel with a brew and a bit of cake after a job well done.



Hiking: THREE PEAKS

ENGLAND

If you're up for a weekend adventure challenge with your family, friends, or even on your own, then head to the Yorkshire Dales for the Yorkshire Three Peaks Challenge



Hiking: ISLE OF SKYE

SCOTLAND

Packed to the brim with epic mountainscapes and dramatic scenery, Scotland's Skye Trail is a hiker's delight. The best part? An 80-mile trail that crosses the island and is walkable in a week

LET'S GO

Getting there

By car: The Isle of Skye is accessible via the A87. Parking is available, but it's always best to get there early during peak season.

By bus: Both ends of the trail are accessible via Citylink buses that go from Skye to Glasgow and Inverness.

Accommodation

Most hikers who conquer The Skye Trail combine nights wild camping with stops in villages or bothys (mountain huts) along the route. There's plenty of accommodation at Torrinn, Elgol, Sligachan, Portree, and Floodigarry. It's always a good idea to plan ahead and book in advance – especially if you visit during peak season.

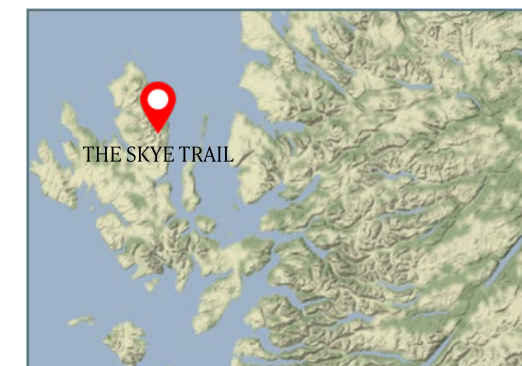
Explore

The Isle of Skye is a gorgeous island. So, take your foot off the gas after finishing the trail with a show at Portree's Aros Centre or a trip to The Skye Museum of Island Life in Kilmuir.

The Quairaing (543m)

Hike: The Skye Trail, Scotland

Distance: 80 miles
Duration: 7-8 days



The Skye Trail is an unofficial 80-mile-long multi-day hike taking in some of the island's best features, including The Old Man of Storr (719m), The Quairaing (543m), and The Cuillin range (992m). It's considered one of Scotland's best.

There are a couple of different ways to complete The Skye Trail. The first is to head completely off grid, carry everything you need for the trek, and be completely self-sufficient. The second is to use a company that'll take care of the accommodation for you. That way, you can enjoy the hiking with only a day pack, knowing you can get to a hotel, hostel, or B&B that has a bed with your name on it.

The Skye Trail itself is split into seven stages, which can take 7-8 days to complete. It is challenging in places, but overall, it's pretty easy going in terms of length and duration, with the average walking day being 8.5 miles.

Stage 1: Rubha Hunish to Flodigarry

This stage starts at the far north of the island, where an overnight at the Lookout Bothy is a good idea if it's not too busy. This section takes in lovely coastal sections with spectacular views looking back north and over to the Quairaing.

Stage 2: Flodigarry to The Old Man of Storr (via The Totternish Ridge)

Arguably the hardest stage of the entire route. This is the only section that may be worth splitting into two days. It's nearly 18 miles in length and encompasses eight hill tops, as well as The Old Man of Storr. It's a tough hill walk and is pretty exposed in places. Speaking from experience, walking poles are also highly recommend for this section.

Stage 3: Old Man of Storr to Portree (via the coastal route)

There is a possible route to go inland, but the coastal route is the recommended one. It encompasses some great views looking out to the isle of Raasay and beyond, but can be extremely boggy in places, especially after significant rainfall.

Stage 4: Portree to Sligachan

A simple stage that follows minor roads and paths. Watch out for a river crossing, which, if in full flood, is tricky to pass.

Stage 5: Sligachan to Elgol

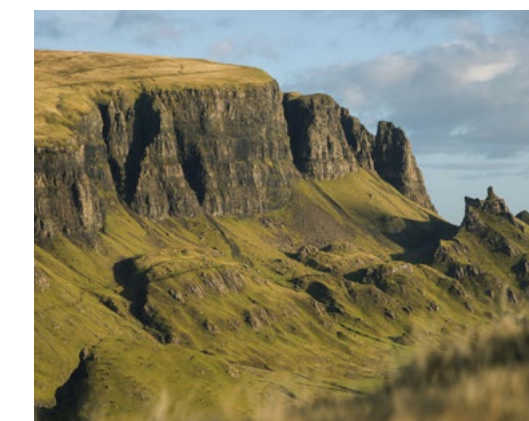
A relatively simple stage with a well-maintained path. It's impossible to not stop and admire the view at frequent points along this section.

Stage 6: Elgol to Torrinn

Another simple stage that follows paths and minor roads, providing you with the chance to admire the coastal views and has the potential for seal spotting in calmer weather.

Stage 7: Torrinn to Broadford

This section takes in some of Skye's cultural history. For one, you'll pass old, abandoned settlements that were cleared during the Highland clearances. From here, it's a simple walk to Broadford, where a well-deserved Fish and Chip supper can be bought.



Path to success

Plan your route. Look at maps, read reviews from other fellow explorers who may have some useful tips for how to travel and which paths to take, and plot your desired route in a GPS device (if you have one) or on your route card – and take it with you.

Time it right

Think about how long your route will take. Allow some extra time for breaks and refuelling, and if you need to slow down on the trip. It is also a good idea to plan a backup route in case the weather changes or you don't quite feel up to the trip you have planned. Think about the time of day you will be walking and travelling; does that impact your planned trip? If you're going to be by the coast, research your tide times too.

Fit for purpose

Keep in mind the physical fitness level of yourself and your group, and don't push anyone ahead of their comfortable ability. If anyone starts to feel unwell or they don't think they'll make the full route, review your Plan B and begin to return home, together. And above all else, don't leave anyone behind.

Fuel up

Water is your best friend, so ensure you have enough packed for you and your peers, plus a little bit extra. A hydration pack is a good option as it takes up less space in your bag. Think about nutritious foods that will replenish spent energy. Fruit is great for natural sugars, nuts are rich in healthy fats and protein, and energy bars that are high in minerals, vitamins, and healthy fats will refuel your body's lost nutrients.

Weather or not?

Before heading out, it's important to know what conditions you might be faced with. So, be sure to check weather forecasts and snow conditions ahead of time and plan to change your itinerary accordingly. When you're up in the mountains, the weather can change quickly and dramatically. Even a day with clear skies can quickly produce thunderstorms, so be prepared.

Phone a friend

Tell someone where you're going, who you're with, and when you're expecting to be back. Take your fully charged phone with you, and keep your contacts updated if your plans change. You should preserve your phone's battery for emergencies. Phone reception is not guaranteed, so don't rely on this alone. If you can, take a spare battery pack or portable charger, and another means of contacting someone – pyrotechnic flares are a good option to signal for help and pinpoint your location in an emergency, as well as Personal Locator Beacons (PLBs) – and ensure you know how to use them.

If you need us...

In the event of an emergency, call for help. In the UK, you should call 999 or 112, and ask for 'Police' then 'Mountain Rescue'. Give all your details of the incident and stay where you are until contacted by the rescue team.

HAPPY HIKING

With everything from dramatic coastlines to incredible Highlands to explore, it's no wonder so many adventurers are drawn to the UK's trails. But to make the most of any expedition, it's important to plan ahead. We spoke to Mountain Rescue Teams from across the UK to get their top tips on being prepared and staying safe on the trail



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