

Catbells

Lake District



Nikon D800E with 14-24mm lens at 21mm, ISO 100, 1/4sec at f/14, 0.6 NH grad hard, tripod, 3 second exposure delay

Catbells is a fell situated in the Lake District. With its modest height of 451 meters it is one of the most popular viewpoints in England's largest National Park. The small summit is situated on the western shore of Derwent Water close to the popular town of Keswick.

In September last year I planned a visit to the Isle of Skye. When visiting Scotland I normally drive from Belgium to IJmuiden, take the ferry to Newcastle upon Tyne and then drive further up north. However because high season prices still applied and the ferry was pretty expensive, I decided to take the ferry from Zeebrugge to Hull and plan a little detour in the Lake District before heading to Skye.

Being one of the wettest places in England, the Lake District surely lived up to its name during my stay: it was grey and windy and it rained cats and dogs for most of the time. Nevertheless I tried to make most of my time and used the rainy days to explore the area around Derwent Water. Even though many photographers had already done this before me, the summit of Catbells, overlooking Derwent Water, was one of those viewpoints I definitely wanted to see and photograph. If you want to make the most out of locations like this it is wise to prepare well and explore the location before you actually plan a shoot. I decided to climb Catbells from Haws Ends, near Swinside at the foot of the northern ridge to prepare for a sunrise shoot when the weather would improve. Preparation like this is essential and allows you to get to know the route, find out how long it takes you to reach the summit and search for interesting compositions and shots. With a large rock in the foreground and the actual path leading the

eye towards Skiddaw in the far distance, it looked like this could become a pleasing shot under the right conditions.

The weather forecast for the next morning looked promising: winds would settle during the night and I would finally get some sun. I set the alarm clock around 4.30 am and at 5.15, armed with a head torch, flashlight, tripod and a heavy camera bag I was already climbing the summit of Catbells. It took me about 45 minutes to reach the spot I discovered the day before and set up my tripod and camera. Conditions looked promising: there was a little bit of mist hanging in the valley below and the sun would soon appear from behind the mountains and light up the slopes of Catbells. My lens was set at 21mm at f/14 to ensure enough depth of field and I had to use a 0.6 hard graduated ND filter to balance the exposure.

When the first people started to make their way up, I was already heading back down, feeling energetic and satisfied of my dawn shoot and ready to pack and leave for the Isle of Skye.

How to get there From Keswick take the B5289 east to the A66. On the A66 take the first left towards Portinscale and follow the main road until you reach Swinside. Keep left and follow the road on the western shore of Derwent Water further south until you reach Hawes End. A small parking lot is situated between Hawes End and Skelgill.

What to shoot Impressive views over Derwent Water with Skiddaw in the far distance. Towards the south you get great views on the other Derwent fells.

Best time of day Dawn and sunrise when first light lits up the slopes of Catbells.

Nearest food/drink/accommodation The Swinside Inn, Newlands Valley, Keswick, Cumbria CA12 5UE, 017687 78253, www.theswinsideinn.com

Other times of year The location offers possibilities throughout the year with Autumn definitely being the most popular time of year among photographers.

Ordnance Survey map LR 90

Nearby locations Keswick harbour (3 miles); Latrigg viewpoint (4 miles)