

Discover TEESDALE



Gateways to Teesdale

Gateway Itinerary: Lake District, Penrith & M6 to A1(M)

Our new gateway itineraries show you how to include Teesdale in your route through the north east region. Teesdale is an easy destination to reach from all directions. Don't hesitate to contact us if you need a tailor-made itinerary.

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Lake District - Penrith & M6 to A1(M)

Teesdale is just a short drive from the Lake District. Easily accessible from the A66 it makes a perfect stopping point for cross-Pennine tours.

Scotch Corner and Yorkshire Dales

Teesdale is the northernmost of the Yorkshire Dales. The little-known route over 'The Stang' Forest to Reeth in Arkengarthdale and Tan Hill, England's highest pub is an ideal country route for minibuses and people carriers. Coaches will prefer to use the main A1M/A66 access route described here.

Pennines - Hexham and Alston

The northern approach to Teesdale from Alston offers stunning views and easy access to High Force, England's highest waterfall.

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.

Gateway Itinerary: Lake District – Penrith and M6 to A1(M)

Teesdale is just a short drive from the Lake District. Easily accessible from the A66 it makes a perfect stopping point for cross-Pennine tours.

Route Plan

M6 – A66 – Brough – B6276 – Middleton-in-Teesdale - B6282 – B6278 - Barnard Castle - A688 towards Bishop Auckland - A689 to A1 (M) north/south

Coach Timings

Penrith – Brough	=	35 mins
Brough – Middleton-in-Teesdale	=	35 mins
Middleton-in-Teesdale – Barnard Castle	=	25 mins
Barnard Castle – A1	=	40 mins

Attractions

Rheged – the Village in the Hill	2 hours
Middleton-in-Teesdale & “Meet the Middletons”	1.5-2 hours
Barnard Castle	2-3 hours
The Bowes Museum	2-3 hours
Raby Castle	3 hours

Refreshments

Rheged – the Village in the Hill	Site café/restaurant
Middleton-in-Teesdale	Village bakery/tearoom
Barnard Castle	Low Way Farm, Holwick near Middleton-in-Teesdale
The Bowes Museum	Variety of tearooms/pubs
Raby Castle	Group bookings: 01833 694605
	Stable tearooms

Commentary

The **Eden Valley** in Cumbria is a wide, fertile plain lying in the shelter of the Pennine hills and the high mountains of the Lake District. This is gentle, pastoral countryside dotted with lovely red sandstone villages and, as befits a valley which has been used as a line of communication for centuries, it makes a convenient and delightful approach to Teesdale. The 19th century Lake District poet, William Wordsworth, re-discovered the Eden valley in his 60's having spent some time as a child in the Penrith area.

On this route there is a real sense of contrast as you move from the Eden Valley through the remote beauty of Lunedale to enter into another type of Eden – the delightful Teesdale.

Penrith is the bustling heart of the Eden Valley and just outside the town is **Rheged – The Village in the Hill**. A wonderful subterranean visitor experience Rheged has a giant cinema screen showing epic movies daily, speciality shops and the International Everest Exhibition.

From Rheged join the A66 on its journey through the Eden Valley. There is a stunning view of the ruins of stately **Brougham Castle** lying alongside the River Eamont. This was one of the largest fortresses in the Eden valley but the Romans found the site before the Normans.

Brocavium – the home of the badgers – guarded the river crossing and in the 2nd century up to one thousand Roman cavalry troops were resident at the fort.

The redoubtable Lady Anne Clifford died in this castle in 1676. 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 through Cumberland and Yorkshire 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.

The place names of the Eden Valley are a big clue as to the early settlers in this area. The ending "by" in Temple Sowerby, Kirkby Thore and Appleby indicates the presence of Danish settlers who crossed the high Pennine moors from Yorkshire in the 10th century. They came as farmers and settlers and left their mark in the local place names and dialect.

Temple Sowerby recalls a religious military order created in the 12th century during the Crusade period. The Poor Knights of Christ and the Temple of Solomon was formed to protect pilgrims as they went about their travels. Sworn to secrecy and undertaking monastic vows the Templars earned a reputation for medicinal prowess.

As you travel eastwards along the A66 look left to the high fell land of the Pennines. If the visibility is good the white golf ball structure on top of **Great Dun Fell** should be visible. This provides radar control and weather forecasting for civil aviation.

Next to it the highest, flat topped ridge marks **Cross Fell** which at 2930' (893m) is the highest point on the North Pennines. Its early name was Fiends Fell until the day the 7th century St Paulinus built a cross to preach to local people. In so doing he banished forever the fiends which roamed the high ground and in the process gave the fell a new name. Cross Fell is infamous for the strong wind which blows along its top ridge. The Helm Wind is well known amongst the residents of the fell side villages lying in the shadow of Cross Fell. When it blows it blows the beaks off the ducks...or so the saying goes.

Appleby-in-Westmorland is famous for its annual Horse Fair held in June and travellers on the A66 during mid-to-late May will probably see some of the colourful horse-drawn Romany living wagons – or Vardos – making their way across the Pennine hills. Gypsies from around the country descend on the town for several days of horse trading and dealing. Gypsies originated in India and when they eventually found their way to Europe and then to Britain they became known as the "little Egyptians" because of their dark coloured skin. This was eventually shortened to "gypsy".

Because of its easy terrain the Eden Valley has long been used by invading forces down the centuries. The Romans had an important road through the valley; Norse invaders and Danish settlers found it a fertile area to farm in the 10th century and the Normans, as we have seen, built their castles to guard the approaches through the valley.

A military presence still exists today. The Ministry of Defence partly owns and partly leases the 25,000 acres which form the **Warcop Army Training Estate**. Look for the military signage along the road and the military vehicles in the compounds on the left. Red flags here – and in Lunedale – mark the boundary of the training area. In the early 1940s 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. 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.

It may be tempting to continue on the A66 and over Stainmore towards the north east.

But let's tempt you not to.....

Exit the A66 into the village of **Brough** to begin the journey towards **Teesdale**. This village was always an important staging post for 18th century coach travellers and even today Brough has plenty of watering holes including the Golden Fleece inn on the main street which dates from 1779. The ruins of Brough Castle are on the edge of the village and, like Brougham Castle earlier, the site of a Roman fort called *Verteris* or "summit" lies beneath the Norman fortification.

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 mushrooming 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 who 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. One, as we have already seen, is the Ministry of Defence on the Warcop Training Estate. The other is the **Strathmore Estate** 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 banks of the River Tees.

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 bird watching 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.

Teesdale opens up ahead of you and the approach into **Middleton-in-Teesdale** crosses a particularly lovely stretch of the **River Tees**. Middleton is well worth stopping in. Local shops in this town serve the surrounding agricultural community so it is possible to buy all types of clothing from nightwear to children's clothes to sturdy outdoor clothes. The village bakery and tearoom offers bakery items and preserves and an excellent TIC is just the place to buy those all important postcards or guidebooks or souvenirs. All in all a very pleasant retail experience far from the madding crowds and crowded city shopping malls.

At the road junction with the main street an elegant drinking fountain stands proudly at the corner on the right and is a reminder of Middleton's role in the lead-mining heritage of Teesdale. 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.

And if you want to discover more about that period then visit the exciting new attraction "**Meet the Middletons**" located in a building next to the Co-op on the main street. Here is the social history of a local family living during the heyday of the lead-mining period in 1850. Their daily lives are explored using interactive displays which makes this an attraction will appeal to all age groups.

The industrial influence of the lead-mining 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. There still is very much a sense of entering something special. And only the most deserving employees of the Company were encouraged to live in New Town.

People like the mine managers and surveyors. People 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. And as a Quaker owned organisation the Company took its social responsibilities seriously providing elementary health care for its workers and building a Company school for the children.

And if you enjoy mooching around market towns then you must build in a stop at **Barnard Castle**. Leave plenty of time to enjoy its undoubted charms. If your visit is on a Wednesday morning then take a wander through the stalls of the open air market. Enjoy the banter of the local stallholders. Include a visit to the Women's Institute market held in the Parish Hall on the same morning – but be quick because their delicious products disappear very quickly! Even better would be a visit on the first Saturday of each month when the Farmers' market is in full swing. Here you get an opportunity to talk to the people who actually produce the food.

And if you are into shopping then browse the antique shops on The Bank. The town is justifiably proud of its growing reputation as one of the best antique centres in the north of England. Look for historic Blagraves House and read the plaque on the front of the building which will tell you about one of the town's famous visitors.

And if it's history you are after "Barney" can sure deliver.....

The town owes its existence to the building of a fortification intended to defend the river crossing below. The first timber structure was built in the 11th century by Guy de Balliol to be followed some years later by a stone building begun by Guy's nephew, Bernard. And from his name – Bernard's castle – we arrive at the modern place name. The ruins are extensive and there is a real sense of medieval military might when you wander through the grounds amidst the towering walls. And a very nice modern addition is the lovely sensory garden within the Castle grounds. This garden is planted with aromatic plants and contains tactile features to help people of all abilities enjoy the sheer pleasure of Mother Nature.

Still hungry for history? What about history and art combined?

What about history, art and architecture combined? What about history, art, architecture and a heart-warming love story combined? What about the winning combination which is **The Bowes Museum**.

Just a few minutes walk from the main street and Butter Market is this amazing building which never fails to draw gasps of surprise from visitors especially if they have never set eyes on it before. Purpose built as a museum and opened in 1892 this extraordinary building was the brainchild of John and Josephine Bowes. And theirs is a wonderful human story of a happy marriage which resulted in this enduring legacy housing their joint art collection.

John was the illegitimate son of the Scottish 10th Earl of Strathmore and a commoner called Mary Millner. Although his parents did finally marry just a few hours before the Earl's death the young John Bowes was not able to inherit his father's title. He was, however, given a family estate called Streatlam just a few miles from Barnard Castle and with the income from this estate and from his coalmining interest he was able to indulge his love of art and all

things French. His character and reputation as a shrewd businessman was tempered by his love of paintings, fine furniture and ceramics.

Whilst on one of his frequent visits to France he met and fell in love with Josephine, an amateur actress and talented sculptor and painter. Together they built the fantastic collection of French and Spanish art we can all enjoy today. Look for Josephine's own paintings hanging on the gallery walls...

....and don't forget to check out the timings for the performance of the mechanical Silver Swan.....an absolute must!

Eventually, we know you will have to leave Barnard Castle. And we still haven't explored all the literary connections in the town. Perhaps that's a story for another day (and to whet your appetite you could read about it on our "Discover Teesdale Pick 'n Mix" itineraries).

Follow the A688 out of town towards the village of Staindrop. A few miles out of Barnard Castle, on the left hand side of the road, the long boundary wall of the **Streatlam estate** comes into view with the old lodge gates marking the entrance into the parkland. Nothing now exists of the old hall but this is the estate once owned by John Bowes the founder of that extraordinary museum.

Dunhouse Quarry, just a few miles further on towards Staindrop, is a working quarry and amongst its customers is Durham Cathedral which has used the stone in recent years to repair and replace medieval stonework.

And that brings you into picturesque **Staindrop** village which is quite simply one of the prettiest villages in County Durham. Although it is close to the edge of what was the Durham coalfield the effects of industry have not been felt in this graceful village. Georgian houses with distinctive pantile roofs face each other across a wide village green and at the top of the street St Mary's church is all one could wish for in a typical English village.

Staindrop has long been regarded as the estate village for nearby **Raby Castle** and a very good view of the castle can be enjoyed from the roadside.

Just too exciting to resist, isn't it?

And a visit to Raby Castle never disappoints. This is one of the best preserved castles in the north of England and is very much a family home lived in by the present owner Lord Barnard. It has a unique atmosphere born from the generations of people who have lived within its walls down the centuries. The appearance of the castle today is largely the result of work undertaken between 1360-90 by Ralph Neville, 2nd Baron Neville and his son, John, the 3rd Baron. Both developed Raby extensively. In 1397 another Ralph Neville was created first Earl of Westmorland and from that time onwards the family became big players in local and national warfare all through the medieval period. Their great rivals were the Percy family of Alnwick Castle – the Earls of Northumberland.

Warrior-like it may be on the outside but Raby Castle's interiors reflect more genteel times. Elegant saloons, fine furniture and the chance to see how the servants lived make this a great visitor experience. Don't miss the walled garden and the Stables Tearoom.

West Auckland and **Bishop Auckland** bring you back on to what was the old Durham coalfield although it is very difficult to see anything in the landscape today which shows that this was once an industrial area. Money has been spent on re-landscaping old pit areas and new housing has been developed. In the 19th century the two main employers in Bishop Auckland were the railways and coalmining. But the town was not just a product of the Industrial Age. The powerful and influential Prince Bishops of Durham built themselves a fortified manor house here in the 12th century which they used as a kind of country residence and hunting lodge. It was well placed being on the edge of Weardale which was their main hunting forest. Their main residence at that time was Durham Castle but when Bishop William van Mildert gave that castle to the newly established Durham University in 1832 the Bishop's permanent residence became **Auckland Palace**. And very impressive it is too. And whilst it is the centre of administration for the current Bishop of Durham it is also an important visitor attraction. Well worth a visit to see the state rooms and the richly decorated St Peter's Chapel and especially the famous paintings by Francesco Zurbarán a contemporary of Goya and El Greco. The paintings cost £124 in 1640 and came into the Bishops' possession when they were captured by pirates whilst being taken by ship to South America.

From Bishop Auckland it is an easy journey on the A689 to link up with the A1.

Sources

Ministry of Defence website