



L&DL route section: Penrith to Cockermouth

Distance: 37 miles (60 kilometres)

Gradient profile:



Overview: This is, by a smidgeon, the longest of the six L&DL 'day ride' sections, it also reaches the highest elevation at 1,125ft (343m). Interestingly this L&DL 'high point' is reached somewhat surreptitiously, on a gently undulating ridge road south of Greystoke Forest, rather than after a stiff climb to a notable viewpoint. The first part of the journey west from Penrith may well seem inexplicably leg-draining, partly due to a gradual climb to that route high point just beyond Berrier, but also because chances are you'll be heading into the prevailing wind. Thankfully, the twists and turns in the road, together with an eclectic selection of fortified manor houses providing visual interest en route will, hopefully, ensure riders' attention is distracted from their efforts. A dramatic change of scenery greets you on the approach to Mungrisdale, where the route swings north under the imposing shadow of Blencathra and surrounding fells. The neighbouring villages of Hesketh Newmarket and Caldbeck both provide a welcome and timely opportunity to rest and refuel, before the second half of this section takes riders round the 'back o Skiddaw', via some fairly remote lanes. The route then veers south-west to cross the River Derwent, cuts across the shoulder of Watch Hill before descending into what will seem (after a day of relative solitude) like the buzzing town of Cockermouth.

Terrain: As noted in the overview above, a distinguishing feature of this section is that it passes through the highest point on the L&DL, albeit almost imperceptibly and without fanfare. Indeed, the majesty of the high fell landscape ahead should take riders' attention from the gentle, if rather relentless, upward incline that characterises the first 16 km of this section. Thereafter, there are a few undulations in the route, which can only be expected as a small price to pay to enjoy one of the quietest corners of the Lake District.

L&DL route description *

From the southern end of Fell Lane, north-east of Penrith town centre, turn R into Meeting House Lane. SA at the mini-roundabout / x-roads, into Drovers Lane. Turn R at the T-jct by the Esso Petrol Station, then second L just after the garage into Robinson Street. SA after a short distance, into Thacka Lane. Follow this minor road / bridleway as it passes under a railway bridge, then the M6, before climbing gently to Newton Rigg College. Follow cycle route signs through the college campus to emerge onto a minor road on the western side. As you exit Newton Rigg, turn R to continue through the hamlet of Newton Reigny, bearing L by the pub then, after 1.5 km, take the L fork just after crossing a river into Laithes. In 1 km L at the x-roads, signed 'Blencow', then SA in Blencow, signed 'Greystoke'. In the centre of Greystoke R at the Market Cross, signed 'Berrier'. Continue for 4.5 km to a T-jct, where R, again signed 'Berrier'. You'll appreciate that you have been steadily climbing from Penrith as this quite elevated road affords some lovely views across to Blencathra and surrounding fells. Take a sharp L, after around 4.5 km, at an oblique x-roads, signed Mungrisdale. Descend to cross a flat valley floor, with the bulk of Blencathra et al rearing up ahead. In 2 km R at T-jct in the hamlet of Mungrisdale, signed Mosedale. Cross the River Caldew into Mosedale and SA on an unfenced road across Mosedale Moss, keeping the dramatic boulder-strewn Carrock Fell close on your L. Turn L in just under 2.5 km, onto a small unsigned road that is easy to miss, to climb out of the valley. After 0.5 km you cross the ford at Carrock Beck, where the



water can be quite deep and the submerged road surface is fairly poor, so use of the adjacent footbridge recommended. Then SA for a further 3.5 km, following signs for Heskett Newmarket. Turn L at an oblique T-jct, signed 'Heskett Newmarket'. SA through Heskett Newmarket, unless you are going to avail your self of the refreshment opportunities on offer, signed 'Caldbeck'. Descend gently into the village of Caldbeck, which also offers several places to eat and drink, where SA on the B5299, signed 'Uldale'. Continue on this road, which becomes unfenced as it crosses Caldbeck Commons, for around 5km, following signs for 'Uldale'. Around 1 km after the B5299 forks off to the R, turn L, signed 'Orthwaite'. Take care on the two steep descents in the next 3 km, then turn R, signed 'Keswick', to pass Overwater Tarn on the left. After 2.5 km R at a T-jct, signed 'Uldale'. Fork L after 200m, signed 'Ireby', then almost immediately L again, unsigned. This road contours round Binsey, a slightly detached Lake District fell with views of Bassenthwaite Lake off the left. After some 3 km, in the hamlet of Bewaldeth, R at a minor T-jct, signed 'Bothel', then also immediately SA to cross the A591 with care into the minor road opposite. L in another 3.5 km, signed 'Cockermouth', then L again at a T-jct in 1.6 km, signed 'Keswick', to cross Iselgate Bridge. Climb a short steep hill to T-jct, where R, signed 'Cockermouth'. Continue for nearly 5 km on this minor road as it swings gradually southward into Cockermouth. Turn R at a T-jct soon after entering the town, into Castlegate Drive, past the Quince and Medlar pub on the R, then L into Market Place.

Alternative return route from Heskett Newmarket to Penrith

Retrace your route for the first couple of kilometres, heading east out of Heskett Newmarket, bearing right at the fork on the edge of the village, signed 'Mungrisdale'. After a steady climb of 1.5 km turn left, again signed 'Mungrisdale'. Follow this very minor road as it twists, turns and descends for a couple of kilometres to a T-jct in the hamlet of High Row, just after a bridge across Carrock Beck. L here, signed 'Greystoke'. This road drops to cross the River Caldew, then climbs to a T-jct where L, signed 'Haltcliff Bridge'. First R after 0.5 km, signed 'Newsham', to ascend Heggles Lane to another T-jct, where L (unsigned). SA at the next two X-roads, following sign for 'Newsham' and 'Lamonby'. R in the hamlet of Lamonby, handsomely signed for 'Ellonby'. R at the T-jct in Ellonby, then L after a short distance, both signed for 'Skelton'. Follow this minor road through Skelton village (which boasts a cycle repair workshop) to a minor X-roads by the Dog and Gun public house where R, signed 'Laithe'. After a couple of kilometres of gentle descent you arrive at a X-roads which should be familiar from earlier in this circular route. L here, following a brown pictorial tourist sign for an historic house and garden (Hutton-in-the-Forest). After 2.5 km this road meets the B5303 where R, signed 'Penrith'. Care is needed on this B road, which does carry a volume of heavier vehicles, but you'll escape it after a little over a kilometre, with a L turn onto a minor road, signed 'Plumpton'. In a couple of kilometres turn R, immediately after crossing the M6 via an over-bridge, signed 'Penrith'. Despite being sandwiched between the Motorway and West Coast Main Railway Line, this flat minor road is surprisingly tranquil. Take the first R turn after 3 km to cross the railway, again signed for 'Penrith'. You'll need to negotiate a six-arm roundabout after a further kilometre (which isn't as big and scary as it sounds), taking the third exit after you join it, signed 'Fair Hill'. A gentle climb over a couple of kilometres follows, before a swoop into the outskirts of Penrith. SA at the first minor X-roads you come to in the town, then bear left after a short distance to join the A6 for around 500m, before turning L opposite an Esso petrol station to retrace your outward route back to the centre of Penrith, via Drovers Lane and Meeting House Lane.

[Note that the summaries below relate to the L&DL and do not include the alternative loop.]

Scenic highlights: Views across the Northern Fells.

Points of interest: Fortified manor houses at Catterlen Hall in Newton Reigny and Blencow Hall; Greystoke Cyclists' Café (seasonal) and Quirky Workshops; Greystoke Castle; Greystoke open-air swimming pool (seasonal); Cockermouth is an attractive town, well worth spending a little time exploring the centre on foot.



Refreshments: Penrith (numerous cafes, pubs and restaurants), Newton Reigny (pub), Blencow (pub), Greystoke (seasonal café, pub), Hesket Newmarket (café, pub), Caldbeck (two cafés, pub), Cockermouth (numerous cafes, pubs and restaurants).

Accommodation: Penrith (numerous B&Bs, small hotels, backpackers hostel), Greystoke (B&Bs), Hesket Newmarket (B&Bs), Caldbeck (B&Bs), Cockermouth (numerous B&Bs, small hotels, camping).

*** Key to route descriptions**

R	=	right
L	=	left
SA	=	straight ahead / across
T-jct / jct	=	T-junction / junction
x-roads	=	crossroads
m	=	metres
km	=	kilometres