

Discover TEESDALE



Themed Itinerary

Romans, Retail and Refreshment

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.

Romans, Retail and Refreshment

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Route Plan

Barnard Castle – A67 east – Piercebridge – B6275 – A1 – Scotch Corner – A66 west – Bowes village – A67 – B6277 – Cotherstone – Romaldkirk – Middleton-in-Teesdale B6282 – Eggleston Hall Gardens – B6278 – Barnard Castle

Coach Timings

Barnard Castle - Piercebridge	15 minutes
Piercebridge – Bowes village	35 minutes
Bowes village – Middleton-in-Teesdale	30 minutes
Middleton-in-Teesdale - Barnard Castle	25 minutes

Attractions

Include one or more of the following attractions:

Barnard Castle	Full day recommended for fascinating market town 1 hour for Castle managed by English Heritage. Group bookings: 01833 638212 (site custodian) or 0191 2691200 (regional head office)
Bowes Museum	up to 3 hours
Piercebridge Roman remains	2 stops – Roman fort and bridge abutment 15 minutes each
Middleton-in-Teesdale	1 hour
Eggleston Hall Gardens	1- 2 hours

Refreshments

Barnard Castle	Variety of tearooms/pubs
Jersey Farm Hotel (A67)	Group bookings: 01833 638223 Email:enquiries@jerseyfarm.co.uk www.jerseyfarm.co.uk
Thorpe Farm Peel House (A66)	Group bookings: 01833 627242
Morrith Arms Hotel (A66)	Group bookings: 01833 627232
Middleton-in-Teesdale	Village bakery/tearoom. Teesdale hotel
Eggleston Hall Gardens	Coach House Tearoom

Commentary

Markets are something the Romans knew a lot about. The Roman forum was a focal point for trading, haggling and gossip. They bought and sold food and goods. Massive shipments of grain were transported to feed garrisons on the borders of the Empire. Olive oil was used for cooking (and as a soap!) and simple vegetables such as onions, beans and cabbages were often on the menu. Honey was used as a sweetener. Wine and oil were stored in large storage vessels called amphorae. Chicken was a popular meat. And Romans made cheese from goat's and sheep's milk. Salt was a precious commodity and was even used as payment in kind – hence the word salary in our language today.

Most of those types of food – and a great deal more – can easily be found in **Barnard Castle's** open air **market** held every Wednesday morning. Enjoy the banter of the local stallholders and if your visit coincides with the first Saturday of each month the **Farmers' market** is another must. Here you get an opportunity to talk to the people who actually produce the food. Quality, choice and freshness is guaranteed. The local **Women's Institute market** is also held in the Parish Hall on Wednesdays where delicious home made produce is just too tempting to resist.

Barnard Castle makes for a delightful shopping experience. No one big shop dominates the town so shoppers have an opportunity to browse in individual speciality shops where personal attention is assured. It's not uncommon to find yourself talking to the owner.

The town is proud of its reputation as one of the best antique centres in the north of England. The steep hill leading down from the Market Place area is known as **The Bank** and is lined with antique shops offering fine furniture, second-hand books, clocks, silver, jewellery and much more besides. Take time, too, to admire the fine 17th century buildings these antique shops are housed in. The plaque on the front of historic **Blagraves House** will tell you about one of the town's famous visitors.

Piercebridge owes its existence to the Romans. The Roman army arrived in 79AD marching north from its main garrison at *Eboracum* – the modern city of York. The Roman Governor of the day was Agricola (whose name gave us the word agriculture) and he was set on a programme of expansion and exploration. Dere Street was the new route forged through this area and became a major supply route for Agricola's campaigns. En-route there were rivers to cross. And at Piercebridge the remains of a Roman bridge abutment are visible. Most of the modern village lies within the boundary of the Roman fort which was built to guard the river crossing and protect the supply chain.

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 look for the earthworks of **Rey Cross** Roman 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 soldiers overnight.

*And then, much later, 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 do say that on misty nights his screams can still be heard being carried on the wind...

The village of **Bowes** has a lot in common with Brough village at the western end of the Stainmore Gap in Cumbria. Both settlements were originally Roman forts. The ruins of Bowes castle occupy a site which the Romans had used 1,000 years earlier when they built their fort *Lavatrae*. Both Romans and Normans recognised a strong strategic position when they saw one. The ancient cross Pennine route across Stainmore could be effectively controlled from here.

Bowes village was visited by the novelist **Charles Dickens** (1812-70) in the 19th century when he was staying in Barnard Castle. He came to Teesdale not for rest and recreation but for research purposes. Together with his illustrator, Hablot Browne (known as "Phiz") he investigated the sometimes harrowing conditions pupils experienced in cheap boarding schools. It was this research which was put to much good use in his lively descriptions of Dotheboys Hall in the novel "Nicholas Nickleby". It was research worth doing. Dickens grossed £4,500 from that novel!

The imposing Bowes Hall stands in its own garden on the right hand side of the road on the approach into the village. This was once a school where pupils were obliged to double up as farmhands on the nearby farm when required.

At the mini-roundabout in the middle of the village continue straight ahead past The Ancient Unicorn pub (there is a turning area just beyond the end of the main street on a sharp righthand turn. Do not cross over the bridge which carries the road over the A66).

Dotheboys Hall is the long building at right angles to the road at the far west end of the village. Known as Shaw's Academy in Dickens' day the school was under the control of William Shaw whom Dickens immortalised in his novel as the bullying headmaster Wackford Squeers. The real Shaw is buried in the nearby churchyard of St Giles.

Back to the quest for food.....

In the culinary world the name **Cotherstone** is well known for the superb local cheese which has been produced in Teesdale for more than 100 years to an age old family recipe. The tradition of cheese making in the Pennine dales of Teesdale, Swaledale and Wensleydale reaches back to the Roman times. With Cotherstone cheese, which takes from 1-3 months to

mature and is made from cow's milk, there is a semi soft texture which is both moist and tangy.

It was a very popular cheese in the 19th century with grocers because it could be kept for a whole year quite easily. Although it is now made all year round, and completely by hand, the traditional season for making Cotherstone cheese was from May to the arrival of the first frost. Shops in Barnard Castle stock this lovely local delicacy.

*And the award-winning “**Rose and Crown**” pub in **Romaldkirk** village offers the cheese on its scrumptious menus.*

Drive slowly through this delightfully picturesque and well kept village. Look for the stocks in the centre of the village green to the right and don't miss the view of the church known as the “cathedral of the dales.” Not one building seems out of place.

If all this talk of food is making you hungry take some time out in **Middleton-in-Teesdale** which is always worth stopping in to explore its individual shopping opportunities. Local shops 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 last minute guidebooks, souvenirs and postcards. All in all a very pleasant retail experience far from the crowded city shopping centres.

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 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.

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.

To round off this culinary jaunt visit **Eggleston Hall Gardens** where you can indulge your appetite for food and horticulture all at the same time. The delightful gardens are perfect for both professional and amateur gardeners. 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. There is even an opportunity to plan a very special wedding breakfast at Eggleston Hall itself...

.....Teesdale really is a feast in all senses of the word.....

Sources

Oxford Companion to English Literature

Teesdale District Council, In the Footsteps of Charles Dickens