

This walk description is from happyhiker.co.uk

Crinkle Craggs and Bow Fell.

Starting point and OS Grid reference	National Trust pay and display car park at the Old Dungeon Gill Hotel (NY 287061)
Ordnance Survey map	OL6 - The English Lakes South-Western area
Distance	7.9 miles
Traffic light rating	

Introduction: This has to be one of the best Lake District walks. The views are beautiful, dramatic and exhilarating as you work your way along the five summits of the Crinkle Craggs ridge. Especially impressive is the sight of Scafell Pike. There are also good views of the Langdale Pikes - in fact everywhere!

The walk is easily shortened by omitting the Bow Fell leg but as you have done most of the hard work by this time, it seems a shame not to “bag” this 2960ft (902 metres) top too.

It is recommended that you walk Crinkle Craggs in the direction given (i.e. south to north) because you will then approach and see the “Bad Step” from below when it can be easily circumvented, rather than it catching you by surprise from the top.

A further safety issue is that it is very important to leave Bow Fell in the right direction as there are very steep drops in the wrong ones! In good visibility there should be no problem but if the cloud descends, the right compass bearing is a reassurance, especially as the summit is essentially a massive rocky pyramid and it may be difficult to pick out from the surrounding rocks the cairns which indicate the correct route.

There are considerable boulders to cross and it is strongly recommended that boots be worn for ankle support.

The walk starts from the National Trust car park at the Old Dungeon Ghyll Hotel. You actually turn into the Hotel approach road to get to it. To get there, take the A593 out of Ambleside and at Skelwith Bridge, turn right on to the B5343. The car park is on the right after 4½ miles at a sharp left hand bend.

Refreshments are available afterwards at the excellent Hikers Bar at the Old Dungeon Ghyll Hotel.

Start: Exit the car park entry road and at the junction with the hotel drive, go straight ahead through the gateway, following the fingerpost for The Band and Oxendale. Immediately after going through the gateway, bear left crossing the beck by the little stone bridge. On meeting the road, turn right following the public footpath fingerpost (NY 265060).

Follow the tarmac farm drive to Stool End Farm and go through the farmyard following the clear footpath signs. Stay on the broad stony track alongside the wall and note the narrower stony path you meet on the right (NY 276057), lined with rocks, which will be your return path after descending The Band.

Stay on the main track which leads to more open land. Go through a kissing gate bearing left. By the next gate, spot the footbridge over the beck. Cross this and climb the hill via the obvious path.

Climb this well “manicured” path to the col. At what appears on the ground as a ‘T’ junction of paths (although technically a footpath does go straight on) by the stream, turn right (NY 267039).

The obvious path climbs to the foot of a small rocky bluff. You can climb this if you wish (although there is little point) or take the path which goes round to the left then right almost 360° and at a cairn, branches left climbing up the rocks.

The route now more or less follows the top of the Crinkles ridge and is marked by a series of cairns. Views in all directions are great but note especially Scafell Pike to the northwest, the Langdale Pikes to the northeast and Pike O’ Blisco to the southeast. The view down the Langdale valley is also wonderful.

When the route descends to a short grassy col (NY 249047), you will see ahead the mass of Long Top and what looks like a rectangular cave formed by a rock fall (see photo). This is the section known as the “Bad Step” and leads up on to Long Top. To avoid the scramble/climb, take the path round to the left. It then swings right in an arc passing a small tarn on the left.

From the summit of Long Top, the highest of the “Crinkles” at 2816 feet (859 metres), resume following the cairns along the ridge.

The ridge eventually drops down to a broad col at the Three Tarns (NY 248059). Ahead of you is the mass of Bow Fell and the path up is obvious, as are some of the perils of coming off Bow Fell in the wrong direction!

At the far side of the col at a stone cairn, a path joins from the right (NY 249062). This is the top of the path which descends the grassy ridge known as The Band and is ultimately our route down (or the point where you can cut the walk short - note this is the path north of the stream Buscoe Sike, not the one to its south which goes via Hell Gill).

To reach the top of Bow Fell, stay on the clear path ahead. This passes some impressive large slabs of rock before arriving at the large rocky pyramid which forms the summit. The highest point is obvious and although there are cairns leading you there, in reality it matters little which route you take. Just watch your step to avoid turning an ankle.

There are no trig. points or cairns to mark the conquest of Bow Fell, just a rocky summit but the views from it are superb (NY 245065).

If you have noticed the steep cliffs on the approach, you will appreciate that it is vital to come off the summit in the right direction. If visibility dictates compass use, come off the pyramid at about 65° magnetic and at the pyramid base about 125° magnetic, going to about 150° after around 300 yards, will take you back to the Three Tarns col. You should double check these bearings for yourself and do not forget magnetic variation – see Ordnance Survey map for details.

Return to the top of The Band and at the cairn, go left. The path is well “manicured” and as you reach the bottom, you will recognise the path bordered by the stones referred to earlier. Turn left by the wall and retrace your steps to the car park.

