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Expert guides to Yorkshire



## How to have the ultimate break in Yorkshire, God's own country

An insider guide to breaks in Yorkshire, from wild moors and rolling dales to local breweries and beautiful beaches



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It would be a cheap shot to say [Yorkshire](#) is England's best county simply because it's the largest. The latter is obviously true but what makes it such a cracking place to spend a weekend (preferably longer) is the variety. Take the scenery; not one but two National Parks: the sheep-and-dry-stone-wall-dotted Dales and the wild and horizon-stretching North York Moors. Plus, a swathe of beaches, breezy clifftop walks, thrilling waterfalls (including England's highest single-drop waterfall) and weirdly wonderful rock formations that pop up out of nowhere.

It's not all for the hearty action-seeker though. There are sumptuous stately homes, romantically ruined abbeys, steam railways and world-class art from Salts Mill's collection of David Hockney to the 500-acre Yorkshire Sculpture Park. Market towns still hold markets, there's the occasional slice of posh (Harrogate, for example), and you'd be hard-pushed to find a village without a pub.

But, of course, it's the people that make a place. Direct, maybe, but always big-hearted, keen to crack a joke and proud to share their beautiful county with others.

For further inspiration, see our guides to the best [hotels](#), [pubs](#), [beaches](#), [restaurants](#) and [things to do](#) in Yorkshire. If you're planning a city break, see our guide to the perfect [weekend in York here](#).

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## How to spend your weekend

A weekend in Yorkshire presents a dilemma: it's a huge county with almost too much choice. But the Yorkshire Dales possibly has the edge; each valley has a different character, plus there are well-resourced towns and villages if a wet-weather or shopping fix is required.

Base yourself in Burnsall, in Wharfedale, sitting on a curve of the river and with a choice of the riverside [Red Lion](#) (from £130) or, for valley views, the [Devonshire Fell](#) (from £160). Explore the [Bolton Abbey Estate](#) five miles downriver with its 12th-century church ruins, stepping-stones, paddling and bosky walks to the Strid where the river squeezes through a rocky chasm. Dog-friendly Cavendish Pavilion, with an outside terrace, is a good lunch spot.



Base yourself in Burnsall as a good base for exploring further | CREDIT: Philip Silverman

Afterwards, drive to [Malham Cove](#) in Malhamdale, a spectacular 230-foot (70m) limestone cliff, the result of glacial action. If feeling energetic, extend the walk past Janet's Foss

waterfall, up the rocky Gordale Scar onto Malham Moor's limestone pavement and back to the Cove. Enjoy an early supper at the [Lister Arms](#) overlooking the village green. Find more of the best things to do in our [dedicated guide](#).

The next day, take the scenic drive up Wharfedale, perhaps stopping at Grassington (location for much of Channel 5's All Creatures Great and Small) or for home-baking at [The Old School Room Tea Room](#) in Hebden. Look out for the overhang of Kilnsey Crag where rock-climbers hang like spiders before enjoying views of Buckden Pike where the road climbs over into Wensleydale. Hardraw Force, on the outskirts of [Hawes](#) is England's highest single-drop waterfall while the town, with its [museum](#), is a good spot for presents including the valley's eponymous cheese. Watch it being made before a cheesy blow-out in its cafe.



Bolton Abbey is a great place to spend a day | CREDIT: All Rights Reserved/dapec

On the drive back enjoy a drink at the riverside [George](#) in Hubberholme and an early supper at [The White Lion](#) in nearby Cray. Prefer fine dining? - head back to Bolton Abbey and the [Devonshire Arms](#). Find more of the best restaurants in the area in [our guide](#).

## How to spend a week

After a couple of days in the soft green dales, move east to the wilder expanses of the North York Moors. But take your time. Either detour south to wander the glories of the [Yorkshire Sculpture Park](#), near Wakefield, from monumental Sean Henry to the curves of Henry Moore. Alternatively, dally in Harrogate with its Pump Room Museum, antique shops and indulgent [Betty's café tea rooms](#)



Stop for coffee and cake at Betty's in Harrogate, the flagship café tearoom of the iconic Yorkshire brand

Motor on to Helmsley, on the southern edge of the moors; options include the [Black Swan](#) overlooking the Market Place (from £104) or [The Feversham Arms](#) with its spa (from £169). Stride out on a walk on the moors perhaps out of Rosedale Abbey to Lastingham, or around the amphitheatre of the Hole of Horcum. On the way back, call at the [New Inn](#) at Cropton for a well-deserved pint from its microbrewery. Find more of the best pubs in Yorkshire in [our guide](#). For a less energetic option, take a steam-train ride on the [North Yorkshire Moors Railway](#) from Pickering to Whitby. Hop off at Goathland for a pint in the pocket-sized [Birch Hall](#) Inn at Beck Hole. Finish the perfect day with dinner at Michelin-starred [The Star Inn](#) at Harome, two miles from your hotel. Find more of the best restaurants in the area in [our guide](#).

The following day, potter around the town with its 12th-century [Helmsley Castle](#), Walled Garden (with Vine House Café), independent shops and, just outside, the romantic ruins of [Rievaulx Abbey](#) before driving 30 minutes south to Malton, the self-styled ‘food capital of Yorkshire’ for lunch. You’ll need the energy as you’re now heading to the showstopper [Castle Howard](#) with its Baroque and Palladian flourishes, lavish furnishings and 1000-acre parkland dotted with follies. Find more of the top attractions in Yorkshire in [our guide](#).



Enjoy a big-skies drive over the moors, stopping to admire the vast Hole of Horcum | CREDIT: Sky Filming/skyfilming.com

For the last two days, breathe in some salty air at the coast. Stay either in bright and dog-friendly [Bike & Boot](#) (from £89), overlooking Scarborough’s South Bay, or 10 minutes inland from here at more tranquil [Ox Pasture Hall](#) (from £150). After a brisk walk up to [Scarborough Castle](#), take your pick of the beaches: sandcastles and donkey rides at South Bay, watching the surfers – or have a go with [Scarborough Surf School](#) – at Cayton Bay, family games at Filey or simple, amusement-free Hunmanby Gap, with its excellent Beach Cafe. Alternatively, head north to the beautiful curve of Runswick Bay and take the cliff-top path to Staithes which tumbles prettily down a ravine to its harbour, and tea at [Dotty’s tea room](#). Find more of the best beaches in Yorkshire in [our guide](#).

Spend the last day in Whitby with its clifftop medieval [abbey](#), [Captain Cook Memorial Museum](#) (the 18th-century explorer served his apprenticeship here), ‘cabinet of curiosities’

[Whitby Museum](#) (from gigantic fossil creatures and Victorian medical equipment to Meccano toys and ships in light bulbs ) and Goth shops (Bram Stoker's 'Dracula' was set in the town). After a walk along the sands enjoy a slap-up fish supper at the [Magpie Café](#) save room for their home-made crumble.

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## Insider tips

### Walks

If you fancy a walk in the Yorkshire Dales but aren't confident about map-reading, join one of the National Park's free or modestly priced (around £5) [guided walks](#). They often have a theme, such as lead-mining or bird-watching ([Yorkshire Dales guided walks](#)). For the North York Moors, you can [download tried-and-tested walks](#), from two to eight miles, with clear and helpful directions.

### Parking

Seaside and coastal car parks between Staithes and Filey, and which are operated by Scarborough Borough Council, have transferable parking tickets. If you plan on visiting two or more seaside towns or beaches within the same day, it works out cheaper to buy a six-hour or 24-hour ticket than, say, several one- or two-hour tickets. And no racing back to the car necessary.

### Attractions

Tucked near the bottom of Whitby's famous 199 steps is [Fortune's Kippers](#), a tiny shoe-box of a shop which has been selling kippers (smoked next door using traditional methods) since 1872. Ask for them to be vacuum-packed to take away but don't dally; they shut when sold out so best to arrive by midday.

### Hotel hack

If you're planning a day's walking, ask if your accommodation offers a packed lunch. This not only saves you time nipping out to the shops in the morning but is often better-value, and will be freshly made. Most places usually like advance warning the night before, so don't forget to place your order.

### Did you know?

The famous [Bettys](#) café tea-rooms (six branches throughout the county) were the result of a fortuitous mistake. The founder, a Swiss confectioner, Franz Belmond, arrived in London in 1907 seeking a better life but discovered at the station that he'd lost his destination address and ended up on a train to Bradford. Moving to Harrogate, he married his landlady's daughter and, with his in-laws' help, opened the first Bettys in 1919.

## Outdoor safety

Yorkshire weather can change quickly and, while the fells and moors are not necessarily high, you can find yourself a long way from roads or houses. Be sensible: if planning a walk, wear decent boots, and always have good waterproofs. If it's a lengthy or remote walk, take a detailed OS map or similar, and it's a good idea to let someone know your route. Don't rely on your phone's map to guide you, and don't rely on your phone to summon help; phone reception can be very poor in parts of the national parks.

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## When to go

Yorkshire's weather can be unpredictable though, generally, it's not as wet as its friendly foe on the other side of the Pennines. Summer can be glorious whether doing seaside-y things on the coast, tramping over the North York Moors – at their finest with heather in July and August – or enjoying the soft greenness of the Dales. But be aware, summer can mean country roads – especially in the Dales – are slow-moving and parking spaces can be at a premium.

Spring and autumn, outside school holidays, are good times for more settled weather and quieter surroundings. But don't dismiss winter when blustery or snowy walks, if well wrapped-up, bring a glow to the cheeks and the prospect of a warming pint in a cheery, fire-warmed pub.

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## Where to stay

### Best for relaxing

For sybaritic pleasure, it's hard to beat the rooftop spa at [Rudding Park](#) (from £342 db&b) while for more intimate surrounds, and heated outdoor pool, try [The Feversham Arms](#) in Helmsley (from £169).

[Find more of the best spa hotels in Yorkshire in our guide.](#)



The Feversham Arms is one of the region's best spa hotels

### Best for families

Children will be entertained with bike rides, fishing, cookery lessons, birds of prey, and Woodland School (spa, golf and cookery, amongst others, for grown-ups) at [Swinton Park](#) from £285, room only). Or try the [White Swan Inn](#) in Pickering with its board games, early suppers and plum spot close to the North Yorkshire Moors Railway (from £170).

[Find more of the best family-friendly hotels in Yorkshire in our guide.](#)

### Best for budget-friendly breaks

Bright and funky, dog- and cyclist-friendly, [Bike & Boot](#) has an enviable position overlooking Scarborough's South Bay (from £89 room-only). Equally well-placed is Harrogate's [White Hart Hotel](#), a Georgian coaching inn with bold-coloured interiors, and between Valley Gardens and the fashionable Montpellier Quarter (from £113).

[Find more of the best budget hotels in Yorkshire in our guide.](#)



Yorkshire has plenty of budget-friendly options like the Bike & Boot | CREDIT: adrian ray

## What to bring home

Using traditional methods of glass-blowing, and taking inspiration for colours and patterns from the surrounding North York Moors, Stephen Gillies and Kate Jones produce covetable pieces of contemporary glassware at [Gillies Jones](#) in Rosedale Abbey, most notably bowls, in both opaque and translucent colours.

Find a real bit of Yorkshire at [Swaledale Woollens](#) in Muker. In sweaters, socks, hats, gloves and more. Whether you choose hand-knitted or machine-knitted, it all comes from the wool of local Swaledale and Wensleydale sheep. Or buy a ball of wool and get knitting.



Stephen Gillies and Kate Jones produce covetable pieces of contemporary glassware at Gillies Jones

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## Essential information

### Tourist information

There are tourist offices in many of the main towns and cities such as Scarborough, Whitby, Harrogate and Leeds, plus National Park Visitor Centres or tourist information centres in several villages, such as Hawes, Grassington and Sutton Bank. You can also find plenty of information on the tourist board's website, [yorkshire.com](http://yorkshire.com). Or try those of the two National Parks: [northyorkmoors.org.uk](http://northyorkmoors.org.uk) and [yorkshiredales.org.uk](http://yorkshiredales.org.uk).

### Getting there

To drive from London takes four hours up the M1 or A1. The [East Coast](#) mainline serves Doncaster, Wakefield, Leeds, York and Northallerton and there are also direct services to the capital to Harrogate, Sheffield, Bradford and Halifax.

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## About our expert

*Helen Pickles is Telegraph Travel's Yorkshire expert. Born within singing distance of Ilkley Moor and brought up on Dales' walks, the proper way to eat Yorkshire pudding (as a separate course) and (extremely rare) treats at Bettys, she just knows Yorkshire is the best place on earth.*

## Related Topics

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