

Discover TEESDALE



Themed Itinerary

Gardens & Geology

Our Pick 'n' Mix themed itineraries give you the flexibility to choose which attractions to visit and which themes to follow to suit your schedule and your group's interests. Don't hesitate to contact us if you need a tailor-made itinerary.

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Our itineraries include;

Famous Families

More than half of the land in Teesdale is privately owned. This tour reveals secret corners and explores Teesdale's links with the Baliol, Barnard, Bowes, Morritt, Neville, Strathmore, Vane families.

Gardens & Geology

Ideal for horticultural societies, garden enthusiasts and nature lovers this tour takes in both wild and cultivated landscapes - and there is an opportunity to buy plants in the old walled gardens and nurseries at Eggleston Hall.

Land of the Three Rivers

The Tees, Tyne and Wear shape the landscape in the North of England. This tour takes in beautiful upper reaches of all three rivers calling in some of the areas' prettiest villages.

Roman Route

Teesdale was a key point on the Roman route across the Pennines south of Hadrian's Wall. The A66 follows the original Roman Road. This tour takes in the fort and river crossing at Piercebridge and can be extended to link up with Hadrian's Wall for history and archaeology enthusiasts - or combined with retail and refreshment opportunities in villages and towns along the way.

Writers and Artists

Famous visitors to Teesdale include Charles Dickens, Sir Walter Scott and artists Cotman and Turner. This tour explores their favourite corners, the places they stayed and the views that inspired them.

Tour itineraries are prepared for Teesdale Marketing by Jan Williams, Registered Tourist 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.

Gardens and Geology

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Route Plan

Barnard Castle – County Bridge over River Tees -A67 – A66 – exit into Brough – B6276 – Middleton-in-Teesdale – B6277 - Bowlees Visitor Centre – Low Force/Wynch Bridge - High Force – B6277 – Langdon Beck – turn left on unclassified road to Cow Green Reservoir – return to Langdon Beck – unclassified moor road to St John’s Chapel – A689 - Stanhope – B6278 - Eggleston Hall Gardens – B6278 - Barnard Castle

Coach Timings

Barnard Castle – Brough	35 mins
Brough – Middleton-in-Teesdale	40 mins
Middleton-in-Teesdale – Cow Green Reservoir	25 mins
Cow Green Reservoir – Stanhope	45 mins
Stanhope – Eggleston Hall Gardens	25 mins
Eggleston Hall Gardens – Barnard Castle	10 mins

Attractions

Include one or more of the following attractions:

Barnard Castle	Full day recommended for fascinating market town and Castle managed by English Heritage Group bookings: 01833 638212 (site custodian) or 0191 2691200 (regional head office)
High Force	England’s highest waterfall managed by Raby Estates. 45 minutes (to include walk to/from falls). Group bookings: 01833 640209 Email: teesdaleestate@rabycastle.com www.rabycastle.com/high_force.htm
Middleton-in-Teesdale	Former lead mining company town. 1.5-2 hours. Group bookings: 01833 641000
Raby Castle	Home of Lord Barnard, castle, coach house, gardens and tearooms. 3 hours. Group bookings: 01833 660202 Email: admin@rabycastle.com www.rabycastle.com/visit_info/tours_groups.htm
Newbiggin Chapel	Methodist chapel. 30 minutes. Group bookings: 01833 638272
Bowlees Visitor Centre	Durham Wildlife Trust discovery centre, picnic area and footpaths leading to Gibson’s Cave and Summerhill Force waterfall and Low Force. 1 hour. Group bookings: 01833 622292
Durham Dales Centre	Crafts, tea room, garden and discovery centre in Stanhope, Weardale. 1 hour Group bookings: 01388 527650 Email: durham.dales.centre@durham.gov.uk
Eggleston Hall Gardens	Gardens and nursery, tearooms and gift shop. 1-2 hours. Gardens bookings: 01833 650115 Tearoom bookings: 01833 650553

Refreshments

Barnard Castle	Variety of tearooms/pubs
Middleton-in-Teesdale	Village bakers/tearoom
Teesdale Hotel	Group bookings: 01833 640264 Email: enquiries@teesdalehotel.com www.teesdalehotel.com
Bowlees Visitor Centre	Group bookings: 01833 622292
Dales Centre, Stanhope	Group bookings: 01388 527650
Eggleston Hall Gardens	Group bookings: 01833 650553

Commentary

Teesdale's outstanding scenic quality is born from its very special geological mix of whinsill, limestone, slate, barytes, galena and sugar limestone.

The A66 trans-Pennine route over **Stainmore** (the stoney moor) has been a major line of communications for thousands of years and the modern road today slices through an ancient landscape rich in prehistoric remains.

To the Romans this part of the Empire was part of a military zone to the south of Hadrian's Wall (built to the north across the narrowest part of England from Newcastle to Bowness on Solway). The Romans constructed signal stations across the Stainmore pass between Bowes and Brough positioned so that each station was visible from the next along the line. Messages were sent using flags, smoke and fire and a simple flag message could be transmitted from one end of Stainmore to the other in under 4 minutes.

Between the Bowes Moor Hotel and the Cumbrian border line watch out for the earthworks of the Rey Cross marching camp. Each time the Roman army stopped overnight in hostile territory they would take the time to dig a rampart of earth and stone – even if it was only going to be used for one night. It is estimated that Rey Cross could have housed 6,000 soliders overnight.

And then there was Eric Bloodaxe.

Eric was everyone's idea of a real Viking. Red-haired, fearsome and brave – and presumably the owner of a large axe – he established himself as ruler of the Viking kingdom of Northumbria. Married to a woman called Gunnhild who has gone down in history as a bit of an evil witch not beyond henpecking her husband. Eric met his grizzly end at the Battle of Stainmore in 954AD and with his death ended the Viking domination of the Northumbria. Locals say that on misty nights his screams can still be heard being carried on the wind.....

Just after the Cumbria county sign the road begins to dip down a long incline where the views across the lovely Eden valley really open up and the Lake District hills are visible in the distance. To the right is the western escarpment of the Pennine range which sweeps down towards the valley floor.

The village of **Brough** at the entrance to the Eden Valley has a lot in common with Bowes village at the eastern end of the Stainmore Gap. Both settlements were originally Roman

forts - *Verteris* meaning “summit” was Brough’s original name and the fort guarded the Roman supply route between York and Carlisle.

When the Normans arrived in the 11th century they recognised that the Romans had chosen well for defence. What was good enough for them was good enough for the Normans and so up went new fortifications. In Brough’s case the first castle was begun in 1092. Almost 600 years later it was restored by the redoubtable Lady Anne Clifford whose personal story is one of a woman’s perseverance in a man’s world. Born at Skipton Castle in 1590 she spent the best part of her adult life fighting to regain the rightful inheritance of her father’s estate in what was then Cumberland. Success came at the age of 53 but it wasn’t a case of retirement for Lady Anne. Her remaining years (and she lived until she was 86 years of age) were spent travelling hundreds of miles inspecting her properties, restoring castles and local churches and building bridges. Even today Lady Anne Clifford’s name is remembered with respect the length and breadth of the Eden valley.

Local tradition in Brough dictates that when a marriage takes place in St Michael’s church the local children lock the church gates and only let the guests free when money has exchanged hands!

In the middle of Brough turn right at the clock tower (1911) passing the Golden Fleece inn. As a staging post for 18th century coach travellers Brough has plenty of watering holes and this is one of the oldest dating to 1779. In its heyday horses could be changed in 2 minutes flat to ensure the minimum of delay.

From the centre of Brough we begin the return journey to **Teesdale**. The B6276 leads through remote **Lunedale** which has long been used as a natural line of communication between the Eden valley and Teesdale. In medieval times this would have been a rough track winding over the moors but in 1817 the road was rebuilt as a Turnpike Road. At that time Turnpike Roads were being constructed all over England. Properly surveyed and constructed the cost of building these roads was met by private subscription. Investors got their money back because users of the road would be charged. On payment, a pike or gate would be turned to allow access onto the road.

There was a very good reason for wanting to improve access through Lunedale. In the 18th and 19th centuries the **lead-mining industry** was a hugely important activity throughout the whole of the North Pennine area. It became one of the longest running economic efforts anywhere in Europe and for 800 years the hills and moors of the Pennine hills yielded up their immense store of lead ore. The main lead-mining dales were Teesdale, Weardale and Allendale and from the end of the 17th century for a period of 200 or more years two major companies dominated the scene. One was the London Lead Company which had their northern headquarters at **Middleton-in-Teesdale** from 1815. It was this Company which financed the building of the Turnpike Road and the construction of new bridges at Grains o’ the Beck and Rennygill.

Shortly after leaving Brough a road sign marks the boundary of the **North Pennine Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty** which extends across 870 sq miles of open countryside. This is not the only designation to protect Teesdale and its neighbouring dales. There are numerous **Sites of Special Scientific Interest** in the area and at **Moor House** a **Biosphere Reserve** – a kind of “living laboratory” – serves as part of an international programme to conserve the rich diversity of plants and animals which contribute to a living biosphere.

And if that was not enough protection.....

.....in 2003 the North Pennine area was awarded **European Geopark** status in recognition of the richness and diversity of local geology.

Two major landowners in the immediate area are also heavily involved in conserving and managing land around Lunedale and Teesdale.

The **Strathmore Estate** is owned by the Bowes-Lyon family. In the 18th century Mary Eleanor Bowes was the daughter of a Durham coal owner and one of the richest heiresses in Europe. She married the 9th Earl of Strathmore and the Earl agreed to exchange his surname for hers. Later, the 11th Earl made the name Bowes-Lyon. The present Earl's Durham estate extends through Lunedale and along the south bank of the River Tees.

The other landowner is the **Ministry of Defence** who partly own and partly lease the 25,000 acres which form the **Warcop Army Training Estate**. Red flags on the left of the road mark the boundary of the training area. In the early 1940's Warcop was established as a tank gunnery range and many of the armoured formations which took part in the Normandy landings were trained here before moving down to the south of England. Today it is an Infantry Field Firing Range used by both the Regular and Territorial Army. Live firing takes place almost every day all year round with the exception of Mondays which gives local farmers an opportunity to check their sheep. There is also no live firing during lambing time. Accommodation blocks on the estate can cope with 1500 soldiers.

Land which is managed for army training purposes presents an excellent opportunity for conservation of landscape and wildlife. Rare flora and fauna survive on the estate because public access is very limited. Breeding and nesting birds, butterflies and moths and good chunks of limestone pavement have all benefited from the army's presence.

Some miles further along the B6276 **Selset Reservoir** comes into view. This, and its sister reservoir of **Grassholme** a little further on, were built in 1960 and today provide fishing and birdwatching opportunities. Windsurfers wanting a good strong wind to test their abilities favour Selset. Those wanting a quieter ride choose the calmer Grassholme.

On the descent through the hamlets of Thringarth and Bowbank a distinctive clump of trees appear riding high on the skyline to the left. This little hill is **Kirkcarrion** and reputedly contains the grave of a Brigantian Prince called Caryn. The Brigantes were one of the self-governing, independent tribes occupying the north of England during the Iron Age. On his death Caryn was buried on this spot – Caryn's church became Kirkcarrion - but his spirit was disturbed during excavations 200 years ago and ever since poor Caryn's unsettled spirit has haunted the hills.

Perhaps he needs to meet up with Eric Bloodaxe's roaming spirit....

The approach to **Middleton-in-Teesdale** crosses a particularly lovely stretch of the **River Tees**. At the road junction with the main street an elegant drinking fountain stands proudly at the corner on the right. The name etched into the canopy is Robert Bainbridge who during the 1840s was the Superintendent for the London Lead Company. A fair but severe man he would not hesitate to fine a man found smoking in the street.

Middleton is well worth exploring. The village bakery and tearoom offers fresh-bakes and preserves and an excellent Tourist Information Centre is just the place to buy those last minute guidebooks, souvenirs and postcards

Middleton has a long history as an agricultural centre and the development of lead mines in the area resulted in an industrial centre being grafted on to a farming community. That industrial influence has left its mark in the architecture of the town. The London Lead Company built a model housing estate on the edge of the town centre. **New Town**, as it became known, had its own distinctive archway entrance to echo the local lead mine architecture. You still get a sense of entering something special. Only the most deserving employees of the Company were encouraged to live in New Town - people like the mine managers and surveyors - who were hardworking, sober and of a high moral standard.

Because of the presence of the London Lead Company Middleton experienced a boom time in terms of local employment and prosperity during the 19th century. As a Quaker owned organisation the Company took its social responsibilities seriously and provided elementary health care for its workers and built a Company school for the children.

Exit Middleton on the B6277 travelling west towards Alston. At the end of the town the view opens up to the right and across a field is the imposing Middleton House which until 1905 was the headquarters of the Company.

Now that your route is on this bank of the River Tees keep a look out for whitewashed farm buildings over the next few miles. Whereas the land on the other bank of the River Tees is partly owned by the Strathmore Estate it is Lord Barnard of Raby Castle who owns land on this side and his estate extends all the way through this middle part of the dale and into the upper reaches. There is a long tradition on the Raby Estate for whitewashing the buildings.

Teesdale villages are dotted with Methodist chapels and one of the oldest is in the hamlet of **Newbiggin** (limited mini-coach parking at Village Hall. Group visits by arrangement. Tel 01833 638272). Built in 1760 for a congregation of 200 John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, was a frequent preacher. He found much support here amongst the isolated communities of the Pennine dales.

Bowlees Visitor Centre (entrance charge) is run by Durham Wildlife Trust and coach parking is permitted at the wide entrance (but not in the official car park area). It is a level walk up the road into the car park and then a footbridge leads to the old Methodist Chapel housing the visitor centre. Refreshments are available and all the stories of geology, wildlife and plant life are brought together in the popular exhibition.

This is where you can learn about the great band of rock which contributed so much to the landscape development of Teesdale. **Whinsill** was formed more than 200m years ago and is properly known as dolerite. Dolerite is an igneous rock formed directly from molten magma which was squeezed between layers of other rocks. As it cooled and solidified it formed a very hard, black dolerite which is columnar in appearance. The Giant's Causeway in Northern Ireland is another well known example of it and the Romans made good use of the rock when they built Hadrian's Wall across the top of an escarpment formed of whinsill. Further east on the Northumberland coastline the castles of Bamburgh and Dunstanburgh

stand atop whinsill and the Farne Islands are the most easterly appearance of the rock before it disappears below the waves of the North Sea.

There are two good opportunities to view the whinsill in this part of Teesdale.

Back on the B6277 and just a short distance from Bowlees Visitor Centre there is a finger post on the left of the road pointing through a gateway into a field leading to **Low Force** and **Wynch Bridge** (300 metres). For parking you need to continue past this and stop in the long lay by on the left just a little further on (mini-coaches and cars only). Walk back to the finger post (*please be very aware of traffic*) and walk across the field to view **Low Force** and the **Wynch Bridge**.

The first Wynch Bridge was built in 1704 – the very year that the Duke of Marlborough was fighting the Battle of Blenheim during the War of the Spanish Succession. It was described as the first suspension bridge in Europe and it was built by leadminers living at Holwick who wished to cross to the hamlet of Newbiggin. Almost 100 years later tragedy struck when the chain links broke and 11 people were killed. The present bridge was rebuilt in 1830 and frames a grand view across the River Tees.

And if you visit Low Force then surely you can't miss its big brother **High Force** (small charge) just a little further on. Lovely views of the River Tees can be seen along this route and on the far bank the largest stand on juniper bushes in England stretch along the hillside. Look out for hikers on that side of the riverbank. They are following the route of the **Pennine Way** long distance footpath. The Lake District writer Alfred Wainwright described it as “a walk of near perfection.”

Reached by a 600 metre woodland walk from the nearby coach/car park High Force is the River Tees at its dramatic best. Plunging 21 metres to the dark pools below the river tumbles over a ledge of Whinsill.

Continue on the B6277 and at Langdon Beck turn left onto the unclassified road to **Cow Green reservoir** where raw beauty and remoteness come together to create a powerful atmosphere. In 1967 construction work began on the upper part of the dale with the intention of evening out the flow of the River Tees to ensure a summer supply of water for the industries of Middlesbrough and Stockton far away. There was great opposition from conservationists and a Public Inquiry. But the argument for the industries was strong and finally construction work got underway. The reservoir is 2 miles long and it takes 2 days for water to travel from here downriver to Teesside. The County Durham/Cumbrian border runs through the middle of the reservoir.

On a clear day the outstanding views across the water take in the high fells of **Upper Teesdale National Nature Reserve**, the **Moor House Biosphere Reserve** and **Great Dun Fell**.

Interpretation boards in the car park are worth reading and the start of a Nature Trail is a short distance away. The Nature Trail leads towards **Cauldron Snout**, England's largest cascade. Just the type of awesome scenery the landscape artist **Joseph Millord William Turner** was looking for on his journeys through Teesdale in 1797 and 1816.

It is incredible to think that 140 different species of plants grow in Teesdale. Gentians, orchids, violets, sedges, primroses and lots of other very beautiful plants thrive on the mixed geology of Teesdale.

On the Nature Trail it is possible to identify small outcrops of Sugar Limestone. When the Whinsill was being formed from hot, molten lava it came into contact with layers of limestone. Normally if limestone comes into contact with hot rock it undergoes a thermal metamorphism and turns into marble. In Teesdale the limestone did not do that. It was only “half-baked” and so formed sugar limestone. This limestone eventually became a safe retreat for arctic and alpine plants which colonised Teesdale after the Ice Age some 10,000 years ago.

Please note: Cow Green reservoir is in a remote corner of Teesdale. It is best visited on a day with good visibility to fully appreciate the views. To protect the landscape and special atmosphere facilities are not provided in the car park area. The Nature Trail takes about one hour to complete. Cauldron Snout is approximately 30 minutes’ walk from the car park and a visit to the cascade requires great care and a head for heights. Young children must be accompanied by an adult. The access road to the reservoir is undertaken at drivers’ own risk.

Return to the B6277 and turn left past the Langdon Beck hotel. Within a very short distance a brown sign for Weardale and then a right hand junction signed for St John’s Chapel comes into view. This route leads once more over high ground with splendid views of **Weardale** on the descent into St John’s Chapel. If the story of the lead mining activity has caught your imagination then a visit to **Killhope the North of England Lead Mining Centre** in upper Weardale is well worthwhile.

Turn right at St John’s Chapel onto the A689 and drive through what in medieval Weardale would have been the hunting ground of the mighty Prince Bishops of Durham. The names of **Westgate** and **Eastgate** recall the entrances to the Bishop’s Deer Park. Hunting in those days was a way of maintaining fitness for warfare as well as a means of providing food for the Bishop and his guests.

The redundant buildings of the Blue Circle cement works at Eastgate are a reminder of the importance of geology in Weardale’s story too. A large band of limestone known as the Great Limestone extends through the dale and was quarried on the far hillside until the cement works closed down in 2003. Further along the dale is a small village called Frosterley where a type of limestone known as Frosterley marble was quarried for centuries. Lovely polished examples of this “cockle marble” can be seen inside Durham Cathedral.

The Durham Dales Centre at **Stanhope** makes a convenient stopping point with facilities, a tourist information centre and craft shops. Don’t miss the walled garden area tucked away in the corner of the car park. Opened by Teesdale local **Hannah Hauxwell** this lovely little garden is a delightful spot to sit on a warm day.

Hannah Hauxwell still lives in the Teesdale village of **Cotherstone**. She found fame in the 20th century through the world of modern media and publicity. Until 1972 Hannah was completely unknown to the wider world beyond Teesdale single-handedly working her small farm in the tributary valley of Baldersdale and eking out a living in a home without running water, electricity or gas. Then one day 30 years ago a Yorkshire television producer made a documentary about her life called “Too Long a Winter”. No one, least of all the lady herself,

could have anticipated what came next. Letters, presents and gifts of money came pouring in. People who had missed her name sent gifts addressed to “The Lonely Lady of the Hills near Barnard Castle....”

From making a farming profit of £280 in a good year Hannah’s life changed dramatically when her life story was retold in books and more television documentaries.

As a farmer Hannah Hauxwell was perfectly in tune with the landscape of these remote dales. Another perfect example of man in harmony with his surroundings can be enjoyed at the final stop of the day.

The B6278 leads south from Stanhope and returns you to Teesdale. The delightful **Eggleston Hall Gardens** are perfect for keen gardeners. The gardens contain many rare plants and shrubs and organic fruit, vegetables and herbs are on sale. Follow the signs to find the ruined chapel hidden away in a corner. Delicious home made food is on offer at the Coach House Tearoom and the well-stocked gift shop will be too tempting to resist.

The tour ends back at Barnard Castle with time to enjoy the French-style gardens surrounding the magnificent **Bowes Museum**. At the time this Museum was opened it was more usual for museums to be built in urban areas so this elegant setting is really very special indeed.

Or try visiting the **sensory garden** within the grounds of the Castle in the town. This garden is planted with aromatic plants and contains tactile features.

Close your eyes and dream on. That’s what gardens are for.....

Sources

Ministry of Defence website