

## Culture in South Lakes - Historic Country Houses

*Step inside an historic country house in the South Lakes and get a glimpse into another era of our rich and varied history. There are impressive castles alongside elegant country halls still occupied by the same families today as 100 years ago. Not to mention the former homes of some of the area's most famous creatives – think John Ruskin and William Wordsworth.*

*Pick a couple to see in a day and discover [culture in the South Lakes](#) with our tour of some of the area's most impressive historic country houses.*

### 1 - Levens Hall & Gardens



**Levens Hall** is a Grade I listed Elizabethan mansion, and a great place to spend a day in the South Lakes. Built around a 13th century Pele Tower, the hall is home to fine panelling and plasterwork; period furniture; paintings by Rubens, Lely and Cupy; and the earliest English patchwork.

Outside, it's home to the world's oldest topiary garden, dating back to 1694 and designed by Monsieur Guillaume Beaumont. There's also a small orchard, a rose garden, herbaceous borders, seasonal bedding, and more. Don't miss World Topiary Day, held every May and established by Levens Hall to highlight the art of topiary.

Once you've explored, head to Levens Kitchen for delicious dishes and freshly baked cakes, made using local produce – including ingredients sourced from the gardens themselves.

**Opening Hours: Sunday – Friday for the House and Gardens between April – October. The house is open 10am for tours, 11am – 3:30pm for general admission; the gardens are open 10am – 5pm (last entry 4pm).**

**On-site parking is available for those travelling by car. The 555 Stagecoach bus service stops directly outside Levens Hall; while the 755 stops at Levens Bridge.**

### 2 - Brantwood - The home of John Ruskin

With its stunning location overlooking Coniston water, it's no wonder Victorian art critic John Ruskin made **Brantwood** his home. This impressive county house is now a registered museum, with nine rooms open to the public to explore. There's also the Blue Gallery, which hosts special exhibitions in Ruskin's original dining room; and the Severn Studio, which presents an annual programme of art and craft exhibitions.



Be sure to stop for lunch at The Terrace Café, with beautiful views across Coniston water and the fells beyond.

**Opening times: Daily from 10:30am – 5pm between March – November; Wednesday – Sunday 10:30am – 4pm between December – March.**

**On-site parking is available for those travelling by car. You can also arrive by boat: Steam Yacht Gondola and the Coniston Launch both travel from Coniston to Brantwood.**

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### 3 - Holker Hall & Gardens



Home to the Cavendish family, and never sold throughout its 400-year history, **Holker Hall** is set amidst 25 acres of woodland and gardens. Explore the Victorian country house at the heart of the estate, with its Neo-Elizabethan architecture and fascinating interiors; and wander the extensive gardens outside.

Keep an eye out for a regular programme of events, too – there's everything from seasonal fairs to a chilli eating contest!

**Opening times: Wednesday – Sunday between March – October. The Café, Gardens, Gift Shop and Food Hall are open 10:30am – 5pm; the Hall is open 11am – 4pm.**

**On-site parking is available for those travelling by car. Cark-in-Cartmel train station is a 15 minute walk away.**

### 4 - Blackwell - The Arts & Crafts House

**Blackwell** is an impressive architectural gem designed by noted architect Mackay Hugh Baillie Scot, and was built on the turn of the 20th century as a holiday home for Manchester brewer Sir Edward Holt.

It also served as a school between 1941 – 1976; today, it is open to visitors who will discover arts and crafts architecture, and decorative features like furniture by Morris & Co, and metalwork by William Arthur Smith Benson. Overlooking Windermere, the gardens were laid out by arts & crafts garden designer Thomas Mawson.



Once you've explored the house and grounds, relax with coffee and cake in the Tea Room, located in the house's old kitchen and scullery.

**Opening times: daily, 10am – 4pm from November – March; 10am – 5pm from April - October.**

**An on-site car park is available for those travelling by car. There is a 5-mile circular walking trail from Bowness-on-Windermere to Blackwell.**

### 5 - Rydal Mount



Discover the house where William Wordsworth spent the last 37 years of his life at **Rydal Mount**: when you see the views across Windermere and Rydal Water, it's not hard to see why the famous poet chose to settle here!

The house remains in the Wordsworth family, who have opened it up to the public. A visit will reveal prized family possessions displayed throughout the house; impressive terraced gardens, landscaped by Wordsworth himself; a Summer House where the poet would sit and write; and a cosy tearoom in which to relax.

**Opening times: daily, 9:30am – 5pm between May - September; 10:30am – 4pm between October – April. The house often closes throughout late December and January; please check ahead before visiting. On-site parking is available for those travelling by car.**

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### 6 - Wray Castle, Ambleside

With stunning views across England's longest lake; impressive turrets, towers and castle grounds; and free entry for all, [Wray Castle](#) is a great place to visit. This Gothic Revival castle on the western shore of Windermere is managed by the National Trust, who inherited it without its contents – meaning its interiors may look a little different to those of a 'typical' historic house!



Explore the castle, stroll along miles of lake shore paths, and wander the grounds to discover lawns and woodland walks with panoramic views.

**Opening times: the Castle is open 10am – 4pm, Saturday – Wednesday between March – October. The car park and grounds are open dawn 'til dusk year round.**

**On-site parking is available for those travelling by car. The 505 Stagecoach bus service drops visitors a half mile walk from the entrance. During the summer months, the Windermere Lake Cruises Green Cruise stops at Wray Castle.**

### 7 - Sizergh Castle



Located just south of Kendal, [Sizergh Castle](#) was built by the Strickland family in 1350 – who still live here today. Managed by the National Trust, the house and gardens are now open to the public who can explore this striking medieval manor and its fascinating contents. That includes thousands of items collected by 26 generations, including portraits; family photographs; and the Inlaid Chamber – internationally recognised as one of the finest examples of Elizabethan craftsmanship in the world. Outside, explore the rich gardens including a mirror lake, limestone rock garden, and topiary yew trees; or wander the 1,600 acre estate and woodland.

**Opening times: the House is open mid-March – October, 12pm – 4pm Tuesday – Sunday. The Gardens, café, estate and car park are open Monday – Sunday, 10am – 5pm from mid-March – October; 10am – 3:30pm November – mid-March.**

**On-site parking is available for those travelling by car. Sizergh Castle can be reached by bus on the X6, 555, 755, 551 or 530 Stagecoach services. Alight at the Heaves / Bettagh stop and walk the 20-minute route to Sizergh Castle. Enjoy a free regular size hot drink at the café when you show your bus ticket.**

We hope you've had a great time visiting just a few of South Lakeland's attractions. Searching for inspiration on where to visit next? Download more cultural itineraries [visitlakedistrict.com/cultureinsouthlakes](https://visitlakedistrict.com/cultureinsouthlakes)

THE CULTURE IN SOUTH LAKES PROJECT IS FUNDED BY THE UK GOVERNMENT THROUGH THE UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND.