

In and around **Witherslack**



Welcome to Witherslack, gateway to dramatic landscapes of limestone cliffs, peaceful peatbogs and wonderful woodlands

Explore the mosaic of habitats in this area, and see something new at every turn. The ancient peatbogs here are home to red deer, the limestone pavements are a haven for butterflies, and springtime in the woods is truly spectacular.

In this guide you will find...

- **Seasonal highlights**
- **Three great days out**
- **How to get around**

Don't Miss...

There's so much wildlife to experience, but if time is of the essence, here are our top 3 highlights not to be missed:

- 1 Keep your eyes and ears peeled for red deer at Foulshaw Moss and Meathop mosses nature reserves**
- 2 Marvel at beautiful butterflies and admire the view among the woodlands around Whitbarrow National Nature Reserve**
- 3 Enjoy the magic of spring around the Lyth Valley**



Look out for butterflies like this green hairstreak

© David Morris

On a rainy day...

Take the train to Leighton Moss RSPB Reserve in Silverdale where you can watch wildlife under the shelter of a cosy hide, call 01524 701601. Or visit a historic house like Levens Hall (015395 60321) or Sizergh Castle (015395 60951).

Fascinating fact

Under the peat bog at Foulshaw Moss lies the remains of a Bronze Age road made from birch and ash trees laid side by side.

Seasonal Highlights

This area is full of wildlife, with something spectacular and different to see whatever the time of year:

Look out for:

SPRING

Green hairstreak butterfly, early purple orchid and carpets of woodland flowers

SUMMER

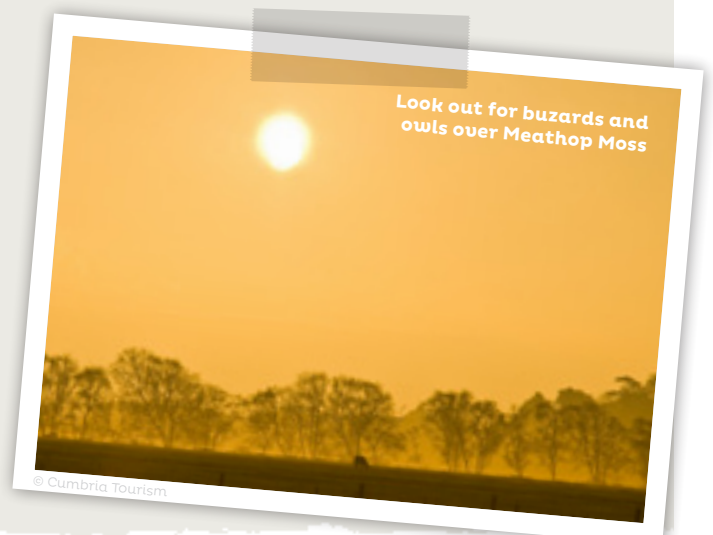
Pearl bordered fritillary butterflies, dragonflies, and insect eating plants

AUTUMN

The spectacular sound of rutting red deer

WINTER

Graceful birds of prey over the mosses and woodlands



Look out for buzzards and owls over Meathop Moss

© Cumbria Tourism

Red Deer Safari

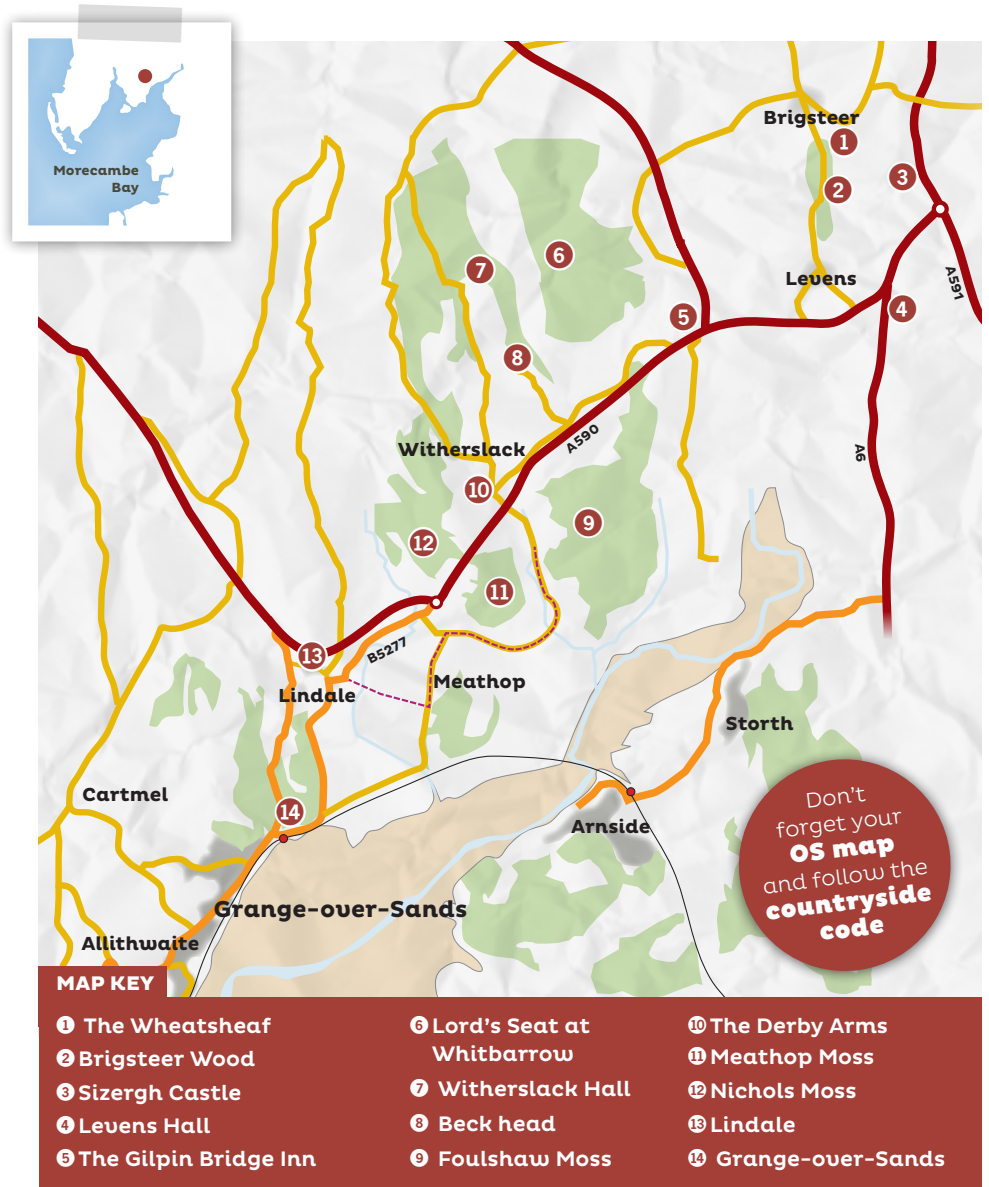
Red deer are the largest of the UK's resident deer species, and a true delight to watch. Their impressive autumn rut, when males compete with other males for access to females, is one of Britain's best wildlife spectacles - listen out for the distinctive roar!

The best place to see this spectacle is at Cumbria Wildlife Trust's Meathop Moss nature reserve, a surviving fragment of the wetlands that once covered this area, and now an internationally important habitat. Visit in spring and you might see young deer playing, and in summer the sundew and butterflies are easy to spot.

- Access Meathop Moss from Highstock Bridge on Regional Cycle Route 70, or walk 10 minutes from the Derby Arms in Witherslack (1km)
- A boardwalk takes you right into the centre of the colourful mosaic of pink, orange and green mosses, look up to see buzzards and owls hunting in the open land. Be aware of ticks and adders, and that paths can be soft.
- Foulshaw Moss and Nichols Moss, two other Wildlife Trust nature reserves are also close by and were once connected to Meathop Moss. Access is being improved at these sites, visit www.cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk for more information.
- Continue on quiet roads to Lindale for a longer walk and country pubs serving food.

Did you know?

A sanatorium was built in Meathop for tuberculosis sufferers because of the healing effects of the fresh air.



Keep your eyes and ears peeled for red deer - one of the Bay's Big 5

© Kevin Kelly

Wildlife with a View

Woodlands are great for wildlife, and around Morecambe Bay you'll see that people have made use of them too. Coppicing (cutting back) woodland lets in more light and makes space for flowering plants like violets and primroses, and these flowers are irresistible to butterflies!

A great place to see butterflies is Whitbarrow National Nature Reserve, a stunning outcrop of limestone covered in wonderful woodland between the Winster and Lyth Valleys. It is home to an abundance of wildlife but in summer it is particularly special for butterflies like high brown fritillary, northern brown argus and pearl bordered fritillary. There are several areas to explore.

- **You can explore Whitbarrow's NNR on public footpaths, with a walk through the wooded slopes to the grassy rocky top. Enter from Witherslack Hall on the west (steep) or The Howe on the east (less steep)**
- **Follow the signposted paths to Lord's Seat for fantastic views**

Literally meaning "white hill", Whitbarrow is made from the fossils of corals and shells, laid down 350 million years ago when the area was a warm shallow sea. It's limestone woodlands are full of primroses in spring.

To the south of Whitbarrow are Witherslack woods, which lie on shale rock instead. The different rocks and soils change the types of plants and flowers that thrive in each wood. The difference between these woods is most noticeable in spring when Witherslack Woods is full of bluebells and the woods on Whitbarrow are full of primroses.

You'll find refreshments nearby at the Derby Arms (015395 5220)7, Gilpin Bridge Inn (01539 552206), or Hikers Rest honesty shop at Beck Head.



Look out for rare pearl bordered fritillaries at Whitbarrow

© Rob Petley Jones

Daffodils and Damsons

Birds singing, flowers opening and butterflies appearing - spring in the woodlands, grasslands and mosses around Morecambe Bay is a true spectacle.

A great place to see spring unfold is in and around the Lyth Valley. Hawfinches arrive to the grounds of the National Trust's Sizergh Castle in December and put on their courtship display around February and March. In April you'll see the orchards and hedgerows of the Lyth Valley become snow white with damson blossom, and more than 5 million wild daffodil flowers in Brigsteer Woods!

- **Cycle Route 70 goes right past Sizergh Castle**
- **From Sizergh Castle take a 1 hour stroll (3.5km) around Holeslack Farm to the church and through Brigsteer Park, Helsington Church and Brigsteer Woods**
- **Pick up a leaflet for more walks from Sizergh Castle shop.**

Refuel at pubs in Levens and Sizergh, Low Sizergh Barn Farm Shop, and Sizergh Castle

Enjoy the Lyth Valley any time of year, be amazed at leaping salmon at Force Falls in autumn, buy fresh damsons from roadside stalls in September, enjoy the views from Helsington Barrow

on a crisp winters' day.

Lyth Valley Damsons

The damson orchards of the Lyth Valley are unique, surrounding each small farmstead and growing along every hedgerow in the valley. The flavour of our damsons is said to be second to none. Damsons have been grown and sold here since the early 1700s, if not earlier. Come along to damson day in April, contact John Holmes at the Westmorland Damson Association (015395 68599).



Wander among spring flowers in Witherslack woods

© Andy Hay rspb images



Getting here

We believe that a car free journey is a care free journey.

- **Arrive under your own steam on National Cycle Route 70 (Walney Island to Sunderland), or Regional Cycle Route 72 from Kendal.**
- **Arrive by train to Grange-over-Sands on a breathtaking route over the Leven or Kent estuary and cycle out to the Witherslack area. Call National Rail Enquiries 08457 48 49 50. Look out for a Duo ticket when two adults travel on Northern Trains**
- **The Cumbria Coastal Way long distance walk from Silverdale to Carlisle passes through Meathop**
- **Hop on the X6 bus from Kendal to Barrow, 530 bus from Cartmel to Kendal, calling at The Derby Arms in Witherslack**

Getting Around

The network of footpaths and lanes are perfect for exploring by boot and bike.

- **Take a compass and a map (OS Explorer Map OL7) and wear appropriate clothing**
- **No bike? No worries! Silverdale Cycle Hire collect and drop off around Witherslack (01524 701537)**
- **Explore on horseback at Witherslack Hall Equestrian Centre (01539 552244)**



Staying Longer

- **Witherslack, or nearby Grange over Sands are a great base for a short break or a longer stay**
- **Call Grange VIC (015395 34026) or visit Bay Tourism or Go Lakes for accommodation**

Moving on

Look out for other itineraries in this series at www.morecambebaynature.org.uk/discover

- **Hike to the Cartmel Peninsula and watch oystercatchers from dramatic viewpoints**
- **Take the train to Barrow-in-Furness, home of the natterjack toad and grey seal**
- **Cycle to Silverdale and listen carefully for the booming bittern**



Useful contacts : call or search online

- **Grange-over-Sands VIC, 015395 34026**
- **www.baytourism.org.uk**
- **Silverdale Cycle Hire 01524 701537**
- **National Rail Enquiries 08457 48 49 50**
- **Traveline 0871 200 22 33**
- **Cumbria Wildlife Trust www.cumbriawildlifetrust.org.uk**



This leaflet is brought to you by Morecambe Bay Local Nature Partnership's Nature Improvement Area and Morecambe Bay Partnership's 700 Days to Transform the Bay scheme. It is funded by Defra, DCLG, Natural England, Forestry Commission, Environment Agency, Coastal Communities Fund and RSPB Futurescapes EU Life Comms +.

The routes described are for guidance only. Please use an up to date map when exploring this area. It's a good idea to plan your route in more detail before you set off, and to check the weather forecast and tide tables. Wear appropriate clothing and don't forget to take food and water. The Partnerships above cannot be held responsible in the unlikely event of injury or accident whilst exploring this area. For more information on the exploring the nature of Morecambe Bay visit www.morecambebaynature.org.uk