



Ten best walks
to do in Sunderland



Welcome

Looking for a great walk in and around Sunderland that takes in fabulous views, visitor attractions, wildlife and culture?

With a beautiful coastline, historic parks and glorious open countryside, not to forget a 10 mile stretch of the River Wear look no more because when it comes to walking opportunities, Sunderland has it all.

Here are ten of the best and most popular walks with something for all age groups and levels of ability.

Sunderland is a doddle to get to by car or public transport from across the UK.

So check out our recommendations and make plans for your next walk in Sunderland.

You can keep right up to date with the latest news, offers and events in Sunderland by following us on social media or checking out our website.

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www.seeitdoitsunderland.co.uk



Distance: 2 miles, circular route

Ability level: A short walk but with several short steep climbs, best suited for those with a moderate level of fitness. Not suitable for wheelchair users or pushchairs.

Starting point:
Ferryboat Lane, Sunderland
SR5 3HW

Parking and nearby facilities:
Limited free parking on
Ferryboat Lane SR5 3HW

Walk 1

High Wood

A stunning short walk taking in beautiful oak woodland, riverside vistas and what is quite possibly the best view in Sunderland!

Although only a short distance from the A19, this walk has a real off the beaten track feel to it, offering a fantastic way to escape the hustle and bustle of the modern world and getting that little bit closer to nature.

High wood is a beautiful ancient woodland that rests on the north bank of a large loop in the River Wear. Woodland of this type isn't very common in the UK, so we are lucky here in Sunderland to have this right on our doorstep. Because of its age, High Wood is an extremely rich and complex habitat that is home to a whole host of wildlife – it's well worth bringing your camera or a pair of binoculars. At any point you could see roe deer and fox in the woods or otters and kingfisher along the river. Walking here at any time of the year is a real treat but we would recommend late spring and early summer when parts of the wood are carpeted in blue bells and the place is alive with birdsong.

Just when you thought the walk couldn't get any better, the return leg of the journey takes you out of the woods, through fields and farmland. Here you will get the chance to see what we think is one of the best views in Sunderland – looking across glorious open countryside to the spectacular Penshaw Monument.

There are some short, steep climbs in High Wood so if you would like to refresh and recharge following your walk, you will be pleased to know that a very welcoming pub awaits you at the end of the route.



Distance: 2 miles
(3 miles if you include
Roker Pier)

Ability level: All abilities. Fully accessible this walk can be enjoyed by all.

Start and finish point:
Bungalow Café, Pier View, Roker,
Sunderland SR6 0PR

Parking and nearby facilities:
Pier View, Roker, Sunderland
SR6 0PR and Marine Walk
SR6 0PL

Walk 2

Roker to Seaburn

A gentle walk from Roker to Seaburn and back again, set against the backdrop of the fabulous North Sea coast. This walk offers big skies, grand views, historic buildings and monuments and the chance to tuck into some of the best fish and chips in the region.

Sunderland is a city by the sea. Along with the River Wear, it is the cities defining natural feature and this walk really does showcase the best of Sunderland's glorious coastline. Walking here you are virtually guaranteed fantastic coastal views, not least of all the sweeping sands of Whitburn Bay, a place well visited and admired by the artist and painter L.S Lowry in the 1960's. Looking south on a clear day you can see over forty miles down the coast to Whitby and the North York Moors.

There's history too on this walk. Look out for Bede's cross, built in 1904 to commemorate local monk and scholar – the Venerable Bede, the man who wrote the first ever history of the English people and who helped calculate the date for Easter.

Weather depending, why not get up close and personal with the recently restored, iconic Roker pier and lighthouse? This sentinel of the sea has stood watch over the mouth of the river since 1903, a triumph of Victorian Sunderland's hard graft and innovation. Tours of the tunnel and lighthouse can be pre booked at www.rokerpier.co.uk however they are subject to weather conditions on the day.



Distance: 2.5 miles

Ability level: All abilities

Starting point:
Sunderland Museum and Winter
Gardens, Burdon Road,
Sunderland SR1 1PP

Finishing point:
Marine Walk, Roker

Parking and nearby facilities:
City Centre parking

Walk 3

City centre to Roker Marine Walk

Another great walk along the River Wear, this fascinating route takes you from the award-winning Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens in the city centre down towards the beautiful North Sea coast. This walk is accessibility friendly and is packed with culture and history both ancient and modern.

The modern city of Sunderland is founded upon the ancient parishes of Monkwearmouth and Bishopwearmouth. These two parishes, on opposite sides of the river, were joined together for the very first time in 1796 by the building of the first Wearmouth Bridge – a key moment in the history of Sunderland.

Our current bridge dates from 1927 and this walk will give you the perfect chance for a close-up inspection. The view from the middle is tremendous – whilst there why not take a quick selfie with the city's coat of arms? Nil Desperandum!

Beyond the bridge the walk becomes more tranquil as you move away from the buzz of the city centre and down along St Peter's riverside. Here you will pass by modern university buildings, the National Glass Centre and the sites of Sunderland's ship building heyday, commemorated now by a fantastic sculpture trail which adds something that little bit different to your journey down to the sea.

The 7th century St Peter's Church is also a must visit. Pop in to see one of the country's most historic sites, once one of the greatest centres of learning in the northern world and home to the world-famous monk and scholar, the Venerable Bede.



Distance: 0.5 miles

Ability level: A short walk with a tough ascent of Penshaw Hill. Not suitable for wheelchair users or pushchairs.

Start and finish point:
Chester Road, Sunderland
DH4 7NJ

Parking and nearby facilities:
Limited free parking at the foot of the Monument or in nearby Herrington Country Park.

Walk 4

Penshaw Monument

Built in the 1840's in honour of the Earl of Durham, Penshaw Monument is perhaps Sunderland's most iconic landmark and a "must see" for anyone visiting or living in the city. Based on the Temple of Hephaestus in Athens, for many residents the monument is quite simply a symbol of home.

This is a very short walk but don't be fooled! A hike up to the Monument is guaranteed to get the legs burning and the heart beating that little bit faster but the end result is well and truly worth it.

At 136m high, this is one of Sunderland's highest points and as you might expect, the views are superb. Durham Cathedral, the Cheviot Hills, Pontop Pike, they are all visible from here.

The site is managed by the National Trust and during the summer months, for a small fee, visitors can climb up a very steep set of steps within one of the columns to the top of the Monument itself. If you thought the views were good from the bottom, just wait until you get to the top! So why not bring a flask and snack, stay a while and enjoy the view.



Distance: 7 miles

Ability level: This is a challenging route requiring a good level of fitness. Not suitable for wheelchair users or pushchairs.

Start and finish point:
Cox Green SR4 9JS

Parking and any nearby facilities:
Cox Green SR4 9JS

Walk 5

Cox Green River Walk

The heavily wooded, picturesque setting of Cox Green belies its industrial past. In the 19th century this area was a hive of activity all linked to the coal trade and the local ship building industry. These industries have long since gone but nature has returned and this walk offers an excellent chance to explore the lush green riverside around Cox Green and Fatfield before taking in the lovely open countryside near Offerton.

It is a quiet, peaceful area, far removed from the hustle and bustle of Sunderland's busy city centre, where the river meanders slowly through the landscape down towards the North Sea. Full of wildlife, keep your eyes peeled for otters on the river, while sparrowhawks and buzzards swoop above the fields and along the hedgerows.

Perhaps the most surprising discovery along this walk is the Victoria Viaduct. Hidden amongst the woodland, this impressive stone structure is one of nine bridges that cross the river in Sunderland. Built to carry rail traffic over the Wear, it was the main rail line from the North East to London until 1872. Named after Queen Victoria, the final stone of this bridge was laid on her Coronation Day, 28 June 1838. Don't delay, get down to the river and see this Victorian marvel for yourself.



Distance: 5 miles

Ability level: A moderate level of fitness required. Not suitable for wheelchair users or pushchairs.

Start and finish point:
Hendon beach, Promenade,
Sunderland SR2 8QR

Parking and any nearby facilities:
Hendon beach, Promenade,
Sunderland SR2 8QR

Walk 6

Hendon Beach to Ryhope Dene

This is a 'there and back' walk along Sunderland's most dramatic stretch of coastline. With bracing sea air, crashing waves and outstanding views looking south and out to sea, what more could you ask for?

The rugged coastline forms part of the Durham Heritage Coast, which is itself part of the England Coast Path, a national trail that encompasses the whole of England. In 2017 it was voted one of the best places to walk in the UK by thousands of walkers in a survey conducted by The Ramblers and the Ordnance Survey - and who are we to disagree!

An unusual feature of this coastline is its geology. We all know that the North East of England sits on a rich bed of coal, it's played a crucial role in the history of the region but let's not forget the magnesian limestone rock that lies on top of that coal. It was formed over 200 million years ago and has resulted in great swathes of rare coastal grassland which are home to a unique mix of plants and insects, so get your walking shoes on and see this special place for yourself.

Top tip, this is an outstanding place to watch the sun rise over the sea, especially during the months of December and January – just remember to wrap up well!



Distance: 1.8 miles

Ability level: All abilities. Fully accessible, this walk can be enjoyed by all.

Start and finish point:
Rainton Meadows DH4 6PU

Nearby facilities:
Visitor centre with café. Free parking on site

Walk 7

Rainton Meadows

In less than a lifetime Rainton Meadows has been transformed from the site of an industrial coal mine into one of the most significant areas for wildlife in Sunderland.

Owned and managed by the Durham Wildlife Trust, the reserve comprises a rich mosaic of wetlands and lakes, grasslands and woodlands and can be explored easily along an excellent network of accessible pathways. In the winter the reserve is home to a small herd of Exmoor ponies and rare breed cattle. These tough and hardy beasts act as nature's lawnmowers, grazing the land and helping to maintain the reserve's beautiful wildflower meadows.

Bursting with wildlife, you might like to bring your binoculars and keep a look out for the reserve's dynamic duo, the stoat and the weasel which are regularly seen along the tracks and footpaths. There's a fully accessible bird feeding station too, which offers a great opportunity to witness a whole host of birdlife including the stunningly brilliant bullfinch.

Don't forget there's also a welcoming visitor centre and café on site to purchase tasty treats to replenish you after a day's exploring.



Distance: 1 mile

Ability level: All abilities. Fully accessible this walk can be enjoyed by all.

Start and finish point:
Barnes Park Road, Sunderland
SR4 7QA

Nearby facilities: Visitor centre with café, children's play area. Free parking on site

Walk 8

Barnes Park

Sunderland was once little more than a scattering of sparsely populated rural settlements and fishing hamlets. Thanks to the booming coal trade the town grew, the population exploded and by the 19th century Sunderland had emerged as an industrial powerhouse.

It was during this time that many of the city's parks were created. Industry had meant that many people were living in cramped and polluted living conditions, but the local authorities responded with gusto, creating new parks to help beautify and civilise Sunderland's urban landscape – and what a good job they did too!

This much-loved park has been enjoyed by the people of Sunderland as a recreational space since 1909. A leafy green oasis that offers a fully accessible network of paths, Barnes Park is a great place to visit and if you are a resident of Sunderland it's right on your doorstep.

Perhaps the parks' most quirky feature is a 17th century cannon, used during the English Civil War. See if you can find out where it is!

The park caters well for visitors with excellent parking, a beautiful sensory garden, children's play area and a very popular and busy café to serve refreshments.



Distance: 1 mile

Ability level: All abilities, however not suitable for wheelchair users or pushchairs.

Start and finish point:
Leechmeere Road, Sunderland
SR2 9TT

Nearby facilities:
Asda shopping centre,
Leechmere Road, Sunderland
SR2 9TT

Walk 9

Tunstall Hills

“Come, let’s away to Tunstall Hill, in twenty minutes we’ll be there, and on top we’ll get our fill, of the pure bracing country air.” So said William Brockie the editor of local newspaper, The Sunderland Times, back in the 19th century.

We agree with him! This is another one of Sunderland’s highest points, over 100m above sea level and offering stunning panoramic views over the whole city. From here just about every local landmark is visible, see how many you can make out.

The hills themselves are the remains of a huge barrier reef that once existed here millions of years ago. Once again formed of that ever present magnesian limestone, they have been designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest and are home to a unique mixture of flowers and grasses. Visit from late May to July to see a stunning display of orchids.

Over the years the hills have been used as farmland and not surprisingly have been home to numerous limestone quarries and kilns. From the 17th century the lime industry was a key part of Sunderland’s economy. Lime was an extremely useful and versatile substance being used in agriculture to improve soil quality and used in the construction of buildings, walls and plastering.



Distance: 2.2 miles

Ability level: A short easy walk.
Not suitable for wheelchair users
or pushchairs.

Start and finish point:
South Hylton, Sunderland
SR4 0NG

Nearby facilities:
Local shops available at South
Hylton, Sunderland SR4 0NG

Walk 10

South Hylton to Claxheugh Rock

It's no coincidence that the River Wear features on many of our walks. It is after all, along with the coast, Sunderland's most dominant natural feature, inextricably linked to the history and identity of the city.

This is a short linear route, walking back through history past the sites of former gas works, shipyards and paper mills, now long since gone and hardly visible beneath the riverside vegetation.

The walk heads east towards the often forgotten Claxheugh Rock, an impressive rocky outcrop that was formed over 200 million years ago when dinosaurs roamed the earth and another super example of Sunderland's magnesian limestone geology. Top tip - the footpath that runs up the eastern side of Claxheugh gives a fantastic view of Sunderland's newest landmark bridge; the Northern Spire.

Keep an eye on the river for what must be one of Sunderland's most unusual features – the Cretehawser. For most people a concrete boat just does not make any sense! But here in Sunderland we have a strong tradition of creative thinking and a “can do” attitude and just after the First World War, due to a steel shortage, several concrete tugs were built on the Wear. The Cretehawser is the only one that remains. After it was damaged during an air raid in the Second World War it was towed upriver for safety and has been there ever since, a permanently unusual feature of this part of the city.



Getting out into the great outdoors for a brisk walk is a super way to get the heart pumping and lift the spirits! But you don't have to travel too far to get away from it all.

We're very fortunate here in Sunderland as we have access to some fantastic green spaces and countryside, all right on our doorstep.

We hope that by now you recognise Sunderland as a great place for walking.

All the routes featured in this article can be downloaded onto your mobile device free of charge courtesy of the Viewranger walking app
<https://www.viewranger.com/en-gb>

Simply download the app to your mobile and under the people search, look for 'Active Sunderland'. Here you will get access to dozens of walking routes in Sunderland, completely free of charge.

From a 1 mile stroll along the seafront to a more intense 12 mile hike along the River Wear, there truly is something for everyone.

Getting to Sunderland

A hassle-free journey to our city by the sea.

By car

Sunderland is just off the A19 main trunk road, follow signs for Sunderland. The city centre is also only a short drive from the A1M. From the south use Junction 62 and the A690. From the north use junction 65 and the A1231.

There's lots of low-cost parking available right throughout the city centre.

By train

Direct train services to Sunderland from London, the East Midlands, York and North Yorkshire are operated by Grand Central and LNER. Direct trains also operate from Carlisle and Teesside to Sunderland.

From the North West, Scotland and other parts of Britain, change at Newcastle for a short Northern Rail or Tyne and Wear Metro transfer to Sunderland.

By bus

National Express bus services from Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool, Chester, North Wales and London serve Sunderland. All services call at Park Lane interchange in the heart of Sunderland city centre for easy onward connections to local bus services and the Tyne and Wear Metro.



