

Route(s)	Great Whernside Loop
Elevation(s) (ft/m)	<b>Great Whernside</b> (2,310ft/ 704m)
Date(s)	February 11 2018
Partner(s)	Kyle Finnegan
Elevation gain/loss (ft/m)	1,771ft / 540m
Distance (miles)	7.64 miles / 12.3km
Total time (hours/mins)	3h 5m
Equipment	Warm layers!!
Weather Forecast	Iffy to be sure
Weather Actuality	On and off (partially cloudy or blizzard)
Flora/Fauna	N/A
Wildlife	Sheep
Starting Point/Trailhead	Kettlewell
Grade/Rating	Class 1 - walking
Accommodations	N/A
Tourist Attractions	Zarina's Tea Shop – excellent post trip soup and tea.
Motto for the day	N/A

Day 1	
<b>Daily 1 Distance</b>	7.64 miles / 12.3km
<b>Daily 1 Elevation</b>	1,771ft / 540m
<b>Day 1 Daily Time</b>	3h 5m
Rise and Shine	Est. 9.30am
Depart House	Est. 10.30am
Arrive Kettlewell	Est. 12.00pm
Leave car	12.20pm
Summit of G. Whernside	1.50pm
Hit the road	2.40pm
Arrival Kettlewell	3.25pm
The Story	

Kyle and I debated going for the Yorkshire Three Peaks again. Back to back weekends because it's a good loop. A nice way to stretch the legs and all. But the forecast was 'slushy' and a significantly high chance of precipitation. So, instead we opted for something a little shorter and a little more East. Kyle picked the destination and route because of the name Great Whernside. I rather think he found it amusing we'd done Whernside but not Great Whernside. *Okay. I'll bite. Anything to get out!*

With our bags mostly unpacked of the essentials from last weekend, but clothes washed, we got a late start heading out to Kettlewell on Starbottom. First, we drove through sun, then we drove through grey, then snow, back to sun, back to grey. After that I lost track. Basically, it was going to be a roll-of-the-dice on weather. *And it was probably going to change as many times on us to be real.* Also, it is a good thing it's winter time and there are fewer people out in the hills because there was still parking in the town lot. I believe it was £5 for the all-day space. As we opened the doors of the pleasantly warm car, we were blasted with wind and cold. *Nope!* Some whining and dancing around followed both of us out of the car. Little whinge fest and tantrums complete. The



cold certainly inspired us to get moving faster. Throw on shoes, jackets, packs and go! *Oh what.. the GPS batteries are dead again?! Kyle!! You said you charged them!* Pause. Off came the gloves as I dug around for new batteries. And those said 'low battery' as well. *What is actually happening?* I am beginning to question if it's not an issue with the GPS as this point. Because the batteries have only just now been exposed to the cold. Quite literally ten minutes ago. I pulled my buff around my neck, clipped the GPS to that and buried it inside my jacket hoping that my body warmth would help lessen the decline. It seemed to work at least a little because we were able to track ourselves for the day. But still, something that will need to be investigated.

After that false start we really got going. Well...After a couple wrong turns in the village, that is. But after that, we really did get going. The trick was to walk along the river through the town, slightly uphill towards a large hill on the far side. From there the road split. We initially thought it was the older road that went sharply uphill to a gate. But at that gate we checked the map and realised it was the lower

road that we wanted. So we back tracked down. Made obvious by all the hillwalkers exiting that way. Thank goodness it wasn't that far down because otherwise I'd have been just as likely to forge my own way cross-country. So, stay on the main paved round as it curves left, and follow it over a small bridge. Just after the bridge there is a trail that runs along the left side of the stream and heads uphill. Follow it over a handful of stiles and it will pop you out into a little ravine of sorts. From there it's pretty open. This part of the journey was lovely. It wasn't too muddy and it followed a stream with a hillside that became steeper the further we ventured. The right (north?) side of the ravine was in shadows and had areas of snow on it and the left (south) side was in the sun. It has an idyllic feel. Eventually we came to a sharp left turn up the hillside onto a switchback. There was a short steep climb and then the trail wound over to a white house (which I believe is a hostel of sorts). *Whatever it was, delicious smells were coming from it!* And it was right at about this point that I noticed two things. One, there was a crowd worthy of the slopes of Everest descending. And secondly, it had become an actual bog walk. There was no escaping it.



In reality, I'd guess 30 or so people descending, and the bogs at least weren't waist deep like we've seen. *No snorkels required... yet.* But the footpath all but disappeared as people spread out trying to find the driest places to go. My no-longer-gortex-shoes gave up the ghost nearly immediately which gave me pause considering we were heading up into snow. Wet feet aren't pleasant per se, but frozen wet feet has the potential to be more problematic. *But quitters never prosper!! Or something like that..* Regardless we wove our way laughing, screeching, and swearing through the bogs. We reached the incline at the other side of the bog maze to find that the trail was icy. Not just little patches of snow, but water had obviously been melting and freezing onto the laid stone path and it was slick! And the higher we climbed, the worse the weather became. Annoyingly. My thick winter running tights which had been fine the weekend before were not quite cutting it today. My legs were going numb in a most uncomfortable fashion and moving faster just wasn't cutting it. I could feel my body losing heat despite the exertion which is problematic. Being warm, or even remaining at a constant comfortable temperature would be one thing, but losing valuable units of heat meant we would either have to put on more layers or tag the top and drop out of the wind quickly. We held off on layers until we got to the top and tagged the trig. But by then the weather had really rolled in and there was snow blowing across our faces. But we were not ready to admit defeat and put on layers just yet. Instead, we made some faces and took some photos before taking off along the ridge. At one point Kyle told me this would take us back to the village and I said something to the effect of "Don't lie to me, I know for a fact the village is over there" and I pointed generally back and to our left. *Oh gosh.. he's been in charge of this trip but if he thinks the village is in front of us we just might be in trouble!*

There was someone in front of us so we generally followed them through the snow haze. Kyle and I really tried to run this portion but my limbs were just too cold, and they were starting to slow down. Nothing was warming me up. When we crossed a circular walled space we popped in and put on warmer layers. Coincidentally, the guy we'd been following had also stopped in the windbreak shelter. He was pretty seriously kitted out though. Tough pants, full gaiters, thicker jacket and he was pulling out a thermos. I was torn between wanting some of whatever was in the thermos and wondering why anyone would have a 'cuppa' in a storm. But with no 'cuppa' of our own this was simply a stop to put on more layers and jet off. There was sufficient snow on the ground and

enough dense cloud in the area to obscure the trail. We knew that we'd seen someone a little lower and assumed the trail was that way. Plus, lower meant less wind! With a quick look at the GPS, which was shockingly still working, we verified that there was indeed a trail off yonder. We scrambled down some rocks and boulders behind the shelter and intercepted what we deigned as the 'trail' and began to follow it in what I sensed was a northerly direction. *Trail sniffin' weather! Not stoppin' to pull out gear!* We were more traversing than dropping and my hands were getting cold. My core was mercifully warmer now but my face was getting hit painfully over and over with cold wind and snow particles. And weirdly, my right eye kept glazing over. I thought it must have been snow in my eye, but it seemed I could blink it away and then it'd immediately be back. *What the..?!* Eye protection now! The only 'eye protection' I had was a pair of sunglasses. *Ain't that wishful thinking.* Kyle pulled them out of my pack and I jammed them on my head before taking off at a light 'wog' again. Except this time, the weird white out light was dimmed further by the dark glacier level tint of the sunglasses. I was having a hard time distinguishing snow and ice, textures and just about everything else! *Haha.. why not?*

The ground was icy, and we had to move slowly in a couple rocky and snowy sections. Once off the slightly steeper terrain it just turned into a slushy bog. My feet were already damp at this point and so I adopted the classic, just go for it, attitude. Instead of navigating too far around the boggy sections we just tried to move faster over them. It definitely didn't work. My mostly wet feet were completely water logged at this point. *Squish Squish.* But, we were moving faster now that we weren't as focused on treading lightly. We ended up intersecting the road at about the same time as another couple was coming out of a trail a little further up the road from us. And at about the same time as the weather started to lift a little on the mountain and we could see a little bit more blue sky. *For serious? This is getting weird now.. this is the fourth mountain in two weekends to do this!* Overall, the walk out was leisurely. We had talked about running to warm up a little but ended up taking pictures and visiting with the couple instead. It's funny, sometimes it still feels odd visiting with people. I still have days when I feel more isolated living in a new country. And, when I have the opportunity to meet and socialize with people, it has a new meaning these days. It is more exciting because it happens so rarely, and I want to take advantage of the chance. Instead of running all the way back we ended up visiting with the lovely

couple and comparing routes we enjoyed in the UK. In the end we made it back to town in time for tea. We quickly changed in the back of the car. *Boy was it cold stripping down in the freezing temperatures!!* And it still feels more socially inappropriate to strip down in the car parks in the UK than it ever did in the US. We made our way over to a café in the town center called Zarina's Tea Shop. It was one of those little discoveries that turns out to be amazing. The tea was fantastic, warm and came with cream. *MmmMMM!* We were the last to leave the shop that afternoon and enjoyed the frequently changing weather on our drive back. Along with some good ol' American tunes!



