

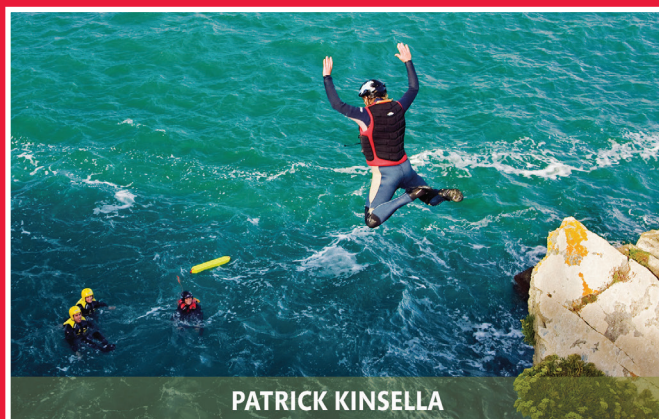
CAVING, CANYONING, COASTEERING...

30 EXHILARATING ADVENTURES AROUND BRITAIN

An atlas of adventure is the newest title in Bradt's bestselling series of full-colour UK activity guides

You don't need to be ultra-fit or highly experienced in the outdoors to enjoy Patrick Kinsella's selection of 30 activities across Britain. 'A sense of adventure and an explorer's heartbeat' is all that's required, he says, and he should know, having spent two decades walking, running, riding, paddleboarding, swimming, canoeing, kayaking... and more besides, in all corners of the country.

Caving, Canyoning, Coasteering... is both an atlas of adventure and book of secrets, enticing readers out of their comfort zone to explore the often-unseen elements and quieter corners of Britain, where the wild experiences live. Some of the activities described take place on the very edges of large urban centres, easily accessible for anyone, yet even many locals don't know about them. Others happen in far-flung corners of the country – places people may never have considered exploring.



PATRICK KINSELLA

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Bradt



1 GHYLL
SCRAMBLING

PURSUIT Ghyll scrambling
WHERE The Lake District
SKILL LEVEL High (professional guidance required)
RISK FACTOR Significant, but jumps are always optional

Water is very good at finding the fastest and most exciting route down a mountain, hillside, cliff or crag, and chasing a stream as it tumbles over drops and rushes through narrow gaps in rocks has become a popular adventure pursuit in various places around the world.

In the United States they call it canyoneering, in South Africa they say kloofing, while in Australia, New Zealand and Europe it's known as canyoning, a term used in parts of the UK too, along with gorge scrambling. In Cumbria, though, this sort of downrigger is only called one thing: ghyll scrambling, and the conditions for the sport in the English Lake District are as unique as the name it goes by.

The experience itself could be described as downhill wild swimming, or whitewater kayaking without the boat. Basically, you start at the top of a ghyll (the local name for a ravine carved by water) and follow the flow, leaping into plunge pools, swimming, scrambling and abseiling through waterfalls and as you go.

To get a proper taste of what ghyll scrambling is really like, I joined a local expert for a gravity-assisted aquatic adventure in the water-sculpted landscape of the lovely Lake District.

LEAP OF FAITH

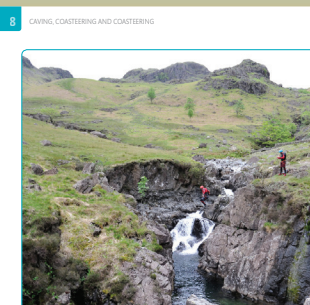
After waddling around the Cumbrian countryside for almost an hour, inconspicuously clad in a wetsuit – providing no small measure of hilarity to the hillwalkers that we pass – I'm starting to wonder what on earth I've let myself in for. However, Rob, my guide, is suddenly very happy.

Rob is taking me ghyll scrambling, a form of canyoning specific to the Lake District. We meet earlier at a rendezvous point in the car park at Hardcastles Pass, where we kitted up. But during the walk in, across several miles of wild and woolly terrain, he has seemed a little preoccupied. It turns out, he has just been thinking about water levels.

As soon we get a visual on the ghyll we will be descending, Rob assesses the flow. His calculations are crucial. If there's too much water in the sluice, the waterfall we'll encounter halfway down will be too feisty to abseil, but if it's not enough water then the plunge pools won't be deep enough for us to jump into.

We cross the Esk via a stunning drystone bridge, and Rob seems giddily pleased. Conditions are perfect – we're on. The steepest part of the climb awaits, however, and by the time we reach the put-in, I'm virtually steaming – hiking in a wetsuit is sweaty work, but Rob assures me I won't be overheating for long.

© Captain to come



ESSENTIALS

TAKE A TOUR Ghyll scrambling is a potentially dangerous pursuit, where local knowledge is required along with technical expertise, so it is imperative you go with a professional guide. A number of providers facilitate the experience, including **Ghyll Scrambling** (ghyllscrambling.co.uk), **Keswick Extreme** (keswickextreme.com), and **Mountain Rat Adventures** (mountainratadventures.co.uk). As a guide, a 2- to 4-hour ghyll scrambling canyoning adventure along the River Esk costs around £40 per person, with discounts often available for group bookings.

GETTING THERE Ghyll scrambling can be enjoyed at various locations around the Lakes. This experience took place near the infamous Hardcastles Pass, well known to cyclists as one of the steepest hill climbs in the country, which carries the B-road between Eklade and the Duddon Valley. Coming from the south, take the M6 to junction 36, and then follow signs to the Lake District National Park.

PLACES TO STAY The friendly Eklade Camping and Caravanning Club Site (campingandcaravanningclub.co.uk) in Boot, Holmrook has tent sites, camping pods and

Of course, there is only one choice really, so I pace out my run up, like a nervous footballer lining up a penalty kick. Rob cautions me to throw everything I have at my outward projection. 'It feels like you're going to hit the other side,' he says, helpfully. 'But don't worry, you won't.'

Sprinting up, I launch from the wrong foot but still manage to clear the rocks and plunge into the welcome icy embrace of the pool. I'm not feeling the cold anymore – adrenaline is keeping me toasty. 'Nice one!' yells Rob from a high, as I thank the river gods for putting that safely behind me.

In total, we scramble, crawl, slip, slide, jump, plunge, paddle and float our way down the Esk for four hours, pausing briefly like trolls beneath the drystone bridge we'd crossed earlier, before finishing at a wonderful wild-swimming hole known as Paradise. There are several launch points into this plunge pool – one from an overhanging bough of a tree.

For the finale, we swim to the other side and climb to the loftiest jump spot of the day, a 36ft-high bank. The water is deep in Paradise, but clear enough for me to see the two rocks that Rob is telling me to avoid. There's enough freedom time on this trip for farsome thoughts to flicker through my mind, but I land in the sweet spot.

So I do it again. And again. My muscles ache a little, after hours of ghyll scrambling, but I could happily do this all day. It's well worth the ignominy of the wetsuit-clad waddle back to the car after all.

a camping barn, and is perfectly positioned for meeting up with ghyll scrambling guides at Hardcastles Pass, and for exploring many other adventures in the Lakes.

There are myriad other accommodation options in the Lakes, ranging from VW Campervan Hire places (vwcampervanhire.net) to comfortable B&Bs and hotels. See viscumbria.com for more.

EXPLORING GORGES ELSEWHERE 'Ghyll scrambling' is unique to the Lake District (no-one will know what you are talking about if you say those words outside of Cumbria), but similar pursuits can be enjoyed elsewhere in the country under the names of gorge scrambling and canyoning.

Strictly speaking, **gorge scrambling** is a less technical affair than canyoning, with no ropes or abseiling involved, which means it can sometimes be taken on independently. Popular places to go gorge scrambling include Dartmoor, the Peak District, the Brecon Beacons and Snowdonia.

For those who want to step it up a level, arguably the best place to go **canyoning** in the UK is in the Brecon Beacons National Park – not for nothing is this known as 'Waterfall Country'. See the next chapter for more details.

Caving, canyoning, coasteering... 30 exhilarating adventures around Britain by Patrick Kinsella

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THE ADVENTURES

The focus area is given for each activity, but advice is given on where else in the country you can have this adventure

1. FREE DIVING - CORNWALL
2. SURFSKI PADDLING - SOUTH DEVON, CORNWALL
3. SEA CLIFF CLIMBING AND DEEPWATER SOLOING - DORSET
4. LETTERBOXING - DARTMOOR
5. TREE CLIMBING - ISLE OF WIGHT
6. SANDBOARDING - NORTH DEVON
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9. MUDLARKING - CENTRAL LONDON
10. FATBIKING - PORTHCAWL
11. SHINRIN YOKU/ FOREST BATHING - HATFIELD FOREST, ESSEX
12. GORGE/WATERFALL WALKING - BRECON
13. COASTEERING - PEMBROKESHIRE
14. PARAHAWKING - SHROPSHIRE
15. LAND SALING/ BLOCKARTING - NORTH NORFOLK COAST
16. SUP - RIVER TRENT
17. LLYN BAGGING/ WILD SWIMMING - LLANBERIS
18. WEASELING - ROACHES RIDGE, STAFFS
19. BOULDERING - PEAK DISTRICT
20. BIKEPACKING - NORTH YORK MOORS
21. GHYLL SCRAMBLING - CUMBRIA
22. FELL RUNNING - LAKE DISTRICT
23. VIA FERRATA - HONISER SLATE MINE
24. KITE SURFING - NORTHUMBERLAND COAST
25. SNORKEL TRAILS - BERWICKSHIRE
26. RIVER SLEDGING/HYDROSPEEDING - LOCH LOMOND
27. SCRAMBLING - GLEN COE
28. SNOW HOLING/ ICE CLIMBING - CAIRNGORMS
29. MUNRO BAGGING - SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS
30. WHITEWATER RAFTING - RIVER FINDHORN



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Patrick Kinsella has been chasing adventures and writing about the outdoors for two decades. A former editor of several outdoor adventure and travel magazines, he worked for Lonely Planet for over 15 years as a writer and editor, and continues to contribute to publications including *Sidetracked*, *National Geographic Traveller*, the *Guardian*, *CNN*, *Adventure Travel* and many others.

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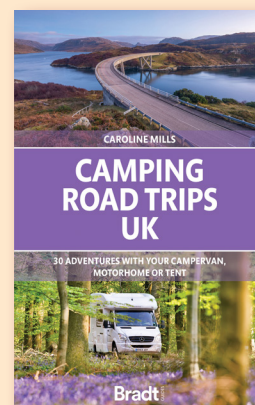
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