

Walker's Britain: St Cuthbert's Way

Tour code: WSC

Revised: October 08

The St Cuthbert's Way is a long-distance path that was established in 1996. The route reflects the life of this 7th Century monk, extending from Melrose Abbey in the Scottish borders, where he became bishop to the island of Lindisfarne just off the coast of Northumberland in northeast England, where he was buried. So the 'Way' links places associated with his life. It includes a variety of delightfully unspoilt countryside: the Tweed valley (origin of the famous woollen cloth), the Eildon Hills, the Cheviot Hills (origin of one of the most famous breeds of sheep), and the Northumberland coast with its broad horizons, sandy beaches, and dramatic contrasts between high and low tide. The small historic towns en route - Melrose, Kirk Yetholm and Wooler - are equally unspoilt and offer a pleasant contrast with the thinly populated countryside. There is an abundance of historical features, including ruined abbeys at Melrose and Lindisfarne, the battle site at Harestanes Moor and old castles. The standard route is intended to be walkable in 4 long days, but we have made several modifications to make the day stages slightly shorter and perhaps more interesting.



The tour ends on Lindisfarne, but we recommend that if you have time, you opt for the extended tour which takes you back to the mainland and the beautiful village of Bamburgh overlooked by its grand castle and further down the coast, past the magnificent ruins of Dunstanburgh castle to near the ancient kipper producing village of Craster.

General Information

Duration: 8 days (7 nights) or 10 days (9 nights)

Season: April to October, **but your selected dates must fit in with the tides on the crossing to and from Lindisfarne.**

This means that you need to check with us to make sure that your dates are feasible. Alternatively the tide timetable is available on www.northumberlandlife.org/holy-island/default.asp

Starting point: Melrose

Grade: Moderate

End of tour: Lindisfarne (normal route) or Dunstan, near Craster (on the extension).

Nearest major cities: Edinburgh, Glasgow, Newcastle upon Tyne.

Nearest airports: Edinburgh, Newcastle, Teeside, Glasgow International, Prestwick International.

To reach starting point

From Edinburgh airport bus/taxi to city centre bus station, then bus to Melrose; **from Newcastle** airport Metro to Newcastle central station, then train to Berwick-on-Tweed, then bus (not Sundays) from train station to Melrose.

From Glasgow airport bus to Edinburgh bus station then bus to Melrose; **from Prestwick** train to Glasgow central station then train to **Edinburgh** and bus to Melrose. It is

about 15 minutes walk or a short taxi ride between Edinburgh Waverley train station and the central bus station in St Andrews Square. **From London** airports, train/underground to London Kings Cross train station, then train to Berwick-on-Tweed, and then bus from train station to Melrose (not Sundays). We provide times of the Berwick-Melrose bus service in the route notes, subject to availability.

End of tour

From Lindisfarne you can take a taxi to Berwick Upon Tweed railway station for about £16. If you are on the extension, from last accommodation near Craster either take a taxi to Alnmouth train station for trains to Newcastle, London, Edinburgh or Glasgow. Some local buses may also fit in with your itinerary.

Your accommodation

Accommodation is on a bed and breakfast basis throughout. There are pubs serving bar meals at or near all of the overnight stops. A packed lunch can be ordered from most of your night stops; alternatively there is in most cases a grocery shop nearby where picnic materials can be obtained.

Please note that below we describe our usual accommodations. If they are not available for the dates

that you book we will endeavor to use alternative accommodation of a similar standard:

- ❑ **Night 1: Melrose.** We stay in comfortable (three star tourist board) accommodation offering ensuite facilities near to the town centre and abbey.
- ❑ **Night 2: Ancrum.** Just off the route we stay at a small B&B in the centre of the village with modern rooms: also a 3 star establishment.
- ❑ **Night 3: Morebattle.** We stay in a small town inn here, on the route. The rooms are ensuite, newly refurbished with tea and coffee and there is of course the bar!
- ❑ **Night 4: Kirk Yetholm.** In this border village we stay at a very pleasant traditional cottage B&B just off the village square.
- ❑ **Night 5: Wooler.** We use a small family run guesthouse on the high street in this pleasant market town. This is a tourist board 4 star establishments with well-appointed rooms with a rustic charm and lovely furnishings.
- ❑ **Night 6: Lowick.** This village is off the route, but you will be collected from Fenwick, which is on the way. At Lowick you will stay in a lovely Inn, 4 diamond grading, it was originally built in the 17th Century. The pub still retains a great deal of old charm and the original beams are visible in the snug bar. The spacious dining room leads off the bar and offers a wide range of home cooked food prepared from as much local produce as available.
- ❑ **Night 7: Lindisfarne (Holy Island).** In the only village on Holy Island, your guesthouse will make you more than welcome

Extension accommodation:

- ❑ **Night 8: Bamburgh.** Our hotel is a grade II listed building overlooking the village green that is dominated by the walls of Bamburgh Castle. Formerly a country inn, the modernized hotel retains the atmosphere and charm of a bygone era. Almost all rooms have en-suite facilities. TV and tea-making facilities are standard.
- ❑ **Night 9: Near Craster.** A village famous for its smoked kipper, we spend our final night in a good quality country house hotel.

Outline Itinerary

- ❑ **Day 1. Arrive Melrose.** An opportunity to explore the town and visit the Abbey church, a 12th century foundation that is now a magnificent ruin. Recent discoveries at the site include what is thought to be the heart of Robert the Bruce, buried in a lead casket. Dependent on your time of arrival it may also be possible to visit Sir Walter Scott's former home at Abbotsford 3 miles away, using taxi or local bus service. If you arrive early enough it is also possible to do the first part of the Day 2 walk over the Eildon Hills as far as Newtown St Boswells, returning to Melrose by bus or taxi in the evening. Melrose to Newtown St Boswells 5 miles.
- ❑ **Day 2. Melrose to Ancrum 14 miles.** We start with the longest day! Walk over the steep-sided Eildon Hills (402m and 404m), which provide panoramic views of the Tweed valley. We descend to Newtown St Boswells and follow the banks of the Tweed. Just across the River Tweed and accessible by a footbridge is Dryburgh Abbey, another superb ruin and the site of Sir Walter Scott's grave. From St Boswells we continue along the riverbank footpath for about 4 miles to Maxton, and then strike off along Dere Street (an ancient Roman roadway) towards Harestanes,

where we need to bear off the route a bit to reach our accommodation at Ancrum.

- ❑ **Day 3. Ancrum to Morebattle 12 miles.** We need to return to Harestanes and then cross the River Teviot. At Jedfoot bridge we join the old Roman Road of Dere Street for a few miles until fairly near to the hamlet of Crailinghall. Next the trail passes the tower of Cessford Castle, which was built in the 15th C by the Ker clan and abandoned in the 17th C. Then we reach the neat Borders village of Morebattle for our overnight stay.
- ❑ **Day 4. Morebattle to Kirk Yetholm 6 ½ miles.** Today is only a relatively short day, but has a steep ascent. From Morebattle the route crosses the Kale water river before ascending steeply to Wideopen Hill 369m where the views are literally wide open! Shortly we descend to stroll alongside and then cross-attractive Bowmont Water. We then come to our next night's stop at Kirk Yetholm, just at the northern end of the Pennine Way, Britain's first long distance trail.
- ❑ **Day 5. Kirk Yetholm to Wooler 13 miles.** Today we cross the border into England. The terrain becomes hillier, the trail steeper and the views wider as we traverse the northern sector of the Cheviot Hills within the Northumberland National Park, crossing the beautiful College Valley, before descending to Wooler, a market town since the 13th century.
- ❑ **Day 6. Wooler to Fenwick 12 miles (Transfer to Lowick 3 ½ miles by road)** The route crosses the rolling terrain of Westwood and Football Moors, passing St Cuthbert's cave, where the saint's body was taken during the flight of the monks from Lindisfarne in 875AD after a Viking raid. You then descend through forests and agricultural land to reach Fenwick near the main road (A1). There is a phone box here to enable you to phone the Inn where you are staying tonight in order to transfer you to Lowick.
- ❑ **Day 7. Fenwick to Holy Island 5 ½ miles.** In the morning you will be transferred back to Fenwick, from where you gingerly cross the main roads before taking the appropriately named 'Fisher's Back Road' down to the causeway across the sands to Lindisfarne. The causeway is covered by the tide for up to 5 hours in every 12, so correct timing is essential. This should be preplanned when you book your holiday (we can inform you of the timings). While exploring the island you should visit the Priory ruins (12th to 16th century), and between April and September, the 16th century castle, which is filled with Flemish furniture and featured in the films 'Macbeth' and 'Cul-de-Sac' by Roman Polanski.
- ❑ **Day 8. Depart after breakfast.** Ideally take a taxi (not included) to Berwick Upon Tweed for national rail connections.

Extension

- ❑ **Day 8: Holy Island to Bamburgh 13 miles** The next stop of the tour is back on the mainland at Bamburgh, in the designated Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. From Lindisfarne you can travel part of the way with the baggage and then walk from Belford to Bamburgh, or, wind and tide permitting, it may be possible to go by boat instead. There is however no scheduled boat service between Lindisfarne and Bamburgh. The Castle of Bamburgh looms large on the coast and is very well preserved. Henry VI tried to rule his disintegrating kingdom from here for some time.
- ❑ **Day 9: Bamburgh to Craster / Dunstan 12 miles.** Today you can either follow the coastal path past the impressive ruins of Dunstanburgh Castle, which got

wrecked in the English Civil War in the 1640s. You then head to the village of Dunstan near to Craster, famous for its kippers (smoked Herrings). If you are staying an extra day in Bamburgh or if you want a change from walking you will have the opportunity for a boat trip from Seahouses to the Farne Islands National Nature Reserve (price not included and dependent on the weather and tides), a haven for seals and seabirds. Then get a bus or taxi from Seahouses to Craster and walk to your hotel at Dunstan.

☐ **Day 10.** Depart: Taxi to Berwick or Alnmouth Station (not included) and depart to London via Newcastle, or Edinburgh via Berwick.

Included

Bed & breakfast with ensuite facilities where available.
Luggage transfers from Inn to Inn. Full route notes and map package.