Lake District Walks

Near High Biggin, graded by difficulty

Two well-known local walks, from an easy family stroll to a proper fell climb

Distances, ascent figures and route descriptions in this guide are for planning purposes. Conditions on Lake District fells change quickly — check the weather and wear proper footwear before you set out.

Where they are, relative to High Biggin

Both walks start on the same short stretch north from High Biggin along Windermere — Orrest Head first, in Windermere village itself, then Wansfell Pike a little further on via Ambleside.



- **A** High Biggin (Bowness-on-Windermere)
- **B** Orrest Head (Windermere village / station)
- **C** Wansfell Pike (via Ambleside)

Map data © Google. Pin positions are geocoded; distances and routes in this guide are for planning, not navigation.

Two walks, two different days out

Both of these start within easy reach of Windermere and Ambleside, a short drive from High Biggin. Orrest Head is about as gentle as a Lake District summit gets — genuinely suitable for most fitness levels. Wansfell Pike is a proper climb: short by fell-walking standards, but steep, and it rewards you with one of the best views over Windermere anywhere in the area.

	Orrest Head	Wansfell Pike
Difficulty	Easy	Moderate to hard
Round trip	3.5km (2.2 miles)	7.6–11.5km (4.7–7.2 miles) depending on route
Ascent	120m	~350–530m depending on start point
Summit height	238m	482m
Typical time	45–60 minutes	3–5 hours
Start point	Windermere village, near the train station	Ambleside (via Stockghyll Lane)

EASY

Orrest Head

Round trip:	3.5km (2.2 miles)
Ascent:	120m to a summit of 238m
Time:	45–60 minutes at an easy pace
Start:	Signposted lane opposite Windermere railway station, postcode LA23 1AW
Terrain:	Waymarked path through Elleray Wood, some steps and short steep sections; an official Lake District National Park “Miles Without Stiles” route

Orrest Head is the closest thing the Lake District has to a guaranteed win: a short, well-marked climb that rewards you with a genuine 360-degree view over Windermere and the central fells, without requiring any real fell-walking experience. It's a good choice for families, first-time visitors, or anyone who wants the views without the commitment of a full fell walk.

It also has a claim to fame: in 1930, a 23-year-old Alfred Wainwright climbed Orrest Head on his first ever visit to the Lake District, and the view from the top is what he later credited with changing the course of his life — he went on to write the seven-volume Pictorial Guides to the Lakeland Fells that fell-walkers still use today.

> *“...we emerged from the trees and were on a bare headland, and, as though a curtain had dramatically been torn aside, beheld a truly magnificent view...”*
>
> — Alfred Wainwright, on first seeing the view from Orrest Head

MODERATE / HARD

Wansfell Pike

Round trip:	From 7.6km (4.7 miles) for the direct out-and-back from Ambleside, up to 11.5km (7.2 miles) for the longer loop via Troutbeck and Skelghyll Wood
Ascent:	Summit at 482m; the direct route from Ambleside is short but consistently steep
Time:	3 hours for the direct route, up to 5 hours for the full loop
Start:	Ambleside town centre, via Stockghyll Lane
Terrain:	Stone-pitched path, steep and rocky in the upper section; can be icy in winter and muddy lower down; no scrambling required at the summit

Wansfell Pike towers directly above Ambleside, and the climb up Stockghyll Lane is a proper test: short by fell-walking standards, but relentlessly steep in the upper stretch. The reward is one of the best views of Windermere in the entire Lake District — the full length of the lake, the Coniston Fells, Fairfield, and on a genuinely clear day, Blackpool Tower over 40 miles away.

The shortest route is a direct there-and-back from Ambleside. For a longer, more varied day, the loop via Troutbeck and back through Skelghyll Wood adds several miles of gentler walking either side of the climb, and passes Stockghyll Force waterfall on the way back into Ambleside. Good boots are essential either way — the summit path is rocky and exposed, and the descent can be hard on the knees.

Before you go

• Check the weather forecast for the fells specifically, not just the valley — conditions at 482m can be very different from Ambleside.

• Proper walking boots are recommended for both routes; the upper section of Wansfell Pike is loose underfoot.

• Orrest Head is accessible enough for most people, but the surface is uneven in places, not fully flat.

Compiled by High Biggin — a 5-Star Gold luxury holiday cottage near Bowness-on-Windermere, sleeping 8 across 4 bedrooms with a private hot tub. highbiggin.com