

Skelghyll Woods and Jenkin Crag

If you are looking for a dog friendly walk close to Ambleside, then Skelghyll Woods is a perfect place to start. Starting in Ambleside, just a few minutes' walk from where the Windermere cruises launch, this walk explores an ancient woodland that sits above the lake and the town, before reaching the delightful viewpoint above Jenkin Crag.

The walk can be broken up into three sections. The first, main walk will take you to the top of Jenkin Crag through the woodland. Bluebells are found in abundance here during the spring. The second section follows a circular trail through Stagshaw Garden, a National Trust piece of land that features ornamental trees. The final section follows the Ambleside Champion Tree trail, where you will find the tallest Grand Fir tree in England. You can choose to do one, two, or all three sections, and all of them are suitable for dogs and children aged four and above.

Distance: 1.5 – 3 miles, depending on route

Time: 1-2 hours

Terrain: Stepped woodland path, rocky in places

Suitable For: Dogs, Children aged 4 and above, Babies and Toddlers in Carriers

Parking: Waterhead Car Park, Borrans Road, south of Ambleside town centre, near the Windermere Cruise launch site; Postcode for satnav is **LA22 0ES**; Parking costs £3 for 3 hours

Facilities: Toilets with baby changing facilities are available at the car park with a 20p charge; There are plenty of dog friendly cafés and pubs in Ambleside.

Waterhead Car Park is located on Borrans Road, opposite Lake Windermere. There is ample parking here, and a camera system with number plate recognition is in operation, allowing you to pay on exit. The machines take cash or cards, and you can also pay online up to 48 hours after your visit. Once parked, head back out onto Borrans Road, and turn left, heading up towards the junction. Turn left again to walk along the side of the Water Head Hotel, where there is a cut through, and at the end of this cut through you will be on the A591.

1. Cross over the A591. Directly opposite you there is a slate wall, and a sign indicating the path to Jenkin Crag. Go up the steps leading along the wall, taking you off the roadside pavement and onto the path. This is a narrow, stepped path that leads you up, away from the road and round the back of some houses. Keep following the path and it eventually ends at a wall, where there are a set of steps built into the wall for you to climb over.

2. Cross over the wall. You need to keep your dog on the lead for this short section as once you have gone over the wall you will find yourself in a field, where there may be livestock. As you look straight across from where you have entered the field you will see a corner where two walls meet. Head to this corner, and there is a stile here for you to cross, leading into the wood. Once you are over the stile your dog can be let off the lead.

3. Beyond the stile a path leads through the woodland. In the spring, this woodland is filled with the aroma of wild garlic, whilst bluebells provide a blue carpet for the floor. Follow the path as it leads up. Pass a turning on the left, and then you will reach a crossroads. Go straight over the crossroads, and you will arrive at a track. Turn right onto this track.

4. This track ascends steeply though the woods. It leads you to a small stone bridge over a waterfall that you need to cross, before continuing upwards. Continue along the main path, passing a turning on your left. The track then joins a boundary wall, and the wall runs alongside the track on the right hand side. On the left you will pass another turning, signposted for Kelsick Scar. Go past this tuning and stay on the main path, following the wall.

5. Just beyond the turning for Kelsick Scar, you will come to a gap in the wall on the right hand side, and through this gap you will notice a National Trust signpost for Jenkin Crag. Go through the gap in the wall and go straight on, past the sign, up to the rocks. You may want to consider briefly putting your dog on a lead at this point, as just beyond these rocks there is a steep drop. At the top of the rocks you are rewarded with a view of Windermere.

6. Go back down the rocks and return to the signpost. Do not go back through the gap in the wall. With your back to the viewpoint, you should see a path leading from the signpost on your right hand side. This path leads down along the side of Jenkin Crag back down into the woodland. Take this path and follow it down, taking care as it can be steep in places.

7. The path from the crag eventually leads you to a wall, with a building on the other side. Follow the path past the wall, and you will be at a five way junction. The first right is a narrow path, taking you back up into the woods. The second right is the main path that you need to take. Left leads to the building, whilst straight on leads onto another narrow track into the woods. Take the second right, and then follow this path through the woods. Again, during the spring you will spot lots of bluebells here.

8. The path continues in a fairly straight line. It then takes a very sharp turning left, down the hill. At this point, where the path turns, you need to come off the main path and go straight ahead, rather than going left on the main path. As you can see in the attached image, there are two trees directly ahead, go to the right of them and once you are by the trees the path becomes clear once more. If you are using an OS map the grid reference for this point is NY381026.

9. Follow the path and it leads you alongside a boundary wall. It then opens out into a very small car parking area. There is a lane on the left hand side that leads out of this car park. You now have a number of choices. You can head down this lane, skipping the next two points of this guide, and return to Ambleside (the last point in this guide provides the final directions you need). Alternatively, you can choose to walk around Stagshaw Gardens, or the Ambleside Champion Tree Trail, or both. Both of these will add approximately another mile each to your walk.

10. On the opposite side of the parking area to the path that you arrived on, you will see a National Trust information board for Stagshaw Gardens, and a gate leading to the gardens. The gardens were created by Cubby Acland, a former National Trust agent, and have some delightful examples of rhododendrons and camellias.

11. The gardens sit on a hillside, with a path that meanders through them, taking in numerous plants and a waterfall along the way. There are benches at various points, including at the top where you are once again rewarded with a view of Windermere. Although there are various routes through the garden, they all lead you back to the car park. Entrance is free and dogs are welcome.

12. At the top of the car park, opposite the entrance lane, there is another National Trust information board. This board marks the start of the Ambleside Champion Tree Trail. The trail is a circular route that takes you back through the woodland, and passes some of the tallest trees in England, including the tallest Grand Fir in England. Information boards along the way provide details of the heights of the trees, and there are picnic benches at various points. The trail leads you back to the parking area.

13. To return to Ambleside, follow the lane that leads into the car park away from the parking area. After a short distance there is a turning on the right hand side, with a track that leads between two fields. Take this track and it leads you back down to the A591. You will need to cross the road at this point to access the pavement, and then turn left. After a few minutes' walk you will find yourself back at the starting point for your walk.