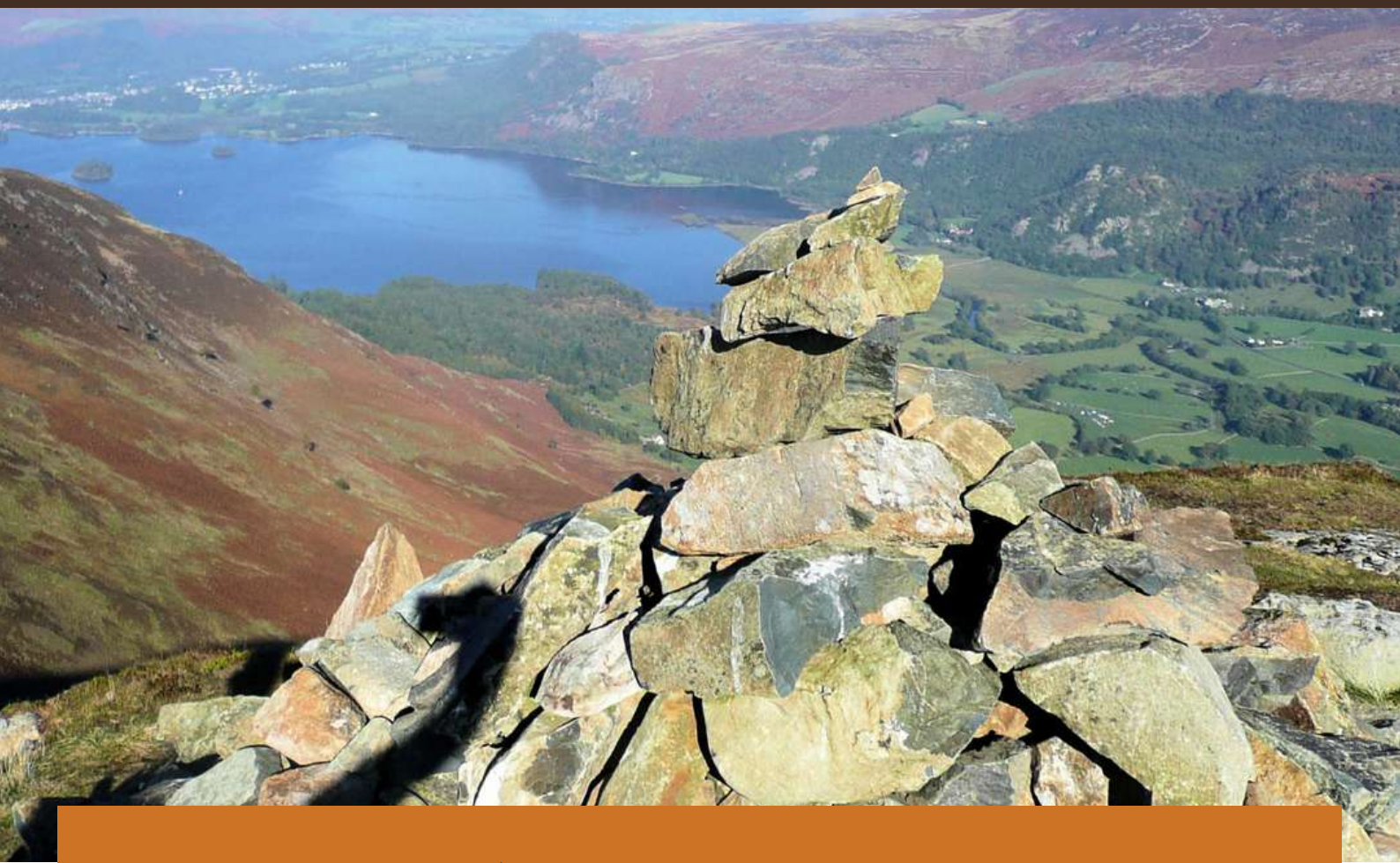




The Royal Oak
HOTEL

Borrowdale, Keswick

WELCOME TO OUR
OCTOBER NEWSLETTER

The Spirit of Autumn – Discover
the North Lake District

IMMERSE YOURSELF IN NATURE: A GUIDE TO FOREST BATHING

In our fast-paced, technology-driven world, finding a moment of calm can be a challenge. But what if the secret to stress relief was as simple as stepping outside and walking among the trees? This is the core principle of a practice called "forest bathing," or shinrin-yoku, a wellness trend with deep roots in Japan.

The concept was officially coined in 1982 by the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries as a way to combat the rising stress levels of the country's workforce due to the technical revolution. The government saw it as a natural antidote to burnout and a way to encourage people to appreciate and protect their nation's forests.

What started as an intuitive idea quickly gained scientific backing. Researchers, most notably Dr. Qing Li, discovered that spending time in a forest could lower blood pressure, reduce stress hormones and even boost the immune system by exposing the body to beneficial compounds released by trees, known as phytoncides.

In recent decades, shinrin-yoku has spread from Japan to become a global wellness trend. It is now practiced worldwide, including the Lake District. Its popularity has grown as a way to combat the negative effects of a modern, urbanized lifestyle disconnected from the natural world.

So, what exactly do you do in the forest? It's not about hiking for exercise or identifying different types of plants. It's about a slow, mindful, and sensory experience. The goal is to fully immerse yourself in the forest atmosphere and connect with nature.

Go slowly, leave your phone behind and wander without a destination. The goal is to be present, not to get from point A to point B. Engage your senses and pay attention to what you see, hear, smell, and feel. Notice the way sunlight filters through the canopy, the sound of leaves rustling, the earthy scent of the soil, or the texture of a tree's bark.

Breathe deeply and inhale the fresh air and the aroma of the trees. This is how you absorb the phytoncides that are believed to have a positive effect on your body. Sit and reflect, find a comfortable spot to sit quietly and simply observe the nature around you. This is a time for calm and reflection.

Forest bathing is a simple yet powerful practice that can help you find a sense of peace and clarity. It's an invitation to slow down, reconnect with the natural world, and recharge your mind and body.



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A PENNY FOR THEM – MINDFULNESS AND THOUGHTS

Take a moment to simply be. After a day of adventures on the fells, we invite you to sit quietly and let your mind wander without judgment. It's a chance to savour the present moment, whether you're relaxing with a book in one of our lounges, enjoying a hot drink by the fire, or simply gazing out at the magnificent Borrowdale landscape. In a world that's always demanding your attention, a little time for quiet reflection is the perfect way to truly unwind, recharge and appreciate the simple beauty of your surroundings.

So, go on—a penny for your thoughts. We hope you find a few peaceful ones here at The Royal Oak.



HIGH SPY

Starting in the busy little hamlet of Rosthwaite, the route initially follows the Cumbria Way along the banks of the River Derwent, before climbing up on to one of the best ridge routes in the northwestern fells, ascending to the summit of High Spy at over 2,000 feet before finally descending past the remains of Rigghead Quarries back down to the valley floor to return to Rosthwaite.

The walk from Rosthwaite to High Spy is a challenging but rewarding route that offers a true taste of the Lake District's rugged beauty. It's an excellent choice for experienced walkers seeking panoramic views and a sense of accomplishment.



Here's a breakdown of the key information for the walk:

ROUTE & TERRAIN

The most common route is a circular walk starting from the National Trust car park in Rosthwaite. The path begins with a relatively gentle section across fields before a sustained, steep ascent. The route often follows Tongue Gill, and as you climb, the terrain becomes rockier and more challenging. You'll encounter old quarry workings and scree slopes before reaching the open fellside and the summit of High Spy. The descent can be steep, often leading back towards the valley floor and the River Derwent.

DIFFICULTY & DURATION

This is considered a strenuous or difficult walk. While the distance may not be excessive (around 7-9 miles depending on the exact route), the significant elevation gain (over 2,000 feet) makes it a demanding climb. The walk typically takes between 4 to 6 hours to complete, but this can vary greatly depending on fitness levels and how often you stop to enjoy the scenery.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS & POINTS OF INTEREST

- **Tongue Gill & Rigghead Quarries:** The path up to High Spy takes you past the historical Rigghead Quarries. You can see the remains of old mine workings and adits (mine entrances), which are a fascinating glimpse into the area's industrial past.
- **Panoramic Views:** From the summit of High Spy, you are rewarded with breathtaking 360-degree views. On a clear day, you can see across the Borrowdale and Newlands Valleys, with stunning vistas of other notable fells like the Scafell range, Great Gable, and Catbells.
- **The Catbells Ridge:** Many routes combine High Spy with a traverse of the popular Catbells ridge, adding to the length and challenge but offering a different perspective of Derwentwater.

ESSENTIAL ADVICE

- **Navigation:** While the main paths are well-worn, it is essential to carry a map (OS Explorer OL4 is recommended) and a compass, as weather conditions can change rapidly on the fells, leading to poor visibility.
- **Equipment:** Sturdy hiking boots are a must due to the rocky and uneven terrain. Be prepared for all weather conditions, carrying waterproof and warm layers, even on a sunny day.
- **Safety:** The old quarry workings contain unstable adits and shafts. Do not attempt to enter them, as they can be extremely dangerous.



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WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN OCTOBER: A SPOTTER'S GUIDE

October is a wonderful month to notice the changing colours of the Borrowdale Valley. The woodlands are turning gold, amber and russet as leaves begin to fall, with beech, oak and birch showing their best autumn shades. Look to the hedgerows and damp ground for late fungi such as fly agaric, puffballs and chanterelles, and you may still spot the last of the wildflowers like devil's-bit scabious, adding a splash of colour before the frosts set in. Berries are abundant now—rowan, hawthorn and holly are heavy with fruit, providing a vital food source for birds and mammals as they prepare for winter.

Wildlife is busy in October, with red squirrels caching hazelnuts, badgers fattening up for the colder months, and deer beginning their rut. Overhead, buzzards can often be seen circling high above the valley, the haunting call of the tawny owl can be heard, while the sharper-winged silhouette of the peregrine falcon may flash past on a hunting dive.

Along the River Derwent, those with patience and luck might even glimpse an otter slipping silently through the water in search of fish. Flocks of fieldfares and redwings are also arriving from Scandinavia, filling the hedgerows and feeding on the autumn berries, while robins and wrens become more noticeable as other birds grow quieter. It's a month full of movement and preparation, as the valley shifts into its autumn rhythm and the wildlife prepares for the colder months.

