

3. Ennerdale – The Place

Location

Ennerdale is a remote valley on the western fringe of the Lake District National Park in Cumbria. Neighbouring Ennerdale are the popular Lakeland valleys of Buttermere and Wasdale. Further west, along the lower lying coastal strip, are urban communities built on a tradition of manufacturing industries (coal mining & ship building) which include the towns of Cleator Moor, Egremont and Whitehaven. Transport links are relatively poor, with the principle main road and rail networks located further north and east towards Carlisle and Penrith.

Facts & Figures

The Ennerdale valley is 9 miles long, 3.5 miles wide (14.5 by 5.6km) at it's widest, ridge to ridge, and extends to an area of 11,640 acres (4711 ha). The valley narrows from west to east and is surrounded by dramatic ridges which include some of Lakeland's highest summits: Green Gable, Great Gable, Pillar, Kirk Fell & Steeple. This stewardship plan covers an area of 10,625 acres (4300 ha) – this being the land owned by the three Wild Ennerdale partners.

The historically unpopulated, upper part of the valley is remote from any public roads or habitation. Public vehicle access is permitted as far as Bowness Knott on the north shore of the lake. Beyond this point vehicle access is restricted (with no metalled road), leaving the remaining seven miles of the valley accessible on foot, bike or horseback. The high fells are grazed by sheep, while the lower slopes and valley bottom are predominantly forest and pastoral farmland. Further west, the mountains give way to a more open vista out towards the coast. Ennerdale Water (fed by the River Liza and numerous mountain becks) is prominent in the landscape and provides a drinking water supply to communities on the West Coast of Cumbria. The Lake is 2.5 miles long by 1 mile wide (4.0 by 1.6km) and 147 feet (44m) at its deepest point. Surrounding the lake is pastoral farmland and buildings, together with a mix of conifer and broadleaf woodland. The nearest settlement is Ennerdale Bridge (population 270¹), located one mile west of Ennerdale Water.

Ennerdale boasts a wide variety of vegetation types which reflect the range in altitude, from 328 feet (100m) beside the lake to nearly 3000 feet (900m) on the mountain summits. Habitats range from the agricultural land and riparian zones of the valley bottom, through the coniferous and broadleaf woodland of the lower and middle slopes, to the heather moorland and rock of the upper slopes. The highest ridges and summits are characterised by a low growing montane heath. A number of designated sites exist in the valley, representing areas of value for nature conservation, geology and archaeology. These sights are designated for their regional, national or international importance.

People have lived and worked in Ennerdale for centuries and the valley continues to support livelihoods today, mostly through farming, forestry, conservation management and tourism. Visitor numbers are fewer when compared to neighbouring Lakeland valleys, primarily due to the remote location, restricted vehicle access and low key tourism provisions (marketing and facilities). Those who do visit the valley, whether from nearby local communities or from further afield, do so to enjoy the spectacular scenery, peace and tranquillity the valley has to offer².

[Linked Maps: A, B & L](#)

¹ Ennerdale & Kinniside Parish Plan, 1997 Local Profile

² Visitor Survey Results 2005, Wild Ennerdale