

Discover TEESDALE



'Dales on Rails' Itinerary

Itinerary 2: Railways Great and Small

Our 'Dales on Rails' itineraries include;

Itinerary 1 Dales on Rails

Take this route to combine visits to Locomotion, Cockfield Fell, the Weardale Railway. There's an opportunity for a spot of shopping and refreshments at the Durham Dales Centre in Stanhope and you will also see the Stanhope and Tyne Railway and the Waskerley Way.

Itinerary 2 Railways Great and Small

Start with morning coffee near Bowes and explore railways in and around Barnard Castle. ride on the miniature railway at Whorlton Lido and finish the day at Locomotion.

Itinerary 3 Scenery and Steam

Combine sightseeing and fine food with a spot of history and a ride on a steam train. This route takes in Teesdale and Weardale.

Itinerary 4 Trains and Castles

Start by riding the Wensleydale railway then tour Castle Bolton, Richmond Castle, Barnard Castle ending at Darlington Railway Centre and Museum to see the engine that opened the world's first passenger railway in 1825: Locomotion no. 1.

Tour itineraries are prepared for Teesdale Marketing by Jan Williams, Northumbria Blue Badge Guide. The information is correct at the time of writing. Group organisers are advised to confirm opening times and arrangements for groups with individual attractions/organisations. A free guiding service is also available (availability is limited, please check with Jan). Contact: Jan Williams Tel 0191 383 0988 Janwildurh@aol.com

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Download other itineraries from www.teesdalediscovery.com/tours.htm

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Itinerary no 2

Route Plan

This route is accessible for full size coaches (except for Whorlton Lido where access is via a weak bridge 6' wide with 3t weight limit)

Scotch Corner – A66 west – Thorpe Farm – west of Greta Bridge take right turn (brown signs for Rokeby and Egglestone Abbey) to Barnard Castle via Abbey Bridge – Barnard Castle – Bowes Museum – Whorlton – A67 (towards Darlington) – Winston – B6274 – Staindrop – A688 (towards Bishop Auckland) – Cockfield/Gaunless Valley – Toft Hill – A68 – A688 - West Auckland – A6072 – Shildon –A6072 - A68 – A1 north/south.

Coach Timings

Scotch Corner – Barnard Castle	=	25 minutes
Barnard Castle – Cockfield Fell	=	30 minutes
<i>(Cockfield Fell circuit)</i>	=	<i>15 minutes</i>
Cockfield Fell – Shildon	=	40 minutes
Shildon – A1	=	12 minutes

Commentary

A stop at **Thorpe Farm** on the A66 gets the day off to a great start. Fill your boots from a mouth watering choice of freshly made pastries, the wonderful aromas of freshly made coffee or a delicious selection of lunchtime meals.

And whilst you take refreshments reflect on the landscape around you. This is an area rich in literary connections. Charles Dickens (1812-70) visited Teesdale in 1838 to research nearby boarding schools for his novel "Nicholas Nickleby". He spent his first night in Teesdale staying in the old coaching inn at nearby **Greta Bridge**. This was more than 10 years after the development of the Darlington and Stockton Railway in 1825 but railways were still in their infancy and used mainly for transporting minerals. People still travelled across the country by horse and carriage and Dickens arrived in Teesdale on the mail coach from London.

Several miles ahead is **Bowes** village and in 1861 the **South Durham and Lancashire Union Railway** (great name!) transported coking coal from County Durham over to West Cumbria via Bowes village and Stainmore.

Mother Nature was kind to Teesdale. Stone quarried in the Barnard Castle area provided material for many of the railway bridges north of the city of York and stone from the old Hulands quarry was used as ballast for the London and North Eastern Railway. Modern quarrying

activity takes place near Staindrop where the Dunhouse Quarry has been worked for 75 years. Stone from here was used recently in newly constructed buildings in Newcastle and Edinburgh and for repairing and restoring Durham Cathedral.

The road out of Barnard Castle passes the extraordinary and magnificent building of **Bowes Museum** founded over 100 years ago by John Bowes and his French born wife, Josephine. John Bowes was the illegitimate son of the Scottish 10th Earl of Strathmore and lived on the Streatlam estate between Barnard Castle and Staindrop (the lodge gateway can still be seen from the A688 but the house no longer exists.) From the lodge gates a field road led down to the Bowes' private railway station at **Broomielaw**. It is said that the 10th Earl of Strathmore had been more than a little reluctant to allow the railway line to cross his land from Darlington to Barnard Castle so to sweeten the pain he was provided with his very own private station.

Whorlton is a delightful hamlet with attractive sandstone cottages topped by pan tile roofs. Full size coaches must turn left at the junction in the village to go north to the A67 and join the main road in the direction of Darlington. *(An alternative route would be to turn right at the junction in Whorlton village to access **Whorlton Lido**. (NB: the Lido area is accessed via a weak bridge 6' wide with a 3t weight limit. It is*

therefore not accessible to full size coaches).

Whorlton Lido (Entrance charge. Check opening times) is a pretty recreation area on the banks of the River Tees. A **miniature railway** and the 9 hole putting green provide the fun. Whorlton suspension bridge was opened in 1831 after a disastrous start when a flood swept away the early foundations within just a few months of the construction work beginning. To avoid problems with future floods the architect, John Green of Newcastle, designed a bridge suspended high enough up to avoid any future raging torrents. It is now the oldest in the country to be supported only by its original wrought iron chains and stone pier. On a visit to watch military training exercises during the Second World War Sir Winston Churchill stood in the middle of the bridge to get the best view of training tactics.

From the A67 turn left onto the B6274 at **Winston**. The road cuts straight through the route of the 1856 **Darlington to Barnard Castle railway line**. The clues are there in the landscape. Look for the buildings on the left of this road just before the first sharp right hand bend. These stand on the site of the disused railway line. During the Second World War rural stations along this stretch of the line rang to the sound of soldiers' voices as they disembarked for the training camps at Stainton and Westwick.

The road continues to **Staindrop**. Turn right onto the A688. A fine view of **Raby Castle** comes into view shortly after leaving the village. The stronghold of the medieval Neville family, mighty Earls of Westmorland, this is very much now the family home of Lord Barnard. The castle is open to visitors (check opening times) and the aura of strength and domination which the outside of the castle gives is balanced with an interior which is both gracious and comfortable. The intimacy and sumptuousness of the Octagon Room contrasts with the splendid proportions of the Great Hall.

Just a short distance past Raby Castle entrance look for a left turn signed **Cockfield** and **Gaunless Valley Visitor Centre**. Continue through Burnt Houses to The Slack.

There is then a choice of routes:

*At the junction in the village **cars and mini-buses** only should turn left on the B6282 towards the village of Copley. A short stop should be made at the Visitor Centre adjacent to the disused Stag's Head pub (check for opening times. Parking for cars and mini buses only in front of building). There is an excellent series of illustrated leaflets available in the Visitor Centre (and also Barnard Castle TIC) which explain the local history and will help you identify all that is interesting in the landscape.*

*Cars and mini-buses can then continue past the Visitor Centre and in the village of Copley turn left (signed Barnard Castle and Car Park) which leads downhill to a small car park on the left of the road. This is the access point to explore **Copley Lead Mill Chimney** hidden uphill in the adjacent woodland. The smelt mill building no longer survives but the interpretation board in the car park explains the busy scene which must once have taken place here.*

And if you read the board carefully you can find out why the Steele Road was so named.....

*Return to the junction with the main street of Copley, turn right and then look for a left turn signed **Lynesack Church** and **Butterknowle**. The church is delightful (please park considerately) and is the last resting place of one Edward Smith who died in 1884. The novelist Charles Dickens based the character of Smike in his novel "Nicholas Nickleby" on this very person.*

*Continue through **Butterknowle** village (look out for the sheep sculpture outside the village hall on the left) and return to The Slack and join the route given below.*

For full sized coaches the following route is recommended:

From the A688 the road to Copley reaches a high point with far reaching views across the Gaunless Valley just before the descent to The Slack. At the crest of the hill there is a bus turning area on the left with a car park close by which gives a great view across the landscape. In the car park is an interpretation panel to set the scene.

Cockfield Fell is England's largest Scheduled Ancient Monument. Agricultural activity stretching back over 2000 years can be traced around the remains of the Fell's Iron Age settlements. And beneath the soil which provided for ancient man lay the mineral wealth which was to sustain his descendants. On the left of the road look for the pockmarks in the landscape which are evidence for the early bell pits sunk as early as the 12th century to reach the coal seams beneath. Drift mines followed at a later period. Coal led to improved transport. Wagon ways, tramways and railways – including a branch of the famous Darlington and Stockton railway - turned the open space into "a knotted bundle of shoelaces". Coke ovens sprang up. Brick works followed. Quarrying activity wasn't far behind.

Staggering to think of so much industrial continuity and human endeavour in such a small area.

Continue downhill to **The Slack**. At the t-junction turn right to cross a cattle grid and bear right (signed Toft Hill B6282). At the next crossroads turn right for Esperley and Cockfield passing through **High Lands** and **Low Lands**. Evidence for the old Haggerleases quarry can be seen far off to the right on the side of Cockfield Fell with the tell tale fan shapes of the old spoil heaps. At the next crossroads turn right again. On the approach to Cockfield's main street look for the pigeon crees in the fields to the right.

The main street leads to a t-junction. Turn right again to return through The Slack and the B6282 this time continuing

on to **Toft Hill** and the A68. Turn south towards West Auckland.

West Auckland and nearby **Bishop Auckland** were once in the centre of a giant network of railway lines radiating out into the surrounding countryside. Economic need drove forward the development of wooden wagon ways in the 17th century and then, as technology improved, wooden rails gave way to iron rails and horse power gave way to steam power and steam power was harnessed to produce sufficient energy to pull wagons smoothly and, eventually, reliably.

Leave plenty of time to explore the fabulous new – and free entry – **Locomotion: the National Railway Museum at Shildon**. Housed in a one kilometre long site (fully accessible) and incorporating the historic buildings and workshops of the Timothy Hackworth Museum the modern design of the new building houses 60 vehicles, workshops, café and shop. And the star of the show? "Sans Pareil" was built by Hackworth at Shildon and is recognised as one of the most important locomotives in the world. It took part in the famous Rainhill Trials of 1829 running against George Stephenson's "Rocket". "Sans Pareil" has now returned to the region and takes pride of place to welcome visitors to this terrific new attraction.

*Definitely "without parallel"
and the perfect ending to a perfect day*

Acknowledgements:

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Discover Teesdale
www.teesdalediscovery.com