



A little local leaf peeping

Lake District, August 2016: New England may be famous for the brilliance of its autumn foliage, but it's not essential to cross the Atlantic to enjoy this annual phenomenon. It's actually the perfect season to staycation in England and explore some of our own stunning landscapes, such as the Lake District, which is particularly beautiful at this time of year, when the trees are ablaze with tones of red, gold, yellow and bronze, and the fells are bathed in golden light.

Leeu Collection's Linthwaite House (www.linthwaitehouse.com), located just above Windermere with stunning panoramic views of the lake and Langdale fells, provides an idyllic base for an autumn break to this part of the country. While the season provides "the year's last, loveliest smile", as poet and writer William Cullen Bryant described it, the Lake District is also less crowded than in summer, making it ideal for visiting all the well-known tourist sites, such as Beatrix Potter's house at Hill Top near Hawkshead and Wordsworth's Dove Cottage near Grasmere. And, of course, it's a great time to enjoy long country walks on cool, crisp mornings, with blackberries ripe for picking should the urge take you.

A wide range of walks start from Linthwaite House's front door, from short gentle strolls to the tarn (a small lake) in the hotel's own gardens to more challenging hikes across tougher terrain requiring greater stamina. Drop into the hotel's own "tourist office" – a small room packed with local information just off the main drawing room – and pick up one of the walking leaflets that the hotel has created in the style of Wainwright. That's Alfred Wainwright, born in Blackburn, Lancashire in the early 20th century, who first visited and fell in love with the Lake District when he was 23 years old. He later moved to Kendal and devoted his life to mapping the area, writing seven guidebooks that are a unique mixture of beautiful pen-and-ink sketches, maps and musings.

One of the recommended shorter walks is to Brantfell and Post Knott. Though it's only about a two-mile walk, hikers should allow 90 minutes to complete the round trip, as the climb up to Brantfell can be strenuous and there are numerous resting places en route where you are likely to want to stop and catch your breath. It's all worth it when you get to the top, however, as Brantfell enjoys 360-degree views over the Lake District and the vistas from Post Knott are equally stunning.



L to R: Grasmere, blackberry picking on the fells; Brantfell overlooking Windermere

An alternative route that would take a morning or afternoon – or even a day if you stopped for a leisurely lunch – takes in the shoreline of Lake Windermere, before returning to Linthwaite House via countryside made famous by the works of Beatrix Potter. This walk covers 7.5 miles and you should allow at least 5 hours to complete it, if you travel as a foot passenger on the Windermere Ferry (if you decide to take your car, the length of the walk is reduced by two miles).

If you walk the route in its entirety, you will go past the National Trust property of Bordriggs Brow, before wending your way down to the Windermere Ferry. Once you have made the short journey across the water and are on the western side of the lake, there is a chance to make a short detour to the village of Near Sawrey, where Beatrix Potter's Hill Top farm can be visited followed, perhaps, by a pub lunch? Otherwise, there's a circular route to be followed that will eventually take you back to the ferry and uphill to return to Linthwaite House.

Of course, there are plenty of other trails dotted throughout the Lake District that all offer the chance to enjoy a different aspect of the awe-inspiring autumn landscape – just ask a local, everyone has their favourite and will be willing to share their top tip!

Exhausted and inspired at the end of a walk, all you will probably want to do is head back to Linthwaite House for afternoon tea so that you can sit back and soak up the panoramic views of the Lake District from the conservatory, warmed by a crackling log fire. Followed up, later in the day, with a gourmet meal in the hotel's award-winning restaurant. After all that exercise and fresh air, you will have earned it!

Bed & breakfast rates at Linthwaite House start from £77 per night per person sharing a double room, with dinner, bed & breakfast rates starting from £120 per night per person sharing a double room – book online at www.linthwaitehouse.com

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