

LAKE DISTRICT CONNECTION GUIDE



**Lake
District
Foundation**

WELCOME TO YOUR LAKE DISTRICT CONNECTION GUIDE

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The Lake District Foundation (LDF) is the charity that cares for the landscapes, wildlife, and communities of the Lake District and Cumbria. We connect people with nature and inspire everyone to care for this special place in ways that are inclusive, sustainable and accessible.

This pack has been developed as part of our Lake District for Everyone programme. Through a dedicated grants scheme, we supported 18 community groups who faced barriers to accessing the Lake District. These groups included people with disabilities, young people, families on low incomes, new arrivals to Cumbria, and others who told us what can make a day out feel welcoming, enjoyable and affordable.

Their voices have shaped everything you'll find in these pages. We listened carefully to their feedback about what helps, what hinders, and what inspires confidence. Then, working alongside our own team's local knowledge and practical tips, we have brought together this seasonal guide to help you get the very best from your visit.

The Lake District is beautiful all year round. You don't need lots of money, gear, or even a car to enjoy it. This pack is here to help you connect with nature, travel sustainably, and find welcoming places to eat, stay, and play. Each section is themed around a season, with simple activities, affordable tips, and inclusive ideas for everyone. From short Miles Without Stiles walks to micro-volunteering moments, we've chosen experiences that are easy to try and kind to the planet.

Whether you're exploring with friends, family, or on your own, there's something here for you. Together we can enjoy the Lake District in ways that celebrate its beauty, respect its fragility, and make it a place for everyone-for every season.

"We've loved working with communities through Lake District for Everyone. Their ideas and experiences have shaped this pack, and our hope is that it helps more people feel welcome and confident exploring the Lakes-whatever the season, whatever your starting point." - Sarah Smith from the LDF team.

INCLUSIVE ADVENTURES FOR EVERY SEASON, EVERY BUDGET, EVERY BODY.

SPRING: FRESH STARTS & SMALL WONDERS

Spring in the Lake District is a season of new beginnings. The valleys are carpeted with bluebells and wild garlic, rivers run fast with melted snow from the fells, and everywhere you look you'll spot fresh shades of green. It's the perfect time to notice the small details, try something simple, and feel uplifted by the change in the air.

This section gives you some easy, low-cost ways to enjoy spring in the Lakes -from accessible riverside walks to creative activities and practical travel tips. All inspired by the voices of community groups we worked with through Lake District for Everyone, and brought together with local knowledge from our team.



This is wild garlic



Spot bluebells in woodlands



Can you find an oak leaf?

MILES WITHOUT STILES-OUR PICKS

These routes are barrier-free, suitable for wheelchairs, pushchairs, or anyone who prefers a gentler outing.

Staveley Riverside Walk

A flat path that follows the River Kent, alive in spring with wildflowers, birdsong, and buzzing bees. It's a short walk, but you can take your time-pause to listen to the water, look out for dippers and wagtails, and enjoy the fresh green growth.

Elterwater to Skelwith Bridge

A gentle walk between two lovely villages, with waterfalls, riverside views, and cafés at either end. Spring is the best time to catch the rivers at their fullest and enjoy the mix of woodland and open scenery.

Top Tip: Take a sketchbook (or some bits of paper) or your phone camera- this route is perfect for capturing little details like lichen, moss, and petals.

NATURE CONNECTION ACTIVITY – FIVE COLOURS OF SPRING

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Spring is bursting with shades of green, from soft lime new leaves to the deep, glossy tones of holly. Challenge yourself (or your group) to spot five different greens.

- Sketch them in a notebook
- Take photos and make a colour card later
- Collect fallen leaves (never pick live plants) to press at home

This is a fun activity for all ages — it slows you down and helps you see the richness in what might at first just look “green.”

CHEAP DAY OUT IDEA

For under £10, you can travel across the Lakes all day with a Stagecoach Explorer ticket (£9.50 adult, £6.50 child). Hop on and off between Kendal, Windermere, and Ambleside, enjoying short strolls, riverside stops, or just the views from the bus window.

This is a great way to explore without worrying about parking or fuel costs — and it’s kinder to the planet too.



Top tip: If you’re travelling from further afield, take the train to Oxenholme or Kendal. From there, buses connect directly into the central Lakes, making it easy to arrive car-free. Plan your connections in advance using Traveline Cumbria or the Stagecoach app.

INCLUSIVE FOOD FOCUS

A spring day out isn’t complete without something tasty to eat. For budget-friendly, inclusive options, head to Kendal Outdoor Market. You’ll find fresh local produce, ready-to-eat snacks, and ingredients to make your own picnic — with vegan and veggie stalls to suit different dietary needs.

Pair your picnic with a spring riverside walk, and you’ve got a full day out. Don’t forget you can get the train or bus!



Summer in the Lake District is all about long days, warm evenings, and the simple pleasure of being outdoors. Lakes sparkle in the sunshine, wildflower meadows are buzzing with life, and villages are full of festivals and laughter. It's a season made for sharing-with family, friends, or community groups.

This section brings you barrier-free summer walks, activities that give back to nature, and budget-friendly ways to enjoy the Lakes without needing a car. These ideas are shaped by feedback from the Lake District for Everyone groups, who told us they value easy, sociable activities that don't cost the earth.

MILES WITHOUT STILES- OUR PICKS

Windermere West Shore

A 4km lakeside path that's smooth, wide, and fully accessible for wheelchairs and buggies. The route takes you right to the water's edge, with picnic spots and plenty of space for children to play. The lake feels alive in summer- watch out for paddleboarders, ferries, and swans gliding past.



Friar's Crag, Keswick

This short walk has one of the most iconic views in the whole of the Lake District. The path leads from Keswick town centre down to the lakeshore, where you'll find a wooden bench overlooking Derwentwater and Catbells. It's a gentle stroll but delivers a breath-taking reward.



Top Tip: Both routes are excellent for people new to the Lakes or those who want a safe, sociable walk close to facilities.

NATURE CONNECTION ACTIVITY – TEN-MINUTE TIDY

Summer paths can get busy, and sometimes litter gets left behind. Pack a bag and gloves, and set yourself a Ten-Minute Tidy challenge: spend just 10 minutes collecting rubbish as you walk.

- Make it a family competition: who can find the most?
- Share a photo of your collected litter to inspire others
- Dispose of it responsibly in the nearest bin

It's a small action that helps protect wildlife, keeps the Lakes beautiful, and leaves a positive mark on your day out.



CHEAP DAY OUT IDEA



- Take to the water for less! Lake crossings on Windermere or Derwentwater start from just £2 per ticket. It's one of the cheapest and most memorable ways to experience the Lakes.
- Pair your boat ride with a simple walk — like Friar's Crag or Windermere West Shore — and a homemade picnic. For less than £10 per person, you can enjoy a whole day of adventure, fresh air, and new views.

TRANSPORT TIP

Ride the open-top “Lakesider” bus (service 599) between Kendal, Windermere, Ambleside, and Grasmere. The top deck gives unbeatable views of the fells and lakes, and children especially love the novelty of riding high above the road.

It's not just a bus ride — it's an experience in itself. Bring sun hats, hold on to your tickets, and hop on and off at different villages for a full day of exploring without the stress of parking.



INCLUSIVE FOOD FOCUS

If you're visiting Keswick, stop at the Theatre by the Lake café. It's fully level-access, has clear allergy information, and offers light meals, drinks, and treats with stunning lakeside views.

Across the Lakes, many cafés and pubs now display allergy and dietary info clearly on menus, and most welcome families and groups. Look out for signs highlighting vegan and gluten-free options — summer is a great time to try fresh local produce.



SUMMER SPOTTING GUIDE



BLUE TIT



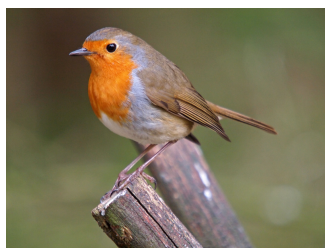
MALLARD



CANADA GOOSE



BEECH TREE



ROBIN



HERDWICK SHEEP



RED SQUIRREL



CHAFFINCH

AUTUMN: GOLDEN LIGHT & QUIET REFLECTION

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Autumn in the Lake District is a season of colour and calm. Woodlands turn gold, red, and amber, the air is crisp, and paths are quieter after the summer rush. It's the perfect time to slow down, reflect, and notice the small changes that come with the turning year.

The ideas in this section are shaped by community groups from the Lake District for Everyone programme, who told us they value gentle activities that spark creativity, as well as safe and accessible routes for enjoying the changing seasons.

MILES WITHOUT STILES- OUR PICKS

Tarn Hows Circuit

A classic circular walk, fully accessible and absolutely stunning in autumn. The reflections of red, gold, and orange trees in the water make this one of the most photographed spots in the Lakes. Benches along the route invite you to pause and take it all in.



Threlkeld to Keswick Railway Path

This wide, flat path follows the old railway line through woodland and riverside landscapes. In autumn it's a peaceful corridor of colour, with leaves crunching underfoot and shelter from the wind. Perfect for buggies, wheelchairs, and anyone who prefers a flat, steady walk.



 **Top Tip: Bring a thermos of tea or hot chocolate and make a ritual of stopping mid-walk and save money during your trip.**



NATURE CONNECTION ACTIVITY – LEAF DIARY

Autumn leaves are endlessly varied in shape, size, and colour. Keep a Leaf Diary by collecting one fallen leaf each week and making a simple note of:

- The colour and shape
- Where you found it
- Any wildlife you noticed nearby

You could press the leaf between paper at home, sketch it, or take a photo. Over the weeks, you'll build a story of autumn unfolding.

This activity works beautifully for children and adults alike, and can be shared with schools, community groups, or families.



CHEAP DAY OUT IDEA

Get creative with Forest Art. Inspired by artists like Andy Goldsworthy, use what you find — leaves, sticks, stones, pinecones — to make temporary sculptures on the forest floor. Arrange colours into a spiral, balance sticks into a sculpture, or lay out patterns with acorns.

Take a photo, then leave everything behind for others to enjoy. It's free, fun, and encourages you to see nature in a whole new way.

TRANSPORT TIP

For an easy way to see more of the Lakes without worrying about parking or driving, try a Mountain Goat tour. These small-group minibuses run from key towns like Windermere, Ambleside, and Keswick and take you into valleys and villages that can be tricky to reach by public transport.

They're a great option if you want to explore hidden gems such as Borrowdale, Langdale, or the quieter corners of Ullswater. Tours are relaxed, friendly, and often include local stories from the driver — making them ideal if you're new to the area or want to explore without the stress of planning every detail.

 **Top Tip:** Mountain Goat offers half-day and full-day tours, so you can choose what suits your time and budget.

Winter in the Lake District is a season of clear skies, crisp frosts, and starry nights. The fells may be dusted with snow, the air feels fresh and sharp, and even the shortest walk can lift your spirits. It's also the perfect time to enjoy cosy cafés, creative activities, and gentle accessible routes that shine in the quiet months.

The ideas here draw on feedback from Lake District for Everyone groups, many of whom told us they wanted shorter, safe walks, indoor or creative activities, and affordable food options where everyone feels welcome.

MILES WITHOUT STILES- OUR PICKS

Keswick Railway Path

A safe, flat route following the old railway line, ideal for a winter stroll. The path is sheltered and wide, making it perfect for wheelchairs, buggies, or anyone who prefers steady ground. Frosted leaves and river views make it magical on a cold day.

Allan Bank, Grasmere

The National Trust grounds at Allan Bank offer gentle paths, sheltered woodland, and welcoming indoor spaces. In winter, it's a peaceful spot to combine a short walk with time indoors by the fire. Please note that there is a charge to visit this property if you aren't a National Trust member.

💡 **Top Tip:** Days are shorter in winter — plan to start your walks early so you can finish before dark.

NATURE CONNECTION ACTIVITY – LEAF DIARY

Winter can be tough for birds, but you can help while connecting with nature at home. Try making a simple bird feeder:

- Save a yoghurt pot or cardboard tube
- Spread it with peanut butter or fat
- Roll it in seeds
- Hang it outside with string- even from a window if you don't have a garden.

Keep a little diary of which birds visit. You may see robins or even woodpeckers. This is a great family activity and a reminder that nature connection doesn't stop when you're indoors.



💡 **Top Tip:** get creative with your designs, why not use a plastic bottle. Recycle and reuse to protect the environment.

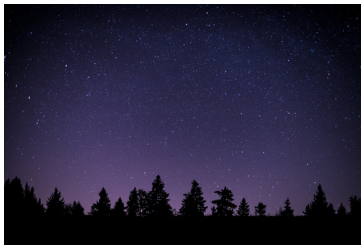
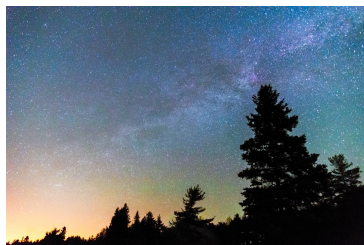
CHEAP DAY OUT IDEA

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Winter nights in the Lakes are perfect for stargazing. With some of the darkest skies in England, you can spot constellations, planets, and sometimes even the Milky Way.

Best spots include Grizedale Forest, Wasdale, or just outside Keswick. All you need is warm clothing, a torch, and a free stargazing app on your phone.

It costs nothing, yet feels magical. If you are lucky- you might even see the northern lights.



TRANSPORT TIPS

In winter, travel can feel tricky — but there are still plenty of options. Look out for:

- Advance rail tickets — often much cheaper if you book ahead
- Multi-day bus passes — great value if you're staying a few days
- Mountain Goat tours — a stress-free way to reach valleys that may be difficult to drive in icy conditions

 **Top Tip: Always check timetables before you travel — some services run less often in the winter months.**

INCLUSIVE FOOD FOCUS

Warm hubs and “pay-as-you-feel” cafés across Cumbria are fantastic winter stops. They offer affordable hot drinks and meals in welcoming spaces where everyone belongs. In Cumbria, the main pay-as-you-can cafe is Waste into Wellbeing's Kendal People's Café, located at The Eddington in Kendal. They use surplus food to serve meals and treats on a pay-as-you-can basis and have regular “Café Lite” sessions offering light lunches and cakes. Visit the Westmorland and Furness and Cumberland Council websites to find designated ‘warm hubs’.



LET'S TALK



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This booklet has been shaped by the voices of 18 community groups through the Lake District for Everyone programme, along with local knowledge from the Lake District Foundation team. It's designed to help you enjoy the Lakes in affordable, accessible, and sustainable ways.

But this is just the beginning. We see this booklet as an evolving piece of work. Every community has ideas, tips, and stories that can help others. If you've got something you'd like to share — maybe a favourite accessible walk, a hidden food spot, or a transport hack — we'd love to hear from you.

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