

Walk 1

The Langdale Pikes

Length	5 miles 6.4 km
Height	2,440 feet 740 m
Difficulty	A steep ascent, and even steeper descent, but once on the tops the going is relatively easy.
Time	Allow 4 - 6 hours, more if you like to stop and look at the views.
Summits	Harrison Stickle, Pike O' Stickle, Thunacar Knott, Pavey Ark.
Views	Superb views down the Langdale Valley and beyond, stretching to Yorkshire.
Fitness level	You need good levels of both strength and stamina.

The climb to the summit of the Langdale Pikes is probably one of the finest one day walks in the world. That may seem to be a bold statement, but the reality is that the Lake District is known as the world's finest walking country and this walk is as good as any in the area. The route starts with a steep climb up the side of the fell to Stickle Tarn. From there we climb along the side of Pavey Ark to reach a broad open fell which offers relatively easy walking. The descent, however, is not so easy, as it is steep and has a tendency to be treacherous after bad weather. It should be seen as a challenge, and respected as such.

1. Turn right out of the hotel and locate a wooden gate leading into the field to the right of Stickle Cottage. Go through, then keep left, following the line of the garden wall to your left, and walk to a wide gap in the wall about 100 yds. away
2. Bear left through the gap to follow a rough, rocky track behind the buildings, up a slope. Care is needed in winter here.
3. After a short distance turn right up a rough, stone covered path that runs uphill alongside the beck. The path is heavily maintained for much of the route to Stickle Tarn.
4. Pass by a series of waterfalls on your right, then 250 yards further on cross the beck via a wooden footbridge. After another steep section cross a wooden fence via a stile.
5. Continue uphill, crossing a small beck feeding Stickle Ghyll, then through a stone walled sheep enclosure. After a steep climb the main falls are reached. It is possible to cross the beck here, although there is no bridge and the crossing is hazardous if the water is high. If the river is low and it is safe to do so, crossing over and continuing on up the rough track on the other side is one option. However if you can't, or don't want to cross here, simply continue on. The problem with staying to the right of the beck is a large rock step over which you must clamber in order to reach the maintained path above. It presents little difficulty for most people, other than a requirement to use hands as well as feet. Once the rock step is climbed the path beyond is well made and easy to follow the remainder of the way to the tarn.
6. If you crossed the beck, simply climb a series of rock steps, followed by a ford, to bring you out onto the southern edge of Stickle Tarn. Ford the stream leaving the tarn to reach the right hand bank.

7. Bear right to follow the path that climbs around the right hand (eastern) side of the tarn, cross a stream that runs out of the North Eastern edge, then follow the path as it climbs the fell to the right of Bright Beck for about 300 yards.
8. At this point the path crosses the beck and bears left across North Rake, the northern ridge of Pavey Ark. The climb here is very steep and the path quite rocky underfoot.
9. At the top, bear left to reach the top of the crag. There used to be an old stone wall and a cairn here, but neither is evident. The ravages of the wind and rain, coupled with the many pairs of feet that trample over these fells, have destroyed all trace of them.

The effort to get this point is the greatest that you will use on this walk, but the view down to the tarn and beyond will take your breath away. Below you lies the tarn, and beyond, well, where should we start?

To the east lies Yorkshire and the giant hump of the Pennines. In front of them the eastern fells of the Lake District stand guard from a respectful distance over Lake Windermere. To the south lie the Coniston fells, and on a clear day a glimpse of the coastline beyond. To the west, the Scafells and Bow Fell dominate the view at the head of the valley, with Harrison Stickle and Thunacar Knott close by.

There is a temptation to rest a while and just look at the excellent panorama from here. Many people have simply decided that the view could not be bettered and have consequently have made their way back down by retracing their steps. Our walk, however, continues.

10. Rejoin the main path, turn left and head towards Harrison Stickle.
 11. At this point you could take a detour north west to Thunacar Knott. Bear right from the path that leads from Pavey Ark to Harrison Stickle and head for the unmistakable dome shaped peak.
- The top of Thunacar Knott is rather deceptive. Long grass grows between jagged rocks, which protrude like spikes, waiting to catch the unwary. I mention this for only one reason. I was once caught out and badly bruised my ankle as I picked my way to the summit. It was a painful walk down the fell that day.
12. From the top of Thunacar Knott follow the path due south to Harrison Stickle.
 13. You will come out on the path from Pavey Ark to Harrison Stickle. At this point you need to be careful as it is easy to take the wrong route as you approach Harrison Stickle. Shortly before two small tarns, a path leading down the screes to Stickle Tarn sometimes catches first time walkers of this route out. To add to the confusion the tarns sometimes dry up in the summer, which leads people to think that they are on the wrong path when they are not.
 14. Go straight on, past the infamous left hand fork and two small tarns and onto a wide grassy plateau. The climb to the rocky top of Harrison Stickle is relatively easy. Once there you will enjoy the superb views of the Langdale Valley, Bow Fell, Lingmoor and Crinkle Crag beyond.

15. From the top of Harrison Stickle head west down a steep path. Ignore the path that forks off to the left and carry on down the slope to where the path crosses a beck, then start to climb the quarter of a mile to the peak of Pike O'Stickle.
16. At this point the path breaks up into four or five alternative paths, but they all head for the summit. The final few yards are a bit of scramble, but you soon reach the flat, rocky top of Pike O'Stickle, from where the views are even better than from Harrison Stickle. This is due mainly to the peak's position at the head of the valley. The panorama straight down from the valley is one of the classic views of the Lake District.

Long before the fell farmers and tourism operators moved in, Neolithic tribes people turned the rocky crags upon which you are now walking into a vast stone axe factory.

The local tribes probably lived on the coast and moved inland in summer to hunt and look for stone that they could shape to make a variety of tools. It is believed that they spent several weeks each year living in the area and making axes from the available stone, which they then transported by canoe along the heavily wooded valley and via Lake Windermere to the coast.

The blades were not just for their own use, but also for trading. Clearly the tribes people were successful for their axes have been found in archaeological digs in many parts of the country, as well as on the mainland of Europe, the furthest afield being discovered in Italy.

17. Leave Pike O'Stickle via the same short scramble that you came up on, but this time bear right to head for the line of the ridge towards Loft Crag. The path becomes steep and rocky as it skirts the eastern edge of the base of Loft Crag, a sheer rock face that is popular with rock climbers.

The Lake District was the birthplace of modern rock climbing and mountaineering. In the days when equipment was primitive and mountainous regions remote and costly to reach, the mountains of North West England were ideally suited as a starting point for this increasingly popular activity. Victorian students were amongst the first to pit their strength against the mountains. Many had visited the Lakes in order to learn about the natural history of the region. They spent much of their time exploring the fells and valleys equipped with little more than stout boots and an oilskin to keep out the rain.

18. The path is very easy to follow but not at all easy to walk. Extreme care needs to be taken on the steep sections and first time walkers of the route often find this the most heart-stopping section of their day! Following a long descent, Dungeon Ghyll Beck, after which the hotels are named, comes into view to your left.
19. After a steep descent the route joins up with the beck. Continue down the path with the beck on your left until you come to a point where two stone walls meet at the corner of a field.
20. Cross the beck here and turn immediately right over a stile, then continue down the fell with the beck on your right.
21. The path follows the stone wall on your left for a short distance until you come to a kissing gate. Go through and straight down to rejoin the outgoing path in the field behind the New Dungeon Ghyll Hotel.