

# STAND-UP PADDLE- BOARDING IN THE LAKE DISTRICT

BEAUTIFUL PLACES TO  
PADDLEBOARD IN CUMBRIA



JO MOSELEY



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Front cover: Ali and Jo on Buttermere © James Kirby.

Back cover (L–R): Debbie and Tip on Windermere © Jo Moseley; Sara practising her step-back turns on Ullswater; Helen and Jon with their litter-picking bucket on Loweswater; Peel Island, Coniston Water; launching on to Ullswater; lush views across Grasmere © Jo Moseley; Jon and Helen in the sunshine on Bassenthwaite Lake © Jo Moseley; a quiet winter paddle on Crummock Water.

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#### SAFETY STATEMENT

Stand-up paddleboarding and wild swimming are activities that carry a risk of personal injury or death. Participants must be aware of and accept that these risks are present and they should be responsible for their own actions and involvement.

Nobody involved in the writing and production of this guidebook accepts any responsibility for any errors that it may contain, or are they liable for any injuries or damage that may arise from its use. Stand-up paddleboarding, outdoor swimming and particularly wild swimming are inherently dangerous and the fact that individual descriptions in this volume do not point out such dangers does not mean that they do not exist. Take care.

**Opposite** Looking over Windermere towards the Langdales © Jo Moseley







Wigton

Aspatria

Maryport

Cockermouth

**Bassenthwaite Lake**

Penrith

Workington

**Loweswater**

**Derwent Water**

Keswick

**Ullswater**

Whitehaven

**Crummock Water**

**Buttermere**

LAKE DISTRICT  
NATIONAL PARK

**West Water**

**Grasmere**

Scafell Pike  
978m

Ambleside

Ravenglass

**Windermere**

Windermere

**Conistone Water**

Kendal

Millom

Ulverston

Milnthorpe

Barrow-in-Furness

Dalton-in-Furness

Grange-over-Sands

**Morecambe Bay**

Carnforth

Morecambe

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**Opposite** Grateful to be on Coniston Water; Old Man of Coniston behind

## Introduction

Thank you for picking up this book and welcome to the joy of paddleboarding in the Lake District. I am so thrilled you are here.

Tell me, where did you fall in love with paddleboarding?

This is a question I also love asking my guests on *The Joy of SUP – The Paddleboarding Sunshine Podcast*, and friends I paddle with.

For me it was on Derwent Water, the ‘Queen of the Lakes’, here in the Lake District.

On 24 September 2016, I took my first lesson with Bo from Lake District Paddleboarding. After a wobbly start I finally stood up and looked out across the water. It was a grey, overcast day, but that didn’t dampen the sunshine I felt in my heart. I immediately knew that SUP (stand-up paddleboarding) was going to be something very special to me.

Having injured my knee at the start of the year, my spirits were low. The nourishing and positive impact of movement I’d rediscovered in 2014 when rowing a million metres on a rowing machine (over the space of a few months) and rowing a marathon (in one day) for Macmillan Cancer Support in memory of my mum had been lost.

On 1 September 2016, I set myself a challenge to spend 30 minutes outside each day moving my body in the hope it would not only heal my knee but also lift my soul. I had heard about the benefits of paddleboarding for our physical, mental and emotional well-being. Being a full-body but low-impact workout, I was hopeful this might be the start of a new chapter.

‘For the first time in months, I felt like a warrior not a worrier,’ is how I described the afternoon of my first paddleboarding lesson. I couldn’t stop smiling as we made our way home.

Perhaps you know the feeling?

In bed that evening, with my body tingling and my heart full, I wrote in my diary: ‘Dreams

do come true! First paddleboarding lesson in the Lakes. I loved it!’ Having spent holidays in the Lake District as a little girl visiting a close family friend, a new world here on the water had opened up.

Since that September day, I have experienced many moments of joy, courage, friendship and gratitude while paddleboarding.

In 2019, I became the first woman to paddleboard coast to coast from Liverpool to Goole, a journey of 162 miles along the Leeds and Liverpool Canal and the Aire and Calder Navigation. I was picking up litter and fundraising for two causes: the mental health surf charity, The Wave Project, and environmental charity, The 2 Minute Foundation.

A film about the adventure, *Brave Enough – A Journey Home to Joy*, was created by the award-winning filmmaker Frit Tam of Frit Films. The film has been selected for prestigious film festivals, including Keswick Film Festival and Kendal Mountain Festival in the Lake District, plus sell-out online screenings.

Having experienced such wonder on the canal, I wanted to find a way to share the stories of other paddleboarders and the health and happiness it can bring us. On Christmas Eve 2020, I launched a podcast called *The Joy of SUP – The Paddleboarding Sunshine Podcast*. My first guest was Cal Major, whom you’ll meet in the Derwent Water chapter; she was later followed by Anna Little (Derwent Water), Adya Misra (Ullswater) and Fiona Quinn (Wast Water).

A few months later, in the summer of 2021, I set out on my travels with my board *Grace* to research my first book. *Stand-up Paddleboarding in Great Britain: Beautiful places to paddleboard in England, Scotland & Wales* was published in 2022 by Vertebrate Publishing; it is the first and currently only guide dedicated to paddleboarding and the SUP community in England, Scotland and Wales.

## The Lake District

The Lake District National Park became one of the first four national parks in the UK in 1951 and, at 2,362 square kilometres, only the Cairngorms National Park in Scotland is larger. In 2017 it was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in recognition of its unique landscape and farming culture. It also includes 41 kilometres of coastline and estuaries, and 12 per cent of the national park is woodland.

The LDNPA (Lake District National Park Authority) owns less than four per cent of the land; the rest is owned by the National Trust, United Utilities, Forestry England and private landowners. This has an impact on where we as paddleboarders are allowed to SUP, whether permits are required, where we can land and to whom we pay parking charges.

Tourism plays a significant role in the economy with 18.14 million tourists and 29.15 million tourist days (of more than three hours) in the Lake District in 2022. With a population of just 40,500 living within the national park boundaries, this has a huge impact.

### Where can we paddle?

There are 17 larger lakes in the Lake District. Only one of these is an actual lake – Bassenthwaite Lake; the rest are ‘meres’ or ‘waters’. Of these 17, we have permission to paddleboard on 10 of these lakes – the lakes are listed in order of surface area in the table below. Access details are subject to change; check online for the best up-to-date information: [www.lakedistrict.gov.uk/visiting/things-to-do/water/access-to-the-lakes](http://www.lakedistrict.gov.uk/visiting/things-to-do/water/access-to-the-lakes)

### Paddleboarding permits and other restrictions

Some of the ten lakes require you to have a permit to paddleboard. These are detailed in the individual chapters and summarised below. Do your research before you travel to the lake, as you can’t always buy a permit locally. These details are subject to change, so check online for the best up-to-date information.

Permits are required for **Bassenthwaite Lake** from the LDNPA. Buy online before you go, as there is nowhere to buy them at the lakeside: [www.lakedistrict.gov.uk/visiting/things-to-do/water/access-to-the-lakes](http://www.lakedistrict.gov.uk/visiting/things-to-do/water/access-to-the-lakes)

	SURFACE AREA	LENGTH	WIDTH	MAXIMUM DEPTH	PAGE
<b>Windermere</b>	14.7km <sup>2</sup>	18.1km	1.5km	67m	18
<b>Ullswater</b>	8.9km <sup>2</sup>	12.2km	1km	62m	134
<b>Derwent Water</b>	5.3km <sup>2</sup>	4.6km	2.1km	22m	120
<b>Bassenthwaite Lake</b>	5.3km <sup>2</sup>	6.3km	1.3km	21m	106
<b>Coniston Water</b>	4.9km <sup>2</sup>	8.3km	800m	56m	4
<b>Wast Water</b>	2.9km <sup>2</sup>	4.9km	780m	79m	52
<b>Crummock Water</b>	2.5km <sup>2</sup>	4.1km	1km	44m	76
<b>Buttermere</b>	0.9km <sup>2</sup>	2km	600m	28m	88
<b>Loweswater</b>	0.6km <sup>2</sup>	1.6km	560m	16m	64
<b>Grasmere</b>	0.6km <sup>2</sup>	1.5km	640m	21m	36

Permits are required for **Crummock Water**, **Buttermere** and **Loweswater** from the National Trust. You can buy day permits from certain car parks or using the **PayByPhone** app. You can also get season permits; further details are online. There are also restrictions on the numbers of craft which can be on these lakes at any one time: [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/lake-district/buttermere-valley/boating-and-fishing-in-the-buttermere-valley](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/lake-district/buttermere-valley/boating-and-fishing-in-the-buttermere-valley)

The other lakes do not currently require a permit.

### Other craft on the water

In addition to paddleboarders, kayakers and canoeists, there may be other larger boats on the water. You may decide that you want a quieter lake or that the family would enjoy a boat ride while you're paddling – there is a table below showing which types of craft you'll find on each lake, to help you decide which is best for you.

#### Tips for keeping safe around other lake users

- » **Keep a safe distance** from boats and, in particular, the larger commercial vessels.

Plan your paddle in advance, understanding where they launch, their routes and timetable. The captains have a job to do and a responsibility to their passengers. Avoid jetties during operational hours.

- » Be aware of sailing boat **moorings** and keep two board lengths at least away from the buoys.
- » Boats can create a **wake**. If you are not used to this, you may find it helpful to drop to your knees for stability. I paddle into the waves rather than becoming parallel to them as they can tip you over. Don't be surprised if you feel the waves created by a larger steamer or lake cruiser a couple of minutes after they have passed by.
- » **Rowing clubs** train on Windermere and Derwent Water. They will be travelling with their backs to you so won't see you; make sure that you keep out of their way and make yourself known if you need to.
- » Keep a look out for **swimmers** and **divers** and keep your distance.

		LARGE COMMERCIAL BOATS	SMALLER POWERED CRAFT	SAILING BOATS	ROWING BOATS	PAGE
<b>SOUTHERN LAKES</b>	<b>Coniston Water</b>	Y	Y	Y	Y	4
	<b>Windermere</b>	Y	Y	Y	Y	18
	<b>Grasmere</b>				Y*	36
<b>WESTERN LAKES</b>	<b>Wast Water</b>				Y	52
	<b>Loweswater</b>				Y	64
	<b>Crummock Water</b>				Y	76
	<b>Buttermere</b>				Y	88
<b>NORTHERN LAKES</b>	<b>Bassenthwaite Lake</b>		Y	Y	Y	106
	<b>Derwent Water</b>	Y	Y	Y	Y	120
	<b>Ullswater</b>	Y	Y	Y	Y	134

\*Faeryland Grasmere boats only

## Around the lake

- » There may be **anglers** either on the shoreline or on the water in a boat so keep an eye out for lines.
- » If you are used to RNLI or local lifeguards on the beach where you paddle, remember there are **no lifeguards** on the lakes to ask for advice or on the shore if you get into difficulty.
- » Remember that cafes, paddleboarding providers, boat trip operators and so on might run **reduced hours** during the winter months so it is worth checking in advance.
- » Don't be surprised if **fighter jets** fly overhead when you're on the water!

### How long does it take to paddle a lake?

The average speed of a recreational paddler is around three or four kilometres per hour, although this will be affected by your board, experience, the wind, your skills and strength, and how often you stop for photos! If you're out in a group, remember to paddle at the speed of the slowest paddler.

## Camping

Overnight camping, including tents, bivvies or vans, is not allowed in lay-bys, on islands or along the shoreline of the lakes other than in designated campsites: [www.lakedistrict.gov.uk/visiting/where-to-stay/campervans-and-where-to-park](http://www.lakedistrict.gov.uk/visiting/where-to-stay/campervans-and-where-to-park) I have included details of campsites and caravan/motorhome sites that are close to the water's edge. You might also want to look at membership of **CampWild** for wilder campsites in the Lakes: [www.campwild.uk](http://www.campwild.uk)

## Litter

Please remember to take your own litter home and, if you can, do a **2 Minute Litter Pick** as well: [www.2minute.org](http://www.2minute.org) Also follow the Lake District National Park **#LakeDistrictKind** campaign.

## BBQs and open fires

BBQs and open fires are not allowed in the Lake District. Disposable BBQs can be a fire risk, create litter and damage wildlife – there are some brilliant tips on cooking outdoors safely and responsibly from Harrison Ward, best-selling author of *Cook Out*, on page 71.

## Toilets

For a list of public toilets in the Lake District, see [www.lakedistrict.gov.uk](http://www.lakedistrict.gov.uk)

### Tips for if you need to do a 'wild wee or poo'

- » A **Kula Cloth** can be helpful if you simply need to wee as it is an antimicrobial, quick-drying pee cloth that can be used through the day. This means you won't need to use toilet paper which you would then need to take away with you. Find out more from adventurer and endurance paddleboarder and guest on my podcast Shells Ellison, [www.shellsellison.com/kula](http://www.shellsellison.com/kula)
- » Buy **Go Anywhere Waste Kit Bags** or **WAG Bags** online or from some of the local outdoor retailers. They contain paper, hand wipes, a large secure bag for your waste and liquid-absorbing, deodorising crystals. You simply put the poo in the bag, seal it securely and dispose of it safely.
- » Create your own **poo kit**, including a trowel, toilet paper, hand sanitiser and resealable freezer bags or plastic bags. If you go for this option, ensure you wee or do a poo at least 30 metres from a path or water. Use the trowel to dig a hole 15–20 centimetres deep to bury the poo and then cover. Do not bury toilet paper, tampons or sanitary towels. They do not rot, and animals will dig them up. Put them in the bag and take them with you. Do not wash your hands in lakes; use hand sanitiser or bottled water.



## Ticks and Lyme disease

The Lake District has a large population of ticks; a tick bite can cause Lyme disease, a potentially serious bacterial infection. Be aware of the risks and find out more about how to protect yourself; simple methods include wearing long trousers and long-sleeved T-shirts and wearing insect repellent. [www.lymediseaseaction.org.uk](http://www.lymediseaseaction.org.uk)

## Public transport

The West Coast main line trains run to Oxenholme (near Kendal), Penrith and Carlisle. Local trains from Oxenholme go to Kendal, Staveley and Windermere. [www.thetrainline.com](http://www.thetrainline.com)

Where possible, do use the bus or shuttle bus services – details are included for each launch spot where they are close enough to public transport. For bus services, go to [www.traveline.info](http://www.traveline.info), download the **Stagecoach** app or pick up a timetable. [www.stagecoachbus.com](http://www.stagecoachbus.com) In 2023, shuttle buses ran at Buttermere, Ullswater and West Water – see individual chapters for more information.

On the larger lakes, the commercial boats (when space is available for your deflated board) can be a really good way of getting around, and open up some great options for longer, one-way paddles.

## Car travel and parking

Travelling by car in the Lake District can often take much longer than you might expect if you're used to more urban areas where roads are wider and there are no mountains to navigate around. Always give yourself plenty of time and be patient. Share transport where possible.

Each launch spot has local parking options listed. As phone signal and 4G can be intermittent in areas of the Lake District, I recommend carrying cash, credit or debit cards and downloading any parking apps you might need, such as **RingGo**, **PayByPhone** and **JustPark**, before you go. Membership of the National Trust means parking in their car parks is free, but you still need to buy a National Trust permit for some of the lakes (see page xiii).

Don't park on yellow lines as this could seriously impede access for the emergency services on narrow rural roads. Please also respect that hotels, cafes and marinas might have very limited parking and can't be expected to be your launch point, unless you are a guest or have prior permission.

Also, don't simply park on grass verges as this is where the sheep graze. While I was researching this book, this was most noticeable at West Water where the number of unofficial parking spots grew each time I visited. As the lovely poster on page xxix by Annabelle from Langdale Primary School says: *Be a winner, don't park on my dinner.*

### Go early or go late

To find the quieter times on the lake and for parking, go early in the morning or later in the afternoon. Many of the most popular car parks can be full by 9.30 a.m. on a summer's day or during the holidays and at weekends. The lakes can also be calmer first thing and quieter in terms of commercial and leisure boats. Likewise, a spot such as Cockshott Point near Bowness-on-Windermere can be very busy with holidaymakers in the summer, but with the right cold weather clothing, can be a beautiful, quiet paddle in the autumn and winter.

## How to use this book

The ten lakes we can paddle are split geographically into three sections – the Southern, Western and Northern lakes.

Each lake includes details of several launch spots (these are also shown on the accompanying map). These aren't necessarily *all* the launch spots on a lake but are either my favourites or where I believe it is most useful to share information, taking into consideration safety, access and environmental factors.





For each launch location there are details of:

- » Where to launch from (grid reference and GPS coordinates).
- » Public transport.
- » Parking spots (grid reference and GPS coordinates).
- » The carry time – how long you'll be walking with your board to reach the launch spot.
- » What the launch spot is like and any other useful information you'll need to know.

If you're not sure how to use grid references, the Ordnance Survey have some handy resources: [getoutside.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/guides/beginners-guide-to-grid-references](https://getoutside.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/guides/beginners-guide-to-grid-references) GPS coordinates (latitude and longitude) can be used in Google Maps.

There is also some general information about the lake, including statistics, getting to the lake, webcams, permits, instruction, guided tours, equipment hire, boats, any hazards, food and drink, and where to stay. Finally, because you often need a Plan B in the Lakes due to the wind and weather, I have included other things to enjoy nearby. This might also be helpful if you are with friends and family who don't paddle.

### Map key

-  Paddleboarding launch spot
-  Direction of water flow
-  No-boating zone
-  Commercial boat routes

Although this book is primarily for the lakes, in a number of places I have included brief details of short paddles on rivers leading in or out of the lake. Longer paddles on other rivers are beyond the scope of this book.



## How to get started in SUP

You might expect me to start with which board to buy or what to wear but – hand on heart – my best tip for getting started is to have a lesson or course of lessons with a paddleboarding instructor or coach. This will save you time, energy and frustration, and equip you with important safety information.

A lesson may cover safety, skills, equipment, confidence, what to wear, turns, stopping, what to do if you fall off, and getting back on your board (self-rescue). You may even save money with advice on safety kit, clothing and which board and paddle to buy. I've included details of local SUP lesson providers where relevant in each chapter.

Keep learning and updating your skills as you progress with online and in-person courses; for example, from Paddle UK (formerly British Canoeing) which – alongside Surfing England – is the national governing body for paddlesports in England, and *SUPfm* podcast (Safety Course). *SUPboarder* magazine also has an excellent series of free literature and videos called SUP Safe.

As a paddleboarder who enjoys inland waterways, such as canals and rivers, I require a Waterways Licence which comes as part of my Paddle UK membership, along with other benefits. Their licensing agreement however doesn't cover the Lake District. The membership fee also goes towards Paddle UK's community, access and environmental projects, such as the Clear Access Clear Waters campaign.

## Kit

### Choosing a paddleboard and paddle

A paddleboard is a big investment financially and in terms of enjoyment and safety. Buy the best quality you can afford, with enough money left over to buy a buoyancy aid, a leash (if your board doesn't come with one) and perhaps an

upgraded paddle. There are a couple of main questions to consider.

#### » **Do you want a hardboard or inflatable?**

Inflatables – or iSUPs – are lightweight and less susceptible to damage (apart from the possibility of punctures). When deflated, they can be stored and transported easily by car, bus or on one of the commercial boats; they often come with a pump, bag, paddle and leash included in the package. Hardboards will sit better in the water, are more efficient to paddle, can be less affected by the wind, plus of course they are always ready to go.

#### » **What sort of paddling do you want to do?**

As well as paddling on lakes, you might want to paddle on the sea, canals or rivers, or do SUP yoga, SUP surf or racing. An all-round-style board (10–11 feet in length) would suit beginners and more experienced paddlers on some of the smaller lakes. However, it is worth considering a touring board (11–12 feet in length) for longer journeys on Windermere or Ullswater where you might be out on the water for a few hours. This type of board makes it easier to go in a straight line, your paddling will be more efficient over the longer distances, plus you can carry more kit on the board. It is worth considering a board you will grow into as you become more experienced.

I spoke with Emma Jones from SUP Inflatables who shared this really valuable guide:

- » Your height determines the width of the board.
- » Your weight determines the thickness of the board.
- » The length of the board determines the performance and how it glides through the water.

### **Tips to consider**

- » How heavy is the board and can you carry it comfortably to the launch site?
- » You may want to consider investing in a carry strap or a set of kayak wheels for longer carry times.
- » Always pump to the manufacturer's recommended level – usually 15–18 PSI (pounds per square inch). An insufficiently pumped board will not give you the rigidity and stability you need to paddle safely.
- » You might be pumping for a few minutes and the board 'looks' inflated but the gauge registers only 7 PSI. The gauge is most likely not at fault. The board simply needs to be pumped more.
- » Keep your board out of direct sunlight and deflate it a little in very hot weather. Inflate again just before going on the water. According to Paul at SUP Services, an inflatable SUP repair specialist, in direct heat the pressure a board is inflated to will increase by 1 PSI per hour. The glue could also melt and, with the extra pressure, your board could rupture.
- » Always remember to check the pin is in the upright position before you start pumping.
- » Wash your board after each use, both to ensure you don't spread invasive non-native species from lake to lake (see pages xxx–xxxii for more on biosecurity) and to keep it in its best condition.
- » Store your board in a cool dry place.
- » Whether to pump manually or to use an electric pump is your preference. For seven years I only ever pumped manually and, having recently used an electric pump, I can see why people use them! They can be plugged into the USB socket in a car, or you can also buy a battery powerbank, such as the Vango (which I was gifted), if you're pumping away from your car.

- » Pumping your board manually is a great warm-up to get your body ready before paddling, especially in the colder months. Remember to bend your knees to get maximum pumping power.
- » Electric pumps can be noisy so be courteous around other people when inflating. Likewise, when deflating my board, I try and warn people it is initially going to be noisy!
- » Finally, getting expert advice can help save you money in the long run.

### **Tips for choosing a paddle**

- » While many iSUP packages come with a paddle included (usually aluminium), upgrading to a fibreglass or carbon paddle will make a big difference to your enjoyment, performance, endurance and efficiency, meaning you can paddle faster and for a longer time without getting so tired.
- » The length of your paddle is determined by a number of factors – your height, the width of your shoulders, the way you stand on the board, the thickness of the board and the type of paddling. A two-, three- or five-piece paddle means you can adjust the height to suit you as you gain experience on different bodies of water and in different conditions.
- » Two simple ways to measure the length of paddle you'll need as a beginner are: do a 'shaka' (an outstretched hand from the top of your head should reach the T-bar handle of the paddle), or simply raise and flop your hand over the handle, with the handle being right on your wrist. This is usually about 20–25 centimetres above your head.
- » Check your paddle floats before you go into deeper waters – not all paddles do!
- » Hold the paddle the right way round. Imagine a pointed ballet shoe (thanks

## 1 Katie putting on her ankle leash 2 Andy putting on his Palm Quick SUP Leash

to the *SUPfm* podcast!) or an ice cream scoop. The blade should slope away from you.

- » Remember that your paddle in the water acts as a third leg of a tripod giving you greater stability.
- » For more information, go to [www.supinflatables.co.uk](http://www.supinflatables.co.uk)

### Leashes

A leash is a key part of your safety equipment. Flatwater recreational paddlers need to wear a coiled leash worn around the ankle, calf or waist. The leash will keep your board close to you which will act as a buoyancy aid and allow you to get back on as swiftly as possible if you fall off.

A coiled leash sits on the top (deck) of the board so it won't snag on debris, branches, moorings or ropes in the water, some of which may not be easily visible.

On moving water, such as an estuary, river or harbour, it is important that the leash is kept higher out of the water. It is recommended that you use a quick-release (QR) belt worn around your waist. The leash is attached to the belt at the back. The QR belt has a buckle and a pull cord or toggle.

On a lake, although the water is not as fast moving, it is nevertheless worth thinking about a QR belt. You may find yourself in a situation where you need to separate yourself from your board. This could be because of a risk of entrapment on an obstruction like a rock, jetty or mooring. A QR belt will allow you to free yourself by pulling the toggle at your waist rather than trying to reach down to your ankle, which could be difficult if the force of the water is pushing you down. Windermere, Ullswater, Derwent Water and Coniston Water all have boats moored where you might be paddling. Look after your QR belt to ensure it remains in good order. Cut the length of the tail to the correct size and do not tuck it in. Personally, I choose to wear a QR belt now.

#### Tips on quick-release belts and leashes

- » Practise using the QR belt on land or a sheltered spot on the water with a trusted friend so you are confident on what to do should you need it in an emergency.
- » Check for wear and tear on the strap of your leash around the Velcro. Sun damage also causes cracking of the plastic around the coil of your leash. Replace your leash



immediately if you see damage. If you haven't been paddling for a while, check the leash is in good working order as it comes out of storage.

- » Don't let the leash drag along the ground as you are carrying your board or get lots of grit on it on the lake shore if you have taken it off. It will damage the Velcro and therefore the safety integrity.
- » It is important to keep up to date with the latest advice on safety issues from organisations such as Paddle UK, podcasts, online and in SUP magazines (see pages 152–153).

### Buoyancy aids

However good a swimmer you are, it is important to wear a buoyancy aid or personal floatation device (PFD). There are different styles of buoyancy aids that recreational paddleboarders usually wear.

- » **Waistcoat PFDs** are fastened with a zip at the front. They may have pockets which are handy for your phone, map or glasses.
- » **Vest PFDs** are pulled over the head like a vest; they also usually have a pocket.

I prefer these two styles as they offer extra warmth, I know they will work immediately

upon impact if I fall in, and I can attach a small whistle. On both these styles, buckle and tighten the straps from the bottom up for the safest fitting.

- » **Waistbelt PFDs** are smaller packs (containing an uninflated PFD) which fasten around your waist. In order to inflate the PFD, you pull a toggle and a small gas cylinder inflates the internal bladder. Once it is inflated you pull it over your head. You can also top it up with an oral inflation tube. Examples include the Palm Glide and the Red Airbelt.

Some experienced paddleboarders like this style because it is compact and affords greater freedom of movement. Others prefer it because it is less bulky for getting back on your board. You can deflate after use and repack, but you will need to buy another gas cylinder to re-arm your waist belt if you have used it in an emergency, so this cost may be a consideration.

Palm have designed Tika, a buoyancy aid better suited for a woman's body. I have been kindly gifted one and it fits beautifully.

Make sure you choose a PFD that is right for your size and that you maintain it well. Personally, I wear a PFD not just as something





that could save my life but also out of respect for the people I am paddling with and those who might have to step in and rescue me in the event of an emergency.

## Clothing

When deciding what to wear, put safety at the heart of your choices and dress for the water temperature, not the air temperature. This is especially important in spring when the sun might be shining but the water is still very cold. Water temperatures under 15 °C are considered cold, and cold water shock (see pages xxvii–xxviii) is a significant risk. Remember some lakes will remain much colder even in the summer than others, so plan ahead. Anything with pockets is good for glasses, back-up communication, safety kit or snacks.

### Basic kit

In summer you'll need the following outerwear:

- » **Swimwear.**
- » Quick-drying or neoprene **leggings or shorts.**
- » Rash vest or neoprene **top.**
- » You could wear a **thin wetsuit** if it's a bit cooler.
- » A long-sleeved rash vest or swimsuit will protect you from the sun as will a cap or broad-brimmed **hat.**
- » Wear **polarised sunglasses** with a safety strap to keep them afloat should they fall into the water.
- » Even in the summer, I recommend a good quality **waterproof jacket** with a hood, which is useful if it begins to rain or it can add warmth should you fall in. Being cold will significantly reduce your ability to paddle and your enjoyment of paddleboarding, and wind chill can cause hypothermia.

In autumn, winter and spring:

- » Add **warm layers, a beanie and gloves.**
  - » Look for kit that has longer arms and back with plenty of stretch so you can paddle comfortably.
  - » Carry **warm layers** in a dry bag on your board and, if you've travelled to the lake by car, have a changing robe or dry clothes stashed there to warm you up on your return.
  - » Once you stop paddling you can feel quite chilly. Your buoyancy aid adds an extra layer of warmth and I continue to wear mine on colder days while packing my board and kit away.
  - » Beanies with a thermal or waterproof membrane and waterproof socks can be a game changer.
- » **Gloves:** neoprene or waterproof gloves can be useful in colder months. An alternative which allows you to still feel the paddle but keep your fingers warm are the Palm Talon gloves.
  - » **Footwear:** paddling barefoot gives you greater connection to the board. I nevertheless recommend shoes for carrying to the lake, launching and exiting the water, or where you might have to land unexpectedly if the wind or weather changes. The beaches on the lakes are not like the sandy beaches of the coast. Aqua trainers, neoprene boots or waterproof sandals are a good start. If you are wearing a drysuit or drysuit trousers with inbuilt socks, you will need to buy shoes or boots that are bigger than your normal size to fit over the extra layers. A pair of thin neoprene socks is useful as an extra layer too.
  - » **Wetsuits:** choose a wetsuit that gives you lots of stretch in the arms to paddle comfortably. In summer, it could be enough to wear a thinner wetsuit such as a 3/2, meaning the body is 3 millimetres thick and the arms and legs are 2 millimetres thick.

This gives you warmth on your body and flexibility of movement in your arms and legs. In winter, go for a thicker 5/4 wetsuit. You can also wear a thin thermal layer underneath if you find you are still cold. If you prefer, you could wear a long John or long Jane wetsuit (which is a full-length wetsuit with no arms) or a shortie (which has short arms and legs).

### Caring for your wetsuit

To help your wetsuit last as long as possible, turn it inside out after each use and rinse with fresh water. Fold over a strong hanger and hang to dry out of direct sunlight.

A **C-Monsta** recycled plastic hanger is perfect for this.

- » **Drysuits:** if you plan to paddle regularly in the Lakes in the colder months, consider a full drysuit or drysuit trousers and a waterproof jacket. With special seals at the neck and wrists, a drysuit will keep you dry if you fall in. The trousers and waterproof jacket won't keep you totally dry in this instance; however, I much prefer them to wetsuits. You will need layers underneath to keep you warm as they are essentially a shell. Do consider the impact of paddling so that you don't overheat in a drysuit, as they are not very breathable. Some have a front opening zip if you need to cool down. Think about a drop-seat zip for going to the loo. Some have built-in socks which you need to take care not to damage so use a changing mat on the shoreline. Dam X Watersports and Reed Chillcheater supply made-to-measure drysuits if off-the-rack ones don't suit your body shape.
- » **Changing robe:** great for changing and warming up after a paddle.

Paddleboarding kit for plus-size women is still more limited but there is a campaign called **#PaddleKitHerWay**, founded by Sarah Blues, which is working with brands to extend the range of sizes. Prolimit seem to be leading the way.

Anna Stishova recommends a hijab from Jog On, a UK brand for modest sportswear. The fabric sits well, dries quickly and keeps you cool in the heat and cosy on cold days.

Amira Patel, founder of the Wanderlust Women – a Muslim women's hiking and adventure group – with whom I paddled for my first book, wears a swimsuit, a wetsuit in winter and a thin kaftan or dress, that is lightweight and quick drying. She wears a jilbab, a long piece of clothing that also covers her head. As an outdoors leader, Amira has created a breathable, waterproof and windproof niqab with Trekmates. Amira also worked with Finisterre to develop a modest seasuit for watersports including SUP.

Neoprene and latex don't suit everyone. If you are allergic, it can be very distressing, and symptoms range from hives, sneezing, asthma or even anaphylactic shock. Reed Chillcheater have a range of products that are latex free.

The manufacturing process to make neoprene has raised serious environmental and health concerns and some brands are creating wetsuits using alternative materials such as Yulex, which is made out of a natural, plant-based rubber.

Brands I personally like include: Red, Vivobarefoot, Alpkite, Ebb and Flow, Finisterre, Palm, RNLI, FINDRA, 360DRY, Sealskinz, Rooted Ocean and Waterhaul. Also, Peak UK, Yak Adventure Equipment, Lomo, Mustang Survival, Rooster and Prolimit come highly recommend from paddling friends.



## 1 Waterproof cases for your phone 2 Preparing to launch

### What to take on your board

What you take on your board will depend on how long and how far you are going out for, the weather, season and water temperature. If your board has suitable loops, a **dry bag** or **deck bag** can be attached safely with a karabiner.

- » A **fully charged phone** in a waterproof case. Keep it on you rather than on your board.
- » Floating box for your **keys** and **valuables**.
- » **Water, snacks** and **hot drinks** – dehydration impairs your judgement and ability to paddle.
- » **Extra clothing** – a hat, gloves, extra layer for warmth, waterproof jacket in case of rain, change of clothes.
- » **Sunscreen** (reef friendly), **lip balm** and **sunglasses** with floating straps.
- » **Midge repellent** such as Smidge.
- » **Pea-less whistle**. Keep it on you rather than on your board.
- » **First aid kit** – to deal with blisters, cuts, minor scrapes and stings.
- » Any **medication** that you may need. Make sure whomever you are paddling with knows what you are carrying and how and when to administer it if you might need it.
- » **Repair kit** – duct tape, cable ties, insulation tape and cord.

- » **Spare paddle**, a **mini pump** (such as the NRS K-Pump), **spare fin** and **fin bolt**, **spare leash**, **valve tightener**.
- » **Head torch** and small **clip-on lights**.
- » **Folding knife** in case of entanglement.
- » **Sling rope** and **karabiner**.
- » **Tow rope** or **throw bag and line**.
- » **Survival blanket** or **emergency shelter**.
- » **Hand sanitiser** to use before eating.
- » If you're in a group it can be handy to take **walkie talkies** for using out on the water.
- » **Litter picker** and **bag** to do a 2 Minute Litter Pick.
- » If you are paddling the perimeter of one of the larger lakes such as Windermere or Ullswater, consider a **laminated map**. You can annotate this with a chinagraph pencil, noting launching, landing, emergency stops, places you can get food and drink, and interesting features to look out for. Note where the land is private and any boat routes. Maps can be downloaded from Ordnance Survey: [explore.osmaps.com](http://explore.osmaps.com)
- » Make sure your **emergency contact details** are handy or you share them with whomever you are paddling with before you set off.



## Weather and wind

While it is beautiful to watch a cloud inversion or mist over Ullswater first thing in the morning, do not paddle in fog or thunderstorms. If there is lightning, leave the water and move away from the shoreline as soon as possible.

When planning your paddle, checking the wind forecast is very important. As paddleboarders we are very susceptible to the wind and standing on our boards we are essentially like sails. The wind impacts paddleboarders these ways:

- » It can push you and your board somewhere you may not want to go, for example to the other side of a lake or further along the shoreline.
- » It creates waves that make the lake choppy and harder to paddle on.
- » It slows you down if you are paddling into a headwind, pushes you along if it is a tailwind behind you and challenges your ability to stand and paddle in a straight line if it is side-on or a crosswind.

When planning a paddle, you need to look at a weather forecast in conjunction with a map of where you want to paddle. Take note of:

- » The **wind speed**, i.e. the average speed over a given period of time.
- » The **wind direction**.
- » The speed of **wind gusts**, which are a rapid increase in wind strength, when the wind will peak and lull again.
- » **How the wind direction impacts each lake** or a section of the larger lakes (for example, will your launch spot be exposed or more sheltered, and which way along the lake might you be pushed?).
- » **How far the wind travels**. The longer the distance the wind blows across the water, the bigger the waves which will form. This is called *fetch*. For example, a northerly or southerly wind on Derwent Water, Coniston Water or Windermere will create larger waves.



Have a look at the forecast a few days before you plan to go out; it will get more accurate the closer you get to the day. Don't just look at the forecast for when you are setting out; look what is happening earlier and later in the day, especially if you plan to be out on the water for a while. It might be very calm first thing in the morning when you set off, but the wind could pick up later in the day when you may be more tired.

By the same token, I once had a lovely paddle in the morning at Waterhead on Windermere, left the lake before a summer rain shower, waited in the National Trust cafe at Fell Foot until the rain stopped and the wind died down, and was lucky enough to then enjoy a sunset paddle along the River Leven to the Swan Hotel at Newby Bridge. It was only because of the forecast that I knew to wait it out and not go home.

Weather and wind forecasts can be found on sites like the **Met Office** ([www.metoffice.gov.uk](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk)), **BBC Weather** ([www.bbc.co.uk/weather](http://www.bbc.co.uk/weather)) and **Weatherline** ([www.lakedistrictweatherline.co.uk](http://www.lakedistrictweatherline.co.uk)) or apps like **Windy**, **Windguru**, **Windfinder**, **Big Salty**, **XCWeather** and **WillyWeather**.

### Wind direction

A wind blowing from the south is called a southerly; a wind blowing from the east is an easterly. On a forecast you will see an arrow pointing in the direction the wind is blowing. The prevailing wind in the UK is west to south-westerly, which means that the Lake District is in one of the most exposed parts of the country. You may recall when Storm Arwen hit the Lake District in 2021 that a huge number of trees were uprooted. One of the reasons, other than the strength of the wind, was that the wind came from the north. The trees had grown to be anchored in a southwesterly but did not have the roots to withstand the northerly wind.

The direction of the wind is important so

we know which way it might push us on the lake from different launch points. This can help us decide the route we want to take or the type of trip and use it to our advantage. For example, we might want to travel to an island on Coniston Water or along the shoreline and back to our start point which is called an A-to-A paddle. Or we might want to plan an A-to-B paddle where we use the wind behind our backs to help us paddle one way only. We can then return by car (someone picking us up or leaving a car at the end spot), taxi, bus or boat, for example paddle from Glenridding to Pooley Bridge on Ullswater and return on the steamer.

On an A-to-A paddle, it is good idea to plan your paddle into a breeze on the outward journey and have it behind you on the way back, when you might be more tired.

### Offshore winds

We might associate offshore winds (winds blowing from the land to the water) with the coast. However, they also occur on lakes and can blow you quickly into the middle of a lake once you have left the shelter of a bay or the lee of a mountain.

### The impact of the fells

The size of each lake along with the height and position of the surrounding fells or woods along the shoreline will make a difference to the wind, either funnelling it down the lake, slowing it down or offering shelter if you are in the lee of a mountain. Cat Bells, for example, provides a wind shadow leading to calmer waters along the western shoreline of Derwent Water.

### Arriving for your paddle

Before you launch think about the different options you have if the wind picks up and you can't return to the same spot. Plan exit points on your journey. If it gets too much, instead of paddling into the wind and getting nowhere, what about landing elsewhere on the shoreline and returning to your launch point a different way?

Perhaps taking one of the launches on Derwent Water, for example? Always pack some money just in case.

Remember that whatever the forecast says, what is happening at the lake is what matters. Before you get your kit ready, look at the conditions on the water to see if they are right for you. If you have spent time pumping your board, you might be tempted to go out in wind conditions which are beyond your ability.

### What is the right wind speed for you?

The wind strength you SUP in depends on many factors including your experience, skills, personal confidence, strength, board shape, the location, whom you are with and your knowledge of the area. For example, an inflatable board will usually sit higher in the water and therefore be more impacted by the wind than a hardboard. Take all these factors into account when deciding if and when to SUP.

As a recommendation, for a beginner you might want to look at winds of 0–3 miles per hour; when you have more experience look at 6–8 miles per hour. (Chop or waves will start to develop over about 5 miles per hour.) As a guideline, consider 10 miles per hour as a maximum wind speed for paddleboarding.

Only paddle in wind conditions that are within your ability and don't go on the water if the wind is beyond your capability. If the lake you have chosen for the day is too windy, go somewhere else and return on a calmer day. Remember you can get all four seasons in one day in the Lake District and always have a Plan B, either a different lake or something fun on land – I've included some suggestions for Plan B activities for each lake.

If you see other paddleboarders out on the water, they might be more experienced than you and testing their skills. Likewise,

they may have no understanding of the wind and shouldn't be out on the water at all, so don't be lulled into a false sense of security. It is important that you make a judgement based on what is right for you and your ability, experience and skills.

Always live by – *if in doubt, don't go out!*

### Tips to think about

- » Paddle along the shoreline or in the bays – this can be more sheltered, keeps you away from boat traffic and is more interesting than the middle of the lake, giving you chance to explore bays and rock formations.
- » The wind speed and direction can change when you are out on the water, so be aware, adjust your paddling and if you need to return to the shore, do so.
- » If you are paddling directly into the wind, i.e. a headwind, move forwards on your board so that less of the surface of the board is affected. The nose of the board will be lower in the water, meaning the wind can't get underneath and slow you down.
- » Likewise, if the wind is behind you, i.e. a tail wind, move backwards on your board.
- » When paddling into the wind, get lower. Bend your knees to give yourself more stability and become less of a sail. Shorten your paddle if you can. Use shorter, faster paddle strokes and a wider grip on the shaft of the paddle. Keep moving, don't stop paddling.
- » If the wind picks up and it feels too windy for you to stand, kneel to paddle. Change the position of your hands so that you are holding the shaft vertically with both hands in a stacked position (hands above each other) to get a shorter, faster stroke.
- » If it gets too windy, lie on your board on your front with your paddle underneath you. Now paddle through the water using

your hands on either side – almost like a swimming front crawl. This is called prone paddling.

- » Take time to practise all of these in calm conditions so you know what to do and feel confident in more testing circumstances.

### Why does it rain so much in the Lake District?

It is easy to forget how close to the sea the Lakes are, in particular Bassenthwaite Lake and Wast Water, and the impact this has on the strength of the wind and rainfall. As the prevailing west-to-southwesterly wind moves across the Atlantic, it picks up moisture before reaching the mountains. The air rises and cools, then the moisture condenses and turns to rain. The hamlet of Seathwaite, south of Derwent Water, is reputed to be the wettest inhabited place in England. The driest months are usually April to June, with August experiencing more rain than other areas in England would expect.

### The impact of rain on the lakes

The water level in the lakes can rise and fall significantly. Boulders or branches that were once covered can become more exposed and, likewise, what was once obvious may now be an underwater hazard you can't see, so think carefully about recent rainfall or lack thereof. Beach areas you may have launched from safely before may now be covered restricting your access to launch or exit safely. This was particularly noticeable during my paddles on Derwent Water, just along from Nichol End Marine and Isthmus Wood, during summer 2023.

Be especially careful where rivers flow out of a lake as a gentle summer current can become very strong after heavy rain, potentially taking you down a fast-flowing river you are not experienced or equipped to undertake or paddle against. Rivers flowing in and out of the lakes can rise and fall quickly.

## Safety

### Falling in and getting back on your board

As individuals, we can't predict when we might fall off our boards into the water, but it's good to be prepared in case it happens. To help reduce injury you should aim to fall flat on your back with your paddle arm outstretched. This will mean that if you are in shallow water, you will reduce the risk of injury to your feet, ankles and legs. It also means you are less likely to inhale water. Practise falling in a safe place when the water is warm, and someone is with you, so you gain confidence.

Being able to confidently get back on your board can be a game changer in building confidence. One way is to approach from the side and put the paddle alongside the board. Hold the handle in the middle with one hand and reach to hold the edge of the board with your other hand (use your dominant hand for this so that you will be stronger). Lie flat on the water so your legs are away from the board and not under it. Kick your legs and pull at the same time to get the majority of your body on to the board. When you have the upper part of your body on the board, swing your legs round and you will be lying flat on the board. Give yourself a moment to breathe, check you haven't hurt yourself and then pop to your knees and stand.

An alternative is to approach the board from the back, sink the tail into the water and pull yourself on to the board. Just SUP UK have created a strap called SUP Haul which can help support you to get back on the board if you find it difficult: [www.justsupuk.com](http://www.justsupuk.com)

### Cold water shock and hypothermia

It is important that we dress for the water temperature not the air temperature and are aware of cold water shock in water temperatures of 10–15 °C. I asked Mike Tipton, Professor of Human and Applied Physiology at the University of Portsmouth, about why we need to do this.

As paddleboarders there is a very real possibility that we may unexpectedly find ourselves in cold water if we fall off. The sudden change from the comfortable air temperature to cold water immersion evokes 'cold shock', caused by a sudden cooling of the skin. The respiratory responses of cold shock include an uncontrollable 'gasp' response and hyperventilation. These can prevent, or significantly reduce, your ability to hold your breath and lead to inhaling the small volume of water which is necessary to drown. Your ability to swim is impacted in the first minutes of immersion if you can't control your breathing and then coordinate breathing and swimming. This is why the RNLI recommend floating on your back for 60–90 seconds to regain your ability to breathe.

Cold water shock can also affect the heart, causing an increase in heart rate, blood pressure and the work required of the heart. This can lead to cardiovascular problems, i.e. heart attacks, in susceptible individuals on initial immersion.

Within 10–20 minutes of immersion in very cold water, the reduction in your grip strength, manual dexterity and swimming ability can result in you not being able to get back on your board or keep your airway clear of water. It's important to note that if you've fallen in, hypothermia is a risk even when you've got out of the water, unless you warm up quickly and efficiently.

#### **How to prevent cold water shock and hypothermia**

- » Watch the video explaining the RNLI Float to Live campaign: [www.rnli.org/safety/float](http://www.rnli.org/safety/float)
- » Dress for the water temperature.
- » Wear a buoyancy aid.

- » Have spare clothing, warm drinks and food on board.
- » If you fall in, get out of the water and change into warm dry clothing as soon as possible.
- » Keep an eye on anyone who may be suffering from cold water shock or hypothermia and seek medical help.

#### **Emergencies**

Always carry a charged mobile phone in a waterproof pouch and keep it easily accessible.

If you need help, call **999** or **112** and ask for the **Fire and Rescue Service** (inland waters) or **Coastguard** (sea and coastal areas). If you find someone in trouble, don't put yourself at risk, call for help.

Conserve mobile battery life by having all the details to hand before phoning. Tell them the nature of the emergency, for example medical or someone in difficulty in the water. They will also need to know where you are (give a grid reference if possible), how many people are in your party, who is injured and the nature of the emergency or injury, the name, gender and age of the casualty, and your mobile phone number. It might be that the local Mountain Rescue will also be involved in a rescue on the lake.

You can also contact the emergency services by SMS text – useful if you have a low battery or intermittent signal, but you do need to register your phone first. To register, simply text 'register' to 999 and then follow the instructions in the reply. Do it now – it could save yours or someone else's life, [www.emergencysms.net](http://www.emergencysms.net)



- 1 Ordnance Survey maps 2 Please park considerately! © Jo Moseley  
3 Summer paddling in the rain, Ullswater © Jo Moseley

- » To let the emergency services know where you are, you can give them a grid reference using a map or the **OS Locate** app.
- » You can make your board more visible by sticking reflective tape to your board or paddle. Look for something that is SOLAS (International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea) approved.
- » Carry a whistle: the internationally recognised distress signal is six blasts of a whistle with a minute between each set. If someone whistles back with three blasts, it means that they have heard you and are coming to your assistance. Keep blowing the whistle until they reach you as they may not be able to see you initially. Use a torch to signal in the same way as you would using a whistle.
- » For more information: [www.adventuresmart.uk/know-how-and-when-to-get-help](http://www.adventuresmart.uk/know-how-and-when-to-get-help)
- » To support the work of the Mountain Rescue, go to [www.mountain.rescue.org.uk](http://www.mountain.rescue.org.uk)

**#BeAdventureSmart:** ask yourself these three questions before you set off:

- 1 Am I confident I have the **knowledge** and **skills** for the day?
- 2 Do I know what the **weather** will be like?
- 3 Do I have the right **gear**?

### Safety tips summary

- » Invest in lessons with a qualified instructor.
- » Dress for the water temperature, not the air temperature.
- » Always wear a buoyancy aid and a leash.
- » Keep your fully charged mobile phone on you, in a waterproof case, not on your board.
- » Plan your paddle in advance. Learn about the location, potential hazards, and entry and exit points.
- » Understand and check wind forecasts.
- » Don't go out in conditions beyond your capability.
- » Have a 'float plan': tell people where you are going, when you expect to be back, what to do if you are delayed and when you are safely off the water.
- » Go with a responsible friend or group so you can help each other if a problem arises.
- » Practise how to get back on your board.
- » Be aware of pleasure and commercial boats on the bigger lakes and keep out of their way.
- » Being able to swim confidently will help if you fall in.
- » Know what to do in an emergency.
- » Keep learning with online or in-person courses.
- » If in doubt, go with a local guide.



1



2



3





# SOUTHERN LAKES

**Opposite** Autumn sunshine, Penny Rock Wood, Grasmere **Overleaf** Paddling round Peel Island, Coniston Water











# CONISTON WATER

From the Old Norse *Konigs-Tun* (King's Settlement),  
referring to a Viking called Thorstein.

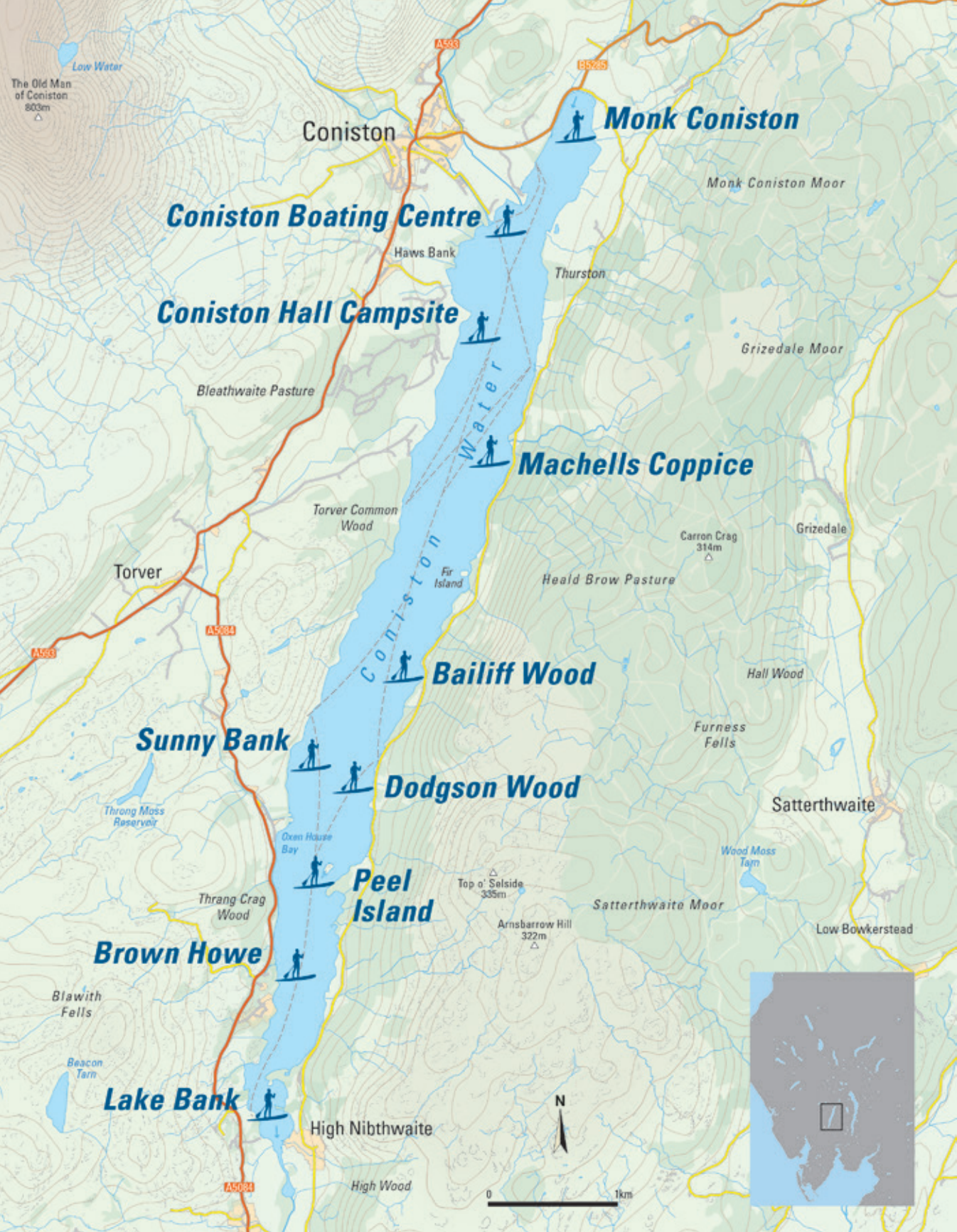
**Opposite** Launching from Monk Coniston, Old Man of Coniston behind  
**Overleaf** A tranquil day on the south-eastern shore of Coniston Water











The Old Man of Coniston  
803m

Coniston

**Monk Coniston**

**Coniston Boating Centre**

**Coniston Hall Campsite**

**Machells Coppice**

**Bailiff Wood**

**Sunny Bank**

**Dodgson Wood**

**Peel Island**

**Brown Howe**

**Lake Bank**

High Nibthwaite

Monk Coniston Moor

Grizedale Moor

Heald Brow Pasture

Hall Wood

Furness Fells

Satterthwaite

Satterthwaite Moor

Low Bowkerstead

Blawith Fells

Beacon Tarn

Top o' Salside  
335m

Arnsbarrow Hill  
322m

Wood Moss Tarn



0 1km





## Introduction

### **SWALLOWS AND AMAZONS, THE OLD MAN OF CONISTON, A GORGEOUS STEAM YACHT AND MAKING CHANGE POSSIBLE**

'Jump, Riley! Jump!' come the cries from the water as the young boys encourage their friend to join them in the lake. With cheers of delight there's a splash as Riley leaps from the rock. One of the girls, aged maybe eight or nine, leans forward, then back, then forward and then ... off she flies! Her face is beaming as she surfaces, checking her glasses are safely in place. The teacher congratulates them all as they laugh and scamper across the rock. It's close to the end of the school term and the children, clad in wetsuits and buoyancy aids, are living their best *Swallows and Amazons* life here in the Lake District.

I am on Coniston Water, one of the Southern Lakes. It is the third longest of the lakes and fifth largest by surface area. A road runs around much of the perimeter of this long, slender lake making the shoreline accessible in many areas with just a short walk from the road. There are campsites along the shoreline, the beautiful steam yacht *Gondola*, the busy Coniston Boating Centre where you can hire paddleboards, literary links and a village nearby to explore. As Alfred Wainwright expressed it, the Old Man of Coniston 'raises his proud and venerable head to the sky', drawing your eye to the head of the lake. Staying at the welcoming hostel at Holly How, I have spent days here in the sunshine as well as being drenched in the rain and wind. I have loved it every time. There's an elegance to the lake, a sense of joy and adventure, a landscape that is impressive but not overwhelming.

And of course, there is Peel Island here by the south-eastern shoreline, which readers of Arthur Ransome's *Swallows and Amazons* will know as Wild Cat Island. According to a sign by

The Arthur Ransome Society at the entrance to Bank Ground Farm, the Old Man of Coniston is Kanchenjunga and the farm itself is Holly Howe. Further south, the water lilled Allan Tarn is Octopus Lagoon. Captain Flint's houseboat is partially based on *Gondola's* Venetian design.

With its secret harbour, Peel Island really does have a magical quality to it. There are moss-covered dips and dells to explore and rock faces to perch, picnic and relax upon with beautiful views across the lake from all points.

Tempting though it may be, fires and overnight camping are not allowed, but why not pack a book and picnic from Bakehouse Born and Bread in nearby Greenodd and create your own Peel Island adventure? Enjoy a well-earned rest after a long paddle around the lake or a short trip from Brown Howe on the western shore or from Low Peel Near or High Peel Near on the eastern.

One morning in early August after days of rain, with blue skies and cotton wool clouds above, I launch from the south-west of the lake for a day of exploration along the 20-kilometre shoreline. This part of the lake south of Brown Howe with sailing boats gently swaying on their moorings and the wooded shore of Oak Isle, Anna's Nab and Bass Crag is one of my favourites. I am careful to keep away from the wildfowl areas on the eastern shore and the vulnerable reed beds on the western. It's quieter here, with sheep grazing in the fields. The sight of the elegant *Gondola* at Lake Bank Jetty only adds to the beauty rather than disturbing the peace.

Originally launched in 1859 from Coniston Hall by the Furness Railway, she was described in the *Illustrated London News* in 1860 as 'a perfected combination of the Venetian gondola and the English steam yacht' and ran for 80 years taking wealthy Victorians around the lake.

- 1 Ready to paddle, Lake Bank Jetty 2 Kate looking out to Peel Island from Brown Howe © Jo Moseley  
3 Monk Coniston, Old Man of Coniston behind 4 Time for tea! © Jo Moseley 5 Taking a break on Peel Island © Jo Moseley  
6 Sailing boats swaying gently in the sunshine, near Lake Bank Jetty © Jo Moseley

In 1936 the boat was retired from service and in 1946 turned into a houseboat. During a storm in 1963 she ran aground and was left to deteriorate. However, in 1979 with the support of the National Trust she was brought back to life – her plush interior design includes 3,200 buttons! She now flies under four flags – the Pilot Jack, the National Trust and National Historic Ships flags and the National Historic Ships ‘Red Duster’ flag at the stern – which flutter in the breeze as she ‘toot toots’ along the lake, leaving barely a wake behind her.

Following the shoreline you pass Brown Howe, a popular spot for families, dippers and paddlers where a few weeks later I launch with Kate Appleby from Kendal. Born in the Lake District, Kate is also a climber, hiker, wild swimmer and camper. Diagnosed with lupus, an autoimmune disease that means she lives with chronic pain, tiredness and limited mobility, along with Raynaud’s syndrome and Hashimoto’s thyroiditis, she is a passionate advocate for the power of the outdoors. ‘Inside, I’m Kate, with lupus; outside, I’m Kate, the adventurer,’ she says. It’s a slightly overcast morning but nestled into the rock on Peel Island, with tea and snacks, the warmth of our conversation and Kate’s passion to help others overcome barriers to an outdoor life brightens the day.

In March 2023 she founded Adaptive Adventurers, a social enterprise designed to enable all adventurers to access the outdoors, regardless of their ability, disability or health status. Kate tells me about the Open Oceans grant for a funded place on a Scottish sailing adventure with Jim Dobie of Wavysail. The recipient is Rohan, a Londoner who gave up a promising career to become a full-time carer over 20 years ago, thereby curtailing his opportunities for adventure. With sailing kit generously donated by Berghaus, Rohan had an incredible experience thanks to Kate and Jim’s dedication.

I follow the wooded shoreline north which in the past was a hive of activity, burning charcoal and smelting iron to produce materials for the Industrial Revolution. Today it is a peaceful area as I make my way to the Sunny Bank Jetty (storm damaged and not in use at the time of writing) and Torver Jetty. As well as the steam yacht *Gondola*, the Coniston Launch boats carry holidaymakers around the lake so, while they are smaller than the cruise boats on Windermere and Ullswater, do keep an eye out.

The lake also has other important boating associations as Donald Campbell set the World Water Speed Record of 260.35 miles per hour in his boat *Bluebird* here in May 1959. Sadly, he was killed seven years later, aged 45, on 4 January 1967 when trying to beat the 300-miles-per-hour barrier. His body was retrieved from the lake in 2001. You can visit a memorial and find out more in the Bluebird Wing of the Ruskin Museum in Coniston village.

The shoreline gets busier as I pass the edge of the three campsites, a converted horsebox selling coffee and cake, a bright yellow ice cream van and then Coniston Sailing Club. I chat to paddleboarders and by chance meet Natalie, a friend from Facebook. I fondly remember waiting here out on the water for Jen, with whom I’d spent the weekend at SUPFEST on the River Eden, as she grabbed her board from the tent. Our very own grown-up, SUP version of calling to see if your friend wants to come and play out!

The bay at the Coniston Boating Centre is as busy as ever – there are people enjoying the Bluebird Cafe, the beach and jetties, or hiring a boat, canoe or bike. I keep my distance from the boats and make my way to the quieter Waterhead and Monk Coniston bay. This is a lovely spot, perfect for a short paddle with the Old Man of Coniston (or Coniston Old Man) as your backdrop and a waterside bench for your family to relax. I once spent a happy morning watching tiny fish darting under my board here.





As I loop south again, I stop for a delicious lunch at Bank Ground Farm, the original *Swallows and Amazons* cafe, who partner with Lake District Paddleboarding to offer introductory lessons. Delicious soup and delightful gardens are really only topped by the view across to the Coniston (or Furness) Fells and the Old Man of Coniston, which looks like a Swiss mountainside with the village below. The area was mined extensively for slate and copper, remnants of which you'll see on a hike to the summit. Ore from the mines was taken by boat along the lake and river to Greenodd and from there on canal barges to Ulverston.

After spotting a heron on a tree trunk and a nearby squirrel (grey not red), I chat to students from the UK Youth Parliament paddleboarding from the Low Bank Ground Activity Centre.

The next view from the water is Brantwood, the home of Victorian social reformer, writer, artist and educational philanthropist John Ruskin. Now a museum, arts centre and cafe with beautiful gardens, make sure you add it to your Plan B rainy days and places to visit list. Coincidentally, Eliza Lynn Linton, who is mentioned elsewhere in this book and wrote *The Lake Country*, an early guide to the Lake District, lived at Brantwood a few years before Ruskin bought the property.

Picnicking families gather on the small

beaches as I head south along the tree-lined shoreline of Machells Coppice towards Fir Island. The island is in fact joined to the shore but today the crossing is covered by water. Much of the land here belongs to the National Trust and was bequeathed by Beatrix Potter.

A group of swimmers play in the water by Low Peel Near and a couple are launching for a paddle. Nearby a gulp of cormorants stretch their wings to dry them in the sunshine. A family in what looks more like a tin bath than a boat wave hello as we pass each other – their laughter and chatter fill the air.

I cherish days on the water like this – a long paddle, with a real sense of accomplishment, knowing I'm safely near the shoreline but also returning to that experience I had on Derwent Water back in 2016 of feeling like a 'warrior, not a worrier'.

Back at the Lake Bank Jetty, two small children and their mum hold hands as they teeter on the edge of the wooden planks.

'Let's jump, Mum! Let's jump!', they cry and – just like Riley – they leap into the water, their dad cheering enthusiastically.

On my way home, I stop at Parkamoor Jetty as the sun sets across the calm waters with Peel Island in view to make notes in my journal. It has been a glorious day on Coniston Water. I hope you will find your own magical adventure here too.



2 Pumping up! 3 Sunset across the water towards Peel Island from the eastern shore © Jo Moseley

## Launch spots

### Monk Coniston

CARRY TIME **2 minutes** LAUNCH LOCATION AND PARKING (LDNPA MONK CONISTON)  
SD 316 978/54.3718, -3.0543

Lovely spot with a gorgeous view of the Old Man of Coniston and right down the lake – there is even a bench for post-paddle relaxation. LDNPA car park (parking charge) and toilets available.

### Machells Coppice

CARRY TIME **2 minutes** LAUNCH LOCATION AND PARKING (FORESTRY ENGLAND MACHELL COPPICE)  
SD 309 952/54.3477, -3.0633

Cross the road from the Forestry England car park (parking charge) to reach the small beach.

### Bailiff Wood

CARRY TIME **2 minutes** LAUNCH LOCATION AND PARKING (NATIONAL TRUST)  
SD 303 935/54.3325, -3.0732

Cross the road from the small, free National Trust car park to reach the small beach.

### Dodgson Wood and Peel Island

CARRY TIME **2 minutes** LAUNCH LOCATION AND PARKING (DODGSON WOOD NATIONAL TRUST)  
SD 299 927/54.3254, -3.0784

The best option to launch for a paddle to this magical island is from the shoreline adjacent to Dodgson Wood car park (free).





### Lake Bank

CARRY TIME **5 minutes** LAUNCH LOCATION **SD 289 900/54.3006, -3.0940**  
A5084 LAY-BY PARKING **SD 287 900/54.3012, -3.0969**

**A pleasant section of shoreline near the Lake Bank Jetty. From the lay-by walk along a permitted path through the wood and private land to the shore (there is a kissing gate to negotiate).**

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### Brown Howe

CARRY TIME **3 minutes** LAUNCH LOCATION **SD 291 911/54.3110, -3.0910**  
PARKING (LDNPA BROWN HOWE) **SD 290 910/54.3102, -3.0922**

**Picnic tables, a grassy area and good access to the shoreline; this launch spot is suitable for wheelchair users and has accessible facilities. This is the best car park on the western shore for a paddle over to Peel Island and a perfect spot for non-paddleboarding friends and family to swim, relax and picnic. Park in the LDNPA car park (parking charge).**

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### Sunny Bank

CARRY TIME **10 minutes** LAUNCH LOCATION **SD 292 928/54.3262, -3.0896**  
A5084 LAY-BY PARKING **SD 288 927/54.3251, -3.0960**

**Launch from the beach area along from the jetty at Sunny Bank, after a lovely walk across Torver Back Common. Please keep the farm track clear.**

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### Coniston Hall Campsite

CARRY TIME **10 minutes (day parking); 3 minutes (for campers)** LAUNCH LOCATION **SD 304 958/54.3537, -3.0712** DAY PARKING **SD 304 963/54.3574, -3.0724**

**Parking and launch is available for a fee on a daily basis.**

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### Coniston Boating Centre

LAUNCH LOCATION **SD 308 970/54.3644, -3.0655**

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**BOATING CENTRE CAR PARK: PARKING LOCATION SD 307 970/54.3645, -3.0673**

CARRY TIME **3 minutes**

**RUSKIN AVENUE LDNPA CAR PARK: PARKING LOCATION SD 303 975/54.3686, -3.0735**

CARRY TIME **20 minutes**

**JOHN RUSKIN SCHOOL CAR PARK: PARKING LOCATION SD 302 974/54.3674, -3.0745**

CARRY TIME **11 minutes**

**CONISTON SPORTS AND SOCIAL CENTRE PARKING: PARKING LOCATION SD 305 977/54.3705, -3.0705** CARRY TIME **25 minutes**

**Launch from the shoreline at Coniston Boating Centre – accessible toilets in the car park. Parking is available either on site or in the village (all parking charge).**

## Technical information

LOCATION **Southern Lakes**

OS MAP **OL6, The English Lakes: South-western area; OL7, The English Lakes: South-eastern area**

LENGTH **8.3km**

WIDTH **800m**

SHORELINE LENGTH **19.5km**

SURFACE AREA **4.9km<sup>2</sup>**

AVERAGE DEPTH **24m**

MAXIMUM DEPTH **56m**

### Getting there

Coniston Water is accessed by the A593 from the Northern Lakes or the A593 or the A5084 from the south.

Stagecoach 505 runs from Kendal to Coniston village via Windermere, Ambleside and Hawkshead. Blueworks X12 runs from Ulverston to Coniston village via Greenodd and Torver (weekdays only).

Subject to space, the Coniston Launch boats and the National Trust steam yacht *Gondola* will carry paddleboarders with a deflated board in a bag should you wish to paddle one length of the lake and return by boat or vice versa: [www.conistonlaunch.co.uk](http://www.conistonlaunch.co.uk), [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)

Information about car parks can be found in the launch spot descriptions. During the height of summer in 2023, the LDNPA opened a large field as a pop-up temporary car park on the south-eastern shoreline of Coniston Water. It is worth keeping an eye out for this during the summer.

### Webcams

- » Coniston Sailing Club:  
[www.conistonsailingclub.co.uk/page/webcam](http://www.conistonsailingclub.co.uk/page/webcam)
- » Coniston Boating Centre:  
[www.conistonboatingcentre.co.uk/aboutus/live-webcam](http://www.conistonboatingcentre.co.uk/aboutus/live-webcam)

### Permits

No permits required.

### Instruction, guided tours and equipment

- » **Lake District Paddleboarding** work in collaboration with Bank Ground Farm for introduction to SUP lessons, guided tours of the lake and private sessions: [www.lakedistrictpaddleboarding.co.uk](http://www.lakedistrictpaddleboarding.co.uk)
- » **Coniston Boating Centre** is a not-for-profit attraction run by the Lake District National Park Authority. Book online to hire paddleboards or launch your own SUP for a small fee: [www.conistonboatingcentre.co.uk](http://www.conistonboatingcentre.co.uk)
- » **SUP Watersports** is a mobile watersports centre that offer lessons and guided tours: [www.supwatersportslakedistrict.co.uk](http://www.supwatersportslakedistrict.co.uk)
- » **Outdoor Vibe** in Coniston sells paddleboards, wetsuits, repair kits, buoyancy aids and camping gear.
- » **Coniston Gifts and Sports** in Coniston sells paddleboards, gloves and boots.

### Boats

There will be sailing boats, especially by the Coniston Sailing Club at the northern end of the lake and at the very south at Lake Bank. Coniston Boating Centre hire electric motorboats – they are on a one-hour maximum hire which usually keeps them to the northern end of the lake. You might also see the powerboat from 360 Watersports, which is used for kneeboarding and wakeboarding. As always, be especially mindful of commercial boats arriving and departing from jetties and keep out of their direction of travel.

## Eating and drinking

- » At the northern end of the lake, you'll find the **Swallows and Amazons Cafe** at Bank Ground Farm. Enjoy breakfast, lunch or tea and cakes at this low-impact working farm. Bed and breakfast, self-catering cottages and camping also available. [www.bankground.com](http://www.bankground.com)
- » **The Terrace** at Brantwood on the eastern shore is a delightful cafe with toasties, salads, brunch and cakes. You can take a look at the *Jumping Jenny*, Ruskin's boat; there are also self-catering studio apartments and a cottage on site. [www.brantwood.org.uk](http://www.brantwood.org.uk)
- » In Coniston village, **The Crown Inn** has a full menu of grills, burgers, sharing boards, sandwiches and fish and chips; rooms are also available. [www.crowninnconiston.co.uk](http://www.crowninnconiston.co.uk)
- » **The Green Housekeeper** is a lovely cafe and takeaway in Coniston. Committed to

being environmentally friendly and serving fair trade and locally supplied food – breakfasts, quiche, jacket potatoes, cakes and ice cream all available.

[www.greenhousekeepercafe.co.uk](http://www.greenhousekeepercafe.co.uk)

- » **The Bluebird Cafe** has shakes, cakes, butties and smoothies right on the shoreline at the Coniston Boating Centre. [www.thebluebirdcafe.co.uk](http://www.thebluebirdcafe.co.uk)
- » **Undercrag** is a delicious vegetarian and vegan cafe in Torver, with an art studio and shop. Soups, salads and cakes are available – the staff paddle too so enjoy some watery chats. [www.undercragstudio.co.uk](http://www.undercragstudio.co.uk)
- » If you're passing through Greenodd on your way to Coniston stop at **Bakehouse Born and Bread** to pick up bread, cakes, pies and pastries for your picnic, or nip for lunch on your way back. [www.bakehousebornandbread.co.uk](http://www.bakehousebornandbread.co.uk)



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## 3 Peel Island adventures

## Where to stay

- » **Bank Ground Farm** does bed and breakfast; there are also some self-catering cottages and a lakeside campsite on a private shoreline. [www.bankground.com](http://www.bankground.com)
- » **Water Yeat Campsite** is a simple pop-up camping field by the River Crake near Allan Tarn (search on Facebook).
- » **Coniston Camping Hoathwaite** (formerly run by the National Trust) is a quiet campsite with very friendly owners for families, couples and individuals (no group bookings); (search on Facebook).
- » **Coniston Park Coppice Club Campsite:** Caravan and Motorhome Club site with touring and tent pitches plus glamping pods set in National Trust woodland with good access to the shoreline. [www.caravanclub.co.uk](http://www.caravanclub.co.uk)
- » **Coniston Hall Campsite** is an open field campsite for tents and motorhomes. Be aware it can be very busy and noisy with groups so not ideal for a quiet evening's camping. No bookings taken; cash only; parking and launch is available on a daily basis. [conistonhallcampsite.co.uk](http://conistonhallcampsite.co.uk)
- » **Pier Cottage** is a family run caravan park with its own jetty and direct access to the lake. [www.piercottageconiston.co.uk](http://www.piercottageconiston.co.uk)
- » **YHA Coniston Holly How:** rooms and camping a short walk from the village. [www.yha.org.uk/hostel/yha-coniston-holly-how](http://www.yha.org.uk/hostel/yha-coniston-holly-how)
- » Overnight parking for motorhomes at **Coniston Sports and Social Centre** in the village. [www.coniston-sports.co.uk](http://www.coniston-sports.co.uk)

## Things to do

- » Enjoy one of the fantastic walks in the Coniston area: **Tarn Hows**, **the Old Man of Coniston**, **Hawkshead**, **the Coppermines Valley**, **Torver Common Wood** or **Cathedral Cave**.
- » Take a trip on the **steam yacht Gondola**.
- » Visit the **Ruskin Museum**. [www.ruskinmuseum.com](http://www.ruskinmuseum.com)
- » Visit Ruskin's home – **Brantwood**. [www.brantwood.org.uk](http://www.brantwood.org.uk)
- » Explore **Grizedale Forest** by bike, on foot, by Tramper or by Segway.
- » Curl up with a cup of hot chocolate and read Arthur Ransome's *Swallows and Amazons*.

