

HADRIAN'S WALL AND THE NORTHEAST

Updated by
Joseph Reaney



 **Sights**
★★★★☆

 **Restaurants**
★★☆☆☆

 **Hotels**
★★☆☆☆

 **Shopping**
★★☆☆☆

 **Nightlife**
★★☆☆☆

WELCOME TO HADRIAN'S WALL AND THE NORTHEAST

TOP REASONS TO GO

★ **Hadrian's Wall:** The ancient Roman wall is a wonder, as much for the wild countryside around it as for its stones and forts, such as Housesteads and Vindolanda.

★ **Castles, castles, castles:** Fought over by the Scots and the English, and prey to Viking raiders, the Northeast was heavily fortified. Barnard, Alnwick, and Dunstanburgh castles are spectacular remnants of this history.

★ **Medieval Durham:** A splendid Norman cathedral that dates back to the 11th century is just one of the city's charms. Take a stroll along its ancient winding streets and charming riverside promenades.

★ **Lindisfarne (Holy Island):** To get to this remote, windswept island, visitors must drive across a causeway that floods at high tide. Island high-lights include the ruins of a Norman priory.

The Northeast can be divided into four distinct sections. The southernmost part of the region is County Durham, which is centered around the beautiful and historic cathedral city of the same name. Farther north, the art-loving city of Newcastle upon Tyne and its southern neighbor Gateshead straddle the region's main river, the muddy Tyne. A third area to the west of Newcastle is Hadrian's Wall country, where the remains of the famous Roman fortification snake through rugged scenery. Finally, it's up to the Far Northeast, where towering castles and misty islands punctuate the stunning, final miles of England's eastern shoreline.

1 Barnard Castle. A pretty market town home to the substantial ruins of a medieval fortification.

2 Bishop Auckland. Named for the Bishops of Durham, this small town includes a well-preserved bishops' palace.

3 Durham. A historic city set on a rocky spur, home to one of England's most spectacular cathedrals.

4 Newcastle upon Tyne. A sprawling metropolis with a lively regional arts scene and the Northeast's best nightlife.

5 Hadrian's Wall. The famous wall that once marked the northern border of the Roman Empire.

6 Hexham. This pretty town is a useful base for visiting Hadrian's Wall and the wild countryside surrounding it.

7 Greenhead. A town surrounded on all sides by Roman history, including the Housesteads Roman Fort.

8 Alnwick. A small town with some big sights, including a Harry Potter-featured castle and spectacular gardens.

9 Dunstanburgh Castle. An evocative castle tower ruin that silently stands guard over a windswept beach.

10 Bamburgh. Another stunning castle ruin on the Northumberland coast; best viewed from the Farne Islands.

11 Lindisfarne (Holy Island). This historic isle—only accessible at low tide—has a Christian history dating back to AD 635.



HADRIAN'S WALL

The wall is a dramatic sight in the countryside.



Winding through the wild and windswept Northumberland countryside, Hadrian's Wall is Britain's most important Roman relic. It once formed the northern frontier of the Roman Empire—its most remote outpost and first line of defense against raiders from the north. Even today, as a ruin, the wall is an awe-inspiring structure.

One of the most surprising things about visiting the 73-mile-long wall is its openness and accessibility. Although many of the best-preserved sections are within managed tourist sites, Hadrian's Wall is also part of the landscape, cutting through open countryside. Signposted trails along the entire route allow you to hike or cycle along most of the wall for free. The area is also rich in archaeological treasures that paint a picture of a thriving, multicultural community. The soldiers and their families who were stationed here came from as far away as Spain and North Africa, and recent discoveries give us an insight into their daily lives.

POSTCARDS FROM THE PAST

"Oh, how much I want you at my birthday party. You'll make the day so much more fun. Good-bye, sister, my dearest soul."

"I have sent you two pairs of sandals and two pairs of underpants. Greet all your messmates, with whom I pray you live in the greatest good fortune."

—From 1st-century writing tablets unearthed at Vindolanda

SEEING THE WALL'S HIGHLIGHTS

Hadrian's Wall has a handful of Roman-era forts, the best of which are concentrated near Housesteads, Vindolanda, and Chesters. Housesteads is the most complete, although getting there involves a quarter-mile walk up a hill; Chesters and Vindolanda have excellent museums. The separate Roman Army Museum near Greenhead offers a good overview of the wall's history and is near one of the best sections in open countryside, at Wall-town Crag.

GETTING AROUND BY CAR OR BUS

The single-lane B6318, also known as the Military Road, runs alongside Hadrian's Wall for much of its length, passing within a stone's throw of most of the forts. Public transport is limited; the special AD 122 bus covers the highlights (but only during spring and summer), and several local buses follow parts of the same route.

EXPLORING BY FOOT OR BIKE

Hadrian's Wall Path meanders along the wall's entire length; it's a seven-day hike. Joining it for a mile or so is a great way to see the wall and stunning scenery. Try the section around Walltown, or near Corbridge, where the path goes by the remains of a Roman garrison town. Hadrian's Cycleway, for bicyclists, follows roughly the same route.

SIGHTSEEING RESPONSIBLY

The wall is accessible, but vulnerable. **Do not** climb on it, and **never** break off or remove anything. In muddy weather you're encouraged not to stand directly next to the wall, as over time this can make the soil unstable.

Remains of a fort near Housesteads



WALL TIMELINE

55 BC: Julius Caesar invades what is now southern England, naming the island Britannia.

AD 122: Emperor Hadrian orders the construction of a defensive wall along the territory's northern border.

208: After the Romans make another disastrous attempt to invade Caledonia, Hadrian's Wall is expanded.

410: The Romans leave Britain. Local tribes maintain the wall for at least a century.

1700s: Stones from the ruined wall are plundered for road building.

1830s: A local philanthropist buys land around the wall to save it from further destruction.

1973: First Vindolanda tablets are found. More than 1300 will be excavated over the next 40 years.

1987: Hadrian's Wall becomes a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

For many Britons, the words “the Northeast” provoke a vision of near-Siberian isolation. Although there are wind-hammered, wide-open spaces and empty roads threading the wild high moorland, the Northeast also has simple fishing towns, small villages of remarkable charm, and historic abbeys and castles that are all the more romantic for their often-ruinous state.

This is also where you'll find two of England's most iconic sights: the medieval city of Durham and the stark remains of Hadrian's Wall.

Even the remoteness can be relative. Suddenly, around the next bend of a country road, you may come across an imposing church, a tall monastery, or a Victorian country house. The value found in the shops and accommodations, the uncrowded beaches ideal for walking, and the general friendliness of the people add to the appeal. Still, outside of a few key sights, the Northeast is off the well-trodden tourist path.

Mainly composed of the two large counties of Durham and Northumberland, the Northeast includes English villages adjacent to the Scottish border area, renowned in ballads and romantic literature for feuds, raids, and battles. Fittingly, Durham Cathedral, the seat of bishops for nearly 800 years, was once described as “half church of God, half castle 'gainst the Scot.” Hadrian's Wall, which marked the northern limit of the Roman Empire, stretches across prehistoric remains and

moorland. Not far north of Hadrian's Wall are some of the most interesting parts of Northumberland National Park. Steel, coal, railroads, and shipbuilding created prosperous towns such as Newcastle upon Tyne, now one of the country's cultural centers.

The region's hundred or so miles of largely undeveloped coast is one of the least visited and most dramatic shorelines in all of Europe. Several outstanding castles perch on headlands and promontories along here, including Bamburgh, which according to legend was the site of Joyous Garde, the castle of Sir Lancelot of the Round Table.

County Durham. Durham—the first major Northeastern town on the main road up from London—is by far the region's most interesting historic city. Its cobblestone streets and towering cathedral make it a charming place to visit. The city is surrounded on all sides by scenic countryside, ruined castles, and isolated villages.

Newcastle upon Tyne. Linked by seven bridges over the River Tyne, the city of Newcastle upon Tyne and the town of

Gateshead together form the region's largest, liveliest, and most cosmopolitan urban hub. It's also home to a number of art highlights, from outdoor sculptures to world-class indoor galleries.

Hadrian's Wall Country. A formidable line of Roman fortifications, Hadrian's Wall was the Romans' most ambitious construction in Britain. The land through which the old wall wanders is wild and inhospitable in places, but that only adds to the powerful sense of history it evokes. Museums and information centers along the wall make it possible to learn as much as you want about the Roman era, while nearby market towns like Hexham make a great base for exploration.

The Far Northeast. Extraordinary medieval fortresses and monasteries line the final 40 miles of the Northeast coast before England gives way to Scotland. Northumbria was an enclave where the flame of learning was kept alive during Europe's Dark Ages, most notably at Lindisfarne, home of saints and scholars. Castles abound, including the spectacularly sited Bamburgh and the desolate Dunstanburgh. The region also has some magnificent beaches, though because of the cold water and rough seas they're far better for walking than swimming. The three-mile walk from Seahouses to Bamburgh gives splendid views of the Farne Islands, and the two-mile hike from Craster to Dunstanburgh Castle is unforgettable. A bit inland are a few other pretty towns and castles.

Planning

When to Go

The best time to see the Northeast is in summer. This ensures that the museums—and the roads—will be open, and you can take advantage of the countryside walks that are one of the region's

greatest pleasures. Rough seas and inclement weather make it dangerous to swim at any of the beaches except in July and August; even then, don't expect warm water. Winter here isn't for the fainthearted. The weather can be terrible, but there are few places in England so beautiful and remote.

Planning Your Time

If you're interested in exploring Hadrian's Wall and the Roman ruins, you'll want to base yourself in (or close to) the towns of Hexham or Greenhead. Both locations offer easy access to Housesteads and other local landmarks. Anywhere in this area is within easy reach of Durham, with its lovely ancient buildings, or Newcastle, with its excellent museums. Romantics will want to spend a day or two driving up the coast to take in the incredible views.

Getting Here and Around

AIR

Newcastle's airport, which is a 15-minute drive from the city center, has regular flights from British and European cities.

CONTACT Newcastle Airport. ☒ Off A696, Woollington ☎ 0871/882-1121 🌐 www.newcastleairport.com.

BUS

National Express and Megabus travel to Durham and Newcastle and leave from London's Victoria Coach Station. The journey takes between six and eight hours, more than twice the time it takes by train, but it can be considerably cheaper, especially if you reserve in advance (book online to avoid premium telephone charges). Connecting services to other parts of the region leave from those cities; Traveline has more information and a journey planner. The Network One Explorer North East ticket (£10.90, or £20.60 for families of up to five) allows unlimited one-day

travel on most local bus and Metro train services in the Northeast. It's available from most bus and Metro stations or through the Go North East app.

CONTACTS Explorer Northeast

Pass. ☎ 0191/276-3706 🌐 www.networkonetickets.co.uk **Megabus.** ☎ 0900/160-0900 🌐 uk.megabus.com. **National Express.** ☎ 0871/781-8181 🌐 www.nationalexpress.com **Traveline.** ☎ 0871/200-2233 🌐 www.traveline.info.

CAR

If you're headed to small villages, remote castles, or Hadrian's Wall, traveling by car is the best option. The A1 highway links London and Newcastle (five to six hours), passing close to Durham along the way, and continues all the way up to Lindisfarne. In the Far Northeast, there are also two alternative scenic routes: the rural A697, which branches west off the A1 north of Morpeth; and the coastal B1340, which leaves the A1 at Alnwick and snakes up to Bamburgh.

TRAIN

Within England, the train is still the best way to reach the Northeast. London North Eastern Railway (LNER) runs train services; the average travel time from London to Newcastle or Durham is three hours. From Newcastle, you can catch local trains to Hexham (30 minutes) and Alnmouth (for Alnwick, 25 minutes). National Rail Enquiries has more information and a journey planner.

CONTACTS London North Eastern Railway.

☎ Newcastle upon Tyne ☎ 03457/225333 🌐 www.lner.co.uk **National Rail Enquiries.** ☎ 03457/484950 🌐 www.nationalrail.co.uk.

Hotels

The large hotel chains don't have much of a presence in the Northeast outside Durham and Newcastle. Instead, you can expect to find country houses converted into welcoming hotels, old coaching inns

that still greet guests after 300 years, and cozy bed-and-breakfasts convenient to hiking trails. And if you've ever dreamed of staying in a castle, the Northeast delivers in spades.

Restaurant and hotel reviews have been shortened. For full information, visit Fodors.com. Restaurant prices are the average cost of a main course at dinner, or if dinner is not served, at lunch. Hotel prices are the lowest cost of a standard double room in high season, including 20% V.A.T.

What It Costs in Pounds

\$	\$\$	\$\$\$	\$\$\$\$
RESTAURANTS			
under £16	£17–£23	£24–£30	over £30
HOTELS			
under £125	£125–£225	£226–£350	over £350

Restaurants

The Northeast has some very fine local meats and produce. Look for restaurants that serve game from the Kielder Forest; local lamb from the hillsides; salmon and trout from the rivers; and shellfish, crab, and oysters from the coast. Outside the cities, the region lags somewhat behind other parts of England in terms of exceptional places to eat, although there are special spots to be found. Aside from the ubiquitous chains, the best bets are often small country pubs that serve the traditional, hearty fare associated with the region. Don't wait until too late to have dinner, though, as most places stop serving between 9 and 10 pm.

Visitor Information

CONTACTS Durham Visitor Contact Center.

☎ 03000/262626 🌐 www.thisisdurham.com **NewcastleGateshead.** ☎ Newcastle

upon Tyne 🌐 www.newcastlegateshead.com **Hadrian's Wall Country.** ☎ Hexham 🌐 www.hadrianswallcountry.co.uk.

Barnard Castle

245 miles north of London, 15 miles southwest of Bishop Auckland.

The handsome market town of Barnard Castle has sights of its own and can also serve as a base for venturing into the Teesdale Valley to the northwest. Its unusual butter market hall (known locally as Market Cross), surmounted by an old fire-alarm bell, marks the junction of the streets Thorngate, Newgate, and Market Place. Stores, pubs, and cafés line these thoroughfares. In 1838, Charles Dickens stayed at the King's Head Inn here while doing research for his novel *Nicholas Nickleby*. The local tourist office has a free "In the Footsteps of Charles Dickens" leaflet.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

Barnard Castle is around a five-hour drive from London on the A1 (the last 13 miles are on the A66). You can also make the journey by train to Darlington, followed by local buses X75 or X76; this takes between three and four hours altogether.

ESSENTIALS

VISITOR INFORMATION Barnard Castle

Visitor Information Point. ☎ The Witham, 3 Horse Market, Barnard Castle ☎ 01833/631107 🌐 www.thisisdurham.com.

Sights

Barnard Castle

CASTLE/PALACE | The substantial ruins of Barnard Castle, which gave the town its name, cling to an aerie overlooking the River Tees. From the outside, it looks satisfyingly complete from the right angle; inside it's rather more ruined, though there are still plenty of interesting sights to see. Climb to the top of the cylindrical,

13th-century tower for stunning river views; stroll around the remains of the Great Hall, once the castle's communal dining hub; and learn about the Victorian hermit who squatted here and charged locals an entrance fee. When in the Inner Courtyard, keep an eye out for the figure of a carved boar above the oriel window—it was the family emblem of King Richard III (1452–85), placed there during his reign in honor of the elevated status he bestowed upon the castle. ☎ Scar Top, Barnard Castle ➔ Off A67 ☎ 01833/638212 🌐 www.english-heritage.org.uk/barnard £7 ☹ Closed weekdays Nov.–Mar.

★ Bowes Museum

ART MUSEUM | This vast manor house, inspired by a French château, was built between 1862 and 1875. Today, it's home to one of the region's most unique museum exhibits: an 18th-century mechanical swan that catches and swallows an articulated silver fish. The swan is currently undergoing restoration so its usual 2 pm show is on hold, although there's a film showing the swan in action and explaining the ingenious mechanics behind it. Other highlights in the Bowes Museum include paintings by Canaletto, El Greco, and Francisco Goya, as well as beautiful collections of ceramics and glass, 18th-century French furniture, and 19th- and 20th-century fashion. There's a guided tour available every day at 11:15 am; book online in advance. ■ **TIP→ Planning to visit the rest of town? Park for free here and walk in. Just note that the entrance gates are locked at closing time (usually 5 pm).** ☎ Newgate, Barnard Castle ☎ 01833/690606 🌐 www.thebowesmuseum.org.uk £15.50; tour £3.

High Force

WATERFALL | The Upper Teesdale Valley's elemental nature shows its most volatile aspect in the sprays of England's highest waterfall. Located 15 miles northwest of Barnard Castle, the dramatic High Force cascade drops 69 feet into a plunge

pool. From the roadside parking lot it's a 10-minute walk through woodland to the massive rocks over which the water tumbles. ☒ Off B6277, Barnard Castle ☎ 01833/622336 🌐 www.raby.co.uk/high-force/waterfall 🎫 £2.50; parking £3 ☹ Closed in bad weather (often in winter).

🍴 Restaurants

Clarendon's Cafe

🇬🇧 | **BRITISH** | A nicely old-fashioned air pervades this 17th-century building on the main square. Drop in for a tasty light lunch, or just a slice of cake, and tea served from an antique silver pot. **Known for:** quick pit stop for cake; tea served in antique teapots; charming gift shop. 📍 Average main: £8 ☎ 29 Market Pl., Barnard Castle ☎ 01833/690110 🌐 www.clarendonsofbarnardcastle.co.uk ☹ Closed Sun. No dinner.

Bishop Auckland

15 miles northwest of Barnard Castle, 11 miles southwest of Durham.

For 700 years, between the 12th and 19th centuries, the powerful prince-bishops of Durham had their country residence in Auckland Castle, in the town of Bishop Auckland. When finally deprived of their powers in 1836, the bishops left Durham and made Bishop Auckland their official home.

Along with the castle, the Auckland Project also manages several other sights in town, from a Spanish art gallery to a look-out tower. Visitors will also enjoy strolling around the 150-acre Deer Park.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

Bishop Auckland is just off the A688 from Barnard Castle. Durham is accessible by continuing up the A688 to Thinford, where you turn north onto the A167. There's a train station in Bishop Auckland, but the line only runs east-to-west.

Buses are the best option for going south-to-north; it's around 50 minutes by bus from Barnard Castle and 40 minutes to Durham.

ESSENTIALS

VISITOR INFORMATION Bishop Auckland

Tourist Information Centre. ☒ Auckland Tower, Market Pl., Bishop Auckland ☎ 01388/743750 🌐 www.aucklandproject.org/venues/auckland-tower.

👁 Sights

Auckland Castle

CASTLE/PALACE | Arguably the greatest of the prince-bishops of Durham's properties is this Episcopal palace, which you enter through an elaborate stone arch. Much of what's on view today dates from the 16th century, although the limestone-and-marble chapel, with its dazzling stained-glass windows, was built in 1665 from the ruins of a 12th-century hall. The extraordinary paintings of Jacob and his 12 sons, by the 17th-century Spanish artist Francisco de Zurbarán, hang in the Long Dining Room. There are also informative videos and immersive projections throughout the property covering everything from the history of the prince-bishops to the bitter miners' strike of 1892. Starting in 2023, the castle will also be home to a Faith Museum, documenting 5,000 years of religious belief in Britain. ☒ Off Market Pl., Bishop Auckland ☎ 01388/743750 🌐 www.aucklandproject.org 🎫 £14 ☹ Closed Jan.-mid-Feb., Mon., and Tues.

★ Head of Steam

HISTORY MUSEUM | **FAMILY** | A family-friendly museum in nearby Darlington tells the story of the early days of rail travel. The town gained fame in 1825, when George Stephenson piloted his steam-powered *Locomotion No. 1* along newly laid tracks the few miles to nearby Stockton, thus kick-starting the railway age. Set in an abandoned 1842 train station, the museum has interactive exhibits and big steam



trains that are great for kids; antique engines and scale models help bring history to life. There's also a café and children's activity room. The museum is 12 miles southeast of Bishop Auckland, just off the A68. There are also regular train connections; get off at Darlington's North Road station. ☒ North Road Station, Station Rd., Darlington ☎ 01325/405060 🌐 www.head-of-steam.co.uk 🎫 £4.95 ☹ Closed Mon. year-round and Tues. in winter.

★ Raby Castle

CASTLE/PALACE | The stone battlements and turrets of moated Raby Castle, once the seat of the powerful Nevills and currently the home of the 11th Baron Barnard, stand amid a 200-acre deer park and ornamental gardens. Charles Nevill supported Mary, Queen of Scots in the 1569 uprising against Elizabeth I; when the Rising of the North failed, the estate

was confiscated. Dating mostly from the 14th century (using stone plundered from Barnard Castle) and renovated in the 18th and 19th centuries, the luxuriously furnished castle has displays of art and other treasures. Rooms in wonderfully elaborate Gothic Revival, Regency, and Victorian styles are open for public viewing, as are the 18th-century Walled Gardens and the Coach House, home to a collection of coaches and carriages dating back to the Georgian era. Note that there may be a little disruption as the site is currently undergoing a restoration project, which will see heritage buildings turned into event spaces, restaurants, and shops as well as the creation of a new walled garden. The castle is seven miles southwest of Bishop Auckland. ☒ Off A688, Staindrop ☎ 01833/660202 🌐 www.raby.co.uk/raby-castle 🎫 £13; park and gardens only £8 ☹ Closed Nov.-Feb., Mon., and Tues.

Durham

11 miles northeast of Bishop Auckland,
18 miles south of Newcastle.

The great medieval city of Durham, seat of County Durham, stands dramatically on a rocky spur overlooking the countryside. Its cathedral and castle, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, rise together on a wooded peninsula almost entirely encircled by the River Wear (rhymes with “beer”). For centuries, these two ancient structures have dominated Durham, a thriving university town that’s the North-east’s equivalent of Oxford or Cambridge. Steep, narrow streets overlooked by perilously angled medieval houses and 18th-century town houses make for fun exploring. In the most attractive part of the city, near the Palace Green and along the river, people go boating, anglers cast their lines, and strollers walk along the shaded paths. For great views, take a short stroll along the River Wear and cross the 17th-century Prebends Footbridge. You can return to town via the 12th-century Framwellgate Bridge.

Despite the military advantages of its location, Durham was founded surprisingly late, probably in about the year 1000, growing up around a small Saxon church erected to house the remains of St. Cuthbert. It was the Normans, under William the Conqueror, who put Durham on the map, building the first defensive castle and beginning work on the cathedral. From here, Durham’s prince-bishops, granted almost dictatorial local powers by William in 1072, kept a tight rein on the county, coining their own money and maintaining their own laws and courts. It wasn’t until 1836 that these rights were restored to the English Crown.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

Trains from London’s King’s Cross Station arrive at the centrally located Durham Station once an hour during the day.

The journey takes about three hours. There are even more regular non-direct trains via York, with a similar journey time. A handful of National Express and Megabus buses make the six-hour trip from London daily. The Durham Cathedral Bus (Route 40) links parking lots and the train and bus stations with the cathedral, castle, and university. Between 10 am and 4 pm Monday through Saturday, cars are subject to a “congestion charge” of £2 (on top of parking charges) to enter the Palace Green area. You can pay the charge at the Parking Shop or over the phone. Payment must be made by 6 pm on the day of usage, or you’ll be subject to a £50 fine.

TIMING

The Durham Regatta in early June is a great time to visit; just be sure to book months in advance. If you’re visiting in February or March, consider joining the mass “ball game” in nearby Sedgfield, where one ball is fought over by an entire village.

ESSENTIALS

VISITOR INFORMATION **World Heritage Site Visitor Centre.** ☎ 7 Owengate, Durham ☎ 0191/334-3805 🌐 www.durhamworldheritagesite.com. **Parking Shop.** ☎ 3-10 Old Pit La., Durham ☎ 0191/384-6633 🌐 www.durham.gov.uk.



★ **Beamish, the Living Museum of the North**
MUSEUM VILLAGE | FAMILY | Situated nine miles northwest of Durham, this impressive “living museum”—a sprawling complex made up of heritage buildings found on-site or moved from elsewhere in the region—offers real insight into the way people in the Northeast lived and worked from the early 1800s to the mid-1900s. A vintage bus and a streetcar take you around the site to various points of interest, including a farm estate; a pit village and colliery; and an entire 1920s town complete with a bank, convenience



Rounded arches and columns with zigzag patterns are hallmarks of the Romanesque style at Durham Cathedral.

store, and Masonic hall. Everything is staffed by workers in period costumes, and you can buy era-appropriate food and drinks in the pub, bakery, and “sweet shop” (candy store). As well as the permanent exhibits, there are special events year-round, from weekend-long festivals, where you’re encouraged to come in old-style fancy dress, to traditional English celebrations such as May Day and Harvest Festival. You can spend at least half a day here, and tickets are valid for a whole year in case you want to return. ☎ Off A693, Beamish ☎ 0191/370-4000 🌐 www.beamish.org.uk 🎫 £19.50 ⏰ *Some areas closed weekdays in winter.*

Durham Castle

CASTLE/PALACE | Facing the cathedral across Palace Green, Durham’s stately, manorlike castle commands a strategic position above the River Wear. For almost 800 years the castle was the home of the enormously powerful prince-bishops; from here they ruled large tracts of the countryside and acted as the main line of

defense against Scottish raiders from the north. Henry VIII was the first to curtail the bishops’ autonomy, although it wasn’t until the 19th century that they finally had their powers annulled. At that point, the castle was given over to the University of Durham, the third oldest university in England after Oxford and Cambridge (albeit more than 600 years younger; it was founded in 1832). The castle interior, including the Great Hall with its stunning stained glass window and wooden beam ceiling, can only be seen on a 45-minute guided tour. These are usually available four times a day (afternoons only during the academic term) but are not held when the building is hired out for private events, so it’s best to check the website or call ahead. During university vacation times, the castle also offers bed-and-breakfast accommodations in the state rooms for around £200 per night; call or check the website for details. ☎ **Palace Green, Durham** ☎ 0191/334-2932 🌐 www.dur.ac.uk/durham.castle 🎫 £5.

★ Durham Cathedral

CHURCH | A Norman masterpiece in the heart of the city, Durham Cathedral is a vision of strength and fortitude, a far cry from the airy lightness of later Gothic cathedrals. Construction began about 1090, and the main body was finished around 1150. The round arches of the nave and the deep zigzag patterns carved into them typify the heavy, gaunt style of Norman, or Romanesque, building. The technology of Durham, however, was revolutionary; this was the first European cathedral to be given a stone, rather than a wooden, roof.

Note the enormous bronze Sanctuary Knecker, shaped like the head of a ferocious mythological beast, mounted on the massive northwestern door. By grasping the ring clenched in the animal's mouth, medieval felons could claim sanctuary; cathedral records show that 331 criminals sought this protection between 1464 and 1524. An unobtrusive tomb at the western end of the cathedral, in the Moorish-influenced Galilee Chapel, is the final resting place of the Venerable Bede, an 8th-century Northumbrian monk whose contemporary account of the English people made him the country's first reliable historian. In good weather, and if you're feeling up to it, you can climb the 325 steps up to the tower, which has spectacular views of Durham.

The Durham Cathedral Museum allows visitors into parts of the complex that were previously closed to the public, including the Monks Dormitory and the Great Kitchen with its breathtaking octagonal roof. Treasures on display here include priceless Anglo-Saxon art, gold and garnet crosses, elaborate vestments, illuminated manuscripts, and the original coffin of St. Cuthbert. Together it represents one of the most significant single collections of Anglo-Saxon artifacts in the world.

For a more modern take on this ancient monument, check out the elaborate LEGO model of Durham Cathedral, situated between the Undercroft Restaurant and shop. It's made up of more than 300,000 bricks.

Guided tours of the cathedral (one hour) are available Monday through Saturday at 10:30 am, 11:30 am, and 1:30 pm, though times can change if there's a special service going on. A choral evensong service takes place Tuesday through Saturday at 5:30 pm and Sunday at 3:30 pm. ☒ *Palace Green, Durham* ☎ 0191/386-4266 🌐 www.durhamcathedral.co.uk 🗳 *Free (requested donation £3); museum £7.50; tower £5.50; guided tours £7.50* ☺ *No tours Sun.*

Oriental Museum

ART MUSEUM | A 15-minute walk from the cathedral, this Durham University-owned museum displays fine art and craftwork from all parts of Asia and the Middle East. Galleries are ordered by culture, including Ancient Egypt, Japan, China, and Korea. Among the highlights are some exquisite Qing dynasty jade and lacquer ornaments, ancient tapestries and embroideries from the Himalayas, and a collection of Japanese woodblock prints from the Edo period. ☒ *Off Elvet Hill Rd., Durham* ☎ 0191/334-5691 🌐 www.dur.ac.uk/oriental.museum 🗳 *Free* ☺ *Closed Mon.*

Prebends Footbridge

BRIDGE | Delightful views are the reward of a short stroll along the River Wear's leafy banks, especially as you cross this 17th-century stone footbridge, reached from the southern end of Palace Green. J. M. W. Turner adored the view from here and painted a celebrated scene of Durham from the bridge. ☒ *S. Bailey, Durham.*

🍴 Restaurants

Cafedral

\$\$\$ | **CAFÉ** | **FAMILY** | Ignore the dad-joke pun—this is a really good, modern, vegetarian- and celiac-friendly café. Mismatched, shabby-chic furniture fills the cozy dining room, where you can enjoy delicious, fresh scones, cakes, gluten-free desserts, and tasty panini and wraps. **Known for:** fantastic gluten-free treats; vegetarian food; good coffee. ☎ *Average main: £6* ☒ *Owengate House, 1st fl., Owengate, Durham* 🌐 www.facebook.com/cafedral.

Finbarr's

\$\$\$ | **EUROPEAN** | Excellent seafood and indulgent desserts are the specialties at this popular bistro, but there are steaks and a few veggie options on the menu as well. Order the fishcakes with buttered spinach or the jumbo shrimp grilled Tandoori style (with a hint of Indian spice), and save room for the Knickerbocker Glory, an old-fashioned concoction of ice cream, sponge cake, fruit, and chocolate, served in a tall glass. **Known for:** intimate atmosphere; great seafood; heavenly desserts. ☎ *Average main: £22* ☒ *Aykley Heads House, Aykley Heads, Durham* ☎ 0191/307-7033 🌐 www.finbarrsrestaurant.co.uk ☺ *Closed Sun. and Mon.*

Zen

\$\$\$ | **THAI** | This colorful and inviting restaurant, where diners are “shaded” indoors by a faux cherry blossom tree, mainly serves Thai food, but the menu is also scattered with Japanese, Chinese, and Indonesian dishes. A rather dizzying trip around Asia can take you from Thai green curry to sizzling Mongolian lamb to Japanese teriyaki beef, as well as some less familiar dishes like cod fillet wrapped in banana leaves and served with chili and lime. **Known for:** eclectic pan-Asian menu; buzzing atmosphere; tasty Thai curries. ☎ *Average main: £18* ☒ *Court La., Durham* ☎ 0191/384-9588 🌐 www.zendurham.co.uk.

🏨 Hotels

Georgian Town House

\$ | **B&B/INN** | At the top of a cobbled street overlooking the cathedral and castle, this family-run guesthouse has small, snug bedrooms with pleasant city views. **Pros:** great city center location; jovial owners; tasty pancakes right downstairs. **Cons:** most rooms are small; decor won't please everyone; some noise from nearby pubs. ☎ *Rooms from: £120* ☒ *11 Crossgate, Durham* ☎ 0191/386-8070 🌐 www.thegeorgiantownhousedurham.co.uk ➡ *8 rooms* 🌞 *Free Breakfast.*

★ Lumley Castle Hotel

\$\$\$ | **HOTEL** | This is a real Norman castle, right down to the dungeons and maze of dark flagstone corridors—one room even has a bathroom hidden behind a bookcase. **Pros:** great for antiques lovers; gorgeous high-ceilinged restaurant; good value out of high season. **Cons:** easy to get lost among winding corridors; a little way out of Durham; (verily) ye banquet is cheesy. ☎ *Rooms from: £150* ☒ *Off B1284, Chester-le-Street* ☎ 0191/389-1111 🌐 www.lumleycastle.com ➡ *73 rooms* 🌞 *No Meals.*

★ Ramside Hall

\$\$\$\$ | **HOTEL** | Just a short drive or taxi ride from the center of town yet surrounded by a sea of green, Ramside Hall is one of the most luxurious stays in the northeast. **Pros:** modern spa with multiple pools; luxury treehouses set among 350 acres; delicious bone marrow fries in the Rib Room. **Cons:** events in main hotel can get noisy; short drive (or long walk) to the city center; expensive option for the region. ☎ *Rooms from: £395* ☒ *Off A690, Carrville, Durham* ☎ 0191/386-5282 🌐 www.ramsidehallhotel.co.uk ➡ *127 rooms* 🌞 *No Meals.*

★ Seaham Hall

\$\$\$\$ | **B&B/INN** | In 1815, Lord Byron married Annabella Milbanke in this foursquare mansion on a cliff top overlooking the sea; today, the sumptuous

contemporary interior is a haven of luxury. **Pros:** pampering rooms; full of atmosphere; wonderful spa facilities. **Cons:** far outside town; high prices; you'll have to dress up for dinner. ☎ *Rooms from: £295* ☒ *Lord Byron's Walk, Seaham* ☎ *0191/516-1400* 🌐 *www.seaham-hall.co.uk* 🚗 *19 suites* 🍳 *Free Breakfast.*

Nightlife

The Half Moon Inn

PUBS | This handsome old pub is popular for its excellent range of traditional ales, as well as for its old-school atmosphere that reminds you pubs like this are a dying breed. ☎ *86 New Elvet, Durham* ☎ *0191/374-1918* 🌐 *www.thehalfmooninn-durham.co.uk.*

Market Tavern

PUBS | Fans of real ales are drawn to the Market Tavern, which has been in business since the late 18th century. Today, it's a Greene King pub, serving a good range of drinks and decent pub food. ☎ *27 Market Pl., Durham* ☎ *0191/386-2069* 🌐 *www.greeneking-pubs.co.uk.*

Shopping

Bramwells Jewellers

JEWELRY & WATCHES | The specialty here is a pendant copy of the gold-and-silver cross of St. Cuthbert. ☎ *24 Elvet Bridge, Durham* ☎ *0191/386-8006* 🌐 *www.bramwellsjewellers.co.uk.*

Durham Indoor Market

MARKET | The food and bric-a-brac stalls in Durham Indoor Market, a Victorian arcade, are open Monday through Saturday, 9 am to 4:30 pm. An excellent farmers' market is held in Market Place on the third Thursday of every month. ☎ *Market Pl., Durham* ☎ *0191/384-6153* 🌐 *www.durhammarkets.co.uk.*

Activities

Browns Rowing Boats

BOATING | At this downtown boathouse, you can rent rowboats from mid-March through late September. There are also short river cruises available from here. ☎ *The Boathouse, Elvet Bridge, Durham* ☎ *0191/386-3779* 🌐 *www.brownsboats.co.uk* 🚣 *£8.*

Newcastle upon Tyne

18 miles north of Durham, 22 miles east of Hexham, 34 miles south of Alnwick.

Durham may have the glories of its castle, cathedral, and university, but the liveliest and most culture-crammed city in the Northeast is Newcastle upon Tyne—along with its south-of-the-river neighbor Gateshead.

Settled since Roman times on the River Tyne, Newcastle made its fortune twice—first by exporting coal and later by shipbuilding. As a 19th-century industrial center, it had few equals in Britain, showing off its wealth in grand Victorian buildings lining the broad streets. Some of these remain, particularly on Grey Street, though it's the works of modern architecture that are most eye-catching today. The cluster of bridges (older and newer) crossing the Tyne is a quintessential city sight.

Much of the regeneration since the early 1990s has been based around the Quayside, particularly on the south bank in Gateshead. Here the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art and the pedestrian-only Millennium Bridge—the world's first tilting bridge, which opens and shuts like an eyelid—have risen from industrial wasteland.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

Newcastle Airport, a 15-minute drive from the city center, has flights from British and European cities. Metro trains connect to the center. The A1 highway links London and Newcastle (five to six hours).

East Coast trains from London's King's Cross take about three hours. National Express and Megabus have service from London's Victoria Coach Station several times a day; it's a six- to seven-hour trip.

Newcastle has a good public transportation system. Its Metro light-rail network is easy to use, well signposted, and has stops near most sights. Buses go to all the places the Metro doesn't reach.

ESSENTIALS

VISITOR INFORMATION **NewcastleGateshead Tourist Information.** ☎ *Gateshead* 🌐 *www.newcastlegateshead.com.*

Sights

★ Angel of the North

PUBLIC ART | South of Newcastle, near the junction of the A1 and A1(M) at Gateshead, you'll find this enormous rust-colored steel sculpture—one of England's largest and most popular works of public art. Created by Antony Gormley in 1998, it's a sturdy, abstract human figure with airplane-like wings rather than arms. It stands 65 feet tall and has a horizontal wingspan of 175 feet. It's tricky to experience it fully from a car, so park in the free lot just behind the sculpture (on the A167) and take a stroll around its feet. ☎ *A167, Gateshead* 🌐 *www.gateshead.gov.uk/article/3957/Angel-of-the-North* 🆓 *Free.*

Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art

ART GALLERY | Formerly a grain warehouse and now the country's largest national gallery for contemporary art outside London, the BALTIC (as it's often styled) presents thought-provoking exhibitions by top names and emerging talents. There's no permanent collection, and the temporary installations change regularly, so check the website for details. There are also two great dining options here: the riverside café-bar BALTIC Kitchen and the rooftop restaurant Six. ☎ *Gateshead Quays, S. Shore Rd., Gateshead* ☎ *0191/478-1810* 🌐 *www.baltic.art* 🆓 *Free.*

Discovery Museum

HISTORY MUSEUM | **FAMILY** | Reconstructed streets and homes lead you from Roman times to the present day in this engaging museum. Kids will like its interactive approach to teaching Newcastle's history, including themed trails on subjects from pioneering Tyneside women to climate change—these are self-guided, with PDFs available on the website. Meanwhile, history buffs will be most thrilled by galleries showing off the town's maritime and industrial achievements, including the *Turbinia*. Built in 1894, it was once the fastest ship in the world and the first to be powered by steam turbines. ☎ *Blandford Sq., Newcastle upon Tyne* ☎ *0191/232-6789* 🌐 *www.discoverymuseum.org.uk* 🆓 *Free (donations welcome).*

★ Great North Museum: Hancock

HISTORY MUSEUM | An amalgam of several collections belonging to Newcastle University and named for a Victorian founder of the Natural History Society of Northumbria, this beautifully renovated museum contains an impressive array of ancient archaeological finds, plus galleries on natural history and astronomy. Highlights include artifacts left behind by the Roman builders of Hadrian's Wall; ancient Egyptian mummies; and a reconstruction of the 1st-century Temple of Mithras at Carrawburgh. This place isn't designed for kids, but the animal exhibits—including a life-size model of a *T. rex*—should entertain them for a while. ☎ *Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne* ☎ *0191/208-6765* 🌐 *www.greatnorth-museum.org.uk* 🆓 *Free (donations welcome).*

Laing Art Gallery

ART GALLERY | One of the Northeast's finest art museums merits at least an hour's visit for its selection of 19th- and 20th-century British art. The Pre-Raphaelites are on show, too, as are sculptures by Henry Moore. The Northern Spirit gallery on the ground floor showcases

some of the great artists from the region, including John Martin (1759–1854), who produced dramatic biblical landscapes, and siblings William and Mary Beilby, whose beautiful enameled-glass creations became highly prized in their 1770s heyday. ☒ *New Bridge St., Newcastle upon Tyne* ☎ 0191/278–1611 🌐 www.lain-gartgallery.org.uk 🆓 Free ☺ Closed Sun.

Life Science Centre

SCIENCE MUSEUM | FAMILY | Bringing science to life with hundreds of kid-oriented exhibits divided into themed “zones” that highlight everything from research on genes to travel to Mars, this is one of Newcastle’s best family attractions. Highlights include the “Space Zone,” which shows how space technology is now a part of people’s everyday lives, and the extra-interactive “Experiment Zone,” which is full of hands-on scientific gizmos and fun experiments that make science learning feel more like a trip to the playground. There’s also a giant 3-D replica of the earth with detailed NASA imagery, a regular 360-degree alien-hunting planetarium show, and a whole host of seasonal events and activities, as well as an ice-skating rink in winter. Visiting as a family? Opt for a family ticket, from £22.50 for one adult and one child to £47.50 for two adults and three children. ☒ *Times Sq., Newcastle upon Tyne* ☎ 0191/243–8210 🌐 www.life.org.uk 🆓 £18.

Newcastle Castle

CASTLE/PALACE | Overlooking the Tyne River, the remains of the Norman castle recall the city’s earlier status as a defensive stronghold. Built in 1080, this was the “new castle” that gave the city its name. The gatehouse and stone keep are all that remain; although the effect is somewhat diminished by the railroad viaduct that thoughtlessly separates the two. The “black gate” remains the point of entry, with a small exhibition on the surrounding area of Castle Garth, but the most interesting sights—including

the impressive Great Hall, the vaulted dungeon, and the rooftop views—are in the keep. ☒ *Castle Garth, Off St. Nicholas St., Newcastle upon Tyne* ☎ 0191/230–6300 🌐 www.newcastlecastle.co.uk 🆓 £9.25 ☺ Closed Tues. and Wed.

Segedunum Roman Fort

HISTORY MUSEUM | For a good introduction to Britain’s Roman history, dip into this museum. It includes the remains of the substantial Roman fort of Segedunum, built around AD 125, as well as the easternmost section of the original Hadrian’s Wall (there’s a reason this part of town is called Wallsend) and a reconstructed Roman bath complex. Start your tour at the (unfortunately rather ugly) observation tower for a good overview of the site, as well as an exhibition on local shipbuilding, before heading down to ground level. The collection of artifacts covers the whole 300-year period of Roman occupation in the region, and it includes pieces of weaponry, armor, and a Roman stone toilet—the only one surviving in the country. ☒ *Buddle St., Wallsend* ☎ 0191/278–4217 🌐 www.segedunumromanfort.org.uk 🆓 £5.95 ☺ Closed Sun. in Oct.–Mar.

🍴 Restaurants

Peace & Loaf

\$\$\$\$ | **BRITISH** | Aside from the punny name, this fine restaurant, in the upscale suburb of Jesmond, hits all the right notes, with chef Dave Coulson serving up delicious, flavor-packed, and beautifully presented dishes. Choose from a selection of seasonal tasting menus that make the most of fresh local produce; the eight-course tasting menu is the best value option. **Known for:** rapid-fire service; good wines by the glass; triple-cooked chips with beef dripping. [5] *Average main: £45* ☒ 217 *Jesmond Rd., Newcastle upon Tyne* ☎ 0191/281–5222 🌐 www.peaceandloaf.co.uk ☺ Closed Sun.–Tues.

★ Sachins

\$ | **INDIAN** | This upmarket yet great value Indian restaurant has been a Newcastle favorite for the best part of four decades, and it’s easy to see why. Head chef Kulmeet Arora, better known as Bob, serves up freshly prepared Punjabi cuisine using the finest ground herbs and spices. **Known for:** friendly and attentive service; delicious Punjabi specialties; good vegetarian options. [5] *Average main: £13* ☒ 14 *Forth Banks, Newcastle upon Tyne* ☎ 0191/232–4660 🌐 www.sachins.co.uk ☺ Closed Sun.

21

\$\$\$ | **MODERN BRITISH** | A Newcastle classic, this sleek, modern bistro is a local favorite for romantic dinners as the crisp white table linens and mix-and-matched light fixtures lend it an upmarket but quirky look. The menu focuses on contemporary, flavorful versions of classic British food using local ingredients, from Lindisfarne oysters (served natural with shallot vinegar and lemon as sashimi or as crispy tempura) to Northumbrian roe deer venison (served as medallions with cherries, walnuts, and pistachios). **Known for:** modern twists on traditional flavors; delicious desserts; romantic ambience. [5] *Average main: £28* ☒ *Trinity Gardens, Pandon, Newcastle upon Tyne* ☎ 0191/222–0755 🌐 www.21newcastle.co.uk ☺ Closed Sun. and Mon.

🏨 Hotels

INNSIDE Newcastle

\$\$ | **HOTEL** | This large but stylish design hotel is a relatively new addition to Newcastle’s waterfront yet it’s already proving to be one of the city’s most in-demand stays. **Pros:** appealing riverside setting; design elements that reflect the Tyne bridges; great on-site Gino D’Acampo restaurant. **Cons:** feels like a business hotel in places; no coffee machine in basic rooms; restaurant can get busy with non-guests. [5] *Rooms from: £130* ☒ *Bridge Court, Close, Newcastle upon*

Tyne ☎ 0191/338–7710 🌐 www.melia.com ➡ 161 rooms 🌐 No Meals.

★ Jesmond Dene House

\$\$ | **HOTEL** | Occupying a sprawling 19th-century mansion in the northeastern part of the city, this attractive, independent boutique hotel is surrounded by beautifully manicured gardens overlooking a stream with a small waterfall and is filled with polished oak floors, huge windows, and wandering staircases. **Pros:** stylish bathrooms with underfloor heating; delicious breakfasts; free private parking. **Cons:** some room TVs are a little small; 15 minutes by bus or tram to the center; “New House” rooms are less interesting. [5] *Rooms from: £180* ☒ *Jesmond Dene Rd., Newcastle upon Tyne* ☎ 0191/212–3000 🌐 www.jesmond-denehouse.co.uk ➡ 40 rooms 🌐 Free Breakfast.

Malmaison

\$\$ | **HOTEL** | Converted from an old riverside warehouse, this glamorous, design-conscious hotel sits beside the iconic Millennium Bridge. **Pros:** spacious and soundproofed rooms; relaxing spa; good restaurant with river views. **Cons:** unreliable Wi-Fi; bordello chic decor not for everyone; lacks the intimacy of small hotels. [5] *Rooms from: £150* ☒ 104 *Quayside, Newcastle upon Tyne* ☎ 0191/389–8627 🌐 www.malmaison.com ➡ 122 rooms 🌐 Free Breakfast.

🍷 Nightlife

Silk Room Champagne Bar




WINE BARS | This elegant, cozy, and romantic wine bar serves a wide variety of Champagnes by the glass as well as New World wines, craft beers, and Champagne cocktails. The food is good too. ☒ *Trinity Gardens, Pandon, Newcastle upon Tyne* ☎ 0191/260–3506 🌐 www.silkroomrestaurant.com.






Sir Norman Foster designed the Sage Gateshead performance venue, an emblem of Newcastle's revival.

Performing Arts

Sage Gateshead

CONCERTS | This distinctive, curving, silver building designed by Sir Norman Foster hosts an array of concerts—jazz, world, pop, classical, folk, and rock—as well as music classes and workshops.  *St. Mary's Sq., Newcastle upon Tyne*  0191/433-4661  www.sagegateshead.com.





Theatre Royal

THEATER | The region's most established performing arts center, the Theatre Royal stages high-quality productions and is also a venue for touring musicals and dance.  *100 Grey St., Newcastle upon Tyne*  0191/232-7010  www.theatreroyal.co.uk.

Activities

City Baths

SWIMMING | **FAMILY** | Recently reopened following an eight-year-long, £7.5 million transformation, Newcastle's City Baths

feature a 25-meter-long pool, sauna, and Turkish spa, all set within a historic building. The large gym hall is where the old pool used to be; you can see the outline on the floor.  *Northumberland Rd., Newcastle upon Tyne*  0191/261-7207  www.city-baths.co.uk  £8 gym or swimming; £20 Turkish baths (two hours).

Hadrian's Wall

Wallsend entrance 5 miles east of Newcastle-upon-Tyne.


The most important Roman relic in Britain extends across the countryside and can be accessed at many different points. Committed hikers can tackle the full, 73-mile-long Hadrian's Wall Path. The Sill National Landscape Discovery Centre, about a mile northwest of Vindolanda, reveals more about the local landscape.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

The A69 roughly follows the path of Hadrian's Wall, although sometimes it's a few miles in either direction. The best sections of the wall are near the narrower B6318, including Vindolanda, Housesteads Roman Fort, and Chesters Roman Fort. There's a small railway station at Hexham, with frequent trains from Newcastle.

The aptly named AD122 Hadrian's Wall Country bus runs between Newcastle and Carlisle during the summer months, stopping near all the major destinations along the way. A special "rover ticket" pass gives you unlimited travel on the route for one (£12.50) or three (£25) days—as well as a 10% discount on most attractions. Several other local buses depart from Newcastle and other towns in the region to various parts of the wall.

BUS CONTACT AD122 Hadrian's Wall

Country Bus.  www.hadrianswallcountry.co.uk/travel/bus.

Sight


★ Hadrian's Wall

RUINS | Dedicated to the Roman god Terminus, the massive span of Hadrian's Wall once marked the northern frontier of the Roman Empire. Today, remnants of the wall wander across pastures and hills, stretching 73 miles from Wallsend in the east to Bowness-on-Solway in the west. The wall is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and excavating, interpreting, repairing, and generally managing it remains a Northumbrian growth industry.

At Emperor Hadrian's command, three legions of soldiers began building the wall in AD 122 and finished it in four years. It was constructed by soldiers and masons after repeated invasions by Pictish tribes from what is now Scotland. During the Roman era it was the most heavily fortified border in the world, with walls 15 feet high and nine feet thick;

behind it lay the vallum, a ditch about 20 feet wide and 10 feet deep. Spaced at 5-mile intervals along the wall were massive forts (such as those at Housesteads and Chesters), which could house up to 1,000 soldiers. Every mile was marked by a thick-walled milecastle (a fort that housed about 30 soldiers), and between each milecastle were two turrets, each lodging four men who kept watch. For more than 250 years the Roman army used the wall to control travel and trade and to fortify Roman Britain against the barbarians to the north.


During the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745, the English army dismantled much of the Roman wall and used the stones to pave what is now the B6318 highway. The most substantial stretches of the remaining wall are between Housesteads and Birdoswald (west of Greenhead). Running through the southern edge of Northumberland National Park and along the sheer escarpment of Whin Sill, this section is also an area of dramatic natural beauty. The ancient ruins, rugged cliffs, dramatic vistas, and spreading pastures make it a great area for hiking.

Specific sites along Hadrian's Wall—such as Segedunum, Corbridge, and Housesteads—can be found in the Newcastle, Hexham, and Greenhead sections.  www.hadrianswallcountry.co.uk.

Activities

BIKING

Hadrian's Cycleway

BIKING | Between Tynemouth and Whitehaven, Hadrian's Cycleway follows the River Tyne from the east coast until Newcastle, where it traces the entire length of Hadrian's Wall. It then continues west to the Irish Sea. Maps and guides are available at the Tourist Information Centre in Newcastle.  www.cyclenorthumberland.org.uk/listing/hadrians-cycleway.

HIKING

★ Hadrian's Wall Path

HIKING & WALKING | One of Britain's national trails, Hadrian's Wall Path runs the entire 73-mile length of the wall. If you don't have time for it all, take one of the less-challenging circular routes. One of the most scenic (but also most difficult) sections is the 12-mile western stretch between Sewingshields and Greenhead. www.nationaltrail.co.uk/hadrianswall.

Hexham

22 miles west of Newcastle, 32 miles northwest of Durham.

The busy market town of Hexham is a popular base for visiting Hadrian's Wall. Just a few miles from the most significant remains, it's a bustling working town, but it has enough historic buildings and winding medieval streets to warrant a stop in its own right. First settled in the 7th century, around a Benedictine monastery, Hexham later became a byword for monastic learning, famous for its book painting, sculpture, and singing.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

The A1 and A69 highways link London and the region (five to six hours). No major bus companies travel here, but the AD122 Hadrian's Wall Country Bus from Newcastle and Carlisle does. East Coast trains take about three hours to travel from London's King's Cross to Newcastle. From there, catch a local train.

Hexham is a small, walkable town. It has infrequent local bus service, but you're unlikely to need it. If you're driving, park in the lot by the tourism office and walk into town. The tourism office has free maps and will point you in the right direction.

ESSENTIALS

VISITOR INFORMATION Hexham Tourist

Information Centre. ☒ *Queens Hall, Beaumont St., Hexham* ☎ 01670/620450
 🌐 www.visitthexham.net.



Chesters Roman Fort

MILITARY SIGHT | In a wooded valley on the banks of the North Tyne River, four miles north of Hexham, this cavalry fort was known as Cilurnum in Roman times, when it protected the point where Hadrian's Wall crossed the river. Although the setting is not as dramatic as the nearby Housesteads Roman Fort, this mazelike layout of surviving fortifications is said to be Britain's most complete Roman cavalry fort, while the military bathhouse by the river is the best-preserved Roman structure of its kind in the British Isles. The museum includes a fascinating array of artifacts, including jewelry and statues of river gods. Regular Roman-themed events are held here throughout the summer, from falconry to battle re-enactments. ☒ *B6318, Chollerford* ☎ 01434/681379 🌐 www.english-heritage.org.uk/chesters 💷 £9 ☹ Closed weekdays in Nov.–Feb.; closed Mon.–Tues. in Mar.

★ Corbridge Roman Town

RUINS | The foundations of this important Roman garrison town (the farthest north in the entire Roman Empire) are brought to life with a lively audio commentary, plus occasional reenactments during the summer. The recently renovated visitor center houses the Corbridge Hoard, a surprisingly well-preserved collection of tools and personal possessions left behind by Roman soldiers in the 2nd century, as well as other objects found in and around the site. In particular, look out for three items: the Corbridge Lion, a free-standing sandstone sculpture depicting a male lion on top of a deer; the Corbridge Lanx, a large silver dish intricately engraved with mythological

scenes; and a gambling soldier's "cheat's dice," which on close inspection features two ones and no six. Corbridge Roman Town is around four miles east of Hexham. ☒ *Corchester La., Corbridge* ☎ 01434/632349 🌐 www.english-heritage.org.uk/corbridge 💷 £9 ☹ Closed weekdays Nov.–Mar.

★ Hexham Abbey

CHURCH | A site of Christian worship for more than 1,300 years, ancient Hexham Abbey forms one side of the town's main square. Most of the current building dates from the 12th and 13th centuries, and much of the stone, including that of the Anglo-Saxon crypt, was taken from the nearby Roman fort at Corbridge. Inside, you can climb the 35 worn stone "night stairs," which once led from the main part of the abbey to the canon's dormitory, to overlook the whole ensemble—look out for the drop of lead on the sixth step, a remnant from when the roof was set alight by a Scottish army in 1286. Also of note inside are the portraits on the 16th-century wooden rood screen and the four panels from a 15th-century *Dance of Death* in the sanctuary. You can find out more about the history of the abbey in the free, interactive exhibition *The Big Story*. ☒ *Beaumont St., Hexham* ☎ 01434/602031 🌐 www.hexhamabbey.org.uk 🆓 Free; requested donation £3.

Hexham Market Place

PLAZA/SQUARE | Since 1239, this pretty square has been the site of a weekly market, held each Tuesday. Crowded stalls are set out across the square under colored awnings, attracting serious shoppers and souvenir hunters year-round. A popular farmers' market takes over on the second and fourth Saturday of the month. Even when there's not an official market on, there's often one or two food stalls set up. ☒ *Market Pl., Hexham* ☎ 01434/230605 🌐 www.hexhamfarmersmarket.co.uk.

Old Gaol

JAIL/PRISON | FAMILY | England's oldest purpose-built prison, dating from 1330, Hexham's Old Gaol houses fascinating exhibits about the history of the borderlands, including tales of the terrifying "reivers" and their bloodthirsty raids into Northumberland from Scotland during the 16th and 17th centuries. Photographs, weapons, and a reconstructed house interior give a full account of what the region was like in medieval times. A glass elevator takes you up and down four floors, including to the dungeon. ☒ *Hallgate, Hexham* ☎ 01670/624523 🌐 museumsnorthumberland.org.uk/hexham-old-gaol 💷 £5 ☹ Closed Nov.–Mar., Mon. and Tues.

🍴 Restaurants

The Corbridge Larder

🍷 | **SANDWICHES** | Located near Corbridge Roman Town and the best deli for miles around, this place is filled with all manner of local produce, as well as specialty foods from small-time artisans across Europe. There's also a cafe serving delicious breakfasts, soups, and sandwiches. **Known for:** local and international artisanal produce; lovely upstairs café; village-shop atmosphere. 🍷 *Average main: £9* ☒ 18 *Hill St., Corbridge* ☎ 01434/632948 🌐 www.corbridgelarder.co.uk ☹ No dinner.

🏨 Hotels

Battlesteads Hotel

🍷 | **B&B/INN** | Located 10 miles north of Hexham and "beyond the wall," this delightful old inn combines three virtues: good food, cozy rooms, and eco-friendly credentials. **Pros:** secret walled garden; excellent Sunday roasts; green ethos. **Cons:** some rooms on the small side; no mobile phone reception; service slow when busy. 🍷 *Rooms from: £115* ☒ *Hexham Rd., Wark, Hexham* ☎ 01434/230209

🌐 www.battlesteads.com ➡ 22 rooms
🍳 Free Breakfast.

Langley Castle

\$\$ | **HOTEL** | Close your eyes and imagine an English castle: you're probably picturing Langley, a lavish 14th-century fortification complete with turrets and battlements. **Pros:** romantic and historic setting; lavish afternoon tea; full movies and sports TV packages in rooms. **Cons:** breakfast can be hit-or-miss; decor a little tired in places; service can be slow. 📞 Rooms from: £200 ☎ Off A686, Hexham ☎ 01434/688888 🌐 www.langleycastle.co.uk ➡ 27 rooms 🍳 No Meals.

★ Walwick Hall

\$\$\$ | **HOTEL** | A short stroll from Chesters Roman Fort, this boutique country estate offers beautifully appointed rooms, a sophisticated fine dining restaurant, and a modern spa with a glass-walled pool. **Pros:** gorgeous Georgian property; excellent restaurant (try the sticky toffee pudding); views over the lawn to the hills beyond. **Cons:** only one spa treatment room; service can be slow; expensive for the area. 📞 Rooms from: £270 ☎ B6318, Humshaugh, Hexham ☎ 01434/620156 🌐 www.walwickhall.com ➡ 10 rooms 🍳 Free Breakfast.

🎭 Performing Arts

Queen's Hall Arts Centre

ARTS CENTERS | A wide range of theater, dance, and art exhibitions are on the bill at this arts center in the heart of Hexham. ☎ Beaumont St., Hexham ☎ 01434/652477 🌐 www.queenshall.co.uk.

🚴 Activities

The Bike Place

BIKING | This cycle-hire place in Kielder is the nearest to this part of Hadrian's Wall, despite being 34 miles northwest of Hexham. Still, it's a great excuse to head up into Northumberland National

Park. Rental prices start at £35 per day, or £60 for e-bikes, and they can arrange delivery and collection for an extra fee. The main store is in Kielder village—take the B6531 and B6320 north from Hexham—though there's a second on Kielder Waterside, which is marginally closer. ☎ Kielder Cycle Centre, Station Garage, Kielder ☎ 01434/250457 🌐 www.thebikeplace.co.uk.

Greenhead

19 miles west of Hexham.

Greenhead may be small, but it's a good base for exploring some of the Hadrian's Wall sites that lie farther west, including the Roman Army Museum, Vindolanda, and the Housesteads Roman Fort. The Sill National Landscape Discovery Centre, around six miles east of Greenhead, has informative displays about Hadrian's Wall and can advise about local walks.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

Greenhead is on the A69 and B6318. The nearest train station is three miles east, in Haltwhistle.

ESSENTIALS

VISITOR INFORMATION **The Sill National Landscape Discovery Centre.** ☎ Northumberland National Park, B6318, Once Brewed ☎ 01434/341200 🌐 www.thesill.org.uk.

👁 Sights

Birdoswald Roman Fort

RUINS | Beside the longest unbroken stretch of Hadrian's Wall, Birdoswald Roman Fort reveals the remains of gatehouses, a granary, and a parade ground. You can also see the line of the original turf wall, later rebuilt in stone. Birdoswald has a unique historical footnote: unlike other Roman forts along the wall, it was maintained by local tribes long after being abandoned by the Romans. The small visitor center has

artifacts discovered at the site, a full-scale model of the wall, and a good café. ☎ Greenhead ☎ 01697/747602 🌐 www.english-heritage.org.uk/birdoswald ☎ £9 ☹ Closed weekdays in Nov.–mid-Feb. and Mon. and Tues. in Mar.

★ Housesteads Roman Fort

RUINS | If you have time to visit only one Hadrian's Wall site, Housesteads Roman Fort is your best bet. Britain's most complete example of a Roman fort also features long sections of the wall, with an informative visitor center showcasing a collection of artifacts discovered at the site and computer-generated images of what the fort originally looked like. The site is a 10-minute walk uphill from the parking lot (not for those with mobility problems), but the effort is more than worth it to see the surprisingly extensive ruins, dating from around AD 125. Excavations have revealed the remains of granaries, gateways, barracks, a hospital, and the commandant's house. **■ TIP → Come for the history, stay for the views: the northern tip of the fort offers sweeping vistas of Hadrian's Wall as it winds up and over distant hills and crags.** ☎ Off B6318, Haydon Bridge ☎ 01434/344363 🌐 www.english-heritage.org.uk/housesteads ☎ £9; parking £3.

Roman Army Museum

HISTORY MUSEUM | **FAMILY** | At the garrison fort of Carvoran, this museum makes an excellent introduction to Hadrian's Wall. Full-size models and excavations bring this remote outpost of the empire to life, with a host of historic artifacts including authentic Roman graffiti adorning the walls of an excavated barracks. There's also a flashy 3-D film that puts it all into historical context. Opposite the museum, at Walltown Crags on the Pennine Way (one of Britain's long-distance national hiking trails), are 400 yards of the best-preserved section of the wall. The museum is one mile northeast of Greenhead. ☎ Off B6318, Greenhead

☎ 01697/747485 🌐 www.vindolanda.com/roman-army-museum ☎ £8; £14 combined with Vindolanda.

★ Vindolanda

RUINS | About 8 miles east of Greenhead, this archaeological site—which celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2020—holds the remains of eight successive Roman forts and civilian settlements, providing an intriguing look into the daily life of a military compound. Most of the visible remains date from the 2nd and 3rd centuries, and new excavations are constantly under way. A reconstructed Roman temple, house, and shop provide context, and the museum displays rare artifacts, such as a handful of extraordinary wooden tablets with messages about everything from household chores to military movements. A full-size reproduction of a section of the wall gives a sense of its sheer scale. ☎ Off B6318, Bardon Mill ☎ 01434/344277 🌐 www.vindolanda.com ☎ £9.25; £14 combined with Roman Army Museum.

🍴 Restaurants

Greenhead Hotel

\$\$ | **BRITISH** | This pretty stone-built pub-hotel is one of the region's best (and best value) dining options. The delicately flavored and beautifully presented dishes, from cured sea trout with cucumber salsa to lamb rump with potato terrine and wild garlic, would seem more at home in a fine-dining restaurant than a village pub if it weren't for the remarkably low prices. **Known for:** seven refurbished rooms available; center-of-town location; high-end food at low-end prices. 📞 Average main: £16 ☎ Station Rd., Greenhead ☎ 01697/747411 🌐 www.greenhead-brampton.co.uk.

Milecastle Inn

\$ | **BRITISH** | The snug bar and restaurant of this remote, peaceful, 17th-century pub make an excellent place to dine. Fine local meat goes into its famous savory

pies—take your pick from the likes of wild boar and duckling—while the unfussy menu also features such staples as fish-and-chips, Whitby scampi, and lasagna with garlic bread. **Known for:** tasty house-specialty meat pies; traditional pub food; 17th-century building. **☑ Average main:** £12 ☑ B6318, Haltwhistle ☎ 01434/321372 🌐 www.milecastle-inn.co.uk.

Hotels

★ Farlam Hall

\$\$\$ | **HOTEL** | Seven miles southwest of Greenhead on the edge of the North Pennines, this luxury country estate is an idyllic away-from-it-all escape. **Pros:** spacious rooms with garden views; relaxing rural setting; beautiful decor throughout. **Cons:** service can be a little slow; a 15-minute drive from the wall; minimum two-night stay in summer. **☑ Rooms from:** £240 ☑ Off A869, Kirkhouse, Greenhead ☎ 01697/746234 🌐 www.farlamhall.co.uk ➡ 13 rooms 🍳 Free Breakfast.

Holmhead Guest House

\$ | **B&B/INN** | Talk about a feel for history—this former farmhouse in open countryside, graced with stone arches and exposed beams, is not only built on Hadrian's Wall but also partly from it. **Pros:** full of atmosphere; close to Hadrian's Wall; very reasonable rates. **Cons:** rooms are a bit of a squeeze; 10 minute walk into town; not a luxury option. **☑ Rooms from:** £80 ☑ Off B6318, Greenhead ☎ 01697/747402 🌐 bandb-hadrianswall.co.uk ➡ No credit cards ➡ 5 rooms 🍳 Free Breakfast.

Alnwick

34 miles north of Newcastle, 8 miles southwest of Dunstanburgh Castle.

Dominated by a grand castle, the little market town of Alnwick (pronounced *ahn-ick*) is the best base from which to

explore the dramatic coast and countryside of northern Northumberland.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

If you're driving up from Newcastle, Alnwick is just off the A1, about 18 miles (25 minutes) beyond Morpeth. Buses X15, X18 and X20 connect Alnwick with Newcastle and Lindisfarne. The nearest train station is four miles away in Alnmouth (pronounced *alun-mowth*); trains travel between here and Newcastle roughly every hour and take 25 minutes.

ESSENTIALS

VISITOR INFORMATION Alnwick

Tourist Information Centre. ☎ *The Playhouse, Bondgate Without, Alnwick* ☎ 01670/622152 🌐 www.visitalnwick.org.uk.

Sights

Alnwick Castle

CASTLE/PALACE | FAMILY | Sometimes called the “Windsor of the North,” the imposing Alnwick Castle will likely provoke cries of “Hogwarts!” from younger visitors as it comes into view over the hill; the grounds appear as the exterior of the famous School of Witchcraft and Wizardry in the Harry Potter movies. Older visitors might also recognize it as Brancaster Castle from the TV series *Downton Abbey*. In reality, the castle is the ancestral home to the dukes of Northumberland, whose family, the Percys, dominated in the Northeast for centuries.

While the exterior is all imposing turrets and towers, the Italianate interiors are lavish and stately. Family photos and other knickknacks scattered around the state rooms are a subtle but pointed reminder that this is a family home, rather than a museum. Highlights include the extraordinary gun room, lined with hundreds of antique pistols arranged in swirling patterns; the formal dining room, its table set as if guests are due at any minute; and the magnificent galleried



The romantic grounds of Alnwick Castle are filled with flowers and rolling fields.

library, containing 14,000 books in floor-to-ceiling cases.

There's plenty here for kids, too. Join a free film tour to hear fascinating anecdotes from the filming of the first two Harry Potter films (as well as *Transformers: The Last Knight*, *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves*, and many more). There are also Potter-themed events on certain dates, including broomstick lessons on the exact spot used in the movie (check the website for the schedule). Elsewhere, Dragon Quest is a labyrinth designed to teach a bit of medieval history; there's have-a-go archery (weather permitting); and there are regular special events, from alchemy and wand-making to bird of prey displays and longbow demonstrations.

For the best views of the castle's dramatic exterior, follow the 20-minute Capability Brown Walk along the River Aln. Tickets are valid for one year, so you can come back if you don't see everything in a day. Keep in mind that many castle events are canceled in inclement

weather (which isn't uncommon). ☎ *Off B6431, Alnwick* ☎ 01665/511100 🌐 www.alnwickcastle.com ➡ £19.50 🕒 Closed Nov.–Mar.

★ Alnwick Garden

GARDEN | FAMILY | A marvelous flight of fancy, Alnwick Garden celebrated its 20-year anniversary at the turn of this decade and remains one of the area's most beautiful, unusual, and kid-friendly attractions. Alongside traditional features like perfectly manicured lawns, shaded woodland walks, and a charming rose garden are more unusual elements like the enormous Grand Cascade water feature, a Poison Garden with everything from hemlock to cannabis, and a labyrinth of towering bamboo. The grounds are also home to the largest “Tai-haku” cherry orchard in the world, as well as a recently spruced-up shop and a number of excellent dining and drinking options, including one of the area's most unique restaurants, the Treehouse. If you want to take a little of the garden home with you, you can buy clippings of the unique

varieties of roses in the shop. ✉ *Denwick La., Alnwick* ☎ 01665/511350 🌐 www.alnwickgarden.com 💷 £14.50 🕒 Closed Jan. and Tues. and Wed. in Nov.–Mar.

Brinkburn Priory

RELIGIOUS BUILDING | A fine historical anecdote concerns this idyllic Augustinian priory, founded in the early 12th century and located 15 miles southwest of Alnwick. A group of Scottish “reivers” came looking for the place to raid and loot it, but because it was entirely hidden by forest, they were unable to find it and gave up. The monks were so happy that they sounded the bells in celebration, thus revealing the location—and the Scots promptly returned and sacked the place. Most of the beautiful, light-filled building is the result of a loving Victorian restoration, though the spirit of the original has been retained, along with a few physical elements. Highlights of the interior include the stunning stone-carved altar, the striking stained-glass windows, and the William Hill organ, regularly used for classical music concerts. On the same site is a mill and a 19th-century manor house, which incorporates the undercroft from the former monk’s refectory. The house is said to be inhabited by the spirits of a monk and a nun, and several workmen have reported sightings in recent years. ■ **TIP** → The walk from the car park takes 10 minutes, but it’s a lovely way to first encounter the priory. Those with mobility issues can drive all the way down. ✉ Off B6344, Longframlington ☎ 01665/570628 🌐 www.english-heritage.org.uk/brinkburn 💷 £6 🕒 Closed Nov.–Mar., Mon. and Tues. in Apr.–Sep., and weekdays in Oct.

★ Cragside

HISTORIC HOME | **FAMILY** | The turrets and towers of Tudor-style Cragside, a Victorian country house, look out over the edge of a forested hillside. It was built between 1864 and 1895 by Lord Armstrong, an early electrical engineer and inventor, and designed by Richard Norman Shaw, a

well-regarded architect. Among Armstrong’s contemporaries, Cragside was called “the palace of a modern magician” because it contained so many of his inventions. This was the first house in the world to be lit by hydroelectricity; the grounds also hold an energy center with restored mid-Victorian machinery. There are Pre-Raphaelite paintings and an elaborate mock-Renaissance marble chimneypiece.

The grounds are as impressive as the house; they cover around 1,000 acres and include an enormous sandstone rock garden, a picture-perfect iron bridge, and 14 different waymarked paths and trails, which bloom with rhododendrons in June. There’s also a children’s adventure playground. If you come by car, don’t miss the six-mile Carriage Drive around the estate. There are some lovely viewpoints and picnic spots along the way, like the gorgeous Nelly’s Moss lake. To get here, take the B6341 southwest of Alnwick for about 10.5 miles. Paths around the grounds are steep, and distances can be long, so wear comfortable shoes. ✉ Off B6341, Rothbury ☎ 01669/620333 🌐 www.nationaltrust.org.uk/cragside 📮 Grounds and house £21; grounds only £13, in winter £7.50.

🍴 Restaurants

★ The Treehouse

🇬🇧 | **MODERN BRITISH** | The treetop location may sound gimmicky, but the effect at this extraordinary restaurant is quite magical and unexpectedly romantic, especially when the place is lit up at night. Here, an enormous complex of buildings spreads out over more than 550 square meters, with a roaring log fire at its center and furniture made from fallen branches; the kitchen serves excellent, decent-value modern British fare. **Known for:** unique setting; Northeastern flavors and ingredients; inoffensive acoustic music on a loop. 🇬🇧 Average main: £15 ☎ Alnwick Garden, Denwick La., Alnwick ☎ 01665/660320



🌐 www.alnwickgarden.com/the-treehouse
🕒 No dinner Sun.–Wed.

🍷 Hotels

★ The Cookie Jar

\$\$ | **HOTEL** | With sumptuously appointed rooms, a popular bistro restaurant, and convenient location right by the castle, this historic convent-turned-boutique-hotel is Alnwick’s most luxurious stay. **Pros:** spacious rooms and Alnwick’s poshest suite; delicious cooked breakfast; house-made cookies in rooms. **Cons:** superior rooms are expensive; no afternoon tea served midweek; unrelentingly blue decor. 🇬🇧 Rooms from: £195 ☎ 12 Bailiffgate, Alnwick ☎ 01665/510465 🌐 www.cookiejaralnwick.com ➡ 11 rooms 🕒 Free Breakfast.

Hallow and Crux

\$\$ | **HOTEL** | Magic-loving Muggles will go wild for this enchanting boutique hotel in the heart of Alnwick, which evokes all the spirit of the wizarding world—even if its literary inspiration is never actually named. **Pros:** great town center location; delicious breakfasts (try the kippers); quirky decor that alludes to “The Book That Must Not Be Named.” **Cons:** heritage features like separate hot and cold faucets will charm some but annoy others; short window for breakfast and early check-out; Wi-Fi is patchy in rooms. 🇬🇧 Rooms from: £180 ☎ 34 Narrowgate, Alnwick ☎ 01665/606193 🌐 www.hallow-and-crux.co.uk ➡ 4 rooms 🕒 Free Breakfast.

Macdonald Linden Hall

\$\$\$ | **HOTEL** | Built as a getaway for a wealthy banker in 1812, this charming country estate surrounded by 450



It's worth the scenic coastal walk to see the remote cliff-top ruins of Dunstanburgh Castle.

acres of private grounds is wonderfully secluded; it's a full five minutes' drive off the nearest public road. **Pros:** out-of-the-way escape; soothing spa; gorgeous original building. **Cons:** can get overrun by large tour groups; visiting spa means a trip outside; bedrooms not as well maintained as public areas. **Rooms from:** £265 **Off** A697, Longhorsley **0344/879-9084** **www.macdonaldhoteles.co.uk/linden-hall** **50 rooms** **Free Breakfast.**

Shopping

★ Barter Books

BOOKS | This extraordinary secondhand bookshop, set within Alnwick's former Victorian railway station, is a must-visit for bookworms, architecture lovers, and train geeks alike. Shelves galore groan with a mix of mainstream, niche, and antiquarian books, while visitors will also enjoy the open fires in winter, the comfy sofas and armchairs, the kids' corner, the excellent café, and the little toy train rattling along a track overhead. Barter Books was also

responsible for the whole "Keep Calm and Carry On" craze, as the owners discovered the old World War II posters when converting the old station. **Alnwick Station, B6346, Alnwick** **01665/604888** **www.barterbooks.co.uk**.

Dunstanburgh Castle

8 miles northeast of Alnwick, 11 miles south of Bamburgh.

Dunstanburgh is as dramatic an old ruin as they come and more than worth the effort it takes to get here (this is not the kind of place where you can just drive up to the front gate).

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

The castle is accessible only by footpaths from the villages of Craster (the most common route) or Embleton off the B1339 (which is a little longer and can get cut off in high tide). The X18 bus from Alnwick is the only practical connection by public transportation; get off in Craster and head to the main public parking lot;

the village is small enough that it's easy to find. The coastal path starts here and is clearly signposted. It's a beautiful route, but a bit of a hike at around 2½ miles there and back.

Sights

Dunstanburgh Castle

CASTLE/PALACE | Perched romantically on a cliff 100 feet above the shore, these castle ruins can be reached along a windy, mile-long coastal footpath that heads north from the tiny fishing village of Craster. Built in 1316 as a defense against the Scots, and later enlarged by John of Gaunt, the powerful Duke of Lancaster who virtually ruled England in the late 14th century, the castle is known to many from the popular paintings by 19th-century artist J. M. W. Turner. The castle is a signposted 1.2-mile walk from the nearest parking lot in Craster. While Dunstanburgh is run by English Heritage, it's owned by the National Trust, so membership with either organization will get you in for free. **Dunstanburgh Rd., Craster, Alnwick** **01665/576231** **www.english-heritage.org.uk/dunstanburgh** **£6** **Closed weekdays Nov.–Mar.**

Hotels

Doxford Hall Hotel

\$\$ | HOTEL | Around six miles east of Dunstanburgh Castle, halfway between Alnwick and Bamburgh, lies this 200-year-old country mansion—now a popular spa hotel. **Pros:** gorgeous Georgian property; fascinating "history of Northumberland" tapestry in hall; therapeutic deep pressure massage. **Cons:** some rooms old fashioned; gym is small and a little tired; can get booked up with weddings. **Rooms from:** £220 **Off** A1, Doxford, Alnwick **01665/589700** **www.doxfordhall.com** **36 rooms** **Free Breakfast.**

Walking and Biking in the Northeast



Wide vistas, quiet roads, and fresh air make for excellent hikes and bike rides in the Northeast. Long-distance footpaths include the 90-mile Teesdale Way, which follows the River Tees through Barnard Castle and Middleton-in-Teesdale. Otherwise, the russet hills and dales of Northumberland National Park will please any serious walker. Bike routes to explore—in whole or in part—are the 220-mile Northumbria Cycling Kingdom loop and the 81-mile Coast and Castles cycle route.

Bamburgh

17 miles north of Alnwick, 14 miles south of Lindisfarne.

Tiny Bamburgh has a splendid castle, and several beaches are just a few minutes' walk away.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

Bamburgh can be reached by car on the B3140, B3141, or B3142. Buses X18 and 418 run from Alnwick to Bamburgh a few times per day. The nearest train station is in Chathill, about seven miles away.

Sights

★ Bamburgh Castle

CASTLE/PALACE | You'll see Bamburgh Castle long before you reach it: a solid, weather-beaten, cliff-top fortress that dominates the coastal view for miles around. A fortification of some kind has stood here since the 6th century, but the Norman castle was damaged during the 15th century, and the central tower is all that remains intact. Much of the structure—the home of the Armstrong



The Farne Islands are home to a charming collection of seabirds, including a puffin colony.

family since 1894—was restored during the 18th and 19th centuries. The interior is mostly late Victorian (most impressively, the Great Hall), although a few rooms, such as the small but alarmingly well-stocked armory, have a more authentically medieval feel; look out for the devil-horned helmet. The breathtaking view across the sweeping sands of Bamburgh beach and the North Sea beyond is worth the steep climb up from the main road; bring a picnic if the weather's good (or order to-go sandwiches at the café). ☒ *Off B1340, Bamburgh* ☎ *01668/214208* 🌐 *www.bamburghcastle.com* 🚗 *£14.10; £4 parking.*

Farne Islands

ISLAND | Regular boat trips from the little village of Seahouses, three miles down the coast from Bamburgh, provide access to the Farne Islands with their impressive colonies of seabirds—including puffins, kittiwakes, terns, shags, and guillemots—and barking groups of gray seals. Inner Farne, where St. Cuthbert, the great abbot of Lindisfarne, died in AD 687, has a tiny

chapel. Look out for the ruined lighthouse beacons as you pass Brownsman Island. There are a few different companies licensed to make the trip to Farne and the other islands, including Billy Shiel's Boat Trips (🌐 *www.farne-islands.com*), Serenity (🌐 *www.farneislandstours.co.uk*), and Golden Gate (🌐 *www.discoverthefarneislands.co.uk*). All boat services leave from Seahouses harbor; look for the tiny booth selling tickets or the outlet in the main village parking lot. Each company offers a variety of other cruises, such as seal-spotting expeditions and Lindisfarne landing trips, which vary from 90 minutes to 4½ hours; visit the individual websites to see what's on offer this season. In addition to the cost of the boat trip, Inner Farne has a National Trust landing fee of £12.60 (May through July) and £8.20 (in March, April, and August through November). Staple Island also has a landing fee of £12.60 (May through July). ☒ *Seahouses Harbour, Harbour Rd., Seahouses* ☎ *01289/389244* **National Trust** 🌐 *www.nationaltrust.org.uk/farne-islands* 🚗 *Landing fees £8.20–£12.60.*

🍴 Restaurants

★ Creel and Reel

\$ | **SEAFOOD** | For a fresh seafood lunch, nothing beats this no-frills trailer just south of Bamburgh. Freshly caught langoustines, lobster, scallops, monkfish, king prawns, crab, and squid are grilled on-site and served with fries or bread and garlic butter. **Known for:** great ocean views; scallop and bacon roll; very casual dining. ☑ *Average main: £10* ☒ *Car Park Links Rd., B1340, Bamburgh* ☎ *07595/981399* 🌐 *www.facebook.com/CreelAndReel* ☺ *No dinner. Closed Tues. and Wed.*

🏨 Hotels

Beadnell Towers

\$\$ | **HOTEL** | Five miles south of Bamburgh on the scenic coastal road, this chic boutique hotel combines 18th-century heritage and character with 21st-century luxury and comfort. **Pros:** delicious locally sourced food; free parking for guests; a short walk to sandy Beadnell Bay. **Cons:** room decor varies wildly so pick carefully; restaurant gets busy on weekends; dogs can stay so barking may be heard. ☑ *Rooms from: £189* ☒ *The Wynding, Off B1340, Bamburgh* ☎ *01665/721211* 🌐 *www.beadnelltowers.co.uk* ➡ *18 rooms* 🌞 *Free Breakfast.*

Lord Crewe Hotel

\$\$ | **HOTEL** | This cozy, stone-walled inn with oak beams sits in the heart of the village and has simple, modern guest rooms decorated with pine furnishings; some of them date back to the 1600s. **Pros:** in the center of the village; good seafood restaurant; close to Bamburgh Castle. **Cons:** pub can get quite crowded; some uninspiring room decor; pet-friendly bar is ideal for dog lovers but not for allergy sufferers. ☑ *Rooms from: £190* ☒ *Front St., Bamburgh* ☎ *01668/214243* 🌐 *www.lord-crewe.co.uk* ➡ *7 rooms* 🌞 *Free Breakfast.*

Lindisfarne (Holy Island)

14 miles north of Bamburgh, 25 miles north of Alnwick.

The cradle of northern England's Christianity and one-time home of St. Cuthbert, Lindisfarne (or Holy Island) has a religious history that dates from AD 635, when St. Aidan established a monastery here. Under its greatest abbot, the sainted Cuthbert, Lindisfarne became one of the foremost centers of learning in Christendom. Today, you can explore the atmospheric ruined priory and a castle.

GETTING HERE AND AROUND

By car, the island is reached from the mainland via a long drive on a causeway that floods at high tide, so check when crossing is safe. The tide schedule, which changes daily, is displayed at the causeway and available on the Northumberland County Council website (🌐 *holysisland-crossingtimes.northumberland.gov.uk*). Traffic can be heavy; allow at least a half hour for your return trip. Parking is available in a paid lot on the edge of village; it's £5 for three hours.

The only public transportation to Holy Island is run by Borders Buses, and it's very limited: Bus 477 runs on Fridays and Saturdays from Berwick-upon-Tweed railway station to the island.

BUS CONTACT Borders Buses.

☎ *01896/754350* 🌐 *www.bordersbuses.co.uk.*

👁 Sights

Lindisfarne Castle

CASTLE/PALACE | Reached during low tide via a causeway from the mainland, this castle appears to grow out of the rocky pinnacle on which it was built 400 years ago, looking for all the world like a fairy tale illustration. In 1903, architect Sir Edwin Lutyens converted the former Tudor fort into a private home that retains the original's ancient features. Across

several fields from the castle is a walled garden designed by Gertrude Jekyll. Opening times are notoriously changeable—especially on Monday outside midsummer—and are always dependant on weather and tides, so it's best to call ahead. ✉ *Off Marygate, Lindisfarne* ☎ 01289/389244 🌐 www.nationaltrust.org.uk/lindisfarne-castle 🎫 £8.50 🕒 Closed Nov.–mid-Feb.

★ **Lindisfarne Priory**

RELIGIOUS BUILDING | In the year 875, Vikings destroyed the Lindisfarne community; only a few monks escaped, carrying with them Cuthbert's bones, which were reburied in Durham Cathedral. The sandstone Norman ruins of Lindisfarne Priory, reestablished in the 11th century, remain an impressive and eerily beautiful sight. A museum here, which is currently being renovated, tells the story of the monks living on Lindisfarne and displays a selection Anglo-Saxon carvings. ✉ *Church La., Lindisfarne* ☎ 01289/389200 🌐 www.english-heritage.org.uk/lindisfarne 🎫 £8.10 🕒 Closed Nov.–Mar.