

# THE ANGEL INN

## Helvellyn

This is an exciting walk along Striding Edge, probably the most popular ridge walk in Britain, to Helvellyn the third highest mountain in England at 950m above sea level. This is by far the most exciting way to the summit of this popular mountain. The route starts at the village of Glenridding by Ullswater. It is a horseshoe walk that circulates Red Tarn and ascends via Striding Edge then descends via Swirral Edge, an equally exciting hands on route. On the ascent you can bag Birkhouse Moor which gives great views over Ullswater and on the descent it is well worth the short diversion to the top of the conical shaped Catstye Cam for equally impressive views. Striding Edge is an exposed knife edge ridge that requires a head for heights and exposure. Saying that, however, it does have in most places an easier alternative side path for anyone struggling. There is an awkward short scramble down a chimney at the end of Striding Edge but even this has an alternative side path. Swirral Edge is also a hands on scramble at times but doesn't have an easier alternative. This is a very serious mountain adventure at any time of the year and especially during winter months. Always carry the right gear and know how to use it.

## Start

1. This walk starts from the large pay and display car park in the centre of Glenridding village near Ullswater at grid reference NY 385 169. The car park has toilet facilities and a visitor centre.
2. From the car park head west along Greenside Road. After two hundred metres the road bends slightly to the right and passes the Travellers Rest Inn.
3. Just after the Travellers Rest Inn the road bends sharp right. Here turn left instead and head up the track to Gillside Farm camp site.
4. You now need to walk past the camp site on the left and past the house. The path you need follows the Mires Beck upstream in to Little Cove.
5. As the path starts to climb the back of Little Cove it turns into a very well laid but steep and hard going path.
6. Once at the top of the steep climb the path reaches a stone wall on top of the ridge. Turn right at this stone wall and head towards Birkhouse Moor to eventually reach its stone summit cairn.
7. After bagging Birkhouse Moor and enjoying its fabulous views over Ullswater head in a south west direction back to the main path and stone wall.
8. Follow the path and stone wall for just over half a kilometre until it reaches a point where the paths come up from Red Tarn from the right and Patterdale from the left over the stile known as the Hole In The Wall.
9. Ascend the path in a south west direction from the Hole In The Wall and you will soon reach the start of the Striding Edge ridge. Climb to the top of the initial rocky knoll and you will get a stunning view of the ridge leading to Helvellyn.
10. The most fun that can be had is by keeping to the crest of the ridge whenever possible. Traversing the ridge this way is and a lot of fun, requiring constant concentration on its knife edge route.
11. For anyone requiring a slightly easier traverse or if the ridge is extremely icy or windy then an easier side path follows the ridge a few metres down to the right on the northern side.

12. The ridge continues like this for a kilometre and then comes to High Spying How. At its far western end there is a scramble down known as The Chimney which you will need to descend with care.
13. Many people get stuck here as it is an unexpected climb down if you are not used to hands on scrambling descents. Luckily there is also a side path to avoid this too. If you are already at The Chimney, go back a short distance then look out for a path that heads round the south side of High Spying How that will lead you to the same place The Chimney would have done.
14. After scrambling down The Chimney you cross a col between Striding Edge and Helvellyn and then have to ascend the final pull to the summit which is a steep and loose path.
15. The first thing you will come across on the summit plateau is the memorial to Charles Gough who in spring 1805 slipped from a rock and died. The story of Gough's faithful dog who stayed with his body for 3 months until it was discovered has inspired many poems including Fidelity by William Wordsworth and Helvellyn by Sir Walter Scott.
16. You will also know when you reach the summit of Helvellyn as it has a large stone cross-shaped shelter which on days of inclement weather can be a huge relief! There is a stone cairn marking the highest point of the mountain at 950m above sea level.
17. From the cairn head in a north west direction for just over a hundred metres and you will reach the stone OS trig pillar. In the winter months and often well into spring the cold north eastern facing side of Helvellyn's summit often has a dangerous snow cornice. You should always avoid walking on this.
18. From the OS trig pillar head north to north west for a hundred metres and you will reach the top of the descent down Swirral Edge. This is also a popular ascent route so you will usually see fellow walkers coming over the edge at the right spot.
19. Swirral Edge is like most ridges so don't go too far left or right, instead stick to the path where possible, concentrate, and use your hands when necessary. Descend Swirral Edge for half a kilometre until you are on the col between Helvellyn and Catstye Cam.
20. Here at the col you decide if you want to take the short diversion to the top of Catstye Cam and back down again or simply head down the path to Red Tarn. I'd highly recommend the diversion!
21. Red Tarn is a stunning place. In winter it is often frozen over for months. The mighty bulk of Helvellyn's cold north eastern facing crags provides an overwhelming backdrop.
22. From Red Tarn take the descent path that heads north east following the Red Tarn Beck down the valley away from the tarn.
23. After two and a half kilometres the path reaches a footbridge over the Glenridding Beck, turn right on the other side and head through the old Greenside Mines area, passing the YHA Helvellyn Youth Hostel.
24. A simple two kilometre walk along the tarmac Greenside Road will now take you all the way back to Glenridding passing again the Travellers Rest Inn where I recommend you step in for tasty ale and food.

# Map

