

Walk 5: Wray, Brathay and Ambleside

A romantic walk of castles and forests, which incorporates a trip across the lake.

Difficulty: Easy to Moderate

7.5 miles

719 ft altitude gain

3 - 4 hrs

This super walk is only possible in the summer months when the launch is running from [Waterside](#) (Ambleside) to Wray.

It begins with a delightful crossing of the legendary Lake Windermere to Wray Castle, where you can find toilets and refreshments. You will continue through fields and forests, reaching the River



Ambleside.

The tracks proceed without much difficulty, although fields can always be muddy if there has been recent rain.

This pilgrimage visits three churches on the way where you can pause and follow the meditations provided, or just have a rest and look around.

You will finish back in Ambleside where there are more cafés to choose from than you can imagine.

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Meditation 1: On the shore of Windermere at Waterside

A Prayer to start the walk:

Lord, make me see thy glory in every place.

Michelangelo (1475-1564)

The Walk:

For this walk a convenient car park is the Ambleside Waterside car park which is opposite the jetty from where you will catch a boat. The cruises are seasonal so you should check the website for availability, times and prices: [Green Cruise \(windermere-lakecruises.co.uk\)](http://GreenCruise(windermere-lakecruises.co.uk))



1. Take the cruise on Windermere from Waterside jetties in Ambleside to Wray Castle. On disembarkation from the boat, follow signs up to Wray Castle, where you can find a nice cup of coffee.

2. When you are ready, head up the drive away from the castle. You can reach Wray Church by following the metal fence away from the driveway to the left; there is a small un-signposted path. Unfortunately, the church is no longer in use and you will find it locked, but the churchyard is peaceful and well maintained.

3. Leave the churchyard and turn right and right again when you reach the road. Follow the road for about 200 yards until you see a turning on your left for a cycle track directing you towards Ambleside and Hawkshead.



The track follows the road for a short distance, but when you get to a fork, keep right, following the sign to Pull Wyke and Ambleside. After a while the track crosses the road and continues towards Ambleside. The path moves away from the road and meanders through beautiful woods, crossing the driveway to Pullwood holiday cottages.

Meditation 2: In Pull Woods

At a convenient place in the wood, you might want to stop and reflect.

Stay still and listen. Even though these woods are quiet, there might have been quite a lot of noise up until now. There has been the sound of your steps, twigs snapping underfoot, the rustle of your clothing. There has been the sound of your breathing. If you have companions with you, there has been the sound of



conversation. Above all perhaps, there has been noise of your thoughts, a relentless interior chatter about yesterday and tomorrow. If you can, turn that off for a short while and enjoy the present moment, and notice things you hadn't seen, felt, heard or smelled until now.

A tiny trickle of water perhaps, birds beginning to sing, animals moving. Perhaps you can hear traffic (we are not far from the road) or other machinery, a reminder of human life going on. In short, we discover that the whole world around us is teeming with life, with movement, with sound. We knew it was there, but we wouldn't have experienced this moment in all its fullness if we hadn't taken the time to stop.

Similarly, Christians know in theory that God, through Christ, is with them all the time. But perhaps most of us don't stop often enough to really feel his presence. But when we do, we discover a God who has been searching for us like a shepherd for his sheep, like a woman with a lost coin, or like a father with his lost prodigal son.

Reading: Luke 17:20-21

Once Jesus was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, and he answered, 'The kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed; nor will they say, "Look, here it is!" or "There it is!" For, in fact, the kingdom of God is among you.'

Prayer:

God be in my head, and in my understanding;
God be in mine eyes, and in my looking;
God be in my mouth, and in my speaking;
God be in my heart, and in my thinking;
God be at mine end, and at my departing.

Sarum Primer, 1558

4. When you reach the road turn right along a footpath/cycle track. After 200 yards you'll come to a gap in the wall. Cross the road to Pull Beck and follow the finger post up through the field in front of you.

5. At the top of the hill go straight on through an iron gate and a couple of fields following a clear path. You will walk round a caravan park on your right. Turn left when you reach the driveway.

Meditation 3: At the top of the hill

When you have reached the top of the hill, you might like to pause to catch your breath and take in the view.

The Celtic saints had a very strong sense of the continuing presence of God in the world around them. As well as a deep love of the scriptures (think of the beautifully illuminated texts of the period), they also considered the environment they lived and worked in to be sacred. Every wood, every rocky outcrop took on mystical significance. No doubt, some of this came from their pagan past, but this reverence for nature was transformed by Christian prayer and reflection.

In the centuries since then, more intellectual and doctrinal formulations have dominated, but maybe that Celtic sense of the mysterious incarnational nature of all creation speaks closely to our age, which is why it is being rediscovered. As you look around, try to see the landscape as a holy place.

Reading: Psalm 96:11-12

*Let the heavens rejoice and let the earth be glad;
let the sea thunder and all that is in it;
Let the fields be joyful and all that is in them;
let all the trees of the wood shout for joy before the Lord.*

Prayer:

You are the peace of all things calm
You are the place to hide from harm
You are the light that shines in dark
You are the heart's eternal spark
You are the door that's open wide
You are the guest who waits inside
You are the stranger at the door
You are the calling of the poor
You are my Lord and with me still
You are my love, keep me from ill
You are the light, the truth, the way
You are my Saviour this very day.

(Celtic oral tradition - 1st millennium)

6. After 200 yards, turn right on the road into Skelwith Fold village and then right again down Bog Lane. Soon you will see [Brathay Church](#) on the hill in front of you. (There is a diversion down to the river along Bog Lane which is lovely if you choose to take it. It will bring you back to the road before you get to the church).



7. Go left over the footbridge next to Brathay church hall. Then turn right on the main road going towards Ambleside and follow it round until you reach Rothay Bridge. Just before the bridge, turn left along Under Loughrigg. After about half a mile, turn right over the footbridge then right again and straight on through the park. Exit the park and soon turn right into [St Mary's Church](#) Car Park.

8. St Mary's is usually open and you are welcome to go inside and look around. When you have finished, go through the car park and out the gate at the other end. Keep right and walk through [White Platts Park](#), bearing left. It will bring you out onto the main road opposite Rothay Garth bed and breakfast where you should turn right along the road. Once you are past the rugby club on your right, go

through the wooden gate marked with the National Trust logo to access Borrans Park where you can explore a fascinating Roman Fort. *(When there is stock grazing, this gate may be closed, in which case you can follow the road round to Waterside.)*



Follow the path through the park. At the end of the park, step back out onto the road and continue round the corner to find the starting point.

Meditation 4: A prayer to finish

O flaming Mountain, O chosen Sun, O full Moon,
O bottomless Well, O unattainable Height,
O Brightness beyond compare, O Wisdom without measure,
O Mercy unsurpassed, O Might irresistible,
O Crown of all glory: your lowly creature sings your praises.

Mechthild of Magdeburg (c.1207-c.1282)