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Langdale Pikes

Starting point and OS Grid reference	National Trust pay and display car park near the New Dungeon Gill hotel (NY 294064)
Ordnance Survey map	OL6 The English Lakes – South-western Area
Distance	6.4 miles
Traffic light rating	

Introduction: No portfolio of walks in the Lake District is complete without The Langdale Pikes walk. The distinctive shape of their summits is visible from all over the area. This and their setting above the gorgeous Langdale Valley make them a magnet for walkers. There are a myriad of ways of tackling them and this route may not be the easiest but provides something of a challenge. It is therefore quite a hard walk despite its relatively short distance, involving a steep climb and steep descent.

Some descriptions of this walk take a sweeping curve to Sergeant Man, then, go along to High Raise, before coming back to Harrison Stickle (see alternative route on the sketch map). This misses out Pavey Arc which is a shame because the view almost vertically down to Stickle Tarn is quite dramatic. I therefore include Pavey Arc but omit Sergeant Man. Sergeant Man can be done as an offshoot from High Raise if you wish.

The plateau on which the Pikes sit can be quite a disorientating place in poor visibility although their relatively lower altitude means they are often below the cloud cap when the bigger fells have disappeared. It is nevertheless recommended that a compass and map be carried plus of course the ability to use them!

The plateau is usually boggy in places and gaiters are recommended, especially after any wet weather.

The walk starts from the National Trust car park at the New Dungeon Ghyll Hotel. The adjacent Stickle Barn pub provides for welcome refreshment afterwards! 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 4 miles.

Start: From the car park (NY 294064), look out for the slate sign (see photo). Go over a stile with a dog gate alongside and take the path up the hill, following the wall on the left and ignoring the track through the gateway. Go through a walkers' gate then turn left through another gate then immediately right to follow the wall now on your right.

After passing a bench, go over another stile with a dog gate (see photo) and take note of this as you come back to this on the return journey.

Continue to follow the wall up the hill. When the path splits, keep right following the wall until it swings right and downhill. Head towards the waterfall and you will meet a path "manicured" with stones coming, up from the valley (NY 291069). Turn left here. The manicuring stops and the path becomes less clear but it is just discernable. Continue to climb, gradually working your way over towards the stream.

Follow the left hand bank of the stream until you reach Stickle Tarn (NY 288075). The mass of Pavey Ark towers above. There is a diagonal band rising up from bottom right left across the face. This is Jack's Rake which provides an alternative route to the top of Pavey Arc via a severe scramble. This should only be attempted if you are confident of your abilities and have no vertigo issues. Our ascent is more restrained!

Turn right at the tarn, crossing the stream, and follow its edge. The path passes a large boulder on the right of the path. At a cairn (NY 290077), the main (most worn) path bears left and you should continue to follow it. (turning right here would take you on the alternative route via a sweeping anti-clockwise path to Sergeant Man).

Our route now starts to climb steeply up the right hand side of Pavey Arc.

On reaching the top, the path goes straight ahead passing just to the left of a small tarn. Just after the tarn, bear round to the left heading towards the top of Pavey Arc. You will notice some old dilapidated sections of wall built on top of rocks. Head to the right of the first prominent section of wall you see. There is then another prominent section to the right. Pass between these sections actually crossing the wall where it has collapsed.

After visiting the top of Pavey Arc (2297ft 700m) (NY 284079) with good views almost vertically down to the tarn, to get to High Raise, retrace your steps across the wall and go straight ahead. High Raise is the left hand end of the grassy hill on the near horizon. The rocky "lump" at the other end is Sergeant Man. There is a small irregularly shaped tarn ahead (this may vary according to recent weather).

After passing the tarn, bear left. You may see a white post and to the right of this are the traces of the path. It is a little indistinct. Pass to the left of a stone cairn built on top of rocks and to the left of another small tarn. Follow the contour of the hill round to the right and you should see a patch of stony ground across which the path goes.

The route to the top of High Raise, across the coll should be clear. The reaching of the stone built trig. point indicates the summit at 2500ft (760m) (NY 281095).

From the summit of raise, retrace your steps along the same path, heading towards Harrison Stickle, the left of the two most prominent rocky hills on the near horizon. The prominent and distinctive round shaped rocky hill to the right is Pike Of Stickle.

After passing two stone cairns on the right and just before a third, look out for a faint grassy path on the right. This path is indistinct but as you crest a rise (Thurnacar

Knott on the map), with a stone cairn, you see Pike Of Stickle ahead and you should bear off left to Harrison Stickle.

As you approach Harrison Stickle, there is a rocky cliff in front of it on two levels. Head to the left of this and look out for a cairn built on top of rocks. From this cairn (NY 281076), the path to the summit, initially to the left of the summit, is clear. At one point it feels as if the path is about to descend but then it swings round to the right with stone cairns marking the way.

From the top of Harrison Stickle (2415ft or 736m) (NY 282074), head towards Pike Of Stickle (or Pike O' Stickle). The route down is marked by stone cairns and from the valley bottom, the path straight ahead to Pike Of Stickle is obvious.

There are various ascent routes of Pike Of Stickle. Some scrambling is inevitable but having climbed one way and come down another, in my view the easiest and with the least scrambling is accessed by turning left off the main track about 200/300 yards after leaving the valley bottom. It is a fairly obvious well walked path.

Enjoy the views from the summit (2326ft or 709m) (NY 274074) but before leaving, look across the valley and note the obvious path bending round the base of Harrison Stickle. This catches people out and is **not** your way down. There is a black dotted path below Thorn Crag shown on the OS map but a safer, better defined route is the one which does appear as a green footpath on the map and is below and to the left of Loft Crag.

Unfortunately, the start of this route can be difficult to spot. Descend Pike Of Stickle and when you get to the valley floor, turn right to pass below Loft Crag. After a few hundred yards, you should find the path marked with cairns. Follow this down and it becomes well "manicured" with rough cobbles as it descends. If unsure from the base of Pike Of Stickle, the compass direction is 123° magnetic.

Follow it down past Dungeon Gill Force until you reach the stile with dog gate mentioned previously and return to the car park.

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