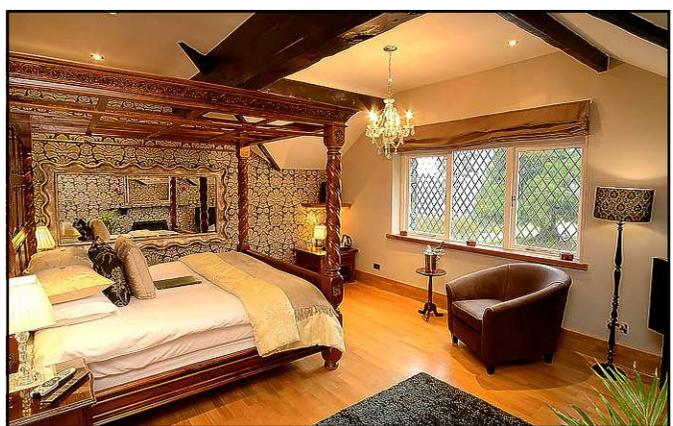


# A feast of the Lake District



**IN A PERFECT SETTING:** Main picture, the Langdale Pikes; inset left, one of the double rooms at the Broadoaks Country hotel and, right, an external view of the hotel

The Lake District is known for its dramatic scenery and as a destination for walking breaks. But **CLARE JARDINE** discovered another of its delights

ASKED which part of Britain has the best food and drink, most of us would be hard-pressed to give a straight answer.

But without hesitation I can state my current favourite is Cumbria – and more precisely the beautiful Lake District.

Not only is the area a feast for the eyes and a smorgasbord for lovers of the outdoors, it also delivers ten out of ten when it comes to eating.

With apologies to Devon and Cornwall, which have both improved dramatically in recent years, the Lake District has pulled ahead when it comes to making the most of its local food.

From local cafes to upmarket restaurants and hotels, the Lakes has a plethora of good food – and makes sure visitors know where it came from.

Chefs also manage to turn local staples, like Cumberland sausage, Lakeland lamb and sticky toffee pudding, into something that extra bit special.

A recent short break in the Lakes was almost blighted by poor weather, which curtailed many outdoor plans.

But it allowed a lot more time to indulge in local food while doing a little gentle sightseeing around the Lake District.

No visit to the Lakes is complete without a walk to the village of Grasmere and the chance to visit Sarah Nelson's famous Gingerbread Shop.

The shop nestles in the middle of this quintessential village next door to St Oswald's Church, the final resting place of the poet William Wordsworth and many of his family.

Visitors are drawn into the tiny shop by the smell of sugar, ginger and butter being turned into something delectable.

To leave Grasmere without a slice, or tin, of gingerbread, is quite impossible.

But it is perhaps the savoury offerings which the Lakes deserve the greater praise for. From Cumberland sausages (what's not to like) to black pudding, lamb hotpot and some fantastic fish and chips, there is plenty to choose from.

Partnered with some of the best ales in Britain you really can't be disappointed.

Serving some outstanding food is the Broadoaks Country House Hotel at Troutbeck, near Windermere.

This gorgeous old hotel has been recently refurbished to put a boutique twist on its old-fashioned elegance.

Many of the luxurious rooms have hand-carved four poster beds but there are modern twists as well, such as



double ended spa baths and TV in the bathroom.

It's an ultra comfortable hotel set in really pretty grounds and well placed for walking the fells or visiting the many lakes.

But its outstanding feature is the Fayrer Restaurant where chef Gareth Owen lives up to his promise to serve "Cumbrian cuisine and memories to savor".

This is top-class 'fusion cuisine', using produce from within a 30 mile radius of

the hotel to produce some really special modern dishes.

The starters of Cartmell Valley Wood Pigeon and Real Ale Battered Monkfish Tail set a high standard for the rest of the meal.

But the fillet of Cumbrian beef, served with the sweetest, softest calves' liver and the Gressingham duck with Cumberland sauce both exceeded expectations.

It would have been rude to ignore the sticky toffee pudding with cinder toffee

## TRAVEL facts

CLARE JARDINE stayed at the Broadoaks Country Hotel, Troutbeck, Windermere. [www.broadoakscountryhouse.co.uk](http://www.broadoakscountryhouse.co.uk); tel 015394 45588

**SCENIC:** Looking North West along Lake Windermere to the Fairfield Horseshoe

ice cream and the plum and almond crumble was an equally creative take on delicious local puds.

Breakfast was also on the mark with some more of those sausages and famous local black pudding taking centre stage in the full Cumberland.

Many writers, poets and artists have reflected the Lake District's beauty so those who don't have the fortune to visit can imagine what it's like.

But it is only by going there yourself that you can enjoy its crowning glory – it's wonderful food.