

Discover TEESDALE

Gateways to Teesdale

Gateway Itinerary: Newcastle/Gateshead and Durham City

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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Our Gateway itineraries include;

Newcastle/Gateshead and Durham City

Combine a break in two of the top three city destinations in England (as voted by The Guardian) with a tour of some of England's most beautiful countryside

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: Newcastle/Gateshead and Durham City

Combine a break in two of the top three city destinations in England (as voted by The Guardian) with a tour of some of England's most beautiful countryside

Route Plan

A1 (via "Angel of the North") – A689 – Bishop Auckland – A688 - Staindrop – B6279 – Eggleston Hall Gardens B6282 – Middleton-in-Teesdale – Newbiggin – Cow Green Reservoir – Langdon Beck – unclassified moor road - St John's Chapel – A689 - Stanhope (Durham Dales Centre) – **EITHER** A689 & A690 to Durham **OR** B6278 via Blanchland – B6306 & B6307 – Corbridge – A69

Coach Timings

Newcastle – Barnard Castle	1 hour 15 mins
(Durham City – Barnard Castle)	50 mins
Barnard Castle – Eggleston Hall	10 mins
Eggleston Hall – Cow Green Reservoir	25 mins
Cow Green – Stanhope	40 mins
Stanhope – Newcastle (via Blanchland)	1 hour 30 mins
(Stanhope – Durham)	55 mins

Attractions

"Angel of the North"	15 minutes
Auckland Castle	1.5 hours
Raby Castle	3 hours
Eggleston Hall Gardens	1-2 hours
Middleton-in-Teesdale & "Meet the Middletons"	1.5-2 hours
Newbiggin Methodist Chapel	30 minutes
Bowlees Visitor Centre	1 hour
Durham Dales Centre, Stanhope	1 hour
Blanchland	50 minutes

Refreshments

Auckland Castle	Site café
Raby Castle	Stable tearooms
Eggleston Hall Gardens	Site bistro/café
Middleton-in-Teesdale	Village bakery/tearoom
Low Way Farm	(Holwick near Middleton-in-Teesdale)
Bowlees Visitor Centre	Site café
Durham Dales Centre, Stanhope	Site café
Blanchland	Village tearoom or Lord Crewe Arms

Commentary

If you are starting this tour from Newcastle and Gateshead lucky you! Because it means that a photo stop at the “**Angel of the North**” can easily be built into the beginning of the day. In February 1998 Anthony Gormley’s enormous art work appeared on the Gateshead skyline and people have simply not stopped talking about it since. The sculpture stands on the site of an old coalmine and specifically on the site of the old pithead baths. The surface of the weather resistant Corten steel is oxidising and turning a rich red/brown colour as the years go past. Just imagine the engineering skills which had to be exercised in designing this sculpture as well as the artistic ingenuity which came up with the idea in the first place. Twenty metre deep concrete piles anchor the “Angel” firmly below ground level and it has been designed to withstand winds of up to 100mph.

What a way to begin the day.....

Further south on the A1 the road signs indicate the town of **Washington**. Established in the 1960’s as a dormitory town for Tyneside Washington was modelled on the grid system of Milton Keynes. In the midst of the modern town is Washington Old Hall which was the ancestral home of George Washington, first president of the USA. He did not live there but his ancestors (the de Wessington family) owned land here in medieval times. So we say we have the original Washington!

The spire of St. Cuthbert’s church in **Chester-le-Street** is clearly visible on the right when travelling south on the A1. The site where the church now stands was occupied 2,000 years ago by a Roman fort which is where the town gets its name – the Roman fort by the Roman road. The dedication of the church reminds us of the great 7th century Celtic saint, Cuthbert, who was one of the movers and shakers of the early Christian church in the then independent Kingdom of Northumbria. His body now rests behind the high altar of Durham Cathedral but for almost 100 years St Cuthbert’s shrine rested here at Chester-le-Street until threats from marauding Vikings forced the Community of St Cuthbert to remove their beloved saint’s body to a safer place. What could be safer than the wooded peninsula at **Durham** bounded on three sides by the River Wear?

County Durham has a population of 600,000 which is a large number given the overall physical size of the County but reflects its industrial past. This route crosses over what was the Great Northern Coalfield which extended through County Durham and through Tyneside into the south east corner of Northumberland. It was a rich, highly productive coalfield and mining activities shaped peoples lives and the landscape for many hundreds of years.

So where is the evidence in the landscape today for this once massive industry?

You won’t be able to see any and it has been quite a few years now since millions of pounds were spent on re-landscaping and clearing away old pit heaps from the surrounding former pit villages. Luckily, the sense of community in these old villages is still strong and every year the Durham Miners Gala still takes place in Durham City to remind us of the heyday of King Coal.

One County Durham family to profit from landowning and coalmining in the 19th century was the Eden family and their name is remembered in the Eden Arms hotel at **Rushyford** on the A689. Continue on the A689 beyond the hotel and in a few minutes the entrance of

Windlestone Hall is passed on the left hand side (now a school). This was the family seat of the Eden's and this is where Sir Anthony Eden was born in 1897.

In the 19th century the two main employers in **Bishop Auckland** were the railways and coalmining. But the town is 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 Zurburan 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

West Auckland has a very wide village green and a link with one of the more sinister stories of County Durham. Mary Ann Cotton earned herself a place in the history books when she became notorious as one of Victorian Britain's wickedest women. Wherever she went she left a trail of destruction.....and bodies. Using arsenic she managed to dispatch more than twenty individuals including four husbands (her own) and five children (also her own). She lived in West Auckland for a brief period because her former lover lived here. Finally, her horrible deeds were discovered and she was put on trial, found guilty and in 1873 was executed at Durham prison. Children of the county often sang about this notorious lady – presumably in relief she was finally gone...

*Mary Ann Cotton
She's dead and she's rotten
She lies in her bed with her eyes wide open
Sing, sing, oh what shall I sing
Mary Anne Cotton
She's tied up with string
Where, where? Up in the air
Selling black pudding's a penny a pair*

On to more pleasant things.

And what could be more pleasant and beautiful than the glimpse of the towers of **Raby Castle** which can be seen nestling in the trees as the road dips towards Staindrop village.

Just too exciting to resist, isn't it?

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.

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.

There is a tradition on the Raby Estate that farm buildings are whitewashed and there are plenty to be seen en-route to Eggleston village. The delightful **Eggleston Hall Gardens** are perfect for the plantsman and amateur gardener alike. And for those who just prefer to dream there are quiet corners to be found in this 4 acre site. 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 tucked away in one 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.

Pause long enough in **Middleton-in-Teesdale** to explore the lead-mining heritage of this picturesque town. 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. 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 who were hard-working, sober and of a high moral standard. "**Meet the Middletons**" is an exciting new attraction on the main street of the town which tells the social history of a local family living during the heyday of the lead-mining period.

Middleton is also a good place to try out some local shopping....

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, founder of Methodism, was a frequent preacher. He found much support here amongst the isolated communities of the Pennine dales.

A little further on is the entrance to **Bowlees Visitor Centre** (entrance charge). Coach parking is permitted at the wide entrance (but not in the official car park area). It is a short level walk up the access road into the car park and then a footbridge leads to the old Methodist Chapel housing the visitor centre. Refreshments are available and the popular exhibition is always worth browsing round to learn more about Teesdale's unique character.

The next bit of this tour through the Pennines is optional but if undertaken it will lead you into a remote and very beautiful corner of Teesdale. **Cow Green** reservoir 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 driver's own risk.

To reach Cow Green turn left at Langdon Beck onto an unclassified road and take the left fork in the road about a mile further on. Construction work on the reservoir began in 1967 with the aim 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 was held. But the industrial argument won the day and work finally got underway.

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 explain about the formation of the Sugar Limestone which has given the valley its incredible mix of flora. Gentians, orchids, violets, sedges, primroses and lots of other very beautiful plants thrive on the mixed geology.

Return to the B6277 and turn left past the Langdon Beck hotel. Look for the brown sign indicating **Weardale** and turn right at the next junction signed for **St John's Chapel**. This high level route provides terrific long distance views on the descent into Weardale.

Turn right 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.

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.

The **Durham Dales Centre** at **Stanhope** makes a great stopping point with facilities, a TIC 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.

Time for another decision....

If you are returning to Durham City continue along the A689 through the village of **Frosterley** and keep a look out for the grass covered spoil heaps on the left hand side of the road as you exit the village. These are a reminder of the limestone quarrying which this village, and indeed the whole dale, was involved in the past. Frosterley "marble" was capable of being highly polished. There are very good examples of columns of this marble to be seen in the Chapel of Nine Altars at Durham Cathedral.

The old pit villages of **Crook** and **Willington** lead back to Durham City. Coal mining is long gone. But the famous community spirit lives on and new housing and new developments occupy the once industrialised sites.

If you are not returning to Durham City.....

Take the B6278 north out of Stanhope passing through **Crawleyside** and on up to open moorland. A stiff enough climb for modern transport. So imagine what it was like to construct a railway up here. The Stanhope and Tyne railway was the highest standard gauge railway in England at the time of its opening in 1834. The consultant engineer was Robert Stephenson, son of the famous locomotive designer, George. Stationary engine houses at Crawley and Wetherhill were used to rope haul wagons full of limestone, iron and lead up the steep slopes. Look for the evidence in the landscape to the right: the bed of the rail track can still be seen across the open fell to the right.

A little further on an unclassified road branches left leading to Hunstanworth and **Blanchland** villages (accessible for large coaches). Originating in France the Premonstratensian Order settled in the valley of the River Derwent in the 12th century. The monks wore white habits and their property became known as the “white-land” or Blanchland. A small village with a big history Blanchland is worth a short stop (coach and car parking) to explore its secrets. Monastic and Jacobite history are only part of the story. Take time to find out how the marriage of an 18th century Bishop of Durham to a local girl still influences the village today.

The B6306 and B6307 (which avoids narrow Linnels Bridge) leads toward Dilston and easy access to the A69 Tyne Valley route and Newcastle.