

The Way of Learning



Jarrow - Sunderland
- Durham





The Christian crossroads of the British Isles



Cleadon Mill

Jarrow – Cleadon – Whitburn – Roker –
Monkwearmouth – Sunderland – Penshaw Monument
– Houghton-le-Spring – Chester-le-Street –
Great Lumley – Finchale Abbey – Crook Hall & Gardens
– Durham Cathedral

Distance: 38 miles/61km

The Way of Learning

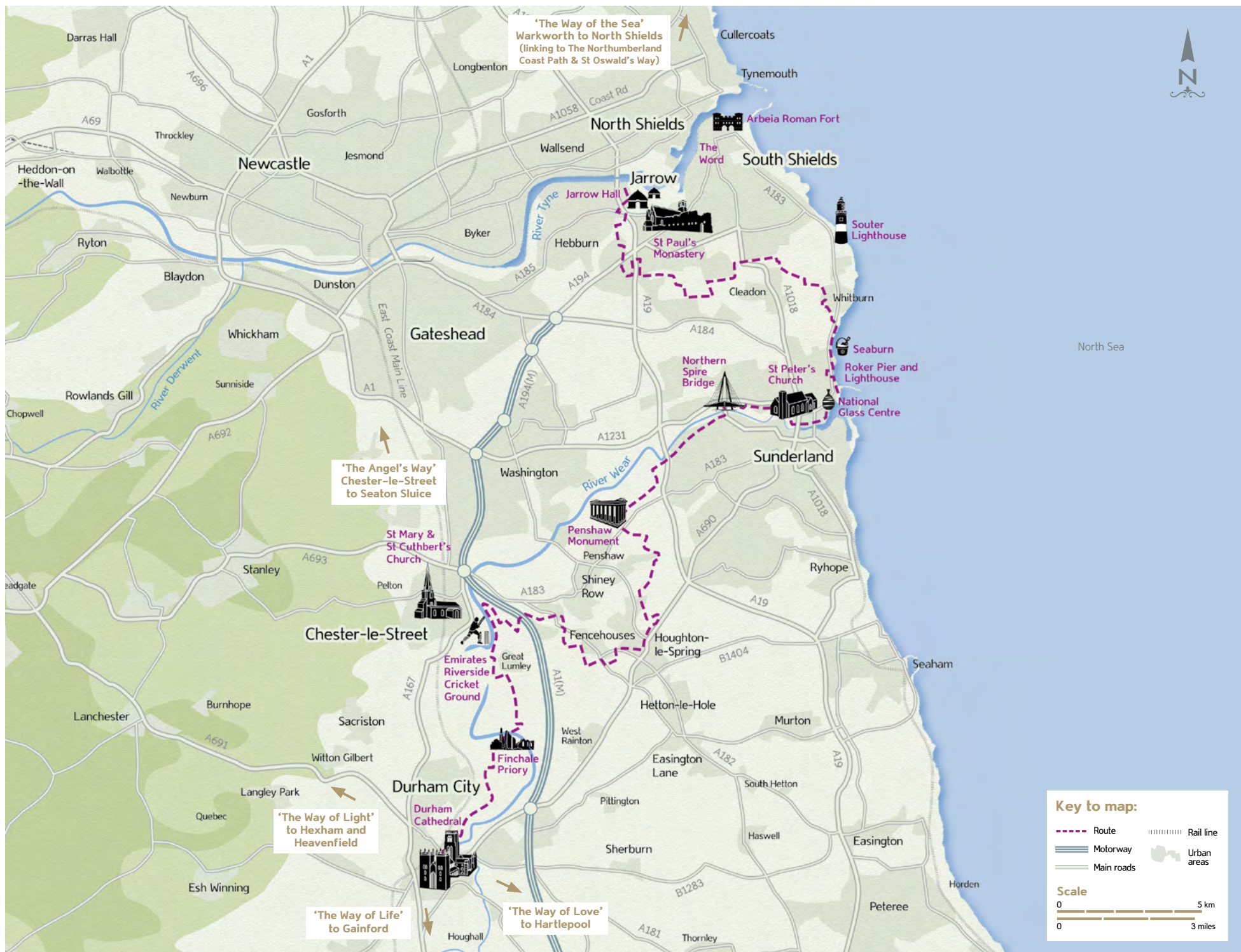
Gain the ultimate enlightenment on The Way of Learning as it takes you on the trail of England's original scholar, the Venerable Bede, through a rich legacy of the North East's foremost industry, inventiveness and innovation.

'Devote yourself to learn the sayings and doings of the men of old' runs a quote from the Father of English History, the Venerable Bede, around the atrium of a museum dedicated to him at Jarrow Hall, near the start of The Way of Learning. The quote is an apt metaphor for this walk. The route traces the special places associated with Britain's best-known scholar-monk the Venerable Bede, besides taking you on a journey to ground-breaking Roman discoveries (Arbeia, South Shields Roman Fort), the majestic medieval Finchale Priory, where fascinating St Godric once attracted attention from as far afield as Rome for his famous piety, and masterful modern cultural icons such as The Word, National Centre for the Written Word in South Shields.

This, the most urban of the six Northern Saints Trails, might have less of the jaw-dropping countryside the North East invariably exhibits, but it compensates by being jam-packed with cultural eye-openers. The area has produced countless firsts (first English history book, England's first stained glass, first incandescent light bulb) and the route winds between example after example of the region's exceptional innovativeness over the centuries, and the museums that champion it. But one character stands out from The Way of Learning in particular and that is the Venerable Bede. Learn about his life and times, and pass the monasteries where he studied and became inspired to produce some of England's most important early literary works. By the time you reach his tomb at Durham Cathedral you might well feel as if you are revisiting an old acquaintance. You will certainly feel acquainted with a region that can justly claim to have been instrumental in kindling the thirst for knowledge we hold so dear today.



Seaburn and Roker Beaches



3.5 miles from the start of The Way of Learning in Jarrow...

Arbeia, South Shields Roman Fort

Sensational showcase of Roman life from original ruins to larger-than-life reconstructions.

The learning curve on The Way of Learning begins even before the route's official start at Jarrow. It begins in culturally buoyant seaside resort South Shields, northeast of Jarrow at the mouth of the River Tyne, and especially at engrossing **Arbeia**, a major Roman ruin and site of Britain's foremost full-scale Roman reconstructions. The result for visitors to Arbeia is some of the most illustrative insights into Roman Britain available anywhere. The fort is part of UNESCO's 'Frontiers of the Roman Empire', which includes all of Hadrian's Wall and acted as the Wall's supply port following its founding in AD 160. Because of extensive excavations here, Arbeia offers a unique insight into how day-to-day life unfolded in a Roman frontier town. Most telling is how cosmopolitan Arbeia would have been. A likely explanation of the name alone is 'Place of the Arabs' and men from the Tigris region in modern-day Iraq were once stationed here, as well as people from other countries such as Syria and Spain. On-site archaeological digs, going on here since 1875, have allowed the three brilliantly reconstructed buildings, the **West Gate** gatehouse, **Barracks** and **Commanding Officer's House**, to be modelled on the originals. But the digs have also enabled Arbeia to display such astonishing artefacts: think a hoard of weaponry, imperial seals, lots of jewellery, a ringmail suit and ornately inscribed tombstones that hint at the diverse assortment of characters once frequenting this fort. Re-enactments and storytelling sessions help you visualise life on the wall.



2.5 miles from Jarrow...

The Word, National Centre for the Written Word, South Shields

*Innovative stimulus for words in their written,
spoken and yet-to-be-determined forms.*

Gaze at this state-of-the-art South Shields cultural centre and you might need a moment to absorb that the exterior terracotta planks around the top two floors of the circular structure actually represent the flicked-through pages of a book. Inside, though, there is little doubt this place's *raison d'être* is words: written, spoken and in other surprising shapes and sizes too. There is a 70,000 volume-strong **library**, but the beauty of The Word, aside from the spacious, glassy, atrium-dominated interior, is how it goes all out to impress all ages. Children will love **Storyworld**, where surrounding audio-visuals enhances the storytelling, allowing audiences to become immersed in worlds from under the sea to outer space. A changing programme of events and exhibitions use the written word in unique ways as inspiration. Then **Fablab** gives young and old the chance to digitally design ideas and bring them to life using 3D printers. Lost for words? There is also a **visitor information centre** and a **café** to help digest the experience.

Why is the National Centre for the Written Word in South Shields? The area has strong connections with one of history's great scholars, the Venerable Bede, and best-selling author Catherine Cookson grew up here to start with...



Medieval ruins at Jarrow

St Paul's Monastery, Jarrow

*Scholar-of-scholars Bede honed his trade at this
7th century monastery.*

In The Way of Learning's official start point at St Paul's, you encounter one of England's great cradles of erudition. This was once one half of the great twin monasteries of Monkwearmouth-Jarrow, located at Monkwearmouth's St Peter's Monastery (674AD) and here. The monasteries were the brainchild of Northumbrian nobleman Benedict Biscop, a well-travelled man who had visited Rome and wanted to create a similarly epic Christian building back home. **St Peter's** and **St Paul's** certainly became era-defining. St Paul's was built around seven years afterwards (AD 681), but both buildings deserve being credited with announcing a type of ecclesiastical architecture seldom seen in Britain since the Romans left several centuries before. Britain's first stained glass, made by Biscop's Gaulish glaziers, decorated monastery windows and set the foundations for a glassmaking industry on Wearside. The St Paul's site also boasted two churches, a finely ornamented guesthouse and space for industries like glassmaking, all indicative of its early importance. But its major claim to fame is that scholar-monk the Venerable Bede lived here. Arriving to Monkwearmouth-Jarrow in around 680, he divided his time between both monasteries, which collectively inspired him to a life of scholarship and some 60 works. Of these, his most famous, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, would become the very first English history book. Also produced here was the *Codex Amiatinus*, the earliest surviving one-volume Latin Bible (the original is in Florence's Laurentian Library).

Incredibly, something does survive of the 7th century monastery at St Paul's as part of today's church chancel, but the ruins are primarily from an 11th century rebuilding. St Paul's never regained its former importance, but as a site of seminal scholarly output is a worthy beginning to The Way of Learning.

Jarrow Hall

Get to know Bede and Anglo-Saxon life at this fascinating attraction.

Immediately north of St Paul's Church is Jarrow Hall, home to an Anglo-Saxon Farm and Village, the Bede Museum and an 18th century house and grounds.

Jarrow Hall's **house** (1785) is today most of note for **Hive Café**. It serves wonderful food including some seasoned with herbs from the property's herb garden, based on the Plan of Saint Gall, a 9th century sketch of a monastic compound. The **Anglo-Saxon Farm and Village** vividly illustrates Anglo-Saxon village life during Bede's era and is a sanctuary for farm animals that have been chosen to best resemble the breeds Bede would have known. The **Bede Museum** continues telling the tales of the monk's times. You learn more about Bede the man and Bede's work, how he was a linguist, a budding astronomer who established how to measure time from the birth of Christ and someone who helped foster English national identity. Star exhibits include Europe's largest collection of 7th/8th century coloured glass and a full-sized reproduction of *Codex Amiatinus*, originally produced at Monkwearmouth-Jarrow monastery.

Head full of facts? Walk it off, as The Way of Learning wends from here along the River Don.



Seaburn and Roker Beaches

Sandy beaches flanked by parks and an Arts and Crafts Movement church.

Seaburn and Roker, Sunderland's affluent park-filled seaside suburbs are abutted by glorious sands, together making for a laid-back two-mile beach walk on The Way of Learning. You can mostly walk along the sand if the tide is out. **Seaburn Beach** is most northerly, separated from **Roker Beach** by **Parson's Rocks** and the **White Lighthouse**. Here, join the cliff-top path and swing inland two blocks along Peareth Road. Then turn left to reach **St Andrew's Church** (1905–1907), the most exquisite work of architect Edward Schroeder Prior, with interior features from several leading Arts and Crafts Movement names. Back southbound on the cliff-top path is the **Bede Memorial Cross** (1904).



Roker Pier and Lighthouse

Explore one of Britain's biggest piers alongside the lighthouse at its end.

Your course on The Way of Learning sticks south towards the long, curving lighthouse-festooned pier protruding from Roker Beach. This iconic piece of seaside construction was rightly acclaimed upon its completion in 1903. The **pier** was begun in 1885, notable for its length of 2,000 feet/610m (on the English mainland there are only four longer piers) and curve (curving piers are rare in Britain). The 1903 **lighthouse**, constructed from red and white stripes of Aberdeen granite, was once reckoned Britain's most powerful port-based lighthouse. Both the lighthouse and the tunnel running under the pier can be visited by guided tour.

National Glass Centre

One-of-a-kind window into the glass industry that defined Sunderland for over thirteen centuries.

Sunderland's National Glass Centre opened as an attraction in former shipyard premises in 1998, but this was the last chapter in a glassmaking heritage that stretches back to the 7th century.

Glassmaking arrived here in AD 674 when Benedict Biscop's widely-sourced recruits for building Monkwearmouth-Jarrow monastery came across from the continent. Remarkably, this kick-started an industry that has defined Sunderland ever since. Huge quantities of cheap locally-mined coal ignited the glassmaking business in the 18th and 19th centuries, it was Sunderland that helped establish Pyrex as a worldwide household name in the 20th century. When the city's last big glass firms closed in 2007, the National Glass Centre continued to promote the time served skills in its museum and event space. Complete with a run-down of the regional history of glass manufacture, along with glass and ceramics exhibitions, you can even watch Sunderland's talented band of still-working glassmakers demonstrate production processes.





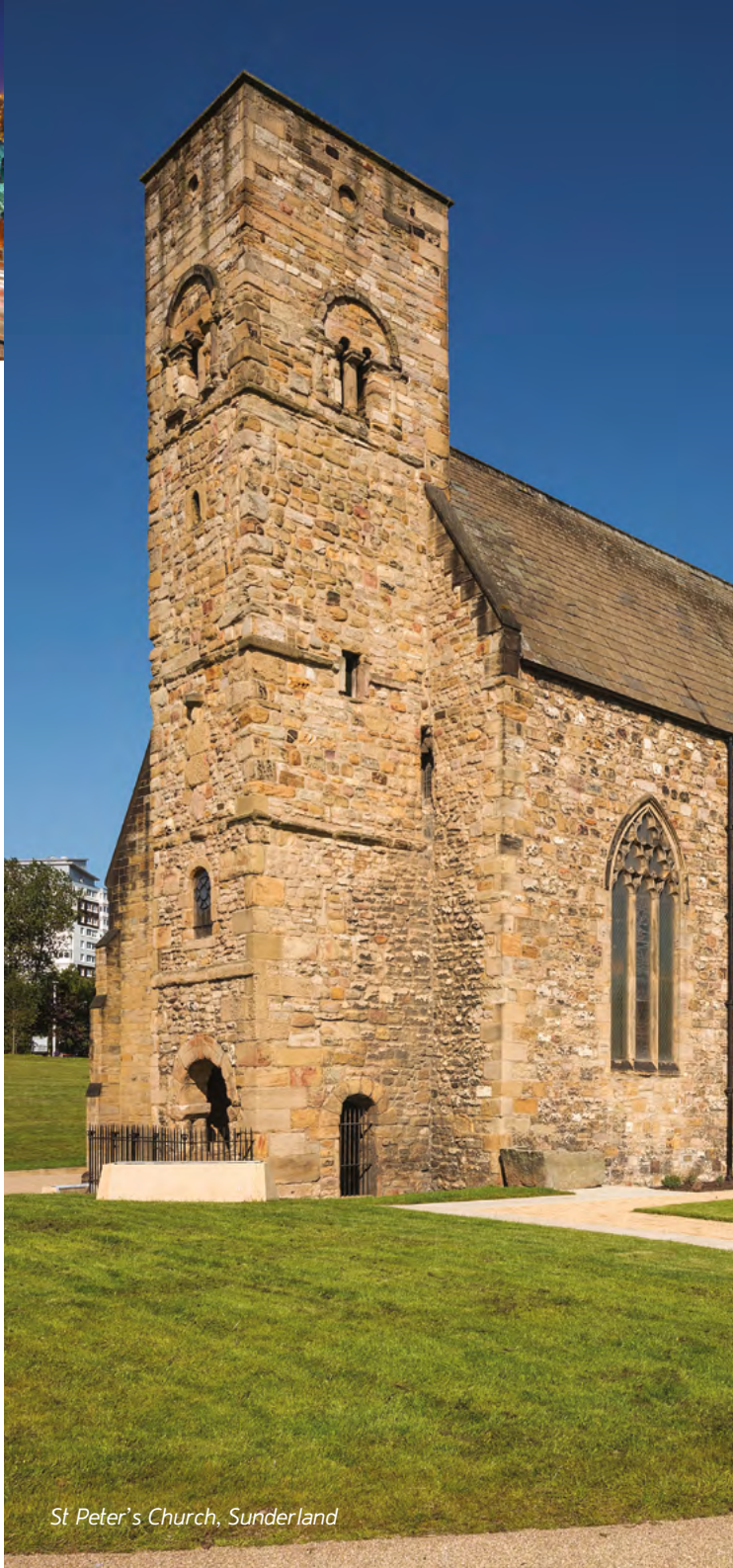
St Peter's Church, Monkwearmouth

Historic other half of the Monkwearmouth-Jarrow monastery, one-time home to the Venerable Bede.

Keeping south along the coast The Way of Learning bends round Sunderland Marina to arrive at St Peter's Church in Sunderland's Monkwearmouth suburb, along with St Paul's Monastery making up the once-famous twin monasteries of Monkwearmouth-Jarrow (see St Paul's Monastery for more on the monastery's foundation).

St Peter's can indeed claim to be even more era-defining than St Paul's as it was built seven years earlier (AD 674). The monastery's construction ushered in a boom period of ecclesiastical architecture not seen in Britain since the Romans left. The landmark feature was that glaziers from Gaul were recruited to endow St Peter's with some of Britain's earliest stained glass. It is probable that Bede began monastic life at St Peter's in AD 680, and that this building was what inspired the scholar-monk to dedicate his life to learning. St Peter's played a huge role in the approximately 60 works Bede produced, and in the production of the special *Codex Amiatinus* (see St Paul's Monastery for more).

The west wall and porch survive from Biscop's monastery; the rest of St Peter's is 13th, 14th and 19th century. In one of those neat full circles history sometimes travels in, new **stained glass windows** were installed in St Peter's **café** in 2017. These windows reflect observations Bede made in his *Reckoning of Time* and were made on Wearside, courtesy of a glassmaking trade that flourished here since the Monkwearmouth-Jarrow monastery's original Gaulish glaziers brought glassmaking secrets over with them an estimated 1,350 years ago.



St Peter's Church, Sunderland



Northern Spire Bridge

Sunderland's spectacular new 105m-high bridge marks the city's highest point.

Walk along the River Wear to Sunderland's most recent river crossing. This striking cable-stayed bridge, opened in 2018, shows that the region which gave England its first proper history book, and determined the way the timing of Easter was decided, hasn't lost its flair for invention. The bridge reveals some good views, especially of the **Claxheugh Rock** beauty spot on the south bank, while ahead the route skirts Bishopwearmouth, birthplace of Joseph Swan, inventor of the incandescent light bulb.





Penshaw Monument

Eccentric temple harbouring tales of Greece, Britain's colonies and Durham's dastardly dragon.

Ever hankered after a piece of Greece as you hike through the North East? High above Sunderland in open countryside is one of The Way of Learning's most unusual sights, perhaps most widely recognisable as an iconic local landmark, a symbol of home.

The Penshaw Monument, atop Penshaw Hill, is a half-size Doric colonnaded replica of Athens' Temple of Hephaestus. If it looks out-of-place today its origins are odder. The 1840s-built monument remembers the work of the 1st Earl of Durham, John George Lambton, and his work creating the *Durham Report*. This was the most pivotal document in British Empirical history, as it recommended self-governance for colonies where possible, but it remains interesting that Lambton's commemoration for this was delivered on such an outlandish scale.

The land hereabouts was already infamous pre-monument as the lair of the **Lambton Worm**, a dragon-like monster that terrorised locals and has a song composed in its honour. It was an ancestor of Earl Lambton's who eventually dispatched the disagreeable beast.

The views, especially from atop the monument over the surrounding parkland, are stunning and far-reaching and include the first glimpse of your final destination, Durham Cathedral. Accordingly, pilgrim tradition holds that you should now make the sign of the cross and praise the Lord.

St Mary and St Cuthbert, Chester-le-Street

Important early church that once housed St Cuthbert's body.

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. These monks were searching for somewhere to build a shrine to protect St Cuthbert whose body had become the epoch's most sought-after saintly relic (and would remain so until the cult of Thomas a Becket began in the 1170s). At Chester-le-Street they found their spot, erecting a wooden church here 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 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 edifice 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** reveals more about their lifestyle.

Across the river from Chester-le-Street is **Lumley Castle**, among the North East's standout historic hotels and one of its spookiest, haunted by one Lily Lumley supposedly cast down a well for rejecting the Catholic faith. Sound intriguing? The castle has developed a novel **escape room** where you can attempt to solve the ghost story.



Finchale Priory

Age-old saintly spot, romantic ruin and start point of the Camino Ingles.

If you thought you'd gained unparalleled knowledge of the region's saints with The Way of Learning almost walked, think again. Finchale Priory was the pretty place that Godric sought out in the 12th century to live his latter years with what biographers would term super-human austerity. Godric might have lacked the clout of Bede or Cuthbert but he could have taught either a few things about renouncing the good life: he wore a hair shirt, bathed in cold water and subsisted on food foraged in nearby countryside. He became renowned for his devoutness (even Pope Alexander III asked Godric to pray for him), kindness toward animals and, later, as author of the earliest surviving Middle English verses set to music. Today's priory was constructed in 1196 over the later-to-be-canonised Godric's hermitage. The rambling ruins wrapped by the River Wear are a delightful place: no wonder monks from Durham once used this as a holiday retreat.

After Finchale Priory you are traipsing the official **Camino Ingles**, an English offshoot of the Camino de Santiago: appropriate as Godric undertook one of the earliest known England-Santiago de Compostella pilgrimages. Soon enough this rural section of the walk ends as Durham looms large and you pass 13th century **Crook Hall & Gardens**. The fetching property has been entwined with much of Durham's development and often hosted Victorian art critic and philanthropist John Ruskin (Ruskin must have enjoyed himself: he called Durham the 'eighth wonder of the world'). Equally importantly, this is a memorable stop for refreshments, especially afternoon tea.





Crook Hall



St Nicholas Church, Durham

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 Way of Learning to Durham's UNESCO-listed historic 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. On the peninsula the river forms here, the castle constitutes the northern end of the UNESCO zone, which extends south a few hundred yards to Durham Cathedral.

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 available in the visitor centre. **Palace Green Library** and its exhibitions are also operated by the University and are well 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 first by tying two threads that have weaved throughout your walk. At the cathedral's eastern end is **St Cuthbert's Shrine**, a hugely popular place of pilgrimage to this day. The saint's remains were delivered here around 995. In the Galilee Chapel in the church's west lies the **Tomb of the Venerable Bede**: Bede's bones were brought here in 1022 and he was originally interred with St Cuthbert, getting his own tomb in 1370.

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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Diocese of Durham

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DURHAM
CATHEDRAL