

Two Tarns Walk – 5 ½ miles

Seathwaite to Sty Head & Grains Gill

This invigorating walk takes you into the heart of the Lake District hills on an ancient pack horse route. Renowned peaks like Great Gable loom large as you follow the trail through Sty Head Pass, visiting Sty Head Tarn and Sprinkling Tarn (great picnic spots), before returning alongside Grains Gill stream. Enjoy fantastic views on paths restored and maintained as part of the 'Fix the Fells' project.

Start & finish: Seathwaite – grid ref: NY 235121 – OS Landranger 90 or Explorer O14

Getting there

By foot: the Cumbria Way, from Ulverston to Carlisle, passes close to the start of the walk

By bus: regular bus service to Seathwaite from Keswick and Buttermere

By road: from Keswick take the B5289 Borrowdale road; follow this up the valley to Seatoller, turn left and follow a single track road to Seathwaite Farm; car parking is available on the road side.

Facilities

WC, public phone box, café and campsite located at Seathwaite Farm.

Things to look out for...

Stockley Bridge

This historic packhorse bridge was constructed in 1540, but partially demolished after floods in 1969. It's actually designated as a grade one listed 'building' because there are so few such old bridges in the area. Goods like salt, wool and charcoal were transported by pack animals through the Lakeland valleys on mountain passes like this for centuries.

Great End

The sheer rock face of Great End rises up beyond the Two Tarns at the head of the Borrowdale Valley. Man has lived in this landscape for 1000s of years – the remains of Neolithic stone axe factories have been found dotted across the slopes around here.

Sprinkling Tarn

This beautiful tarn below Great End is a nursery for the vendace; Britain's rarest freshwater fish. The vendace is a small fish with a bluish green back and silvery flanks. It's a relic from the last glacial period which only survives in the watercourses that flow into Derwent Water and Bassenthwaite Lake.



Look out for the mountain ringlet butterfly. It can be seen fluttering around the slopes here on sunny days throughout the summer. It is a dark brown butterfly with a striking row of black-centred orange eyespots on its wings.

© NT / Matthew Oates



The rare evergreen alpine plant, the dwarf cornel (or bunchberry) likes to live in cool spots on shady mountainous slopes or in dark woodland. As our climate begins to get warmer, it is struggling to survive.

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Towards the top of Sty Head Pass lies a huge rock, known as the '1000ft boulder'. It's a great place to enjoy views of the waterfall, Taylor Gill Force, which lies to the right of it.

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“On a damp day, nothing beats the sudden glimpse of a high peak as mists and low cloud move through these deep Lakeland valleys. This walk offers a real sense of mystery and adventure whatever the season.”

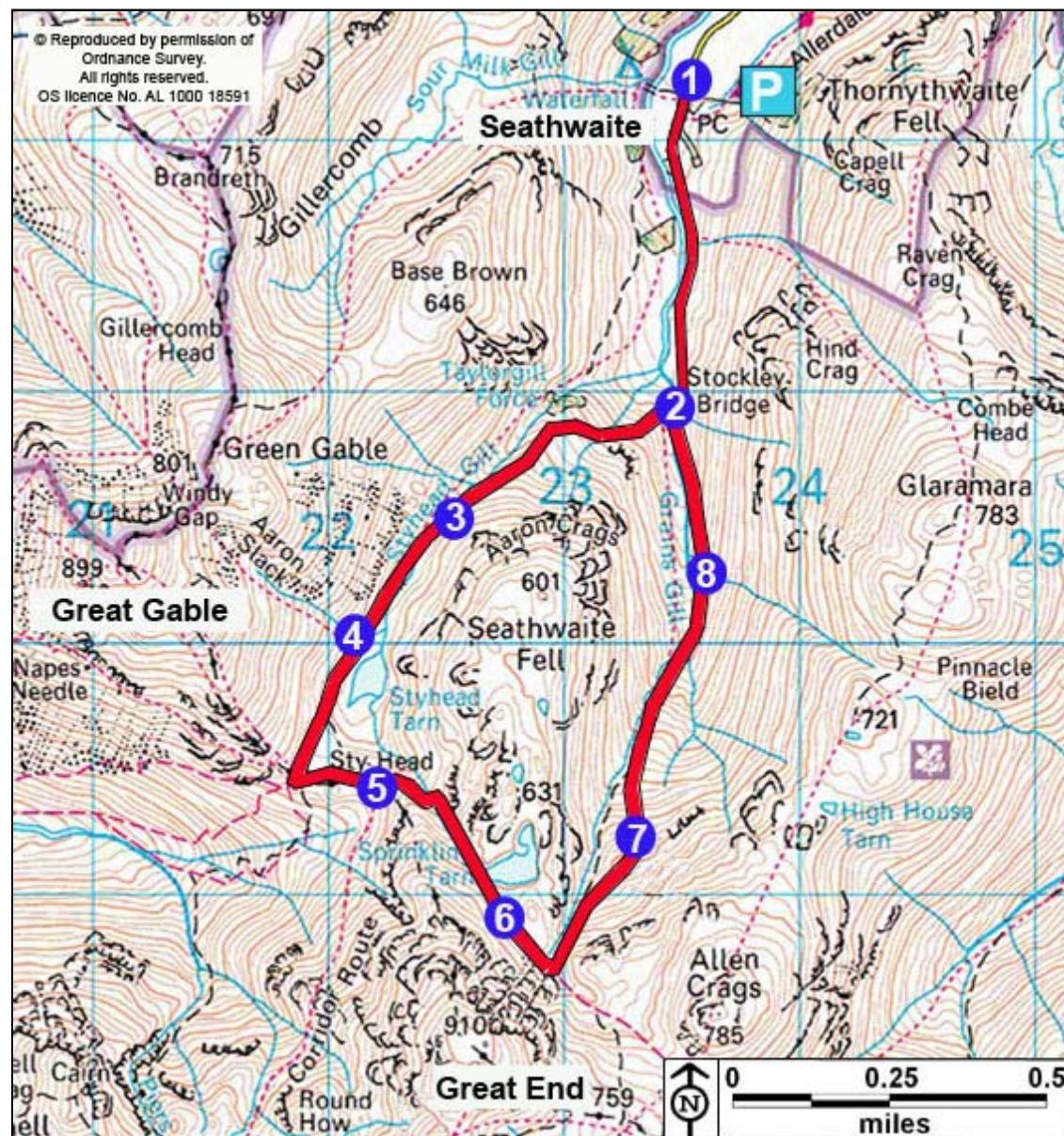
John Atkinson, 'Fix the Fells' Project Manager

Walk terrain & accessibility

5 ½ mile (9km) walk involving 530m ascent and descent – can be fairly strenuous in all weathers. Sections of this route have recently been levelled with stone and include a few steep rock steps. Good boots and waterproofs needed.

Directions

1. Cross Seathwaite farmyard, going through a series of gates. Walk along a streamside gravel track over a small footbridge.
2. On reaching Stockley Bridge, continue straight ahead and begin climbing up Sty Head Pass on cobbled and stone-pitched paths.
3. Follow this route, which after a short distance becomes a narrow gravel track on more level but still uneven ground. The footbridge over Sty Head Gill appears in front of you.
4. Cross the bridge then bear left, ascending gently towards Sty Head Tarn. Great Gable rises up to your right.
5. Just above the Tarn you will see a mountain rescue stretcher box. From here walk left across stepping stones and on to another stone-pitched path with some sections of gravel and bedrock. Follow this to Sprinkling Tarn, a pleasant spot to rest for a bite to eat.
6. Leave Sprinkling Tarn and follow the same path as it skirts around the bottom of Great End until meeting Ruddy Gill, a fairly steep stream.
7. At Ruddy Gill turn left and cross the stream. Continue straight ahead and you will soon get back onto the path on Grains Gill again. On a clear day there are great views of the Borrowdale valley and Derwent Water from here.
8. Follow this path downhill, crossing a footbridge on the way. Eventually you'll reach a drystone wall. Go through a gate in the wall and look out again for Stockley Bridge ahead. Return to it and then to your start point by the same streamside route you came up.



National Trust places nearby: Borrowdale Valley, Great Gable, the Scafell Massif



The Lake District is one of the most beautiful places in the world, however its paths are extremely fragile and over time have been eroded by wind, rain, ice and people. The Fix the Fells project, with the help of The National Trust, is working to repair these damaged paths.

Find out more at www.nationaltrust.org.uk and www.fixthefells.co.uk