

# Packhorse Trails

Five mountain bike routes in the North Pennines



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{ NORTH PENNINES  
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AONB family

# Welcome to the North Pennines

The North Pennines is a stunning landscape of open heather moors, dramatic dales, tumbling upland rivers, wonderful woods, close-knit communities, glorious waterfalls, fantastic birds, colourful hay meadows, stone-built villages, intriguing imprints of a mining and industrial past, distinctive plants and much, much more.

The area is one of England's most special places – a peaceful, unspoilt landscape with a rich history and a vibrant natural beauty. It was designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1988. The AONB is also a European and Global Geopark in recognition of its important geological heritage and local efforts to bring it to life.



*Discovering a smelt mill flue in Allendale*

The North Pennines lies within the boundaries of five local authorities: the three counties of Cumbria, Durham and Northumberland and the districts of Carlisle and Eden.

In the North Pennines you'll find:

- Some of the best walking, cycling and horse riding in the UK
- 40% of the UK's upland hay meadows
- 80% of England's black grouse
- 22,000 pairs of breeding wading birds
- Peace, tranquillity and fabulous night skies
- England's biggest waterfall – High Force in Teesdale.



*Finding out about hay meadows*



*Weardale*

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### Disclaimer:

Information is correct at the time of going to print (September 2011). Every effort has been made to ensure that information is accurate. However, the AONB Partnership and its Staff Unit cannot be held responsible for errors or omissions. Please check critical information before travel. Inclusion in this guide is not a recommendation by the AONB Partnership and in itself is not necessarily a guarantee of quality.

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### This guide is printed on:

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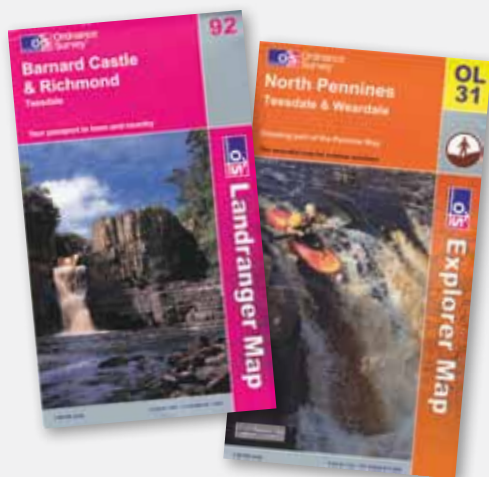
# How to use this guide

One of the best ways to explore the fantastic scenery of the North Pennines is to get out on two wheels. These five 'do in a day' routes are great to get you out into the wilds with nothing to disturb you other than the sound of your wheels turning, curlews calling and the wind in your hair!

The guide comes in two parts:

- Five waterproof route cards
- This booklet

If you don't want to risk getting the booklet wet then you can do the routes just using the cards. Taking a back-up OS map (and compass) is a good idea. If GPS is your thing you'll find waypoints on pages 28-29.



## Safety first

The routes cross some fairly remote terrain and it's probably best to go in a group. However you do them it is definitely advisable to let someone know where you are going and when you plan to get back.

## Weather

The weather can change rapidly in the North Pennines. It is perfectly possible to experience all four seasons in one day at almost any time of year. All the routes also cross high ground. It's a good idea to check the forecast before you set off ([www.metoffice.gov.uk](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk)) and to carry waterproofs and spare clothing just in case!

## Take care!

The five routes are promoted as mountain biking AND horse riding routes. Please follow the code on page 5. Ride carefully and be aware of other users, including walkers.



*Watch out for horse riders!*

# Cycling code

Please follow this code\* to ensure enjoyable riding and the safety of yourself and others.

## On all routes...

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Please be courteous! Always cycle with respect for others, whether other cyclists, walkers, wheelchair users, horse riders or drivers, and acknowledge those who give way to you.

- Follow the Countryside Code. Respect. Protect. Enjoy. Visit [www.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk)
- Respect land management activities, such as farming or forestry and take litter home
- Be self-sufficient – carry food, water, repair kit, map and waterproofs
- Consider wearing a helmet and bright clothing
- Fit lights and use them in poor visibility
- Keep your bike well maintained
- Warn people of your approach. Acknowledge people who give way
- Match your speed to the surface and your skills
- Try to cycle or use public transport to travel to and from the start and finish of your ride



## On shared-use routes...

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- Give way to walkers, horse riders and wheelchair users, leaving them plenty of room
- Be prepared to slow down or stop if necessary
- Don't expect to cycle at high speeds
- Keep erosion to a minimum on off-road routes
- Be careful at junctions, bends and entrances
- Remember that some people are hard of hearing or visually impaired – don't assume they can see or hear you

## When cycling on roads...

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- Always follow the Highway Code
- Be seen – most accidents to cyclists happen at junctions
- Don't cycle on pavements except where designated – pavements are for walkers

\* This code is based on one developed by Sustrans for the National Cycle Network - [www.sustrans.org.uk](http://www.sustrans.org.uk)



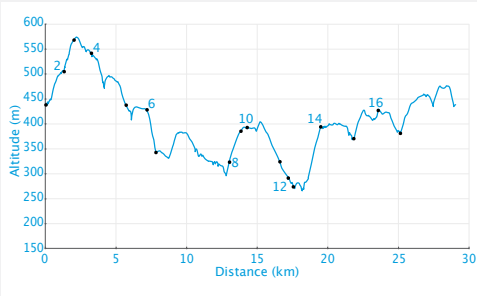
# Route basics



All the rides are circular and are easily completed within a day's riding. All the routes include on and off-road riding – a mountain bike is essential. None of the routes are technically difficult, although you will encounter some narrow, rocky trails, stone tracks, sections across moorland and some singletrack.

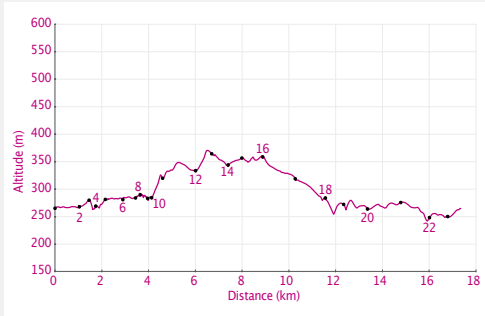
## Route 1: Alston

- Length: 29km (18 miles) – 30% off-road
- Ascent: 912m (2,992ft)
- Start: Nenthead Mines car park (NY 781 436)
- OS maps: Explorer OL31/Landranger 87



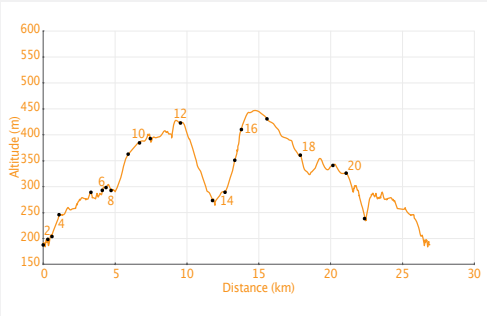
## Route 2: Baldersdale

- Length: 18km (11 miles) – 60% off-road
- Ascent: 370m (1,212ft)
- Start: Northumbrian Water car park on south side of Hury Reservoir (NY 966 192)
- OS maps: Explorer OL31/Landranger 92



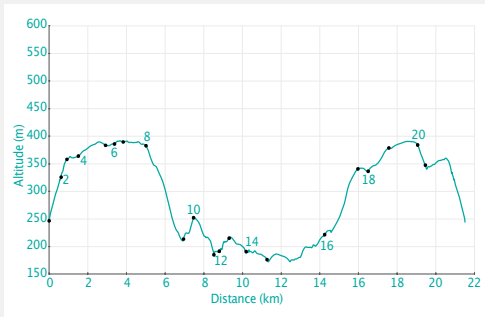
## Route 4: Hamsterley

- Length: 26km (16 miles) – 75% off-road
- Ascent: 846m (2,775ft)
- Start: Grove car park (NY 066 298) on the Hamsterley Forest Drive
- OS maps: Explorer OL31/Landranger 92



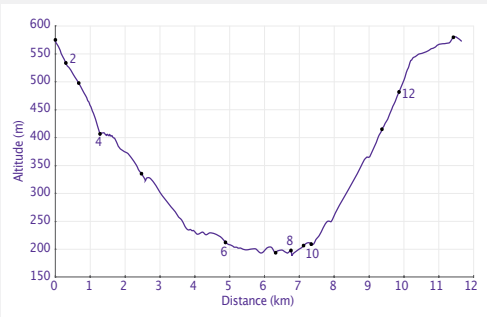
## Route 3: Blanchland

- Length: 21km (13 miles) – 70% off-road
- Ascent: 1,027m (3,370ft)
- Start: Baybridge car park (NY 957 500)
- OS maps: Explorer OL43/Landranger 87



## Route 5: Hartside

- Length: 11km (7 miles) – 75% off-road
- Ascent: 458m (1,501ft)
- Start: Car park at Hartside Top Café (NY 646 418)
- OS maps: Explorer OL31/Landranger 86



# Places to eat and drink

## Key

- ★ On the route
- < Less than a mile from route
- > More than a mile from route

Note that opening times vary and some establishments have seasonal opening – it's best to check before you rely on them!

## Route 1. Alston

### ★ George & Dragon Inn

The Green, Garrigill, CA9 3DS  
T: 01434 382 014  
E: oj6371@yahoo.co.uk

### ★ Alston House

Townfoot, Alston, CA9 3RN  
T: 01434 382 200  
E: alstonhouse@sffmail.net  
W: www.alstonhouse.co.uk

### ★ The Cumberland Hotel

Townfoot, Alston, CA9 3HX  
T: 01434 381 875  
E: guy@alstoncumberlandhotel.co.uk  
W: www.alstoncumberlandhotel.co.uk

### ★ The Miners Arms

Nenthead, CA9 3PF  
T: 01434 381 427  
E: theminersarms2@gmail.com  
W: www.nenthead.com

### < Nent Hall Country House Hotel

Nr Alston, CA9 3LQ  
T: 01434 381 584  
E: info@nenthall.com  
W: www.nenthall.com

### < Blueberry's Café

Market Place, Alston, CA9 3QN  
T: 01434 381 928

### < Cumbrian Pantry

Front Street, Alston, CA9 3HU  
T: 01434 381 406



*Blueberry's Café in Alston Market Place, just off Route 1*



< **The Turks Head**

Market Place, Alston, CA9 3SE  
T: 01434 394 859

> **West Natrass Tearoom**

West Natrass, Nr Alston, CA9 3DA  
T: 01434 382 292  
E: [info@westnatrass.com](mailto:info@westnatrass.com)  
W: [www.westnatrass.com](http://www.westnatrass.com)

> **Hartside Top Café**

See Route 5: Hartside for details

## Route 2. Baldersdale

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There are no cafés or pubs actually on this route.

> **The Coach House Café & Bistro**

Eggleston Hall, Nr Eggleston, DL12 0AG  
T: 01833 650 553  
E: [info@egglestonhall.co.uk](mailto:info@egglestonhall.co.uk)  
W: [www.egglestonhall.co.uk](http://www.egglestonhall.co.uk)

> **The Fox and Hounds**

Cotherstone, DL12 9PF  
T: 01833 650 241  
E: [ianswinburn999@btinternet.com](mailto:ianswinburn999@btinternet.com)  
W: [www.cotherstonefox.co.uk](http://www.cotherstonefox.co.uk)

> **The Red Lion**

Cotherstone, DL12 9QE  
T: 01833 650 236  
E: [red.lion@onebillinternet.co.uk](mailto:red.lion@onebillinternet.co.uk)  
W: [www.theredlionhotel.blogspot.com](http://www.theredlionhotel.blogspot.com)

> **Rose and Crown Hotel**

Romaldkirk, DL12 9EB  
T: 01833 650 213  
E: [hotel@rose-and-crown.co.uk](mailto:hotel@rose-and-crown.co.uk)  
W: [www.rose-and-crown.co.uk](http://www.rose-and-crown.co.uk)

> **Kirk Inn**

Romaldkirk, DL12 9ED  
T: 01833 650 260  
E: [romaldkirk77@btinternet.com](mailto:romaldkirk77@btinternet.com)

> **The Blacksmith's Arms**

Mickleton, DL12 0JY  
T: 01833 640 605

> **The Crown**

Mickleton, DL12 0JZ  
T: 01833 640 381  
E: [info@thecrownatmickleton.co.uk](mailto:info@thecrownatmickleton.co.uk)  
W: [www.thecrownatmickleton.co.uk](http://www.thecrownatmickleton.co.uk)

> **The Ancient Unicorn**

Bowes, DL12 9HL  
T: 01833 628 321  
E: [ancient.unicorn@virgin.net](mailto:ancient.unicorn@virgin.net)  
W: [www.ancient-unicorn.com](http://www.ancient-unicorn.com)

## Route 3. Blanchland

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There are no cafés or pubs actually on this route. However the village of Blanchland is only 0.5 miles away from the start.

< **Lord Crewe Arms Hotel**

Blanchland, DH8 9SP  
T: 01434 675 251  
E: [reception@lordcrewehotel.co.uk](mailto:reception@lordcrewehotel.co.uk)  
W: [www.lordcrewehotel.co.uk](http://www.lordcrewehotel.co.uk)

< **The White Monk Tearoom**

The Old School, Blanchland, DH8 9ST  
T: 01434 675 044  
E: [timber@joseph.marchltd.co.uk](mailto:timber@joseph.marchltd.co.uk)

> **The Punch Bowl Inn**

Edmundbyers, DH8 9NL  
T: 01207 255 545  
E: [info@thepunchbowlinn.info](mailto:info@thepunchbowlinn.info)  
W: [www.thepunchbowlinn.info](http://www.thepunchbowlinn.info)

> **Redwell Hall Farm – Byre Tearooms**

Redwell Hall Farm, DH8 9TS  
T: 01207 255 216  
E: [redwellhall@aol.com](mailto:redwellhall@aol.com)

> **The Manor House Inn**

Carterway Heads (just off the A68),  
DH8 9LX  
T: 01207 255 268  
E: [info@themanorhouseinn.com](mailto:info@themanorhouseinn.com)  
W: [www.themanorhouseinn.com](http://www.themanorhouseinn.com)

## Route 4. Hamsterley

★ **The Moorcock Inn**

Hilltop, Eggleston, DL12 0AU  
T: 01833 650 395  
W: [www.the-moorcock.co.uk](http://www.the-moorcock.co.uk)

> **Three Tuns Inn**

Church Bank, Eggleston, DL12 0AH  
T: 01833 650 289  
E: [the3tuns@talktalk.net](mailto:the3tuns@talktalk.net)  
W: [www.three-tuns-inn.co.uk](http://www.three-tuns-inn.co.uk)

< **The Coach House Café & Bistro**

See Route 2: Baldersdale for details

> **Hamsterley Forest Tearooms**

Hamsterley Forest Visitor Centre,  
DL13 3NL (1.75 miles E of the route  
start along the Forest Drive)  
T: 01388 488 822

> **The Cross Keys Country Pub  
& Restaurant**

Hamsterley, DL13 3PX  
T: 01388 488 457  
E: [info@thecrosskeyshamsterley.com](mailto:info@thecrosskeyshamsterley.com)  
W: [www.thecrosskeyshamsterley.com](http://www.thecrosskeyshamsterley.com)

## Route 5. Hartside

★ **Hartside Top Café**

Hartside Top, Nr Alston, CA9 3BW  
T: 01434 381 036

> **The Village Bakery**

Melmerby, CA10 1HE  
T: 01768 881 811  
E: [restaurant@village-bakery.com](mailto:restaurant@village-bakery.com)  
W: [www.village-bakery.com](http://www.village-bakery.com)

> **The Shepherds Inn**

Melmerby, CA10 1HF  
T: 01768 881 741  
E: [shepherdsinnmelmerby@btconnect.com](mailto:shepherdsinnmelmerby@btconnect.com)  
W: [www.shepherdsinnmelmerby.co.uk](http://www.shepherdsinnmelmerby.co.uk)

Alston is about 5 miles (along the A686) E of Hartside Top. Here you'll find lots of café and pubs – see Route 1: Alston for details.



*The Hartside Top Café is at the start (and finish!) of Route 5*

# Finding accommodation

The North Pennines lies within the boundaries of the three counties of Cumbria, Durham and Northumberland.

## Green places to stay

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Some accommodation providers in the area have joined either the Green Tourism Business Scheme (green accreditation for quality businesses) or have other green awards.

- You'll find a list on [www.northpennines.org.uk](http://www.northpennines.org.uk)
- More information at [www.green-business.co.uk](http://www.green-business.co.uk)

## Durham

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- [www.thisisdurham.com](http://www.thisisdurham.com) – search for accommodation in the Durham Dales (Teesdale, Weardale or Derwent Valley)
- [www.teesdalediscovery.com](http://www.teesdalediscovery.com)
- [www.discoverweardale.co.uk](http://www.discoverweardale.co.uk)
- Contact Barnard Castle, Middleton-in-Teesdale or Stanhope Tourist Information Centres (page 34)

## Northumberland

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- [www.visitnorthumberland.com](http://www.visitnorthumberland.com) – search for accommodation in Hadrian's Wall & North Pennines
- Contact Hexham, Haltwhistle or Corbridge Tourist Information Centres (page 34)

## Cumbria

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- [www.golakes.co.uk](http://www.golakes.co.uk) – search and book accommodation within Cumbria
- [www.visiteden.co.uk](http://www.visiteden.co.uk)
- [www.discovercarlisle.co.uk](http://www.discovercarlisle.co.uk)

## Youth Hostels

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- There are six YHA Youth Hostels in the North Pennines: Alston, Dufton, Edmundbyers, Kirkby Stephen, Langdon Beck and Ninebanks
- [www.yha.org.uk](http://www.yha.org.uk)



# Foundations of the landscape

The North Pennines landscape has its foundations in the underlying rocks and the geological processes which have shaped it over 500 million years of Earth history.

## The oldest rocks

The deep roots of the North Pennines are slates and volcanic rocks, which are only exposed in Teesdale and along the Pennine escarpment. These rocks are nearly 500 million years old.

About 400 million years ago, molten rock rose up into the slates. It crystallized underground to form the Weardale Granite. Granite is less dense than most other rocks in the Earth's crust and is relatively buoyant. Because of this, the North Pennines has remained higher than surrounding areas for millions of years.



*A piece of Weardale Granite, from a borehole drilled at Rookhope by researchers at Durham University in 1960-61*

## Tropical seas and swamps



*Terraced hillsides around Blagill (Direction 15 on Route 1: Alston) in the Nent Valley, showing evidence of past workings for lead ore and coal*

About 360 to 300 million years ago – in the Carboniferous Period – the North Pennines lay near the equator and was periodically covered by shallow tropical seas, vast deltas and swampy rainforests. Over time, shelly debris on the sea floor hardened into limestone, the delta sands and muds turned into sandstone and shale, and the forests became thin coal seams.

These different rocks influence the shape of the land. Layers of hard rocks such as limestone and sandstone stand out as terraces, whereas the softer shales lie beneath the gentler slopes between the terraces.

## The Whin Sill

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Stretching of the Earth's crust 295 million years ago caused molten rock to rise up and spread out between the layers of Carboniferous rocks. It solidified underground to form the Whin Sill, a vast sheet of hard dolerite (or whinstone). After millions of years of erosion the Whin Sill is now exposed at the surface and its cliffs form dramatic landscape features in Upper Teesdale and along the Pennine escarpment.

## Mineral riches

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*Formation of North Pennine mineral veins*  
*Elizabeth Pickett © NERC*

The North Pennines is famous for its mineral deposits. Veins of lead ore and other minerals formed about 290 million years ago when mineral-rich waters, warmed by heat from the buried Weardale Granite, flowed through fractures underground. As the fluids cooled, their dissolved minerals crystallized within the fractures, forming mineral veins. These minerals were the foundation of the area's economy for many centuries. Most important was 18th and 19th century lead mining. Mining has had a profound effect on the landscape, leaving a legacy of settlements, shafts, spoil heaps, smelt mill flues, chimneys and packhorse trails.

## Deserts and floods

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*The North Pennine escarpment about 250 million years ago © NPAP/Elizabeth Pickett*

The Eden Valley is underlain by red sandstones, which formed roughly 250 million years ago. The North Pennines baked in a desert environment just north of the equator, and these rocks formed from sand laid down in dunes and rivers. These red rocks give a distinctive character to the villages along the foot of the Pennine escarpment – for example Unthank on the Hartside Trail (Route 5).

## Ice age

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The North Pennines owes much of its character to the action of ice and meltwater in the more recent geological past. About 20,000 years ago a kilometre-thick ice sheet covered the area. It streamed across the landscape, scouring the fells and dales, and dumping clay, gravel and boulders. About 15,000 years ago the ice melted, leaving a landscape of rock and glacial debris. Arctic plants, shrubs and eventually trees colonised the bare land.



# People and place

The historic environment in the North Pennines is rich and varied. The human story begins approximately 10,000 years ago, following the end of the last Ice Age.

## Human influence

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Since people first came to the North Pennines, human activity has profoundly influenced the landscape. The first settlers came to forage for wild resources in heavily wooded valleys, very different from today's meadows and grassland. From about 6,000 years ago, early farmers began felling trees to create agricultural clearings, and the wildwood has been progressively cleared from this point.

Through the following millennia, many different peoples – Celts, Romans, Saxons, Vikings, Normans – left their mark in settlements, fortifications, field systems, graves and mines. But it is in the last few hundred years that people have had the greatest impact on the North Pennines landscape. Exploitation of the area's mineral resources over hundreds of years has strongly influenced the pattern of settlement and agriculture and has even changed the shape of the landscape in some places.



*Excavated Bronze Age burial cairn on Birkside Fell*

Today most people live in the dales which cut through the moorland landscape. Villages, farms and dry stone walls built of local stone reflect the underlying geology of the area. The imprint of lead and other mining activity is still strong with chimneys, hushes, adits, mineshops, leats, packhorse routes and other features providing a reminder of the area's industrial past.



*Leat carrying water to a storage reservoir at Nenthead Mines*

## Farming the hills

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Between 6,000 and 4,000 years ago, during the Neolithic period (New Stone Age) communities throughout the North Pennines gradually adopted farming alongside long-established practices of hunting, fishing and gathering. Many polished stone axes, beautiful leaf-shaped flint arrowheads and other stone tools provide evidence of Neolithic activity. Archaeologists have discovered evidence for farming from all periods from the Neolithic through to the present day, although hunting, fishing and the gathering of wild resources remained important long after the introduction of farming.

## Land and livelihood

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Farming and forestry play an important role in the lives of local communities and in looking after the landscape. Careful management of moors for red grouse shooting and rivers for fishing benefits wildlife and supports the livelihood of local people. The North Pennines is also a popular destination for walkers, cyclists, horse riders and wildlife watchers – visitors who help support the local economy.



Red grouse © Brian Rafferty

## Blooming lovely

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Linked with the keeping of livestock are the area's very special and rare upland hay meadows, well known as a fantastic habitat for wild plants, invertebrates and birds. These meadows have evolved through traditional farming practices over several centuries. In the North Pennines you'll find about 40% of the UK's remaining species-rich upland hay meadows.



*The best upland hay meadows in the North Pennines contain up to 120 species of flowering plants, including many different types of grasses!*

# Moving the lead



*Galloway being loaded with lead ore*  
© Science Museum/SSPL

Lead mining has had a huge influence on the North Pennines. This influence extends beyond landscape features like mines and flues to include a vast network of old packhorse trails.

The wild, upland landscape of the North Pennines is not well suited to easy travel and in past centuries the only way to transport lead ore and lead was by packhorse.

After the lead ore had been mined and processed it was then smelted at smelt mills to extract the lead. Until proper roads were built in the mid 19th century, strings of packhorses carried the ore from the mines and mills along established packhorse trails. Finished 'pig' lead was then transported by packhorse out of the area to Tyne and Tees wharves for shipping to London.

## Transport network

Given the number of mines across the North Pennines it's not unreasonable to assume that lots of the routes across the area were used at some point as packhorse trails. Some of them would have been the main arteries of packhorse transport whereas others would have had quite low levels of use or would have been used for just a short time over the life of an individual mine.

Packhorses (galloways, jaggors or jagger galloways as they were known) once trod the North Pennine moors in their thousands. They were usually led in strings of 12-30, each carrying a load of about two hundredweight (approximately 102kg). Ten horses would therefore be needed to carry a ton of ore. If a mine produced 1,000 tons a year, a grand total of 10,000 horse journeys would be required to get the ore to the smelt mill!



*Galloways carrying wood* © Science Museum/SSPL



*Driving Galloways © Science Museum/SSPL*

## Ways and causeways

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The North Pennines has a network of named 'ways', 'causeways' and 'drove roads' that signify their use as historic transport routes. Many of these old routes are marked on modern OS maps.

They include:

- The Carriers' Way across Bulbeck Common between Slaley Forest and Halleywell (on the Blanchland trail - Route 3)
- The Ward Way heading south and west from Alston (on the Alston trail - Route 1)

## Place names

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Some of the place names in the North Pennines also provide clues to the use of packhorses in the area:

- Jangling Gate – near Lord's Lot in Hexhamshire – this could be a reference to the bells that were attached to the lead packhorse in the train, which no doubt jingled when the horse passed through the gate.

- Carriers' Hill – just to the north of Killhope Museum, Weardale – a reference to the people involved in the carriage business, whether of lead or other materials.
- Galloway Hill – near Causeway Top on the Grasshill Causeway between Weardale and Teesdale close to the Hamsterley trail (Route 4) – a name given to the packhorses which carried lead ore and lead in the North Pennines.

## The way forward

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Because of the problems of transporting lead out of the area by packhorse, the mining companies commissioned the best known road engineer of the time – John McAdam – to design and build new carriage roads in the early years of the 19th century.

# Route 1 - Alston

You'll travel through a landscape rich with echoes of the area's lead mining past. Passing through the small town of Alston and the villages of Nenthead and Garrigill, as well as over the high moors, it's a route of contrasts.

## Points of interest

### **A** Nenthead Mines

Nenthead Mines is one of the largest former lead mining sites in the North Pennines.



*You'll pass a lot of old lead mining spoil heaps as you ride up through the Nenthead Mines site*

### **B** Shake holes

Look over the wall here and you'll see a line of hollows in the field. These are sinkholes or shake holes, a sign that limestone lies beneath. Shake holes form when rainwater reacts with the limestone and gradually dissolves it away. They also sometimes form through the collapse of a cave roof.

### **C** Rock layers

If you look to the skyline, across the valley, you can see how layers of different rock influence the landscape. Harder rock such as limestone and sandstone stands out as terraces, whereas more easily eroded shale lies beneath the slopes between the terraces.

### **D** Dry Burn

Halfway between Garrigill and Leadgate is Dry Burn. Look over the bridge and you'll see it's well named (unless you visit during or following heavy rain). Dry watercourses like this are typical of limestone landscapes. Rainwater has gradually dissolved the limestone, creating cracks into which the water disappears.





*You'll find yourself riding along this quiet country lane between Garrigill and Leadgate*

### **E** Leadgate

Leadgate is a small hamlet about two miles from Alston. A subscription library was set up in the schoolroom here in 1848 by Isaac Walton, mine agent, for the benefit of the local miners.

### **F** Park Fell

On the left of the valley is Park Fell, enclosed as a deer park in 1337 by the Lord of the Manor, Robert de Veteripont.

### **G** The Ward Way

The Ward Way is so called because it was an 'awarded way' to allotments that were created following the Commons Act of 1876. However it is highly likely, given the level of mining activity in the area, that this was already an established packhorse route.

### **H** Alston

Alston is reputed to be the highest market town in England. It was recorded in 12th century documents and the town stands at the crossroads of the main routes across the North Pennines. Its medieval and post-medieval history is closely linked to the local lead mining industry.



### **I** Blagill

### **I** Blagill

The area around Blagill has long been associated with quarrying and mining. The landscape is dotted with old coal pits and with deep gashes where lead veins have been worked.



*Lumps and bumps on the hillside above Blagill tell a story of past mining and quarrying*

### **J** Aerial ropeway remains

The large concrete blocks beside the road at Pry House were associated with lead mining high in the Nent Valley. They supported an aerial ropeway which transported ore down the hill to be processed at Nenthead.

# Route 2 - Baldersdale

This glorious ride initially follows the banks of Hury and Blackton Reservoirs in remote Baldersdale, before striking off over the moors on the Pennine Way.

## Points of interest

### A Hury and Blackton Reservoirs

Hury and Blackton Reservoirs were built in the late 19th century. In each case an earth dam holds back the water. The reservoirs supply water to Stockton and Middlesbrough.



*Hury Reservoir*



*In the spring you'll find bluebells between directions 4 and 5*

### B Hannah's Meadow

The meadows and pastures here have evolved as a result of traditional farming practices over several centuries. Hannah Hauxwell owned and farmed them for over 50 years. She lived alone at Low Birk Hat Farm without the luxury of electricity or running water. Hannah was made famous by a Yorkshire TV documentary in the early 1970s. When she retired in 1988 Durham Wildlife Trust took over the management of these special meadows.

### C Mining remains

Mining has shaped the landscape, even out on this remote moor. There are several traces of early coal mining at Blackton. At least two shafts, a level and a short length of railway are still here. These remains probably date from the 18th or 19th centuries.



### Cotherstone Moor

There was also a small lead mine on Cotherstone Moor, and the remains of hushes (opencast workings along mineral veins) and leats (channels built to supply water for washing ore or powering water wheels) can still be seen.

### **D** Goldsborough

Goldsborough is a prominent flat-topped sandstone summit standing proud above the surrounding moor. It is a relic of a once extensive horizontal layer of sandstone. Goldsborough has survived the erosive forces of the mighty ice sheets of the last ice age – most of the rest of the layer of sandstone has been eroded away.



### Goldsborough

### **E** Cup-and-ring marked stones

Just after the gate at direction 15 you'll find some cup-and-ring marks on a large flat stone on the left of the route.

Cup-and-ring marked stones are amongst the greatest mysteries of British archaeology. They are about 5,000 years old and occur in many places on the North Pennine moors. Nobody knows for certain what the symbols meant to the people who made them.

### **F** The Butterstone

According to local legend the Butterstone gained its name during the great plague of 1636. Markets in Barnard Castle, and surrounding settlements, were 'cried down', to try and prevent the infection spreading. People needed to find new ways to sell their products.

It is said that a large, water-filled basin was kept on top of the stone. Farmers left butter and eggs at the site and their customers placed money in the basin, in exchange for the produce.

### **G** The 'Tatty Field'

If you're out on this route in June and early July this small hay meadow is an amazingly vibrant splash of colour. This meadow contributes to the 440 hectares of species-rich upland hay meadows in the North Pennines – 40% of those remaining in the UK.



*The Tatty Field in late June/early July*  
© Barbara Brown

# Route 3 - Blanchland

This stunning ride starts at Baybridge, close to the village of Blanchland. You'll follow the Carriers' Way across Bulbeck Common, alive with the evocative calls of wading birds in the spring and early summer.

## Points of interest

### A Baybridge

In 1866 this small, peaceful, hamlet was the scene of a riot between local lead miners and miners from Cornwall. It took place at the then Miners' Arms – a former inn which is now a private house and a Grade II listed building.

In his poem 'Bonnie Blanchland', local poet George Carr tells the story of how the inn was saved from being blown up.



*The Carriers' Way*

### B Bronze Age settlements

Settlements on this moor date back to prehistory. A Mesolithic flint scatter and a Bronze Age burial cairn were excavated in the 1990s on Birkside Fell.



*Excavated Bronze Age burial cairn on Birkside Fell*

### C The Carriers' Way

The Carriers' Way is a trackway running between Beldon and the Corbridge road and was part of the network of packhorse trails.

### D Barn at Wester Byres

This barn has links to the historic Hexhamshire leather industry. Tanning (the process of treating animal skins) was carried out near here. Oak bark was the only legally permitted vegetable tanning agent between 1563 and 1808. Oak trees coppiced in nearby woods provided the bark, which was stored in this very barn!

## E Dukesfield

There used to be an old smelt mill to the southwest of Dukesfield Mill Bridge. Smelting is the extraction of a metal from its ore. Lead ore would have been heated in a furnace with fuel and a constant blast of air until molten lead was produced. The lead was collected in moulds to form ingots known as 'pigs'.

The smelt mill was built in the late 18th century and was demolished in 1837. The ore came from lead mines in Allendale run by the WB Lead Company. It would have been carried here by packhorses.

## F Ladycross Quarry

At Ladycross Quarry, thin sandstone slabs have been quarried by hand for at least 300 years. The nearby village of Blanchland, and its church, a former Abbey, were roofed with stone from here in 1740.

## G Blanchland Moor

This stretch of moorland seems like a pretty wild place. However, like many of the moors in the North Pennines, its appearance has much to do with its management for red grouse shooting.

## H Pennypie House

This building gained its name because pies were baked here and sold to drovers and miners for a penny (old money!) each.

## I Shildon Engine House

A detour from the route takes you to this example of an early 19th century engine house. The building housed a steam-driven engine built in 1806 to pump water out of the nearby mine. It did not succeed because

of the high cost of bringing in coal to fuel the boiler. By the late 19th century it was disused and converted into flats, giving rise to its local name of Shildon Castle.

The consolidation of the Engine House, completed in 2010, was carried out by the AONB Partnership.



*Working on the Engine House*



*The building after consolidation had been completed*

## J Blanchland

A further detour brings you to the historic village of Blanchland, an 18th century estate village built on the site of a 12th century abbey.



# Route 4 - Hamsterley

A ride of contrasts - in the forest and out over the open moor. You'll follow an old drove road on the return to the forest from Eggleston.

## Points of interest

### A Hamsterley Forest

Hamsterley Forest is 2,000 hectares of mixed woodland looked after by the Forestry Commission. Passing through the forest you can see how its management has changed over the years, with more native broadleaved trees now being planted as conifers are felled.

### B Eggleston Moor

Eggleston Moor is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). It is part of one of the largest areas of dry heath habitat in the North Pennines. As well as being significant for its plant communities it is also important for birds, such as short-eared owl, redshank and twite.



*If you're really lucky you might just see a short-eared owl hunting across the moors © Brian Rafferty*

### C Managed moorlands

Moorlands in the North Pennines are managed by shooting estates for red grouse. Much of the heather moorland would once have been covered in natural woodland with a mixture of birch, oak and rowan trees. Clearance of this woodland started in Neolithic times – from around 4,000BC. Controlled burning and grazing (by sheep and cattle) keep the trees from growing back



*Controlled burning of the moorlands in the North Pennines is a widespread tool used by estates to manage the moors for red grouse shooting © RDI*

### **D** Smelt mill flue

Passing by Blackton Beck, the course of an old smelt mill flue can be seen alongside the track. Industrial remains such as this can be seen all over the North Pennine landscape.

### **E** Eggleston Saddle House

This small building is a short detour from the main route. It is thought to have been built by the London Lead Company to store spare saddles for the packhorses that transported lead and lead ore along the packhorse trails.

### **F** The Hett Dyke

Look to the NW from point F and you'll see these interesting looking hills. They were formed by a combination of the underlying rocks and the action of glacial meltwater. The hills are part of a 'dyke', a vertical sheet of rock which was once molten.

This dyke formed deep underground and is now exposed after millions of years of erosion. It may have been a conduit for the molten rock that formed the Whin Sill (see page 13). At the end of the last ice age, glacial meltwater was dammed in the upper reaches of the Eggleston Burn by the ice that filled Teesdale. As the ice melted

in stages, the water overflowed and cut successive nicks in the hard rock of the Hett Dyke, creating these little hills.



*These hills were formed by a combination of the underlying rocks and the action of glacial meltwater*

### **G** Drove road

This part of the route follows an old drove road which passes just to the south of Coldhorn Nook (the 442m spot height on the map). These routes were used to drive livestock on foot from one place to another, such as to market or between winter and summer pasture.



*Old drove road on the flanks of Coldhorn Nook*

### **H** Ark on the Edge

Animal rescue and sanctuary – [www.arkontheedge.org.uk](http://www.arkontheedge.org.uk) for details.

# Route 5 - Hartside

A dramatic ride from the Pennine escarpment down into the Eden Valley and back up to the top again!

## Points of interest

### **A** Hartside view



*The view from Hartside*

Hartside stands at an altitude of 1,903 feet (580m). On a clear day you'll be greeted by magnificent views across the Eden Valley to the Lake District fells, as well as southern Scotland on the other side of the Solway Firth.

### **B** Ancient road

The track here is an old road connecting the Alston-Penrith road and an ancient road through Renwick. The origin of this road has been lost in the mists of time – it's been suggested that it could be Roman, but this is far from certain. Nevertheless it has been a transport route for a long time and may well have seen packhorses carrying lead, coal and other goods.

### **C** Ricker Gill Bridge

The stone bridge crossing Ricker Gill is also of uncertain date, but it may be several centuries old. It is also known as Haresceugh (pronounced 'Harscu') Bridge, as the gill runs down from Haresceugh Fell. The meaning of the word is 'hare's wood' so it's worth looking out for hares; a good way to recognise them is to spot their black ear tips.

The restoration of the bridge, completed in 2011, was carried out by the North Pennines AONB Partnership. Using traditional materials including lime mortar, this involved rebuilding the entire downstream wall and 'knitting' new sections of masonry into the surviving historic fabric of the upstream wall. Historic bridges are often prone to water and frost damage. Have a look at the new section of masonry - it incorporates 'spitter' drains which carry surface water away from the masonry.



*Before*



*During restoration*



*The finished bridge © Blakett-Ord Conservation Engineering*

## **D** Shepherd's bothy

This now-roofless building, replete with sheep handling pens, was used by shepherds as an overnight bothy. Checking the sheep has now become an easier task with the widespread use of quad bikes on the fells – overnight stays are no longer required.

## **E** Selah Bridge

The views across the vale from here are stunning. The contrast from the windswept, treeless, Hartside Top to the more friendly and intimate nature of the Eden Valley – with its patchwork of small fields – is striking.

## **F** Unthank



*Red sandstone is an attractive building material*

Unthank is an attractive settlement. The use of the local red sandstone in the cottages is characteristic of villages throughout the Eden Valley.

The name Unthank has nothing to do with not thanking somebody but instead comes from the Old English word 'unpance' which means 'without leave' and describes an area of land which was occupied unlawfully.

# GPS Waypoints

These 8-figure OS grid references for each direction point on the five routes are provided for reference purposes.



*Cottongrass in flower on the moors is a spectacular sight*



*Swaledale sheep are a constant companion in the North Pennines. Keep an eye out for them on our unfenced moorland roads*



*You'll find 80% of England's black grouse in the North Pennines*  
© Brian Rafferty

## 1. Alston

1. NY 7806 4359
2. NY 7890 4264
3. NY 7848 4210
4. NY 7805 4101
5. NY 7605 4012
6. NY 7520 4132
7. NY 7460 5412
8. NY 7073 4378
9. NY 7000 4349
10. NY 6995 4392
11. NY 7076 4609
12. NY 7128 4630
13. NY 7155 4610
14. NY 7211 4777
15. NY 7408 4747
16. NY 7554 4731
17. NY 7591 4601



2. Baldersdale	3. Blanchland	4. Hamsterley	5. Hartside
1. NZ 9664 1923	1. NY 9578 5001	1. NZ 0664 2989	1. NZ 6464 4179
2. NZ 9566 1893	2. NY 9544 5056	2. NZ 0643 2961	2. NZ 6438 4203
3. NZ 9531 1877	3. NY 9526 5079	3. NZ 0636 2979	3. NZ 6407 4215
4. NZ 9511 1890	4. NY 9475 5103	4. NZ 0608 2944	4. NZ 6353 4225
5. NZ 9472 1883	5. NY 9360 5170	5. NZ 0522 2791	5. NZ 6241 4255
6. NZ 9403 1868	6. NY 9363 5215	6. NZ 0497 2729	6. NZ 6042 4205
7. NZ 9373 1835	7. NY 9370 5256	7. NZ 0479 2721	7. NZ 6091 4074
8. NZ 9353 1835	8. NY 9422 5359	8. NZ 0452 2699	8. NZ 6113 4043
9. NZ 9324 1825	9. NY 9264 5412	9. NZ 0365 2753	9. NZ 6129 4011
10. NZ 9331 1810	10. NY 9289 5451	10. NZ 0307 2801	10. NZ 6149 4022
11. NZ 9354 1774	11. NY 9274 5532	11. NZ 0252 2751	11. NZ 6284 4109
12. NZ 9475 1787	12. NY 9277 5560	12. NZ 0097 2627	12. NZ 6329 4114
13. NZ 9534 1753	13. NY 9303 5601	13. NY 9933 2502	13. NZ 6461 4169
14. NZ 9598 1738	14. NY 9362 5655	14. NY 9961 2435	
15. NZ 9651 1717	15. NY 9438 5730	15. NZ 0020 2471	
16. NZ 9684 1635	16. NY 9582 5677	16. NZ 0045 2493	
17. NZ 9817 1662	17. NY 9546 5514	17. NZ 0212 2477	
18. NZ 9944 1670	18. NY 9539 5463	18. NZ 0436 2495	
19. NZ 9964 1744	19. NY 9508 5363	19. NZ 0613 2596	
20. NZ 9997 1834	20. NY 9499 5220	20. NZ 0628 2687	
21. NZ 9868 1887	21. NY 9493 5182	21. NZ 0531 2757	
22. NZ 9774 1946			
23. NZ 9699 1950			

# Cycle hire and repair

## Key

 Hire

 Repair

### ActivCycles

17 Watling Street, Corbridge,  
Northumberland NE45 5AH  
T: 01434 632 950  
E: [info@activcycles.net](mailto:info@activcycles.net)  
W: [activ-cycles.co.uk](http://activ-cycles.co.uk)  
Other: Bike sales, accessories

### Arragon's Cycle Centre

2 Brunswick Road, Penrith,  
Cumbria CA11 7LU  
T: 01768 890 344  
E: [arragonscycles@mac.com](mailto:arragonscycles@mac.com)  
W: [www.arragonscycles.com](http://www.arragonscycles.com)  
Hire bikes: Mountain, hybrids  
Other: Sales, parts, accessories



### The Bike Shop

16 St Mary's Chare, Hexham,  
Northumberland NE46 1NQ  
T: 01434 601 032  
E: [bikeshophexham@live.co.uk](mailto:bikeshophexham@live.co.uk)  
W: [www.thebikeshophexham.com](http://www.thebikeshophexham.com)  
Hire bikes: Hybrids  
Other: Sales, parts and accessories

### C2C Bike Repairs

Nenthead, Nr Alston  
T: 01434 382 194 or 07776 098 915  
E: [mark@fearn2620.freemove.co.uk](mailto:mark@fearn2620.freemove.co.uk)  
W: [www.markfearn.co.uk](http://www.markfearn.co.uk)  
Other: Bike and rider recovery,  
road side assistance, parts - new and re-used,  
specialist workshop repairs (inc. wheels)





### Kirkby Stephen Cycle Centre 🚲🔧

Unit 1, Station Yard, Kirkby Stephen,  
Cumbria CA17 4LA  
T: 017683 71658  
E: exploreoutdoor@aol.com  
Hire bikes: Mountain, comfort, hybrids  
by prior arrangement  
Other: Sales, spare parts

### North Pennine Cycles 🚲🔧

The Old Post Office, Nenthead,  
Cumbria CA9 3PF  
T: 01434 381 324  
E: npcycles@hotmail.co.uk  
W: www.northpenninecycles.co.uk  
Hire bikes: Mountain, kids, tandem, road  
Other: Rescue, retail, parts, accessories

### Pedalpushers 🚲🔧

Lonnings End, Sandy Lanning, Capontree  
Road, Brampton, Cumbria CA8 1RA  
T: 01697 742 387 & 07770 976 187  
E: pedalpushersbram@aol.com  
Hire bikes: Road and moderate off-road use,  
bikes for children, tandem  
Other: Collection/deliver and transfer  
service offered

### Spitfire Cycles 🚲🔧

26 The Bank, Barnard Castle,  
County Durham DL12 8PQ  
T: 01833 690 640  
E: spitfirecycles@btconnect.com  
W: www.spitfirecycles.co.uk  
Other: Sales, parts and accessories

### Wood 'n' Wheels 🚲🔧

Hamsterley Forest, Redford, Bishop  
Auckland, Co. Durham DL13 3NL  
T: 0333 800 8 222 (free from a landline,  
reduced rate from mobiles)  
E: info@woodnwheels.org.uk  
W: www.woodnwheels.co.uk  
Hire bikes: Mountain – adults and  
children (down to 16" wheel), child  
seats and tagalongs  
Other: Sales (new & ex-hire), accessories  
& parts, bikes can be delivered to  
accommodation, C2C transfers



# More cycling in the AONB

If you've ridden the five packhorse trails and you want to explore more of the North Pennines by bike – here are a few suggestions:

## Wheels to the Wild Cycle Route



Turn your wheels to the wild and discover some of the best cycling in the AONB and explore the area's geology and landscape. This 122km (76 miles) long touring route can be split into 48, 42 and 33km (30, 26 and 20 miles) legs.

The guide also includes three day routes suitable for mountain and hybrid cycles: Waskerley Round (33.5km or 21 miles); Swinhope High Challenge (38km or 24 miles); and the Killhope Round (32km or 20 miles).

- More information from [www.northpennines.org.uk](http://www.northpennines.org.uk)

- Order your copy direct from the AONB Partnership – send a cheque (£5 made payable to Durham County Council) to North Pennines AONB Partnership, Weardale Business Centre, The Old Co-op Building, 1 Martin Street, Stanhope, Bishop Auckland, Co. Durham DL13 2UY.



*Crossing the watershed between Weardale and Teesdale*



## National Cycle Routes

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### C2C Cycle Route

The UK's most popular 'challenge' cycle route (from Whitehaven or Workington to Newcastle or Sunderland). The 140 mile (225km) route passes right through the heart of the North Pennines.

### Walney to Wear (or Whitby) Cycle Route

Inspired by the pioneering C2C, the W2W route passes through a variety of stunning countryside. It goes through the southern part of the AONB.

### Pennine Cycle Way

This route runs for 335 miles (539km) between Derby and Berwick-upon-Tweed, passing through the North Pennines on its way.

### More information

- [www.sustrans.org](http://www.sustrans.org), [www.c2c-guide.co.uk](http://www.c2c-guide.co.uk) and [www.cyclingw2w.info](http://www.cyclingw2w.info)

## Traffic-free routes

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### *Tees Railway Walk (Teesdale)*

The Waskerley Way (Weardale) and the Tees Railway Walk (Teesdale) are great traffic-free, easy gradient, cycle routes ideal for families. Hamsterley Forest is also a great place to find traffic-free routes.

- [www.durham.gov.uk](http://www.durham.gov.uk)

## Hamsterley Forest

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### *You'll find waymarked mountain bikes routes in Hamsterley Forest*

Hamsterley Forest has excellent terrain for mountain biking, offering routes for a range of abilities, including: The Loop – skills area; downhill for experienced riders; and colour coded, waymarked trails exploring the wider forest.

- [www.forestry.gov.uk/hamsterleyforest](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/hamsterleyforest), [www.hamsterley-trailblazers.co.uk](http://www.hamsterley-trailblazers.co.uk), [www.descend-bikepark.co.uk](http://www.descend-bikepark.co.uk)

# Further information

Visit [www.northpennines.org.uk](http://www.northpennines.org.uk) for a wide range of information on the North Pennines AONB and Global Geopark.

The North Pennines lies within the boundaries of three counties: Cumbria, Durham and Northumberland. A variety of websites provide information on different parts of the AONB:

[www.thisisdurham.com](http://www.thisisdurham.com)

[www.visitnorthumberland.com](http://www.visitnorthumberland.com)

[www.golakes.co.uk](http://www.golakes.co.uk)

[www.cybermoor.org](http://www.cybermoor.org)

[www.visiteden.co.uk](http://www.visiteden.co.uk)

[www.discovercarlisle.co.uk](http://www.discovercarlisle.co.uk)

[www.discoverweardale.co.uk](http://www.discoverweardale.co.uk)

[www.teesdalediscovery.com](http://www.teesdalediscovery.com)

[www.hadrians-wall.org](http://www.hadrians-wall.org)

[www.allenvalleys.com](http://www.allenvalleys.com)

## Information centres

### Alston

Alston Local Links, Town Hall, Front Street,  
Alston, Cumbria CA9 3RF

T: 01434 382 244

E: [alstonlocallinks@eden.gov.uk](mailto:alstonlocallinks@eden.gov.uk)

W: [www.visiteden.co.uk](http://www.visiteden.co.uk)

### Appleby-in-Westmorland

Moot Hall, Boroughgate, Appleby-in-  
Westmorland, Cumbria CA16 6XE

T: 017683 51177

E: [tic@applebytown.org.uk](mailto:tic@applebytown.org.uk)

W: [www.applebytown.org.uk](http://www.applebytown.org.uk)

### Barnard Castle

Woodleigh, Flatts Road, Barnard Castle,  
Co. Durham DL12 8AA

T: 01833 696 356

E: [tourism-teesdale@durham.gov.uk](mailto:tourism-teesdale@durham.gov.uk)

W: [www.teesdalediscovery.com](http://www.teesdalediscovery.com)





## **Brampton**

Moot Hall, Market Place, Brampton,  
Cumbria CA8 1RW  
T: 016977 3433  
E: [tourism@carlisle-city.gov.uk](mailto:tourism@carlisle-city.gov.uk)  
W: [www.discovercarlisle.co.uk](http://www.discovercarlisle.co.uk)

## **Corbridge**

Hill Street, Corbridge, Northumberland  
NE45 5AA  
T: 01434 632 815  
E: [corbridge.tic@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:corbridge.tic@northumberland.gov.uk)  
W: [www.visitnorthumberland.com](http://www.visitnorthumberland.com)

## **Haltwhistle**

Mechanics Institute, Haltwhistle,  
Northumberland NE49 0AX  
T: 01434 322 002  
E: [haltwhistle.tic@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:haltwhistle.tic@northumberland.gov.uk)  
W: [www.visitnorthumberland.com](http://www.visitnorthumberland.com)

## **Hexham**

Wentworth Car Park, Wentworth Place,  
Hexham, Northumberland NE46 1QE  
T: 01434 652 220  
E: [hexham.tic@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:hexham.tic@northumberland.gov.uk)  
W: [www.visitnorthumberland.com](http://www.visitnorthumberland.com)

## **Kirkby Stephen**

Market Street, Kirkby Stephen,  
Cumbria CA17 4QN  
T: 017683 71199  
E: [ks.tic@eden.gov.uk](mailto:ks.tic@eden.gov.uk)  
W: [www.visiteden.co.uk](http://www.visiteden.co.uk)



## **Middleton-in-Teesdale**

10 Market Place, Middleton-in-Teesdale,  
Co. Durham DL12 0QG  
T: 01833 641 001  
E: [tic@middletonplus.myzen.co.uk](mailto:tic@middletonplus.myzen.co.uk)  
W: [www.middletonplus.org.uk](http://www.middletonplus.org.uk)

## **Penrith**

Robinson's School, Middlegate,  
Penrith, Cumbria CA11 7PT  
T: 01768 867 466  
E: [pen.tic@eden.gov.uk](mailto:pen.tic@eden.gov.uk)  
W: [www.visiteden.co.uk](http://www.visiteden.co.uk)

## **Stanhope**

Durham Dales Centre, Stanhope,  
Co. Durham DL13 2FJ  
T: 01388 527 650  
E: [durham.dales.centre@durham.gov.uk](mailto:durham.dales.centre@durham.gov.uk)  
W: [www.durhamdalescentre.co.uk](http://www.durhamdalescentre.co.uk)



# NORTH PENNINES

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



**The North Pennines is one of England's most special places – a peaceful, unspoilt landscape with a rich history and vibrant natural beauty. In recognition of this it is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The area is also a Global Geopark – an accolade endorsed by UNESCO.**

Together with the five waterproof route cards this booklet is the 'Packhorse Trails: Five mountain bike routes in the North Pennines' guide. It includes: further details on the trails; background information on the special qualities of the North Pennines; and GPS waypoints. It also highlights cycle hire and repair businesses and places to eat and drink near the routes.



*On the Hartside Packhorse Trail (Route 5)*

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