

The Way of Love



Hartlepool - Durham





The Christian crossroads of the British Isles



Hartlepool – Hart Village – Nesbit Dene –
Castle Eden Dene – Wingate – Trimdon Colliery –
Trimdon – Trimdon Grange – Coxhoe – Kelloe – Cassop
– Old Durham – Durham Cathedral

Distance: 28 miles/45.5km

The Way of Love follows the influence of three of the most important female figures in the establishment of Christianity in England - St Hilda, St Helena and St Mary Magdalene - whilst mixing maritime and mining heritage, nationally-important nature reserves and the North East's iconic denes.

The countryside The Way of Love links up between Hartlepool and Durham now seems gentle, sleepy and seldom walked. It was not always thus.

Step back in time to Anglo-Saxon and Norman England and this region was front-page news: some of the ground-breaking goings-on in the Christianisation of England happened hereabouts. One of the most famous

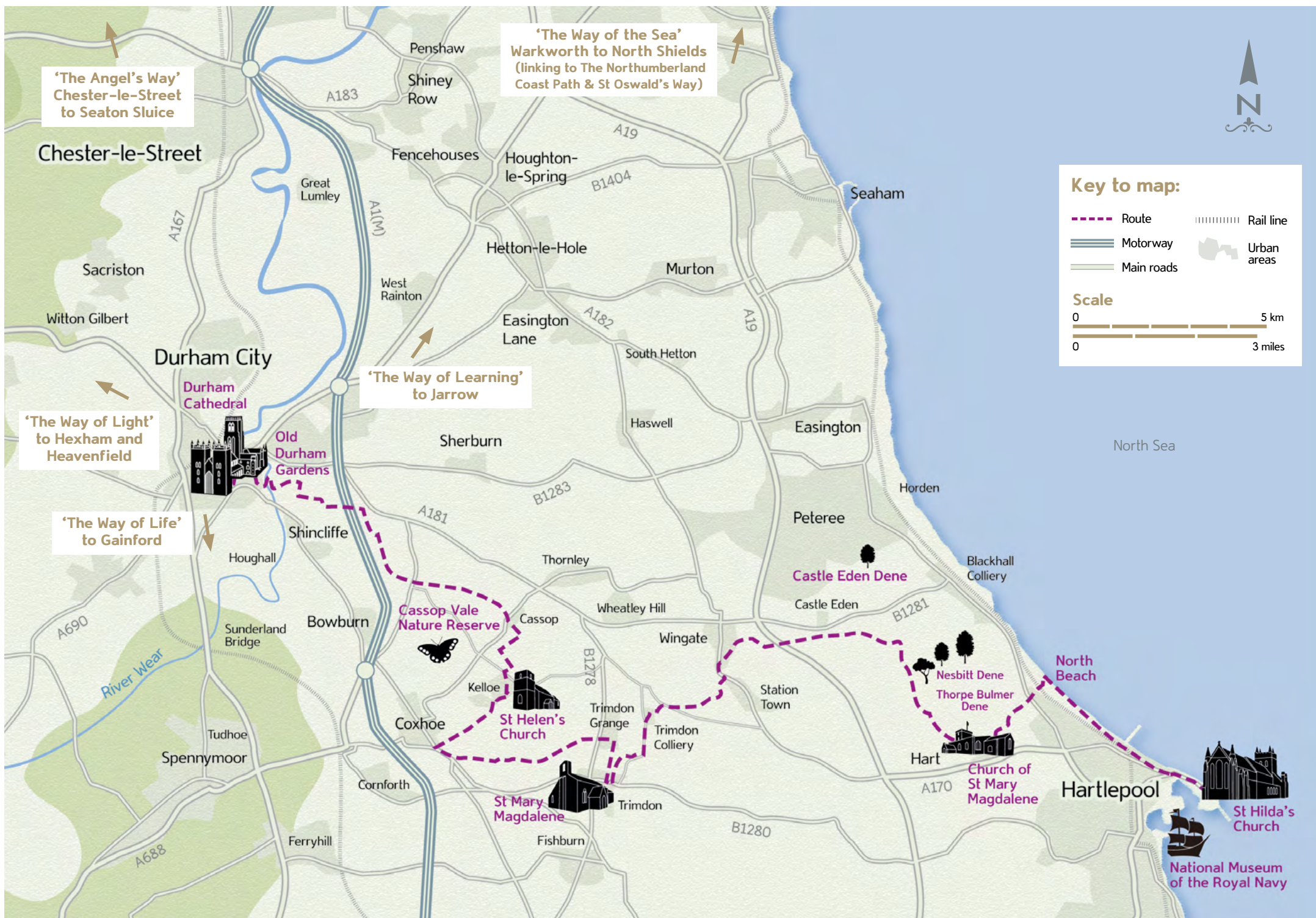
of the country's dual-sex monasteries was set up at Hartlepool, with the second abbess, St Hilda, going on to head up one of the Anglo-Saxon world's premier religious centres at Whitby. Brutal monarch King Canute turned up to take a pilgrimage along this route from Trimdon in 1020, while a stone cross depicting Christianity's original ambassador St Helena, and numbering among Britain's most important Romanesque sculptures, was built into a church at Kelloe.

In the 18th and 19th centuries this area resounded to the sounds of some of the planet's biggest industries. Hartlepool was a very busy port and the villages en route to Durham had some of the defining coalmines in the Great Northern Coalfield, which became the powerhouse for the North East's greatest-ever period

of economic growth. Post industrial landscaping has had interesting affects on nature, with coal railway tracks re-purposed as walkways and cycleways, and spoil heaps transformed into rolling hills, helping to create some rich species diversity across a number of nature reserves.

The scenery here, as kissed by sea as it is hugged by inland rivers and streams, has perhaps avoided the attention other parts of the North East get today because its most outstanding parts remain so hidden. The steep wooded valleys known as denes, one of the region's most distinctive topographical features, evade the gaze of the most eagle-eyed traveller until the last moment. Descend into their tranquil, time-lost depths and you are sure to fall head over heels for The Way of Love.





St Hilda's, Hartlepool

Saintly sanctuary to early English Christianity's key female saint, St Hilda, which set the town on its storied seafaring course.

Today's Norman church of St Hilda's might only be 12th century – relatively recent in the North East's venerable history – but its beginnings as a place of worship hark back much further: to the foundation of Hartlepool and the establishment of Christianity.

Before Hartlepool was the seagoing place it stands out as today, it was a saintly one: an honour bestowed on it by the very best in the business at the time, St Aidan. St Aidan was quick to found other religious houses after his first, on Lindisfarne, and Hartlepool Abbey (c. AD 640) was among the next in the Kingdom of Northumbria to be built, on the very site St Hilda's occupies today. Then St Aidan did two things highly unusual for the times. The abbey he founded was a double monastery – for



Image: Michael Sadgrove

monks *and* nuns – and the person he placed in charge was a woman, Hieu. Hieu's successor St Hilda, was that rare blend of kind (advocating peace and charity are mentioned as her main strengths), just (both ordinary people, princes and kings sought out her advice, apparently) and strict (she insisted on regular schedules of observances): qualities that with her efforts at Hartlepool got her what was surely deemed a big promotion in Anglo-Saxon Britain. St Hilda became founding abbess of Whitby Abbey, one of Anglo-Saxon England's foremost and important enough, seven years after St Hilda took the helm, to host the seminal Synod of Whitby, itself considered a significant step towards Romanisation of the church in England. As for Hartlepool Abbey, as swiftly as it had sprung into the spotlight it vanished, allegedly destroyed by a Viking raid and never rebuilt. Until about 1190, that is: when today's church was raised in the same place.

The building you see now is a beautiful one, befitting of its illustrious and intriguing past. The location helps. On a bulbous green peninsula, now Hartlepool Headland, and edged by the long, lovely, sandy North Beach, the church must have been an especially fine landmark when first built. The imposing exterior **buttresses** were added to prevent it falling into the sea, its builders perhaps wary of the fate of the place of worship that stood there before. Inside, the **tomb of the de Brus family**, one-time local landowners and ancestors of Scottish royal Robert the Bruce, and a **7th century pillow stone** originally marking the grave of a Saxon nun, illustrate the breadth of the history St Hilda's has. A **visitor centre** elaborates on the various chapters of the church's colourful story.



Image: Chris Scaife

Why did Hartlepool Abbey rise so rapidly and fall again without trace? That is a question for you to ponder as you wander around the charismatic district of Hartlepool immediately surrounding the present day church: **Hartlepool Headland**. You'll soon understand why the Hartlepool that sprung up around the earlier monastery was from the outset a seagoing settlement. Whether as principal port of the **County Palatine of Durham** in the middle ages, as century-old fishing village or Victorian shipbuilding port, Hartlepool's relationship with the sea is there for all to see. Revisit the scene of the only World War I battle on British soil at **Heugh Battery** or get a flavour for the area's fishing lifestyle with a pint at the **Fisherman's Arms**, little-changed since the 19th century.

Curiosity sufficiently whetted? There is one particular place you should visit to discover more about the maritime tales the town has to impart. Behind the masts of the pleasure craft lining today's marina, the **National Museum of the Royal Navy** tells of a grittier, more graphic era in Hartlepool's nautical past. Afterwards, leave Hartlepool by following Hartlepool Headland north on The Way of Love.



Image: Chris Scaife



Around 2 miles from the end of The Way of Love at Hilda's on the Way of St Hilda / England's Coastal Path in Hartlepool town centre.

National Museum of the Royal Navy

Incredible maritime insights from warships to the world's first gas-lit lighthouse.

Many of us look out to ships at sea and start dreaming of the Golden Age of ocean travel but, at this enthralling attraction, a major force behind Hartlepool's cultural renaissance when it was set up in the mid-1990s, dreams become reality. Make a journey back through time to the late-18th/early-19th centuries and a recreation of a historic quay as it might have looked in the age of Napoleon and Nelson, complete with the quayside businesses that would have then existed (think a gunsmith's, an instrument-makers, a chandlery). Then step aboard Britain's oldest still-floating warship, **HMS Trincomalee**, first launched in 1817. The ship has witnessed some event-filled episodes – helping quell a potential invasion of Cuba, and doing a stint on anti-slavery patrol – and is a wonderful window into the not-always-so-rosy life of a Georgian sailor. There are live demonstrations of the ship's firepower and costumed characters to lend extra colour to exhibits.

Another (free) attraction alongside this museum is the smaller but absorbing **Museum of Hartlepool**. Here, learn about such regional phenomena as the town's monkey-hanging legend, Andy Capp, the cartoon character created by local lad Reg Smythe, and the planet's first successful gas-lit lighthouse that stood across on Hartlepool Headland.

Outside, a promenade runs south from **Hartlepool Marina** to the seaside resort of **Seaton Carew**.



Image: Chris Scallie

Hart Village

A windmill on a hill, village pubs and a charming Norman church.

Hart village, four miles northwest of Hartlepool, is conducive to a trail break on The Way of Love as it announces your arrival in the countryside proper.

North of Hartlepool Headland on the route you'll take, urbanisation fades into nature in dramatic fashion along the extensive tawny sands of **North Beach**. Dilapidated **Steetley Pier** was once the ultimate symbol of industrial boom times, shipping Dolime and Magnesite for use in the steel industry on an epic scale nationwide, while further along, **Hart Warren Nature Reserve** deserves national recognition for habitat conservation: this is the UK's only significant calcareous dune system, enabling it to protect several rare orchid species and the endangered Northern Brown Argus butterfly – found only in Durham. But as you approach Hart, from the coast, a serene rustic feel starts to pervade: there are the timeless livestock-grazed fields; there on a hill, to the south, is a 19th century windmill; there in the village are the first couple of good country pubs worth a pause and a pint. And soaring above the houses is the Norman church tower.

The **Church of St Mary Magdalene** is Hart's main attraction. Like many area churches, this is a 12th century building with considerably older Anglo-Saxon roots, originally dating to around AD 675. Fragments of the pre-Norman era remain in the form of Anglo-Saxon grave fragments and an interesting early sundial. The Norman parts of the church, built by Hart's then landowners, the same de Brus family who would one day sire Scottish freedom-fighter and king Robert, are nevertheless splendid, with exquisite stonework. Outside on the south chancel wall, though, is St Mary Magdalene's most mystifying feature: a St George and Dragon motif, of unknown origin.

Thorpe Bulmer Dene, Nesbitt Dene and Castle Eden Dene

Dashing examples of the denes, or narrow wooded valleys, for which Durham is famous.

Northwest of Hart village: The Way of Love next introduces you to a trio of delightful steep-sided, tree-covered valleys cut through by streams. Known as denes across the North East, these valleys are iconic features of its landscape.

First up, the route dips into **Thorpe Bulmer Dene**. Next you cross **Nesbitt Dene**, perhaps most special of the three with impressive limestone cliffs and a cave to explore. The route then rises to follow the course of the old Hart-Haswell Railway along to Castle Eden and, just north of the path, the most renowned of the three denes, **Castle Eden Dene**. Good paths traverse all three denes, and the area, featuring a montage of mature and semi-mature woodland, as well as limestone grasslands and butterfly glades, is largely protected and hosts a wealth of wildlife. These denes are magical and mysterious places today and clearly, to judge from local legends, were considered still more so once upon a time. One tale tells of the devil conniving to supply crumbly stone from Castle Eden Dene for the construction of Durham Cathedral, thereby causing the walls to collapse on those inside: the devil, as you shall see when you reach the cathedral at the of The Way of Love, failed spectacularly.





Trimdon

Medieval pilgrimage route stop-off favoured by ancient Anglo-Saxon monarch King Canute... and former prime minister Tony Blair.

Like several communities in this part of Durham, Trimdon has a 12th century church named after St Mary Magdalene as its most attractive highlight: perhaps not surprising given the settlement's important position on a medieval pilgrimage route (between Whitby and Durham). Rest assured that travelling this section of The Way of Love you are on the trail of the most distinguished of the devout. It was from Trimdon in 1020 that King Canute began his own pilgrimage to St Cuthbert's shrine. One story goes that as an act of penitence he cut his hair before setting out and that this is how Trimdon got its name, although a more likely etymology is *treo mael dun*, or 'wooden cross hill'.

The 1145-built **Church of St Mary Magdalene** has several idiosyncrasies, including being one of only two English churches to boast a horseshoe arch, a feature more commonly associated with Moorish architecture. Its better-known time in the limelight, though, was when on 30th August 1997 Right Honourable Tony Blair, then UK Prime Minister, stood outside to give his moving 'People's Princess' speech and thereby informed the world about the death of Princess Diana.

The path then passes through **Trimdon Grange Quarry Nature Reserve**, an area of high wildlife diversity because of the presence of magnesian limestone: 20 species of butterfly have been recorded along this stretch.

Kelloe

Parish laced with tales of tragedy and of love.

Kelloe is not the first community you'll have passed on The Way of Love to have been influential in this area's mining past: since Hartlepool you have been walking along the southern edge of the Great Northern Coalfield, which included the once-rich coal seams of Durham and Northumberland and secured the region its greatest-ever period of prosperity (albeit with its toughest-ever working conditions) between 1830 and 1915. Kelloe is the first, however, to have commemorated that era in a lasting way. This village was once the location of the Kelloe Mineral Line Railway, transporting coal to the big new coal port of Hartlepool, and part of the trackway is today the **Kelloe Way**, which you trace into Kelloe village itself. At the village entrance (in metal) and further into the village (stone monoliths decorated in mining paraphernalia), **sculptures** remember Kelloe's mining legacy, as does a **monument** in the cemetery dedicated to the 69 who perished in the Trimdon Grange mining disaster of 1882.

The village's history harks back many centuries further than the mining era and **St Helen's Church** is the place to tap into it. It was here that Kelloe's most famous resident, prominent Romantic poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning who lived at now-demolished Coxhoe Hall, was baptised in 1808. Browning, once a candidate for poet laureate, is best remembered for her verse *How Do I Love Thee?* (Sonnet 43) that, alongside other sonnets, describes her love for her husband and fellow poet Robert Browning.

A different sort of love is also preserved within the church: that of a mother for her son. The mother in question is St Helena herself and the son Roman Emperor St Constantine the Great, both of whom are depicted on the church's **St Helena Cross**, hailed as one of Britain's most significant Romanesque sculpture finds. It was Helena's undying love for her son that persuaded her to accept Christianity, just as he had. Constantine indeed had become the first Roman Emperor to embrace Christianity and both agreed that Helena undertake a journey to Palestine to locate the True Cross. Supposedly, following Helena's enquiries and excavations, three crosses were found, and she was able to identify the site where Jesus had been buried and commission construction of a shrine on the spot. The shrine would one day become the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, holiest site in the whole Christian world.





Cassop Vale Nature Reserve

Special woodsy wetland protecting rare flower and butterfly species.

At Cassop The Way of Love enters one of this route's most important protected pockets of countryside. The area was a tropical sea 250 million years ago, the legacy of which was leaving an unusually lime-rich soil and among the country's largest remaining areas of magnesian limestone grasslands. The grassland, along with a lake, wetlands, woodland and scrub, combines to form a habitat only found in the North East and often, sadly, on sites threatened by quarrying. The result is that many of the species living in Cassop Vale, such as the globeflower, birds-eye primrose and Northern Brown Argus butterfly, flourish in few other places in Britain.



Before you leave Cassop to enter the reserve, note the village is the last place to grab refreshments without deviating from the route before Durham.

As you descend from Cassop Post Office into Cassop Vale, be sure to scan the horizon ahead. Durham Cathedral reveals itself for the first time on the walk. And pilgrim tradition dictates that you should kneel and give thanks for sighting your destination...



Shincliffe and Old Durham Gardens

Riverside conservation village with wonderful 18th century gardens close by.

There are a few surprises left in store before you enter Durham City proper, enclosed in a pocket of land between the A1(M) motorway and the River Wear. It's worth veering slightly off The Way of Love to visit gorgeous river-hugging conservation village **Shincliffe**, with its lovely pub/restaurants. Your route does not cross the River Wear to the west bank here but keeps east to arrive at **Old Durham Gardens**, arresting landscaped grounds first created some 350 years ago and now lovingly restored to former glories. A hangout of Durham well-to-do's through the 18th and 19th centuries, the peaceful split-level gardens are once more a romantic place to roam.



Durham UNESCO World Heritage Site

Breathtaking medieval architecture with countless stories contained within its walls.

Sometimes the best is saved until last and, having gone the distance on The Way of Love to arrive at 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 of course by the cathedral, indisputably among Europe's most magnificent buildings. Durham's UNESCO site is among England's standout architectural treasures.

You approach from the northeast via the 12th/13th century **Elvet Bridge**, one of three many-arched stone bridges still connecting the peninsula to other parts of Durham (the other two are **Prebends Bridge** at the southwestern end of the peninsula and **Framwellgate Bridge**, just northwest of Durham Castle). All three are romantic places from which to appreciate the world heritage site.

From Elvet Bridge, turn left up Saddler Street and then right at Owengate to the **World Heritage Visitor Centre**, a mine of information.



In any other setting, **Durham Castle** would grab all attention, a stronghold tracing its origins to 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 a college 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 Love's end is not here, but in the even more mesmerically beautiful building to the south. The cathedral, or **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. It is the resting place of hugely influential saints **St Cuthbert** and **the Venerable Bede**. **St Hild** is celebrated with a dedicated altar in the Chapel of Nine Altars at the east end of the cathedral. 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, the elegantly vaulted **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. Be wooed by 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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