

Miles Without Stiles

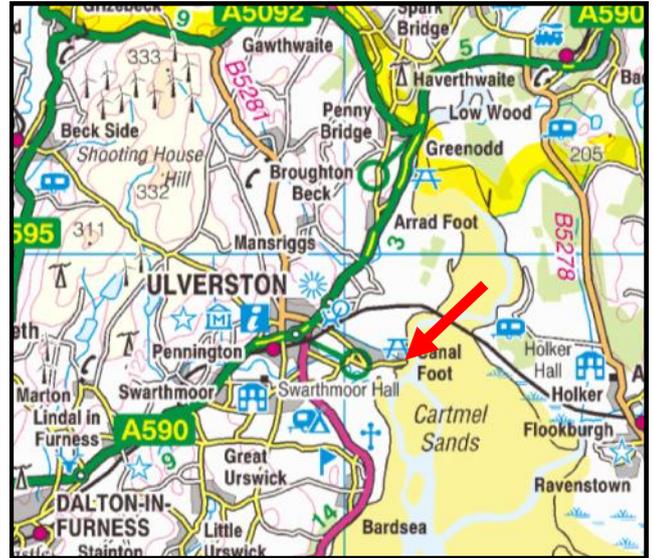


Cumbria
County Council

Ulverston Canal

Route Information

- Distance** 4.5 km/2.5 miles (return)
- Time needed** 2 hours (approx)
- Terrain** Tarmac surface throughout
- Start point**
Car park near the Bay Horse Inn, Canal Foot
- OS Grid Ref:** SD 313 777
- Post code:** LA12 9EL
- Public Transport**
Canal Foot is served by bus route 60 (limited service). It is not a low floor vehicle.



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Ulverston Canal is claimed to be the deepest, widest and straightest canal in the UK. This linear route follows the canal side path, and provides enjoyable access for walkers, wheelchair users and those with pushchairs and young children.

The canal path provides plenty of opportunity to spot wildlife and glimpses of the area's industrial heritage. The start point at Canal Foot is on the coast and offers panoramic views across the Leven Estuary and Cartmel Sands to Morecambe Bay. As you travel inland towards Ulverston, there are views over agricultural land to the Barrow Monument on Hoad Hill and the Coniston Fells in the far distance. Apart from two short gradients of 3° the route is level, but there are slight crossfalls in places.

The starting point for this walk is the car park near the Bay Horse Inn. There is space for several vehicles and there are picnic benches on the lawn. On leaving the car park, cross the bridge over the canal, by the remnants of the old lock gates, and bear left to follow the canal path.

The canal was cut to enable sea-going ships to get closer to Ulverston so that the town could compete with local 'rival' ports like Lancaster and Barrow. Work began in 1803, and it took 3 years to dig the one mile long, 65ft wide and 15 ft deep canal.

Continue inland alongside the canal, and pass through a gap between a gate post and hedge (90 cm wide). An nearby information panel details more of the canal's history more history.



Old lock gates mark the start of the canal

The industrial site on the far side of the canal belongs to the pharmaceutical company GlaxoSmithKline, who bought the canal in 1974. The area is managed for conservation and recreation, but should there be a major fire at GSK, the canal will serve as an emergency water supply.

After about 180m you will encounter the first of several speed bumps which are located at regular intervals along the route: a one metre wide central gap leaves enough space for a wheelchair to pass through. Please be aware that there is vehicular access along this track for farm vehicles and residents.



View along the canal side path

Throughout the route you will encounter short sections with cross falls of up to 4° (1:14 gradient) which tend to slope away from the canal.

You might occasionally meet anglers and there are access points for fishing in several locations on the canal side - beware of unprotected edges.

The views gradually open out to your right over farmland and after about one kilometre you will come to a bench. From here you can enjoy glimpses of the Coniston Fells in the distance.

Continuing onwards, ascend a short ramp (3°, 1:20 gradient) to cross a disused railway line. There is a brief uneven section whilst crossing the tracks, after which a short descent (3°, 1:20 gradient) returns us to the smoother surface of the canal side path.



Hoad Hill overlooks the canal path

As you travel towards Ulverston you will notice a white 'lighthouse' on the prominent Hoad Hill which overlooks the canal. It is actually a monument to Sir John Barrow who was born in Ulverston in 1764, and who was the founder member of the Royal Geographic Society, and held various post in the government of the time. The Grade II listed building is 100ft high and is a replica of the 3rd Eddystone lighthouse. It cost £1250 to build in 1850 and in 2009/2010 the monument underwent a £1.2 million restoration.

After you have gone under the rail bridge you will soon reach the canal basin, where you'll find several benches and another information panel.



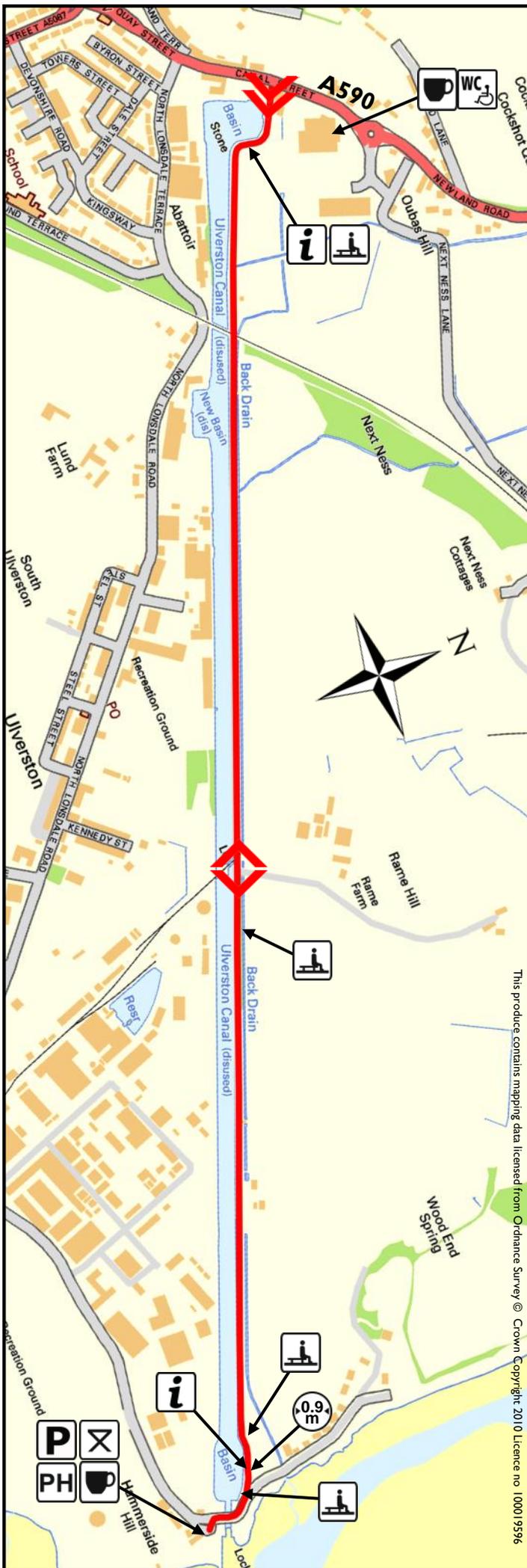
The Railway bridge towards the end of the route

From the early 1800's to the coming of the railway in 1850, the canal basin was a hive of activity with ships being loaded and unloaded at the docks. There were warehouses, ship builders, an iron foundry, a sailmaker and many other businesses associated with the port.

The arrival of the railway meant that goods could easily be sent directly to Barrow, which could accept much larger ships, and so the canal fell into disuse shortly afterwards.

From the basin, a steep incline (6°, 1:10 gradient) leads up to the busy A590, which has narrow pavements (unsuitable for wheelchairs). There is no public parking at the canal basin. If you are using a wheelchair you may want to retrace your route from here back to the start.

If you are on foot, it is a short walk of approx 200 metres along this road to the café and toilet facilities at Booths (just turn right).



Route Map Key

-  Car parking
-  Refreshments
-  Public House
-  Picnic Area
-  Rest points
-  Site interpretation point
-  Width restriction feature
-  Recommended Route
-  Gradient 1:10, 6°
-  Gradient 1:20, 3°

Useful Numbers and Points of Information

- Ulverston Tourist Information Centre
Tel/Fax: 01229 588994
Email: corohall@southlakeland.gov.uk
- Traveline - Tel: 0875 2002233
- The Ulverston Canal can be found on Ordnance Survey Outdoor Leisure Map 7.

Refreshments and toilets close to the route

- The Bay Horse Hotel and Restaurant
Tel: 01229 583972
Web: www.thebayhorsehotel.co.uk
- Booths Supermarket
Tel: 01229 588003
Web: www.booths.co.uk