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Hadrian's Wall Path

59 large-scale maps & guides to 29 towns and villages

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WALLSEND (NEWCASTLE) TO BOWNESS-ON-SOLWAY

HENRY STEDMAN & DANIEL McCROHAN

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This 5th edition of Hadrian’s Wall Path was researched and written by Daniel McCrohan. His work built upon that of Henry Stedman who wrote the first four editions of this book.

**Daniel McCrohan** is a widely published travel writer with a passion for hiking and a penchant for ancient walls. For more than a decade he lived in Beijing, under the shadow of the Great Wall of China, another breathtaking bastion which he has hiked much of the way along, and written about for numerous publications, including Lonely Planet. Back in the UK, he jumped at the chance to size up Britain’s very own great wall – and brought his family along for the ride. With their nephew and two friends from Beijing they all descended on Newcastle one sunny summer’s day and hiked and camped their way along the entire route. Eight days later they concluded that Hadrian’s Wall was in pretty good nick considering it was more than a thousand years older than its Ming-Dynasty counterpart in China – but were thankful it wasn’t quite as long.

This is Daniel’s third Trailblazer guide – and his 32nd guidebook in total. You can keep track of his travels at danielmccrohan.com or on Twitter (@danielmccrohan). To listen to a podcast about Daniel hiking Hadrian’s Wall, go to www.traveltapethepodcast.com.

Born in Chatham, Kent, **Henry Stedman** has been writing guidebooks for 20 years now and is the author or co-author of over half a dozen Trailblazer titles including *Kilimanjaro*, *Coast to Coast Path*, *Dales Way* and all three books in the *South-West Coast Path* series. On most walks he’s accompanied by Daisy. Two parts trouble to one part Parson’s Jack Russell, Daisy has now completed Hadrian’s Wall Path, Coast to Coast, Dales Way, Offa’s Dyke and the entire South-West Coast Path.

When not travelling or writing, Henry lives in Battle, maintaining his Kilimanjaro website and arranging climbs on the mountain through his company, Climb Mount Kilimanjaro.
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A request
The author and publisher have tried to ensure that this guide is as accurate and up to date as possible. Nevertheless, things change. If you notice any changes or omissions, please write to Trailblazer (address above) or email us at info@trailblazer-guides.com. A free copy of the next edition will be sent to persons making a significant contribution.

Warning: long-distance walking can be dangerous
Please read the notes on when to go (pp13-15) and outdoor safety (pp68-70). Every effort has been made by the author and publisher to ensure that the information contained herein is as accurate and up to date as possible. However, they are unable to accept responsibility for any inconvenience, loss or injury sustained by anyone as a result of the advice and information given in this guide.

Updated information will be available on:  www.trailblazer-guides.com

Photos – Front cover: Following a fine stretch of Wall near Turret 45A.
This page: Hiking past Sewingshields Crags. Overleaf: Hikers near Walltown Quarry.
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ABOUT THIS BOOK

This guidebook contains all the information you need. The hard work has been done for you so you can plan your trip from home without the usual pile of books, maps and guides.

When you’re all packed and ready to go, there’s comprehensive public transport information to get you to and from the trail and 59 detailed maps (1:20,000) and town plans to help you find your way along it. The guide includes:

- All standards of accommodation with reviews of campsites, bunk-houses, hostels, B&Bs, guesthouses and hotels
- Walking companies if you want an organised tour and baggage-transfer services if you just want your luggage carried
- Itineraries for all levels of walkers
- Answers to all your questions: when to go, degree of difficulty, what to pack, and how much the whole walking holiday will cost
- Walking times and GPS waypoints
- Cafés, pubs, tearooms, takeaways, restaurants – and shops for buying supplies
- Rail, bus and taxi information for all villages and towns along the path
- Street plans of the main towns both on and off the Wall: Newcastle, Wylam, Corbridge, Hexham, Haltwhistle, Brampton and Carlisle
- Historical, cultural and geographical background information
- GPS waypoints

MINIMUM IMPACT FOR MAXIMUM INSIGHT

Man has suffered in his separation from the soil and from other living creatures ... and as yet he must still, for security, look long at some portion of the earth as it was before he tampered with it.

Gavin Maxwell, Ring of Bright Water, 1960

Why is walking in wild and solitary places so satisfying? Partly it is the sheer physical pleasure: sometimes pitting one’s strength against the elements and the lie of the land. The beauty and wonder of the natural world and the fresh air restore our sense of proportion and the stresses and strains of everyday life slip away. Whatever the character of the countryside, walking in it benefits us mentally and physically, inducing a sense of well-being, an enrichment of life and an enhanced awareness of what lies around us.

All this the countryside gives us and the least we can do is to safeguard it by supporting rural economies, local businesses, and low-impact methods of farming and land-management, and by using environmentally sensitive forms of transport – walking being pre-eminent.

In this book there is a detailed and illustrated chapter on the wildlife and conservation of the region and a chapter on minimum-impact walking, with ideas on how to tread lightly in this fragile environment; by following its principles we can help to preserve our natural heritage for future generations.
INTRODUCTION

Just when you think you are at the world’s end, you see a smoke from East to West as far as the eye can turn, and then under it as far as the eye can stretch, houses and temples, shops and theatres, barracks and granaries, trickling along like dice behind – always behind – one long, low, rising and falling, and hiding and showing line of towers. And that is the Wall!

*Rudyard Kipling*, *Puck of Pook’s Hill*

On 23 May 2003, Britain’s 13th National Trail, Hadrian’s Wall Path, was opened in the border country between England and Scotland. The trail (84 miles/135km from end to end) follows the course of northern Europe’s largest-surviving Roman monument, a 2nd-century fortification built on the orders of Emperor Hadrian in AD122. The Wall marked the northern limits of Hadrian’s empire – an empire that stretched for 3000 miles across Europe and the Mediterranean all the way to the Euphrates.

To say that creating such a path was problematic would be something of an understatement. This was the first National Trail to follow the course of a UNESCO World Heritage Site. As such, every time a fencepost, signpost or waymark was driven into the ground, an
archaeologist had to be present to ensure that the integrity of the Wall was not in any way compromised. To give you an indication of just how careful they had to be, it took ten years before the Hadrian’s Wall Path was finally opened to the public. By comparison, it took the 2nd and 6th legions of the Roman army only six years to build the actual Wall!

Since its opening many have walked the trail and all seem to agree that the difficulties involved in its creation were well worth it, allowing the walker to follow in the sandal-steps of those who built it with the trail itself rarely diverting from the course of the Romans’ barrier by more than a few hundred metres. And, though there’s only about ten miles of the Wall left and it hardly ever rises to more than half its original height, it – or at least the route it would have taken – makes for a fascinating hiking companion.

Punctuated by forts, milecastles and turrets spaced evenly along its length, the Wall snaked over moor and down dale through Northumberland and Cumbria, between the Roman fort of Segedunum (at the appropriately named Newcastle suburb of Wallsend) in the east and the mouth of the Solway River in the west. It’s an incredible feat of engineering, best appreciated in the section from Housesteads to Cawfield Quarry where the landscape is so bleak and wild that human habitation and farming never really took a hold. It is here that the Wall stands most intact, following the bumps and hollows of the undulating countryside – as integral a part of the scenery now as the whinstone cliffs on which it is built. Here, too, are some of the best-preserved fortresses, from the vast archaeological trove at Vindolanda, set just off the Wall to the south, to the subtle charms at Birdoswald and the beautifully situated Housesteads itself.

After the Romans withdrew the Wall fell into disrepair. What
we see as a unique and awe-inspiring work of military architecture was to the local landowners a convenient source of ready-worked stones for their own building purposes. The Wall is part of the fabric of many of the major constructions built after the Romans left: the churches, priories and abbeys that lie just off the Wall, such as those at Hexham and Lanercost; the Norman castles at Carlisle and Newcastle; the Military Road which you follow for part of the walk; the stronghouses at Thirlwall and Drumburgh – all beautiful, historically important buildings. And all of them incorporate stones from the Wall. Yet even where its destruction was total, the Wall’s legacy continues to echo through the ages in the names of the villages that lie along the route: Wallsend, Wallend, Wallhouses, Walton, Wall village and Oldwall are just some of the place names that celebrate the Wall. The past, it seems, is inseparable from the present.

Quite apart from the architectural and historical interest, all around the Wall is scenery of breathtaking beauty, from the sophisticated cityscape of Newcastle to the wild, wind-blasted moors of Northumberland, the pastoral delights of Cumbria and the serenity of Bowness-on-Solway, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and a haven for birdwatchers and those seeking peaceful solitude. After all, what other national trail passes through Paradise (a suburb of Newcastle), Eden (the river flowing through Carlisle) and the site of the Battle of Heavenfield (before Chollerford).

Yet perhaps the best feature of the Wall is that all its treasures are accessible to anyone with enough get-up-and-go to leave their armchair. The path itself is regarded as one of the easiest National Trails, a week-long romp on a grassy path through rolling countryside with the highest point, Green Slack, just 345m above sea level. The waymarking is clear and, with the Wall on one side and a road a little distance away on the other, it’s very difficult to lose one’s way. There are good facilities, from lively pubs to cosy B&Bs, friendly, well-equipped bunkhouses and idyllic little tearooms. And for those for whom completing the entire trail is over-ambitious, there are good transport connections, including a special Hadrian’s Wall Country bus (the AD122). With a little planning, you can arrange a simple stroll along a short section of the trail, maybe take in a fort or museum on
the way, then catch a bus back to ‘civilisation’. While for those who prefer not to follow any officially recognised National Trail, the path also connects to 43 other walks, details of which are readily available from one of the tourist information offices serving the trail.

So, while the Wall no longer defines the border between Scotland and England (90% of Northumberland, an English county, actually lies to the north of the Wall, and at no point does the Wall actually coincide with the modern Anglo-Scottish border), it nevertheless remains an inspiring place and a monument to the breathtaking ambition of both Hadrian, the youthful dynamic emperor, and of Roman civilisation itself. And there can be few greater ways to appreciate it than by walking along this trail.

**How difficult is the Hadrian’s Wall Path?**

The Hadrian’s Wall Path is, for experienced hikers, just a long walk. Indeed, many rate this as the easiest of the national trails in the UK. It only takes about a week to complete it, and for some no more than four days. And there’s a guy
called Elvis from Haltwhistle who completed it in one 30-hour stretch for charity.

Age seems to be no barrier to completing the walk either. While updating the third edition of this book Henry Stedman walked with his friend, Peter Fenner, who was just a month shy of his 78th birthday. And while updating this fifth edition, Daniel McCrohan was joined by his whole family, including his six-year-old daughter Yoyo. So there’s no need for crampons, ropes, ice axes, oxygen bottles or any other climbing paraphernalia, because there’s no climbing involved. All you need to complete the walk is some suitable clothing, a bit of money, a rucksack full of determination and a half-decent pair of calf muscles.

The route is well marked with the familiar National Trail ‘acorn’ signposts, arrows and other waymarks, so keeping to the trail shouldn’t really be a problem. That said, it is a fairly wild walk in places. Regarding safety, there are few places on the regular trail where it would be possible to fall from a great height, unless you stray from the path near the crags; and with the Wall on one side and a road on the other, it’s difficult to get lost, too. Nevertheless, you may find a compass or

There’s a great variety of scenery on this walk: it’s not just about the Wall. On some stretches, such as between Carlisle and Bowness-on-Solway (below, see pp214-6), almost all evidence of the Wall has disappeared. (Photo © Henry Stedman)
How difficult is the Hadrian’s Wall Path?

GPS unit (see p17) useful. Your greatest danger will likely come from those sections where the trail follows or crosses a main road. These points are few and far between, but care should be taken on them nonetheless. Sadly you will pass one roadside memorial to a hiker who was hit and killed by a vehicle while walking by a stretch of the B6318 at East Wallhouses.

Your greatest inconvenience will no doubt come from the weather, which can also be hazardous at times. It is very important that you dress for inclement conditions and always carry a set of dry clothes with you. Not pushing yourself too hard is important too, as over-exertion leads to exhaustion and all its inherent dangers; see pp68-70.

But really, while it is no mean achievement to complete this walk, it is nevertheless a straightforward but fairly exhausting stroll by the standards of other hikes in northern Britain and should be enjoyed and appreciated as such.

How long do you need?

Most people take around six days to complete the walk, making it one of the shorter national trails. Of course, if you’re fit there’s no reason why you can’t go a little faster, if that’s what you want to do, and finish the walk in five days (or even less), though you will end up having a different sort of hike to most of the other people on the trail. For where theirs is a fairly relaxing holiday, yours will be more of a sport. What’s more, you won’t have as much time to enjoy the forts and other attractions; one of the main reasons for visiting the Wall in the first place.

When deciding how long to allow for the walk, those intending to camp and carry their own luggage shouldn’t underestimate just how much a heavy pack can slow them down; bank on taking more like seven or eight days if carrying all your luggage. On pp32-4 there are some suggested itineraries covering different walking speeds. If you have only a few days, perhaps don’t try to walk it all; consider concentrating instead on one particular area, such as the popular central section, or the quieter Cumbrian section from Carlisle to Bowness.

See pp32-4 for some suggested itineraries covering different walking speeds.
When to go

SEASONS

Britain is a notoriously wet country and the north of England is an infamously damp part of it. ‘Hadrain’ as one witty souvenir T-shirt puts it and it’s fair to say that few hikers manage to complete the walk without suffering at least one downpour; two or three per trip are more likely, even in summer. That said, it’s equally unlikely that you’ll spend a week in the area and not see any sun at all, and even the most cynical of hikers will have to admit that, during the hiking season at least, there are more sunny days than showery ones. The hiking season runs from April to September.

The hiking season starts at Easter and builds to a crescendo in August, before steadily tailing off in September. By September’s end, few indeed are the hikers who attempt the whole trail, although there are plenty of people on day walks, and by the end of October many places close down for the winter.

Unusually, the authorities in charge of maintaining the path request that walkers do not attempt the trail in winter (which they define as October to April), when the path is at its most fragile; they do not, however, rule out walking in Wall country altogether; see the box on pp64-5 for more details.

There are two further points to consider when planning your trip. Firstly, remember that most people set off on the trail at a weekend. This means that you’ll find the trail quieter during the week and as a consequence you may find it easier to book accommodation. Secondly, towards the western end of the walk, the trail through the Solway Marshes can be prone to flooding. While this won’t affect when you set off (at least, not if you are starting at the eastern end of it), you do need to be aware of the time of the high tides and plan your walk through the marshes so that you are not there during particularly high-level tides; the box on p201 gives advice on how to do this.
DON’T WALK ON THE WALL
There are plenty of ways in which hikers can help protect the Wall for future generations to enjoy (see pp64-5 Caring for the Wall – the Hadrian’s Wall Code of Respect for more details), but the most important one to remember is never, ever walk along, or climb onto the Wall, even if it’s just to get a better angle for a photo.
approach turn to Part 6 for detailed information on accommodation, places to eat and other services in each village and town on the route. Also in Part 6 you will find summaries of the route to accompany the detailed trail maps.

**SUGGESTED ITINERARIES**

The itineraries in the boxes on p33 are based on different accommodation types: camping, hostels and B&Bs, with each one divided into three alternatives depending on walking speed. They are only suggestions so feel free to adapt them. See also box p32 for a reader’s itinerary and if planning to camp see also the box below. It is also possible to plan a walk with fixed bases, such as Hexham, Haltwhistle and around Carlisle; this would mean using public transport, but you wouldn’t need to carry your luggage every day. Whatever you do don’t forget to add your travelling time before and after the walk.

---

**P L A N N I N G  Y O U R  W A L K**

- **Carry on camping**
  If you want to camp every night, it is possible, but it takes a little bit of forward planning due to the scarcity of campsites on some stretches of the trail, and the fact that wild camping is not allowed. The following is one possible option, with fairly evenly spaced campsites never more than 15 miles apart. Remember, it’s a lot harder walking long distances when you’re carrying all your camping gear, plus food and water, so unless you are super fit and very much accustomed to long-distance ‘through hiking’, don’t expect to be able to walk much more than 15 miles in one day.

  This itinerary is, of course, only one option. There are plenty of other campsites besides these, allowing you to stay at numerous other points on the trail.

- **Days 0 & 1: Ovingham – 15 miles** (High Hermitage Caravan Park, p115) Since there are no campsites in, or even close to Newcastle, one option is for you to spend your first two nights here (two miles from the trail, just beyond Wylam) and to use the train, or local buses (see pp46-8) to get you to the start of the trail in the morning before hiking back to your tent. The campsite is about 15 miles (24km) from Wallsend, and 4 miles (6km) from Heddon-on-the-Wall.

- **Day 2: East Wallhouses – 11 miles** (Robin Hood Inn or Wellhouse Farm Camping, both p122) Wellhouse is better equipped, but about a mile south of the trail.

- **Day 3: Chollerford – 11 miles** (Riverside Campsite, p144) Note, you’ll need to stay here for two nights if you also want to walk the Corbridge loop. Also note, you could push on an extra three miles to reach the excellent Green Carts Farm Campsite (p147), and help reduce the length of the next day’s walk.

- **Day 4: Once Brewed – 14 miles** (Winshields Farm Campsite, p162).

- **Day 5: Greenhead – 7 miles** (Holmhead B&B, p172) This stretch is hillier than most so don’t overdo the mileage. It’s also a Wall-filled stage to be savoured, so best not to rush through it. Note, this campsite is very small so can fill up.

- **Day 6: Walton – 9 miles** (Sandysike, p184) You could push on to Crosby-on-Eden if you’re feeling energetic.

- **Day 7: Crosby-on-Eden – 6 miles** (Crosby Campsite, p189) This is the last campsite before Carlisle.

- **Day 8: Beaumont – 11 miles** (Roman Wall Lodges, p205).

- **Day 9: Bowness-on-Solway – 11 miles** (Wallsend Guest House, p216) You may have time to catch public transport back home from Bowness after your final day’s walk, thereby negating the need to use this final campsite.
WHICH DIRECTION?

It’s more common for Wall walkers attempting the entire trail to start from Newcastle and head west. The main reason seems to be because the official trail guide and the majority of those guidebooks that have followed in its wake were written from east to west. The justification put forward by the author of the official guide is that it seems ‘more natural’ to walk out of a big city into the open country, and there is some truth in that. Around 60% of Wall walkers seem to agree. Furthermore, the scenery improves the further west you go – up to a point – and the turrets and milecastles are also numbered from east to west (see box p116) as that is the direction that the Romans built the Wall. What’s more, as it’s more popular to walk from east to west, those trekkers who prefer a bit of company will find more people heading in their direction.

But, that said, there are arguments that could be made for walking the other way, from Bowness-on-Solway to Wallsend; for one thing, the prevailing winds in the UK tend to blow in from the west, and thus will be at your back if walking from west to east, which is preferable to struggling against a force nine (though, to be fair, the winds aren’t too severe in summer). Secondly, just as the official guide says that it’s better to walk out of a city into the countryside, it could also be argued that a big city makes a suitably grand place to finish a hike – and Newcastle certainly has any number of places in which to celebrate the completion of a successful walk. Thirdly, some argue that you get a better view of the crags (on your way into Thirlwall) and can understand a little more how the Wall was laid out by travelling in this direction (and yes, of course, you can just look back and see the same view if travelling westwards – but it’s a rare hiker who actually does). It’s also a lot easier getting away from Newcastle at the end of the trail than it is from Bowness – and struggling to find a bus or lift that will take you away from the Solway and back to ‘civilisation’ is not something you want to be doing after you’ve walked 84 miles. Finally, isn’t there something poetic about finishing a walk along the Wall at a place called Wallsend?

As the majority of trekkers continue to walk from east to west, that is the way this book has been written. That said, those who prefer to swim against the tide of popular opinion and walk west to east should find it easy to use this book too.

TAKING DOGS ALONG THE HADRIAN’S WALL PATH

The Hadrian’s Wall Path is actually not that dog-friendly. Much of the land through which the path passes is grazed by livestock and dogs must be kept on a lead; the number of B&Bs, bunkhouses, guesthouses and even campsites that accept dogs is surprisingly low; and even the odd pub refuses to allow dogs inside, leaving you to sup your shandy in a storm while other walkers crowd...
Public Transport

- Regular bus service
- Infrequent bus service

PLANNING YOUR WALK
along it and back, and then walked all the way home again – a total journey of about 600 miles (966km). Taking 35 days to complete, it was an impressive feat by any standards, particularly when one considers that he was 78 years old at the time and wore the same pair of socks for the entire walk!

The product of his adventure was a book, *The History of the Roman Wall which crosses the Island of Britain from the German Ocean to the Irish Sea, Describing its Antient [sic] State and its Appearance in the Year 1801* – a title almost as long as the Wall itself – in which his love of Severus’s Wall (as it was still called) and his interest in its history shines through. John Hodgson and John Collingwood Bruce (whose *Wallet Book of the Roman Wall*, printed in 1863 and later renamed *Handbook to the Roman Wall*, was still being published over a hundred years later) also contributed to our knowledge with texts on the history and archaeology of the Wall and it was Hodgson who first definitively proved that the Wall was built during Hadrian’s reign and not Severus’s.

Then there was John Clayton, a Newcastle town clerk in the late 19th century, who bought four of the Wall forts and to whom we owe a great debt of gratitude; without his excavation and restoration work much of the Wall still extant would have been lost. That’s not to say Clayton’s work is unanimously admired today. In particular, his attempts to rebuild much of the Wall, taking great liberties and using largely non-Roman methods and materials, make more
A fittingly grand location to begin an epic walk, or the perfect venue for a post-trek knees-up, Newcastle is a large, buzzing city with plenty of history, a thriving food-and-drink scene and a pleasantly attractive riverside waterfront.

Arriving by train, the first thing you’ll see as you cross the Tyne is an eclectic mix of river bridges, followed by an untidy jumble of roofs; an interesting but somewhat messy skyline that belies the uniform elegance of much of the city centre with its stylish Classical 19th-century façades interspersed here and there with the latest in cutting-edge municipal designs. Yet Newcastle is like that; a city that is forever defying those who dismiss it as merely a home for brown ale, football and fun-runs. As the starting point for a major trek it’s ideal: functional, convenient, with great amenities and plenty to keep you occupied round-the-clock. The Great North Museum: Hancock, see p94, is also the perfect introduction to the Wall and its history (and like just about every other museum and gallery in the city, it’s free), while if you are coming to the end of your Hadrian’s Wall odyssey and Newcastle is your last stop, there couldn’t be a better place to celebrate than the revamped Quayside, home to numerous cafés, bistros and bars.

ARRIVAL

Most visitors alight at Newcastle’s Central Station and it’s hard to imagine a more appropriate place to arrive in this city. Built in 1850, the station stands in the heart of a metropolis that will forever be associated with George Stephenson (see box p114), the ‘Father of the Railways’ who was born in nearby Wylam, and which thrived on the back of the railways in the glory days of the late 19th century. The terminus, lying just to the north of the River Tyne, has cafés, ATMs and its own metro station. The National Express coach station stands a five-minute walk to the west on St James Boulevard.
interior is decent, with rooms (every one of which overlooks the water) equipped with everything you’d expect from a hotel of this standard. There’s also a gym and more than one restaurant. Rates start at £50pp (sgl occ rates on request) but the actual cost depends on availability and when you book.

Perhaps at the top of the pile, however, is Malmaison (☎ 0191-245 5000, www.malmaison.com/locations/newcastle; 122D or T, all en suite, ; wi-fi; ), a sophisticated place housed in the old Co-operative building on the Quayside overlooking the Millennium Bridge. Facilities are top-notch and service is excellent. Weekday/weekend rack rates start at £42.50/60pp (sgl occ rates on request).

Rivalling this is a new, funkier hotel chain called Tune Hotel (☎ 0191-229 9210, www.tunehotels.com/newcastle; 104D or T, all en suite; wi-fi), which has a branch in the heart of the Quayside action, close to the best pub in town (Crown Posada; see Where to eat and drink). The rooms are small, but it’s still good value when you consider you can sometimes pay as little as £25 for two people sharing. Room rates are more like £35-89 (no single occupancy discount) most of the time, though what you pay depends in part on what add ons, such as TV, wi-fi and air-con you have. Also note that 13 of the cheapest rooms are interior rooms and come without windows. Breakfast is not available here.

Quayside

Hotels Premier Inn Newcastle Quayside (☎ 0871-527 8804, www.premierinn.com; 133D/19T, all en suite; ; wi-fi), by the foot of the Tyne Bridge on Lombard St, is central and offers early booking deals from £35 for a double, although rack rates are more like £60-85 for a room.

Vermont Hotel (☎ 0191-233 1010, www.vermont-hotel.com; 73D/27T, all en suite; ; wi-fi), up by Castle Keep (see pp94-5), is a classy-looking place in a central yet quiet location beside the castle. The rooms are very smart and well equipped; the hotel offers 24-hour room service, has a restaurant, a couple of bars and a fitness centre. As with other places here the rates change every day, but expect to pay at least £60pp (sgl occ room rate), plus £10pp for breakfast.
St Oswald’s church
This was built to commemorate the victory of the eponymous saint over his rivals Cadwallon and Penda at the Battle of Heavenfield, which took place in the field in which you are probably now standing. In the 7th century St Oswald, who was merely a king at this stage, was the leader of the Angles following the death of Edwin (after whom Edinburgh is named) in AD633. His defeat of the combined forces of Gwynedd and Mercia, though not quite the victory of Christianity over paganism that the Venerable Bede portrays in his History, was nevertheless a significant victory for the Anglo-Saxons over the Celts and, as such, an important moment in English history. Incidentally, at the back of the church by the font there’s a large Roman altar.

The church is also the official end (or start) of St Oswald’s Way (www.stoswaldsway.com) which covers 97 miles of beautiful Northumberland countryside and coastline between here and Lindisfarne, linking some of the places associated with St Oswald.

Planetwork is the first proper bit of Wall on this entire stage. Its existence is largely due to the efforts of William Hutton, who came across some workmen taking stones from the Wall to be used as raw materials for a new farmhouse. Hutton’s entreaties to the local landowner responsible for the desecration, Henry Tulip, ensured that this small fragment survived; though 204m (224 yards) of the Wall did not, having already been pulled down by Tulip’s men before Hutton arrived. However, the portion that has survived is interesting: notice how, near the culvert built into the Wall to prevent water from collecting and weakening the foundations, the Wall changes from being a broad Wall on broad foundations, as seen at Heddon, to a narrow Wall on broad foundations.

A similar pattern can be seen at Brunton Turret (see p144), just a little further on, and suggests that it was around here that the Romans gave up building an all-broad Wall and opted instead for a narrower version that nevertheless still made use of the original broad foundations. But before you get to Brunton Turret there’s a rather dull stretch of road-walking that veers towards, and then away from, the village of Wall.

WALL [Map 16]
It is typical of the sometimes perverse nature of this trail that Wall village doesn’t actually lie on the Wall.

The village is perhaps of most interest to hikers because of a highly commendable decision by the local parish council to allow a night’s camping on the village green, free of charge as long as you don’t stay for more than 24 hours and leave the place exactly as you found it. There are toilets nearby but no other facilities. Nor indeed is there a shop in town. But there is a very good pub-cum-B&B at the southern end of town, about 10 minutes from the trail: The Hadrian Hotel (☎ 01434-681232, www.hadrianhotel.co.uk; 2D/2T both en suite/2T shared bathroom; 🍷; 🍽️; Wi-Fi; ⛽️) is an 18th-century coaching inn that offers food (summer daily noon-8.30pm, winter noon-3pm & 6-8.30pm) and has some very comfortable rooms, including some with a four-poster bed. B&B costs £40-45pp (sgl occ £50-60).

GNE’s 680 bus service stops here; see pp46-8 for further details.
wall on narrow foundations. And, at the River Irthing, the remains of the third Roman bridge on your walk can be seen; a bridge which once would have carried both the Wall and the Military Way. Quite a stage indeed. And that’s before any mention has been made of all the turrets, forts and milecastles – and even, uniquely, a Roman watchtower – that are encountered along the way.

One word of warning, however, before you set off: though this stage ends in Banks, there is just one B&B-cum-campsite there. As such, be prepared to have to stay somewhere before Banks – for example at Greenhead (see p172) or Gilsland (p176) – or to attempt a longer walk to Walton (p184). Off the trail there are some more B&Bs at Haltwhistle (pp167-8) which provide further options.

The route
The day’s first treat lies just a 10-minute walk from Steel Rigg car park. This is Green Slack (Map 23) on Winshields Crags, and at 345m is the highest point on the trail, with a decent section of Roman Wall leading up to it. Whilst the rest of the stage is only slightly less exhausting than the relentless up-and-down rollercoaster ride of the previous stage, it is at least some comfort that, for the rest of the trip, there’ll be more downhill than uphill!

If you feel like taking a breather while you’re up here, according to scientists there’s no better place in England to take it: the lichen that grows on Winshields Crags requires extremely pure air and, apart from Dartmoor, this is
75 mins from Walltown
Quarry Cafe (Map 27) ➔ GREAT CHESTERS FORT ➔ 45 mins to Caw Gap (Map 24)

**Great Chesters Fort** (Aesica)

- Collapsed Wall
- Note the Roman Ditch over the Wall Here
- Look for dedication stone in wall
- Look for altar here
- Quarry Cafe (Map 27) 45 mins to Caw Gap (Map 24)
- 70 mins to Walltown
- 45 mins from Caw Gap (Map 24)

MAP 25

- B&B
- Picnic Tables
- Public Toilets
- Burnhead
- To Haltwhistle (on road) via Milecastle Inn & Herding Hill Campsite
- To Haltwhistle Burn (via Haltwhistle Burn)
- Old Chimney
- Bridge across Burn
- Old Brickworks
- See Haltwhistle Town Plan

**To Greenhead**

**To Haltwhistle Burn**

**Approx Scale**: 0 ➔ 1/4 mile

**500m**: 35-45 mins from Haltwhistle via Haltwhistle Burn

**60 and 70 mins to/from Haltwhistle via Lees Hall**

**70 mins to Walltown**

**Quarry Cafe (Map 27)**

**Great Chesters Fort**

**45 mins from Caw Gap (Map 24)**
the only place in the entire country where the air is clean enough for this lichen to thrive. The trail varies little for the next two miles (3km) or so as you ride the crest of the crags, following the undulations through wild territory uninhabited since Roman times. The names printed on the maps – Bogle Hole, Caw Gap, Bloody Gap, Thorny Doors – only serve to add to the sense that you’re in a land of folklore and myth.

After Caw Gap (Map 24) the Wall continues unbroken for over half a mile (1km). Look out for the swastika etched by the Romans into one of the Wall stones – another symbol of prosperity – on the way to Milecastle 42, which originally had an entrance in the north Wall until, presumably, the builders saw the steep drop beneath, realised such a door was unnecessary and blocked it up. The trail then rounds the flooded, disused quarry at Cawfields. Next to the quarry is a car park (Map 25), a toilet block and a few picnic tables.

Those heading to Haltwhistle should not cross over the bridge but instead head on the path to the south of the Burn. Alternatively, you can wait until you hit Great Chesters fort, just a short walk further on, and take the path down to Haltwhistle from there. For either path, see Map 25 and the route below.

Walking to and from Haltwhistle (1hr) [Map 25, p165]
The path down to Haltwhistle, particularly if taking the trail that shadows Haltwhistle Burn, is both easy and lovely. Furthermore, you actually hike in woods under the shade of trees for much of the path – a stark contrast to the more exposed, wind-blasted walking along much of the Wall.

To get to the Burn trail, leave the Hadrian’s Wall Path at the road bridge just after the car park by Cawfields Quarry (Map 24), taking the path that runs south of the Burn. The path heads towards a small bridge in the middle of a field but doesn’t take it! Instead, you bend leftwards and continue to follow, roughly, the course of the Burn until it hits the B6318.

If in need of a hot meal or a pint, turn left when you meet the road to Milecastle Inn (Map 24; ☎ 01434-321372, www.milecastle-inn.co.uk; food served daily noon-2.30pm & 6-8.30pm, but not on Sunday evening in the winter; Wi-Fi) with a menu of standard pub fare augmented by some really good ‘rural’ dishes such as pheasant slow cooked in cider and bacon. Note, however, that dogs are not allowed.

Continue for 10 minutes or so along Shield Hill (the road running south from Milecastle Inn) and you come to Herding Hill Farm (off Map 24; ☎ 01434-320175, www.herdinghillfarm.co.uk; apart from in belle tents; Wi-Fi), a very well equipped campsite with three tipis (each sleeps 4; with woodburning stove; £70 plus additional adult £20, Apr/May-Sep), 17 wooden wigwams (sleep 2-5; minimum 2-night stay; £68-98; hot tub £30) and four belle tents (each sleeps 4; £85; Apr/May-Sep), as well as pitches for ordinary tents (£12pp plus £4.40-5 per extra person; Mar/Apr-Oct). They also have a small shop (open summer one hour at each end of the day) with camping essentials plus beer and wine, and offer homemade pizza for campers (Easter to Oct at weekends). Check the website for details of when the site is closed. The AD122 bus service (see pp46-8) calls both here and at Milecastle Inn.

If you just want to head straight down to Haltwhistle and rejoin the trail, stride a little way west along the road, and take a left to follow the footpath
which passes a weir, heads through a gate in a stone wall then follows the path as it meanders into the woods that shroud the Burn. The trail continues sedately down before finally ending up at the **Old Brickworks** on the outskirts of Haltwhistle.

For the **return journey**, rather than taking the same path back you can follow Willia Rd all the way to its termination at a gate, which you should go through and head towards **Lees Hall**. Crossing the B6318 once more, you go north down the slope past Markham House, then up towards Great Chesters Fort, which you arrive at behind the old Roman altar.

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**HALTWHISTLE**

Though not on the trail itself, Haltwhistle is an important place for hikers. Good bus and train connections (Haltwhistle is on the Newcastle–Carlisle line), a variety of accommodation, plenty of shops, restaurants and tearooms and a location almost exactly halfway along the Wall (one of the hotels on the main street is even called The Centre of Britain) ensures that many a Wall walker calls in for the night.

It’s also a particularly historic town, with bastle (see p217) houses lined up along Main St and an even earlier Pele Tower now forming part of the Centre of Britain Hotel. These buildings were, of course, built as defensive fortifications during the long-running skirmishes between the English and the Scots, a time when much of the border region was considered bandit country. Such was the fear and enmity between both sides that a plaque in Market Square recounts the sad tale of a young local girl who had attempted to run away and marry a Scot. Her reward for this act of ‘treason’ was to be the last person executed in Market Sq – along with her fiancé – in 1597.

Today Haltwhistle is a genteel sort of place with a pretty main street and a plethora of tearooms and eateries, many of which display notices saying that ‘Walkers are welcome here’ – a nice touch.

**Services**

The **tourist information centre** (☎ 01434 321863; Mon–Fri 10am–1pm & 1.30–4.30pm, Sat 10am–1pm), in the **library**, is perhaps the office most dedicated to the Hadrian’s Wall Path. Staff will do accommodation booking (see box p43). The library (same hours) has free **wi-fi**, and you can use their computer terminals to access the **internet** for free (max 2hrs per day per person) as long as you are a member of the library (it’s free to join).

For a quirky introduction to the history of the village, look in Market Square for the free-to-use, foot-pump-operated audio recording for tourists.

There is a Barclays Bank with **ATM** on Main St and another outside the **post office** (Mon–Sat 9am–5.30pm), while a little further up you’ll find a self-service **laundrette** (daily 8am–6.30pm; £4 for a load plus £1 for 20 mins in the dryer), a rarity on this walk. Down from the post office, on the opposite side, there’s a Boots the **chemist** (Mon–Fri 9am–6pm, Sat to 1pm).

For **provisions**, there’s a Co-op (daily 7am–10pm) on the main street and a large Sainsbury’s (Mon–Fri 8am–10pm, Sat 7.30am–10pm, Sun 10am–4pm) just to the north of Main St behind the shops; Sainsbury’s has an **ATM** and there is a path to it between Lucky Palace and Ocean Fish & Chips.

**Transport**

[See pp46-8] The AD122 **bus** stops at Market Sq and at the railway station. Arriva’s/Stagecoach’s No 685 and GNE’s No 185 also call in Haltwhistle.

There are **trains** approximately every hour to Newcastle (journey time 50-60 mins) and Carlisle (just over 30 mins).

**Where to stay**

**Ashcroft** (☎ 01434-320213, www.ashcroftguesthouse.co.uk; 4D/3T/1Tr/1Qd, all en suite; ☕; wi-fi; ⚽), a former vicarage
on Lanty’s Lonn, is a lovely place with some award-winning terraced gardens. The rooms are full of features – one double has a four-poster bed; another has its own wood-decked terrace – and the quad is a two-bedroomed apartment suite with lounge, kitchen and private entrance. They charge £47-52pp (sgl occ £72-90, three/four sharing £47-50pp).

Manor House Inn (☎ 01434-322588, www.manorhouseinhaltwhistle.co.uk; 5T/1D, all en suite; ⚼; wi-fi; Ⓟ; 🗽) is a friendly pub with basic but neat and tidy rooms above it. B&B costs £35pp (sgl occ £40).

Just across the road – but a few steps up in terms of quality – Centre of Britain Hotel (☎ 01434-322422, www.centreofbritain.co.uk; 5T/6D/1Qd, all en suite; ⚼; Ⓟ; ⚹; wi-fi; Ⓟ), part-housed in the 15th-century Pele Tower, is the pick of the hotels on Main St. One room also has pull-out beds for children and two rooms have their own sauna. Rates are £36-56pp (sgl occ £60-81, three/four sharing £115/138).

Further east on Main St, Grey Bull (☎ 01434-321991, www.greybullhotel.co.uk; 3D/2T/1Qd, all en suite; wi-fi; Ⓟ; 🗽 but not in dining room; mid Feb-mid Dec) is a friendly place sporting comfortable rooms (£37.50pp, sgl occ £60, three/four sharing £35pp) with a modern finish.

In the centre of things, Hall Meadows (☎ 01434-321021, www.accommodationinhaltwhistle.co.uk; 1T/1D both en suite, 1S/1D private bathroom; ⚼; Ⓟ; wi-fi; Mar-Oct) is a very attractive late 19th-century building covered with creepers that looks slightly out of place on Main St. B&B costs £35pp (sgl/sgl occ £35-50). If both the single and double are booked the bathroom is shared.
Where to eat and drink

One of the main reasons for dropping down off the path to visit Haltwhistle is the quality (and quantity) of eateries here. Cafés abound.

Kasteale (☏ 01434-394121, www.kasteale.co.uk; summer Mon-Sat 9am-5pm, Sun noon-4pm, winter days/hours variable; ☚; WI-FI) is a lovely little café-cum-bakery-cum-deli serving mainly home-baked goods using organic and locally produced ingredients. Their sandwiches, wraps and paninis (takeaway £3-3.50, eat in from £4.95) are great for packed lunches, and their organic teas and fresh coffees cost just £1.50 for takeaway (eat in £1.60-2.30).

Another popular café, right on Market Sq, is Val’s Coffee House (☏ 01434-321370; summer Mon-Sat 8am-4.30pm, Sun 9am-4.30pm, winter hours variable; ☚; WI-FI) with good-value breakfasts and light lunches and a few tables overlooking the pretty church behind. Also on Market Sq, Jethro’s (Mon-Sat 8am-3pm, Sun 9am-1.30pm) is a friendly sandwich deli with some seating out back, overlooking the historic Black Bull Inn. Sandwiches and jacket potatoes cost £2.50-3.

Next to the post office is the quirkily named but down-to-earth Pillar Box Cafe (Mon-Sat 9am-4pm), a cheap, no-frills place that’s popular with Haltwhistle’s older locals.

To continue on Hadrian’s Wall Path and reach Great Chesters Fort, cross the bridge and climb over the nearby farm wall. The attractive farmhouse, which was built in 1830 using Roman stones, is home to Burnhead B&B (Map 25; ☏ 01434-320841, www.burnheadbedandbreakfast.co.uk; 2T, both en suite; WI-FI; ☛), which charges £40pp (sgl occ £40-50).

Soon afterwards, round the back of a neighbouring farm, lies the buried remains of Great Chesters Fort (not to be confused with Chesters Fort in Chollerford, see pp145-6), known to the Romans as Aesica. It is known that the Dalmatae from the Yugoslav mountains were garrisoned here during Hadrian’s reign and later the Hamii from Syria, who were famous archers.
Maps 16-23
Chollerford to Steel Rigg
13 miles/21km – 5¼-6½hrs
NOTE: Add 20-30% to these times to allow for stops
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