

# RD DRIVING SPECIAL

Pack a picnic and fire up the engine! We bring you some of Britain's most beautiful drives, plus expert advice on how to navigate them safely

## **DRIVE ONE: FOLLOW IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF WORDSWORTH**

**START: AMBLESIDE, CUMBRIA**

**LENGTH: 45 MILES**

More than 150 years ago, William Wordsworth would walk from his home in the country into Ambleside. If he made the same journey today, it would bring him few surprises. The little town still features grey-stone Victorian villas on the banks of Lake Windermere and older cottages huddled ▶



◀ together on the hillside.

Climb 1,500ft to the Kirkstone Pass, the highest in the Lake District, past Glenridding on the shore of Ullswater, and on to Aira Force, a spectacular woodland waterfall close to the spot that inspired Wordsworth's "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud".

Follow the A66 to Keswick, passing below the overhanging, rocky brow of 2,848ft Blencathra, and stop off at the 3,500-year-old Castlerigg stone circle. Pass through Keswick and follow the lake shore route around Thirlmere.

Descend the A591 into Grasmere, which Wordsworth described as "the loveliest spot that man hath ever found". Just outside the village is Dove Cottage, where he spent many years as a young man—it's now a museum and art gallery. Take in the stunning Rydal Water, just off the road, before heading back to Ambleside.

## EXPERT TOP TIPS



**Nicholas Daines** Hollywood stuntman who's appeared in three Harry Potter films, *Clash of the Titans* and *Batman Begins*

When filming car chases, I make cars skid and swing by pulling the handbrake. But I stay in control of a skid by steering away from it. This creates traction and stops the back of the car swinging out too much. It helps concentration if you look in the direction you want to go.



## DRIVE TWO: AT HOME ON THE BROADS

START: AYLSHAM, NORFOLK  
LENGTH: 61 MILES

Thatched churches, busy villages and waterways—all under seemingly enormous skies—feature on this journey around the Norfolk Broads, the network of shallow lakes created from flooded medieval peat diggings.

The little flint and red-tiled town of Aylsham has been a royal manor since before the Norman conquest, and its mainly Georgian marketplace is home to the Black Boys Inn, in whose assembly room Lord Nelson once danced.

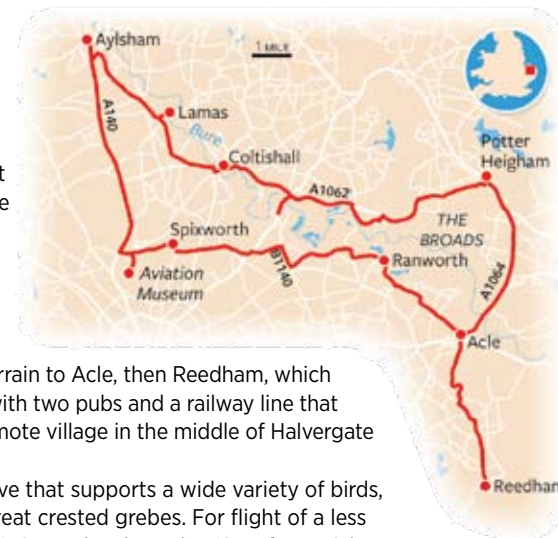
Follow the A140 to Lamas, which has a beautiful wooden mill house and the

Old Quaker Chapel, final resting place of *Black Beauty's* author Anna Sewell.

Continue to Coltishall, on the River Bure, where cabin cruisers moor in front of elegant 18th-century houses and antique shops. Nearby Potter Heigham is a thriving holiday resort and boating centre with a medieval bridge and the thatched St Nicholas church.

Cross increasingly fen-like terrain to Acle, then Reedham, which has a delightful river frontage with two pubs and a railway line that takes you to Berney Arms, a remote village in the middle of Halvergate marshes, inaccessible by road.

Ranworth has a nature reserve that supports a wide variety of birds, including common terns and great crested grebes. For flight of a less bucolic kind, take the B1140 to Spixworth, where the City of Norwich Aviation Museum's aircraft collection includes a massive Vulcan bomber. ▶



JON GIBBS/GETTY IMAGES; ANGLIA IMAGES/ALAMY



Coltishall

Berney Arms





### DRIVE THREE: WHERE THE SEA MEETS THE SKY

START: GAIRLOCH, HIGHLAND  
LENGTH: 69 MILES

Even by Scottish standards, Gairloch has a stunning setting. The sea loch, warmed by the Gulf Stream, stretches away to a horizon punctuated by the darker shapes of Skye and Lewis. Behind the town, the rock-and-lake country of Wester Ross rolls up to the domes of the Torridons, dotted with the ruins of crofts abandoned during the Highland clearances.

#### EXPERT TOP TIPS

**Andy Smith** *AA Patrol of the Year, 2012* Driving through floodwater isn't worth the risk. Even an egg cup's worth of water in an engine cylinder can stop it compressing properly, breaking the pistons and connecting rods. If there's no alternative but to go through the water, apply the handbrake as you drive slowly out of the flood and keep it on for 100 yards. This creates heat to dry the brake linings and ensure they don't stick.

The A832 takes you through the brooding pines of Slattadale Forest, all the way to the shores of Loch Maree. Across the water lie a group of more than 50 islands, including Isle Maree, where you'll see the remains of a chapel built by the seventh-century Saint Maelrubha.

Head back to Gairloch, then up the A832 towards Poolewe, through a landscape of moorland and scattered stone. Half a mile beyond Poolewe is Inverewe Garden, where the area's microclimate allows the cultivation of sub-tropical flowers.

Do one more U-turn and follow the A832 and B8056 towards the coastal village of Redpoint. You'll pass Badachro, the model of a remote west-coast Scottish settlement, with its small harbour and peat cuttings. The road also climbs to a lay-by with more wonderful views across to the Western Isles.

DAVID NOTON/NATUREPL.COM; HOLMES GARDEN PHOTO/ALAMY



Badachro



#### EXPERT TOP TIPS

##### Vicki Butler-Henderson

Racing driver, presenter of the Discovery Channel's *Fifth Gear* and author of *100 Sexiest Cars*

Racing drivers feel their car and the track conditions through their hands—both of them. So if Lewis Hamilton can keep both his paws on the wheel for the best part of a two-hour F1 race, so should you.

- In a car park, use a space that has a pillar or wall on one side. This halves the risk of your car being hit or scratched by the vehicle next to you

**Richard McCann** *Racer, collector and restorer of classic cars, and columnist for MoneyMaker magazine*

An egg cracked into a leaking radiator will get you home. The heat will cook the egg and the pressure in the radiator will force the white into the hole. A pressure flush will clear out the mess later.

**Gill Balshaw** *Head of instructor training at the AA Driving School*

Ensure you're the correct distance behind the car in front by picking a point ahead of you, such as a bridge. When that car goes under it, say, "Only a fool breaks the two-second rule." If you finish the phrase before you reach the bridge, you're fine.

**Dean Paffett and Mick Hunsdon** *Green Flag patrolmen*

Make sure your tyres are cool when you check their pressure. Warm air inside (which can be caused by just three miles of motorway driving) will give a pressure reading that's way too high.

- Fill your oil to just below the maximum mark on the dip stick. Overfilling can make the engine smoke, causing damage and obscuring other motorists' view.

- Modern antifreeze mixtures combine antifreeze and coolant, so it's just as important to top up in the summer to stop your engine overheating.

## EXPERT TOP TIPS

**Tiff Needell** Racing driver and TV presenter. His biography *Tiff Gear* (£19.99) is out now

My best tip to keep drivers out of trouble is to focus on the one thing they're supposed to be doing—driving. Racing drivers survive on 100 per cent concentration. When things go wrong, they're thinking about nothing but minimising the effect. When they crash, there's no "shock" because they're constantly expecting the unexpected

Hands-free phones, operating radios and looking at passing scenery all take your brain somewhere else. So keep your hands on the wheel, your eyes on the road, and concentrate.

**Peter James** Best-selling crime author and racing driver. His new book *Not Dead Yet* (£18.99) is out this month

A police-pursuit driving instructor taught me the Vanishing Point technique when I was researching a novel. During a cross-country chase, officers have to drive very quickly along unfamiliar country roads, trying to judge the best speed for approaching bends. But when a road bounded by hedgerows curves, there's a point where the two hedges appear to intersect. So the police drivers keep an eye on it. If it keeps getting further and further away as they approach, they'll get around the bend at their current speed. If it's not moving, they brake until it does.

**Garry Sowerby** Four-time long-distance driving world-record holder and author of *Sowerby's Road: Adventures of a Driven Mind* (£11.99)

If you think you're tired, you are. Pull over, have a power snooze, do some roadside jumping jacks, stretch or look at the stars. And always pack an egg sandwich—the smell will keep you awake.



Cadair Idris

## DRIVE FOUR: THE MOUNTAIN SEAT OF GIANTS

START: DOLGELLAU, SNOWDON  
LENGTH: 45 MILES

Snowdonia is a realm of rock, raging river and tide. This route amply demonstrates its timeless appeal.

Just outside the slate-grey but stylish town of Dolgellau, on the B4416, the awe-inspiring sight of the Afon Clywedog river thundering down a deep wooded gorge sets the tone for your journey.

The A487 then leads you across a mountain pass and onto the B4405, where a waymarked track leads to a beautiful woodland torrent at the base of the precipitous Cadair Idris—mountain home of a mythical giant.

GREENWALLES/ALAMY



Cymer Abbey



LIQUID LIGHT/ALAMY

## EXPERT TOP TIPS

**Andrew Weltch** Motor-sports enthusiast and PR consultant ([weltchmedia.com](http://weltchmedia.com))

One of the best rush-hour cars is an old but cute one. You probably won't be waved out of a side road if you're in a pricey coupé or boring hatchback, but you'll have more luck in a VW Beetle or Morris Minor. I know this because people always let me out when I'm in my rare (and dinky) Nissan Pao!

● Stuck in mud? Let some air out of the driving tyres. This increases their contact area with the ground, giving you more grip. Put the air back in afterwards, though!

As you drive towards Llanegryn, Craig yr Aderyn (Birds' Rock) is an unmistakable landmark—a dizzyingly high inland cliff surrounded by wheeling cormorants. Beyond Llywyngwriol, the road climbs over a headland to reveal the great sweep of Cardigan Bay. It then drops to the coast at Friog before sweeping inland to follow the Mawddach valley.

Stay on the A493 and turn left at the T-junction with the A470, just past Penmaenpool. Take the A496 towards Barmouth until you reach the Fiddler's Elbow picnic area. A steep footpath leads to RSPB-managed forest and heathland, a haven for butterflies and birds that's carpeted with bluebells in spring.

Drive back towards Dolgellau, taking in the ruins of the 12th-century Cymer Abbey and old Mawddach bridge (closed to traffic). ▶



## EXPERT TOP TIPS



**Lisa Kelly** *American lorry driver and star of History channel reality series *Ice Road Truckers* (Season 5 is out now on DVD)*

If there's ice on the roads, keep in control by driving as if there's an egg under the pedals that you must not break. Increase your braking distance by at least double and pull away gently to minimise wheel spin.

**Mike Frisby** *Chief examiner at the Driving Instructors Association*

Save fuel by reversing into parking spaces. Manoeuvring a car out of the space with a cold engine is less fuel efficient than driving straight out. Most drivers could save 10 per cent of their fuel bills by making small changes like this, or taking unnecessary items out of their boot, or not accelerating or braking too hard.

**Jamie Boggs** *Environmental and road-safety manager for energy firm Mark Group*

Close your windows and switch on the air con when driving at more than 55mph. At speed, the interior of your car acts like a windsock, reducing fuel efficiency by 20 per cent. The air con cuts efficiency by just ten per cent.

- Keeping your car washed and waxed improves aerodynamics. US engineer Tom Wagner Jr reported a seven per cent improvement in fuel economy during a 1,600-mile road trip in his clean truck.
- Switch off your engine when stuck in traffic. For every hour your car is idling, it's using the same amount of fuel it takes to go three and a half miles.
- It's a myth that a modern car needs to warm up before you set off. Put on your seat belt and sort out the radio before switching on the ignition. The less time with the engine on, the better.

## DRIVE FIVE: CLINGING TO THE EDGE OF A CLIFF

START: LYNTON, DEVON  
LENGTH: 37 MILES



Lynmouth

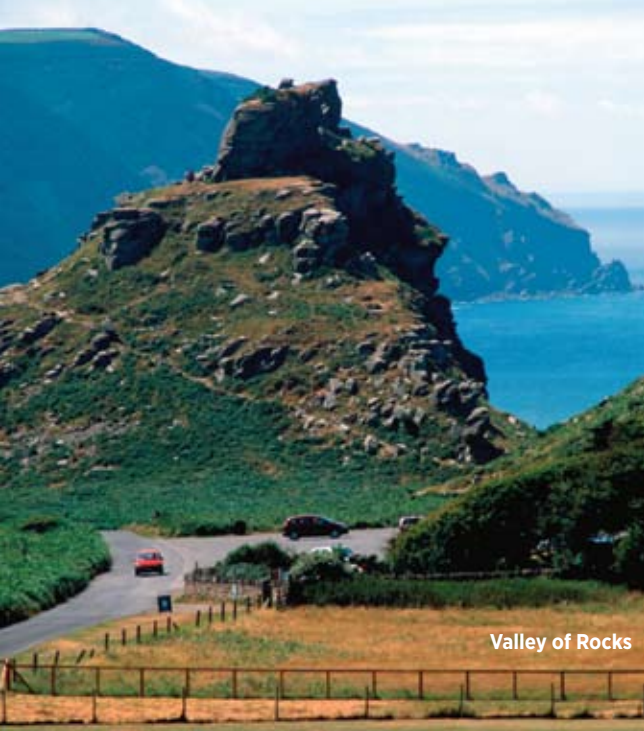
Rocky coves, steep drops to the ocean, windswept moors and a rich literary past characterise this route around the north Devon coast.

The wild hamlet of Lynmouth is your starting point. Perched high above the sea, it attracted the romantic poets Wordsworth, Shelley and Coleridge, 200 years ago. It then became a Victorian seaside resort, and the cliff railway is still in use.

From there, take the B3234 down to Lynmouth, whose picturesque harbour and thatched cottages belie its tragic past—an infamous 1952 flood killed 34 people. Climb the A39 1,000 feet to the top of Countisbury Hill and on to County Gate, for superb views across Exmoor.

Further on, just over the Somerset border, you'll find Oare. The 15th-century church was the "setting" for the shooting of R D Blackmore's Lorna Doone during her wedding ceremony ▶

EXPERT ADVICE TOLD TO AMANDA RILEY. WITH THANKS TO THE FUELCARD COMPANY (THEFUELCARDCOMPANY.CO.UK) TIPS FOR ADVICE PURPOSES ONLY.



Valley of Rocks



## EXPERT TOP TIPS

**Diane Hall, Driving instructor and author of *L of a way 2 Pass* (£11.95, [lofaway2pass.com](http://lofaway2pass.com))** If you're upset or

angry, ask yourself, "Am I focusing more on how I'm feeling than the road?" If so, pull over and use the Thought Field Therapy technique. Firstly, think of what's upset you. Then, tap two fingers five or six times on the bony bit under your eye socket, then about four inches below your armpit, then on your collarbone. Repeat for two minutes. This is used to help troops returning from Afghanistan cope with post-traumatic stress disorder.

◀ (Blackmore's grandfather was church rector).

Continue along the wooded East Lyn river valley. Stop at Parracombe and visit St Petrock's Church, its Georgian interior almost unchanged for two centuries.

Continue to Combe Martin, where the Pack o' Cards inn has 52 windows, arranged over four storeys, each with 13 doors. Turn right back towards Lynton, along narrow, tortuous and very steep lanes. After two miles, turn left to Hunter's Inn, a lodge set in the Heddon Valley—one of the deepest in England.

Wind past Martinhoe, along a series of hairpin bends, through woods high above the sea and on to the Valley of Rocks, whose extraordinary jagged formations were created during the most recent Ice Age. Beyond the car park, the road returns to Lynton. ■

» All these drives can be found in *The Most Amazing Scenic Journeys in Britain* (Reader's Digest), available at [readersdigest.co.uk/shop](http://readersdigest.co.uk/shop)

