

WALKING IN COUNTY DURHAM

About the Author



Paddy Dillon is a prolific walker and guidebook writer, with over 90 guidebooks to his name and contributions to 40 other titles. He has written for several outdoor magazines and other publications, and has appeared on radio and television.

Paddy uses a tablet computer to write as he walks. His descriptions are therefore precise, having been written at the very point at which the reader uses them.

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Other Cicerone guides by the author

Glyndwr's Way
Mountain Walking in Mallorca
The Cleveland Way and the
Yorkshire Wolds Way
The GR5 Trail
The GR20 Corsica
The Great Glen Way
The Irish Coast to Coast Walk
The Mountains of Ireland
The National Trails
The North York Moors
The Pennine Way
The Reivers Way
The South West Coast Path
The Teesdale Way (Martin Collins;
updated by Paddy Dillon)
Trekking in Greenland
Trekking in Mallorca
Trekking in the Alps
(contributing author)

Walking and Trekking in Iceland
Walking in Menorca
Walking in Sardinia
Walking in the Isles of Scilly
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Walking on Arran
Walking on Gran Canaria
Walking on Guernsey
Walking on Jersey
Walking on La Gomera and
El Hierro
Walking on la Palma
Walking on Lanzarote and
Fuerteventura
Walking on Madeira
Walking on Malta
Walking on Tenerife
Walking the Wales Coast Path

WALKING IN COUNTY DURHAM

40 WALKING ROUTES EXPLORING PENNINE MOORS,
RIVER VALLEYS AND COASTAL PATHS

by Paddy Dillon

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Updates to this Guide

While every effort is made by our authors to ensure the accuracy of guidebooks as they go to print, changes can occur during the lifetime of an edition. Any updates that we know of for this guide will be on the Cicerone website (www.cicerone.co.uk/1058/updates), so please check before planning your trip. We also advise that you check information about such things as transport, accommodation and shops locally. Even rights of way can be altered over time. We are always grateful for information about any discrepancies between a guidebook and the facts on the ground, sent by email to updates@cicerone.co.uk or by post to Cicerone, Juniper House, Murley Moss, Oxenholme Road, Kendal LA9 7RL.

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Front cover: Upper Weardale farms between Cowshill and Killhope (Walk 39)

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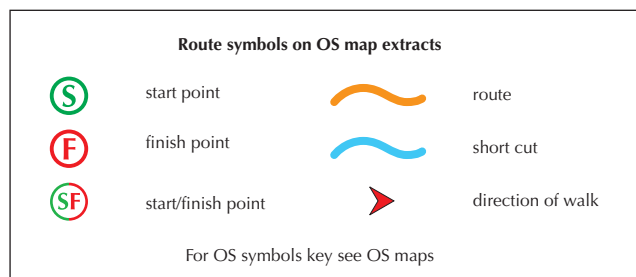
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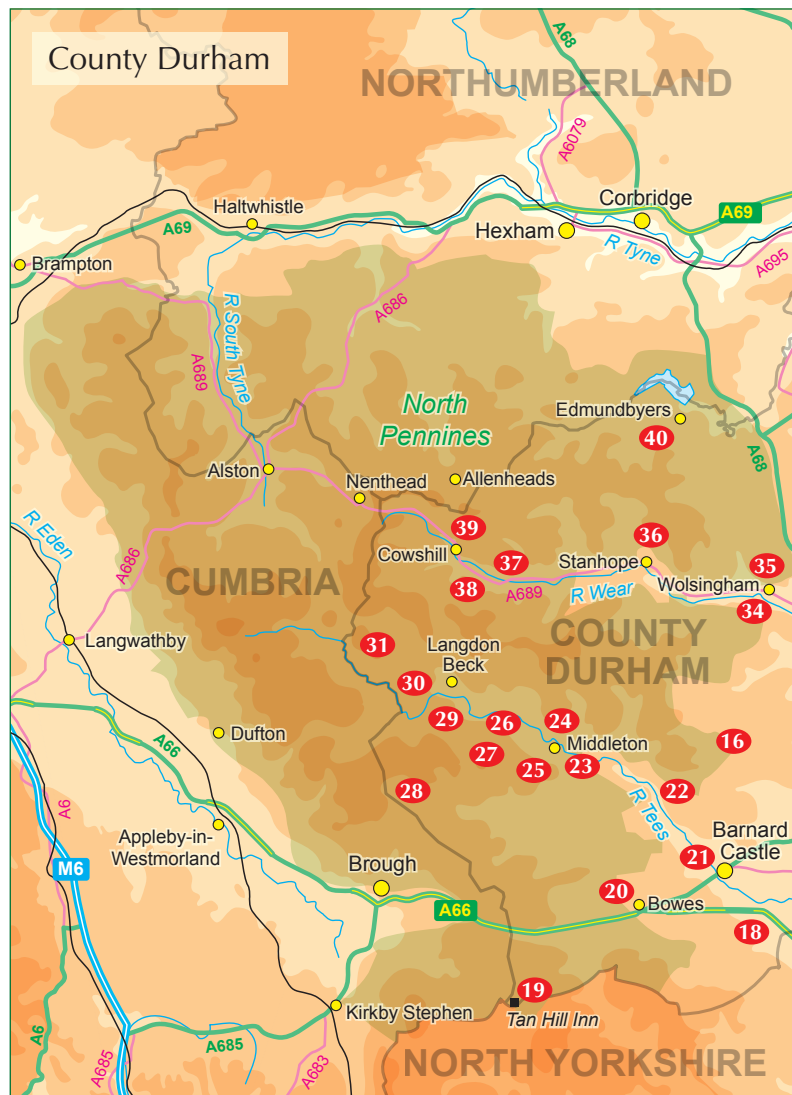
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A blaze of gorse bushes on the cliff coast between Hawthorn Dene and Easington Colliery (Walk 7)







Looking across the River Wear to Durham Cathedral (Walk 1)

INTRODUCTION

County Durham stretches from the high Pennines in the west to a low cliff-coast in the east. Its richly wooded, ancient landscape covered a treasure trove of coal and lead. Wave after wave of invaders fought each other, conquered each other and settled beside each other to breed a race of hardy people who will always have the strength to face change – for County Durham is essentially a land of change.

Durham city is dominated by symbols of a powerful trinity. The cathedral is a symbol of religious power; the castle a symbol of civic power; the university a symbol of the power of thought and learning. This trinity of powers and disciplines was personified in a succession of ‘prince-bishops’, who dominated and controlled the region throughout centuries of change. The religio-political scene was summed up in the words of Sir Walter Scott:

*‘Grey towers of Durham!
Yet well I love thy mixed
and massive piles
Half church of God, half castle
‘gainst the Scot.’*

Those who walk through County Durham can best observe the signs of change. Here you will find a Roman fort, and over there a Saxon church or a Norman castle. Here is a coalmine,

there is a lead mine, and over there is an old stone quarry. You can find remnants of ancient woodland, marvel at communities of arctic/alpine plants, or observe the slow and steady reclamation of a former industrial site by the forces of nature. Ancient market towns, old pit villages and new industrial sites all share the same countryside.

As industry changes, its remains are consigned to museums and visitor centres, so a generation is growing up who will never experience the depths of a coalmine, and are breathing cleaner air. As former industrial sites are redeveloped for recreational uses, there are more opportunities to explore new areas of countryside, where interpretative facilities are first class.

County Durham is changing fast. Historically, it was a land hemmed in between two mighty rivers – the Tyne to the north and the Tees to the south. It lost portions of its original territory in the local government reorganisation of 1974, although it gained a generous slice of Yorkshire in the process. In 1997 the Borough of Darlington ‘seceded’ from County Durham, so the county boundary keeps shifting. The power of the prince-bishops has waned, and more and more people are turning to the countryside to find a renewal of spirit. There are broad and bleak moorlands to explore, wide-ranging views to enjoy, powerful



waterfalls to admire, woodlands and fields to wander through, heritage sites to visit, with plenty of interest and enjoyment on the way.

The network of rights of way is constantly being overhauled by an active Countryside Group at County Hall, with the aim of ensuring that paths are walkable and clearly marked. New routes are being developed, most notably a splendid, signposted network of traffic-free cycleways along old railway trackbeds, linking with cycleways along quiet country roads. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 ensures that a high degree of access is available to walkers on the bleak and remote moorlands of the North Pennines. Tourism is an important new industry for County Durham.

This guidebook contains detailed descriptions of 40 one-day walks spread all over County Durham, to illustrate the region's history, heritage, countryside and natural wonders. The

terrain covered ranges from field paths to open moorlands, from the North Sea to the high Pennines. You will be able to discover the region's geology, natural history and heritage by following informative trails, or taking in specific sites of interest along the way. A network of tourist information centres can help you discover the best places to stay, how to get around and what to see. Welcome to 'Walking in County Durham – the Land of the Prince-Bishops'.

GETTING TO COUNTY DURHAM

By air

The two airports most convenient for getting to County Durham are Newcastle (www.newcastleairport.com) and Teesside International Airport (www.durhamteesvalleyairport.com). There are more flights to and from the former than the latter.

GETTING AROUND COUNTY DURHAM

By bus

National Express coaches has direct services from London Victoria coach station to Durham, and also from Edinburgh, Leeds and Manchester (www.nationalexpress.com). Arriva buses cover most of the northeast, and Durham is one of the hubs in their network (www.arrivabus.co.uk).

GETTING AROUND COUNTY DURHAM

Public transport around County Durham is generally excellent, with most places enjoying regular daily bus services.

If relying on buses, be sure to collect the relevant timetables as soon as possible, and ensure that the level

By sea

Ferries reach Newcastle from Amsterdam, bringing the region within reach the Low Countries. Check ferries with DFDS Seaways (www.dfdsseaways.co.uk).

By rail

County Durham prides itself on being the 'cradle of the railways', and so arriving by rail ties in well with the heritage of the region. LNER provides direct rail services to Durham from London Kings Cross and also from Edinburgh (www.lner.co.uk). Cross Country also runs direct services to Durham from points as far afield as Birmingham, Edinburgh and Glasgow (www.crosscountrytrains.co.uk).



A rough-surfaced road crosses Bowes Moor and links with the course of the Pennine Way (Walk 19)

Castle Eden Dene is managed as a national nature reserve and contains ancient woodland (Walk 8)



of service allows time to complete a walk. Most bus stations and tourist information centres carry stocks of timetable leaflets, and some bus drivers may also be able to supply them.

Few places are accessible by rail, but a handful of important destinations are served. Public transport around County Durham is excellent in most places and quite good in others. In fact, it is good enough to be relied upon by walkers who wish to travel without a car. This guidebook was researched using public transport from one end of County Durham to the other, without any problems. However, some services have been drastically reduced recently.

By rail

Considering County Durham's railway heritage, and the fact that the region was comprehensively crisscrossed by railways in the 19th century, the 21st century network is a mere skeleton service. The mainline railway links Newcastle, Durham and Darlington. The coastal railway links the mainline railway with Stockton-on-Tees, Hartlepool, Seaham and Sunderland and one day the branch line from Darlington to Bishop Auckland may carry passengers into Weardale. For now, most local rail services in County Durham are provided by Northern (www.northernrailway.co.uk). The heritage Weardale Railway (www.weardale-railway.org.uk) operates only between Wolsingham, Frosterley and Stanhope, but has plans to extend its services in the future.

By bus

Arriva traces its origins to an enterprise run by the Cowie family of Sunderland in 1938, and now provides the bulk of bus services in County Durham, www.arrivabus.co.uk. Go-North East buses generally operates in the northern parts of County Durham, linking with Newcastle, www.gonortheast.co.uk. There are half-a-dozen minor bus operators, of which the most important is Weardale Travel, which operates across the whole of Weardale, www.weardale-travel.co.uk.

Some bus operators sell 'explorer' tickets, offering exceptional value when a long journey or a change of bus is involved. North East Explorer tickets allow buses from several operators to be used. See www.networkonetickets.co.uk for full details.

Bus services around County Durham can be checked on the County Council website at www.durham.gov.uk/busmap.

Traveline

Timetable information can be checked for any form of public transport in County Durham and beyond by contacting Traveline, tel 0871 2002233, www.traveline.info.

GEOLOGY

The geology of County Durham is complex, but its salient points can be presented in a simplified manner. An understanding of the geology of the region helps to interpret the

WALK 1

Durham City and the River Wear

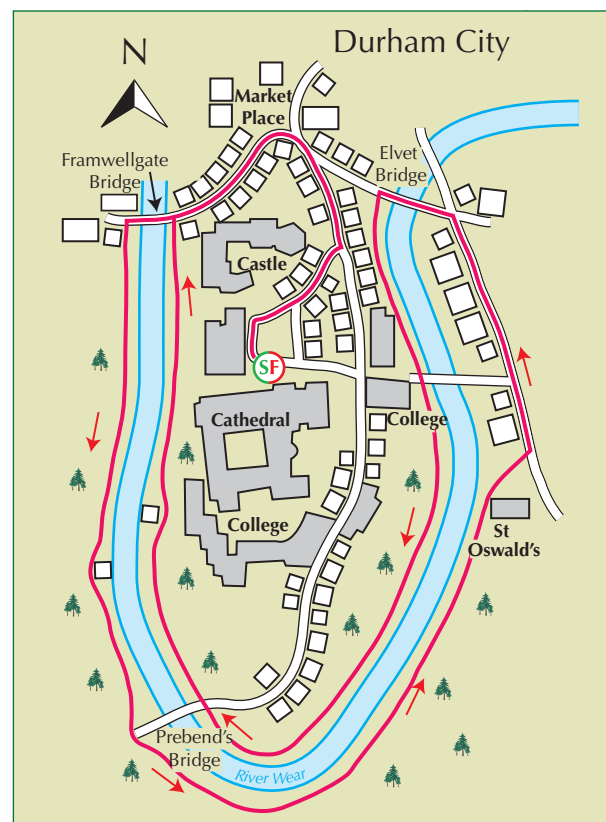
Start/Finish	Durham Cathedral – GR 273 422
Distance	5km (3 miles)
Terrain	Easy, low-level urban paths, tracks and roads
Maps	OS Landranger 88; Explorer 308
Refreshments	Plenty of pubs, cafés and restaurants around the city
Transport	Durham is a major transport hub, with plenty of bus and rail services. The Cathedral Bus serves the city centre regularly from the railway station and coach park, except Sundays.

Situated on a wooded promontory rising above a deeply entrenched meander of the River Wear, Durham city is redolent with history and stirs the spirit. The Dunholme – the hill crowned with the cathedral, castle and college – is a designated world heritage site. Before exploring the county of Durham, it is well worth exploring the city. Wander through the poky alleyways around Market Place before striding along both banks of the River Wear – no one leaves Durham city disappointed. This simple stroll could be accomplished in as little as an hour, but with 1000 years of accumulated history to see, it could take as much as a week!

A viewing platform was added to the tower in 2019.

Starting at **Durham Cathedral**, the best climb in the city is up the 325 steps of the central tower – weather and opening times permitting. ◀ You can look down on this short day's walk, as well as across country to distant hills and the moors of the North Pennines.

Descend from the tower, leave the cathedral and walk round Palace Green, passing the college and castle. Follow a narrow road down to **Market Place**. Turn left to continue down narrow, cobbled Silver Street, which is lined with shops, to reach **Framwellgate Bridge**. Cross the bridge and descend a flight of steps on the left, beside a pub. Turn right to walk upstream beside the **River Wear** and enjoy fine views across to the



castle and cathedral. The path passes a weir on its way to **Prebend's Bridge**. Don't cross the bridge, but maybe take photographs from its parapet, and read Sir Walter Scott's words carved in stone.

Beyond Prebend's Bridge, the broad path drifts from the river and later climbs up a wooded slope to reach **St Oswald's Church**. Bear left to leave the churchyard and walk along Church Street and New Elvet, turning left to cross **Elvet Bridge**.



The stout stone towers of Durham Cathedral completely dominate the skyline of Durham city

Descend via steps from the bridge to reach the riverside path and head downstream. The path runs below some of the colleges and passes under modern Kingsgate Bridge. Proceed through the entrenched meander of the River Wear and then beneath Prebend's Bridge to reach the Museum of Archaeology, which stands beside the weir passed in the early stages of the walk. Framwellgate Bridge lies further along the path, where you can climb back up into the city and visit any places that caught your attention earlier.

Durham City celebrated its millennium in 1995, recalling the day in 995 when the congregation of St Cuthbert brought their founder's body onto the Dunholme – the wooded promontory rising above a crook in the River Wear. The rest, as they say, is history. Rather than attempt to distil 1000 years of



Looking down on Durham Castle from the splendid viewpoint of the central tower of Durham Cathedral

history onto half a page here, those who want to know more should get hold of the colourful, condensed, informative booklet *Durham – Historic and University City* by Margot Johnson, published by Turnstone Ventures. This contains a clear plan of the city and covers all the main historical points. Rather like the city itself, this popular little booklet has been through several editions. Many of Durham city's main attractions have plenty of their own background material. Visit the Durham Museum www.durhammuseum.co.uk.