



THE ROUTE (start & finish at Grasmere)

Start to Keswick

Cross the main road carefully when you leave the sports field – no rush, since the start timing point isn't until you're on the other side of that road. Then you're off, following the main A591 down to Ambleside, where you keep right at the mini-roundabout and then follow the road through the town and on south to Waterhead (head of Lake Windermere). Here you go straight on at the traffic lights, towards Windermere, but after only just over a mile get ready for bottom gear, since you now turn left (6 miles) up the very steep Holbeck Lane climb to Troutbeck.



Kirkstone Pass - photo Steve Fleming

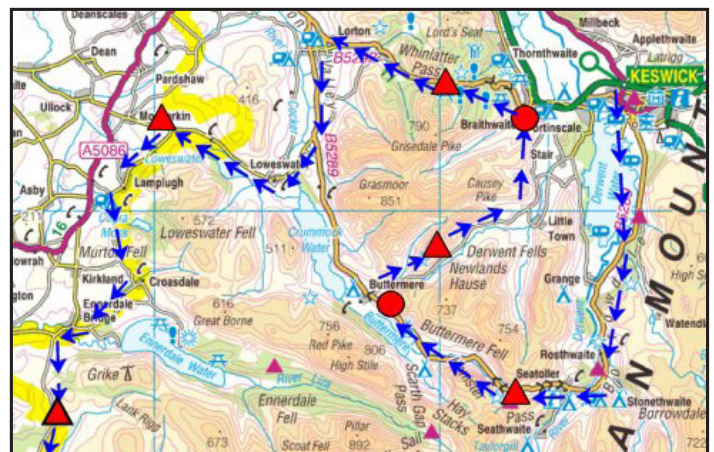
This is the start of the first BIG climb of the day, up Kirkstone pass. At Troutbeck you go straight on, then down a short hill to turn left onto the main Kirkstone road (⚠ another give way at the bottom of a descent, so careful here), and then there's another 3 miles of climbing up to the top of Kirkstone pass (454m, 14.7 miles covered).

Being the highest pass, there's a long and steep descent, so take care. You now get some respite of flatter roads, through Patterdale and Glenridding, before turning left (23.4 miles)

onto the A5091 and the steady climb up to Matterdale End (343m). Follow the road through the village and on to Troutbeck (North), where you turn left (28.7 miles) onto the main A66 to Keswick. ⚠ Take care on this road, which has fast moving traffic, but thankfully for most of the way there's a '1m strip' on the left that gives you a bit more room. Follow this road past the first turn off to Keswick (which would lead you onto slower and busy town centre roads and traffic lights). Instead follow the A66 to the roundabout (37.4 miles), where you turn left into Keswick, left again at the T-junction, then right at the mini-roundabout. Then follow the road round to the left (just after which there are some public toilets in the car park on the left), then straight on at the first roundabout and right at the second one, onto the road down Borrowdale.

Keswick to Ennerdale

⚠ The road down from Keswick narrow and a poor surface, so take care and don't block traffic. It leads down the valley, passing Derwentwater and through Rosthwaite to Seatoller (46 miles). It's a good idea to have a toilet stop here (there are public toilets just off the road in the car park on the right as you enter the village) since there are only very limited toilets available at the Buttermere feed stop and likely to be a queue. And get into bottom gear, since Seatoller is literally at the bottom of Honister pass, and it starts ultra steep!



This climb is really hard, almost on a par with the infamous Hardknott, and it's narrow and has tourist traffic, so look out for cars and please don't block people.

⚠️ Get ready with the brakes as soon as you reach the top (356m), since the descent immediately starts very steeply, the surface is slippery when wet, badly corrugated in places, and there's a narrow chicane over a bridge part way down. Please be warned that this descent catches lots of people out – if you don't get the brakes on right from the word go then before you know it you'll be hurtling down too fast and struggling to get things under control. So take this descent ultra carefully to make sure you don't ruin your ride with a crash here.

You're now in the Buttermere valley, and the road, now rolling rather than mountainous, takes you through to the first feed station, which is on the right hand side at the Youth Hostel just before Buttermere village (52 miles). There are plenty of sandwiches, cakes, bananas etc., and water & orange to drink and for water bottles, but there are only limited toilets here, so to avoid queuing it's better to use the ones earlier at Seatoller or later at Braithwaite or Whinlatter. (Note: In the 2010 event and earlier this feed station at Buttermere also used to be the first checkpoint, but now the first checkpoint is further on – at Braithwaite.)

Don't eat too much at the feed and then rush off, since only 200m beyond the hostel you turn right and immediately steeply uphill onto the climb up Newlands Pass. The middle part of the climb isn't too bad, but there's a very steep final stretch to the top (333m), and then a correspondingly steep sudden drop down the start of the descent. The road descends down Newlands valley and is mostly quite straight, but watch out ⚠️ since at two separate places further down the valley there are sudden and steep hairpin bends that can easily catch you out.

Follow the road as it bends slowly left to Braithwaite, where you follow the road until it gives way at a T-junction in the village (60 miles). In our annual event the first checkpoint is here, be sure to use the electronic timing by Race Timing Systems Marshals will be here to help you. You then join the road to climb up to the top of Whinlatter Pass.



Newlands Pass - photo Steve Fleming

Whinlatter Pass is a good place for any friends who aren't riding the event to meet up with you, since there's a café for them while they wait, and the road isn't too narrow. Please ask friends not to drive on, or try to meet you or watch the event, on the narrower parts of the course, in particular definitely not on Honister, Newlands, Hardknott or Wrynose. The roads are too narrow and the last thing the riders need is yet more cars on the road to contend with.

The descent down Whinlatter is mostly straight and fast, but again ⚠️ watch out for the tight bends down over a bridge about half way down. Ignore the first turn into Lorton and instead take the second sharp left turn, then left again into the village. Follow the road round as it swings right and down through the rest of the village, keeping straight on until you reach a T-junction where you turn left onto the B5289 (65 miles).

Follow this road, which bears right then climbs past Scale Hill (⚠️ steep short descent) to Loweswater.

It now starts to climb up to the wonderfully named Fangs Brow, where you follow the road round to the left and start to drop down to Lamplugh village. Turn left at the T-junction, through past the church and then down to a junction where you turn left onto the minor lane that takes you up and over towards Croasdale, in the Ennerdale valley. ⚠ Watch it on the descent to Croasdale – there's a sharp right hander, followed by a hairpin, and another sharp and narrow bend further down. Turn right at the T-junction and follow the lane as it winds round and on down to Ennerdale Bridge (77.3 miles).

Ennerdale to Eskdale

Turn left at the give way in Ennerdale Bridge, then left again after 400m, onto the climb over Cold Fell. This one is straight and steady to begin with, but then a steep windy bit over a cattle grid, followed by a final steady pull up to the top of the moor (290m, Swarth Fell). Follow the road on down, over another cattle grid, then a short climb back up before the more serious descent down to Calder Bridge. ⚠ Take care on the later part of this descent – there's a couple of hairpin bends not long before you reach Calder Bridge. Turn left into the village hall car park as you enter the village – this is both the second checkpoint and the second feed station 86.6 miles. Again be sure to use the electronic timing by Race Timing Systems Marshals will be here to help you, there are also then drinks, sandwiches, cakes, bananas etc., and toilets available in the village hall. Again there is a cut off time for riders at 3.30 pm.



Just after leaving the village hall you reach the main A595 coast road and turn left down to Gosforth. ⚠ This road is busy and not wide, so file out. After 2 miles look out for the fork left on a descent, leading off the main road and down through some traffic calming and into Gosforth village. Bear left at the mini-roundabout in the village centre, then turn right about 200m further on, where a lane forks off to the right towards Santon Bridge. This is an easy bit, on a pleasant lane, down through Santon to Santon Bridge, but just after swinging right over the bridge you hit another steep climb, over Irton Pike. ⚠ The descent gets quite steep and twisty towards the end, so don't let your speed get too high.

At the bottom follow the road left and on up through Eskdale Green, and then down again to the King George the Fourth pub (95.8 miles), where you turn left up Eskdale. This narrow road leads through Boot village and on up the valley to the foot of Hardknott pass.



Hardknott and Wrynose (ouch!)

Hardknott is the daddy of them all, and you'll know as soon as you start it, since it immediately kicks up viciously when you pass the telephone box at the bottom. This first ultra steep bit climbs over a cattle grid (tricky, need to sit down as you cross it, to avoid wheel spin) and lots of riders have to get off and walk at this point. If you make it up this first killer section, then the climb relents a bit, and you get a chance to get the heart rate down below 99% max. And if you're keen to ride the whole climb then you'd be well advised to take advantage of this respite by easing right back and recovering as much as you can because – you've guessed it – there's another viciously steep bit coming up, as the road swings left at one hairpin and then right at a second painfully steep hairpin.



Photo Steve Fleming

If you're still going at this point you're doing extremely well and the worst is now over, but you'll still have to dig deep to keep it moving to the very top (393m). In fact it's often not really worth trying to ride it all – two years ago I walked this second steep bit and people still riding were barely passing me. But worse, one rider lost his balance and when he hit the deck his seat post snapped at the top, taking his saddle off with it and cruelly ending his ride. It's certainly not worth risking injury if your gears aren't low enough.



⚠️ Be warned – the descent down Hardknott is very VERY steep with extremely tight bends, the road surface isn't good, and it requires extreme care. Whatever you do don't let your speed build up, or you'll be straight off the road and down the hillside, and we don't want to have to call out the ambulance to pick up the pieces.

At the bottom you reach a junction, where you turn left up the long valley towards Wrynose pass. This one's nothing like as hard as Hardknott, steady at first but it gradually steepens, before a short very steep final kick to the top (393m).

⚠️ Again, take great care on the descent down Wrynose. It's not quite as steep and twisty as Hardknott, but it's a longer descent and you've got to keep control of your speed, since the road surface is bad and there are some very tight turns near the bottom. Dave Boyle's bike Many riders have ruined their ride by coming to grief here – look at the state of Dave Boyle's bike after he crashed here in 2004.

The road is very narrow as it now leads down the Little Langdale valley, so narrow that modern cars often fill the whole width of the road, so watch it along here and be ready to stop. The road kicks up and down a few times, and then eventually drops steeply down to a T-junction (⚠️ careful, it comes on you suddenly), where you turn left. After a short rise the road starts a twisty and narrow descent down to Elterwater – ⚠️ careful again down here, since there won't be much room when a car comes the other way. At the village follow the road right and right again through to a T-junction give way at the main Langdale valley road, where you turn right and after a short climb start a shaded and bumpy descent (⚠️ poor road surface) down to Skelwith Bridge. You have to give way here to get onto the main road to Ambleside, though it's pretty much straight on.

This main road is busy so be careful and considerate to traffic. After about 1½ miles, when you reach the outskirts of Ambleside, be ready for a sharp left turn onto a very minor lane, just before the main road swings sharp right. This lane often has lots of parked cars and walkers and there are two fairly rough cattle grids, so take care. Just after the second cattle grid slow down for the hump-back bridge, since literally the other side of the bridge you have to give way to turn left onto the main Ambleside-Grasmere road.

You're now on the final and easy 2 mile run into Grasmere and the finish, ⚠️ but it's a pretty busy road so again take care and be considerate to traffic. Go straight on at the mini-roundabout on the outskirts of Grasmere, from where it's only a few hundred metres to the left turn into the sports field and the finish line. Well done! Now you can rest, with the ultimate feeling of satisfaction with what you've achieved.

Finished!!

An incredible ride! Relax and get your breath back – no rush now. There's a small meal provided, to help you replace what you've lost, and remember to drink plenty too, to avoid dehydration. There are showers, changing rooms etc. available so you can make yourself human again. And in the building you can get details of your times and those of your friends, and a printed certificate of your ride, which you can have framed there and then if you want.

