Skiddaw – Circuit and Summit

With just over 4400ft of climbing in 22 miles this mountain bike route is a real leg burner.  It starts from [Keswick](http://www.keswick.org/) and circles [Skiddaw](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Skiddaw) using the Skiddaw House trail, before a steep ascent of the mountain.  With a fantastic descent from Skiddaw House to Keswick it's worth doing even if you don't make the summit.

1. Start from the Otley Road car park in Keswick [(GR267236)](http://www.streetmap.co.uk/map.srf?x=326740&y=523587&z=120&sv=326740,523587&st=4&ar=y&mapp=map.srf&searchp=ids.srf&dn=815&ax=326740&ay=523587&lm=0) then ride to the main road (A5271) and turn right. Follow the road through the centre of the town going left then right. Go straight across the roundabout then past [Keswick Bikes](https://www.keswickbikes.co.uk/) on the left. Turn right at the following junction signposted as '(A591)'. Follow the road straight on at the next junction, past the garage on the right, to a large roundabout. Go straight across, taking the second exit onto the A591. Follow this road for roughly 4 miles then just after the woods, on a left hand bend, take the lane climbing away on the right signposted 'Orthwaite 3' [(GR234306)](http://www.streetmap.co.uk/map.srf?x=323465&y=530652&z=120&sv=323465,530652&st=4&ar=y&mapp=map.srf&searchp=ids.srf&dn=703&ax=323465&ay=530652&lm=0).

2. Continue along this road for about 2 miles, going straight on at the junction in the dip. Climb through a long right hand bend followed by a sharp left hand bend then a little while later take the bridleway on the right, signposted to Skiddaw House and Whitewater Dash [(GR249323)](http://www.streetmap.co.uk/map.srf?x=324960&y=532337&z=120&sv=324960,532337&st=4&ar=y&mapp=map.srf&searchp=ids.srf&dn=703&ax=324960&ay=532337&lm=0). Once through the gate follow the tarmac to a junction with a dirt track, where the tarmac heads across to the other side of the valley [(GR262320)](http://www.streetmap.co.uk/map.srf?x=326185&y=531997&z=120&sv=326185,531997&st=4&ar=y&mapp=map.srf&searchp=ids.srf&dn=703&ax=326185&ay=531997&lm=0).

3. Take the dirt track off to the right, which is again signposted as the bridleway to Skiddaw House and Whitewater Dash. Follow the track as it winds its way up the right hand side of the valley. The track gets progressively steeper and comes to a gate near the top [(GR272313)](http://www.streetmap.co.uk/map.srf?x=327250&y=531302&z=115&sv=327250,531302&st=4&ar=y&mapp=map.srf&searchp=ids.srf&dn=703&ax=327250&ay=531302&lm=0).

4. After the gate climb through the left then right hairpins before heading up the final part of the climb. Continue straight ahead along the double track and descend to the ford. While the ford is rideable it is deep, so take care, or use the bridge on the left of the crossing. After crossing the stream continue along the double track to Skiddaw House [(GR287291)](http://www.streetmap.co.uk/map.srf?x=328715&y=529152&z=120&sv=328715,529152&st=4&ar=y&mapp=map.srf&searchp=ids.srf&dn=703&ax=328715&ay=529152&lm=0).

5. Take the track round the front of the house, not off to the left. Descend a rocky track, over a bridge, to a gate. After the gate follow the track as it bears off to the right and heads slightly uphill. At this point it’s a bit muddy in places. Very soon the trail starts to descend on some sweet singletrack. Straight ahead two trails can be seen, one on either side of the valley. Keep to the track clinging to the right hand side of the valley, so at the next junction go straight on [(GR292279)](http://www.streetmap.co.uk/map.srf?x=329235&y=527967&z=120&sv=329235,527967&st=4&ar=y&mapp=map.srf&searchp=ids.srf&dn=703&ax=329235&ay=527967&lm=0).

6. The next section of track along Lonscale Fell is fantastic with some great rock sections. Be very careful on this section. In the dry the rocks don't offer much grip due to the polishing effect of many feet, in the wet it will only be worse. Added to this is a HUGE drop into the valley on the left. After the rocks follow the singletrack as it bears right around the hill to a stream crossing, very shallow this time. Go across the stream then follow the track through a sharp left hand bend then climb to a gate at a junction [(GR283256)](http://www.streetmap.co.uk/map.srf?x=328295&y=525579&z=115&sv=328295,525579&st=4&ar=y&mapp=map.srf&searchp=ids.srf&dn=703&ax=328295&ay=525579&lm=0).

7. Turn right before the gate and follow the track that can be seen winding its way up the flanks of Skiddaw. The start of the climb is very steep and is a push for a while but this only lasts for about as far as can initially be seen, in good weather, then it flattens out and becomes ridable. At roughly halfway, where another track climbs steeply away to the left, go straight on through the gate in the fence, signposted to the summit.  Climb past the summit of Little Man, on the left. After a while the trail widens out and kicks up again. I managed to ride all of this section. Continue along the wide track all the way to the top [(GR260291)](http://www.streetmap.co.uk/map.srf?x=326050&y=529099&z=120&sv=326050,529099&st=4&ar=y&mapp=map.srf&searchp=ids.srf&dn=703&ax=326050&ay=529099&lm=0).

8. Once the usual summit photos have been taken turn round and ride back down the same way you came up. At the bottom turn right through the gate, then go through a couple more gates before turning right into a car park. At the far end of the car park turn left onto the bridleway signposted to Keswick [(GR280253)](http://www.streetmap.co.uk/map.srf?x=328055&y=525364&z=120&sv=328055,525364&st=4&ar=y&mapp=map.srf&searchp=ids.srf&dn=703&ax=328055&ay=525364&lm=0).

9. This descent twists its way down to a fork where either the left or right track can be taken, the right hand one being the most direct. At the bottom go straight ahead, over the bridge, then at the junction turn right [(GR268241)](http://www.streetmap.co.uk/map.srf?x=326785&y=524144&z=120&sv=326785,524144&st=4&ar=y&mapp=map.srf&searchp=ids.srf&dn=703&ax=326785&ay=524144&lm=0). Ride to the end of this road and turn left, then at the end of the next road turn left again. Ride back into the centre of Keswick, going straight over the roundabout. Follow the road left then right to a junction with a road on the left [(GR266235)](http://www.streetmap.co.uk/map.srf?x=326646&y=523589&z=115&sv=326646,523589&st=4&ar=y&mapp=map.srf&searchp=ids.srf&dn=685&ax=326646&ay=523589&lm=0). Turn left to complete the ride back at the Otley Road car park.

Technically this ride is not too difficult a ride except for the rocks on Lonscale Fell, which would be a short push for those not wishing to tackle it. To find out what the mountain/weather looks like follow this link for the [George Fisher Keswick webcam](http://www.georgefisher.co.uk/pages/webcam.asp).