



Hadrian's Wall

2-day itinerary

In AD122 the Emperor Hadrian commissioned work on a stone barrier to be erected across northern England, stretching 80 miles from the North Sea to the Solway Firth. Reaching up to 6m in height in parts, Hadrian's Wall was built to keep the northern barbarians out of Roman Britain.

Visitors to the Glasgow Commonwealth Games will receive a far warmer welcome as they head south.

The nearest part of Hadrian's Wall is a 2 hour drive down the A74 and then east on the A689/A69 to **Birdoswald Roman Fort** and a great place to start your Hadrian's Wall Country holiday.

Day 1 Morning:

Arrive mid/late morning at Birdoswald (CA8 7DD).

Birdoswald Roman Fort is the perfect place for a picturesque family day out or as a base if you want to walk or cycle along Hadrian's Wall in Cumbria.

You can explore the extensive remains of the Roman Fort and the longest continuous remaining stretch of this magnificent World Heritage Site can be seen here. Inside, the visitor centre has interesting interactive displays and artefacts telling the story of the 1,000+ soldiers based here, as well as a model of the Wall at its full height.

During school holidays, Roman-themed events take place. Check <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/daysout/properties/birdoswald-roman-fort-hadrians-wall> for details.

If you fancy stretching your legs, head east along the Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail to Willowford Bridge, where you'll see not only a fine stretch of Wall but the remains of two turrets and a bridge which once spanned the River Irthing.

Have lunch at the Birdoswald Visitor Centre tearoom with its delicious homemade cakes. Alternatively, drive 20 minutes west to Banks and onto to Lanercost Priory. Here pop into the **Lanercost Tea Room** (www.lanercosttearoom.co.uk) grab freshly prepared hot and cold meals,

homemade cakes, daily baked scones, artisan coffees and teas, made using local Cumbrian produce, in a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere.

Day 1 Afternoon:

After lunch, you could visit **Lanercost Priory**, next to the Tea Rooms (CA8 2HQ). The beautiful and now tranquil setting of Augustinian Lanercost Priory belies an often troubled history. Standing close to Hadrian's Wall, it suffered frequent attacks during the long Anglo-Scottish wars, once by Robert Bruce in person. The mortally sick King Edward I rested here for five months in 1306-7, shortly before his death on his final campaign. Yet there is still much to see in this best-preserved of Cumbrian monasteries. The east end of the noble 13th century church survives to its full height, housing within its dramatic triple tier of arches some fine monuments and beautifully preserved cloisters (<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/daysout/properties/lanercost-priory>).

If you fancy stretching your legs after lunch, drive up to **Banks East Turret** just 1 mile away and visit this well-reserved turret, Leahill Turret and **Pike Hill Signal Tower**, the latter one of a series of signal towers that pre-dates Hadrian's Wall.

Alternatively if you've brought youngsters with you, you wish to visit **Walby Farm Park** (CA6 4QL www.walbyfarmpark.co.uk). This award-winning attraction is a perfect family day out. If the sun's shining, there outdoors fun like the Maize Maze, trampolines, go-karts, mini-quads, rare breeds and more. If the weather's not so good, indoors you'll find the 'play barn' with mega slides, ball pools and sack slides. Grown ups can relax with a locally-roasted coffee and homemade cake. Or have a go on the slides too, if they dare!

Accommodation ideas:

B&Bs

Lanercost B&B AA 5* (www.lanercostbedandbreakfast.co.uk)

Abbey Bridge VisitEngland 4* (www.abbeybridge.co.uk)

Self-catering

Lanercost Holiday Cottages VisitEngland 4* (www.lanercost.co.uk)

Long Byres at Talkin Tarn VisitEngland 3* (www.longbyres.co.uk)

Hotel

The Crown at Wetheral AA 4* (www.crownhotelwetheral.co.uk)

Evening meals suggestions if needed:

Farlam Hall Hotel nr Brampton for fine dining (www.farlamhall.co.uk)

The Kirkstyle Inn, Slaggyford for great pub food, slightly off the beaten track (www.kirkstyleinn.co.uk)

The Gilsland Spa Hotel, Gilsland (www.gilslandspa.co.uk)

For more suggestions, please go to www.visithadrianswall.co.uk

Day 2 Morning:

Head east along the A69, direction Hexham. At Bardon Mill, turn north signposted Hadrian's Wall. At the junction with the B6318 (or the Military Way), turn right for about 1 mile. On your left is the car park for **Housesteads Roman Fort**. Please note that the car park is operated by Northumberland National Park and is Pay & Display.

Adjacent to the car park is the new National Trust-run Visitor Centre and from here there is a short walk up to the Wall, the Fort and Housesteads museum. The walk is on a grass path and there is a short steep part to get you up to the escarpment. So be prepared. Ideally bring walking gear and be prepared for all weathers. Housesteads is quite unique in that the Fort is owned by National Trust but maintained by English Heritage.

Housesteads is the most iconic of all the Wall sites. The panoramic views from the Fort and the Roman remains are spectacular. Visitors are able to delve into the Fort's story and see a stunning collection of artefacts. A CGI film will fly visitors through time and reconstructs Housesteads before their eyes.

Visit www.english-heritage.org.uk/housesteads for details.

If you have time and the energy, then a walk along Hadrian's Wall and **Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail** is highly recommended. Just less than 2 miles west, is the stunning **Sycamore Gap**, made famous by Kevin Costner in his film Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves. Your walk will follow the Wall as it snakes up and down along the Whin Sill, showing how the Romans cleverly utilised the landscape to help create the empire's barrier. Imagine to the north are the unruly barbarians; to the south the civilised (Roman) world.

Grab some lunch at the Housesteads Visitor Centre or head west on the B6318 to Once Brewed and pop into the Twice Brewed Inn (NE47 7AN www.twicebrewedinn.co.uk) or a little further to the Haltwhistle junction and the Milecastle Inn (NE49 9NN www.milecastle-inn.co.uk).

Day 2 Afternoon:

After lunch, you have a choice, depending on weather and children. If the weather is dry, head to the Once Brewed junction of the B6318, and then turn south, signposted **Vindolanda Roman Fort** (NE47 7JN www.vindolanda.com).

Vindolanda is a stunning excavated fort and civilian settlement, with an extensive museum displaying amazing artefacts found at the site. This includes the Vindolanda Writing Tablets, voted Britain's Top Treasure, which are delicate, wafer-thin slivers of wood covered in Roman writing, found buried in the fort. These postcards from the past give visitors a rare insight into what Roman life on the Wall was like 2,000 years ago. From April through to September, you'll also be able to watch live excavations of the Fort.

If you're dragging the kids with you, head east instead on the B6318, direction Greenhead and turn north for the **Roman Army Museum** (CA8 7JB www.vindolanda.com). Also run by the Vindolanda Trust, RAM is the site of the old Roman Fort Carvoran and perched high up on Walltown Crag, one of the highest sections of the Wall. Today it is home to a dramatic tribute to Roman's military might. Here you'll be able to step into the shoes (or sandals?) of Roman soldiers posted on the Wall, and get a real feel for army life - reconstructions, artefacts and an exclusive and award-winning 3D film *Edge of Empire* will give you and your family a great afternoon out. Grab a cake and coffee before the journey home.

Head back to Glasgow, first west on the A69 and then north on M6/A74.