

LAKE DISTRICT

Ambleside Champion Tree Trail

Follow the tree symbols as you wind through Skelghyll Woods, and discover some of the tallest trees in Cumbria – and England. With picnic benches at all the best viewpoints, this is a great short walk to enjoy at lunchtime. You may even spot a red squirrel having a snack too.



Information

Address: Stagshaw Garden National Trust car park, near Ambleside, Cumbria, LA22 0HE

OS map: Explorer OL07

Activity: Walking

Easy: Generally wide, undulating tracks with one short, steep climb. For further details, please see Terrain section.

Dog friendly: Dogs are welcome. Please keep your dog on a lead due to animals grazing, and take any mess home with you.

Full trail: Miles: 0.8 (km: 1.28)

Access: Challenging

Duration: 45 mins

Terrain

The trail follows some original paths and tracks that were first used by coppice craftsmen to move cut timber around the wood, and then by the Victorians as they planted exotic conifer trees. The paths are generally wide and undulating, but have narrow and bumpy parts leading up- and downhill. The trail has one short and steep climb, which is lined with very tall trees, worthy of a stop to admire them while catching a breath.

Total steps: 10

Start point: Stagshaw Garden National Trust car park, off the A591, grid ref: NY38100290

1. Standing in the car park for Stagshaw Garden, look uphill and you will see a metal sign saying Skelghyll Woods. At this sign take the right-hand footpath into the woods.
2. Follow the route as it passes the first of three picnic benches, and joins a historic track that is wide and gentle. It passes through conifers that were planted by Victorian plant collectors.
3. Shortly after passing through a gap cut into a fallen tree, turn left to begin a steep climb through the Gallery of Giants.
4. If you don't have the energy to walk up this steep hill, there is a picnic bench here where you can admire champion trees with ease. Otherwise continue uphill, looking at the trees as you go.
5. After a short trek, you will be in amongst the tallest Wellingtonia and Douglas fir trees in Cumbria, and the tallest grand fir in England. Their heights are written on plaques attached to the trees.
6. Halfway up the hill, turn right to follow a narrow path onto a wide, rocky outcrop. If you turn around and look, you can see the tallest tree in its entirety – a rare and awe-inspiring sight.
7. From here, stay on the outcrop but meander uphill to re-join the path. It gently curves up and left, passing another picnic bench sited on a flat piece of ground called a 'charcoal hearth' that coppice craftsmen will have used when making charcoal.
8. Pass through another gap in a fallen tree and follow the gentle curve up and right, weaving between trees in a conifer grove, each with unique colours and patterns on their bark.

9. On joining a level path, turn left and follow this until you reach a junction with a larger path weaving down through the wood. Follow this wide track downhill, keeping left as you go, past a beautiful bubbling beck.
 10. Before long you will find yourself back in the car park where you started, hopefully with enough time to explore Stagshaw Garden.
- End point: Stagshaw Garden National Trust car park, off the A591, grid ref: NY38100290
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