

Fairfield Horseshoe

The classic Ambleside ridge round · 8 Wainwrights · thelakesplanner.co.uk

WALK FACTS

Distance	~10–11 miles / 16–18 km (circular)
Ascent	~1,000 m
Time	5–7 hrs walking
High point	Fairfield, 873 m
Start	Ambleside, or Rydal (Pelter Bridge)
OS map	Explorer OL7 (Fairfield summit on OL5)
Terrain	Grassy ridge, good paths, no scrambling

THE ROUTE

1. From Rydal, climb the steep path onto Nab Scar (450 m) — the hardest sustained pull of the day.
2. Follow the western ridge over Heron Pike (612 m) and Great Rigg (766 m), climbing steadily.
3. Reach Fairfield's broad stony summit (873 m) — take a careful bearing off the top toward Hart Crag.
4. Return over Hart Crag (822 m) and Dove Crag (792 m), then down the eastern ridge.
5. Descend over High Pike (Scandale, 656 m) and Low Pike (508 m) back to Ambleside or Rydal.
6. Walked clockwise from Ambleside, do this route in reverse (Low Pike first).

PARKING & GETTING THERE

Ambleside has proper pay-and-display car parks (check current charges) and is the easier start. Rydal (St Mary's / Pelter Bridge) is closer to the ridge but parking is very limited and fills early. It is a circuit, so you return to your start.

WHAT TO TAKE

Proper boots, warm layers and full waterproofs even in summer, more food and water than you think you need, a map and compass you can use, sun protection and a head torch if starting late.

SAFETY

A long, high, exposed day. Fairfield's summit plateau is broad and featureless — in mist it is easy to descend the wrong way, so know your route off the top and trust your compass over boot-worn paths. Check a mountain forecast (Lake District Weatherline), not a valley one.