

SHERPA: WALKER'S BRITAIN - HADRIAN'S WALL

8-days/ 7-nights self-guided inn-to-inn walking holiday

(WRW - Revised: October 10)



This is the newest "National Trail" in the UK, only officially opened in May 2003 after many years of negotiations with landlords and farmers to finalize the exact route which stretches 83 statute miles/133 km across town and country, forest and moorland, World Heritage Site and National Park.

It is a great alternative coast to coast walk, with a lot of scenic variety from the modern, busy cityscapes of Newcastle upon Tyne to the red sandstone hues of medieval Carlisle, from industrial Tyneside to the quiescence of Bowness on Solway. From the barren blustery heights of Highshields Craggs in the Northumberland National Park to the lime green pastoral scenes of the Eden valley. Omnipotent along the route the Wall snakes its way. In sections interrupting a housing estate here, popping up under a road there.

Then from being little more than a grassy bank it transforms into stone and roller coasters over crag tops and down into impressive fort like structures such as at Birdoswald and Housesteads.

Departs: Daily from 4 April – Mid October 2011.

Cost: AUD\$1070 per person twin share. Single supplement AUD\$250

Starts: Whitley Bay (Newcastle Upon Tyne)

Ends: Carlisle (Cumbria)

Included: Bed and breakfast with ensuite facilities where available. Luggage transfers from Inn to Inn. Full route book and map package including notes on finding your accommodation each night

Grading: Moderate. Some longish days (around 15–17 miles) and short steep climbs and descents. Generally however undulating. Mixed weather can be expected at anytime.

The actual wall however, was started as long ago as 122 A.D!

At this time The Roman Emperor; Hadrian was having a lot of trouble with the restless natives to the north; those devilish blue painted Pictish and assorted Caledonian warriors were causing mayhem across the wild Northern frontiers and hassling trade and settlement. It became imperative to create some kind of order and consolidate the extreme North of the Empire, especially after one of the legion divisions was withdrawn from Britain to fight the German tribes leaving Britain under defended.

The wall was built "to separate Romans from Barbarians," across northern Britain at its narrowest point between the Solway Firth and the North Sea. In its original form it was built in 6 years over 73 modern miles (80 Roman ones). It was extended and enhanced with impressive stone defenses following natural ridgelines and with a deep ditch (The Vallum) dug alongside it. Later much of the stonework was mortared allowing it to survive the centuries to become one of the oldest structures in the country today.

Contact Outdoor Travel for more itinerary details and reservations

The amount of work and finance that would have gone into the wall was immense even with slave or conscript labour. Post forts were built every Roman Mile along the route. At intervals huge garrison forts were built so that a counter attack or a raid could be organised at short notice. These included baths with hypocausts (under-floor heating). There were also gatehouses controlling access over the frontier forests and moors. So there must have been hundreds of skilled and semi skilled masons involved and thousands of labourers. Even stone was brought in by boat on the Tyne, to supply areas where it could not be cut locally.

Things are more peaceful today, the Picts have disappeared altogether, absorbed perhaps into other tribes like the Scotti, the Romans have gone, leaving only a few Italian restaurants in the region and much of the imposing defensive structures were dismantled and used for building and field wall stone. This means that you can enjoy "walking the wall" unmolested, on this alternative Coast-to-Coast route.

General Information

Route Notes: Please note that one set of route notes per room booked is included in the cost of the holiday. If you require more sets of notes then there is a charge for addition sets.

Waymarking: National Trail Acorn marks often attached to "finger posts" and stiles. The wall either as an embankment or a wall forms a suitable waymark for much of the route, but you will have to use map interpretation especially in times of low visibility, and getting to know how far you have come. So you should be accustomed to using map and compass.

Start of your walk: take the **Metro** from Whitley Bay to Wallsend (15-mins) or further into town if you want to miss out the first few miles (all transport costs are not included).

At the end of your walk: Carlisle is straightforward to exit from and get onto mainline rail services. From Bowness on Solway, there are a few bus connections back to Carlisle, but it is easiest to take a taxi.

Getting to the Start: From Newcastle bus or train station and airport, you can easily connect with the Nexus Metro to take you to Whitley Bay within about an hour. If you cannot manage with your baggage then you will need to hire a taxi.

National Rail: www.nationalrail.co.uk

Dietary Requirements: It is important for you to tell us if you have any special dietary requirements when you book your holiday so that we can inform everyone that you are staying with. Breakfast in the UK will generally consist of sausage, bacon, eggs etc; cereals and fruit will also be available.

Single Supplements: are payable on most of our tours. The single supplement guarantees the privacy of your own room, however, rooms can at times be small and in some places may not enjoy the same facilities as double/twin rooms.

Luggage: When staying in hotels, sometimes your luggage will have been taken to you room awaiting your arrival. However don't be surprised if your luggage is waiting for you to take it up to your room.

Suggested accommodation: With all our night stops we aim to reserve rooms with ensuite facilities. In some circumstances ensuite rooms may not be available at the time of booking. Below we list our normal stops along the route, note that room numbers in the different locations are limited and so we may have to find alternatives on some occasions.

Night 1: At Whitley Bay. A busy seaside town where we use a number of places depending on availability.

Night 2: In Wylam we stay in another nice Victorian country house, which has been noted by English Heritage. The rooms are large and ensuite. Some clients have described it as a home from home.

Night 3: At Humshaugh, our guesthouse located only half a mile from the wall and Chollerford. It is a welcoming working farm, which offers magnificent views of Northumberland.

Night 4: Near to Housesteads we stay at a farm B&B situated about half a mile north of Hadrian's Wall within Northumberland's beautiful National Park. Magnificently situated, the wall can be seen from the farm. It is in the middle of all the most important sites (Housesteads, Vindolanda, Great Chesters and the Roman Army

Museum at Carvoran are all within 4 miles, via beautiful scenic walks if you have the time or you have an extra day).

Night 5: At **Walton** we are about half a mile from the wall, near this little village, in a nice working dairy farm set in beautiful Hadrian's Wall countryside. The farm offers spacious comfortable guest rooms with either king size or twin beds and all have stunning views over the Pennines and Cold fell. Bedrooms are traditionally furnished, warm and quiet with radio alarm clocks and tea and coffee making facilities, a family room and ensuite are available. A Cumbrian farmhouse breakfast is provided using local produce, farm fresh free range eggs and home baked bread and preserves. Packed lunches are available on request. The picturesque village has a large village green and traditional pub serving locally produced food for your evening meal and beer.

Nights 6 & 7: Our final two nights are spent in **Carlisle** at a small hotel situated in a solid Victorian terrace. It has its foundations literally on Hadrian's Wall. All rooms have hot drinks tray, hair dryer, remote controlled TVs, radio alarms and direct dial telephone with lap top point. There is also a Bistro restaurant open everyday except Sundays.

Suggested itinerary:

Day 1 Whitley Bay: Travel to Newcastle and then onto Whitley Bay. If you have time you will be able to take the Metro back into the city to have a look round this vibrant "Toon."

Day 2 Whitley Bay to Wylam / Heddon on the Wall 15 Miles / 24 km: Today you take the short train (metro) from Whitley Bay to Wallsend and the start of the walk (15 mins, not included). If you have time before setting off on your days walk take a close look at the remains of the Roman fort of Segedunum which marks the beginning of the route today. This is a multi award-winning site, with reconstructions of a Roman Bath House and an excellent interactive museum.

From the Tourist Information in Wallsend, by the Swan Hunter Ship Yard, the trail heads out following the walls of the ancient Roman fort of Segedunum. Take the old Tyne to Blyth railway line (now a footpath) through to Walker where you join the River Tyne at the Riverside Park and pass Byker. You come into the riverside area of downtown Newcastle upon Tyne with vistas of the elegant Tyne Bridges and of the Newcastle skyline including St. Nicholas Cathedral. There should be time to climb up to Newcastle Keep. Walk out of the city along side the river. There is plenty of evidence of present and former industrial activity.

As you get to the old village of Newburn, the countryside really begins to open up at last.

You are now in the county of Northumberland. Just before you would cross the River Tyne for Heddon on the Wall, on the trail, we turn off for Wylam and our overnight stop at the end of this flattish day.

Day 3 Wylam to Humshaugh 16.5 miles / 26 km: After crossing over the River Tyne, you have your first steep ascent up to Heddon on the Wall, where there are some wall remains. To beyond Chollerford now, the National Trail follows beside the roads that have been built over part of the wall. The wall became itself a source of material for the foundations of General Wade's military road, the trail though often follows along the Vallum, the ancient ditch line created as a defensive feature when the wall was built. Look out for remains of Vindobala fort and the reservoirs around Welton. There is a pub at East Wallhouses after about 6 miles.

A slight deviation to Halton after 9 miles might be in order to admire the old keep.

Day 4: Humshaugh to Housesteads (Once brewed) 12 miles / 19.3 km the route follows beside the road as far as Fozy Moss, where the road veers off the wall as it reaches the crags of the Whin Sill Escarpment. Our stage roller coasters to Housesteads, with its famed fort and National Trust Museum. There are excellent views over the "Northward Tynescape" to the Bellingham and Simonside Hills. Now follows arguably the most scenic section of the trip; over Highshield crags and then down via Peel Crags to the National Park car park at Steel Rigg. From here you can walk out to accommodation at Once Brewed.

Day 5: Once Brewed to Walton 17 Miles / 27 km The wall climbs to its highest point over Windshields Crags, before descending to the delightfully named Bogle hole. Then down steps through Thorny Doors and up Cawfields Crags with excellent views onto the Pennines. The way passes by Great Chesters and Magnis (Roman forts), passing Greenhead, the ruin of medieval Thirlwall castle and in another mile or so crosses the Cumbria / Northumberland border on the River Irthing at Gilsand.

There are interesting Roman defenses to visit at Birdoswald, and eventually after a trek to Banks you will hopefully find a shop/post office open for refreshment. Banks overlooks the Irthing Valley and Lanercost priory below. From here there are few signs of Hadrian's Wall remaining so enjoy the last significant portion maintained by English Heritage at Hare Hill. The path starts to slowly descend to Garthside. There are interesting views over the Irthing Valley as the walk heads into Walton. This is easy walking along the edge of fields and beside some old established hardwood trees.

On approaching Walton the way drops into the valley below crossing King Water. A short section of road takes the walk into the village of Walton a small village with an interesting church in the centre beside the village green.

Day 6: Lanercost to Carlisle 11 miles / 18 km The route continues undulating across country, reaching the little village of Walton, where a pint might be in order. After crossing the very attractive Cam beck, you briefly join the road at Newtown Village near the green before skipping across the fields. Here you are following the wall line via Old wall, Blea head and Wall head farms, before detouring on a little "Sandy Lane" that takes you down to The Stanegate, the old Roman road that leads into Crosby on Eden and the river Eden. Now you will be walking beside the river for about a mile.

At Linstock there is a medieval pele, a Peel Tower that rang in times of danger so that the locals could congregate within its fortifications. Next we come to Rickerby, which has, in contrast, a Victorian folly tower. Finally we cross the River Eden, wind round the river, meander towards Stanwix, then up into Carlisle - a very interesting historical city, with a castle started by Henry I, extensive wall and other Roman remains and then there is the cathedral. The town has changed hands several times between Scotland and England and this is reflected in parts of the town's structure.

Carlisle is quite a bit smaller than Newcastle. A lot of the buildings such as the castle and the Old Town Hall are made of fine red sandstone. Beer fans will not want to miss out a couple of drams, as this is the centre for the Theakstone's Brewery. Visit the Tullie House Museum for a fine collection of Roman remains. The inner city has been pedestrianised making exploration enjoyable around the market square.

Day 7: Carlisle to Bowness on Solway 14 miles / 23 km. As you have a second night in your hotel in Carlisle, the final walk today can be done in either direction. Most efficiently take a scheduled bus (at own expense) at around 09:00 to Bowness On Solway and walk back to Carlisle, or just check the timetables and walk to Bowness and then bus or taxi back.

The walk itself from Carlisle follows at first the Southern side of the River Eden.

The trail follows the Eden once again, more or less parallel with the line of the Wall and Vallum, through Grinsdale and Beaumont where you at last veer away from the Eden. You get good views from just north of the village to the peaks of Skiddaw and High Pike to the south and across the Solway Firth to the West. Through Burgh by Sands, a short detour takes you to the point on the marsh where Edward I died in 1307. In the vicinity of Dykesfield House, the trail joins an old railway embankment for a couple of miles before rejoining the line of "The Wall" near Glasson.

From here the route follows the minor road to Bowness on Solway, the site of the Roman fort of Maia and journey's end.

Day 8: Depart Carlisle

Tour ends after breakfast.

Other walking holidays – guided in small groups or self-guided with inn-to-inn luggage transfers & meals are available in many parts of the UK & Europe through **Outdoor Travel** including the spectacular **Coast to Coast** trail, **St Cuthbert's Way** from Scotland into England, the pilgrims **Way of St James** or **Camino de Santiago** from Le Puy in France to Santiago in Spain or the **Via Francigena** the pilgrims 'road to Rome' in Italy.

Contact Outdoor Travel for more itinerary details and reservations

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