



Allen Banks, Northumberland  
NE47

TRAIL  
**Walking**

GRADE  
**Easy**

DISTANCE  
**2.5 miles (4km)**

TIME  
**50 minutes**

OS MAP  
**Landranger 86 and  
87; Explorer OL43**

### Contact

01434 344218  
allenbanks@nationaltrust.org.uk

### Facilities

Car park  
Toilets and baby-changing  
facilities  
Picnic area  
Free map, guide and other  
information

**National  
Trust**

[nationaltrust.org.uk/walks](http://nationaltrust.org.uk/walks)

# Allen Banks and Staward Gorge woodland walk

Set on the steep valley sides of the river Allen, a tributary of the south Tyne, explore the woods and see what wildlife you can spot on this gentle riverside walk. It's the largest area of ancient woodland in Northumberland and has been here since at least medieval times. This long history has helped make it a fantastic home for flora, fauna and fungi.



## Terrain

Circular walk following brown trail markers along natural and surfaced footpaths. Relatively flat, with some short, sharp climbs. Some narrow sections with steep drops to the river Allen.

## Things to see



### Birds

April to July is a great time to see birds - over 70 species have been recorded on the estate, even those which are in decline, such as wood warbler and pied flycatcher. This is because we manage the woodlands to provide a varied patchwork of habitats for them. Nuthatch live throughout the woods and if you're lucky you might see one crawling up and down tree branches. Great spotted wood-pecker also make their home here; they can often be heard drumming with their chisel like beak, searching for insects and creating nest holes.

### Fungi

Allen Banks is one of the best places in the north-east for fungi, with 181 species recorded here. Autumn's the best time to see mushrooms and toadstools, as this is when most fungi develops a 'fruit body' to distribute its spores and reproduce. Deathcap (pictured), destroying angel and panthercap fungi are deadly poisonous with no known antidote; all can be found in the woodland here. The deathcap is reputed to have been the cause of the murder of Roman Emperor, Claudius Caesar - it was added to his favourite mushroom dish by his wife. Caution: never eat any fungi until you're completely certain it's edible.

### Wild flowers

A carpet of bluebells and ramsons, commonly known as wild garlic, covers the woodland floor in spring and early summer. During warm weather and when crushed the latter has an unmistakably pungent aroma. Many of the plants here are characteristic of ancient woodland and soil types help dictate which species grow where. Woodruff, ramsons, dog's mercury are found on the richer brown earths, whilst greater woodrush dominates in poorer and drier soils.



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## Start/end

Start: Allen Banks car park, grid  
ref: NY799640

End: Allen Banks car park, grid  
ref: NY799640

## How to get there

By foot: footpaths to the estate  
from all directions, including  
Haydon Bridge

By bike: National Cycle  
Network Route 72

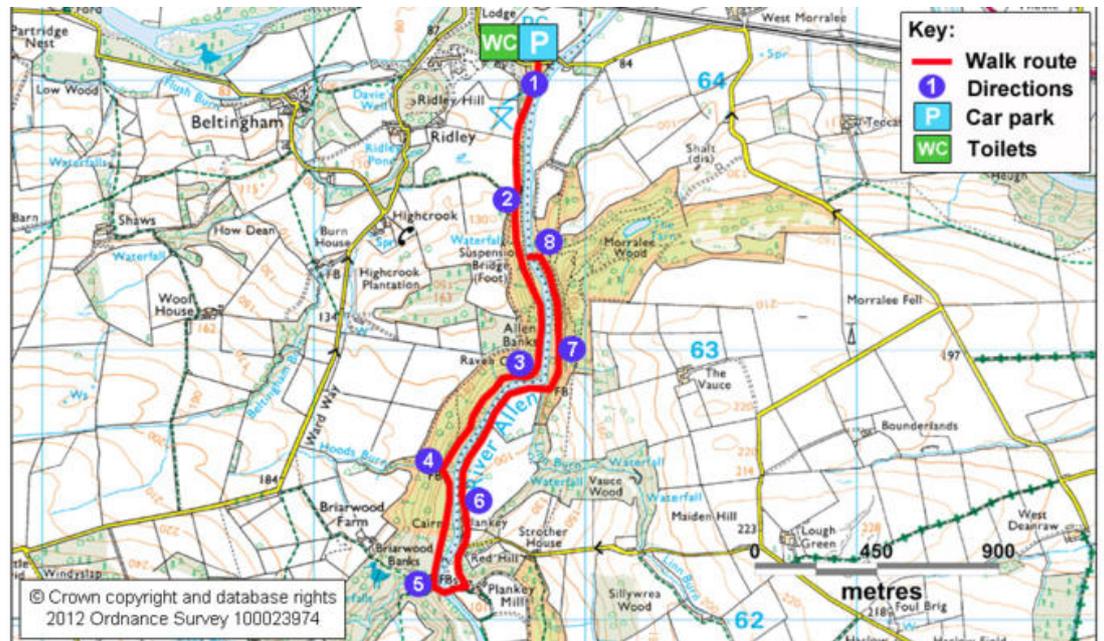
By bus: Carlisle to Newcastle  
service stops 0.5 miles (0.8km)  
away

By train: Bardon Mill, 1.5 mile  
(2.4km)

By car: south of the River  
Tyne, 5 miles (8.0km) east  
of Haltwhistle and 3 miles  
(4.8km) west of Haydon Bridge,  
signposted off A69

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1. Starting at the car park, follow the main footpath into the woodland. Brown waymark arrows lead you on the route. Take the lower, left-hand fork in the path. The river Allen comes into view.

2. The path drops close to the waterside and the woodland opens out. The river is rocky and fast flowing here, a prime spot for birds like dipper and grey wagtail. Heron and goosander can also be seen stalking prey throughout the year.

3. At a bend in the river, under Raven Crag, the river becomes deeper and slows to create a flat pool where, on summer evenings, Daubenton's bats skim just above the water feeding on insects. There are 17 species of bats indigenous to Britain, nine of these live in Northumberland and eight can be found at Allen Banks. Roe deer are found in the woods and if you're very lucky you may spot an otter at the riverside, though you're more likely to see signs that they're here, like otter footprints along the river banks.

4. Decaying fallen trees on the banks above you here are part of the life cycle of the woodland. Insects and fungi feed on and break down the rotting timber, returning vital nutrients to the soil. Woodpeckers and other birds then feed on the insects and create nests in the standing deadwood.

5. After crossing the Kingswood Burn, turn left and cross the Plankey Mill Bridge over the river Allen. Walk right, towards the farm buildings and join the public road which travels left for about 109yds (100m). Take the track to the left of this road, which heads down to a kissing gate near the river and old ruins.

6. Walk through meadows along the river bank. Alder trees with lichen-covered stems and branches line the river. Lichens require clean air so are good indicators of pollution-free areas. During the summer, keep a look out for wild flowers such as field pansies, orchids and yellow rattle near the river and in the hay fields here. They make it a great habitat for a wide range of butterflies.

7. Enter the woodland opposite Raven Crag and soon take to a higher level path.

8. You return to the riverside and cross the water again at a suspension bridge. Turn right when you reach the far bank and walk back to the car park.