

Discover TEESDALE



Themed Itinerary

Land of Three Rivers

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.

Land of 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.

Route Plan

Barnard Castle – B6278 – B6282 – Middleton-in-Teesdale – High Force – B6277 - Alston – A689 - Nenthead – Stanhope – B6278 and unclassified road – Blanchland – B6306 – B6307 - Dilston – A69 - Corbridge – A68 south – West Auckland – A688 - Barnard Castle

Coach Timings

Barnard Castle – High Force	25 mins
High Force – Alston	45 mins
Alston – Stanhope	45 mins
Stanhope – Corbridge	45 mins
Corbridge – Barnard Castle	1 hour 15 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
High House Chapel	45 minutes
Middleton-in-Teesdale	Former lead mining company town. 1.5-2 hours. Group bookings: 01833 641000 Email: middletonplus@compuserve.com
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
Blanchland	45 minutes
Corbridge	1 hour

Refreshments

Barnard Castle	Variety of tearooms/pubs
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High Force Hotel	Group bookings: 01833 622222
Alston	Variety of tearooms
Dales Centre, Stanhope	Group bookings: 01388 527650
Blanchland	Lord Crewe Arms and village shop
Corbridge	Variety of tearooms

Commentary

The north east of England is fortunate to have some very fine rivers. Rivers with names recognised the length and breadth of the country and praised in song and poetry. This tour celebrates the waterways of the **Tees**, the **Wear** and the **Tyne** which together flow through....

The Land of Three Rivers.....

The **River Tees** rises high in the Pennine hills close to the source of the River South Tyne and only about 4 miles from the source of the River Wear. Flowing eastwards through a dale which changes in character from the wild reaches of Upper Teesdale to the pastoral landscape around Barnard Castle the river twists and winds its way to its final destination of the North Sea approximately 90 miles away.

Water quality in Teesdale is good and each year increasing numbers of migratory salmon and sea trout swim upstream as far as High Force waterfall whilst the headwaters of the river and its tributaries support brown trout.

The Tees is a very fast flowing river and rises quickly after heavy rain. It is an important water supply river and is served by six main tributaries. There are reservoirs at Cow Green on the Tees, at Selset and Grassholme on the River Lune and three other reservoirs on the River Balder. If the level of the main river begins to drop in a dry summer then the flow can be maintained by releases from these supporting reservoirs. Even water from far away Kielder Reservoir in north Northumberland can be fed down to the Tees by connecting tunnels linking the River Tyne to the River Wear and so on to the Tees.

It was water power which helped drive **Barnard Castle's** woollen economy in the 17th century. The town was the centre of a thriving woollen industry and thousands of stockings were made here. Before the days of artificial dyes the purity of the water was considered a great asset in bringing out the brilliancy of the colours in natural dyes. Weavers and their families were housed in the **Thorngate** area of the town just at the bottom of **The Bank**. Later came the town's reputation as a carpet-making centre.

Until 1932 Ullathorne Mill dominated the riverbanks opposite the castle ruins. For more than 130 years this was the town's biggest employer producing shoe-thread and twine which was then sent worldwide. The mill was demolished in 1975 and now only a plinth marks the base of a mill chimney.

Depart Barnard Castle on the B6278 road. A brilliant place to view the middle reaches of the River Tees is **Whistle Crag** layby between the village of Eggleston and Middleton-in-Teesdale. The Enclosure Acts of the late 18th and early 19th centuries resulted in long straight walls being built and hedgerows being planted to divide up the pastureland. And the dale is

still well wooded at this point. Remember this view and contrast it with the view a little later en-route to Alston.

No story about the River Tees could be complete without a stop at **High Force** waterfall (small charge). 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. After heavy rain it is easy to understand why the name of the river translates as “seething” or “boiling”.

Beyond **Langdon Beck** Upper Teesdale begins to take on a very different character. Here is the heart of the 870 square miles of **North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**. This is the haunt of curlews, of the black grouse and merlins. And, of course, of sheep. Carving a living from agriculture up here is a tough business calling for resilience from both farmer and stock. And the Swaledale sheep is a tough breed of sheep. Black faced except for its distinctive white nose both the male and female sheep have horns. Lambing in these upland areas takes place from April onwards which is much later than lowland breeds in other parts of the country.

And there is no need to fence the sheep in on these open fells. Upland sheep have an inbuilt homing instinct and do not wander far from the area of land they come to know whilst young lambs. This is their *hefting* instinct (a word which recalls the Old Norse influence in the dialect of the north of England). In the 10th century the first wave of Vikings came as invaders and conquerors seeking out new territories and riches. Gradually, as the generations passed, they came as settlers and farmers and left their imprint on the local language. The Pennine hills or the Lake District mountains are often described as fells from the Norse “fjell”. And “foss” was used to describe waterfalls – hence High Force. When they lifted their eyes to the horizon they saw “riggs” instead of ridges and when they looked down the long valley of the River Tees they saw a “darl” which became a “dale”. The local farmhouse architecture in Teesdale recalls the Scandanavian longhouse style of a dwelling house with a barn attached at one side.

At 1,000ft above sea level **Alston** is the highest market town in England. People have lived in the immediate area since the days of the Bronze Age tribes but it was the lead industry of the 18th and 19th centuries which saw the town grow as a service centre for lead mining families. Blacksmiths, sawmills and cornmills thrived and water power was the artery which drove the machinery until electricity arrived in the town just before the Second World War

Today, Alston makes a very pleasant place to stop to explore the winding alleyways and perhaps buy locally made produce in the craftshops surrounding the market place.

The lead-mining theme continues along the A689.

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. Even the Romans 2,000 years ago knew about the lead supplies.

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 and which, as we have seen, influenced the development of Alston. The second company was owned by the Blackett-Beaumont family who owned most of the mines in Weardale and Allendale. Their lead was of very high quality and in the 19th century was the only lead singled out and sold at a premium price on the London Lead Market.

At **Nenthead** the London Lead Company built a model village in 1753. As a Quaker led organisation they took their social responsibilities seriously building schools and providing elementary health care for their workers. And the miners were given smallholdings to supplement their income from the mines. Not only was lead mined at Nenthead it was also smelted on the site. This was an important process and one which had to be handled carefully. If something went wrong at this point in the process it could be an expensive mistake. The smelters were highly skilled and to ensure they were as fully trained as possible University of Durham lecturers were invited to Nenthead to deliver lectures on chemistry to the miners.

A drinking fountain stands at the corner of a road junction just past the Miners Arms pub on the left. The name etched into the canopy is Robert Bainbridge who during the 1840s was the Superintendent for the London Lead Company. Its twin can be seen in the main street of Middleton-in-Teesdale.

To fully understand the mining process and to see how the miners lived both **Nenthead** and **Killhope the North of England Lead-Mining Museum** are excellent sites to visit.

The second of our main rivers on this journey is the **River Wear**. It has its source high on Cross Fell on the eastern slopes of the Pennine Hills and runs eastwards along Weardale until turning north at Bishop Auckland, looping round the historic city centre of Durham and ending its journey by flowing into the North Sea at Sunderland.

The headwaters of the river lie in wet peat soils and that means after heavy rainfall the river is prone to “flashy” river flows although improvements have been made along the length of the river to minimise flood damage. The most serious flood took place in 1771 when bridges and land at Frosterley and Wolsingham further down the dale were seriously affected. Even today, the river has the capacity to wash down large amounts of sand and gravel which get deposited in its middle reaches.

The Wear has long had a good reputation for its runs of sea trout and, more recently, its runs of salmon. Stock is transferred from a salmon hatchery at Kielder Water.

Weardale and Teesdale share another common feature apart from a pretty river. **Methodist** chapels are part of the village landscape in both dales. **Newbiggin Chapel** in Teesdale dates from 1760 and was frequently visited by the founder of the Methodist Movement, John Wesley, on his preaching rounds through the dales. And Weardale has its own gem. **High House Chapel** at Ireshopeburn was built in 1760. The founder of the Methodist movement, John Wesley, was a frequent visitor and would preach beneath the tree in the small garden to one side of the Chapel. From here he would ride his horse across the high fells to visit Newbiggin chapel later in the day. High House chapel and the adjacent **Weardale Museum** are open to visitors.

Medieval Weardale was 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. She single-handedly worked her small farm in the tributary valley of Baldersdale and eked out a living in a home without running water, electricity or gas. Then one day 30 years ago a Yorkshire TV 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.

Let's move on.....

Rivers have provided a means of transport for many thousands of years. They were very often an easy way of penetrating densely forested areas before humans began to control their environment by cutting and harvesting trees. But the arrival of railways in the early 19th century completely changed the way we approached travel and transport.

The restored **Weardale Railway** operates steam hauled engines out of Stanhope station (check for operating times). The line opened in 1847 and at the peak of its operation 100 freight trains a week operated on the line which extended from Bishop Auckland through to Wolsingham, Stanhope and on to Wearhead. The line was built to transport minerals especially Weardale limestone.

And this was not the only railway line. The B6278 climbs 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: the bed of the railtrack 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 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 **River Derwent** (“river of the oak trees”) flows through the village and is one of the tributaries of the next major waterway on this tour.

The stone arched bridge over the **River Tyne** makes a lovely approach to the village of **Corbridge** and here again is a village worth exploring. Look for the stone pele tower in the corner of the churchyard. Pele towers were fortified dwelling houses built at the time of the border raids during the 14th and 15th centuries.

Five miles upstream and just west of the market town of Hexham the River South Tyne and River North Tyne come together to form a single waterway. The Tyne is now officially classed as one of the top salmon rivers in England – a strong indicator of just how clean and pollution free the water is. Because the river rises in areas of high rainfall where there are steep valley sides it too is prone to short, sharp floods.

Pass the Angel Inn in the middle of the village and follow the road out to link up in 2 miles with the A68 at Styford roundabout. Travelling south on the A68 the road re-crosses the River Tyne and then at Witton-le-Wear the River Wear comes once more into view before returning to **Barnard Castle** and the banks of the river which started this story.....

*the beautiful **River Tees**.....*

Sources

National Rivers Authority (June 1993)