



The Northeast

Northeast England knows a thing or two about hard living. Perched atop of England along the border with Scotland, this has always been frontier country – inhabited by a people who are passionate, independent, and historically not afraid to get into a scrap over territory.

And what a territory it is. You only need take a glance at the vast, almost epic countryside to get a sense of its brooding, menacing beauty – from the wind-lashed stretch of coast through the heather-carpeted Cheviot Hills and on into the wilderness of Northumberland National Park before arriving at the feet of the dark slopes of the North Pennines. Beyond them is Scotland, the other actor in an 800-year-old historical drama of war, bloodshed and conquest: no wonder the folks up here have a reputation for being hardy.

It has taken the best efforts of Man to make a dent on this indomitable landscape. The Romans did their bit, leaving us the magnificent Hadrian's Wall, which served as their empire's northern border for nearly 300 years. The Normans acquitted themselves equally well: their legacy was in splendid castles and, in Durham, a magnificent cathedral. Against their splendid backdrops, these marvellous constructions serve only to reinforce an impression of a landscape that hasn't changed much since the region was part of the ancient kingdom of Northumbria.

If you look closely, however, you will see that the landscape is run through with dark, menacing scars: dotted throughout are the rusting hulks of an industry that drove this region for nearly 700 years. Mining is all but defunct now, yet the cities it built are still very much alive, none more so than Newcastle, the biggest in the region and one of the most dynamic urban centres in England.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Exploring Newcastle's arty side in the exciting **Ouseburn Valley** (p750)
- Walking like a Roman – hiking along the stunning **Hadrian's Wall** (p769)
- Castle-spotting along the blustery white-sand beaches of **Northumberland** (p778)
- Exploring Durham's industrial history at the **Beamish Open-Air Museum** (p763)
- Hiking to the top of the **Cheviot** (p777) in Northumberland National Park
- Going Norman in **Durham** (p758), the cathedral of which is a spectacular World Heritage Site



■ POPULATION:
2.5 MILLION

■ AREA: 3320
SQ MILES

■ FIRST PLACE IN ENGLAND TO BREW BEER :
NEWCASTLE (ACCORDING TO LEGEND)

History

Violent history has shaped the region more than any other in England, primarily because of its frontier position. Although Hadrian's Wall was not quite the defensive barrier some believe it to be, it nevertheless marked the northern frontier of Roman Britain and was the Empire's most heavily fortified line. Following the Romans' departure, the region became part of the Anglian kingdom of Bernicia, which united with the southern kingdom of Deira (which stretched across much of modern-day Yorkshire) to form Northumbria in 604.

The kingdom changed hands and had its borders (which extended up into present-day Scotland) altered several times over the next 500 years as various Anglo-Saxon lords and, later, Danes struggled to get their hands on it. The land north of the River Tweed was finally ceded to the emerging kingdom of Scotland in 1018, while the nascent kingdom of England kept its hands on everything below it...and so the fun really began.

The arrival of the Normans in 1066 added a new spice to the mix, as William I was eager to secure his northern borders against the Scots, but he also had to contend with local tribes who weren't too happy about the Norman presence. He ordered the construction of most of the castles you can see along the coast, and cut deals with the prince bishops of Durham to ensure their loyalty. It worked, but only up to a point: the new lords of Northumberland became very powerful because, as Marcher Lords (from the use of 'march' as a synonym of 'border'), they were the ones who kept the Scots at bay. And they did, regularly.

Northumberland's reputation as a hotbed of rebellion intensified during the Tudor years, when the largely Catholic north, led by the seventh duke of Northumberland, Thomas Percy, rose up against Elizabeth I in the defeated Rising of the North in 1569. The region's refusal to fully submit to national authority is perhaps best exemplified in the actions of the Border Reivers, raiders from both sides of the border who rose to real power in the 16th century and kept the region in a perpetual state of lawlessness, which only subsided after the Act of Union between England and Scotland in 1707.

Northumberland also played a central role in the Industrial Revolution. The region's coalmines were key to the development of

industry and the development of the railway, which transported coal to the Tyne and the shipbuilding and armament works that grew up around Newcastle.

Orientation & Information

The Pennine hills are the dominant geological feature, forming a north-south spine that divides the region from Cumbria and Lancashire in the west and provides the source of major rivers such as the Tees and the Tyne.

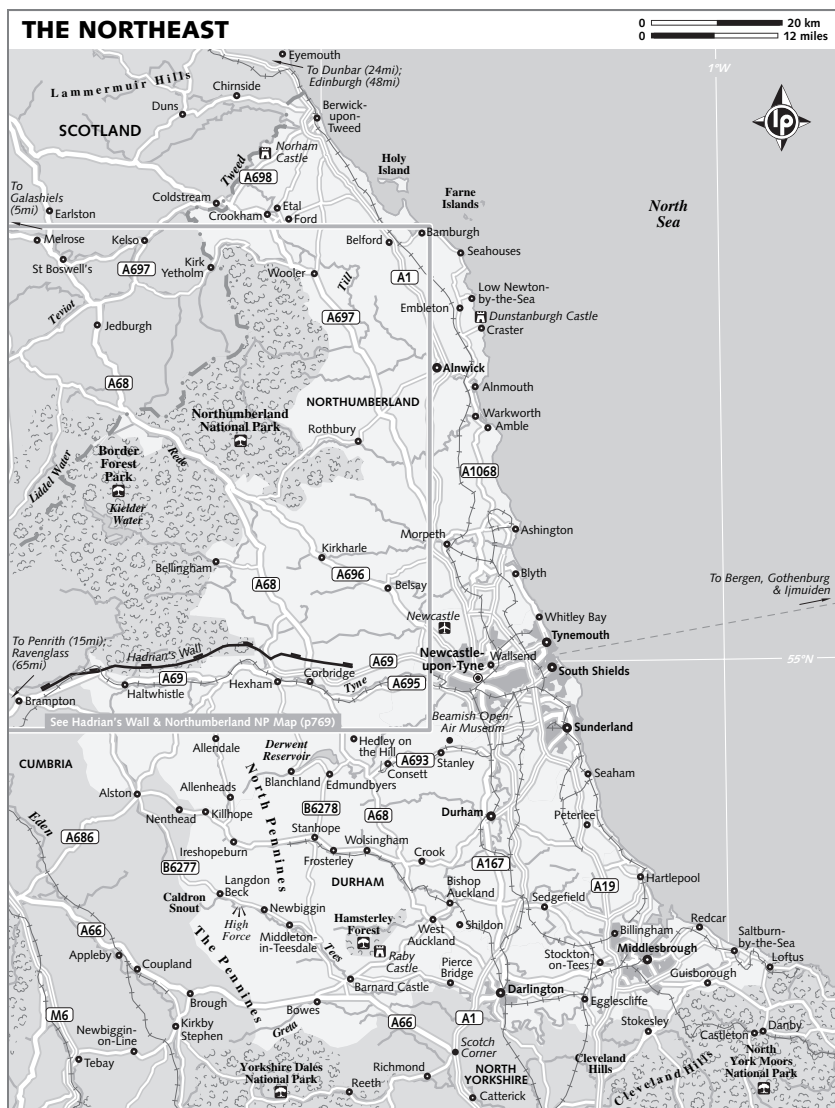
The major transport routes are east of this spine, from Durham northwards to Newcastle and Edinburgh. Newcastle is an important ferry port for Scandinavia (see p756 for details). There's a northeast region website at www.thenortheast.com.

Activities

With the rugged moors of the Pennines and stunning seascape of the Northumberland coast, there's some good walking and cycling in this region. The scenery is beautiful in a wild and untouched way – quite different from the picture-postcard landscape of areas such as Devon or the Cotswolds. If you're out in the open, be prepared for wind and rain at any time of year. But when the sun shines, you can't go wrong. More details on walking and cycling are given in the Outdoor England chapter (p141), and suggestions for shorter routes are given throughout this chapter. Regional tourism websites all contain walking and cycling information, and tourist information centres (TICs; referred to throughout this book simply as tourist offices) all stock free leaflets plus maps and guides (usually £1 to £5) covering walking, cycling and other activities.

CYCLING

There are some excellent cycling routes in this part of the world. Part of the National Cycle Network (see the boxed text, p792), a long-time favourite is the **Coast & Castles Cycle Route** (NCN route 1), which runs south-north along the glorious Northumberland coast between Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Berwick-upon-Tweed, before swinging inland into Scotland to finish at Edinburgh. Of course you can also do it north-south, or just do the northeast England section. The coast is exposed, though, so check the weather and try to time your ride so that the wind is behind you.



The 140-mile **Sea to Sea Cycle Route** (C2C; www.c2c-guide.co.uk) runs across northern England from Whitehaven or Workington on the Cumbrian coast, through the northern part of the Lake District, and then over the wild hills of the North Pennines to finish at Newcastle-upon-Tyne or Sunderland. This popular route is fast becoming a clas-

sic, and most people go west-east to take advantage of prevailing winds. You'll need five days to complete the whole route; the northeast England section, from Penrith (in Cumbria) to the east coast is a good three-day trip. If you wanted to cut the urban sections, Penrith to Consett is perfect in a weekend. The C2C is aimed at

CALL THE NORTHEAST

The northeast is the call-centre capital of England, mostly because the area desperately needed to attract jobs to the region following the demise of traditional industry. But another reason might have to do with the distinctive accent, which polls have shown to be the friendliest and most trustworthy of all English accents!

road bikes, but there are several optional off-road sections.

The other option is the **Hadrian's Cycleway** (www.cycleroutes.org.uk), a 172-mile route opened in July 2006 that runs from South Shields in Tyneside, west along the wall and down to Ravenglass (p736) in Cumbria.

Most people riding along Hadrian's Cycleway also go west-east to take advantage of the prevailing wind (ie, it's more likely to be behind you), and a long-distance trans-England circuit combining Hadrian's Cycleway and the C2C (and a bit of the Cumbrian coast) is growing in popularity.

The newish **Wheels to the Wild** is a 70-mile circular cycle route that explores the dales of the North Pennines. From Wolsingham, it weaves a paved route through Weardale, Allendale and Teesdale on mostly quiet country lanes.

For dedicated off-road riding, good places to aim for in northeast England include Kielder Forest in Northumberland and Hamsterley Forest in County Durham, which both have a network of sylvan tracks and options for all abilities.

WALKING

The North Pennines are billed as 'England's last wilderness', and if you like to walk in quiet and fairly remote areas, these hills – along with the Cheviots further north – are the best in England. Long routes through this area include the famous **Pennine Way**, which keeps mainly to the high ground as it crosses the region between the Yorkshire Dales and the Scottish border, but also goes through sections of river valley and some tedious patches of plantation. The whole route is over 250 miles, but the 70-mile section between Bowes and Hadrian's Wall would be a fine four-day taster. If you prefer to go walking just for the day, good bases for circular walks in the North

Pennines include the towns of Alston (p742) and Middleton-in-Teesdale (p766).

Elsewhere in the area, the great Roman ruin of **Hadrian's Wall** is an ideal focus for walking. There's a huge range of easy loops taking in forts and other historical highlights. A very popular walk is the long-distance route from end to end, providing good options for anything from one to four days (see p770).

The Northumberland coast has endless miles of open beaches, and little in the way of resort towns (the frequently misty weather has seen to that), so walkers can often enjoy this wild, windswept shore in virtual solitude. One of the finest walks is between the villages of Craster and Bamburgh via Dunstanburgh, which includes two of the area's most spectacular castles.

Getting There & Around

BUS

Bus transport around the region can be difficult, particularly around the more remote parts of Northumbria in the west. Call ☎ 0870 608 2608 for information on connections, timetables and prices.

Several one-day Explorer tickets are available; always ask if one might be appropriate. The Explorer North East (adult/child £5.75/4.75), available on buses, covers from Berwick down to Scarborough, and allows unlimited travel for one day, as well as numerous admission discounts.

TRAIN

The main lines run north to Edinburgh via Durham, Newcastle and Berwick, and west to Carlisle roughly following Hadrian's Wall. Phone ☎ 0845 748 4950 for all train inquiries.

There are numerous Rover tickets for single-day travel and longer periods, so ask if one might be worthwhile. For example, the North Country Rover (adult/child £61.50/30.75) allows unlimited travel throughout the north (not including Northumberland) any four days out of eight.

NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE

pop 189,863

Of all of England's cities, Newcastle is perhaps the most surprising to the first-time visitor, especially if they come armed with the preconceived notions that have dogged the

city's reputation since, well, always. A sooty, industrial wasteland for salt-of-the-earth toughies whose favourite hobby is drinking and braving the elements with a T-shirt on. Coal slags and cold slags? You're in for a pleasant surprise.

Welcome to the hipster capital of the north-east, a cool urban centre that knows how to take care of itself and anyone else who comes to visit with an enticing mix of culture, heritage and sophistication, best exemplified not just by its excellent new art galleries and magnificent concert hall, but by its growing number of fine restaurants, choice hotels and interesting bars. It's not just about the Tyne bridges – although the eclectic, cluttered array of Newcastle's most recognisable feature is pretty impressive.

Thankfully, Newcastle's hip rep is built on a set of deep-rooted traditions and mores embodied by the city's greatest strength: the locals. Raised and subsequently abandoned by coal and steel, Geordies (see the boxed text, p749) are a fiercely independent bunch, tied together by history, adversity and that impenetrable dialect, the closest language to 1500-year-old Anglo-Saxon left in England. They are also proud, hard-working and indefatigably positive – perhaps their greatest quality considering how tough life has been.

And then of course there's the nightlife, source of so many of the city's most brazen stereotypes. Of course you can go mad here – there's an irrepressible energy that borders on the irresponsible – but you don't have to, and there are plenty of options that don't involve draining blue-coloured vodka or running bare-chested through the streets.

ORIENTATION

The River Tyne marks the boundary between Newcastle to the north and Gateshead to the south; it is also one of the focal points for visitors to the city. Newcastle's attractive Victorian centre – which the local council has called Grainger Town to the uncertain shrugs of the locals – is only a short, uphill walk from the river. The up-and-coming Ouseburn is less than a mile east of here, while genteel Jesmond is north of the city and easily reached by bus or with the excellent Metro underground. The Tyne's southern bank – home to the impressive Baltic gallery and stunning Sage entertainment venue – is as far into Gateshead as you'll likely need to venture.

Central Station (train) is between the river and the city centre; the coach station is on Gallowgate, while local and regional buses leave from Eldon Sq and Haymarket bus stations.

Maps

All tourist offices have handy, free tearaway maps of Newcastle and Gateshead. The Ordnance Survey's *Mini-Map* (£2) is a handy foldaway pocket map of Newcastle, but not Gateshead.

The **Newcastle Map Centre** (☎ 0191-261 5622; 1st fl, 55 Grey St) supplies copious maps and guides.

INFORMATION

Blackwell's Bookshop (☎ 0191-232 6421; 141 Percy St) A comprehensive range of titles.

Clayton Road Laundrette (☎ 0191-281 5055; 4 Clayton Rd, Jesmond)

Main post office (35 Mosley St; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, to 12.30pm Sat) In the city centre.

McNulty's Internet Cafe (☎ 0191-232 0922; 26-30 Market St; per hr £5 ☎ 8am-6.30pm Mon-Sat) About 14 terminals to fix all of your online needs.

Newcastle General Hospital (☎ 0191-273 8811; Westgate Rd) Half a mile northwest of the city centre, off Queen Victoria St.

Police station (☎ 0191-214 6555; cnr Pilgrim & Market Sts)

Thomas Cook (☎ 0191-219 8000; 6 Northumberland St) Has a bureau de change; it's just east of Monument.

Tourist offices (www.visitnewcastlegateshead.com)

Main branch (☎ 0191-277 8000; Central Arcade, Market St; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Wed, Fri & Sat, to 7.30pm Thu year-round, plus 10am-4pm Sun Jun-Sep); Gateshead Library (☎ 0191-433 8420; Prince Consort Rd;

☎ 9am-7pm Mon, Tue, Thu & Fri, to 5pm Wed, to 1pm Sat); Guildhall (☎ 0191-277 8000; Newcastle Quayside;

☎ 11am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat, 9am-4pm Sun); Sage Gateshead (☎ 0191-478 4222; Gateshead Quays;

☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat, 11am-5pm Sun) All offices listed here provide a booking service (☎ 0191-277 8042) as well as other assorted tourist sundries.

Waterstone's (☎ 0191-261 7757; Emerson Chambers, Blackett St) Four floors of books to satisfy most of your needs.

SIGHTS Quayside

Newcastle's most recognisable attractions are the seven bridges that span the Tyne and some of the striking buildings that line it. Along Quayside, on the river's northern side, is a handsome boardwalk that makes



for a pleasant stroll during the day but really comes to life at night, when the bars, clubs and restaurants that line it are full to bursting. A really great way of experiencing the river and its sights is by cruise (see Tours, p752).

TYNE BRIDGES

The most famous view in Newcastle is the cluster of Tyne bridges, and the most famous of these is the **Tyne Bridge** (1925–28), built at about the same time as (and very reminiscent of) Australia's Sydney Harbour Bridge. The quaint little **Swing Bridge** pivots in the middle to let ships through. Nearby, **High Level Bridge**, designed by Robert Stephenson, was the world's first road and railway bridge

(1849). The most recent addition is the multiple-award-winning **Millennium Bridge** (aka Blinking Bridge; 2002), which opens like an eyelid to let ships pass.

OTHER SIGHTS

The Tyne's northern bank was the hub of commercial Newcastle in the 16th century. On Sandhill is **Bessie Surtee's House** (☎ 0191-261 1585; 41–44 Sandhill; admission free; 🕒 10am–4pm Mon–Fri), a combination of two 16th- and 17th-century merchant houses – all dark wood and sloping angles. Three rooms are open to the public. The daughter of a wealthy banker, feisty Bessie annoyed Daddy by falling in love with John Scott (1751–1838), a pauper. It all ended in smiles because John went on to become Lord

INFORMATION		Hatton Gallery.....(see 18)	DRINKING ☑
Blackwell's Bookshop.....1 B1	Laing Art Gallery.....17 C1	Newcastle University.....18 B1	Blackie Boy.....34 B2
Main Post Office.....2 B2	River Tyne Cruises.....19 D3		Camp David.....35 A3
McNulty's Internet Cafe.....3 C2			Crown Posada.....36 C3
Newcastle General Hospital.....4 A1	SLEEPING ☑		Forth.....37 A3
Newcastle Map Centre.....5 B2	Albatross Inn!.....20 B2		Ship Inn.....38 D2
Police Station.....6 C2	Copthorne.....21 B3		Tokyo.....39 B3
Thomas Cook.....7 B2	Euro-Hostel Newcastle.....22 D2		Trent House Soul Bar.....40 A1
Tourist Office.....(see 45)	Greystreethotel.....23 C2		ENTERTAINMENT ☑
Tourist Office.....(see 16)	Jury's Inn.....24 A3		Digital.....41 A3
Tourist Office.....8 B2	Malmaison.....25 D3		Foundation.....42 C2
Waterstone's.....9 B2	Premier Lodge.....26 C3		Loft.....43 A3
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES	Vermont.....27 C3		Powerhouse Nightclub.....44 A3
Baltic-The Centre for	Waterside Hotel.....28 C3		Sage Gateshead.....45 D3
Contemporary Art.....10 D3	EATING ☑		St James' Park.....46 A1
Bessie Surtee's House.....11 C3	Big Mussel.....29 C3		Star and Shadow.....47 D2
Biscuit Factory.....12 D1	Blake's Coffee House.....30 B2		Theatre Royal.....48 B2
Blue Carpet.....(see 17)	Brasserie Black Door.....(see 12)		World Headquarters.....49 C2
Castle Garth Keep.....13 C3	Cafe 21.....31 C3		TRANSPORT
Centre for Life.....14 A3	Cafe Royal.....32 B2		Eldon Sq Bus Station.....50 B1
Discovery Museum.....15 A3	Secco Ristorante		Gallowgate Coach Station.....51 A2
Great North Museum.....(see 18)	Salentino.....33 B2		Haymarket Bus Station.....52 B1
Guildhall.....16 C3			

Chancellor. Today it is run in conjunction with English Heritage (EH; for details see p801).

Just across the street is the rounded **Guildhall**, built in 1658. It now houses a branch of the tourist office.

City Centre

Newcastle's Victorian centre, a compact area bordered roughly by Grainger St to the west and Pilgrim St to the east, is supremely elegant and one of the most compelling examples of urban rejuvenation in England. At the heart of it is the extraordinarily handsome Grey St, lined with fine classical buildings – undoubtedly one of the country's finest thoroughfares: in 2005 BBC Radio 4 listeners voted it Britain's most beautiful street.

CENTRE FOR LIFE

This excellent **science village** (☎ 0191-243 8210; www.life.org.uk; Scotswood Rd; adult/child £8/5.85; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat, 11am-6pm Sun, last admission 4pm), part of the sober-minded complex of institutes devoted to the study of genetic science, is one of the more interesting attractions in town. Through a series of hands-on exhibits and the latest technology you (or your kids) can discover the incredible secrets of life. The highlight is the Motion Ride, a motion simulator that, among other things, lets you 'feel' what it's like to score a goal at St James' Park and bungee jump from the Tyne Bridge. There's lots of thought-provoking arcade-style games, and if the information sometimes gets lost on the way, never mind, kids will love it.

LAING ART GALLERY

The exceptional collection at the **Laing** (☎ 0191-232 7734; www.twmuseums.org.uk; New Bridge St; admission free; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, 2-5pm Sun) includes works by Kitaj, Frank Auerbach and Henry Moore, and an important collection of paintings by Northumberland-born artist John Martin (1789–1854).

Outside the gallery is Thomas Heatherwick's famous **Blue Carpet** (2002) with shimmering blue tiles made from crushed glass and resin.

DISCOVERY MUSEUM

Newcastle's rich history is uncovered through a fascinating series of exhibits at this excellent **museum** (☎ 0191-232 6789; www.twmuseums.org.uk; Blandford Sq; admission free; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat,

WHY A GEORDIE?

Truth is, no one really knows for sure, not even the Geordies themselves. The most attractive explanation, at least here, is that the name was coined to disparage the townspeople who chose to side with the German Protestant George I ('Geordie' being a diminutive of George) against the 'Old Pretender', the Catholic James Stuart, during the Jacobite Rebellion of 1715. But a whole other school contends that the origins are a little less dramatic, and stem from Northumberland miners opting to use a lamp pioneered by George 'Geordie' Stephenson over one invented by Sir Humphrey Davy.

NEWCASTLE IN...

Two Days

You'll invariably want to start on Quayside, where you'll find the famous **Tyne bridges** (p748). A good walk is to cross the Millennium Bridge into Gateshead and check out **Baltic** (opposite) and the **Sage** (p755), where you can grab a scenic coffee. Wander back across the bridge and hop on a Quayside Q2 bus out to the Ouseburn Valley to visit the **Biscuit Factory** (opposite), stopping for a bite to eat in the **Brasserie Black Door** (p754). If you're with the kids, stop into **Seven Stories** (opposite). Otherwise, have a pint in one of the area's selection of fabulous pubs – we love the **Free Trade Inn** (p755).

Back in the elegant Victorian centre, visit **Laing Art Gallery** (p749) and the science village **Centre for Life** (p749). Stop off in **Blake's Coffee House** (p754) for a pick-me-up. Work your way up to the **Trent House Soul Bar** (p755) and find that song you love but haven't heard in years on the incredible jukebox. And just keep going; everyone else is, so why shouldn't you?

The next day, devote the morning to the **Great North Museum** (below) before hopping on a bus south through Gateshead to the **Angel of the North** (p757) statue. Unfortunately, there's not much else going on here, so you'll have to head back into town. If you're looking for an alternative end to your day, take in an art film at the Star And Shadow (p755).

Four Days

Follow the two-day itinerary and then explore further afield, beginning with a side trip to **Bede's World** (p758) in the eastern suburb of Jarrow. In the afternoon, head to the seaside suburb of **Tynemouth** (p757), where you can ride the waves if you so choose. The next day, head for the Roman fort at **Segedunum** (p758), at the start of Hadrian's Wall. All the while, be sure to fuel your efforts; the other bars in Ouseburn should not go undiscovered, especially the **Ship Inn** (p755) and **Cumberland Arms** (p755). Round off your stay with a gig at the Cluny (p755) or a play at the Northern Stage (p756).

2-5pm Sun). The exhibits, spread across three floors of the former Co-operative Wholesale Society building, surround the mightily impressive 30m-long *Turbinia*, the fastest ship in the world in 1897. The different sections are all worth a look; our favourites were the self-explanatory Story of the Tyne and the interactive Science Maze.

CASTLE GARTH KEEP

The 'New Castle' that gave its name to the city has been largely swallowed up by the railway station, leaving only the square Norman **keep** (adult/child £2/1; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm Apr-Sep, to 4.30pm Oct-Mar) as one of the few remaining fragments. It has a fine chevron-covered chapel and great views across the Tyne bridges from its rooftop.

GREAT NORTH MUSEUM

The **Great North Museum** (☎ 0191-222 8996; www.greatnorthmuseum.org), which at the time of writing was expected to open in spring 2009, will be the north's foremost museum of the natural sciences, archaeology, history and culture. The

main exhibition hall will be in the neoclassical building that once was home to the natural history exhibits of the prestigious Hancock Museum, where new additions include a life-size model of a *Tyrannosaurus rex*. Besides the expanded contents of the Hancock, the 11 galleries will also combine the contents of Newcastle University's other museums: the Greek art and archaeology of the Sfehton Museum and the magnificent Museum of Antiquities, the Roman exhibits of which will now include an interactive model of Hadrian's Wall.

The museum will also include a new planetarium and a space to host the major touring exhibitions of the world, both of which are being added to the back of the building. Across the street, the well-known Hatton Gallery and its permanent collection of West African art have been absorbed into the new project. Take the Metro to Haymarket.

Ouseburn Valley

About a mile east of the city centre is the Ouseburn Valley, the 19th-century industrial

heartland of Newcastle and now one of the city's hippest districts, full of potteries, glass-blowing studios and other skilled craftspeople, as well as a handful of great bars, clubs and our favourite cinema in town. To get there, jump onto the yellow Quayside Q2 bus that runs a loop through the valley from the city centre. For more info on the area, check out www.ouseburntrust.org.uk.

BISCUIT FACTORY

No prizes for guessing what this brand-new public **art gallery** (☎ 0191-261 1103; www.thebiscuitfactory.com; Stoddart St; admission free; ☎ 10am-8pm Tue-Sat, 11am-5pm Sun) used to be. What it is now, though, is the country's biggest art shop, where you can peruse and buy work by artists from near and far in a variety of mediums, including painting, sculpture, glassware and furniture. Prices are thoroughly democratic, ranging from £30 to £30,000, but even if you don't buy, the art is excellent and there's a top-class restaurant too (see Brasserie Black Door, p754).

SEVEN STORIES – THE CENTRE FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

A marvellous conversion of a handsome Victorian mill has resulted in **Seven Stories** (☎ 0845 271 0777; www.sevenstories.org.uk; 30 Lime St; adult/child £5.50/4.50; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Wed, Fri & Sat, to 6pm Thu, 11am-5pm Sun), a very hands-on museum dedicated to the wondrous world of children's literature. Across the seven floors you'll find original manuscripts, a growing collection of artwork from the 1930s onwards, and a constantly changing program of exhibitions, activities and events designed to encourage the AA Milnes of the new millennium.

36 LIME STREET

The artistic, independent spirit of Ouseburn is particularly well represented in this **artists cooperative** (☎ 0191-261 5666; www.36limestreet.co.uk; Ouseburn Warehouse, 36 Lime St; admission free), the largest of its kind in the northeast, featuring an interesting mix of artists, performers, designers and musicians. They all share a historic building designed by Newcastle's most important architect, John Dobson (1787-1865), who also designed Grey St and Central Station in the neoclassical style. As it's a working studio you can't just wander in, but there are regular exhibitions and open days; check the website for details. It is attached to the popular Cluny bar (see p755).

LET THERE BE LIGHT

Mosley St – which runs on an east-west axis across the bottom of Grey St – was the first street in the world to be lit by electricity, all thanks to the genius of Sir Joseph Wilson Swan (1828-1914), the inventor of the incandescent light bulb, for which he received a patent in 1878 – a year before Thomas Edison got his. Swan, who had a business on Mosley St, hung the first light outside his shop in February 1879.

The two inventors worked in tandem to improve on Swan's original design, and in 1883 the two formed the Edison & Swan Electric Light Company (better known as Ediswan, the forerunner to US giant General Electric), changing the world forever.

Gateshead

You probably didn't realise that that bit of Newcastle south of the Tyne is the 'town' of Gateshead, but local authorities are going to great lengths to put it right, even promoting the whole kit-and-caboodle-on-Tyne as 'NewcastleGateshead'. A bit clumsy, but we get the point. To date, the ambitious program of development has seen the impressive transformation of the southern banks of the Tyne, but as yet there's little to make you travel further afield than the water's edge.

BALTIC – THE CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY ART

Once a huge, dirty, yellow grain store overlooking the Tyne, **Baltic** (☎ 0191-478 1810; www.balticmill.com; admission free; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Tue & Thu-Sun, to 8pm Wed) is now a huge, dirty, yellow art gallery to rival London's Tate Modern. Unlike the Tate, there are no permanent exhibitions here, but the constantly rotating shows feature the work and installations of some of contemporary art's biggest show stoppers. The complex has artists in residence, a performance space, a cinema, a bar, a spectacular rooftop restaurant (you'll need to book) and a ground-floor restaurant with riverside tables. There's also a viewing box for a fine Tyne vista.

NEWCASTLE FOR CHILDREN

Newcastle is friendly, full stop. Although at first glance the bonhomie mightn't seem to extend past buying rounds in the pub, on

closer inspection there's plenty to keep the young 'uns entertained.

The utterly wonderful **Seven Stories** (p751) is the perfect destination for any kid who has an imagination, while virtually next door, the **Round** (☎ 0191-260 5605; www.the-round.com; 34 Lime St) is the Northeast's only theatre devoted exclusively to kids.

Closer to the centre the **Centre for Life** (p749) and the **Discovery Museum** (p749) are brilliant and should keep the kids busy for the guts of a day. The most popular park in town is **Leazes Park**, just north of St James' Park, which has a rowing lake, but the nicest of all is **Saltwell Park** (☞ dawn-dusk), an elegant Victorian space behind Gateshead College and easily accessible by bus 53 and 54 from the Gateshead Interchange. Pedestrians can get in through entrances on East Park Rd, West Rd, Saltwell Rd South, Saltwell View and Joicey Rd.

QUIRKY NEWCASTLE

Take in the David Lynch vibe at **Blackie Boy** (p754), where it's not all it appears to be. Pop your coins into the world's best jukebox at the **Trent House Soul Bar** (p755) for the stomping sound of northern soul and pretend that James Blunt had stayed in the army. Attend a 'happening' at **36 Lime Street** (p751) before taking in an old art-house movie at the excellent **Star And Shadow** (p755) and then going to a late gig at the **Head of Steam/The Cluny** (p755). Take a rowing boat onto the lake at **Leazes Park** (above) – watch out for those fishing rods. Cross one of the **Tyne bridges** (p748) on foot.

TOURS

There are a handful of tour options:

Newcastle City Tours (☎ 07780 958679; www.newcastlecitytours.co.uk; per tour from £40) Tailored tours of the city as well as heritage tours of the surrounding region.

River Tyne Cruises (☎ 0191-296 6740/1; www.tyneleisureline.co.uk; adult/child £12/7; noon Sat & Sun May-early Sep) Three-hour river cruises departing from Quayside pier at Millennium Bridge, opposite Baltic.

Tom Keating Tours (☎ 0191-488 5115; www.tomkeating.net) Expert, tailor-made tours of the city by a well-respected blue-badge guide. Tours of surrounding region also available.

Walking Tours (adult/child £3/2; 2pm Wed & Sat Jun & Sep, Mon-Sat Jul-Aug) Ninety-minute walking tours of the main sites of interest, run by and departing from the main branch of the tourist office.

SLEEPING

Although the number of city-centre options is on the increase, they are still generally restricted to the chain variety – either budget or business – that caters conveniently to the party people and business folk that make up the majority of Newcastle's overnight guests. Most of the other accommodations are in the handsome northern suburb of Jesmond, where the forces of gentrification and student power fight it out for territory; Jesmond's main drag, Osborne Rd, is lined with all kinds of bed types as well as bars and restaurants – making it a strong rival with the city centre for the late-night party scene. As the city is a major business destination, weekend arrivals will find that most places drop their prices for Friday and Saturday nights.

City Centre

As you'd expect, bedrooms in the city centre are pricier than most anywhere else, but there are some good budget and midrange options that don't involve too much of a hike.

BUDGET

Euro-Hostel Newcastle (☎ 0845 490 0371; www.euro-hostel.co.uk; Garth Heads St; dm/d £17/60; (P) (Q)) This hostel offers a broader range of options than any hostel and most hotels, from a bed in a dorm to a private room or self-catering apartment suitable for families of up to seven people. The building is part of a new development perfectly situated halfway between the city centre and Ouseburn Valley.

Albatross Inn! (☎ 0191-233 1330; www.albatrossnewcastle.com; 51 Grainger St; dm/d from £17.50/45; (P) (Q)) Clean, fully equipped hostel with decent-sized dorms, a self-catering kitchen, top-notch bathroom facilities, CCTV, electronic key cards and an internet station. There's even a small car park.

MIDRANGE

Premier Lodge (☎ 0870 990 6530; www.premierlodge.com; Quayside; r from £59) With a superb location in the old Exchange Building, this budget chain is right in the heart of the action. If you're here for the party, you shouldn't care that your room has about as much flavour as day-old chewing gum – if all goes according to plan, you won't be spending much time here anyway!

Jury's Inn (☎ 0191-201 4400; www.jurysinn.com/newcastle; St James' Gate, Scotswood Rd; r from £63) A short walk from Central Station, this edition of the popular Irish chain has rooms, a restaurant, and a bar best described as big, bland and absolutely inoffensive. And at these prices, who cares? The difference here is the friendliness of the staff, which is genuine.

Waterside Hotel (☎ 0191-230 0111; www.watersidehotel.com; 48-52 Sandhill, Quayside; s/d £75/80) The rooms are a tad small, but they're among the most elegant in town: lavish furnishings and heavy velvet drapes in a heritage-listed building. The location is excellent.

Coptorhne (☎ 0191-222 0333; www.millenniumhotels.com; The Close, Quayside; s/d from £75/85; **P** **Q** wi-fi) A superb waterside location makes this modern hotel a perfect choice – especially if you pick a room overlooking the water (the Connoisseur rooms, for instance). The bathrooms could do with some freshening, but that's only a minor complaint. Whatever you do, book online – the rack rate can be three times more expensive.

TOP END

Vermont (☎ 0191-233 1010; www.vermont-hotel.com; Castle Garth; s/d/ste from £110/130/250; **P** **Q** wi-fi) Mid-1930s Manhattan with new-millennium facilities, the Vermont was the top dog in town, until the arrival of the Mal and Greystreet. The location is good, but a view of the castle keep just isn't enough of a sales pitch; the iPod docking stations are a decent contemporary touch.

our pick Greystreethotel (☎ 0191-230 6777; www.greystreethotel.com; 2-12 Grey St; s/ste from £145/165; **P**) A bit of designer class along the classiest street in the city centre has been long overdue: the rooms are gorgeous if a tad poky, all cluttered up with flat-screen TVs, big beds and handsome modern furnishings.

Malmaison (☎ 0191-245 5000; www.malmaison.com; Quayside; r from £125, ste £225-350; **P** **Q** wi-fi) The affectedly stylish Malmaison touch has been applied to this former warehouse with considerable success, even down to the French-speaking lifts. Big beds, sleek lighting and designer furniture flesh out the Rooms of Many Pillows. Breakfast is £13.

Jesmond

The northeastern suburb of Jesmond is packed with budget and midrange accommodation to cater to the thousands that throng the area's bars and restaurants. There's a big party at-

mosphere around here that is easily a match for the city centre.

Catch the Metro to Jesmond or West Jesmond, or bus 80 from near Central Station, or bus 30, 30B, 31B or 36 from Westgate Rd.

BUDGET

Newcastle YHA (☎ 0845 371 9335; www.yha.org.uk; 107 Jesmond Rd; dm/d £16.50/40; **Y**; end Jan-end Dec) This nice, rambling place has small dorms that are generally full, so book in advance. It's close to the Jesmond Metro stop.

MIDRANGE

Adelphi Hotel (☎ 0191-281 3109; www.adelphihotelnewcastle.co.uk; 63 Fern Ave; s/d £39/60) Just off Osborne Rd, this attractive hotel has nice floral rooms that are clean and very neat – a rare thing around here for this price range.

Whites Hotel (☎ 0191-281 5126; www.whiteshotel.com; 38-42 Osborne Rd; s/d £45/75) First impressions don't promise a great deal, as the public areas are a bit tatty, but don't let that put you off; this is our favourite of the Osborne Rd hotels, with uniformly modern rooms and first-rate service.

New Northumbria Hotel (☎ 0191-281 4961; www.newnorthumbriahotel.co.uk; 61-73 Osborne Rd; s/d incl breakfast from £85/95) Trendy, clean and fairly pleasant, the New Northumbria likes to parade its five-star qualification, but that's just from the tourist office – this is a fine hotel with decent rooms and a good breakfast. Not more.

TOP END

Jesmond Dene House (☎ 0191-212 3000; www.jesmonddenehouse.co.uk; Jesmond Dene Rd; s £135, d £160-200, ste £225-275; **P** **Q** wi-fi) As elegant a hotel as you'll find anywhere, this exquisite property is the perfect marriage between traditional styles and modern luxury. The large, gorgeous bedrooms are furnished in a modern interpretation of the Arts and Crafts style and are bedecked with all manner of technological goodies (flat-screen digital TVs, digital radios, wi-fi) and wonderful bathrooms complete with underfloor heating. It also has an outstanding restaurant; see p754.

EATING

The Geordie palate is pretty refined these days and there are a host of fine dining options in all price categories that make their mark. Conversely, if all you're looking for is stomach-lining crappy fast food and dodgy ethnic cuisine, well there's plenty of that too.

City Centre

BUDGET

Blake's Coffee House (☎ 0191-261 5463; 53 Grey St; breakfast £3-4.50, sandwiches £3-4; ☎ 9am-6pm) There is nowhere better than this high-ceilinged cafe for a Sunday-morning cure on any day of the week. It's friendly, relaxed and serves up the biggest selection of coffees in town, from the gentle push of a Colombian blend to the toxic shove of Old Brown Java. We love it.

MIDRANGE

Cafe Royal (☎ 0191-231 3000; 8 Nelson St; cafe mains £4-5, restaurant mains £8-12; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, to 7pm Sun) Downstairs is a pleasant cafe that serves sandwiches and decent cakes, upstairs is a dining room with a Mediterranean menu with vaguely Pacific Rim influences.

Big Mussel (☎ 0191-232 1057; www.bigmussel.co.uk; 15 The Side; mains £6-12; ☎ lunch & dinner) Mussels and other shellfish – all served with chips – are a very popular choice at this informal diner. There are pasta and vegetarian options as well, and students get 15% off everything. There's another branch (☎ 261 8927) on Leazes Park Rd, close to St James' Park, that does a roaring trade on match days.

TOP END

Secco Ristorante Salentino (☎ 0191-230 0444; www.seccouk.com; 86 Pilgrim St; mains £12-20; ☎ lunch & dinner) Top-notch food from Salento in the Italian heel of Puglia makes this place an easy contender for best Italian restaurant in town. Some punters have been disappointed with the slowish service, which, for the price, should probably be a little snappier.

Cafe 21 (☎ 0191-222 0755; Trinity Gardens, Quayside; mains £14.50-22; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Simple but hardly plain, this elegant restaurant – all white tablecloths and smart seating – offers new interpretations of England's culinary backbone: pork and cabbage, liver and onions and a sensational Angus beef and chips.

Ouseburn Valley

MIDRANGE

Brasserie Black Door (☎ 0191-260 5411; Biscuit Factory, 16 Stoddard St; mains £10-16; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Less a museum restaurant and more a restaurant in a museum, the Black Door serves up excellent modern English fare – which generally involves a twist from pretty much any other part of the world – in a bright, elegant room. Even if you're not visiting the museum this is a great spot for lunch.

Jesmond

MIDRANGE

Pizzeria Francesca (☎ 0191-281 6586; 134 Manor House Rd, Jesmond; mains £4-12; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) This is how all Italian restaurants should be: chaotic, noisy, friendly, packed cheek-to-jowl and absolutely worth making the effort for. Excitable, happy waiters and huge portions of pizza and pasta keep them queuing at the door – get in line and wait because you can't book in advance.

TOP END

Our pick **Jesmond Dene House** (☎ 0191-212 3000; www.jesmonddenehouse.co.uk; Jesmond Dene Rd; mains £18-22) Chef Terry Laybourne is the architect of an exquisite menu heavily influenced by the northeast: venison from County Durham, oysters from Lindisfarne and the freshest herbs plucked straight from the garden. The result is a gourmet delight and one of the best dining experiences in the city.

DRINKING

There are no prizes for guessing that Geordies like a good night out – but you may be surprised to know that not only is there nightlife beyond the coloured cocktails of the Bigg Market, but that it is infinitely more interesting and satisfying than the sloppy boozefest that defines the stereotype. The Ouseburn is our area of choice, but also worth checking out is the western end of Neville St, which has a decent mix of great bars and is also home to the best of the gay scene.

We daren't even begin to list the pubs and bars in town, but here's a handful to start with. Get a bottle of dog and get down.

City Centre

Blackie Boy (☎ 0191-232 0730; 11 Groat Market) At first glance, this darkened old boozier looks like any old traditional pub. Look closer. The overly red lighting. The single bookcase. The large leather armchair that is rarely occupied. The signage on the toilets: 'Dick' and 'Fanny'. This place could have featured in *Twin Peaks*, which is why it's so damn popular with everyone.

Crown Posada (☎ 0191-232 1269; 31 The Side) An unspoilt, real-ale pub that is a favourite with more seasoned drinkers, be they the after-work or instead-of-work crowd.

Forth (☎ 0191-232 6478; Pink Lane) It's in the heart of the gay district, but this great old

pub draws all kinds with its mix of music, chat and unpretentious atmosphere.

Tokyo (☎ 0191-232 1122; 17 Westgate Rd) Tokyo has a suitably darkened atmosphere for what the cognoscenti consider the best cocktail bar in town, but we loved the upstairs garden bar where you can drink, smoke and chat with a view.

our pick **Trent House Soul Bar** (☎ 0191-261 2154; 1-2 Leazes Lane) The wall has a simple message: 'Drink Beer. Be Sincere.' This simply unique place is the best bar in town because it is all about an ethos rather than a look. Totally relaxed and utterly devoid of pretentiousness, it is an old-school boozier that out-cools every other bar because it isn't trying to. And because it has the best jukebox in all of England – you could spend years listening to the extraordinary collection of songs it contains. It is run by the same folks behind the superb World Headquarters (p756).

Ouseburn Valley

Free Trade Inn (☎ 0191-265 5764; St Lawrence Rd) Our favourite bar in the Ouseburn is a no-nonsense boozier overlooking the Tyne that is frequented by students and long-standing patrons; it doesn't look like much but it's one of the coolest pubs in town (and the jukebox is brilliant). It's a short walk from the Quayside.

Ship Inn (☎ 0191-232 4030; Stepney Bank) The Ouseburn's oldest extant bar (early 19th century) has recently had a facelift, but not so that its traditional look and feel has disappeared, thereby ensuring that it continues to be a firm fixture on the valley's authentic pub crawl.

Cumberland Arms (☎ 0191-265 6151; off Byker Bank, Ouseburn) Sitting on a hill at the top of the Ouseburn, this 19th-century bar has a sensational selection of ales as well as a range of Northumberland meads. There's a terrace outside, where you can read a book from the *Bring One, Borrow One* library inside.

Cluny (☎ 0191-230 4474; 36 Lime St) Cool bar by day, superb musical venue by night, this superpopular spot defines the independent spirit of the Ouseburn Valley.

Jesmond

Mr Lynch (☎ 0191-281 3010; Archbold Tce) Newcastle goes shabby chic with this '60s-style bar at the southernmost edge of Jesmond, in truth only a short stroll from Newcastle University. Ignore the appearance and focus on the crowd, which is a knowledgeable mix of students and local trendies. There's live music on Sunday.

TOP FIVE PUBS FOR A PINT

- Trent House Soul Bar (left; Newcastle)
- Free Trade Inn (opposite; Newcastle)
- Ship Inn (p781; Low-Newton-by-the-Sea, Embleton Bay)
- Ye Old Cross (p779; Alnwick)
- Ship Inn (p783; Holy Island)

ENTERTAINMENT

Are you up for it? You'd better be, because Newcastle's nightlife doesn't mess about. There is nightlife beyond the club scene – you'll just have to wade through a sea of staggering, glassy-eyed clubbers to get to it. For current listings go online to www.thecrackmagazine.com. Club admissions range from £4 to £15.

Cinema

Star And Shadow (☎ 0191-261 0066; www.starandshadow.org.uk; Stepney Bank, Ouseburn Valley; membership £1, admission £4) This unlikely looking cine-club in an old warehouse once used to store props for Tyne-Tees TV. It is the best movie experience in town, and the place to go for your art-house, cult, black & white and gay & lesbian film needs. Asylum seekers get in free.

Live Music

Head of Steam@The Cluny (☎ 0191-230 4474; www.headofsteam.co.uk; 36 Lime St, Ouseburn Valley) This is one of the best spots in town to hear live music, attracting all kinds of performers, from experimental prog-rock heads to up-and-coming pop goddesses. Touring acts and local talent fill the bill every night of the week. Take the Metro to Byker.

Sage Gateshead (☎ 0191-443 4666; www.thesagegateshead.org; Gateshead Quays) Norman Foster's magnificent chrome-and-glass horizontal bottle is not just worth gazing at and wandering about in – it is also a superb venue to hear live music, from folk to classical orchestras. It is the home of the Northern Sinfonia and Folkworks.

Nightclubs

Digital (☎ 0191-261 9755; www.yourfutureisdigital.com; Times Sq) A two-floored cathedral to dance music, this megaclub was voted in the top 20 clubs in the world by DJ Magazine – thanks to the best sound system we've ever heard.

A MONUMENT TO ROCK

Newcastle has produced a fair number of musical celebrities, from 1960s rockers The Animals to The Police's Sting. These days the best-known are punk revivalists Maximo Park, who formed in the city in 2000. Their 2007 album, *Our Earthly Pleasures*, features a song called 'By the Monument', which refers to Grey's Monument at the top of Grey St. And when the lads played a homecoming gig in December 2007 at the Newcastle Metro Radio Arena, they were afforded the ultimate accolade: local brewers Newcastle Brown Ale created a limited edition Maximo Brown Ale in their honour.

Our favourite night is Thursday's Stonelove (£6), a journey through 40 years of alternative rock and funk. Saturday's Shindig (£12 before 11pm, £15 after) brings the world's best house DJs to town.

Foundation (☎ 0191-261 8985; www.foundation-club.com; 57-59 Melbourne St) This warehouse-style club features a massive sound system, fantastic lighting rig and regular guest slots of heavy-weight DJs from all over. If you want a night of hard-core clubbing, this is the place for you.

World Headquarters (☎ 0191-261 7007; www.trenthouse.com; Curtis Mayfield House, Carloli Sq) Dedicated to the genius of black music in all its guises – funk, rare groove, dance-floor jazz, northern soul, genuine R&B, lush disco, proper house and reggae – this fabulous club is strictly for true believers, and judging from the numbers, there are thousands of them.

Theatre

Northern Stage (☎ 0191-230 5151; www.northernstage.co.uk; Barras Bridge, Haymarket) The original Newcastle Playhouse has been transformed

into this marvellous new performance space (three stages and a high-tech, movable acoustic wall) that attracts touring international and national shows.

Theatre Royal (☎ 0191-232 2061; www.theatre-royal-newcastle.co.uk; 100 Grey St) The winter home of the Royal Shakespeare Company is full of Victorian splendour and has an excellent program of drama.

Sport

Newcastle United Football Club (☎ 0191-201 8400; www.nufc.premiumtv.co.uk) is more than just a football team: it is the collective expression of Geordie hope and pride as well as the release for decades of economic, social and sporting frustration. Its fabulous ground, **St James' Park** (Strawberry Pl), is always packed, but you can get a **stadium tour** (☎ 0191-261 1571; adult/child £10/7; ☎ 11am, noon, 1.30pm daily & 4hr before kick-off on match days) of the place, including the dugout and changing rooms. Match tickets go on public sale about two weeks before a game or you can try the stadium on the day, but there's no chance for big matches, such as those against arch-rivals Sunderland.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Newcastle International Airport (☎ 0191-286 0966; www.newcastleairport.com) is 7 miles north of the city off the A696. It has direct services to a host of UK and European cities as well as long-haul flights to Dubai. Tour operators fly charters out of Newcastle to the Americas and Africa.

Boat

Norway's **Fjord Line** (☎ 0191-296 1313; www.fjordline.com) operates ferries between Newcastle, Stavanger and Bergen. **DFDS Seaways** (☎ 0870

GAY & LESBIAN NEWCASTLE

Newcastle's gay scene is pretty dynamic, with its hub at the 'Pink Triangle' formed by Waterloo, Neville and Collingwood Sts, but stretching as far south as Scotswood Rd. There are plenty of gay bars in the area and a few great clubs.

Camp David (8-10 Westmorland Rd) An excellent mixed bar that is as trendy with straights as it is with the gay community.

Loft (☎ 0191-261 5348; 10A Scotswood Rd) Loud, proud and completely cheesy, this 1st-floor club above the equally cheesy Switch bar is open seven nights a week with nights like Monday's Shag Tag and Saturday's Passion.

Powerhouse Nightclub (☎ 0191-261 4507; 9-19 Westmorland Rd) Newcastle's brashest queer nightclub, with flashing lights, video screens and lots of suggestive posing.

533 3000; www.dfdseaways.co.uk) operates ferries to Newcastle from Kristiansand in Norway, the Swedish port of Gothenburg and the Dutch port of IJmuiden, near Amsterdam. For online ferry bookings, check out www.newcastleferry.co.uk.

Bus

National Express buses arrive and depart from the Gallowgate coach station. You can get to most anywhere, including London (£27, seven hours, six daily) and Manchester (£17.50, five hours, six daily). For Berwick-upon-Tweed (two hours, five daily) take bus 505, 515 or 525 from Haymarket bus station.

Local and regional buses leave from Haymarket or Eldon Sq bus stations. For local buses around the northeast, don't forget the excellent-value Explorer North East ticket, valid on most services for £7.

Train

Newcastle is on the main rail line between London and Edinburgh. Services go to Alnmouth (for connections to Alnwick; £8.40, 30 minutes, four daily), Berwick (£23.80, 45 minutes, every two hours), Edinburgh (£42, 1½ hours, half-hourly), London King's Cross (£124.50, three hours, half-hourly) and York (£21.40, 45 minutes, every 20 minutes). There's also the scenic Tyne Valley Line west to Carlisle. See p771 for details.

GETTING AROUND

To/From the Airport & Ferry Terminal

The airport is linked to town by the Metro (£2.80, 20 minutes, every 15 minutes).

Bus 327 links the ferry (at Tyne Commission Quay, 8.5 miles east), Central Station and Jesmond Rd. It leaves the train station 2½ hours and 1¼ hours before each sailing.

There's a taxi rank at the terminal; it costs about £18 to the city centre.

Car

Driving around Newcastle isn't fun thanks to the web of roads, bridges and one-way systems, but there are plenty of car parks.

Public Transport

There's a large bus network, but the best means of getting around is the excellent underground Metro, with fares from £1.30. There are also several saver passes. The tour-

ist office can supply you with route plans for the bus and Metro networks.

The DaySaver (£4.50, £3.70 after 9am) gives unlimited Metro travel for one day, and the DayRover (adult/child £5.80/3) gives unlimited travel on all modes of transport in Tyne & Wear for one day.

Taxi

On weekend nights taxis can be rare; try **Noda Taxis** (☎ 0191-222 1888), which has a kiosk outside the entrance to Central Station.

AROUND NEWCASTLE

ANGEL OF THE NORTH

In 2008 the world's most viewed work of art celebrated its 10th birthday; we are, of course, referring to the Gateshead Flasher, an extraordinary 200-tonne, rust-coloured human frame with wings that is more soberly known as the *Angel of the North*. It is the most viewed due to its location, towering over the A1 (M) about 5 miles south of Newcastle – you just can't miss it. At 20m high and with a wingspan wider than a Boeing 767, Antony Gormley's most successful work is the country's largest sculpture. Buses 723 and 724 from Eldon Sq, or 21, 21A and 21B from Pilgrim St, will take you there.

TYNEMOUTH

One of the most popular Geordie days out is to this handsome seaside resort 6 miles east of the city centre. Besides being the mouth of the Tyne, this is one of the best surf spots in all of England, with great all-year breaks off the immense, crescent-shaped Blue Flag beach. In October, it hosts the **National Surfing Championships** (www.bpsauktour.com).

For all your surfing needs including lessons, call into the **Tynemouth Surf Company** (☎ 0191-258 2496; www.tynemouthsurf.co.uk; Grand Parade), which provides two-hour group lessons for £25 or one-hour individual lesson for the same price.

Front St runs perpendicular to the beach, and is where you'll find pubs, restaurant and cafes, as well as **Razzberry Bazaar** (☎ 0191-296 3133; www.razzberrybazaar.co.uk; 14 Front St), the most interesting curio shop we've seen, with gee-gaws of all shapes and sizes from through the world.

Tynemouth is on the Metro line.

DETOUR: BEDE'S WORLD

The fairly grim southeastern suburb of Jarrow is embedded in labour history for the 1936 Jarrow Crusade, when 200 men walked from here to London to protest against the appalling conditions brought about by unemployment.

But it is also famous as the home of the Venerable Bede, author of the *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (see also opposite).

Bede's World (☎ 0191-489 2106; www.bedesworld.co.uk; admission £4.50; 🕒 10am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, noon-5.30pm Sun Apr-Oct, noon-4.30pm Nov-Mar) comprises St Paul's Church, which dates back to the 7th century; a museum; and many reconstructed medieval buildings. It's accessible via the Metro.

SEGEDUNUM

The last strong post of Hadrian's Wall was the fort of **Segedunum** (☎ 0191-295 5757; www.twmuseums.org.uk; adult/child/concession £4/free/2.25; 🕒 9.30am-5.30pm Apr-Aug, 10am-5pm Sep, 10am-3.30pm Nov-Mar), 6 miles east of Newcastle at Wallsend. Beneath the 35m tower, which you can climb for some terrific views, is an absorbing site that includes a reconstructed Roman bathhouse (with steaming pools and frescoes) and a fascinating museum that gives visitors a well-rounded picture of life during Roman times.

Take the Metro to Wallsend.

COUNTY DURHAM

Best known for its strikingly beautiful capital that is one of England's star attractions, County Durham spreads itself across the lonely, rabbit-inhabited North Pennines and the gentle ochre hills of Teesdale, each dotted with picturesque, peaceful villages and traditional market towns.

Ironically, this pastoral image, so resonant of its rich medieval history, has only been reclaimed in recent years; it took the final demise of the coal industry, all-pervasive for the guts of 300 years, to render the county back to some kind of pre-industrial look. A brutal and dangerous business, coal mining was the lifeblood of entire communities and its sudden end in 1984 by the stroke of a Conservative pen has left some pur-

poseless towns and an evocatively scarred landscape.

Durham has had a turbulent history, though it pales in comparison with its troublesome northern neighbour. To keep the Scots and local Saxon tribes quiet, William the Conqueror created the title of prince bishop in 1081 and gave them vice-regal power over an area known as the Palatinate of Durham, which became almost a separate country. It raised its own armies, collected taxes and administered a separate legal system that – incredibly – wasn't fully incorporated into the greater English structure until 1971.

Getting Around

The Explorer North East ticket (see p746) is valid on many services in the county.

DURHAM

pop 42,940

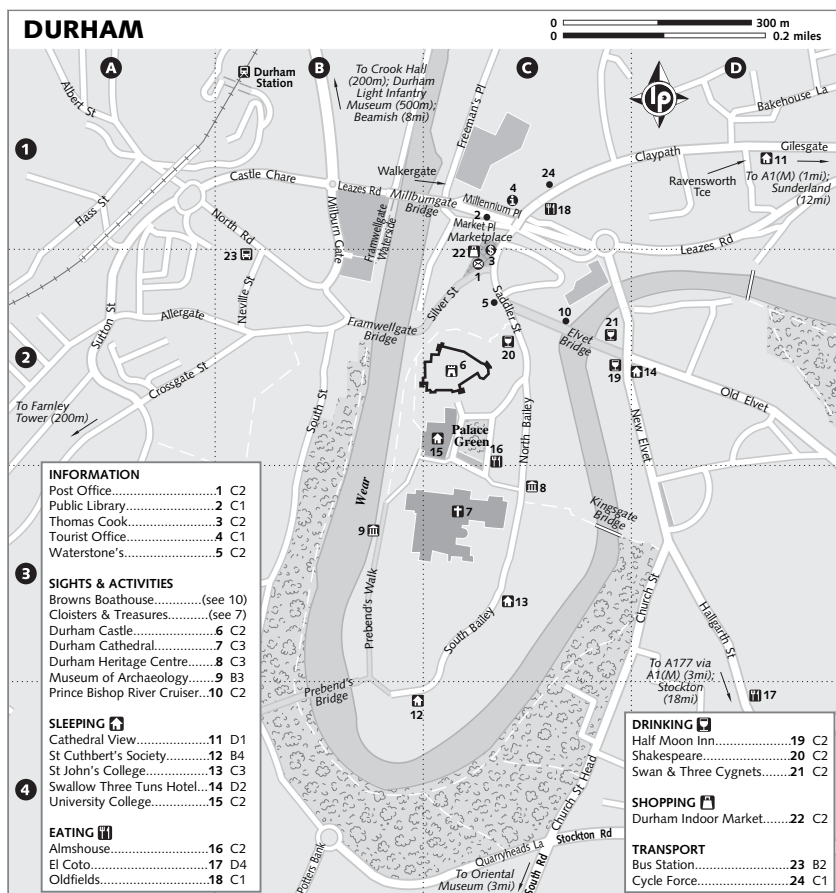
The sheer magnificence of Durham is best appreciated if arriving by train on a clear morning: emerging from the train station, the view across the River Wear to the hilltop peninsula will confirm your reason for coming. England's most beautiful Romanesque cathedral, a masterpiece of Norman architecture and a resplendent monument to the country's ecclesiastical history, rates pretty highly in our Best of Britain list. Consider the setting: a huge castle, the aforementioned cathedral and, surrounding them both, a cobweb of cobbled streets usually full of upper-crust students attending Durham's other big pull, the university. It's all so...English.

OK, so the university may not have the hallowed prestige of Oxbridge – it was only founded in 1832 – but its terrific academic reputation and competitive rowing team make the disappointment of not getting into Oxford or Cambridge that bit easier to bear.

Durham is unquestionably beautiful, but once you've visited the cathedral and walked the old town looking for the best views there isn't much to do; we recommend that you either visit it as a day trip from Newcastle or as an overnight stop on your way to explore the rest of the county.

Orientation

Market Pl, the tourist office, castle and cathedral are all on the peninsula surrounded by the River Wear. The train and bus sta-



tions are to the west, on the other side of the river. Using the cathedral as your landmark, you can't really go wrong. The main sites are within easy walking distance of each other.

Information

Post office (Silver St; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Sat)

Public library (Millennium Pl; ☎ 9.30am-5pm Mon-Sat) The only place in town to check email.

Thomas Cook (☎ 0191-382 6600; 24-25 Market Pl)

Near the tourist office.

Tourist Office (☎ 0191-384 3720; www.durhamtourism.co.uk; 2 Millennium Pl; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-4pm Sun) In the Gala complex, which includes a theatre and cinema.

Waterstone's (☎ 0191-383 1488; 69 Saddler St) A good selection of books.

Sights

DURHAM CATHEDRAL

Durham's most famous building – and the main reason for visiting unless someone you know is at university here – has earned superlative praise for so long that to add more would be redundant; how can you do better than the 19th-century novelist Nathaniel Hawthorne, who wrote fawningly: 'I never saw so lovely a magnificent a scene, nor (being content with this) do I care to see better.' Let's not go nuts here. No building is *that* beautiful, but the definitive structure of the Anglo-Norman Romanesque style is still pretty amazing. We would definitely put it in our top-church-in-England list – as do

many others, including Unesco, who declared it a World Heritage Site in 1986.

The **cathedral** (☎ 0191-386 4266; www.durhamcathedral.co.uk; donation requested; ☞ 9.30am-8pm mid-Jun-Aug, 9.30am-6.15pm Mon-Sat, 12.30-5pm Sun Sep-mid-Jun, private prayer & services only 7.30-9.30am Mon-Sat, 7.45am-12.30pm Sun year-round) is enormous and has a pretty fortified look; this is due to the fact that although it may have been built to pay tribute to God and to house the holy bones of St Cuthbert, it also needed to withstand any potential attack by the pesky Scots and Northumberland tribes who weren't too thrilled by the arrival of the Normans a few years before. Times have changed, but the cathedral remains an overwhelming presence, and modern-day visitors will hardly fail to be impressed by its visual impact.

The interior is genuinely spectacular. The superb nave is dominated by massive, powerful piers – every second one round, with an equal height and circumference of 6.6m, and carved with geometric designs. Durham was the first European cathedral to be roofed with stone-ribbed vaulting, which upheld the heavy stone roof and made it possible to build pointed transverse arches – the first in England, and a great architectural achievement. The central tower dates from 1262, but was damaged in a fire caused by lightning in 1429, and was unsatisfactorily patched up until it was entirely rebuilt in 1470. The western towers were added in 1217-26.

Built in 1175 and renovated 300 years later, the **Galilee Chapel** is one of the most beautiful parts. The northern side's **paintings** are rare surviving examples of 12th-century wall painting and are thought to feature Sts Cuthbert and Oswald. The chapel also contains the **Venerable Bede's tomb**. Bede was an 8th-century Northumbrian monk, a great historian and polymath whose work *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People* is still the prime source of information on the development of early Christian Britain. Among other things, he introduced the numbering of years from the birth of Jesus. He was first buried at Jarrow (see boxed text, p758), but in 1022 a miscreant monk stole his remains and brought them here.

The **Bishop's Throne**, built over the tomb of Bishop Thomas Hatfield, dates from the mid-14th century. Hatfield's effigy is the only one to have survived another turbulent

time: the Reformation. The **high altar** is separated from **St Cuthbert's tomb** by the beautiful stone **Neville Screen**, made around 1372-80. Until the Reformation, the screen included 107 statues of saints.

The cathedral has worthwhile **guided tours** (adult/child/student £4/free/3; ☞ 10.30am, 11.30am & 2.30pm Mon & Sat). Evensong is at 5.15pm from Tuesday to Saturday (Evening Prayer on Monday) and at 3.30pm on Sunday.

There's a splendid view from the top of the **tower** (adult/child £3/1.50; ☞ 10am-4pm Mon-Sat mid-Apr-Sep, to 3pm Oct-Mar), but you've got to climb 325 steps to enjoy it.

Cloisters & Treasures

The monastic buildings are centred on the cloisters, which were heavily rebuilt in 1828. The west door to the cloisters is famous for its 12th-century ironwork. On the western side is the **Monks' Dormitory** (adult/child £1/30p; ☞ 10am-3.30pm Mon-Sat, plus 12.30-3.15pm Sun Apr-Sep), now a library of 30,000 books and displaying Anglo-Saxon carved stones, with a vaulted undercroft that houses the Treasures and a restaurant. There is also an **audiovisual display** (adult/child £1/30p; ☞ 10am-3pm Mon-Sat Apr-Nov) on the building of the cathedral and the life of St Cuthbert.

The **Treasures** (adult/child £2.50/70p; ☞ 10am-4.30pm Mon-Sat, 2-4.30pm Sun) refer to the relics of St Cuthbert, but besides his cross and coffin, there's very little here related to the saint. The collection is made up mostly of religious paraphernalia from later centuries.

DURHAM CASTLE

Built as a standard motte-and-bailey fort in 1072, **Durham Castle** (☎ 0191-374 3800; www.durhamcastle.com; adult/concession £5/3.50; ☞ tours 10am, 11am noon, 12.30pm & 2-4pm Jun-Oct, 2-4pm Mon, Wed, Sat & Sun Nov-May) was the prince bishops' home until 1837, when it became the first college of the new university. It remains a university hall, and you can stay here (see p762).

The castle has been much altered over the centuries, as each successive prince bishop sought to put his particular imprint on the place, but heavy restoration and reconstruction were necessary anyway as the castle is built of soft stone on soft ground. Highlights of the 45-minute tour include the groaning 17th-century Black Staircase, the 16th-century chapel and the beautifully preserved Norman chapel (1080).

ENGLAND'S WONDER WORKER

St Cuthbert (c 634–687) is one of Britain's most venerated saints as much for an eventful afterlife as for a pious life. A kick-ass monk who fought under arms, nurtured the poor and succeeded in the thankless task of bringing the independent monastic settlements of the northeast to Roman heel following the Synod of Whitby (664), which laid down the law on when exactly Easter should be observed, Cuthbert spent the last years of his life in contemplative solitude on Inner Farne, dying on 20 March 687. And then things got really interesting.

According to legend, his burial casket was opened a few years after his death and his body was found to be perfectly preserved, or incorrupt, which quickly made him the most popular British saint in the country. When the Vikings invaded Lindisfarne in 875, a group of monks took his body on a seven-year journey across the northeast, but another Danish invasion in 995 led to another prolonged period of wandering. He eventually found a permanent home in a stone church that preceded the current cathedral. In 1104 his body and relics were transferred to a shrine inside the new cathedral, which itself was desecrated during the Reformation, although his relics surprisingly survived.

OTHER SIGHTS

Near the cathedral, in what was the St Mary-le-Bow Church, is the **Durham Heritage Centre** (☎ 0191-386 8719; www.durhamheritagecentre.org.uk; St Mary le Bow, North Bailey; admission £2; ☎ 2-4.30pm Jun, 11am-4.30pm Jul-Sep, 11am-4.30pm Sat & Sun Apr, May & Oct), with a pretty crowded collection of displays on Durham's history from the Middle Ages to mining. It's all suitably grim, especially the reconstructed prison cells.

Durham and its environs have other museums that may be of interest, including the small **Museum of Archaeology** (☎ 0191-334 1823; Old Fulling Mill, Prebend's Walk; admission £1; ☎ 11am-4pm Apr-Oct, 11.30am-3.30pm Fri-Mon Nov-Mar), located in a converted riverside mill building; and the **Oriental Museum** (☎ 0191-334 5694; Elvet Hill; admission £1.50; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, noon-5pm Sat & Sun), 3 miles south of the city centre in the university campus. It has a good collection that ranges from fine Egyptian artefacts to a monster of a Chinese bed. Take either bus 5 or 6.

Crook Hall (☎ 0191-384 8028; www.crookhallgardens.co.uk; Sidegate; adult/child £5.50/4.50; ☎ 11am-5pm Sun-Thur Apr-Sep, seasonal variations) is a medieval hall with 1.6 hectares of charming small gardens, about 200m north of the city centre.

Finally, if you really can't get enough of war and the uniforms people wear to fight them, you won't want to miss the **Durham Light Infantry Museum** (☎ 0191-384 2214; Aykley Heads; admission £3.25; ☎ 10am-5pm Jun-Sep, to 4pm rest of year), 500m northwest of town. The history of Durham's County Regiment and its part in various wars from 1758 to 1968

is brought to life through anecdotes and poignant artefacts; there's a small art gallery with changing exhibitions.

Activities

BOATING

The **Prince Bishop River Cruiser** (☎ 0191-386 9525; www.princebishoprc.co.uk; Elvet Bridge; adult £5.50; ☎ cruises 2pm & 3pm Jun-Sep) offers one-hour cruises.

You can hire a rowing boat from **Browns Boathouse** (☎ 0191-386 3779; per hr per person £5), below Elvet Bridge.

WALKING

There are superb views back to the cathedral and castle from the riverbanks; walk around the bend between Elvet and Framwellgate Bridges, or hire a boat at Elvet Bridge.

Guided walks (adult/child £3.50/free; ☎ 2pm Wed, Sat & Sun May-Sep) of 1½ hours leave from Millennium Place; contact the tourist office for details. **Ghost walks** (☎ 0191-386 1500; adult/child £4/2; ☎ 6.30pm Mon Jun-Sep, 8.30pm Jul & Aug) lasting 1½ hours also drift around town.

Sleeping

There's only one view that counts – a cathedral view. But when you consider that it's visible from pretty much everywhere, it's quality, not quantity, that counts. The tourist office makes local bookings free of charge, which is a good thing considering that Durham is always busy with visitors: graduation week in late June results in accommodation gridlock.

Swallow Three Tuns Hotel (☎ 0191-386 4326; www.swallowhotels.com; New Elvet; s/d from £55/90) A

UNIVERSITY ACCOMMODATION

Several colleges rent their rooms during the holidays (Easter and July to September). The rooms are generally modern and comfortable, like most contemporary student halls. Phone ☎ 0191-374 7360 for more information.

St Cuthbert's Society (☎ 0191-374 3364; 12 South Bailey; s/d £26/48) A few doors down from St John's College, with similar student-style rooms.

St John's College (☎ 0191-334 3877; 3 South Bailey; s/d £27/50) This college is right next to the cathedral; none of the rooms are en suite.

University College (☎ 0191-374 3863; s/d with bathroom £39/70, without bathroom £27/50) Smack on the Palace Green, this has the best location. Some rooms are available year-round, such as the bishop's suite (per person £90), decked out with 17th-century tapestries.

converted 16th-century coaching inn, the Three Tuns has plenty of olde-worlde feel – in the low-hanging ceilings, creaking passageways and heavy wooden beams throughout – until you get to the bedrooms, which are comfortable, modern and, well, a little bland. The rooms in the older section are larger than those in the new wing.

Cathedral View (☎ 0191-386 9566; www.cathedralview.com; 212 Gilesgate; s/d from £60/80) This plain-fronted Georgian house has no sign, but inside it does exactly what it says on the tin. Six large rooms decorated with lots of cushions and coordinated bed linen and window dressings make up the numbers, but it's the three at the back that are worth the fuss: the views of the cathedral are superb. A small breakfast terrace with the same splendid vista is an added touch of real class.

Farnley Tower (☎ 0191-375 0011; www.farnley-tower.co.uk; The Ave; s/d from £65/85; ☎) A beautiful Victorian stone building that looks more like a small manor house than a family-run B&B, this place has 13 large rooms, none better than the superior rooms, which are not just spacious but have excellent views of the cathedral and castle. The service is impeccable.

Eating

Cheap eats aren't a problem in Durham thanks to the students, but quality is a little thin on the ground. Some pubs do good bar food; see Drinking (right).

Almshouse (☎ 0191-386 1054; Palace Green; dishes £5-9; ☎ 9am-8pm) Fancy imaginative and satisfying snacks (how about spicy beef with red-bean casserole and rice?) served in a genuine 17th-century house right on Palace Green? It's a shame about the interior, which has been restored to look like any old museum cafe.

El Coto (☎ 0191-384 4007; 17 Hallgarth St; lunch about £12, dinner mains £8-11; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, closed dinner Sun) A full range of inviting Spanish tapas fills the menu at this terrific restaurant – such as sweet and spicy peppers stuffed with black pudding or the perennial favourite *albondigas* (lamb meatballs). The atmosphere is lovely, as are the staff.

our pick Oldfields (☎ 0191-370 9595; 18 Claypath; 2-/3-course menu £10/13; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, closed dinner Sun) A couple of years ago, Oldfields won the restaurant of the year award with its strictly seasonal menus that use only local or organic ingredients sourced within a 60-mile radius of Durham, and it's just gone from strength to strength ever since. Why not start with warmed mushroom and sage paste, followed by braised shin of Neasham Farm beef and finish off with a gorgeous raspberry *cranachan* (oatmeal and whisky cream)? The best meal in town, in the old boardroom of the former HQ of the Durham Gas Company (1881).

Drinking

Durham may be a big student town, but most students seem to take the whole study thing really seriously, because the nightlife here isn't as boisterous as you might expect from a university town. There is, however, a fistful of lovely old bars. The tourist office has a bimonthly *What's On* guide.

Half Moon Inn (New Elvet) Sports fans love this old-style bar for its devotion to the mixed pleasures of Sky Sports; we like it for its wonderful collection of whiskies and ales. There's a summer beer garden if you want to avoid the whoops and hollers of the armchair jocks.

Shakespeare (63 Saddler St) As authentic a traditional bar as you're likely to find in these parts,

this is the perfect locals' boozier, complete with nicotine-stained walls, cosy snugs and a small corner TV to show the racing. Needless to say, the selection of beers and spirits is terrific. Not surprisingly, students love it too.

Swan & Three Cygnets (☎ 384 0242; Elvet Bridge) This high-ceilinged riverside pub with courtyard tables overlooks the river. It also serves some pretty good food (mains around £8) – usually fancy versions of standard bar fare such as bangers and mash.

Shopping

Durham Indoor Market (☎ 0191-384 6153; Market Pl; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat) It's less about what you might buy and more about the place itself, but this Victorian market is worth a browse, if only for the motley collection of wares on sale, from fruit and veg to garden gnomes.

Getting There & Away

BUS

The bus station is west of the river on North Rd. All National Express buses arrive here, while bus 352 links Newcastle and Blackpool via Durham, Barnard Castle, Raby Castle and Kirkby Stephen. Destinations include Edinburgh (£23.50, four hours, one daily), Leeds (£15.30, 2½ hours, four daily) and London (£27, 6½ hours, four daily). There are three daily National Express buses to Newcastle (£2.80, 30 minutes); bus 21 provides a half-hourly service but takes twice as long because it makes plenty of stops along the way.

TRAIN

There are services at least hourly to London (£124.50, three hours), Newcastle (£6.80 single, 20 minutes) and York (£23.50, one hour).

Getting Around

Pratt's Taxis (☎ 0191-386 0700) charges a minimum of £2.80. **Cycle Force** (☎ 0191-384 0319; 29 Claypath) charges £10/16 per half-/full day for mountain-bike hire.

AROUND DURHAM

Beamish Open-Air Museum

County Durham's greatest attraction is **Beamish** (☎ 0191-370 4000; www.beamish.org.uk; admission Nov-Mar £6, Apr-Oct adult/child £16/10; ☎ 10am-5pm Apr-Oct, to 4pm Tue-Thu, Sat & Sun Nov-Mar, last entry 3pm year-round), a living, breathing, working museum that offers a fabulous, warts-and-

all portrait of industrial life in the north-east during the 19th and 20th centuries. Instructive and lots of fun to boot, this huge museum spread over 121 hectares will appeal to all ages.

You can go underground, explore mine heads, a working farm, a school, a dentist and a pub, and marvel at how every cramped pit cottage seemed to find room for a piano. Don't miss a ride behind an 1815 Steam Elephant locomotive or a replica of Stephenson's *Locomotion No 1*.

Allow at least three hours to do the place justice. Many elements (such as the railway) aren't open in the winter (when the admission price is cheaper); call for details.

Beamish is about 8 miles northwest of Durham; it's signposted from the A1(M) – take the A693 west at junction 63. Buses 709 from Newcastle (50 minutes, hourly) and 720 from Durham (30 minutes, hourly) operate to the museum.

Bishop Auckland

The name's a giveaway, but this friendly, midsized market town 11 miles southwest of Durham has been the country residence of the bishops of Durham since the 12th century and their official home for over 100 years. The castle is just next to the large, attractive market square; leading off it are small-town streets lined with high-street shops and a sense that anything exciting is happening elsewhere.

The **tourist office** (☎ 01388-604922; Market Pl; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat year-round, plus 1-4pm Sun Apr-Sep) is in the town hall on Market Pl.

The imposing gates of **Auckland Castle** (☎ 01388-601627; www.auckland-castle.co.uk; adult/child £4/free; ☎ 2-5pm Sun-Mon Easter-Jul & Sep, plus Wed Aug), just off Market Pl behind the town hall, lead to the official home of the bishop of Durham. It's palatial – each successive bishop extended the building. Underneath the spiky Restoration Gothic exterior, the buildings are mainly medieval. The outstanding attraction of the castle is the striking 17th-century chapel, which thrusts up into the sky. It has a remarkable partially 12th-century interior, converted from the former great hall. Admission is by guided tour only.

Around the castle is a hilly and wooded 324-hectare **deer park** (admission free; ☎ 7am-sunset) with an 18th-century deer shelter.

DETOUR: LOCOMOTION

If you or your kids can't get enough of steam trains, then a half-day trip to the National Railway Museum at Shildon, now known as **Locomotion** (☎ 01388-777999; www.locomotion.uk.com; Shildon; admission free; 🕒 10am-5pm mid-Mar-Sep, to 4pm Wed-Sun Oct-mid-Mar) is a must. Shildon is best known as the starting point for Stephenson's *No 1 Locomotion* in 1825, finishing up in Stockton-on-Tees (for more on the train, see Head of Steam, below). Less museum and more hands-on experience, this regional extension of the National Railway Museum in York (see p626) has all manner of railway paraphernalia spread out over a half-mile area (and linked by free bio-bus) that all leads to a huge hanger that is home to 70-odd locomotives from all eras. Railway buffs will love it. It's 5 miles southeast of Bishop Auckland. Shildon is on the Darlington to Bishop Auckland rail line; buses 1 & 1B run every half hour from Darlington and stop here on the way to Crook and Tow Law.

Bus 352 running from Newcastle to Blackpool passes through Bishop Auckland (daily March to November, Saturday and Sunday December to February), as does bus X85 from Durham to Kendal (one on Saturday June to September).

You need to change at Darlington for regular trains to Bishop Auckland.

Binchester Roman Fort

One and a half miles north of Bishop Auckland are the ruins of **Binchester Roman Fort** (☎ 01388-663089; www.durham.gov.uk/binchester; admission £3; 🕒 excavations 11am-5pm Easter-Sep), or Vinovia as it was originally called. The fort, first built in wood around AD 80 and rebuilt in stone early in the 2nd century, was the largest in County Durham, covering 4 hectares. Excavations show the remains of Dere St, the main high road from York to Hadrian's Wall, and the best-preserved example of a heating system in the country – part of the commandant's private bath suite. Findings from the site are displayed at the Bowes Museum in Barnard Castle (opposite).

Escomb Church

The stones of the abandoned Binchester Fort were often reused, and Roman inscriptions can be spotted in the walls of the hauntingly beautiful **Escomb Church** (☎ 01388-602861; admission free; 🕒 9am-8pm Apr-Sep, to 4pm Oct-Mar). The church dates from the 7th century – it's one of only three complete surviving Saxon churches in Britain. It's a whitewashed cell, striking and moving in its simplicity, incongruously encircled by a 20th-century cul-de-sac. If no-one's about, collect the keys from a hook outside a nearby house. Escomb is 3 miles west of

Bishop Auckland (bus 86, 87 or 87A; 15 per day Monday to Saturday, 10 on Sunday).

DARLINGTON

pop 97,838

Darlington might be best known these days for its retail opportunities, but its main claim to fame came in 1825, when it served as the arrival point for the world's first passenger train, George Stephenson's *No 1 Locomotion*, which chugged along the new rail link to Stockton at the breakneck speed of 10mph to 13mph, carrying 600 people – mostly in coal trucks.

The event – and the subsequent effect of transport history – is the subject of the city's top attraction, the recently reopened (and rebranded) **Head of Steam** (☎ 01325-460532; www.darlington.gov.uk; North Rd; adult/child £5/3; 🕒 10am-4pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep, 11am-3.30pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar), also known as the Darlington Railway Museum, which is actually situated on the original 1825 route, in Stockton & Darlington railway buildings attached to the North Rd Station and dating from the mid-19th century. Pride of place goes to the surprisingly small *Locomotion*, but railway buffs will also enjoy a close look at other engines, such as the *Derwent*, which is the earliest surviving Darlington-built locomotive. The original displays have been complemented by an impressive range of audiovisuals that tell the story of the railway and its impact on Darlington. The museum is about a mile north of the centre.

There aren't many other reasons to linger, but you should definitely pop your head into Our Lady of the North, better known as **St Cuthbert's Church** (Market Pl), founded in 1183 and one of the finest examples of the Early

English Perpendicular style. It is topped by a 14th-century tower. The **tourist office** (☎ 01325-388666; www.visitdarlington.com; Dolphin Centre, 13 Horsemarket; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 3pm Sat) is on the south side of Market Place.

The town has some decent restaurants around the centre; best of them is **Oven** (☎ 01325-466668; 30 Duke St; mains £8-16; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, noon-8pm Sun), a classy French spot that was voted the best Sunday lunch in the northeast by readers of the *Observer*.

Getting There & Away

Darlington is 13 miles southwest of Durham on the A167. Buses 13 and 723 run between Darlington and Durham (£3.40, 35 minutes, every 30 minutes Monday to Saturday, hourly Sunday). Bus 723 also runs half-hourly to Newcastle (£5.70, 1¼ hours). Most buses go and arrive opposite the Town Hall on Feethams, just off Market Place.

Darlington is also on the York (£17, 30 minutes) to Newcastle (£7.10, 40 minutes) line, with a service every 20 minutes or so.

AROUND DARLINGTON

Barnard Castle

pop 6720

Barnard Castle, or just plain Barney, is anything but: this thoroughly charming market town is a traditionalist's dream, full of antiquarian shops and atmospheric old pubs that serve as a wonderful setting for the town's twin-starred attractions, a daunting ruined castle at its edge and an extraordinary French chateau on its outskirts. If you can drag yourself away, it is also a terrific base for exploring Teesdale and the North Pennines. The **tourist office** (☎ 01833-690909; www.teesdalediscovery.com; Woodleigh, Flatts Rd; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm Easter-Oct, 11am-4pm Mon-Sat Nov-Mar) has information on all the sights.

SIGHTS

Once one of northern England's largest castles, **Barnard Castle** (EH; ☎ 01833-638212; www.english-heritage.org.uk; admission £4; ☎ 10am-6pm Easter-Sep, to 4pm Oct, Thu-Mon only Nov-Mar) was partly dismantled during the 16th century, but its huge bulk, on a cliff above the Tees, still manages to cover more than two very impressive hectares. Founded by Guy de Bailleul and rebuilt around 1150, its occupants spent their time suppressing the locals

and fighting off the Scots – on their days off they sat around enjoying the wonderful views of the river.

If the beautifully atmospheric ruins of one castle aren't enough, then about half a mile east of town is the extraordinary, Louvre-inspired French chateau that is the **Bowes Museum** (☎ 01833-690606; www.bowesmuseum.org.uk; adult/child £7/free; ☎ 10am-5pm Mar-Oct, to 4pm Nov-Feb). The museum was the brainchild of 19th-century industrialist and art fanatic John Bowes; he commissioned French architect Jules Pellechet to build a new museum to show off his terrific collection, which could give the Victoria & Albert Museum a run for its money. Opened in 1892, the museum has lavish furniture and paintings by Canaletto, El Greco and Goya. The museum's most beloved exhibit, however, is the marvellous mechanical silver swan, which operates at 12.30pm and 3.30pm.

SLEEPING & EATING

Marwood House (☎ 01833-637493; www.marwoodhouse.co.uk; 98 Galgate; s/d £29/58) A handsome Victorian property with tastefully appointed rooms (the owner's tapestries feature in the decor and her homemade biscuits sit on a tray), Marwood House's standout feature is the small fitness room in the basement, complete with a sauna that fits up to four people.

Greta House (☎ 01833-631193; www.gretahouse.co.uk; 89 Galgate; s/d £40/60) This lovely Victorian home stands out for the little touches that show that extra bit of class – fluffy bathrobes, face cloths and posh toiletries. What really did it for us though was the stay-in service: a tray of lovely homemade sandwiches and a superb cheeseboard to nibble at from the comfort of bed.

Old Well Inn (☎ 01833-690130; www.oldwellinn.info; 21 The Bank; r from £69) You won't find larger bedrooms in town than at this old coaching inn, which makes it an excellent option for families – it even takes pets. It has a reputation for excellent, filling pub grub and a decent Italian restaurant that does good pizzas and pastas (mains £8 to £11).

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Bus 352 runs daily between Newcastle and Blackpool via Durham, Bishop Auckland, Barnard Castle, Raby Castle and Kirkby

DETOUR: MIDDLESBROUGH INSTITUTE OF MODERN ART

Middlesbrough, 15 miles east of Darlington and Teeside's largest town, is something of a post-industrial mess, an unattractive urban centre that does little to entice the interested visitor. It might all change with the opening of the boldly modern **Middlesbrough Insititute of Modern Art** (☎ 01642-726720; www.visitmima.com; Centre Sq, Middlesbrough; admission free; 🕒 10am-5pm Tue, Wed, Fri & Sat, 10am-8pm Thu, noon-4pm Sun), which has gathered the city's municipal art collections under one impressive roof. The 1500 or so pieces includes work by some of Britain's most important 20th-century artists, including Duncan Grant, Vanessa Bell (sister of Virginia Woolf), Henri Gaudier-Brzeska and Frank Auerbach. Also exhibited is a good collection of ceramics and jewellery. Middlesbrough is served by hourly buses from Darlington (£4.90, 30 minutes). Buses arrive at Gilke St, about 500m from MIMA.

Stephen. Buses 75 and 76 runs almost hourly from Darlington (40 minutes).

Egglestone Abbey

The ransacked, spectral ruins of **Egglestone Abbey** (🕒 dawn-dusk), dating from the 1190s, overlook a lovely bend of the Tees. You can envisage the abbey's one-time grandeur despite the gaunt remains. They're a pleasant mile-long walk south of Barnard Castle.

Raby Castle

About 7 miles northeast of Barnard Castle is the sprawling, romantic **Raby Castle** (☎ 01833-660202; www.rabycastle.com; adult/child £9.50/4, park & gardens only adult/child £4/3; 🕒 castle 1-5pm, grounds 11am-5.30pm Sun-Fri Jun-Aug, Wed & Sun May & Sep), a stronghold of the Catholic Neville family until it engaged in some ill-judged plotting (the 'Rising of the North') against the oh-so Protestant Queen Elizabeth in 1569. Most of the interior dates from the 18th and 19th centuries, but the exterior remains true to the original design, built around a courtyard and surrounded by a moat. There are beautiful formal gardens and a deer park. Buses 8 and 352 zip between Barnard Castle and Raby (20 minutes, eight daily).

NORTH PENNINES

The North Pennines stretch from western Durham to just short of Hadrian's Wall in the north. In the south is Teesdale, the gently undulating valley of the River Tees; to the north is the much wilder Weardale, carved through by the River Wear. Both dales are marked by ancient quarries and mines – industries that date back to Roman times. The wilds of the North Pennines are

also home to the picturesque Derwent and Allen Valleys, north of Weardale.

For online information, check out www.northpennines.org.uk.

TEESDALE

Scattered unspoilt villages, waterfalls and sinuous moorland define Teesdale, which stretches from the confluence of the Rivers Greta and Tees to a waterfall, Caldron Snout, at the eastern end of Cow Green Reservoir, the source of the Tees. The landscapes get wilder as you travel northward into the Pennines; the Pennine Way snakes along the dale.

Middleton-in-Teesdale

This tranquil, pretty village of white and stone houses among soft green hills was from 1753 a 'company town', the entire kit and caboodle being the property of the London Lead Company, a Quaker concern. The upshot was that the lead miners worked the same hours in the same appalling conditions as everyone else, but couldn't benefit from a Sunday pint to let off steam.

For information on local walks, go to the **tourist office** (☎ 01833-641001; 🕒 10am-1pm & 2-5pm Apr-Oct, 10am-4pm Nov-Mar).

Middleton to Langdon Beck

As you travel up the valley past Middleton towards Langdon Beck, you'll find **Bowlees Visitor Centre** (☎ 01833-622292; 🕒 10.30am-5pm Apr-Oct, 10.30am-4pm Sat & Sun Nov-Feb) 3 miles on, with plenty of walking and wildlife leaflets and a small natural-history display. A number of easy-going trails spread out from here, including one to the tumbling rapids of **Low Force**, a number of metre-high steps along a scenic stretch of river. One mile further on is the much

more compelling **High Force** (adult/child £1.50/1, car park £2), England's largest waterfall – 21m of almighty roar that shatters the general tranquillity of the surroundings. It's a sight best appreciated after a rainfall, when the torrent is really powerful.

The B6277 leaves the River Tees at High Force and continues up to **Langdon Beck**, where the scenery quickly turns from green rounded hills to the lonely landscape of the North Pennines, dotted with small chapels. You can either continue on the B6277 over the Pennines to Alston and Cumbria or turn right and take a minor road over the moors to St John's Chapel in Weardale.

Bus 73 connects Middleton and Langdon Beck, via Bowlees and High Force, at least once a day Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. Buses 75 and 76 serve Middleton from Barnard Castle almost hourly.

Sleeping & Eating

Brunswick House (☎ 01833-640393; www.brunswickhouse.net; 55 Market Pl, Middleton-in-Teesdale; s/d £40/60) This pretty Georgian house has a floral, fluffy theme: nice quilted duvets and big pillows with flowers all over them. Everything else is painted white.

High Force Hotel & Brewery (☎ 01833-622222; www.highforcehotel.com; Forest-in-Teesdale; s/d £40/80) This former hunting lodge by the High Force waterfall is best known for the award-winning beers brewed on the premises: Teesdale Bitter, Forest XB and Cauldron Snout – at 5.6% it has a kick like a mule. Upstairs are six decent enough bedrooms, while the bar also serves food.

Langdon Beck YHA (☎ 0845 371 9027; www.yha.org.uk; Forest-in-Teesdale; dm £14; ☎ Mon-Sat Apr-Sep, Fri & Sat Nov, Tue-Sat early Feb-Mar, Sep-Oct) Walkers on the Pennine Way are avid fans of this hostel between High Force and Langdon Beck. The hostel is also a good base for short walks into the dales and the Pennines, in particular to Cow Green Reservoir, the source of the Tees.

WEARDALE

A one-time hunting ground of the prince bishops, Weardale's 19th-century legacy as a lead-mining centre has left rust- and olive-coloured patchwork moors pitted with mining scars. Mining relics notwithstanding, there are some splendid walks in and around

the surrounding valley, which is sheltered by the Pennines.

Stanhope & Ireshopburn

Peaceful Stanhope is a honey-coloured town with a cobbled marketplace – a good base for windswept walks across the moors. Its interesting church is Norman at the base, but mostly dates from the 12th century. There's a great farmers market on the last Saturday of every month.

The **tourist office** (☎ 01388-527650; www.durhamdalescentre.co.uk; Market Pl; ☎ 10am-5pm Apr-Oct, to 4pm Nov-Mar) has lots of information on walks in the area, and there's a small tearoom.

In Ireshopburn, 8 miles west of Stanhope, the **Weardale Museum** (☎ 01388-537417; www.weardalemuseum.co.uk; adult/child £2/50p; ☎ 2-5pm Wed-Sun May-Jul & Sep, daily Aug) allows a glimpse into local history, including a spotless lead-mining family kitchen and information on preacher John Wesley. It's next to **High House Chapel**, a Methodist chapel (1760) that was one of Wesley's old stomping grounds.

SLEEPING & EATING

Belle Vue Farm Cottages (☎ 01388-526225; www.tranquil-life.info; Hall Rd, Stanhope; s/d £38/62) This beautiful farmhouse has about a mile north-west of Stanhope has great views of the dale and comfortable, rustic-style rooms, some with four-poster beds. It's very popular with cyclists (the town is the last stop on the C2C route before cyclists push on to Sunderland), who can avail of the workshop for repairs. There's also a coarse fishing pond on the grounds.

Queen's Head (☎ 01388-528160; 89 Front St, Stanhope; mains £5-8) This handsome pub in the middle of Stanhope is a good spot for hearty pub grub.

Killhope

At the top of the valley, about 13 miles from Stanhope, is a good example of just how bleak miners' lives really were. In the **Killhope Lead Mining Centre** (☎ 01388-537505; www.durham.gov.uk/killhope; adult/child £4.50/1.50, with mine trip £6.50/3.50; ☎ 10.30am-5pm Apr-Oct), the blackened machinery of the old works is dominated by an imposing 10m-high water wheel that drove a crushing mechanism.

In one of those unfortunate linguistic ironies, 'hope' actually means 'side valley', but once you get a look inside the place you'll

understand the miners' black humour about the name. An absorbing exhibition explains what life was like: poor pay, poorer living conditions and the constant threat of the 'Black Spit' (coal dust in the lungs) that killed so many of its sufferers. The most poignant records are those of the washer boys – children employed in freezing, back-breaking work. The mine closed in 1910 but you can visit its atmospheric underground network as it was in 1878, on an hour-long guided tour; wear warm clothes.

It's possible to buy a combined ticket for the mine and the South Tynedale Railway (p742). From the mining centre it's another 7 miles up over the highest main road in England (617m) and the North Pennines and down into Alston.

Bus 101 makes the regular trip up the valley from Bishop Auckland to Stanhope (10 daily). If you ring ahead, it will go on to Killhope midmorning and pick you up in the afternoon. Call **Wearhead Motor Services** (☎ 01388-528235) to arrange the service.

DERWENT VALLEY

Pretty Blanchland and Edmundbyers, two small, remote villages, are south of the denim expanse of the **Derwent Reservoir**, surrounded by wild moorland and forests. The 3.5-mile-long reservoir has been here since 1967, and the county border separating Durham and Northumberland runs right through it. The valley's a good spot for walking and cycling, as well as sailing, which can be arranged through the **Derwent Reservoir Sailing Club** (☎ 01434-675258).

Nestling among trees, and surrounded by wild mauve and mustard moors, **Blanchland** is an unexpected surprise. It's a charming, golden-stoned grouping of small cottages arranged around an L-shaped square, framed by a medieval gateway. The village was named after the white cassocks of local monks – there was a Premonstratensian abbey here from the 12th century. Around 1721 the prince bishop of the time, Lord Crewe, seeing the village and abbey falling into disrepair, bequeathed the buildings to trustees on the condition that they be protected and looked after.

Another inviting, quiet village, **Edmundbyers** is 4 miles east of Blanchland on the B6306 along the southern edge of Derwent Reservoir.

Edmundbyers is 12 miles north of Stanhope and 10 miles south of Hexham on the B6306. Bus 773 runs from Consett to Townfield via Blanchland and Edmundbyers three times a day, Monday to Saturday.

Sleeping & Eating

Edmundbyers YHA (☎ 0845 371 9633; www.yha.org.uk; Low House, Edmundbyers; dm £14; ☞ daily Jul-Aug, Wed-Sun Apr-Jun & Sep-Oct) This beautiful hostel is in a converted 17th-century former inn. The hostel helps to serve walkers in the area and cyclists on the C2C route.

Lord Crewe Arms Hotel (☎ 01434-675251; www.lordcrewehotel.co.uk; Blanchland; s/d from £60/100) This glorious hotel was built as the abbot's lodge. It's a mainly 17th-century building, with a 12th-century crypt that makes a cosy bar. If you're looking for a bit of atmosphere – open fires, hidden corners, tall windows and superb food (lunch £6 to £12) – you won't find better, but make sure to ask for a garden room, which has its own sitting room.

ALLEN VALLEY

The Allen Valley is in the heart of the North Pennines, with individual, remote villages huddled high up, surrounded by bumpy hills and heather- and gorse-covered moors. It's fantastic walking country, speckled with the legacy of the lead-mining industry.

Tiny Allendale is a hamlet around a big open square. The quiet rural community hots up on New Year's Eve when the distinctly pagan and magical 'Tar Barrels' ceremony is performed (see the boxed text, p770). It's 7 miles from Hexham on the B6295.

Four miles further south towards the Wear Valley is England's highest village, **Allenheads**, nestled at the head of Allen Valley. It really just consists of a few houses and a marvellously eccentric hotel. There's a small **heritage centre** (☎ 01434-685395; admission £1; ☞ 9am-5pm Apr-Oct) with some displays on the history of the village and surrounding area and access to a blacksmith's cottage, and a small nature walk.

An attraction in its own right, **Allenheads Inn** (☎ 01434-685200; www.theallenheadsinn.co.uk; Allenheads; s/d £35/60), an 18th-century low-beamed pub, has a quite extraordinary and bizarre collection of assorted bric-a-brac and ephemera, from mounted stag heads to Queen Mum plates. It's a friendly, creaky place to stay, and serves up hearty, tasty food (mains around £8) as well.

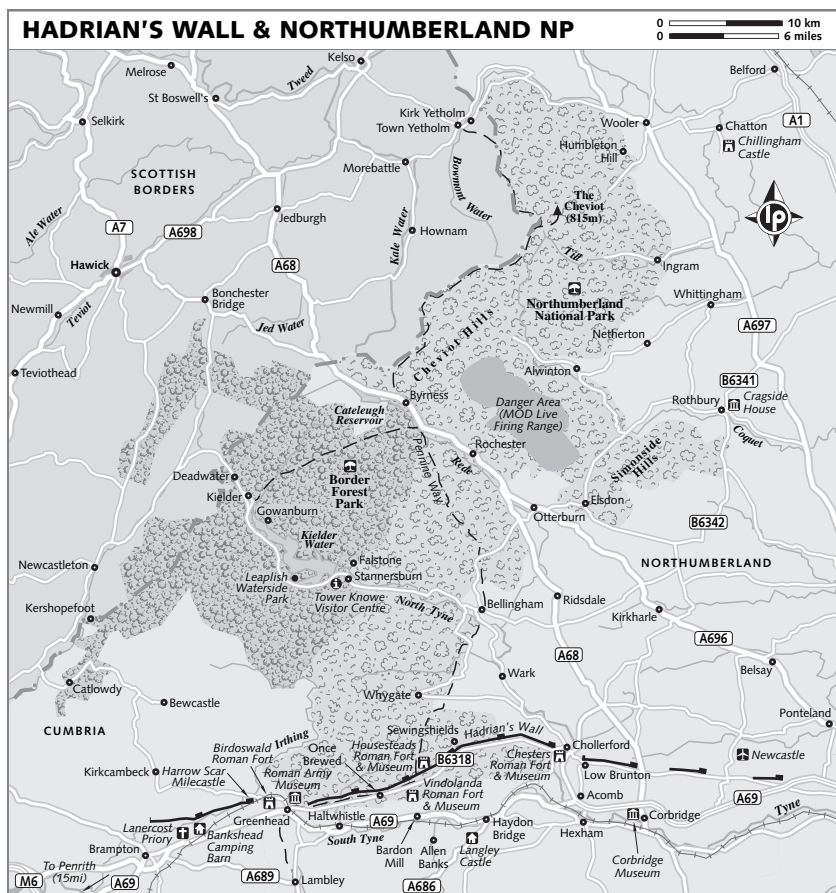
Bus 688 runs up and down the Allen Valley from Hexham to Allenheads (stopping at Allendale town; 25 minutes, 11 daily).

HADRIAN'S WALL

What exactly have the Romans ever done for us? The aqueducts. Law and order. And this enormous wall, built between AD 122 and 128 to keep 'us' (Romans, subdued Brits) in and 'them' (hairy Pictish barbarians from Scotland) out. Or so the story goes. Hadrian's Wall, named in honour of the emperor who ordered it built, was one of Rome's greatest engineering projects, a spectacular 73-mile testament to ambition

and the practical Roman mind. Even today, almost 2000 years after the first stone was laid, the sections that are still standing remain an awe-inspiring sight, proof that when the Romans wanted something done, they just knuckled down and did it.

It wasn't easy. When completed, the mammoth structure ran across the narrow neck of the island, from the Solway Firth in the west almost to the mouth of the Tyne in the east. Every Roman mile (1.62 miles) there was a gateway guarded by a small fort (milecastle) and between each milecastle were two observation turrets. Milecastles are numbered right across the country, starting with Milecastle 0 at Wallsend and ending with Milecastle 80 at Bowness-on-Solway.



FLAMING ALLENDALE

Thought to be Viking or pagan in origin, the **Baal Fire** (aka Tar Barrels) on New Year's Eve – a procession of flaming whisky barrels through Allendale – has certainly been taking place for centuries. The 45 barrels are filled with tar and carried on the heads of a team of 'guisers' with blackened or painted faces – this hot and hereditary honour gets passed from generation to generation. The mesmerising procession, accompanied by pounding music, leads to a pile of branches, where the guisers chuck the scorching barrels to fire up an enormous pyre at midnight, doing their best not to set themselves alight.

A series of forts were developed as bases some distance south (and may predate the wall), and 16 lie astride it. The prime remaining forts on the wall are Cilurnum (Chesters), Vercovicium (Housesteads) and Banna (Birdoswald). The best forts behind the wall are Corstopitum at Corbridge, and Vindolanda, north of Bardon Mill.

History

Emperor Hadrian didn't order the wall built because he was afraid of northern invasion. Truth is no part of the wall was impenetrable – a concentrated attack at any single point would have surely breached it – but was meant to mark the border as though to say that the Roman Empire would extend no further. By drawing a physical boundary, the Romans were also tightening their grip on the population to the south – for the first time in history, passports were issued to citizens of the empire, marking them out not just as citizens but, more importantly, as taxpayers.

But all good things come to an end. It's likely that around 409, as the Roman administration collapsed, the frontier garrisons ceased receiving Roman pay. The communities had to then rely on their own resources, gradually becoming reabsorbed into the war-band culture of the native Britons – for some generations soldiers had been recruited locally in any case.

Orientation

Hadrian's Wall crosses beautiful, varied landscape. Starting in the lowlands of the Solway

coast, it crosses the lush hills east of Carlisle to the bleak, windy ridge of basalt rock known as Whin Sill overlooking Northumberland National Park, and ends in the urban sprawl of Newcastle. The most spectacular section lies between Brampton and Corbridge.

Carlisle, in the west, and Newcastle, in the east, are good starting points, but Brampton, Haltwhistle, Hexham and Corbridge all make good bases.

The B6318 follows the course of the wall from the outskirts of Newcastle to Birdoswald; from Birdoswald to Carlisle it pays to have a detailed map. The main A69 road and the railway line follow 3 or 4 miles to the south. This section follows the wall from east to west.

Information

Carlisle and Newcastle tourist offices are good places to start gathering information, but there are also tourist offices in Hexham, Haltwhistle, Corbridge and Brampton. The **Northumberland National Park Visitor Centre** (☎ 01434-344396; Once Brewed; ☎ 10am-5pm mid-Mar–May, Sep & Oct, 9.30am-6pm Jun-Aug) is off the B6318. The official portal for the whole of Hadrian's Wall Country is www.hadrians-wall.org, an excellent, attractive and easily navigable site. There is also a **Hadrian's Wall information line** (☎ 01434-322002) too. May sees a spring festival, with lots of re-creations of Roman life along the wall (contact tourist offices for details).

Activities

The **Hadrian's Wall Path** (www.nationaltrail.co.uk/hadrianswall) is an 84-mile National Trail that runs the length of the wall from Wallsend in the east to Bowness-on-Solway in the west. The entire route should take about seven days on foot, giving plenty of time to explore the rich archaeological heritage along the way. Anthony Burton's *Hadrian's Wall Path – National Trail Guide* (Aurum Press, £12.95) available at most bookshops and tourist offices in the region, is good for history, archaeology and the like, while the *Essential Guide to Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail* (Hadrian's Wall Heritage Ltd, £3.95) by David McGlade is a guide to everyday facilities and services along the walk.

If you're planning to cycle along the wall, tourist offices sell the *Hadrian's Wall Country Cycle Map* (£3.50); you'll be cyc-

ling along part of Hadrian's Cycleway (see p746).

Getting There & Around

BUS

The AD 122 Hadrian's Wall bus (three hours, six daily June to September) is a hail-and-ride guided service that runs between Hexham (the 9.15am service starts in Wallsend) and Bowness-on-Solway. Bus 185 covers the route the rest of the year (Monday to Saturday only).

West of Hexham the wall runs parallel to the A69, which connects Carlisle and Newcastle. Bus 685 runs along the A69 hourly, passing near the YHA hostels and 2 miles to 3 miles south of the main sites throughout the year.

The Hadrian's Wall Rover ticket (adult/child one-day £7.50/4.80, three-day £15/9.60) is available from the driver or the tourist offices, where you can also get timetables.

TRAIN

The railway line between Newcastle and Carlisle (Tyne Valley Line) has stations at Corbridge, Hexham, Haydon Bridge, Bardon Mill, Haltwhistle and Brampton. This service runs daily, but not all trains stop at all stations.

CORBRIDGE

pop 2800

The mellow commuter town of Corbridge is a handsome spot above a green-banked curve in the Tyne, its shady, cobbled streets lined with old-fashioned shops. Folks have lived here since Saxon times when there was a substantial monastery, while many of the buildings feature stones nicked from nearby Corstopitum.

The **tourist office** (☎ 01434-632815; www.thisiscorbridge.co.uk; Hill St; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat, 1-5pm Sun mid-May-Sep, 10am-5pm Mon-Sat Easter-mid-May & Oct) is part of the library.

Corbridge Roman Site & Museum

What's left of the Roman garrison town of **Corstopitum** (EH; ☎ 01434-632349; admission incl museum £4.50; ☎ 10am-6pm Apr-Sep, to 4pm Oct, Sat & Sun only Nov-Mar) lies about a half a mile west of Market Pl on Dere St, once the main road from York to Scotland. It is the oldest fortified site in the area, predating the wall itself by some 40

HADRIAN'S WALL CIRCULAR WALK

Starting at Once Brewed National Park Centre, this walk takes in the most complete stretch of Hadrian's Wall. The walk is 7.5 miles long and takes approximately 4½ hours. The wall follows the natural barrier created by steep dramatic cliffs, and the views north are stunning. Some parts of the wall are so well preserved that they have featured in films. You might recognise Sycamor Gap, which stole the screen from Kevin Costner in *Robin Hood – Prince of Thieves*. The trail returns to the YHA hostel across swaths of farmland. The centre has a good map.

years, when it was used by troops launching retaliation raids into Scotland. Most of what you see here, though, dates from around AD 200, when the fort had developed into a civilian settlement and was the main base along the wall.

You get a sense of the domestic heart of the town from the visible remains, and the Corbridge Museum displays Roman sculpture and carvings, including the amazing 3rd-century Corbridge Lion.

Sleeping & Eating

2 The Crofts (☎ 01434-633046; www.2thecrofts.co.uk; A695; s/d incl breakfast £35/58) A typical Victorian terraced home on the edge of town has only one room, a comfortable twin, which ensures that you'll get all of the owner's attention. The breakfast is excellent.

Errington Arms (☎ 01434-672250; Stagshaw, B6318 off A68 roundabout; mains £8-13; ☎ 11am-11pm Mon-Sat, noon-3pm Sun) About 3 miles north of town is this marvellous 18th-century stone pub where delicious food is served up in suitably atmospheric surroundings. From the mouth-watering ploughman's lunch to more intricate delicacies such as loin of lamb with mushroom and chive risotto, Errington won't disappoint. Wash it all down with a pint of real ale.

Valley Restaurant (☎ 01434-633434; www.valleyrestaurants.co.uk; Station Rd; mains £9-12; ☎ dinner Mon-Sat) This fine Indian restaurant in a lovely building above the station supplies a unique service as well as delicious food. A group of 10 or more diners from Newcastle can catch the 'Passage to India' train to Corbridge accompanied by a waiter, who will supply snacks

and phone ahead to have the meal ready when the train arrives!

Getting There & Away

Bus 685 between Newcastle and Carlisle comes through Corbridge, as does the half-hourly bus 602 from Newcastle to Hexham, where you can connect with the Hadrian's Wall bus AD 122. Corbridge is also on the Newcastle–Carlisle railway line.

HEXHAM

pop 10,690

Tynedale's administrative capital is a handsome market town long famed for its fine Augustinian abbey. Hexham is a bustling place, with more restaurants, hotels and high-street shops lining its cobbled alleyways than any other wall town between Carlisle and Newcastle. The **tourist office** (☎ 01434-652220; www.hadrianswallcountry.org; Wentworth Car Park; ☎ 9am–6pm Mon–Sat, 10am–5pm Sun mid-May–Oct, 10am–5pm Mon–Sat Oct–mid-May) is northeast of the town centre.

Sights

Stately **Hexham Abbey** (☎ 01434-602031; ☎ 9.30am–7pm May–Sep, to 5pm Oct–Apr) is a marvellous example of early English architecture. Inside, look out for the Saxon crypt, the only surviving element of St Wilfrid's Church, built with inscribed stones from Corstopitum in 674.

The **Old Gaol** (☎ 01434-652349; adult/child £4/2; ☎ 10am–4.30pm Apr–Oct, Mon, Tue & Sat Oct–mid-Nov), completed in 1333 as England's first purpose-built prison, was recently revamped and all four floors can be visited in all their gruesome glory. The history of the Border Reivers – a group of clans who fought, kidnapped, blackmailed and killed each other in an effort to exercise control over a lawless tract of land along the Anglo-Scottish border throughout the 16th century – is also retold, along with tales of the punishments handed out in the prison.

Sleeping & Eating

West Close House (☎ 01434-603307; Hextol Tce; s/d from £30/60) This immaculate 1920s house, in a leafy cul-de-sac off Allendale Rd (the B6305) and surrounded by a beautiful garden, is highly recommended for its friendliness and comfort.

Hallbank Guest House (☎ 01434-605567; www.hallbankguesthouse.com; Hallgate; s/d from £70/100) Behind

the old gaol is this fine Edwardian house with three extravagantly furnished rooms: leather furniture, flat-screen TVs and huge beds.

There are several bakeries on Fore St and, if you turn left into the quaintly named Priestpople near the bus station, you'll find a selection of restaurants.

Dipton Mill (☎ 01434-606577; Dipton Mill Rd; mains around £6–10) For sheer atmosphere, you can't beat this superb country pub 2 miles out on the road to Blanchland, among woodland and by a river. It offers sought-after ploughman's lunches and real ale, not to mention a terrific selection of whiskies.

Getting There & Away

Bus 685 between Newcastle and Carlisle comes through Hexham hourly. The AD 122 and the winter-service bus 185 connect with other towns along the wall, and the town is on the Newcastle–Carlisle railway line (hourly).

CHESTERS ROMAN FORT & MUSEUM

The best-preserved remains of a Roman cavalry fort in England are at **Chesters** (EH; ☎ 01434-681379; admission £4.50; ☎ 9.30am–6pm Apr–Sep, 10am–4pm Oct–Mar), set among idyllic green woods and meadows and originally constructed to house a unit of troops from Asturias in northern Spain. They include part of a bridge (beautifully constructed and best appreciated from the eastern bank) across the River North Tyne, four well-preserved gatehouses, an extraordinary bathhouse and an underfloor heating system. The museum has a large collection of Roman sculpture. Take bus 880 or 882 from Hexham (5.5 miles away); it is also on the route of Hadrian's Wall bus AD 122.

HALTWHISTLE

pop 3810

It's one of the more important debates in contemporary Britain: where exactly is the centre of the country? The residents of Haltwhistle, basically one long street just north of the A69, claim that they're the ones. But then so do the folks in Dunsop Bridge, 71 miles to the south. Will we ever know the truth? In the meantime, Haltwhistle is the spot to get some cash and load up on gear and groceries. Thursday is market day.

The **tourist office** (☎ 01434-322002; ☎ 9.30am–1pm & 2–5.30pm Mon–Sat, 1–5pm Sun May–Sep, 9.30am–noon & 1–3.30pm Mon, Tue, & Thu–Sat Oct–Apr) is in the train station.

DETOUR: LANGLEY CASTLE

Langley Castle (☎ 01434-688888; www.langleycastle.com; s £110-200, d £135-255) This 14th-century castle in 4 hectares of woodland is the real deal minus the medieval privations. Live like one of the many nobles associated with the castle's history in one of the grand rooms, with pointy four-poster beds and window seats set in 2m-thick walls. Top of the heap is the fabulous Radcliffe Room, with a sunken circular bath and a sauna – modern guests are better off than the room's namesake, Sir Edward, who bought the Langley Estate in 1631 and pronounced himself the top aristocrat in Northumberland. The rooms in the recently converted gate lodge also have canopied beds but aren't nearly as grand. It's off the A686 (the road for Alston), which is off the A69 just before Haydon Bridge.

Ashcroft (☎ 01434-320213; www.ashcroftguesthouse.co.uk; Lanty's Lonnen; s/d from £36/72) is a marvelous Edwardian home surrounded by beautifully manicured, layered lawns and gardens from which there are stunning views (also enjoyed from the breakfast room). The owners like their flowers so much they decorated most of the house accordingly. Highly recommended.

Bus 685 comes from Newcastle (1½ hours) and Carlisle (45 minutes) 12 times daily. Hadrian's Wall bus AD 122 (June to September) or 185 (October to May) connects Haltwhistle with other places along the wall. Bus 681 heads south to Alston (55 minutes, three daily Monday to Saturday). The town is also on the Newcastle–Carlisle railway line (hourly).

AROUND HALTWHISTLE**Vindolanda Roman Fort & Museum**

The extensive site of **Vindolanda** (☎ 01434-344277; www.vindolanda.com; admission £5.20, with Roman Army Museum £8; ☎ 10am–6pm Apr–Sep, to 5pm Feb–Mar & Oct–Nov) offers a fascinating glimpse into the daily life of a Roman garrison town. The time-capsule museum displays leather sandals, signature Roman toothbrush-flourish helmet decorations, and countless writing tablets such as a student's marked work ('sloppy'), and a parent's note with a present of socks and underpants (things haven't changed – in this climate you can never have too many).

The museum is just one part of this large, extensively excavated site, which includes impressive parts of the fort and town (excavations continue) and reconstructed turrets and temple.

It's 1.5 miles north of Bardon Mill between the A69 and B6318 and a mile from Once Brewed.

Housesteads Roman Fort & Museum

The wall's most dramatic site – and the best-preserved Roman fort in the whole country – is at **Housesteads** (EH; ☎ 01434-344363; admission £4.50; ☎ 10am–6pm Apr–Sep, to 4pm Oct–Mar). From here, high on a ridge and covering 2 hectares, you can survey the moors of Northumberland National Park, and the snaking wall, with a sense of awe at the landscape and the aura of the Roman lookouts.

The substantial foundations bring fort life alive. The remains include an impressive hospital, granaries with a carefully worked-out ventilation system and barrack blocks. Most memorable are the spectacularly situated communal flushable latrines, which summon up Romans at their most mundane.

Housesteads is 2.5 miles north of Bardon Mill on the B6318, and about 3 miles from Once Brewed. It's popular, so try to visit outside summer weekends, or late in the day when the site will be quiet and indescribably eerie.

Other Sightings

A mile northwest of Greenhead, near Walltown Crag, the kid-pleasing **Roman Army Museum** (☎ 016977-47485; www.vindolanda.com; admission £4, with Vindolanda £7.50; ☎ 10am–6pm Apr–Sep, to 5pm Feb–Mar & Oct–Nov) provides lots of colourful background detail to wall life, such as how far soldiers had to march per day.

Technically it's in Cumbria (we won't tell if you don't), but the remains of the once-formidable **Birdoswald Roman Fort** (EH; ☎ 016977-47602; admission £4.50; ☎ 10am–5.30pm Mar–Oct), on an escarpment overlooking the beautiful Irthing Gorge, were part of the wall and so merit inclusion in this chapter on logical grounds. They're on a minor road off the B6318, about 3 miles west of Greenhead; a fine stretch of wall extends from here to Harrow Scar Milecastle. Across the impressive river footbridge, about

half a mile away, is another good bit of wall, ending in two turrets and the meticulous structure of the **Willowford Bridge abutment**.

About 3 miles further west along the A69, are the peaceful raspberry coloured ruins of **Lanerost Priory** (EH; ☎ 016977-3030; admission £3; ☎ 10am-6pm Apr-Sep, to 4pm Thu-Mon Oct), founded in 1166 by Augustinian canons. Ransacked several times, after the dissolution it became a private house and a priory church was created from the Early English nave. The church contains some beautiful Pre-Raphaelite stained glass. The AD 122 bus drops off at the gate.

Sleeping

Once Brewed YHA (☎ 0845 371 9753; www.yha.org.uk; Military Rd, Bardon Mill; dm £12; ☎ year-round) This modern and well-equipped hostel is central for visiting both Housesteads Fort, 3 miles away, and Vindolanda, 1 mile away. Bus 685 (from Hexham or Haltwhistle train stations) will drop you at Henshaw, 2 miles south, or you could leave the train at Bardon Mill 2.5 miles southeast. The Hadrian's Wall bus can drop you at the door from June to September.

Greenhead YHA (☎ 016977-47401; www.yha.org.uk; dm £13; ☎ Jul-Aug, call to check other times) A converted Methodist chapel by a trickling stream and a pleasant garden, 3 miles west of Haltwhistle. The hostel is served by bus AD 122 or 685.

Birdoswald YHA (☎ 0845 371 9551; www.yha.org.uk; dm £14; ☎ Easter-Oct, call to check other times) This farmhouse within the grounds of the Birdoswald complex has recently been converted into a hostel with basic facilities, including a self-service kitchen and laundry. The price includes a visit to the fort.

Holmhead Guest House (☎ 016977-47402; www.bandhadrianswall.com; Thirlwall Castle Farm, Greenhead; dm/s/d from £12.50/43/66) Four fairly compact rooms are available in this lovely remote old cottage; most of the space is taken up by the big beds. All the rooms have a shower rather than a bath. A barn was recently converted into a large dorm room, perfect for budget walkers and cyclists. It's about half a mile north of Greenhead.

NORTHUMBERLAND NATIONAL PARK

England's last great wilderness is the 398 sq miles of natural wonderland that make up Northumberland National Park, spread about the soft swells of the Cheviot Hills, the spiky

moors of autumn-coloured heather and gorse, and the endless acres of forest guarding the deep, colossal Kielder Water. Even the negligible human influence – even today, there are only about 2000 inhabitants here – has been benevolent: the finest sections of Hadrian's Wall run along the park's southern edge and the landscape is dotted with prehistoric remains and fortified houses – the thick-walled *peles* were the only solid buildings built here until the mid-18th century.

Orientation & Information

The park runs from Hadrian's Wall in the south, takes in the Simonside Hills in the east and runs into the Cheviot Hills along the Scottish border. There are few roads.

For information, contact **Northumberland National Park** (☎ 01434-605555; www.northumberland-national-park.org.uk; Eastburn, South Park, Hexham). Besides the tourist offices mentioned, there are relevant offices in **Once Brewed** (☎ 01434-344396; ☎ 10am-5pm mid-Mar–May, Sep & Oct, 9.30am-6pm Jun-Aug) as well as **Ingram** (☎ 01665-578890; ingram@nnpa.org.uk; ☎ 10am-5pm Easter-Oct). All the tourist offices handle accommodation bookings.

Activities

The most spectacular stretch of the Hadrian's Wall Path (p770) is between Sewingshields and Greenhead in the south of the park.

There are many fine walks through the Cheviots, frequently passing by prehistoric remnants; the towns of Ingram, Wooler and Rothbury make good bases, and their tourist offices can provide maps, guides and route information.

Though at times strenuous, cycling in the park is a pleasure; the roads are good and the traffic is light here. There's off-road cycling in Border Forest Park.

Getting There & Around

Public transport options are limited, aside from buses on the A69. See the Hadrian's Wall section (p771) for access to the south. Bus 808 (55 minutes, two daily Monday to Saturday) runs between Otterburn and Newcastle. Postbus 815 and bus 880 (45 minutes, eight daily Monday to Saturday, three on Sunday) run between Hexham and Bellingham. National Express bus 383 (three hours, four daily, £16.60) goes from Newcastle to Edinburgh via Otterburn, Byrness (by request), Jedburgh, Melrose and Galashiels.

BELLINGHAM

The small, remote village of Bellingham (bellin-*jum*) is a pleasant enough spot on the banks of the North Tyne, surrounded by beautiful, deserted countryside on all sides. It is an excellent base from which to kick off your exploration of the park.

The **tourist office** (☎ 01434-220616; Main St; ☹ 9.30am-1pm & 2-5pm Mon-Sat, 1-5pm Sun Apr-Oct, 2-5pm Mon-Sat Nov-Mar) handles visitor inquiries.

There's not a lot to see here save the 12th-century **St Cuthbert's Church**, unique because it retains its original stone roof, and **Cuddy's Well**, outside the churchyard wall, which is alleged to have healing powers on account of its blessing by the saint.

The **Hareshaw Linn Walk** passes through a wooded valley and over six bridges, leading to a 9m-high waterfall 2.5 miles north of Bellingham (*linn* is an Old English name for waterfall).

Bellingham is on the Pennine Way; book ahead for accommodation in summer. Most of the B&Bs are clustered around the village green.

Bellingham YHA (☎ 01434-220258; www.yha.org.uk; Woodburn Rd; ☎ £15; ☹ mid-Apr-Oct) is on the edge of the village. It is almost always busy, so be sure to book ahead. There are showers, a cycle store and a self-catering kitchen on the premises.

Lyndale Guest House (☎ 01434-220361; www.lyndale.guesthouse.co.uk; s/d from £30/60) The bedrooms in this pleasant family home just off the village green are modern and extremely tidy; it's a bit like visiting a really neat relative.

Pub grub is about the extent of the village's dining; recommended is the Black Bull or the Rose & Crown.

ROTHBURY

pop 1960

The one-time prosperous Victorian resort of Rothbury is an attractive, restful market town on the River Coquet that makes a convenient base for the Cheviots.

There's a **tourist office & visitor centre** (☎ 01669-620887; Church St; ☹ 10am-5pm Apr-Oct, to 6pm Jun-Aug).

The biggest draw in the immediate vicinity is **Cragside House, Garden and Estate** (NT; ☎ 01669-620333; admission £11, gardens & estate only £7; ☹ house 1-5.30pm Tue-Sun mid-Mar-Sep, 1-4.30pm Tue-Sun Oct-mid-Mar, gardens 10.30am-5.30pm Tue-Sun mid-Mar-Sep, 11am-4pm Wed-Sun Oct-mid-Mar), the quite incredible country retreat of the first Lord Armstrong.

In the 1880s the house had hot and cold running water, a telephone and alarm system, and was the first in the world to be lit by electricity, generated through hydropower – the original system has been restored and can be observed in the Power House. The Victorian gardens are also well worth exploring: huge and remarkably varied, they feature lakes, moors and one of the world's largest rock gardens. Visit in May to see myriad rhododendrons.

The estate is 1 mile north of town on the B6341; there is no public transport to the front gates from Rothbury; try **Rothbury Motors** (☎ 01669-620516) if you need a taxi.

High St is a good area to look for a place to stay.

Beamed ceilings, stone fireplaces and canopied four-poster beds make **Katerina's Guest House** (☎ 01669-602334; Sun Buildings, High St; www.katerinasguesthouse.co.uk; s/d from £45/68) one of the nicer options in town, even though the rooms are a little small.

Alternatively, the **Haven** (☎ 01669-620577; Back Crofts; s/d/ste £40/80/130) is a beautiful Edwardian home up on a hill with six lovely bedrooms and one elegant suite.

Food options are limited to pub grub. For takeaway you could try the **Rothbury Bakery** (High St) for pies and sandwiches or **Tully's** (High St) for flapjacks.

Bus 416 from Morpeth (30 minutes) leaves every two hours from Monday to Saturday and three times on Sunday.

KIELDER WATER

The northeast was thirsty, so they built it a lake, and a bloody huge one it is: Europe's largest artificial lake holds 200,000 million litres and has a shoreline of 27 miles. Surrounding it is England's largest forest, 150 million spruce and pine trees growing in nice, tidy fashion. Besides being busy creating H₂O and O₂ for this part of the world, the lake and forest are the setting for one of England's largest outdoor-adventure playgrounds, with water parks, cycle trails, walking routes and plenty of bird-watching sites, but it's also a great place to escape humanity: you are often as much as 10 miles from the nearest village. In summer, however, your constant companion will be the insistent midge: bring strong repellent.

The **Tower Knowe Visitor Centre** (☎ 0870 240 3549; www.visitnorthumberland.com; ☹ 10am-5pm Jun & Sep, to 6pm Jul-Aug, to 4pm Oct-Apr), near the southeastern

end of the lake, has plenty of information on the area, with lots of walking leaflets and maps, a cafe and a small exhibition on the history of the valley and lake. *Cycling at Kielder* and *Walking at Kielder* are useful leaflets available from any of the area's tourist offices (£2.70 each). They describe trails in and around the forest, their length and difficulty.

Sights & Activities

Most of the lake's activities are focused on **Leaplish Waterside Park** (☎ 0870-240 3549), located a few miles northwest of Tower Knowe. It is a purpose-built complex with a heated outdoor pool, sauna, fishing and other water sports as well as restaurants, cafes and accommodation.

The **Birds of Prey Centre** (☎ 01434-250400; www.discoverit.co.uk/falconry; admission £5; ☎ 10.30am-5pm Mar-Oct) is also located here, with owls, falcons and hawks flapping about; the birds are flown twice daily from April to September.

The **Osprey** (☎ 01434-250312; adult/child £7/4.50) is a small cruiser that navigates the lake (four per day Easter to October) and is the best way to get a sense of its huge size.

At the lake's northern end, 6 miles on from Leaplish and 3 miles from the Scottish border, is the sleepy village of **Kielder**.

Kielder Castle (☎ 01434-250209; admission free; ☎ 10am-5pm Apr-Oct, to 6pm Aug, 11am-4pm Sat & Sun Nov-Dec) was built in 1775 as a hunting lodge by the Duke of Northumberland. It now houses a Forestry Enterprise information centre, with countless maps and leaflets.

Sleeping & Eating

Leaplish Waterside Park (☎ 0870 240 3549; site per person £8, cabins £60, Reiver's Rest dm/d £17.50/38; ☎ Apr-Oct) The water park offers three distinct types of accommodation. The small campsite (12 pitches) is set among trees; the Reiver's Rest (formerly a fishing lodge) has en suite doubles and two dorms that all share a kitchen and a laundry, while the fully self-contained log cabins offer a bit of waterside luxury, complete with TVs and videos. The catch is that the cabins can only be rented for a minimum of three nights.

Kielder YHA (☎ 0845 371 9126; www.yha.org.uk; Butterbaugh, Kielder Village; dm £12; ☎ Apr-Oct) This well-equipped, activities-based hostel on the lake's northern shore has small dorms and a couple of four-bed rooms (£15 per person).

Gowanburn (☎ 01434-250254; s/d £34/70) Probably the most remote B&B in England is Mrs

Scott's fabulous spot on the eastern side of the lake at Gowanburn, accessible by a narrow road from Kielder village. The iron-grey lake spreads out before the house, the welcome is warm and the breakfast fantastic.

Falstone Tea Rooms (☎ 01434-240459; Old School House, Falstone) This place has filling all-day breakfasts for around £4.

Getting There & Around

From Newcastle, bus 714 – the 'Kielder Bus' (1½ hours) – goes directly to Kielder on Sundays and bank holidays, May to October. The bus leaves in the morning, turns into a shuttle between the various lake attractions and returns in the afternoon. Bus 814 (one hour, two daily Monday to Friday in term time) arrives from Otterburn, calling at Bellingham, Stannersburn, Falstone, Tower Knowe Information Centre and Leaplish; the bus begins in Bellingham from June to September (Tuesday and Friday only). **Postbus 815** (☎ 01452-333447) runs between Hexham train station and Kielder (two daily Monday to Friday, one Saturday) on a similar route along the lake and makes a detour to Gowanburn and Deadwater in the morning.

Kielder Bikes (☎ 01434-250392; Castle Hill; bike hire adult/child £22/14; ☎ 10am-6pm Easter-Sep) is opposite Kielder Castle. If no-one's around, there's an excellent long-distance doorbell.

WOOLER

pop 1860

A harmonious, stone-terraced town, Wooler owes its sense of unified design to a devastating fire in 1863, which resulted in an almost complete reconstruction. It is an excellent spot to catch your breath in, especially as it is surrounded by some excellent forays into the nearby Cheviots (including a clamber to the top of The Cheviot, at 815m the highest peak in the range) and is the midway point for the 65-mile St Cuthbert's Way, which runs from Melrose in Scotland to Holy Island on the coast.

The **tourist office** (☎ 01668-282123; www.wooler.org.uk; Cheviot Centre, 12 Padgepool Pl; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat & 10am-4pm Sun Jul-Aug, to 4pm Mon-Sat Apr & Oct, to 5pm Sat & Sun only Nov-Mar) is a mine of information on walks in the hills.

Activities

A popular walk from Wooler takes in **Humbleton Hill**, the site of an Iron Age hill fort and the location of yet another battle (1402)

between the Scots and the English. It's immortalised in 'The Ballad of Chevy Chase' (no, not *that* Chevy Chase – see boxed text, right) and Shakespeare's *Henry IV*. There are great views of the wild Cheviot Hills to the south and plains to the north, merging into the horizon. The well-posted 4-mile trail starts and ends at the bus station. It takes approximately two hours. Alternatively, the yearly **Chevy Chase** (www.woolerrunningclub.co.uk) is a classic 20-mile fell run with over 4000ft of accumulated climb, run at the beginning of July.

A more arduous hike leads to the top of the **Cheviot**, 6 miles southeast. The top is barren and wild, but on a clear day you can see the castle at Bamburgh and as far out as Holy Island. It takes around four hours to reach the top from Wooler. Check with the tourist office for information before setting out.

Sleeping & Eating

Wooler YHA (☎ 0845 371 9668; www.yha.org.uk; 30 Cheviot St; dm £14; ☞ Mon-Sat Apr-Jun, Tue-Sat Sep, Fri & Sat Mar) This recently refurbished hostel has 44 beds in a variety of rooms, a modern lounge and a small cafe.

Black Bull (☎ 01668-281309; www.theblackbullhotel.co.uk; 2 High St; s/d from £25/50; ☑) A 17th-century coaching inn that has retained much of its traditional character, this is probably the best option in town; it also does decent pub grub (mains around £8).

Tilldale House (☎ 01668-281450; www.tilldalehouse.co.uk; 34-40 High St; s/d from £35/40) This place has comfortable, spacious rooms that work on the aesthetic premise that you can never have enough of a floral print.

Getting There & Around

Wooler has good bus connections to the major towns in Northumberland. Bus 464 comes in from Berwick (50 minutes, five daily Monday to Saturday). Buses 470 (six daily Monday to Saturday) or 473 (eight daily Monday to Saturday) come from Alnwick. Bus 710 makes the journey from Newcastle (1½ hours, Wednesday and Saturday).

Cycle hire is available at **Haugh Head Garage** (☎ 01668-281316; per day from £15) in Haugh Head, 1 mile south of Wooler on the A697.

AROUND WOOLER

One of England's most interesting medieval castles, **Chillingham** (☎ 01668-215359; [#### WHICH CHEVY?](http://www.chilling</p>
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In 'The Ballad of Chevy Chase', the Chevy chase refers to a Cheviot hunt (ie hunting for deer). It was an English hunting party crossing into Scotland that caused the famous battle. Perhaps unexpectedly, there is a link between the American actor Chevy Chase and this Northumberland battle ballad – Mr Chase's grandmother was Scottish and gave him this nickname. His real name is Cornelius. Really.

ham-castle.com; adult/child £6.75/3; ☞ 1-5pm Sun-Fri Easter-Sep) is steeped in history, warfare, torture and ghosts: it is said to be one of the country's most haunted places, with ghostly clientele ranging from a phantom funeral to Lady Mary Berkeley in search of her errant husband.

The current owner, Sir Humphrey Wakefield, has gone to great lengths to restore the castle to its eccentric, noble best. This followed a 50-year fallow period when the Grey family (into which Sir Humphrey married) abandoned it, despite having owned it since 1245, because they couldn't afford the upkeep.

Well done, Sir H. Today's visitor is in for a real treat, from the extravagant medieval staterooms that have hosted a handful of kings in their day to the stone-flagged banquet halls, where many a turkey leg must surely have been hurled to the happy hounds. Belowground, Sir Humphrey has gleefully restored the grisly torture chambers, which have a polished rack and the none-too-happy face of an Iron Maiden. There's also a museum with a fantastically jumbled collection of objects – it's like stepping into the attic of a compulsive and well-travelled hoarder.

In 1220, 148 hectares of land were enclosed to protect the herd of **Chillingham Wild Cattle** (☎ 01668-215250; www.chillinghamwildcattle.com; adult/child £4.50/1.50; ☞ park 10am-noon & 2-5pm Mon & Wed-Sat, 2-5pm Sun Apr-Oct) from borderland raiders; this fierce breed is now the world's purest. They were difficult to steal, as they cannot herd and apparently make good guard animals. Around 40 to 60 make up the total population of these wild white cattle (a reserve herd is kept in a remote place in Scotland, in case of emergencies).

It's possible to stay at the medieval fortress in the seven apartments designed for guests, where the likes of Henry III and Edward I once snoozed. Prices vary depending on the luxury of the apartment; the **Grey Apartment** (£156) is the most expensive – it has a dining table to seat 12 – or there's the **Tower Apartment** (£120), in the Northwest Tower. All of the apartments are self-catering.

Chillingham is 6 miles southeast of Wooler. Bus 470 running between Alnwick and Wooler (six daily Monday to Saturday) stops at Chillingham.

NORTHUMBERLAND

The utterly wild and stunningly beautiful landscapes of Northumberland don't stop with the national park. Hard to imagine an undiscovered wilderness in a country so modern and populated, but as you cast your eye across the rugged interior you will see ne'er a trace of Man save the fortified houses and friendly villages that dot the horizon.

While the west is covered by the national park, the magnificent and pale sweeping coast to the east is the scene of long, stunning beaches, bookmarked by dramatic wind-worn castles and tiny islands offshore that really do have an air of magic about them. Hadrian's Wall emerges from the national park and slices through the south.

History

Northumberland takes its name from the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Northumbria (north of the River Humber). For centuries it served as the battleground for the struggle between north and south. After the arrival of the Normans in the 11th century, large numbers of castles and *peles* (fortified buildings) were built and hundreds of these remain. All this turmoil made life a tad unsettled till the 18th century brought calm. Today the land's turbulent history has echoes all around the sparsely populated countryside.

Getting Around

The excellent *Northumberland Public Transport Guide* (£1.90) is available from local tourist offices. Transport options are good, with a train line running along the coast from Newcastle to Berwick and on to Edinburgh.

ALNWICK

pop 7770

Northumberland's historic ducal town, Alnwick (no tongue gymnastics: just say 'an-ick') is an elegant maze of narrow cobbled streets spread out beneath the watchful gaze of a colossal medieval castle. Not only will you find England's most perfect bookshop, but also the most visited attraction in the northeast at Alnwick Garden.

The castle is on the northern side of town and overlooks the River Aln. The **tourist office** (☎ 01665-510665; www.visitalnwick.org.uk; 2 The Shambles; ☹ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 10am-4pm Sun) is by the marketplace, in a handsome building that was once a butcher's shop.

There has been a market in Alnwick for over 800 years. Market days are Thursday and Saturday, with a farmers market on the last Friday of the month.

Sights

The outwardly imposing **Alnwick Castle** (☎ 01665-510777; www.alnwickcastle.com; adult/child/concession £10.50/4.50/9; ☹ 10am-6pm Apr-Oct), ancestral home of the Duke of Northumberland and a favourite set for film-makers (it was Hogwarts for the first couple of *Harry Potter* films) has changed little since the 14th century. The interior is sumptuous and extravagant; the six rooms open to the public – staterooms, dining room, guard chamber and library – have an incredible display of Italian paintings, including Titian's *Ecce Homo* and many Canalettos.

The castle is set in parklands designed by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown. The woodland walk offers some great aspects of the castle, or for a view looking up the River Aln, take the B1340 towards the coast.

As spectacular a bit of green-thumb artistry as you'll see in England, **Alnwick Garden** (☎ 01665-510777; www.alnwickgarden.com; adult/child/concession £10/free/7.50; ☹ 10am-7pm Jun-Sep, to 6pm Apr-May & Oct, to 4pm Nov-Jan, to 5pm Feb-Mar) is one of the northeast's great success stories. Since the project began in 2000, the 4.8-hectare walled garden has been transformed from a derelict site into a spectacle that easily exceeds the grandeur of the castle's 19th-century gardens, a series of magnificent green spaces surrounding the breathtaking Grand Cascade – 120 separate jets spurting over 30,000L of water down 21 weirs for everyone to marvel at and kids to splash around in.

SOMETHING FOR THE WEEKEND

Northumberland's historic ducal town of Alnwick is the perfect choice for a getaway weekend and the **White Swan Hotel** (below) in the middle of town is the perfect base. On Saturday, visit the **castle** and its spectacular **garden** (opposite) – but don't miss the market, which has been running since the early 13th century. Also not to be missed is a pilgrimage to **Barter Books** (below), arguably the best bookshop in the country and a browser's dream. Kick off the evening with a pint in **Ye Old Cross** (below) before dining in Edwardian splendour in the dining room of the **White Swan Hotel** (below), which has the original decor from the *Titanic's* sister ship, the *Olympic*.

Sunday should be about exploring the surrounding area. **Warkworth Castle** (p780) is only a few miles away, while further on up the coast (only 6 miles from Alnwick) is the little sea village of **Craster** (p780), famous for its kippers. A short walk from here is **Dunstanburgh Castle** (p780) and **Embleton Bay** (p780), a wonderfully idyllic spot that reveals the best of Northumberland's windswept coastline.

There are a half-dozen other gardens, including the Franco-Italian-influenced Ornamental Garden (with more than 15,000 plants), the Rose Garden and the particularly fascinating Poison Garden, home to some of the deadliest – and most illegal – plants in the world, including cannabis, magic mushrooms, belladonna and even tobacco.

Festivals

The **Alnwick Fair** is an annual costumed re-enactment of an original medieval *foyre*. It features arts and crafts stalls, hog roasts, street theatre and the ubiquitous Dunking of the Wenches (in icy cold water): surely no fair is complete without it? Festivities kick off the last Sunday in June.

Sleeping & Eating

White Swan Hotel (☎ 01665-602109; www.classiclodges.co.uk; Bondgate Without; s/d from £70/115; (P) (W) wi-fi) Alnwick's top address is this 300-year-old coaching inn right in the heart of town. Its rooms are all of a pretty good standard (LCD screen TVs, DVD players and free wi-fi), but this spot stands out for its dining room, which has elaborate original panelling, ceiling and stained-glass windows filched from the *Olympic*, sister ship to the *Titanic*.

A row of handsome Georgian houses along Bondgate Without offers several worthwhile options that all charge around £32 per person, including **Lindisfarne Guest House** (☎ 01665-603430; 6 Bondgate Without) and the **Teapot** (☎ 604473; 8 Bondgate Without), which has the largest teapot collection in town.

A number of atmospheric pubs do a good line in traditional food. The **Market Tavern**

(☎ 01665-602759; 7 Fenkle St; stottie £6), near Market Sq, is the place to go for a traditional giant beef stottie (bread roll), while **Ye Old Cross** (☎ 01665-602735; Narrowgate; mains £6) is good for a drink to go along with your stottie cake, and is known as 'Bottles', after the dusty bottles in the window: 150 years ago the owner collapsed and died while trying to move them and no-one's dared attempt it since.

Shopping

Barter Books (☎ 01665-604888; www.barterbooks.co.uk; Alnwick Station; (M) 9am-7pm) One of the country's largest second-hand bookshops is the magnificent, sprawling Barter Books, housed in a Victorian railway station with coal fires, velvet ottomans and reading (once waiting) rooms. You could spend days in here.

Getting There & Away

There are regular buses from Newcastle (501, 505 and 518; one hour, 28 per day Monday to Saturday, 18 on Sunday). Bus 518 has 10 to 14 daily services to the attractive towns of Warkworth (25 minutes) and Alnmouth (15 minutes), which has the nearest train station. Buses 505 and 525 come from Berwick (45 minutes, 13 daily Monday to Saturday). The Arriva Day Pass (adult/child £6/5) is good value.

WARKWORTH

Biscuit-coloured Warkworth is little more than a cluster of houses around a loop in the River Coquet, but it makes for an impressive sight, especially if you arrive on the A1068 from Alnwick, when the village literally unfolds before you to reveal the craggy ruin of the enormous 14th-century castle.

A 'worm-eaten hold of ragged stone', **Warkworth Castle** (EH; ☎ 01665-711423; adult £4; 🚶 10am-5pm Apr-Sep, to 4pm Oct, Sat-Mon only Nov-Mar) features in Shakespeare's *Henry IV* Parts I and II and will not disappoint modern visitors. Yes, it is still pretty worm-eaten and ragged, but it crowns an imposing site, high above the gentle, twisting river. *Elizabeth* (1998), starring Cate Blanchett, was filmed here.

Tiny, mystical, 14th-century **Warkworth Hermitage** (EH; adult/child £3/free; 🕒 11am-5pm Wed & Sun Apr-Sep), carved into the rock, is a few hundred yards upriver. Follow the signs along the path, then take possibly the world's shortest ferry ride. It's a lovely stretch of water and you can hire a **rowing boat** (adult/child per 45 min £5/3; 🕒 Sat & Sun May-Sep).

Fourteen huge, country-style bedrooms sit above a cosy bar at the **Sun Hotel** (☎ 01665-711259; www.rytonpark-sun.co.uk; 6 Castle Tce; s/d from £55/85, with dinner £69/112; 🍷), and an elegant restaurant serves local dishes given the French treatment. There are excellent views of both the castle and the river.

Right in the centre of the village, the **Greenhouse** (☎ 01665-712322; 21 Dial Pl; mains £8-14; 🍷 lunch & dinner Mon & Wed-Sat, lunch only Sun) is a cafe-bistro that serves great coffee, cakes and more substantial fish and meat dishes on large pine tables.

Bus 518 links Newcastle (1½ hours, hourly), Warkworth, Alnmouth and Alnwick. There's a train station on the main east-coast line, about 1.5 miles west of town.

CRASTER

Sandy, salty Craster is a small sheltered fishing village about 6 miles north of Alnwick that is famous for its kippers. In the early 20th century, 2500 herring were smoked here *daily*; these days, it's mostly cigarettes that are smoked, but the kippers they do produce are excellent.

The place to buy them is **Robson & Sons** (☎ 01665-576223; www.kipper.co.uk; 2 for around £8), which has been stoking oak-sawdust fires since 1865. For fish facts and other info, call into the **tourist office** (☎ 01665-576007; Quarry Car Park; 🕒 9.30am-5.30pm Apr-Oct, to 4.30pm Sat & Sun Nov-Mar).

You can also sample the day's catch – crab and kipper pâté are particularly good – and contemplate the splendid views at the **Jolly Fisherman** (☎ 01665-576218; sandwiches £3-5).

Bus 401 or 501 from Alnwick calls at Craster (30 minutes, around five daily). A

pay-and-display car park is the only place in Craster where it's possible to park your car.

Dunstanburgh Castle

A dramatic 1-mile walk along the coast from Craster is the most scenic path to the striking, weather-beaten ruins of yet another atmospheric **castle** (EH & NT; ☎ 01665-576231; admission £3.50; 🚶 10am-5pm Apr-Sep, to 4pm Oct-Mar, Thu-Mon only Nov-Mar). The haunting sight of the ruins, high on a basalt outcrop famous for its sea birds, can be seen for miles along this exhilarating stretch of shoreline.

Dunstanburgh was once one of the largest border castles. Its construction began in 1314, it was strengthened during the Wars of the Roses, but then left to rot. Only parts of the original wall and gatehouse keep are still standing; it was already a ruin by 1550, so it's a tribute to its builders that so much is left today. It is jointly administered by English Heritage and the National Trust.

You can also reach the castle on foot from Embleton.

EMBLETON BAY

From Dunstanburgh, beautiful Embleton Bay, a pale wide arc of sand, stretches around to the endearing, sloping village of **Embleton**. The village is home to the stunning seaside **Dunstanburgh Castle Golf Club** (☎ 01665-576562; www.dunstanburgh.com; green fee weekday/weekend £25/30) – first laid out in 1900 and improved upon by golf legend and 'inventor' of the dogleg, James Braid (1870-1950), in 1922 – and a cluster of houses. Bus 401 or 501 from Alnwick calls here too.

Past Embleton, the broad vanilla-coloured strand curves around to end at **Low-Newton-by-the-Sea**, a tiny whitewashed, National Trust-preserved village with a fine pub. Behind the bay is a path leading to the **Newton Pool Nature Reserve**, an important spot for breeding and migrating birds such as black-headed gulls and grasshopper warblers. There are a couple of hides where you can peer out at them. You can continue walking along the headland beyond Low Newton, where you'll find **Football Hole**, a delightful hidden beach between headlands.

Sleeping & Eating

Sportsman (☎ 01665-576588; www.sportsmanhotel.co.uk; 6 Sea lane, Embleton; s/d from £36/64) This large, relaxed place set up from the bay has a wide

deck out the front and a spacious, plain wooden bar that serves top nosh. Upstairs are 12 beautifully appointed rooms – nine of which look over the bay and golf course – but all have solid-oak beds and handsome pine furniture.

Ship Inn (☎ 01665-576262; www.shipinnnewton.co.uk; Low-Newton-by-the-Sea; bar food £4-8, mains £9) Our favourite pub in all of Embleton Bay is this wonderfully traditional ale house with a large open yard for fine weather, although it would take a real dose of sunshine to tear yourself away from the cosy interior. The menu puts a particular emphasis on local produce, so you can choose from local lobster (caught 50m away), Craster kippers or perhaps a good ploughman's lunch made with cheddar from a local dairy. A converted barn is a self-contained apartment that sleeps up to four people (double £70, per week £420).

Blink Bonny (☎ 01665-576595; Christon Bank; mains £6-9) Named after a famous racehorse, this typical stone country pub is a cut above the average. A huge open fireplace, oak panelling everywhere and a menu that puts a heavy accent on seafood (the lobster is particularly recommended), plus traditional music at weekends – what more could you want?

FARNE ISLANDS

One of England's most incredible seabird conventions is found on a rocky archipelago of islands about 3 miles offshore from the undistinguished fishing village of **Seahouses**. There's a **tourist office** (☎ 01655-720884; Seafield Rd; ☎ 10am-5pm Apr-Oct) near the harbour in Seahouses and a **National Trust Shop** (☎ 01665-721099; 16 Main St; ☎ 10am-5pm Apr-Oct) for all island-specific information.

The best time to visit the **Farne Islands** (NT; ☎ 01665-720651; admission £5.60, Apr & Aug-Sep £4.80; ☎ 10.30am-6pm Apr & Aug-Sep, Inner Farne also 1.30-5pm May-Jul, Staple also 10.30am-1.30pm May-Jul) is during breeding season (roughly May to July), when you can see feeding chicks of 20 species of seabird, including puffin, kittiwake, Arctic tern, eider duck, cormorant and gull. This is a quite extraordinary experience, for there are few places in the world where you can get so close to nesting seabirds. The islands are also home to England's only colony of grey seals.

To protect the islands from environmental damage, only two are accessible to the public: Inner Farne and Staple Island. Inner Farne is the more interesting of the two, as it is also

the site of a tiny chapel (1370, restored 1848) to the memory of St Cuthbert, who lived here for a spell and died here in 687.

Getting There & Away

There are various tours, from 1½-hour cruises to all-day specials, and they get going from 10am April to October. Crossings can be rough, and may be impossible in bad weather. Some of the boats have no proper cabin, so make sure you've got warm, waterproof clothing if there's a chance of rain. Also recommended is an old hat – those birds sure can ruin a head of hair!

Of the operators from the dock in Seahouses, **Billy Shiel** (☎ 01665-720308; www.farne-islands.com; 3hr tour adult/child £12/8, all-day tour with landing £25/15) is recommended – he even got an MBE for his troubles.

BAMBURGH

Bamburgh is all about the castle, a massive, imposing structure high up on a basalt crag and visible for miles around. The village itself – a tidy fist of houses around a pleasant green – isn't half bad, but it's really just about the castle, a solid contender for England's best.

Bamburgh Castle (☎ 01668-214515; www.bamburghcastle.com; adult/child £7/2.40; ☎ 10am-5pm Mar-Oct) is built around a powerful 11th-century Norman keep probably built by Henry II, although its name is a derivative of Bebbanburgh, after the wife of Anglo-Saxon ruler Aedelfrip, whose fortified home occupied this basalt outcrop 500 years earlier. The castle played a key role in the border wars of the 13th and 14th centuries, and in 1464 was the first English castle to fall as the result of a sustained artillery attack, by Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, during the Wars of the Roses. It was restored in the 19th century by the great industrialist Lord Armstrong, who also turned his passion to Cragside (p775) and was the owner of Jesmond Dene House in Newcastle (p753). The great halls within are still home to the Armstrong family. It's just inland from long open stretches of empty white-sand beach, ideal for blustery walks.

The **Grace Darling Museum** (☎ 01668-214465; admission by donation £2; ☎ 10am-5pm) has displays on Bamburgh's most famous resident, lighthouse keepers in general and the small boats they rescued people in. Grace was a local lass who rowed out to the grounded, flailing SS *Forfarshire* in 1838 and saved its

TOP FIVE NORTHEAST ENGLAND CASTLES

- Chillingham Castle (p777; Wooler)
- Warkworth Castle (p780; Warkworth)
- Bamburgh Castle (p781; Bamburgh)
- Dunstanburgh Castle (p780; Embleton Bay)
- Lindisfarne Castle (opposite; Holy Island)

crew in the middle of a dreadful storm. She became the plucky heroine of her time – a real Victorian icon.

Sleeping & Eating

Bamburgh Hall Farm (☎ 01668-214230; www.bamburghhallfarm.com; s/d incl breakfast £40/60; (P)) This magnificent farmhouse built in 1697 has only one room, but we highly recommend it for the sheer pleasure of the views, right down to the sea, and the huge breakfast, served in the very dining room where the Jacobite officers met during the rebellion of 1715.

Victoria Hotel (☎ 01668-214431; www.victoriahotel.net; Front St; s/d from £65/90; (P)) Overlooking the village green is this handsome hotel with bedrooms decorated with quality antiques and – in the superior rooms – handcrafted four-posters. Here you'll also find the best restaurant in town, with a surprisingly adventurous menu (mains £10 to £16) that matches local fare with exotic flavours – how about a fillet of beef with pak choi?

Greenhouse (☎ 01668-214513; www.thegreenhouseguesthouse.co.uk; 5-6 Front St; r from £65; (P)) With four large, modern rooms with power showers and a mix of views (rooms 1 and 2 overlooking the front are best), this is a decent option, although they are loath to sell a room as a single during the summer.

our pick **Waren House Hotel** (☎ 01668-214581; www.warehousehotel.co.uk; Waren Mill; d/ste £143/175; (P) (G)) This most romantic of getaway hotels presents a delicious dilemma: whether to spend more time enjoying the superb setting, overlooking Budle Bay and Holy Island to the east and the Cheviot Hills to the west, or to lock yourself indoors and lose yourself in the luxurious trappings (try the three-course dinner, £27) of this magnificent house. The hotel is in the small hamlet of Waren Mill, 2 miles northwest of Bamburgh along the B1340.

You can stock up for a picnic at the **Pantry** (☎ 01668-214455; 13 Front St; sandwiches £2.50-4.50); the **Copper Kettle** (☎ 01668-214361; 22 Front St; afternoon tea £5-7) is a gift shop with a pleasant tearoom.

Getting There & Away

Bus 501 runs from Newcastle (2¼ hours, two daily Monday to Saturday, one Sunday) stopping at Alnwick and Seahouses. Bus 401 or 501 from Alnwick (four to six daily) takes one hour.

HOLY ISLAND (LINDISFARNE)

'A strange and mystical island,' a local might whisper solemnly in your ear, inferring even a hint of magic. Holy Island is often referred to as an unearthly place, and while a lot of this talk is just that (and a little bit of bring-'em-in tourist bluster), there *is* something almost other-worldly about this small island (it's only 2 sq miles). It's tricky to get to, as it's connected to the mainland by a narrow, glinting causeway that only appears at low tide. It's also fiercely desolate and isolated, barely any different from when St Aidan came to what was then known as Lindisfarne to found a monastery in 635. As you cross the empty flats to get here, it's not difficult to imagine the marauding Vikings that repeatedly sacked the settlement between 793 and 875, when the monks finally took the hint and left. They carried with them the illuminated *Lindisfarne Gospels* (now in the British Library in London) and the miraculously preserved body of St Cuthbert (see boxed text, p761), who lived here for a couple of years but preferred the hermit's life on Inner Farne. A priory was re-established in the 11th century but didn't survive the dissolution in 1537.

It is this strange mix of magic and menace that attracts the pious and the curious; during summer weekends the tiny fishing village, built around the red-sandstone remains of the medieval priory, swarms with visitors. The island's peculiar isolation is best appreciated midweek or preferably out of season, when the wind-lashed, marram-covered dunes offer the same bleak existence as that taken on by St Aidan and his band of hardy monks.

Whatever you do, pay attention to the crossing-time information, available at tourist offices and on notice boards throughout the area. Every year there is a handful of

go-it-alone fools who are caught midway by the incoming tide and have to abandon their cars.

Sights

Lindisfarne Priory (EH; ☎ 01289-389200; admission £4; 🕒 9.30am-5pm Apr-Sep, to 4pm Oct & Feb-Mar, 10am-2pm Sat-Mon Nov-Jan) consists of elaborate red and grey ruins and the later 13th-century St Mary the Virgin Church. The museum next to these displays the remains of the first monastery and tells the story of the monastic community before and after the dissolution.

Twenty pages of the luminescent *Lindisfarne Gospels* are on view electronically at the **Lindisfarne Heritage Centre** (☎ 01289-389004; www.lindisfarne.org.uk; Marygate; adult/child £3.50/free; 🕒 10am-5pm Apr-Oct, according to tides Nov-Mar), which also has displays on the locality.

Also in the village is **St Aidan's Winery** (☎ 01289-389230), where you can buy the sickly sweet Lindisfarne Mead, cleverly foisted upon unsuspecting pundits as an age-old aphrodisiac.

Half a mile from the village stands the tiny, storybook **Lindisfarne Castle** (NT; ☎ 01289-389244; adult £6; 🕒 10.30am-3pm or noon-4.30pm Tue-Sun Apr-Oct), built in 1550, and extended and converted by Sir Edwin Lutyens from 1902 to 1910 for Mr Hudson, the owner of *Country Life* magazine. You can imagine some decadent parties have graced its alluring rooms – Jay Gatsby would have been proud. Its opening times may be extended depending on the tide. A **shuttle bus** (☎ 01289-389236) runs here from the car park.

Sleeping & Eating

It's possible to stay on the island, but you'll need to book in advance.

Open Gate (☎ 01289-389222; opengate@aidanandhilda.demon.co.uk; Marygate; s/d £32/58) This spacious Elizabethan stone farmhouse with comfortable rooms caters primarily to those looking for a contemplative experience – you're not as much charged a room rate as 'encouraged' to give the listed price as a donation. There is a small chapel in the basement and a room full of books on Celtic spirituality, and there are organised retreats throughout the year.

Ship Inn (☎ 01289-389311; www.theshipinn-holyisland.co.uk; Marygate; s/d/tr £72/94/112) Three exceptionally comfortable rooms – one with a four-poster – sit above an 18th-century public house known here as the Tavern. There's good local seafood in the bar.

Getting There & Around

Holy Island can be reached by bus 477 from Berwick (Wednesday and Saturday only, Monday to Saturday July and August). People taking cars across are requested to park in one of the signposted car parks (£5 per day). The sea covers the causeway and cuts the island off from the mainland for about five hours each day. Tide times are listed at tourist offices, in local papers and at each side of the crossing.

BERWICK-UPON-TWEED

pop 12,870

The northernmost city of England is a salt-encrusted fortress town that is the stubborn holder of two unique honours: it is the most fought-over settlement in European history (between 1174 and 1482 it changed hands 14 times between the Scots and the English); and its football team, Berwick Rangers, are the only English team to play in the Scottish League – albeit in lowly Division Two. (In fact, a 2008 poll showed most residents would like the town to become part of Scotland again.)

Although it has been firmly English since the 15th century, it retains its own peculiar identity, as though the vagaries of its seesaw history have forced it to look inwards and not trust anyone but its own – you need only walk its massive ramparts, built during Elizabethan times and still virtually complete, to understand the town's insularity.

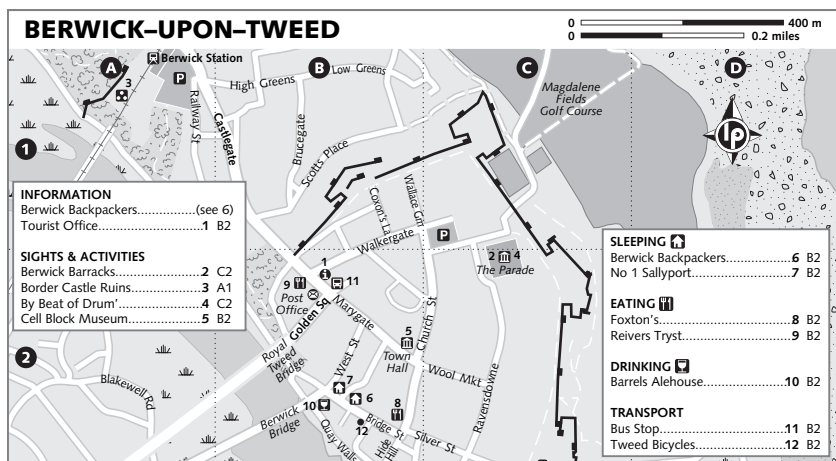
Orientation & Information

The fortified town of Berwick is on the northern side of the Tweed; the three bridges link with the uninteresting suburbs of Tweedmouth, Spittal and Eastcliffe.

The **tourist office** (☎ 01289-330733; www.berwick-upon-tweed.gov.uk; 106 Marygate; 🕒 10am-6pm Easter-Jun, to 5pm Jul-Sep, to 4pm Mon-Sat Oct-Easter) is helpful. Access the internet at **Berwick Backpackers** (☎ 01289-331481; 56-58 Bridge St; per 20 min £2).

Sights & Activities

Berwick's superb **walls** (EH; admission free) were begun in 1558 to reinforce an earlier set built during the reign of Edward II. They represented state-of-the-art military technology of the day and were designed both to house artillery (in arrowhead-shaped bastions) and to withstand it (the walls are low and massively thick, but it's still a long way to fall).



You can walk almost the entire length of the walls, a circuit of about a mile. It's a must, with wonderful, wide-open views. Only a small fragment remains of the once mighty **border castle**, by the train station. The tourist office has a brochure describing the main sights.

Designed by Nicholas Hawksmoor, **Berwick Barracks** (EH; ☎ 01289-304493; The Parade; admission £4; ☞ 10am-5pm Apr-Oct, to 4pm Nov-Mar) is the oldest purpose-built barracks (1717) in Britain and now houses the By Beat of Drum Museum, chronicling the history of British soldiery from 1660 to 1900.

The original gaol cells in the upper floor of the town hall (1750-61) have been preserved to house the **Cell Block Museum** (☎ 01289-330900; Marygate; admission £2.50; ☞ tours 10.30am & 2pm Mon-Fri Apr-Oct), devoted to crime and punishment, with tours taking in the public rooms, museum, gaol and belfry.

Recommended are the one-hour **guided walks** (adult/child £4/free; ☞ 10am, 11.15am, 12.30pm & 2pm Mon-Fri Apr-Oct) starting from the tourist office.

Sleeping

There are plenty of B&Bs around the town, most of which offer fairly basic but comfortable rooms; the tourist office can assist in finding one.

Berwick Backpackers (☎ 01289-331481; www.berwickbackpackers.co.uk; 56-58 Bridge St; dm/s/d from £13/16/38; P) This excellent hostel, basically a series of rooms in the outhouses of

a Georgian home around a central courtyard, has one large comfortable dorm, a single and two doubles, all en suite. Highly recommended.

ourpick No 1 Sallyport (☎ 01289-308827; www.1sallyport-bedandbreakfast.com; 1 Sallyport, off Bridge St; r £110-170) Not just the best in town, but one of the best B&Bs in England, No 1 Sallyport has only six suites – each carefully appointed to fit the theme. The Manhattan Loft, crammed into the attic, makes the minimalist most of the confined space; the Lowry Room is a country-style Georgian classic; the Smuggler's Suite has a separate sitting room complete with wide-screen TV, DVD players and plenty of space to lounge around in. Newer additions include the Tiffany Suite and the recently added attic Mulberry Suite, bathed in light.

Eating & Drinking

Good dining is a little thin on the ground, but there are a few exceptions.

Foxton's (☎ 01289-303939; 26 Hide Hill; mains £8-12; ☞ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) This decent brasserie-style restaurant has Continental dishes to complement the local fare, which means there's something for everyone.

Reivers Tryst (☎ 01289-332455; 119 Marygate; lunch mains £4-7, dinner mains £8-12; ☞ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) From the hearty breakfast through to homemade pies for lunch and the likes of lemon sole in the evening, this place specialises in classic English cuisine – nothing fancy, but very good.

Barrels Alehouse (☎ 01289-308013; 56 Bridge St) Elvis and Muhammad Ali grace the walls of this fine pub, where you'll also find real ale and vintage Space Invaders. There's regular live music in the atmospherically dingy basement bar.

Getting There & Away

BUS

Buses stop on Golden Sq (where Marygate becomes Castlegate); there are good links from Berwick into the Scottish Borders; there are buses west to Coldstream, Kelso and Galashiels. Buses 505, 515 and 525 go to Newcastle (2¼ hours, five daily) via Alnwick. Bus 253 goes to Edinburgh (two hours, six daily Monday to Saturday, two Sunday) via Dunbar.

TRAIN

Berwick is almost exactly halfway between Edinburgh (£18.20, one hour) and Newcastle (£17.50, 50 minutes) on the main east-coast London-Edinburgh line. Half-hourly trains between Edinburgh and Newcastle stop in Berwick.

Getting Around

The town centre is compact and walkable; if you're feeling lazy try **Berwick Taxis** (☎ 01289-307771). **Tweed Bicycles** (☎ 01289-331476; 17a Bridge St) hires out mountain bikes for £14 a day.

AROUND BERWICK-UPON-TWEED

Norham Castle

Once considered the most dangerous place in the country, the pinkish ruins of **Norham Castle** (EH; ☎ 01289-382329; admission £2.50; ☎ 10am-6pm Sat & Sun Mar-Sep) are quiet these days, but during the border wars it was besieged no less than 13 times, including a year-long siege by Robert the Bruce in 1318. The last attack came just three weeks before the Battle of Flodden (see Crookham & Around, right), and the castle was once again restored to the prince bishops of Durham, for whom it was originally built in 1160 to guard a swerving bend in the River Tweed.

The castle ruins are 6.5 miles southwest of Berwick on a minor road off the A698; bus 23 regularly passes Norham Castle from Berwick train station on its way to Kelso in Scotland (seven daily Monday to Saturday).

Etal & Ford

The pretty villages of Etal and Ford are part of a 23.45-sq-mile working rural estate set

between the coast and the Cheviots, a lush and ordered landscape that belies its ferocious, bloody history.

Etal (*eet-le*) perches at the estate's northern end, and its main attraction is the roofless 14th-century **castle** (EH; ☎ 01890-820332; admission £3.50; ☎ 11am-4pm Apr-Oct). It was captured by the Scots just before the ferocious Battle of Flodden (see below), and has a striking border-warfare exhibition. It is 12 miles south of Berwick on the B6354.

About 1.5 miles southeast of here is Ford, where you can visit the extraordinary **Lady Waterford Hall** (☎ 01890-820524; adult/child £2/1.50; ☎ 10.30am-12.30pm & 1.30pm-5.30pm Apr-Oct, other times by appointment), a fine Victorian schoolhouse decorated with biblical murals and pictures by Louisa Anna, Marchioness of Waterford. The imposing 14th-century **Ford Castle** is closed to the public.

If you're travelling with kids, we recommend a spin on the toy-town **Heatherslaw Light Railway** (☎ 01890-820244; adult/child £6/4; ☎ hourly 11am-3pm Apr-Oct, to 4.30pm mid-Jul-Aug), which chugs from the Heatherslaw Corn Mill (about halfway between the two villages) to Etal Castle. The 3.5-mile return journey follows the river through pretty countryside.

SLEEPING & EATING

Estate House (☎ 01890-820668; www.theestatehouse.co.uk; Ford; s/d £45/70) This fine house near Lady Waterford Hall has three lovely bedrooms (all with handsome brass beds) overlooking a colourful, mature garden. An excellent choice – the owners have a plethora of local information.

Black Bull (☎ 01890-820200; Etal) This white-washed, popular place is Northumberland's only thatched pub. It serves great pub food and pours a variety of well-kept ales.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Bus 267 between Berwick and Wooler stops at both Etal and Ford (six daily, Monday to Saturday).

Crookham & Around

Unless you're a Scot or a historian, chances are you won't have heard of the Battle of Flodden, but this 1513 encounter between the Scots and the English – which left the English victorious and the Scots to count 10,000 dead, including James IV of Scotland and most of his nobles – was a watershed in the centuries-old scrap

between the two. A large stone cross, a monument 'to the brave of both nations', surmounts an innocuous hill overlooking the battlefield and is the only memorial to the thousands used as arrow fodder.

SLEEPING & EATING

our pick **Coach House** (☎ 01890-820293; www.coachhousecrookham.com; Crookham; s/d incl breakfast from £52/74) This is an exquisite guesthouse spread about a 17th-century cottage, an old smithy and other outbuildings. There is a variety of rooms, from the traditional (with rare

chestnut beams and country-style furniture) to contemporary layouts flavoured with Mediterranean and Indian touches. The food (dinner £19.50), beginning with an organic breakfast, is absolutely delicious and the equal of any restaurant around.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The battlefield is 1.5 miles west of Crookham, on a minor road off the A697; Crookham itself is 3 miles west of Ford. Bus 710, which runs between Newcastle and Kelso serves these parts (two daily Monday to Friday).