



This route uses the main Silurian Way loop in the eastern half of Grizedale Forest (orange markers), with great views looking north to the fells above Ambleside and also south to the coast. It is both the longest of these routes and also has the most ascent as the forest trails undulate through the forest. There is a cafe at the Esthwaite Water fisheries and several short steeper climbs in Grizedale Forest as well as climbing back up Dale Park.

Distance: 43km, **Ascent:** 800m, **Cycling Time:** 3h30
Route points on map: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 11, 16, 17, 18, 13, 19, 12, 8, 2, 1.

7. Grizedale Forest and Sawrey

The top of Claife Heights provides varied cycling – a mixture of woods, grassy tracks, and sometimes short rocky sections which non-technical riders may have to push across, however this compensated for by glorious views over its tarns to the Langdale Pikes. Aside of this section, it includes a significant proportion of lovely gravel tracks along NCN 6 to Wray and then climbing up through the woods below Latterbarrow. There is also a pleasant finish back along the shores of Windermere. There is a National Trust cafe at the Claife Viewing Station and steeper climbs up onto Claife Heights.

Distance: 29km, **Ascent:** 470m, **Cycling Time:** 3h
Route points on map: 1, 2, 8, 12, 19, 13, 21, 12, 8, 2, 1.

6. Claife Heights and Windermere

Grizedale Forest is a major centre for mountain biking and there are both purpose built single-track trails and a wide range of waymarked forest tracks (green markers) in the western half of the forest, before heading back to Hawkshead and Ambleside. There are refreshments in the forest centre as well as in Hawkshead. The route reaches the highest point of those described here, hence the climbs are sustained, albeit steady and the views across to the Coniston Fells make them worthwhile. The steeper climbs are actually on the lower slopes above the forest centre – with a corresponding steep descent down to it, and also crossing the ridge from Hawkshead to Wray, with a particularly steep descent down to Blelham Tarn.

Distance: 36km, **Ascent:** 650m, **Cycling Time:** 3h15
Route points on map: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 11, 16, 20, 17, 7, 6, 8, 2, 1

5. Grizedale Forest West and Hawkshead

On the routes there are occasional steep gravelled ascents, which, whilst short, require low gearing to cycle up. I've adapted my gravel bike to take a 0.8:1 bottom gear and have to use it occasionally - below 1:1 is essential if you want to cycle all the climbs marked as *difficult* on the maps.

Similarly the trails can have bigger stones on them, especially when the top surface has been eroded by the Lakeland weather so wider tyres are useful to push through the bumps – I've put 700x38c on the bike which again I'd regard as a good minimum width for comfort on the rockier sections.

Key for Gravel Maps			
	Motorway		Dangerous Junction
	A-road		Steep Hill
	B-road		Built-up area
	Local road		Forest
	Minor road		Sustrans route number
	Railway line		Historic Building
	Sustrans Route		Church
	Route on-road		Cafe or Public House
	Route off-road		Railway Station
	Route difficult		Car Park
	Route busy road		Country/Forest Park
	Mountain		
	Contour 200m, 300m, 400m		
	River		
	Lake		
	Marshes		
	Viewpoint		
	Ferry		
	Directions Point		

I have taken all responsible steps to ensure that these routes are safe and achievable by people with a reasonable level of fitness. However, all outdoor activities involve a degree of risk. To the extent permitted by law, I accept no responsibility for any accidents or injury resulting from following these routes. Walking and cycling routes change over time. Weather conditions may also affect path surfaces. Please use your own judgement when using the routes based upon the weather and the ability, experience and confidence levels of those in your group.

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One of the most technical rides of this selection given the steep descent from Tarn Hows to Coniston Water, although this can be missed out by following the exit route from the National Trust car park. Apart from that, it includes a significant proportion of lovely gravel tracks through the old mine workings of the Tilberthwaite valley and a pleasant finish back from Elterwater reversing Route 2. There are cafes in Coniston and Elterwater and steeper climbs to Tarn Hows and to Skelwith Fold.

Distance: 34km, **Ascent:** 530m, **Cycling Time:** 3h
Route points on map: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 11, 10, 14, 15, 3, 2, 1

4. Tarn Hows and Coniston

A harder option to get to Dungeon Ghyll via Little Langdale, this includes a steep gravel track from the River Rothay at Colwith and then the road climb over Blea Tarn Col. The reward from the top is a spectacular view over the Langdale Pikes before a steep twisting descent into the valley. Refreshments at Dungeon Ghyll.

Distance: 31km, **Ascent:** 590m, **Cycling Time:** 3h
Route points on map: 1, 2, 3, 4, 10, 14, 22, 9, 1

3. Blea Tarn and the Langdales

This is my favourite route, as it heads deep into the mountains with spectacular views and beautiful woods. It also passes three of the most picturesque lakes – Elterwater, Grasmere and Rydal Water. Cafes at Skelwith Bridge and Elterwater, and Sticklebarn National Trust. There are also a number of pubs. There are several steep climbs – up to Skelwith Bridge, out of Elterwater through the quarries and the climb over Red Bank to Grasmere.

Distance: 28km, **Ascent:** 400m, **Cycling Time:** 3h
Route points on map: 1, 2, 3, 15, 9, 22, 9, 1

2. Great Langdale, Dungeon Ghyll and Grasmere

This is the smoothest of the routes and an easy day out. There are many refreshment stops on route, including in Hawkshead, the fisheries at Esthwaite Water and the National Trust cafes at Claife Heights and Wray Castle. The only significant climbs are up to Skelwith Fold and a short hill alongside Windermere.

Distance: 31km, **Ascent:** 440m, **Cycling Time:** 2h45
Route points on map: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 18, 13, 21, 12, 8, 2, 1

1. Sawrey and Windermere

Lakeland Gravel (West)

Seven gravel bike routes around Ambleside, Hawkshead and Coniston

Gravel biking comes into its own in the Southern Lake District in an area bounded by Grasmere and Ambleside in the north, Kendal and Carnforth to the east, Morecambe Bay to the south and Wainwright's Southern Fells (Old Man of Coniston, Scafell and Bowfell) to the west. Away from the high fells, it is criss-crossed by quiet tarmac'ed lanes and its fair share of hard-packed and gravel tracks. This guide covers the western side of that area, with seven rides starting from Ambleside, but also accessible from Hawkshead and Coniston.



More details on these rides can be found on the Lakeland Gravel mini-site <https://oysterwheel.wordpress.com/lakeland-gravel/>. Here you can find ride descriptions, links to downloadable gpx files and videos which give a feel for the routes.