

## Smardale Walk C

**Start:** Smardale Nature Reserve

**Grid Ref:** NY 742 083

**Nearest postcode:** CA17 4HG

**Distance:** 5 miles / 8 km

**Terrain:** Tarmac, hard track, open fell

**Ascent:** Approx. 100 metres

**Difficulty:** Once you have left the boardwalk the route follows quiet tarmac lanes until you reach Crosby Garrett, where the going gets rougher on a stony track. The section along Bull Flat has no visible track and there are a series of stone stiles to negotiate. The route back down to the nature reserve needs some careful navigation in bad conditions. Once you reach the old railway track, both navigation and conditions underfoot are straightforward.

**Parking:** Free parking at the Nature Reserve.

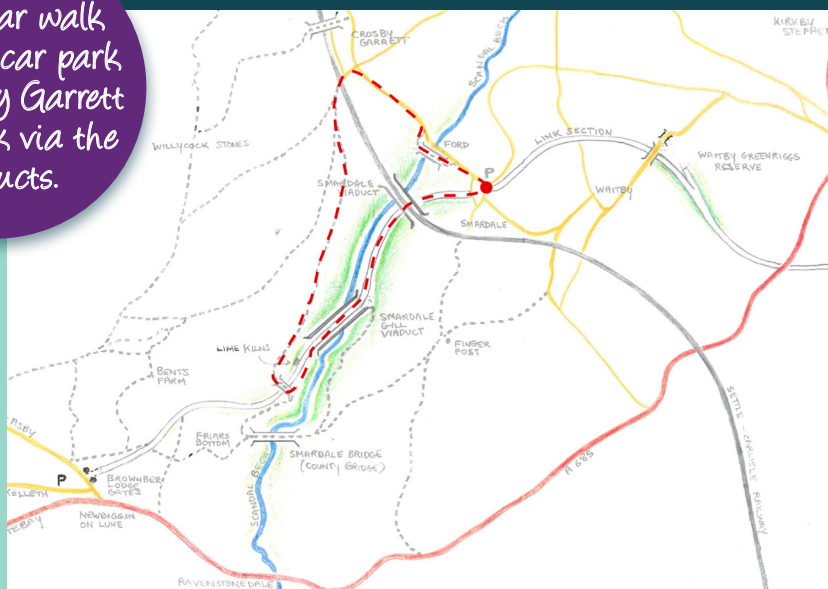
**Public Transport:** A limited bus service runs from Kendal, Sedbergh and Brough to Kirkby Stephen. The Settle–Carlisle railway goes through Kirkby Stephen.

**Directions:** From the A685 between Ravenstonedale and Kirkby Stephen, take the Smardale turning. Turn left at the T-junction, bear right over the disused railway and turn immediately right. The car park is 200 metres on your right.

**Facilities:** No facilities along route.

**OS Map:** OS Explorer map OL19.

*A circular walk from the car park via Crosby Garrett and back via the viaducts.*



Map by Richard Hughes. Photo by Richard Arrowsmith

## The route

- ❖ Visit the charming hamlet of Crosby Garrett.
- ❖ Discover the archaeological remains of a Romano-British settlement as you walk over the fell.
- ❖ Look out for red squirrels in the woodland and around the feeders in the car park.

Leave the car park past the cabins and go along the gravelled track onto the wooden walkway, following the signs to the nature reserve. Exit the gate and turn right onto Beck Lane. Do not turn left into the nature reserve, but carry on down Beck Lane and cross the footbridge next to the ford over Scandal Beck. The road now becomes Tarn Lane and rises gradually, leading you to the pretty village of Crosby Garrett.

Turn left in Crosby Garrett, cross the beck and head under the very imposing viaduct towards the open fell. Ignore

the footpath to the right as you pass the last house in the settlement and carry on up the rough track.

After a couple of hundred metres the track splits into two. You take the smaller of the two tracks, to the left (the footpath designation not the bridleway). An old lime kiln is visible on your left.

At the wall take the first of the two gates you come to (there is a stile immediately to the left of it). Once in the field, head diagonally right towards the obvious gap and stone stile.

You now pass through a succession of fields with many stiles as you traverse Bull Flat. This section might be awkward if you have a dog in tow. (In which case you might try the aforementioned bridleway as an alternative.) The track trends South, keeping high above Smardale Gill below you to the left.

There is no visible track, so you should take a moment to try to recognise the next stile as you head off – they are all there but



## Smardale Walk C route – continued

the later ones can be tricky to spot. A compass or a mapping App would help. Look out for the ruins of the old Romano-British settlement on the top of a knoll.

Once you have passed above the quarry (you won't see it but you might spot the lime kiln below it), you will see an old railway building next to the old railway line which will be your route back. Keep well above the stone building and look for a stile in the wall (quite a challenge, this stile, for the less agile!) whilst you very briefly join the Coast to Coast route.

Turn left after the stile and then right at the building. Descend to the stone bridge that crosses the disused railway line and from the far side of the bridge turn immediately right over the stile and descend onto the trackway. Start your homeward leg by heading NW along the track. Shortly you will be treated to a view of the quarry and lime kilns, and just after that you cross the Smardale Gill viaduct with spectacular views along the valley.

The next major feature after 1.2 km is when you pass under the Smardale viaduct that carries the Settle–Carlisle railway. The track finishes at Smardale and you will have no difficulty in recognising the route back to the car park.

### Before you set off

The weather in Cumbria can change quickly, particularly on the fells, so please be prepared, as changes in weather can alter the difficulty of a route. Appropriate clothing can make all the difference – it is important to be warm, comfortable and dry when out exploring.

An Ordnance Survey map of the area, a compass and the knowledge to use them are invaluable.

Please observe the country code when out walking and, where possible, stick to public footpaths and bridleways. Stock is frequently grazing in these areas so dogs must be kept under control.

### Wildlife Highlights

Visiting this nature reserve allows you to explore an unspoilt corner of Cumbria where stunning scenery and wildlife-spotting opportunities await at any time of the year.

The nature reserve itself offers something for everyone: from the steep woodland and the beck below to the species-rich grasslands, each has its own community of interesting plants and animals.

This walk also takes in the hamlet of Crosby Garrett and open fell where buzzard and raven may be seen overhead, and in summer the unmistakable sound of skylark can be heard high above.

In the summertime the limestone grassland around the quarry comes into bloom. Orchids, such as fragrant and butterfly, are in flower and other plants like bloody crane's-bill, melancholy thistle and great burnet fill the meadow.

Bees and butterflies can be seen buzzing and basking; rarities are the northern brown argus and the Scotch argus butterfly, which is found here at the southernmost edge of its range.

The scenery changes as the walk progresses to the woodland. Here, the wildlife focus is on the smaller birds like redstart, wood warbler, treecreeper and long-tailed tit, which can be seen at the woodland edge.

The woodland plants are at their best during the spring months when the

early primrose are in abundance. These are followed by bluebell, herb-paris and wild garlic.

Keep an eye open for the red squirrels – they can be seen in the woodland and around the feeders in the car park.



Treecreeper



Herb-paris



Scotch argus butterfly

Please note: Smardale Gill viaduct is owned and managed by the Northern Viaduct Trust, [www.nvt.org.uk](http://www.nvt.org.uk)



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Wildlife Trust

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