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Whernside

Starting point and OS Grid reference	Lay-by parking area just yards north of where the B6479 meets the B6255 (SD 766793)
Ordnance Survey map	OL2 Yorkshire Dales Southern & Western Areas
Distance	8 Miles
Traffic light rating	

Introduction: Despite being one of the “Three Peaks”, Whernside does not get the same attention. True it lacks the dramatic profiles of its sisters Pen-y-Ghent and Ingleborough and has a relatively boring “whaleback” profile. Yet, it is the highest of the Three being 736 metres (2415ft) high against Pen-y-Ghent (694m – 2277ft) and Ingleborough (723m - 2372). By some quirk of Yorkshire logic, it is also higher than the more grandly named “Great Whernside” near Kettlewell which only manages a paltry 704 metres. It is the only one to have tarns at its higher levels and it gives you the chance to get up close and personal to that masterpiece of Victorian engineering, the Ribbleshead railway viaduct. The views from the summit are also magnificent.

In my view, the descent is rather harder work than the ascent (on the knees!) hence the order of the traffic lights.

Our walk starts at a parking area just yards north of where the B6479 meets the B6255 (SD 766793). The B6255 is the road which runs from the A65 at Ingleton to the A684 at Hawes.

Start: Take the obvious track heading towards the Ribbleshead Viaduct but do not pass under it. Instead, follow the path which follows the Settle Carlisle railway tracks keeping them on your left. Keeping as close as the path allows to the tracks, remain on it for about two miles until an aqueduct bridge takes you across the tracks close to and giving a great view of the railway tunnel under Blea Moor (SD 761816).

This tunnel is the longest on the Settle Carlisle railway being 2629 yards long. It opened in 1876 and is still going strong.

Once across the bridge, the path climbs. Take the left fork when the path divides and gradually swing round in an arc with a wall to your right cresting the ridge at SD 741824. Whernside tarns are to your right and an unnamed tarn to the left. Turn left to walk along the long ridge keeping the stone wall on your right arriving at the trig point (SD 739814) through a narrow stile. There is a wall shelter here for lunch. If the weather is clear, there will be great views towards the Howgills and the Lake District and in the other direction Pen-y-Ghent and Ingleborough.

Return to the east side of the wall and follow the path in a southerly direction. After $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile, the path swings away south eastwards (SD 735803) just below High Pike.

Descending the steep path, you cross three walls then turn left (SD 739791) heading for the farm at Ivescar. The path becomes a broader track heading towards the railway viaduct. Just before Winterscales farm, turn right through a gate.

Turn left past Gunnerfleet Farm (SD 753796) and follow the obvious track to pass under the viaduct and marvel at how they managed to build this in the 1870s!

The return to the car is now clear.

This walk can be accessed from the station at Ribblehead should you wish to avoid using a car and the station building houses an interesting collection of railway memorabilia.

