

Linthwaite  
House

# THE LAKE DISTRICT

*by plate  
and by foot*

There's more to England's largest national park than lakes and literary links. It's also a culinary destination and a wholesome, family-friendly holiday spot. Emma Winterschladen reflects on two very different trips.

## A farm-to-fork feast

### L'Enclume, Cartmel & Linthwaite House, Lake Windermere

We arrive in Cartmel at dusk to weeping willows and sleeping shops. Sitting on the southern edge of the Lake District, this ancient village is home not only to a famous 12th-century priory, but also a thriving food scene. Notable independent food and drink establishments include the Cartmel Village Shop (known for its esteemed sticky toffee pudding), The Pig and Whistle pub (the place to go for people-watching and a perfect pint), and Unsworth's Yard – an artisan square where you'll find a cheese shop, a wine shop, a brewery and a food market (on the third Friday of every month).

The reason we were here though was the reason this small Cumbrian village has grown to become an internationally acclaimed food destination: L'Enclume. The original, humble offering of chef Simon Rogan's now-thriving restaurant empire, this former blacksmith's workshop holds two Michelin stars and five AA Rosettes, as well as being named the number one restaurant in the UK by *The Good Food Guide 2020*. It also has 16 bedrooms for guests, scattered around the village (and all in walking or, in our case post-wine-flight, tottering-



Delicious dishes and the kitchen garden at L'Enclume



distance of the restaurant).

Simon's footprint has firmly been in Cartmel for 18 years, after he fell in love with the area – both its landscape and produce. It's easy to see the allure; within just a day of exploring the winding lanes and surrounding valleys, my partner and I were looking up property prices for our own handsome stone cottage (note: they were handsomely priced too!).

On our second evening we arrived at 6pm for our reservation. Sitting low-key at the end of a quiet street, inside it's both rugged and polished – exposed low-beam ceilings hang above perfectly painted thick stone walls, soft lighting reflects off natural woods, fresh flowers sit alongside a 13th-century anvil (the original blacksmith tool the restaurant is named after). We settled in with a glass of Exton Park sparkly, tucked into a table with an enveloping view of fellow diners and a sneak peek of the (noticeably calm) kitchen in the corner.

We were then presented with a menu, *the menu* – a daunting

16-course affair, including word combinations like 'seaweed custard with sugar kelp' and 'vintage Sweetbell turnips'. There was enough information to make your mouth water, but not quite enough for your mind to successfully conjure up each dish.

We start with the aforementioned turnips poached in a broth, rich and smoky with bacon fat and crispy lichen (moss). Then there was a 'moss'-covered pebble – or a 'cod stone' to be precise, made with creamy salt cod mousse, parsley and pepper dulse. A rice-crispy-esque fritter filled with pork and smoked eel, served with tangy fermented sweetcorn purée, followed – a morsel that somehow lingered on the lips long after we'd finished. The pace of it all was perfect: enough time to dwell on each course, but with a bespoke rhythm that kept the evening flowing and exciting.

The bread and butter truffle pudding made with croissants was as joyful (and rich) as it sounds,

especially when slathered in truffled garlic egg custard. In fact, it was the first of our custard dishes. Later on came a seaweed variant with firm razor clams and pop-in-the-mouth caviar. Throughout it all we enjoyed the signature wine flight, and the Alvarinho Contacto, served with this dish, still stands out. Crisp like apples, it cut through the salty creaminess.

At the heart of L'Enclume is a 'farm-to-table' philosophy, with many of the restaurant's ingredients not only grown down the road on Rogan's 12-acre farm ('Our Farm'), but also a hyper-seasonal, almost daily-changing menu itself shaped by what farm manager Paul Cambre pulls out of the soil that day. This particular day it included biodynamic leeks, which head chef Tom Barnes gently cooked in miso butter with a pickled quail's egg.

Fish dishes were both light, bright and bold (West Coast turbot and mussels with buttermilk and

**'We start with the turnips poached in a broth, rich and smoky with bacon fat and crispy lichen'**



lovage), and comfort food-worthy (think Cornish potatoes, chicken fat and roast chicken skin). It wasn't just the flavours though, it was the textures too. Meaty duck hearts salted in walnut vinegar were hiding in a silky cheese sauce. Thirty-day dry-aged duck, skin brushed with fermented wheatbran (think Marmite), was served with chocolate malt broth and a spongy, butter-laden duck fat crumpet. Micro herbs and flowers were woven artfully through many a dish, like in the frozen Tunworth cheese (course 13), which was served with verbena and crumbled in the mouth like a refreshing savoury sherbet.

Before we knew it, nearly five hours had passed. Time was measured in spoonfuls and 'mmms' and 'ahhhs', with words like 'remarkable' and 'wow' thrown around with increasing abandon. Even now, I can almost relive the meal just by writing about it, so imprinted is each mouthful on my memory (and taste buds).

Our next night was spent just 20 minutes down the road at Linthwaite House, a luxury country hotel with panoramic views over Lake Windermere. Recently refurbished new offerings include Lake Suites hidden among the trees and Simon Rogan's latest restaurant, the Michelin-starred restaurant Henrock.

Elegant and laid-back, with an almost cosmopolitan buzz, it was a totally different vibe to L'Enclume. Globally-influenced dishes are made with locally-produced food, and although we did feel bit sorry that we inevitably compared it to our once-in-a-lifetime meal the previous evening, the food (and cocktails) were still all sorts of pleasing. Twice-baked Jerusalem artichoke with pork crackling, chive and stout vinegar, and venison tartar with salsify, egg yolk jam and aged cheddar were the stand-out starters for us, and our joint main of whole roasted Dover sole with shiso salsa verde and broth of citrus and radish felt like a succulent yet light pivot from 48 hours of rich flavours.

Luckily, we had the rolling hills on our doorstep and were able to walk off our indulgences the next day (after a cocktail-induced lie-in and leisurely breakfast, that is...).

**L'Enclume tasting menu from £155, [lenclume.co.uk](http://lenclume.co.uk); Linthwaite House from £234 per night, including breakfast, [leeucollection.com](http://leeucollection.com)**

## Hill walking

### Goodies Farmhouse, Sedbergh

It can be hard to pinpoint what makes a place you've never been to feel like home. Perhaps it's the way your shoulders instantly drop and your breathing slows down the minute you step through the door. Or that sense that you could happily both snuggle up inside and explore the outside, for days, weeks, without ever getting bored. Goodies Farmhouse is one of these places.

Sitting on the boundary of the Lake District and the Yorkshire Dales, this Elizabethan farmhouse is a slice of history in the hills (the Howgill Fells to be precise). Inside, original oak beams and oak floors are complemented with plush furniture, European *objets d'art*, a piano, an overflowing bookcase, fresh flowers and, in our case upon arrival, a freshly-baked Victoria sponge made by Alexandra, the lovely owner.

Upstairs there's two double rooms and a twin bedroom – perfect for our party: two couples and a set of one-year-old twins. The house's happy place is downstairs though, in the designer conservatory. Perched high above the garden with views reaching out across a valley of grazing sheep and ancient woodland, it's where we spent many an hour quietly reading and window-gazing – and not-so-quietly playing and cuddling with the twins, Scout and Kip.

As much as it was tempting to stay indoors, drink copious cups of tea and enjoy the view, we soon



Walks with the twins, Scout and Kip




wanted to get out and about in the view. Luckily, there are countless walks just waiting to be explored – from gentle baby-friendly ambles on the lower lands to more challenging, cloud-touching hikes on the high fells. We managed to fit in both kinds of walk (the latter being adults-only), and the thing that struck us all about this rugged, beautiful landscape was how empty it was. In the land of hiking holidays, we didn't pass another walking-booted soul on our ten-mile walk through fields, woodland and over Victorian railway bridges.

It felt like we had nature totally to ourselves for the day (along with the birds and the bees and the sheep, of course). In fact, the only time we crossed paths with other humans was when we finally arrived in 'Sleepy Sedbergh', the UK's official Book Town, replete with cute cafés, antique emporiums and, unsurprisingly, bookshops. We were also delighted to find it home to a handful of gastro pubs – from the

smart coaching inn The Black Bull to The Dalesman, a more cosy affair.

For those wanting to travel deeper into the heart of the Lake District and hike some more-well-trodden paths, Ullswater, the second largest lake in England is just a 35-minute drive from Goodies. There, you can enjoy the popular seven-mile adventure from Howtown to Glenridding, or take a boat trip instead, walking back along the lakeshore that inspired Wordsworth to write his famous poem, *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud*.

One thing's for certain: you don't need to be a poet to enjoy the 'sparkling waves' and trees 'fluttering and dancing in the breeze' of this peaceful spot. Although, whether you're visiting Goodies as a couple, a family or with friends (and their twins), you might just find yourselves wanting to stay a while, as Wordsworth did so many years ago. 

**From £1,495 a week for up to six guests, [goodiesfarmhouse.com](http://goodiesfarmhouse.com). Book via [premiercottages.co.uk](http://premiercottages.co.uk).**