

The Angel's Way



Seaton Sluice - Newcastle,
Gateshead - Chester-le-Street
- Durham





The Christian crossroads of the British Isles



Seaton Sluice – Seaton Delaval Hall – Holywell – Burradon – Camperdown – Killingworth – Longbenton – Jesmond Dene – Newcastle – Gateshead – Saltwell Park – Angel of the North – Kibblesworth – High Uppeth – Pelton – Chester-le-Street – (Join Way of Learning) – Finchale Abbey – Durham Cathedral

Distance: 30 miles/48km

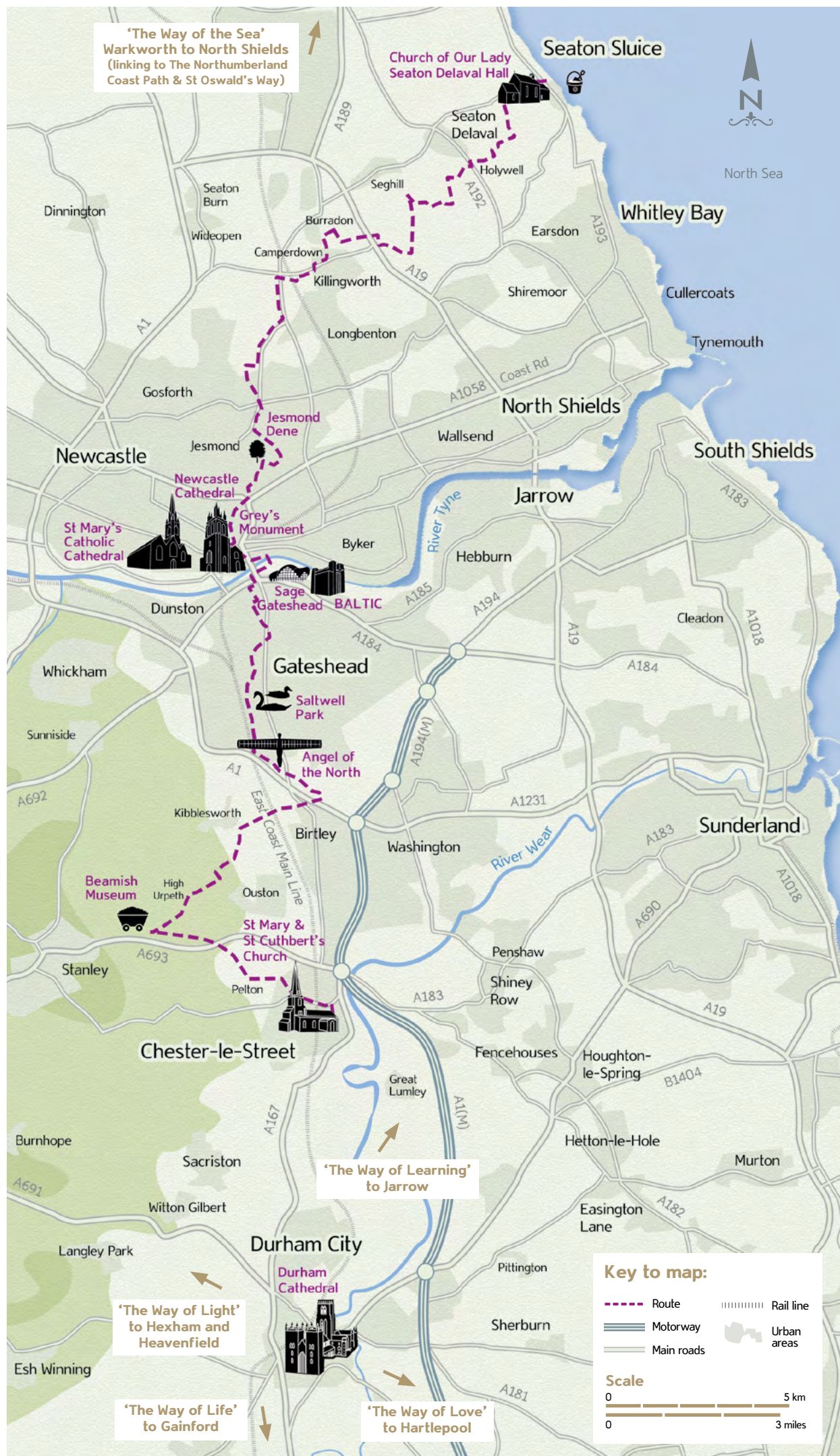
The Angel's Way

Traverse Tyneside in all its multi-faceted allure, from a sandy seaside village to the site that once housed St Cuthbert's remains, through a titanic legacy of medieval magic, Industrial Age endeavour and sheer contemporary class.

Newcastle and Gateshead, the two areas in which The Angel's Way spends most of its time, are potent symbols of how places can rise, fall and rise again to become cultural life forces. Few can deny today that these Tyneside locales showcase some of England's most enticing arts and architecture, and even fewer would have thought this possible until quite recently in their respective histories. It is hard to attribute Newcastle and Gateshead's astonishing renaissance to any one event, for their potential was always huge. But one giant step along the way was when the Angel of the North that would become Britain's best-known and most-viewed sculpture was built on a hill above Gateshead. It was symbolic of many things, but most importantly of how Tyneside had turned a corner and was again becoming a big attraction to visitors to North East England. And so

The Angel's Way takes this as its inspiration. The path is one of the most cosmopolitan Northern Saints Trails, introducing you to some of the North East's most noteworthy art galleries, museums and cultural venues. Were you to absorb everything on this route, you would need days in addition to actual walking time. But there is more than spectacular city sightseeing in the wings. You will also traverse the seldom-visited countryside on Tyneside's fringes: peaceful sandy beach-side village Seaton Sluice, Grade 1 listed country mansion Seaton Delaval Hall or the divine wooded gorge of Jesmond Dene in Newcastle itself. And the walk concludes on a profound note: at the Chester-le-Street site that once housed St Cuthbert's body before continuing on to Durham Cathedral. Hike the whole Angel's Way, and flit between truly world-class big city attractions and heavenly rural hinterlands.







Seaton Sluice

Seaside village abutting a divine sandy beach and harbouring a hazard-fraught seafaring past.

Seaton Sluice village sits at the southern end of a glimmering expanse of golden sands, **Seaton Sluice Beach**, which arcs in a 3-mile dune-backed band to Blyth. This, The Angel Way's sleepy start-point, straddles the snaking Seaton Burn, which widens into a pretty, apostrophe-shaped **harbour** before meeting the sea. Its course sculpts out a headland home to the interesting 1880-built **Watch House Museum**, remembering the volunteer life-saving groups that once helped out the overstretched coastguard along the shipwreck-prone seaboard.

Fuel yourself for your pilgrimage with the famous fish and chips: available in the village's historic pubs and local fish and chip shop. Ready to start walking? The area's most famous sight, ostentatious mansion Seaton Delaval Hall, is one mile west on The Angel's Way.

Seaton Sluice also links up with another Northern Saints Trail, **The Way of the Sea**.



Seaton Delaval Hall

Baroque country mansion with a cursed past and a charmed present.

Some places have guardian angels; this lavish 1720's residence was long synonymous with utter lucklessness. When Admiral George Delaval acquired it in 1718 he was assured there was no hope of refurbishing his crumbling family pile short of knocking it down, and so that was what he did. Sir John Vanbrugh, among the age's foremost architects and designer of Blenheim Palace, was enlisted for the rebuild; **Seaton Delaval Hall** would become his finest work but both he and the admiral died before its completion in 1728. For a century the house became the abode of the 'Gay Delavals', notorious for wild parties and other scandals, and family fortunes were squandered with spectacular extravagance. Then in 1822, a fire destroyed the house and it lay unoccupied, save for a stint as a World War II prisoner-of-war camp, for the next 130 years. It is now a National Trust property, with restoration work almost complete, although some of the hall's wings remain off-limits.

The Baroque building, flanked by towers almost reminiscent of an embattled Northumbrian fortress and set in stunning formal gardens, adorned by some bizarre and brilliant statues, constitutes some of the North East's most splendid architecture. Of the Delaval's original pad, however, only the beautiful 12th century **Church of Our Lady** remains.

The Angel's Way now flits through the Newcastle-upon-Tyne green belt towards the city suburbs.



Jesmond Dene, Newcastle

This serene, steep-sided valley is Newcastle's most picturesque place to pass time.

Just as the city enfolds around you, Jesmond Dene brings the countryside bounding beautifully back. The Ouseburn, a tributary of the Tyne, gouges through this time-lost, steep woodsy gorge, which, thanks to the forward-thinking protection of William George Armstrong in the 1850s, has stayed a lush, development-free pocket of Newcastle.

Many signs of bygone centuries are secreted here, such as the 12th century **St Mary's Chapel** and nearby **St Mary's Well**, both places of pilgrimage to this day due to various miracles ascribed to them. Remains of an old **mill** on the valley bottom also hark to a pastoral era in Newcastle's history; the pastoral element was something Armstrong was keen to preserve and accordingly he constructed a **waterfall** at one end of the park and the magnificent **Armstrong Bridge** at the other to improve aesthetics.

Near the bridge is a **visitor centre** with further information on the park's history and a **café**. Numerous nature trails, picnicking areas and guided walks all add to the delightful Dene's appeal.





Great North Museum: Hancock, Hatton Gallery, Laing Art Gallery and Hancock Gallery

A great museum and three nationally important galleries.

It's time for a change of scene on The Angel's Way. You now enter central Newcastle which, these days, hosts one of England's most dynamic arts and cultural scenes outside London, as this quartet of mighty cultural attractions illustrates. First up is the **Great North Museum: Hancock**. The museum sports a standout interactive exhibit of Hadrian's Wall: an overview of the colossal nearby Roman fortification and its points of interest. The wall actually ran from Wallsend, five miles east of the city centre. On a separate site at the nearby university is **Hatton Gallery**, whose 3,000+ collection includes works by the North East's own Thomas Bewick, a gifted engraver, and pop art pioneer Eduardo Paolozzi.

The Hancock Gallery on the other side of the Great North Road is the city's newest gallery. Its opening retrospective of leading contemporary artist Alexander Millar's portrayals of figures based on the Geordie 'gadgie' (or old-, sad- or down-and-out-looking man) was nothing short of haunting. South of here, **Laing Art Gallery** lends another weighty body of artwork to Newcastle's portfolio: Edward Burne-Jones masterpieces and John Martin's vivid epic *The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah* star.

Grey's Monument, Newcastle

Magisterial monument, shrine to peace and reform and superb city viewpoint.

This dominant city centre landmark is a likeness of Charles, 2nd Earl Grey, mounted on a 130-foot/40m column and commemorating his role as Prime Minister in passing the Great Reform Act in 1832. A plaque on the pedestal sums him up as a 'constant advocate of peace and the fearless and consistent champion of civil and religious liberty'. A spiral staircase ascends inside for unforgettable city views from the top: possible on guided tours only.



Newcastle Cathedral

The country's most northerly cathedral and a 14th century ecclesiastical eye-catcher.

Spanning nine centuries of Newcastle history, England's most northerly cathedral traces its roots to those of the city itself, erected as one of the very earliest edifices along with Newcastle Castle, in the 1090s. The current structure was finished in 1350. The cathedral gives some fascinating glimpses into local history. Observe the crowning glory of the exterior for starters: a **lantern spire** (1448) added to act as a guiding light to vessels navigating the Tyne. Scottish reformer John Knox once preached on this site, and a **monument** remembers local son Admiral Cuthbert Collingwood, who became commander-in-chief of the British fleet at the Battle of Trafalgar following Nelson's death. The **nave** is also astonishing, flanked by imposing arches. The stained glass, mostly 19th century, depicts several northern saints including St Cuthbert, portrayed with two otters: supposedly when the saint was praying each night immersed in the freezing North Sea off Lindisfarne, otters would come to keep him warm.

St Mary's Catholic Cathedral, Newcastle

Grand, spired Gothic Revival cathedral dating from 1844.

Emblematic of the 19th century Gothic Revival and raised by that architectural style's most famous exponent, Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin, the splendidly spired **St Mary's Catholic Cathedral** celebrated 175 years as a place of worship in 2019.

Alongside the cathedral is the **Cardinal Basil Hume memorial garden**: Newcastle-born Hume was an Archbishop of Westminster and author of books including *Footprints of the Northern Saints*. The fine statue of the cardinal shows him standing on an outline of the Holy Island of Lindisfarne.

BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art

England's biggest contemporary arts space, Turner Prize venue and paragon for how buildings can radically reinvent themselves.

Built as an ostentatious flourmill in the 1930s and converted during the late 1990s and early 2000s into an even more ambitious arts centre, this is one of the North East's most prestigious galleries and, at 2,600 square metres, the country's biggest dedicated contemporary arts space. The bulky brick building has long been a dominant landmark on the Gateshead Quayside, but its swift turnaround from defunct industrial site to the first Turner Prize venue outside London (in 2011) is miraculous. Today it is an exhibition venue, performance venue, a champion of ground-breaking art and your dramatic welcome to Gateshead as you cross the **Gateshead Millennium Bridge** on The Angel's Way.



Image: Peter Atkinson NewcastleGateshead Initiative



Sage Gateshead

The North East's most iconic performance venue, enclosed in a superlative glass building that defines the Gateshead townscape.

Another jewel in the crown of Gateshead's exemplary quayside regeneration, Sage Gateshead is the shimmering glass performance venue to your right as you cross Gateshead Millennium Bridge on The Angel's Way.

The creation of Norman Foster's Foster and Partners, the structure is regarded as one of the world's pre-eminent pieces of 'blobitecture' – architecture that challenges the straight lines conventionally used in construction.

Its three-part segmented design comprises three acoustically independent performance spaces that give rise to its local nickname: the 'slug'.

Shingle Art Gallery, Gateshead

Fascinating North East gallery going strong since 1917.

Newcastle and Gateshead are both resplendent with dazzlingly good art, and the Shingle Art Gallery continues in that spirit. The gallery opened in 1917 to display the collection of benefactor Joseph Shingle. The turn-of-the-century solicitor amassed an astonishing 2,500+ artworks throughout his life and left them all to the people of Gateshead. Today's gallery displays 500-odd of these, and has acquired some 10,000 pieces of art altogether. It is England's leading gallery for craft and design outside London, and includes the Henry Rothschild collection of studio ceramics. The Shingle's Dutch and Flemish 16th/17th century paintings are also phenomenal. The best-known work here is probably Tintoretto's *Christ Washing the Disciples' Feet*, but pride of place goes to William C. Irving's *Blaydon Races*. The painting encapsulates the colour of the horse races that were a major aspect of Victorian Tyneside life in Blaydon, Gateshead, and which became more universally famous through a song, written by Tyneside music hall maestro Geordie Ridley. The lyrics attained longevity: the song is much-sung hereabouts over 150 years after its original airing, and Newcastle United fans have even adopted Ridley's *Blaydon Races* as the club's unofficial anthem.



Saltwell Park, Gateshead

Among Britain's most exceptional urban parks: whether gauged by size, style, facilities or history.

Better known as the People's Park, because of its creation to help propagate health and wellbeing in an industrialising Victorian Gateshead devoid of green spaces, this is one of metropolitan Tyneside's biggest and best outdoor playgrounds. Saltwell Park was the bequest of stained glass baron William Wailes, who sold his sizeable estate to Gateshead Council for the establishment of what would become among the UK's largest urban parks. It was opened in 1876 and restored back to its early glory between 1999 and 2005. The park's northern section focuses around a **boating lake** designed by John Hancock (one of the age's leading landscapers) and laid out in the 1880s. Founding authorities didn't lack ambition: they originally wanted incandescent light-bulb inventor, locally born Joseph Swan, to illuminate the park. Meanwhile, the central section features **Saltwell Towers**, Wailes' flamboyant turreted mansion, today containing the park tearoom. You will join this popular park's whopping two million annual visitors as The Angel's Way meanders through, on its course south towards the Angel of the North.



Angel of the North, Gateshead

Britain's best-known sculpture dominates the Tyneside horizon and is a highlight of The Angel's Way.

With a presiding, humbling presence overlooking Gateshead and much of the route you have walked, the 177ft/54m-wide, 65ft/20m-tall Angel of the North is Britain's most famous piece of public art. Its dimensions are awe-inspiring: four double-decker buses high and with a wingspan virtually that of a jumbo jet. This Antony Gormley masterpiece is also believed to be the world's biggest angel sculpture. Records aside, the copper-coloured steel monument alighting on a green hill on the edge of the Tyneside conurbation is a bold, thought-provoking work, and as much part of the landscape here as the Christ the Redeemer statue is in Rio de Janeiro.

According to Gormley, his Angel represents past, present and future: the past in the mining that happened hereabouts, the present in symbolising transition from an industrial into an information age and the future, as a focus for all our evolving hopes and fears. The sculpture is also an apt metaphor for a more ancient past, with its location at the nexus of an area that shone as a cradle of early Christianity. It is certainly fitting that the path you have been following is named after the Angel of the North.

Beamish, The Living Museum of the North

High Urpeth and Pelton

Peaceful once-industrial countryside has the charming Beamish, The Living Museum of the North as a highlight.

The Angel's Way now nears its end, crossing this formerly industrial and now curiously sleepy landscape. After High Urpeth you join the Conssett & Sunderland Railway Path along which you can veer off-route to **Beamish, The Living Museum of the North**. This is one of Britain's best open-air museums. Conceived to preserve an industrial age and set of customs which were dying, Beamish spread-eagles across a former open-cast mine and brings the region's 19th and 20th century heyday vividly to life through some epic exhibits. The country's longest preserved tramway transports visitors around the site. Explore 1830s-built workers' cottages, an early 1800s pub, numerous 19th century businesses, a drift mine, farm, train station, and much more.

South of Pelton, David Kemp's sculpture *Old King Coal* is a final memento of the industrial legacy here: coincidentally the sculpture was completed on 15th October 1992, the same day closure of Durham's last coal mine was announced.



St Mary and St Cuthbert, Chester-le-Street

This important early church marks the end of The Angel's Way.

Driven from Lindisfarne monastery by Viking raids in 875, outcast monks wandered many years bearing the body of their spiritual leader St Cuthbert, through a Northumbria waning from the Golden Age it had enjoyed for two centuries. They were searching for somewhere to build a shrine to protect St Cuthbert, whose body had become the epoch's most sought-after saintly relic. At Chester-le-Street they found their spot, erecting a wooden church here in about 883. St Cuthbert's remains would win a permanent stone-built home in Durham City 112 years later. The church's first century was its foremost: it was here that the Lindisfarne Gospels were first translated into Saxon English and a facsimile of the Lindisfarne Gospels can be seen at the Parish Church. The present **St Mary and St Cuthbert church** dates to 1056: it's a fine, spired building with an unusual, well-preserved anchorage. The anchorites once living here were similar to hermits, except that they underwent a religious rite after which they were considered 'dead to the world' and, at this church, were voluntarily walled up within their cells. **Ankers House Museum** sheds more light on their lifestyle.



Across the river from Chester-le-Street is **Lumley Castle**, one of the North East's standout historic hotels and also one of its spookiest, haunted by the spirit of Lily Lumley who was supposedly cast down a well for rejecting the Catholic faith.

Your time on The Angel's Way concludes at the church. Here, you can join another Northern Saints Trail, **The Way of Learning**, and follow it north to Jarrow or south via Finchale Abbey to Durham Cathedral. **You will now need The Way of Learning fold-out map** to continue on this route: however you can see more on Durham Cathedral below.



Durham UNESCO World Heritage Site

Breathtaking medieval architecture containing countless stories within its walls.

Sometimes the best is saved until last and, having explored all along The Angel's Way to Durham's UNESCO-listed spiritual heart, you might well agree that this age-old adage applies to your journey's end. The River Wear is dominated by the cathedral, indisputably among Europe's most magnificent buildings.

You approach from the north via the arched, stone 15th century **Framwellgate Bridge**. Continue to the market place, turn right up the hill and right again at Owengate to the **World Heritage Visitor Centre**, a mine of information.



In another setting, **Durham Castle** would grab all attention, a stronghold from 1072 and residence of the powerful Prince Bishops of Durham, once second only to whoever sat on England's throne in influence, for eight centuries. The castle is now part of Durham University and guided tours are given four times daily on most days, with tickets purchasable in the visitor centre. **Palace Green Library** and its exhibitions is also operated by the University and is worth a visit.

Yet The Way of Learning's end is not here, but in the cathedral to the south. The **Cathedral Church of Christ, Blessed Mary the Virgin and St Cuthbert of Durham** is one of Britain's best-preserved, most stunning examples of Norman architecture. Where to begin? Perhaps with a visit to the saint who inspired the cathedral's creation. Indeed, **St Cuthbert's Shrine** at the church's eastern end is a hugely popular place of pilgrimage today. St Oswald's head is buried in St Cuthbert's Shrine. In the Galilee Chapel in the church's west lies the **Tomb of the Venerable Bede**: Bede's bones were brought here in 1022.

Durham Cathedral's phenomenal collections contain the most complete medieval monastic library and archives surviving the Reformation. Open Treasure, the cathedral's award-winning museum displays its collections through permanent and temporary exhibitions. The cathedral has its own eatery, **Undercroft Restaurant**. Why not take time to climb the cathedral **tower** offering panoramic views across Durham City and beyond? You will be able to trace your steps into Durham from a bird's-eye view.

Take time to absorb the cathedral's magnificence, just as a millennia's worth of pilgrims have before you.



Visitor information

For information on things to see and do, places to eat and stay along the Northern Saints Trails, see northernsaints.com

Additional area destination information websites along the Northern Saints Trails:

thisisdurham.com

visitsouthtyneside.co.uk

visitnorthumberland.com

newcastlegateshead.com

visitnorthtyneside.com

seeitdoitsunderland.co.uk

destinationhartlepool.com

enjoyteesvalley.com

North East England is the Christian Crossroads of the British Isles. The Northern Saints Trails are a series of six long-distance walking trails based on ancient pilgrimage routes:

The Way of Light (Heavenfield/Hexham – Durham)

The Way of Life (Gainford – Bishop Auckland – Durham)

The Way of Love (Hartlepool – Durham)

The Way of Learning (Jarrow – Sunderland – Durham)

The Angel's Way (Seaton Sluice – Newcastle, Gateshead – Chester-le-Street – Durham)

The Way of the Sea (Warkworth – North Shields)

For further information, or to download the trails, visit: northernsaints.com

If you would like to provide feedback on the routes, please email feedback@northernsaintstrails.com

Please note that Northern Saints Trails can be walked in any direction for any duration – you can walk as little or as much as you choose. These leaflets are designed to give you a flavour of the route's main attractions and locations. For more detailed information, visit: northernsaints.com

Non-directional wayfinder discs have been installed along the Northern Saints Trails to reassure you that you're on the routes, but full details and maps are available on the Northern Saints website.

Every effort has been taken to ensure that the information in this leaflet/on this website was correct at the time of publication, but we cannot accept responsibility for any error or omission. Things do change and problems can occur on public rights of way. If you encounter problems, please email feedback@northernsaintstrails.com

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