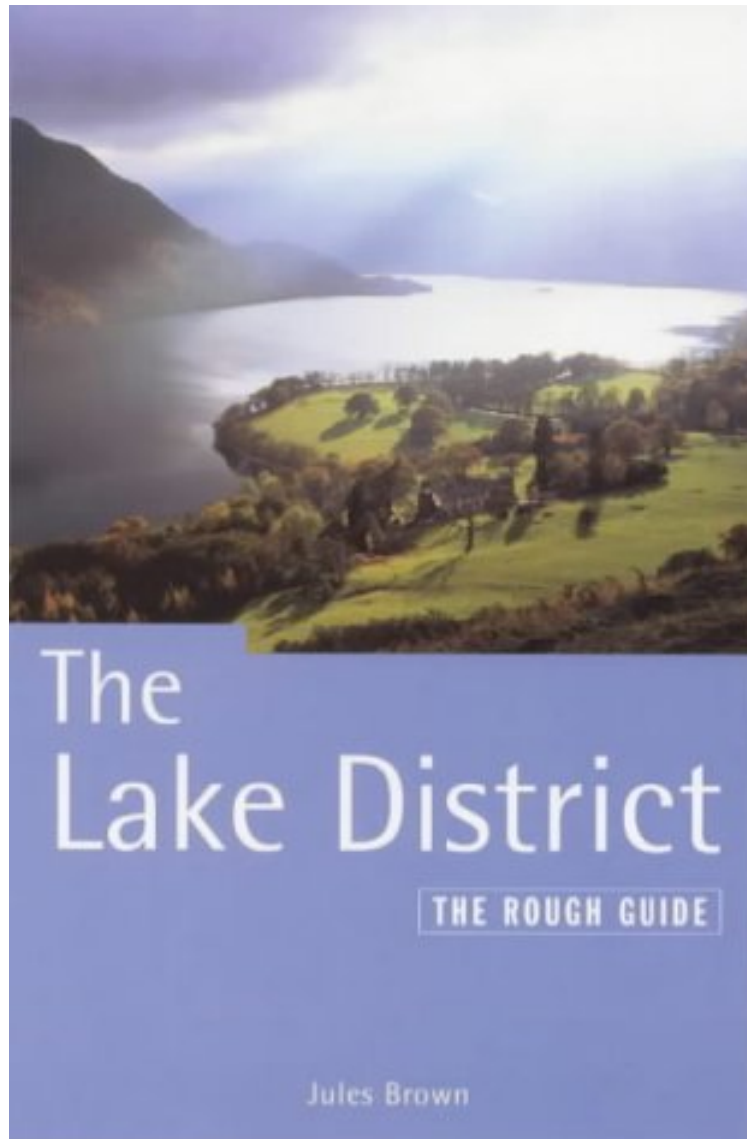


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Jules Brown

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Jules Brown : The Rough Guide to The English Lake District, 1st Edition (Rough Guide to the Lake District) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Rough Guide to The English Lake District, 1st Edition (Rough Guide to the Lake District):

This guide has advice on Lakeland walks, safe fell-walking, and tips on the right equipment to use and the best maps to buy. With reviews of the best places to eat, drink and stay, it also has coverage of lesser-known lakes and the area's literary heritage.

No other guide to the region has the Rough Guide's all-embracing approach. -- Sunday Telegraph, 11 June 2000, London, UKExcerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Where to go Given its relatively small size, it's easy to see a great deal of the Lake District in just a few days, even if you are travelling by public transport or getting around on foot. The southern and central lakes and valleys get the most attention, as well as northern destinations such as Keswick, Derwent Water and Ullswater. Less visited (because they take more effort to reach) are the western lakes and valleys and the far northern reaches beyond Keswick. But determined hikers will be able to find quiet spots almost anywhere in the National Park. If you're pushed for time, you could tour around most of what's detailed below in a week, but you'd be doing precious little walking or relaxing. It's far better to pick a base and see what you can from there, hiking rather than driving between villages, and building in time for doing nothing more strenuous on occasion than taking out a rowboat or picnicking in a meadow. Windermere is the largest lake with the most boating opportunities and features the National Park headquarters on its shores at Brockhole. The lake's towns - Windermere, Bowness and, especially, Ambleside - are among the region's busiest settlements and, given their choice of accommodation, cafs, restaurants and pubs, they make obvious bases. Even if they don't plan to stay there, most people at least pass by Windermere on the way to Grasmere and the famous Wordsworth houses of Rydal Mount and Dove Cottage, or to pretty Hawkshead and Beatrix Potter's house at Hill Top. Nearby Coniston is perhaps the least attractive of all the lakeland villages, but it sits at the head of engaging Coniston Water which boasts the big draw of Brantwood, home of the critic and essayist John Ruskin, and of Grizedale Forest. Away from the main settlements and literary trail, there are renowned hikes, peaks and tarns in central Langdale, or calm rural pockets in the gentler hills and dales south of Windermere and Coniston. On the whole, the scenery is more dramatic in the north, where four peaks - Scafell Pike, Scafell, Helvellyn and Skiddaw - top out at over 3000 feet, and several other equally famous mountains (including Great Gable and Blencathra) don't lag far behind. There are, of course, literally hundreds of other mountains, crags and fells to roam, while the quite different lakes of Derwent Water and Ullswater provide superb backdrops for a day's cruising and walking. Keswick, the main town in the north, is the one major lakeland settlement with real year-round character, and it makes a handy base for exploring: south through the precipitous delights of Borrowdale, a valley for which the word picturesque might have been invented; west over the forested Whinlatter Pass; or north around the little-visited region known as Back o' Skiddaw. The summer crowds tend to thin out in the western side of the Park. Although Buttermere and Crummock Water see a fair amount of traffic, West Water, Ennerdale Water and Loweswater lie further off the beaten track. The only part of the Cumbrian coastline that lies within the National Park stretches twenty miles south from Ravenglass, an undistinguished village, but one which provides a bucolic route into the heart of dramatic Eskdale by either road or rail. Outside the National Park, most visitors make time for Kendal and its excellent museums, and the historic market towns of Ulverston, Penrith and Cockermouth, the last also famous as the birthplace of Wordsworth. For a glimpse of the erstwhile religious influence on the Lakes, Furness Abbey and the priory church in the attractive village of Cartmel, both on the southern flanks of the National Park, also demand attention. Those are the lakeland highlights, though each chapter introduction does a more detailed job of picking out local attractions and offbeat destinations. If hiking and the great outdoors isn't your bag, it's tempting to say that you're on the wrong holiday, though the Lake District does have a fair amount to satisfy other interests. The region's literary connections are justly famous, though you may be surprised to find that it's not all Wordsworth, Coleridge and De Quincey: writers and poets as diverse as Sir Hugh Walpole, Norman Nicholson and John Ruskin have left their mark on the Lakes. There's an industrial history, too, which manifests itself in scattered mining works, scarred quarry sites, surviving mills (one still working at Stott Park) and a couple of old railway lines - Ravenglass to Eskdale, and Lakeside to Haverthwaite - now converted to tourist use. The Lake District also has one of the country's highest concentrations of classic rural pubs and inns, many of them former coaching inns dating back several hundred years. Finally, in summer, the region hosts many of its annual sports, festivals and events, many recently revived in the face of tourist interest, but nonetheless providing a fascinating snapshot of traditional rural life.