

Distance: 40 miles (64 kilometres)

A circular loop from Penrith to Hesketh Newmarket, making use of the L&DL

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 Hesketh Newmarket. Turn L at an oblique T-jct, signed 'Hesketh Newmarket', to descend into the village that marks the half-way point of this loop.

For the return journey, retrace your route for the first couple of kilometres, heading east out of Hesketh 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 'Laithes'. 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.