

The Way of the Sea



Warkworth - North Shields

(linking to The Northumberland Coast
Path & St Oswald's Way)





The Christian crossroads of the British Isles



Warkworth – Amble – Cresswell – Newbiggin-by-the-Sea
– Blyth – Seaton Sluice – St Mary's Lighthouse –
Whitley Bay – Tynemouth – North Shields

Distance: 38 miles/61km

The Way of the Sea

The course of this sea-hugging hike is also a crash course in all things maritime: a vibrant seabird sanctuary, sublime sand dunes, medieval castles and a bustling fishing port.

Coasting along an exquisite but little-known stretch of the North East's shoreline, The Way of the Sea reveals the area's eventful relationship with the ocean throughout time.

It was the sea that sculpted the necessary environment to entice this region's nationally important seabird populations. It was the sea that allowed prolific fishing and coal-mining to first flourish here, and later be preserved in a number of riveting insights for visitors today to discover. It was the sea that necessitated the raising of castles at Tynemouth, lighthouses like St Mary's and astounding Art Deco leisure complex Spanish City at Whitley Bay.

The scope of this trail will leave the wayfarer with a satisfyingly complete experience of the North East. On a path that alternates in appearance as often as the area's notorious tides, you begin hiking through empty dunes and end on the edge of one of England's biggest metropolitan areas. Along the way you encounter signs of just about every purpose people in this country ever derived from the sea: insights into the region's unique maritime heritage at Newbiggin-on-Sea and a museum dedicated to the volunteer life-saving groups that helped the coastguard along this tempestuous coast at Seaton Sluice.



Warkworth Castle

Towering 12th century fortress with striking ruins and mystery-shrouded hermitage gracing the charming River Coquet.

The Way of the Sea reaches this imposing motte-and-bailey castle ruin by Warkworth village, on a tree-fringed River Coquet meander. Former stomping ground of English kings John, Edward I and Edward II, it enjoyed its height of glory under Henry Percy, first Earl of Northumberland. His son Harry Hotspur became infamous for rebelling against King Henry IV, losing the Percys the castle for a time but gaining mention in Shakespeare's *Henry IV Part I*. The Greek cross-shaped **keep** is hailed as a marvel of medieval architecture. You can walk from Warkworth up the River Coquet and take a boat trip to the **Warkworth Hermitage**, which started attracting attention following publication of the 18th century ballad *The Hermit of Warkworth*, but predates the poem by several centuries. The River Coquet was also once known for fulling (a process in woollen clothmaking). Rent from a fulling mill near Warkworth financed a light for St Cuthbert's shrine in the 13th century.



Amble, Cresswell and Newbiggin

Agreeable **Amble**, just down the River Coquet from Warkworth Castle is a boarding point for seasonal boat trips to offshore **Coquet Island**, where an impressive 20,000-odd pairs of puffins nest, alongside endangered roseate terns (the island protects Britain's biggest population). South along the coast two further fabulous bird-watching sites beckon: **Druridge Bay Country Park** and **Cresswell Ponds**, near Cresswell. Spy golden eye, snipe, greylag, pink-footed geese and even, occasionally, avocets.

The next notable place south is beach-hugging **Newbiggin-by-the-Sea**, one of the few North East towns that built (and went to sea on) cobbles: flat-bottomed boats with high bows that allowed a launch from sand and could fend off big North Sea waves. A **Maritime Centre** explains Newbiggin's nautical happenings. **The Woodhorn Museum**, a former turn-of-the-century-built colliery with wonderfully preserved original pit buildings, is a riveting way of learning about the one-time importance of coal to the local economy.

The Way of the Sea continues via **Blyth** and more beautiful sandy beaches to Seaton Sluice.

Seaton Sluice

Seaside village abutting a beautiful sandy beach.

Seaton Sluice village sits at the southern end of the golden sands of **Seaton Sluice Beach**. This settlement straddles Seaton Burn, which widens into a pretty, apostrophe-shaped **harbour** before meeting the sea, sculpting out a headland that is home to the 1880-built **Watch House Museum**. This tells of the area's volunteer life-saving groups, which once acted as a secondary coastguard on this shipwreck-prone coast. Fuel yourself for your pilgrimage with heavenly fish and chips from one of the village's historic pubs or the local fish and chip shop. Nearby ostentatious mansion, **Seaton Delaval Hall**, is also well worth a visit.

Seaton Sluice marks a crossroads for Northern Saints Trail pilgrims. From here you can join **The Angel's Way** to continue via Newcastle, Gateshead and the Angel of the North to Chester-le-Street. Or, continue on The Way of the Sea to North Shields. South of the river, at Jarrow, you can then join **The Way of Learning** and continue to Durham Cathedral.

Spanish City, Whitley Bay

Lovingly-refurbished ocean-fronting leisure complex dating from 1910.

*'...And girl it looks so pretty to me
Like it always did
Like the Spanish City to me
When we were kids...'*

So goes the Dire Straits song *Tunnel of Love*, sufficiently honoured at this spectacularly restored seafront complex to be etched into the amphitheatre outside. Dire Straits frontman Mark Knopfler and Sting, both local lads, have fond memories of Whitley Bay's glamorous entertainment venue in its original incarnation. It opened in 1910 as a concert venue, a restaurant and roof garden with the UK's second-largest unsupported dome (after St Paul's Cathedral) as its central feature. A century later, Spanish City had fallen into disrepair but, after receiving some serious TLC, reopened in 2018.

It is enough to visit the tearoom beneath the dome to appreciate the architecture but, if you wish to linger, the new-look Spanish City is also a restaurant and events space, and there's a hotel nearby. Who says British seaside resorts are dying? If this attraction is anything to go by, they are still making waves.





Tynemouth Priory and Castle

Tynemouth Priory and Castle's ruins encompass two millennia of history on one dramatically-poised headland.

On a headland between the two largest of Tynemouth's sandy beaches perches this ruined priory-cum-castle, on a spot that has seen settlement for the last 2,000 years. It was an important Iron Age fort, and a priory probably by the 7th century AD. After it suffered excessive plundering by Vikings, later site developers wisely decided any holy building should come complete with fortifications, and from Norman times onwards the destinies of priory and castle were intertwined. Northumbrian and Scottish kings are buried in the grounds, as well as Edward II's illegitimate son. Highlights include the 15th century chapel and the restored battery, which reflect this site's historic dual purpose.

Tynemouth village has many wonderful places to eat and drink and a famous weekend vintage/bric-a-brac market.

After Tynemouth, your path proceeds to **North Shields**, where you can take the ferry across the Tyne to **South Shields**.



St Mary's Lighthouse, Whitley Bay

An island at high tide, this turn-of-the-century lighthouse provides smashing coastal vistas.

Your path south on The Way of the Sea reaches its first major landmark south of Seaton Sluice at this 1898-built, Grade II-listed lighthouse, theatrically poised on a rocky, rock pool-riven, causeway-linked tidal island. There is a **museum** explaining the lighthouse's history, a shop and 137 steps to climb for epic views along the coast from the top.

Cullercoats

With a sandy bay nestled between two piers this is a popular spot all year round.

The south of the bay is a launching area for local fishing boats. Cullercoats has a marine laboratory, a working **Victorian Lifeboat Station** and **Fisherman's Watch House**. Winslow Homer, one of America's leading artists, spent some time living in Cullercoats. Many of his masterpieces, painted locally, hang in some of the world's most prestigious museums and galleries, including the Laing Art Gallery in Newcastle. Cullercoats was popular with generations of artists who drew inspiration from the breathtaking coastal scenery, often using fishing as a theme, and still attracts artists now.



Tynemouth Beach



North Shields

A working fishing port on the north bank of the River Tyne.

A visit is an excellent way to spend a couple of hours. The **Fish Quay** offers an array of culinary delights with lots of good restaurants to choose from. There is also the option to eat al fresco with fresh fish and chips, while sitting and overlooking the Tyne, watching the vessels pass by.

The **Old Low Light**, once used as a means for navigating ships back into the Tyne, is now a facility run by volunteers celebrating the history and heritage of the area. It features a museum, shop, café, event space and viewing platform.

Royal Quays is built on the site of former docks, home to the North Shields International Ferry Terminal, outlet shopping centre and inflatable theme park.

More to see



Image: David Southern

The Way of the Sea connects with the Northumberland Coast Path and St Oswald's Way walking route which runs from Lindisfarne to Heavenfield, via Warkworth. The routes boast a selection of eye-catching places to enjoy. Why not explore further?

Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

Forty miles of the country's most sublime coastline, protected as a pristine package of wondrous wildlife and history.

Not every stretch of seaside is pretty and pristine enough to get AONB status, but the Northumberland Coast AONB, spanning 40-odd miles of sandy coastline in England's far northeast between Berwick-on-Tweed and the Coquet Estuary at Warkworth, is such a stretch. Sweeping golden sand flats and sandy beaches combine here with craggy headlands, seemingly endless dunes secreting a wealth of rare wildlife and otherworldly offshore islands. The coastline is as entrancing today as it has been to people throughout time: 7,000 years of human activity awaits your discovery, from the cradle of Christianity in England at Lindisfarne through Saxon monasteries, Norman strongholds and splendid Victorian mansions, to the modern museums that bring all this history to life.

The **St Oswald's Way** walking route (between Lindisfarne and the Heavenfield Battle Site) passes through part of the AONB.

Connecting routes to Lindisfarne and Heavenfield from Warkworth

Follow the The Northumberland Coast Path and St Oswald's Way between Warkworth and Lindisfarne to see...

Lindisfarne

Photogenic Holy Island, crucible of the Christianisation of Britain and one of the country's most popular pilgrimage sites.

It is difficult to imagine of a more poignant or picturesque place to begin a pilgrimage than Lindisfarne. In AD 635 Aidan, the Irish monk favoured by pious new Northumbrian king Oswald for bringing Celtic Christianity to his people, selected this spot to found the monastery that would become the base for his evangelic efforts. It is easy to understand why. Spirituality aside, this green causeway-linked island, rimmed by vast tidal sand flats and crowned by a crag, naturally has a heightened sense of theatre. And of course for almost 14 centuries Lindisfarne and spirituality have been synonymous with each other: hence its other name, Holy Island.

St Aidan's work in spreading the Christian faith across Northumbria and that of the still more famous prior that came after, St Cuthbert, blessed Lindisfarne with a spiritual stature that resounded far beyond the borders of Britain.

Cuthbert was a well-liked monk but after bringing monastery etiquette in line with Rome (rather than with Ireland, as it had previously been) he soon became a hermit, retiring to nearby island Inner Farne to follow his calling and here developing a reputation for spiritual healing. Then, in death, this reputation really rocketed: countless miracles were attributed to his relics, including Northumbrian victories in battle. Not until Thomas a Becket's death in 1170 did a saint attain greater cult status.

Lindisfarne Priory is the most recent manifestation of a site that has stood out as a place of devotion since at least the time Aidan began building here. Viking raiders destroyed St Aidan's monastery, and today's priory was built nearby in about 1150. It is evident what a grand building this was: note the elaborate decorative stonework and the mighty, still intact 'rainbow arch'. Although ruined today, the priory commands reverence. It is well



Bamburgh Castle

Formidably mighty fortress among Britain's most massive still-occupied strongholds.

Is enormity more important to you, or is historic clout? Bamburgh Castle offers both. Towering above a sublime sandy stretch of coastline, it is one of Britain's largest occupied castles. But its roots run deep. As a built-on site it probably outdates Lindisfarne, clearly visible from here, and has likely been a royal residence since the 5th century AD. Having united Northumbria, Oswald made Bamburgh his base in AD 635. The current castle is Norman, with Victorian modifications courtesy of prominent regional inventor-industrialist William George Armstrong, who transformed it into his ideal of the quintessential fortress. The oldest still-standing part is the bulky 12th century **keep**. With its two **museums**, one of which includes significant archaeological finds, and its grassy, sandy coastal setting, Bamburgh Castle will keep you captivated for hours.

At Bamburgh Castle, you are also on the **St Oswald's Way** (Lindisfarne - Heavenfield Battle Site).

worth contemplating, as you explore, that Christianity spread across much of England from here.

It was not only holy men drawn to Lindisfarne. It was fighting men too, and **Lindisfarne Castle** was constructed mid-16th century recycling the no-longer used priory's stone. The crag-crowning castle is the island's most prominent feature, but its history is surprisingly humble: aside from accommodating temporary garrisons, it is most notable for being refashioned as an Edwin Lutyens-designed holiday home in the early 1900s.

Lindisfarne is very much a place to tarry: perhaps to see if you are as hardy as St Cuthbert and take a dip in the sea (the saint prayed daily immersed in icy North Sea water), to gaze out at the Farne Islands to which St Cuthbert retreated for a life of solitude or simply to soak up the ethereal energy of this wave-bashed spot.

Lindisfarne also marks the northern end of the **St Oswald's Way**, running south to Heavenfield Battle Site, and the south-eastern terminus of the **St Cuthbert's Way** which heads over the Cheviots to Melrose, Scotland: where St Cuthbert began his monastic career after he had a vision of St Aidan.

Important safety note - It is possible to walk or drive to Lindisfarne but check safe crossing times before departing as the island is cut off from the mainland twice daily by fast incoming tides.

Seahouses

Fishing village and hub for Farne Islands boat trips.

Follow the dreamy sands south from Bamburgh to the fishing village of **Seahouses**, where you can board a boat for the storm-tossed wildlife sanctuary of the **Farne Islands**. This 20-island archipelago holds a special, mystery-steeped allure and includes Inner Farne, where St Cuthbert lived as a hermit. It was the saint who initially passed laws protecting seabirds here (then a world first) and spotting puffins, eider ducks, seals and other sea life is a key reason to come today. Sir David Attenborough called the Farnes his favourite nature-watching site in the UK.

At Seahouses, you are also on the **St Oswald's Way** (Lindisfarne - Heavenfield Battle Site).



Dunstanburgh Castle

War of the Roses stronghold and a headland end point to the perfect Northumberland seaside stroll.

The broken battlements of this early 14th century ruin, dominating a rugged headland on the Northumberland Coast AONB, kindle the imagination like few fortresses in Britain can.

The modern world is far away here, with approach only by foot, helping you to better bring to mind colourful past happenings when the castle was a key battleground in the War of the Roses.

The twin-towered **keep** is still awe-inspiring. The 1.3 mile/2km walk to get here from the fishing harbour of **Craster**, famous for its mouth-watering kippers (cured herrings) and classic seaside tavern, is a perfect coastal adventure.

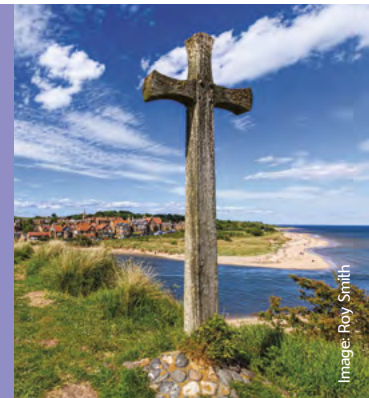
At Dunstanburgh Castle, you are also on the **St Oswald's Way** (Lindisfarne - Heavenfield Battle Site).

Alnmouth

Fishing village turned tranquil coastal getaway.

Once shifting sands silted up the harbour, this former fishing village changed tack to transform into an eye-catching little holiday destination. In this respect it was pioneering: one of England's first golf courses, heated baths, bathing huts and an early holiday camp all popped up in the 19th century. Its comely painted houses and grassy, sandy, dune-flecked location at the south end of the Northumberland Coast AONB attract plenty of people to this day. At the sleepy harbour is the **Ferryman's Hut Museum** (a ferry formerly ran across the River Aln here), reckoned to be the country's smallest museum. With no ferry running now, you must retreat inland, crossing the river on the B1338 to continue on The Way of the Sea towards Warkworth Castle.

At Alnmouth, you are also on the **St Oswald's Way** (Lindisfarne - Heavenfield Battle Site).



Follow *St Oswald's Way* between Warkworth and Heavenfield to see...



Rothbury

A fine traditional sandstone market town.

The nearby Victorian manor **Cragside** is a former residence of inventor-industrialist William George Armstrong (discover more about him on another Northern Saints Trail, **The Angel's Way**). Cragside's key claim to fame is being the world's first residence illuminated by hydroelectricity. The Tudor Revival mansion and gardens are full of fascinating insights into Armstrong, one of the North East's great Victorian personalities: not least the man's thirst for innovation. See the site of the first hydroelectric power station and pioneering interior gadgetry such as an electricity-powered dumb waiter, dinner gong and one of the earliest domestic dishwashers.

The sensational hill-scape around Rothbury rears into the nearby Northumberland National Park, and the town is a popular hiking and mountain-biking centre as a result.

At Rothbury, you are also on the **St Oswald's Way** (Lindisfarne – Heavenfield Battle Site).

Northumberland National Park

A montage of moors, crags, burns and waterfalls makes up England's wildest national park.

A far-ranging and adventure-inspiring green gap on the map, England's most northerly national park, which your route enters on its eastern side, is also one of its least visited. Spreading north east from Hadrian's Wall through the lonely Cheviot Hills to the Scottish border, its isolation will come as a pleasant surprise to those accustomed to other gentler, more densely-populated parts of England. Two of Britain's four most famous frontiers (Hadrian's Wall and the Scottish border) bound the park but otherwise, the Northumberland National Park is beautifully remote. It is one of Europe's largest Dark Sky parks and a refuge of the red squirrel and wild goat. The domain of the truly wild and the wilderness-lovers that seek it, this is where you come to enjoy Northumberland's highest hill (**the Cheviot**, at 2,674 feet/ 815m), most resplendent valley (**College Valley**) and prettiest waterfall (**Linhope Spout**). But besides physical remoteness, a psychological remoteness pervades here. This was border country, jurisdiction over which neither England nor Scotland could agree on and left, therefore, to the Border Reivers and the gypsies in past times: people who had their own laws and mysteries and propagated this place's beautiful, barren otherness.

In Northumberland National Park, you are also on the **St Oswald's Way** (Lindisfarne – Heavenfield Battle Site).

Hadrian's Wall

Spectacular 73-mile-long monument marking the northern extent of the Roman Empire.

Hadrian's Wall is the striking Roman-built UNESCO-listed fortification that runs from Wallsend on England's east coast over some of the nation's starkest, remotest countryside to near Bowness-on-Solway on the west coast. Raised under the Emperor Hadrian in little over six years from AD 122, the wall deserves just about every superlative Northern England can conjure. To walk its full course, as you can on the long-distance trail **Hadrian's Wall Path**, is to travel from big city suburbs through Northumberland National Park to the sand flats of the Solway Firth, with the rich, intense history of the wall and its



points of interest at your beck and call. The attraction is perhaps best absorbed in several separate visits. Highlights include the **Housesteads Fort** (on the wall, with a museum), **Vindolanda** (another fort just off the wall, with writing tablets preserving some of Britain's oldest-known handwriting) near Bardon Mill and an especially spectacular section of wall at **Walltown Crags**.

At Hadrian's Wall, you are also on the **St Oswald's Way** (Lindisfarne – Heavenfield Battle Site).

Heavenfield Battle Site

This pretty hilltop church poignantly marks the battle that began Northumbria's Golden Age.

The simple but charming **St Oswald's Church**, on a quiet hilltop southeast of Hexham, signals where Northumbria's Golden Age began. This was the site where in AD 633–634 Oswald, returning from exile as claimant to the Kingdom of Bernicia after the death of his brother Eanfred, defeated forces under Cadwallon ap Cadfan, King of Gwynedd. Victory at the Battle of Heavenfield here enabled Oswald to reunite Bernicia and Deira as the Kingdom of Northumbria, and usher in a period of great stability and advancement. Oswald's reign also saw the reintroduction of Christianity to England under St Aidan. St Aidan, as you will know if you have followed this route from Lindisfarne, achieved big results: through his work, Northumbria became the driving force of England's Christianisation. Plenty to reflect on, as you stand on the **Heavenfield Battle Site**. Views from here are also dazzling.

At the Heavenfield Battle Site, you can join **The Way of Light** at Hexham, which takes you on to Blanchland and Durham Cathedral.

You are at the southern end of the **St Oswald's Way** to Lindisfarne here.

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

northumberlandcoastandcountryside.org

visitnorthtyneside.com

seeitdoitsunderland.co.uk

destinationhartlepool.com

enjoyteesvalley.com

northumberlandnationalpark.org.uk

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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DURHAM
CATHEDRAL