



ULLSWATER 'STEAMERS'

PRESS PACK 2014

CRUISING BACK TO HAPPINESS



January 1, 2014

'Steamers' Announces 14 Events On Which To Cruise Back To Happiness In 2014!

Idyllic Cumbrian lake cruise company, Ullswater 'Steamers' is heading into the New Year with 14 fabulous events or event types for 2014, including brand new ones based around preserves, predators and practical instruction with the camera.

The 'Lakes 14', as they are being termed, are themed around marmalade, Easter and teddy bears, birdwatching, photography, pirate adventures, fish and chips, history and heritage, a yachting regatta, myths and legends, wildlife, geology, red deer, Halloween, and Santa.

Some of these run on more than one day, to make the Ullswater 'Steamers' events calendar a packed-with-pleasure PDF that has something for all independent travellers and for groups and coach parties too.

There are also other temptations, which fit around key dates in the calendar, with gift vouchers available for both Mother's Day and Father's Day and a special online competition to kick the season off over February half term.

The first of the new events is **'Marmalade Madness'** – a must for anyone loving preserves made from citrus fruits! The event ties in with the staging of the Marmalade Festival at Dalemain, near Penrith, just a short drive from Ullswater 'Steamers' Pooley Bridge Pier. There will be a free cruise for anyone bringing a jar of marmalade to either Glenridding or Pooley Bridge for the 9.45am sailings on March 1 and 2. Complimentary toast and marmalade will also be served on board, making this an event to really get your teeth into!

The second new event is scheduled for May 17 when an **RSPB Water, Predator and Heathland Birds** cruise will run. This event is all about spotting wildlife, so get some binoculars at the ready, or resolve to ensure you look through those provided by your RSPB escorts, as you go in search of birds on the water, spot those flying overhead and seeking prey and discover those whose habitats are on the heath.

Keen eyes may be able to spot the fastest bird on the planet, the Peregrine Falcon, while all should be able to see the visiting and resident water birds and those nesting further inland.

The day starts with a 9.45am sailing from Glenridding. After an hour, passengers will disembark to travel by mini-bus to Askham Fell. The group will return at approximately 1pm and participants are advised to bring a packed lunch. A moderate walk is involved and suitable boots and outerwear are required. Profits from the £14.50 ticket price (£12.50 for RSPB members) go to the RSPB. Children travel for half price.

On both May 22 and November 6, there are new Ullswater 'Steamers' **Photography Days** to focus your attention on. These encompass an escorted tour with a local photographer who will be ready to divulge trade secrets as ticketholders head out into the world of nature, both on board a heritage boat and on foot. The day starts with a 10.30am sailing from Glenridding and requires participants to wear suitable clothing and footwear. A packed lunch also needs to be popped into the rucksack, as you will return at approximately 2.30pm.

Children will discover that lots of fun can be had with the 'Steamers' and their loveable mascot, **Sammy the Squirrel**, who also has his own **Kids Club** that anyone can join for free. Excitement can begin with an online competition over February half term, which will ask families to look out for letters that are then used to form the answer to the quiz in a special **A-Z competition**.

Over **Easter**, (April 12-24), the action moves outdoors and children under aged 5-15 can sail for free if they bring their teddy bear (under 5s also free as normal). They may be lucky enough to win tickets in a family competition too!

A large number of young scallywags can testify to the giggles to be had during one of the 'Steamers' marvellous 2-hour long **Pirate Cruises**, which allow youngsters to fire the water cannons on approaching foe, play piratical games and have lots of other fun with Pirate Pete, while also taking home chocolate treasure! Pirate cruises are running on May 28 and August 22, with two sailings each day at 11am or 2.30pm from Glenridding. Tickets cost £12 per pirate (adults and children aged over 3) and this includes a return cruise voucher for the grown ups.

Kids will be equally keen not to miss the **Ghostly Galleon Halloween cruise** on October 30, when the ghost ship will sail twice, at 12.30pm and 3pm for a 1.5-hour cruise packed with ghoulish antics and magic, mayhem and monsters! The dark lake of Ullswater, already steeped in legend and myth, is the perfect setting for this cruise, which will also include spellbinding magic and balloon modelling from magician Stu-Di-Doo and a sweetie bag to take home within a ticket price of £12 per spook (parents and children pay the same).

Child-focused action then ends with the **Santa and His Happy Elves event** on December 14 – a cruise full of festive fabulousness featuring Santa and a musical orchestra, not to mention an amusing company of elves! With mascot Sammy the Squirrel on board, games and the magic choccie tree, this cruise is full of awe and Christmas magic for just £13 per head for the 1.5-hour experience and cruise on the lake. Boats sail at both 10.30am and 1.30pm from Glenridding.

Children can also have fun at events of adult appeal. This is very true of the hugely popular **Cumbrian Fish Suppers**, which run every Tuesday evening from June 24 to August 26 and combine a 2-hour cruise with music from Pete Lashley and a fish and chip supper (price £17 adults: £14 for children under 13).

Lake District National Park themed cruises can be as fun and fact-filled for kids as for adults and run on July 1 (History & Heritage), July 22 (Myths & Legends), August 9 (Wildlife) and August 19 (Mountains High & Valley Low). Tickets cost £12 for adults and £6 for children and can be booked in advance, or on the evening (departures at 6.45pm and return at 8.15pm). This includes tea or coffee or squash.

The **October Red Deer Rut cruises** are totally awesome experiences whatever your age, as you watch nature's ultimate battle for male supremacy as the red deer stags compete and lock horns. From October 9-12 you can book a place on board a boat that sails from Glenridding at 10.30am and returns at 3.30pm. In between, you will board a mini-bus and be taken by RSPB guides into Martindale, where you will be able to locate a herd on the fell and observe the behaviour of the stags and their ladies. This is a once-in-a-lifetime experience for many, so tickets, priced at £14.50 (£12.50 for RSPB members) for adults and half-price for children, sell fast. Profits go to the RPSB.

The July 5 **Birkett Cup event** is a truly chilled one that brings panache to any summer. Passengers board an exclusive charter, which departs from Pooley Bridge at 12.30pm and returns at 3.30pm. The chartered boat takes passengers out on to the lake to watch the yacht racing action of the prestigious Birkett Cup, which simply has to be enjoyed with the glass of cava or squash provided! This superb event costs £20 for an adult ticket and £10 for children.

Last, but not least, are the **Yuletide Afternoon Tea Cruises**, sailing on dates between December 1 and 19. A delightfully festive afternoon tea can be enjoyed at the Inn on the Lake and combined with a winter cruise on the lake at a lovely time of year to take to the water and enjoy nature. Tickets cost £19.95 and afternoon tea can be booked (between 12pm and 5pm) by calling 017684 82444. You can even take your cruise on a different date from your afternoon tea (voucher valid to December 22).

Choose one or more of the Lakes 14 events from Ullswater 'Steamers' and add sparkle to your stay or life in the Lake District. Relax, chill and enjoy everything on offer on your chosen event, whether you wish to cuddle Teddy, don the walking boots, or sip a glass of fizz.

More details about Ullswater 'Steamers' can be found at www.ullswater-steamers.co.uk where you can also buy tickets for your chosen events online. Alternatively, please call 017684 82229. Groups can download booking forms from <http://www.ullswater-steamers.co.uk/charters/groups/>

ENDS

Press calls: Jane Hunt, Catapult PR, 01253 891114 - jane@catapultpr.co.uk



Spring a Surprise And Let Someone Cruise To Happiness With Ullswater 'Steamers'

Lake District cruise company, Ullswater 'Steamers' has made it as easy as pie (or afternoon tea and scones) to give your parents a truly lovely treat on either Mother's Day (March 30, 2014) or Father's Day (June 15).

For both occasions, you can purchase vouchers from www.ullswater-steamers.co.uk and offer your parent a choice of ways to spend their voucher, whether that is by taking a cruise, enjoying the scenery while having a refreshment in a pier house with a mountain backdrop, or shopping in our gift shop.

Vouchers can be bought in denominations of £5, £10 and £20 and given with thanks to parents who love fresh air, beautiful scenery and days out in the country.

If you want to go bigger with your gift, you could surprise someone by organising a private charter and having one of our glorious heritage boats at your disposal for a family celebration, an impromptu party or a special occasion.

Taking a private charter out on the water gives you an intimate and exclusive environment in which to relax and enjoy your event to the full, on a lake described as England's most beautiful and often compared to Lake Lucerne in Switzerland. Hire charges are from £525 per hour and you can upgrade to have a Pink Prosecco or Cava reception, for up to 60 guests, through a Charter diamond package costing an additional £100.

Ullswater 'Steamers' boats Lady of the Lake and Raven are perfect for anniversaries, while the delightful Lady Dorothy is a blissful boat for a children's party, to which you could add the arrival of Sammy the Squirrel or book a magician or a host of other entertainers. There are five heritage boats in the fleet, so there's one to suit everyone. The boats are:

Raven (up to 150 people dependent upon catering arrangement)

Lady of the Lake (up to 110 people)

Western Belle (up to 100 people)

Lady Wakefield (up to 90 people)

Lady Dorothy (up to 40 people)

If your surprise is for a smaller group of friends, why not consider our 'Ladies That Lunch' package, enjoying a champagne lunch at a host of places around the lakeshore and combining this with a scheduled sailing (unless you prefer to order champagne aboard).

All the options are there – you just need to explore them! Call 017684 82229!

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It's Raven's 125th Birthday And Lucky 13 For Lady Dorothy!

Two of the five vessels in the Ullswater 'Steamers' fleet are celebrating significant anniversaries in 2014, as *M.Y Raven* celebrates her 125th birthday, *M.V Lady Wakefield* toasts her 65th birthday and *M.V Lady Dorothy* makes it lucky 13 as a member of the 'Steamers' fleet.

M.Y Raven was launched on July 11, 1889 and her arrival on Ullswater was directly inspired by the tour operator, Thomas Cook – now a household name to many. Thomas believed that the fleet needed a second vessel to cope with peak demand for sailings in the summer months and the directors took this on board and brought in *Raven*, naming her after the home of Company Director, W H Parkin, which was called Ravencragg.

Raven was christened by six-year-old Winifred Parkin, who broke a bottle of champagne against her bows as she entered Ullswater's waters for the first time.

The boat was not actually the first choice of the directors, who preferred a vessel called *Wyvern*. However, *Wyvern* sank on Windermere in 1876, giving *Raven* her chance to shine.

When *Raven* was launched on Ullswater, the Westmorland Gazette wrote: "It is questionable if there be any boat to beat or even equal this little craft on any lake in the country".

In 1895, *Raven* was painted yellow to mark the visit of the German Kaiser, Wilhelm II to Lowther Castle, home of the 'Yellow Earl', Lord Lonsdale.

Lady Wakefield was built in 1949 in Dartford, Devon by the River Dart Steamboat Co. Ltd. and is 65 this year. Prior to arriving on Ullswater in 2007, she had worked on the Dart and in the Plymouth Sound and had there been called various names – Berry Castle, Golden Cormorant and Totnes Castle. She was the sister ship to Seymour Castle, previously known as Devon Belle, which went to Dunkirk, but never made it to the beaches during the Little Ships evacuation in 1940 (Operation Dynamo).

On arrival on Ullswater, she was fully restored and re-named by HRH Princess Alexandra, with the name *Lady Wakefield* being chosen in honour of the wife of Lord Wakefield, a keen admirer of the boats.

Lady Dorothy was lifted into Ullswater in 2001, having arrived on a low loader. 2014 will undoubtedly be a lucky 13th for her, as this tough little boat was originally a sea-going vessel, which was used to much choppier waters than those experienced on the lake. She originates from Guernsey and her arrival allowed the 'Steamers' to operate an extended winter schedule.

The other two vessels in the fleet, *Lady of the Lake* and *Western Belle*, may not be celebrating anniversaries this year, but are just as important to Ullswater 'Steamers' operations and place in boating history.

Lady of the Lake is believed to be the oldest working passenger vessel in the world, having launched in June 1877. She was designed in Penrith and built in Rutherglen near Glasgow. She was transported to Ullswater in sections, by both rail and horse-drawn drays, before being assembled near to Pooley Bridge. In 1889, she was tested on the water against *Raven* and proved that there was still life in the lady, as she saw off the newcomer and arrived first in the trial, much to the delight of her crew.

That fighting spirit has never deserted her. In 1881, she sunk at her moorings and then she sank a second time in 1958, before being damaged by fire in 1965. After this, she was out of service for 14 years. Politician William Whitelaw then re-launched her in 1979, following her extensive refurbishment.

Western Belle was built in 1935 and is the most recent arrival in the fleet of 'Ladies'. She was a wartime heroine, carrying passengers on evacuation runs from Plymouth in World War II and was a favourite on Tamar and Yealm excursions before moving on to work on the River Thames. She was completely refurbished on arrival on Ullswater.

Visit Ullswater in 2014 and you will be able to meet at least one of these gracious heritage boats. More information on timetables and events is available at www.ullswater-steamers.co.uk

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January 6, 2014

Lake District Estates' Attractions To Fly Two Flags For The Commonwealth

Lake District visitor attractions, Ullswater 'Steamers' and Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway have been honoured by becoming two of only nine sites in Cumbria to be chosen to fly special Commonwealth flags on Commonwealth Day, March 10 2014.

The 'Fly a Flag for the Commonwealth' initiative has been created to celebrate the amazing and influential family of nations that spans all the continents of the world. It is marketing the true value of the Commonwealth as an increasingly multi-cultural world seeks unity, understanding and tolerance.

Organisers have selected locations across the UK and beyond that are significant, strategic and eye-catching. Other flags will be flying at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow (July 23-August 4).

Lake District Estates, which runs both Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway and Ullswater 'Steamers', has been given two flags to fly. Another seven flags are to be distributed to the county, these going to Cumbria County Council, Carlisle City Council, Allerdale Borough Council, Barrow Borough Council, Copeland Borough Council, Eden District Council and South Lakeland District Council.

The HM Lord Lieutenant of Cumbria, Mrs Claire Hensman, will present the flags to Lake District Estates on February 10, one month before they will both proudly fly. The presentation will be made at _____ at 10am and _____ will receive them on behalf of both attractions.

Jim Walker, CEO of Lake District Estates, says: "We are honoured to have been selected to fly two of the Commonwealth flags and believe we have locations that certainly fit the eye-catching criteria, with both of our attractions operating against stunning backdrops.

"We welcome visitors each year from across the Commonwealth, so hope that our flags will have special significance for these overseas visitors. Our attractions' joint motto is 'One Happy Family', which we hope conveys the spirit of the Commonwealth that we shall be celebrating with these very special flags."

The Commonwealth is made up of fifty-four sovereign states working together in mutual support towards shared goals of democracy, development and respect for diversity. It includes some of the world's largest, smallest, richest and poorest countries, with two billion citizens drawn from all faiths and ethnicities, half of them under 25 years old. ENDS

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Appreciate Your Cruise Back To Happiness Through An App, On-Board Commentary or Lake Guide!

Ullswater 'Steamers' will be enticing tourists to England's loveliest and second-largest lake this year and telling them all about the many facets to the lake through the mode of communication that suits them best, whether that is a mobile phone App, on-board commentary and headphones or a printed Lake Guide given free to passengers taking a cruise.

Ullswater is a ribbon lake, which is 205 ft (62m) deep at its deepest point and has three distinct reaches. The landscape around Ullswater was shaped by the last Ice Age and is stunningly scenic. To appreciate it to the full, passengers can now download an app for free in the Apple store from <http://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/ullswater-steamers/id548252504?mt+8&uo=4>

which provides passengers with useful insights that contribute greatly to their sense of place and knowledge. An android version is available at <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.phonegap.ullswatersteamers>

Alternatively, passengers can opt for an on-board commentary service or download commentary guides on to their MP3 player from <http://www.ullswater-steamers.co.uk/timetable-fares/commentary/> They can download the full guide, or up to 33 different themed tracks.

The third option is to just refer to the Lake Guide that you are given when boarding. This will give you key details about the lake and may also contain special competitions, from time to time.

History

The name 'Ullswater' may derive from 'Ulfr's Water', which is what the lake was named in honour of a Viking lord. Alternatively, Ulf is the Scandinavian word for wool and it is said that the Danes washed fleeces in the lake. Of course, it could be named after the Norse God, Ullr. Passengers can choose which theory they wish to believe!

Many myths surround the lake. Martindale is said to be the last place in Cumbria at which fairies were seen and if you throw money into Kailpot Crag, it is said to be lucky. Some believe that Ullswater is the lake in which King Arthur found Excalibur ... after all, his father Uther Pendragon lived in Eden, at Pendragon Castle. In medieval times, it was believed that monsters lurked in the dark waters of the lake.

In more recent times, the lake was used to test mini-submersibles during WW2 and may have been a test area for the Bouncing Bomb. The lake is also intrinsically linked with the speed demon, Donald Campbell. He broke the world water speed record on Ullswater on July 23, 1955 in the jet-powered Bluebird K7, which travelled at 215.08 mph on the outward journey and at 189.57mph on the return leg of the attempt, resulting in a new world record time of 202.32 mph on average.

Ullswater 'Steamers' Lord Wakefield had provided Campbell with a slipway, boathouse and launching facilities at Glenridding, from where Ullswater 'Steamers' sail to this day. The original record attempt was supposed to take place in February, when the lake would have been calm, still and quiet, but delays and trial modifications meant that the attempt had to be put back to the rather busier month of July.

One of Ullswater 'Steamers' skippers, Bob Jackson, was aged 14 at the time of Campbell's triumphant record-breaking attempt and watched the run from the top of mighty Helvellyn, looking down on Ullswater. He recalls: "The tiny, bright blue craft with a huge tail of white spray raced down the middle reaches. The noise from the two and a half ton turbo-jet engine was tremendous".

Today's Donald Campbell Links

A memorial plaque to Donald Campbell is situated next to the Glenridding Pier House and was unveiled by Donald's daughter, Gina Campbell, in 1997. This marks the successful world record attempt and marks the original slipway used on the day.

A signed menu from the celebratory dinner held on the night of July 23, 1955 can be seen in the memorial library at the Glenridding Hotel. Donald Campbell's triumph was actually announced from the balcony of the hotel, which is nowadays the Library Sun Lounge.

Those wishing to follow the history of Donald Campbell's life thereafter can follow a Bluebird Trail from Ullswater, which takes in various buildings with which the Campbells were associated. They can head down to Coniston, where much memorabilia is housed in the Ruskin Museum and where Donald Campbell is buried in Coniston's graveyard. The new Lakeland Motor Museum at Backbarrow also has a permanent Bluebird display.

Sailing on the Lake

Five Ullswater 'Steamers' heritage boats currently carry passengers up and down the lake between piers and also round the lake, on tickets that enable them to hop off and on all day and enjoy the network of footpaths, which criss-cross the fells.

Leisure options enjoyed by passengers include walking, climbing and mountaineering, cycling, photography, sketching and painting, ghyll scrambling, wildlife and birdwatching and watersports. Other interests that can be pursued include heritage, history, ancient stone circles and standing stones and myths and legends.

Geology

Ullswater lies in the shadow of Helvellyn, the third highest mountain in England with a name that possibly means 'yellow mountain'. It has foreboding, sheer slopes to the east and gentler ones to the west.

Helvellyn stands 3117ft tall (950m) on a mighty plateau at the South West end of the valley. This flat-topped mountain sits behind the conically shaped Catseye Cam (2920ft/890m) while to the left the outline of Striding Edge can be seen. On the opposite side of the lake is Saint Sunday Crag (2759ft/841m), which can be seen on the Patterdale skyline near Glenridding.

Waterfall Heaven

One of the most popular places to visit around Ullswater is the incredible waterfall named 'Aira Force'. This is a beauty spot reached by footpath from a National Trust car park. The water cascades down Aira Glen, before falling 70 feet into a chasm. The display sometimes includes the Aira Rainbow – a triple bow produced when light reflects on the falls' spray.

The best advice for 2014 is to 'watch this space' as there will be significant developments for Ullswater 'Steamers' with regard to operating a service to a new Aira Pier as from late 2014.

Wordsworth Connections

As well as being visually stunning, Aira Force is an intriguing place, as it is the subject of a local legend, which says it is home to the ghost of Emma, daughter of the Duke of Norfolk, who fell into the falls while sleepwalking while her betrothed was on his knight's duties abroad. This then inspired William Wordsworth to write the poem, 'The Somnambulist'.

That is not the only Wordsworth connection to the lake. Wordsworth's most famous poem, 'The Daffodils', which starts with the line, 'I wandered lonely as a cloud', was based upon his and his sister Dorothy's experience on the shores of the lake on April 15, 1802. That day, they were walking back to their home in Grasmere and witnessed the lake in stormy conditions. On the shore at Glencoyne Bay, they saw 'a host' of daffodils (Lenten Lilies) bowing their heads in the wind. Dorothy went home and recorded this sight in her Grasmere Journal. A few years later, William wrote his acclaimed poem.

In Spring, Ullswater 'Steamers' passengers can still see the Lenten Lilies on the shore and re-live the Wordsworths' experience. Dove Cottage, the former home of the Wordsworths, is just 30 minutes away by car or coach and reached via the Kirkstone Pass.

Where to Stay

There is a range of fabulous accommodation in the Ullswater area. Top hotels include Sharrow Bay (Howtown side), Rampsbeck Country House Hotel (mid-way down the lake), the Inn on the Lake (Glenridding) and the Pooley Bridge Inn (at the top of the lake).

There are also a variety of campsites and caravan parks, including Waterfoot Park, which is an idyllic spot for touring caravans, motorhomes and those with a holiday home on site. This park is owned by Ullswater 'Steamers' parent company. There is also the award-winning Quiet Site at Watermillock.

Head to Ullswater in 2014 and discover the lake through whatever type of communication suits you best. More information is available at www.ullswater-steamers.co.uk

Fares

Ullswater 'Steamers' offers a 'Pay Once: Sail All Day' option in the form of its Round-the-Lake Pass. This costs just £33 for a family in 2014 and allows the passengers to hop on and off boats all day, making the most of the cycle and walking routes that link to the pier houses and which can enable passengers to get the boots or lycra on and fully explore the area in a sustainable and green way.

Cycle racks can be found at both pier houses and both bikes and dogs can be carried on to the boats for a small charge of £1.50 and £1 respectively (charges are per day).

A Round the Lake Pass also provides a 50% discount voucher for use at the 'Steamers' sister attraction, the Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway. Standard fares are reduced by 10% for early risers who can travel on the 9.45am sailings and buy tickets at a pier house. If four adults travel together, there is a further discount, with one adult travelling for half price.

The Round the Lake Pass costs £13.40 for an adult, £6.70 for a child and £33 for a family.

Single fares to Howtown (mid lake) from either Glenridding (bottom of the lake) or Pooley Bridge (top of the lake) are £6.30 for an adult, who will pay £10 for a return ticket. The child fares are £3.15 or £5 and a return family ticket is £27.

Single fares from Glenridding to Pooley Bridge (or vice versa) are £9 for an adult, or £4.50 for a child. Return fares are the same price as a Round the Lake pass.

A family ticket is for two adults and two children or one adult and three children. Two adults with one child can pay slightly less.

There is also an annual season ticket (adult £50: child £25: family £125: dogs £6 and bikes £6).

A new mini season ticket is also available to offer five days travel over a 2 week period. This costs £40.20 for adults and £20.10 for children.

ENDS

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Journey To The Centre Of Cumbria's Nature Offer With Ullswater 'Steamers'

Buying a ticket for an Ullswater 'Steamers' cruise excursion can be just the start of your nature-focused adventure ... if you want it to be.

The lake is set in a stunning natural environment, with the backdrop of the fells, which all have walking paths to follow to lead you to other features in the landscape, to stunning viewpoints and to places of historical importance. By following bridle paths from the pier houses, you can easily link up with these walking routes.

An easy four-hour lakeshore walk might be just the ticket along Ullswater's eastern shore, or you might wish to tackle a mini mountain stretch to reach Hallin Fell. The options are endless.

There are also numerous cycle paths to follow, whether you want a gentle cycle along the lakeshore, or wish to do something more challenging with your mountain bike.

Ullswater 'Steamers' is always ready to encourage you to explore under your own steam, as part of its commitment to the natural environment and green policies. For this reason, it provides cycle racks, electric cycle recharge facilities and also electric car charge points.

The 'Steamers' works with various environmental partners to bring its passengers the best experiences that nature tourism can provide. Its RSPB Water, Predators and Heathland Birds experience in 2014 and its Red Deer Rut Cruises will both see the environmental charity benefiting by keeping the profits made on these special days.

The 'Steamers' is regularly rewarded for its green policies with awards and commendations. It holds the Gold Green Tourism Business Scheme accreditation (GTBS) and a Gold CBEN (Cumbria Business Environment Network) rating. It was Highly Recommended at the Virgin Holidays Responsible Tourism Awards 2008 and 2011 and won the local Cumbrian CN Environmental Awareness Award in 2009.

In 1998, it introduced a visitor donation scheme to raise funds for the Tourism & Conservation Partnership (now Nurture Lakeland), to fund conservation projects within the Ullswater valley. This operates through a 10 pence donation on every passenger fare between Glenridding and Howtown and around £45,000 has now been raised.

Cruising and then exploring will also bring you into contact with some amazing wildlife. Fell ponies wander across the Helton Fells and red grouse can be found high on the fells, while the ancient woodlands around the lake are breeding habitats for many species of insect and bird such as the ermine moth, great spotted woodpecker, tree-creeper, meadow pipit, lapwing, pied and yellow wagtail, yellowhammer, peregrine falcon and raven.

Keen young wildlife spotters will find gulls roosting on the lake itself and mallards, red-breasted merganser, goosander, kingfisher, cormorants and dippers inhabiting the bays. Osprey can sometimes be spotted in passage, but it is more likely to see buzzards circling overhead in search of prey. Oystercatchers nest around the lake and cormorants diving into the lake for fish are a regular sight and one followed by that of them sitting on posts and branches holding their wings out to dry.

Hallinghad Wood is a nesting paradise for meadow pipit and comes to life in Spring with the small yellow flowers of the Tormentil. The wetter and boggy places around the lake are home to amazing sundews – insectivorous plants that trap and feed on small insects and flies. Bilberry can be found growing on the fells and juniper is being re-planted and protected from rabbits and sheep.

In April, wildlife watchers may detect eggs on holly growing by the lakeshore, but will no doubt spot the Holly Blue butterflies on the bushes in May.

Every season holds something different, but a highlight all year round is that of the endangered, native red squirrel, which does not hibernate, but stores food up for the three months of winter. These cheeky chappies can often be seen in trees around the lake, where they build their dreys in the trees.

If you regard your cruise ticket as more than a licence to sail on England's most beautiful lake and more as a passport to other adventures in the world of nature, you will get so much more out of your day – even if you wildlife spot from on board!

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Cruise Back To Happiness While Enjoying The Settle To Carlisle Experience

A cruise on Ullswater will be a tempting add-on for passengers travelling on the iconic 'Fellsman' steam train on June 11, 18 and 25.

On those dates, 'The Fellsman' will be travelling on the Settle to Carlisle line, giving passengers the thrill of travelling over the 24-arched Ribbleshead Viaduct, a true masterpiece of Victorian engineering.

Having journeyed past limestone peaks and traversed deep valleys, those who are travelling in the style of yesteryear will be able to take an optional vintage experience that combines a cruise on a heritage boat on Ullswater with a short drive in a Cumbrian Classic Coach. The coach will pick passengers up as they disembark from the train and transport them to the Ullswater 'Steamers' pier for a cruise on England's most beautiful lake.

Tickets for this experience are selling fast but are available at many different prices online at www.statesmanrail.com

The optional excursion to Ullswater is priced at £22.

For more details of this exquisite day out, visit www.statesmanrail.com

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