

# 10 best green spaces in Sunderland



**City of  
Sunderland**

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# Did you know that Sunderland has 42 formal parks and country parks, totalling 820 hectares. A green space can be land that has grass, trees or shrubs.

This can include parks, community gardens, cemeteries, schools, nature trails and playgrounds. Do you have somewhere you go to get away, play sports, walk your dog, horse-ride? Why not tell everyone about it!

You can keep 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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**City of Sunderland** **Experiences**



Beaches



Landmarks



Lighthouse



Nature



Panoramic



Wildlife



# Rainton Meadows Nature Reserve

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.





See map  
on page 27

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. It is a fantastic green space at any time of the year.

Be it a summer stroll looking for tadpoles in the shallow edges of the pond waters, or winter sledging on the gentle slopes, the reserve is always a great place to visit for all the family.

A visit to the café is a must for the grown-ups while the little ones can burn off excess energy at the adventure play area.



**Where:**

Rainton Meadows nature reserve can be found at Rainton Meadows DH4 6PU



**Parking and nearby facilities:**

Visitor centre with café.  
Free parking on site.



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Nature



Panoramic



Wildlife

# Hetton Lyons Country Park

Situated on the southeast edge of Sunderland, this country park was once a colliery, right at the heart of the Durham coalfields.

The colliery closed in 1950 and over time a park has been established that offers excellent recreational opportunities. At over 100 acres, the park boasts a sporting lake, fishing lakes, football pitches and is also part of the national cycling network.

The park has an outstanding reputation for cycling and in 2018 it hosted the British Cycling National Cyclo-Cross Championships. Away from the sport and activity, the park is a valuable greenspace and wildlife habitat.

Wetland birds include coot, moorhen, tufted duck, heron and reed bunting. The extensive public footpath of the area is a great way to explore Hetton Lyons Country Park.

Paths take in the lovely countryside around Great Eppleton and for those who want to stretch their legs, paths lead out towards Seaton and the Seaham coast.

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.



**Where:**

Houghton le Spring DH5 0RH



**Parking and nearby facilities:**

Parking onsite



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Landmarks



Nature



Panoramic



Wildlife

# Cox Green Riverside

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 area now 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.



**Where:**

Cox Green SR4 9JS



**Parking and nearby facilities:**

Cox Green SR4 9JS



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Nature



Panoramic



Wildlife

# High Wood

A beautiful oak woodland with riverside vistas and what is quite possibly the best view in Sunderland!

Although only a short distance from the A19, High Wood 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 get 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 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 so that you can take it all in.

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 this area couldn't get any better, a short stroll 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.



**Where:**

SR2 9QQ



**Parking and nearby facilities:**

Shipwrights Hotel and  
Riverside Pub Wood SR2 9QQ



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# The Secret Garden at Doxford Park

The Secret Garden is a hidden gem within Doxford Park that is perfect for a stroll and to take a step back into history.

The original Silksworth House was built in 1775–1780 by William Johnson. In 1902, Charles David Doxford took over the hall and estate which included the only walled garden in Sunderland, which is still standing today.

Doxford Hall's present name was bestowed on it by Sunderland City Council after the building and estate was bequeathed to them in 1968. This was in honour of the great contribution that the Doxford Shipping Company gave to the shipbuilding empire of Wearside.

The gardens were subsequently renamed Doxford Park. A crowdfund campaign by Friends of Doxford Park to renovate the Doxford Walled Garden was launched in 2020 and encompassed a masterplan for the park, with features including a pond, orchard, wildflower meadow and woodland trail.

This breath of new life that has been given to Doxford Park is now enjoyed by schools and a variety of groups for conservation projects. You can certainly see the love, care and attention that has gone into this project and it is somewhere that you will want to take yourself for a wander time and time again.



**Where:**

SR2, SR3



**Parking and nearby facilities:**

SR2, SR3



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# Town Moor

First established as a public common in 1718, alongside the creation of the Holy Trinity Church and the new parish of Sunderland.





See map  
on page 27

This historic space has served a variety of purposes throughout its history.

These have included industrial activities such as limestone and clay quarrying and ropemaking, as well as questionable sporting activities such as bull, badger and bear baiting (which were commonplace, popular activities in less enlightened times).

The Sunderland Barracks were built on the edge of the Town Moor in the late 18th century. The space is now a great place for walking, exploring with the dog, and having fun with the family.



**Where:**

Sunderland SR1 2JH

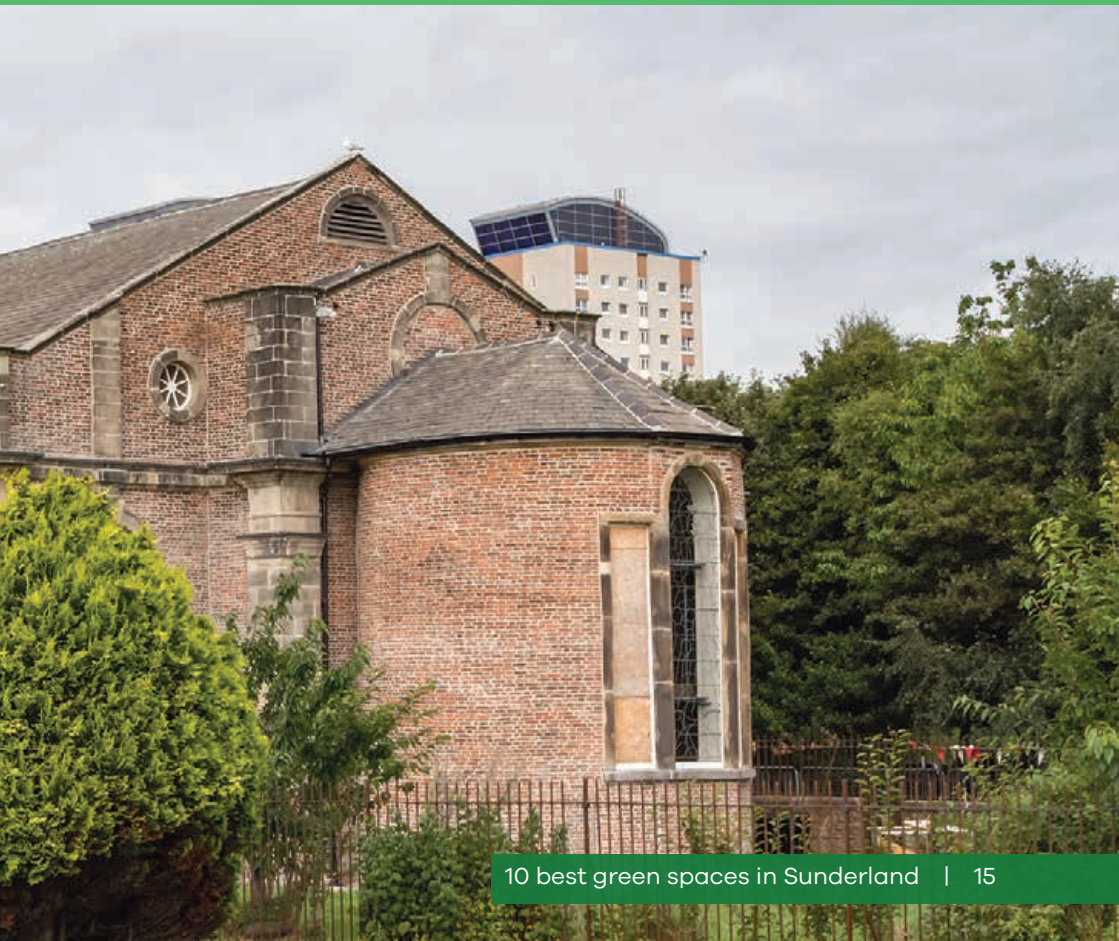


**Parking and nearby facilities:**

Sunderland SR1 2JH



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Nature



Panoramic



Wildlife

# Backhouse Park

The park lies just outside the city centre, tucked away close to the leafy Victorian suburb of Ashbrooke - and it's a real beauty!

Backhouse Park takes its name from its former owners, the Backhouse family, a Quaker banking family who lived at Ashburne House, which dominates the eastern edge of the park.

After the First World War, the Backhouse family left the park to the town and it opened to the public in 1923. It's a great place for a leisurely stroll along the Hendon Burn, or just an escape from the bustling city centre. If you have a young family there is also an excellent play area to keep the kids busy.

The Park is great to visit at any time of year but we recommend the Autumn, when the magnificent beech trees will put on a dazzling display of reds and golds.

Keep an eye out for the resident grey squirrels and believe it or not a small colony of parakeets!



**Where:**

Ryhope Rd, Sunderland SR2 2EF



**Parking and nearby facilities:**

Ryhope Rd, Sunderland SR2 2EF



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Landmarks



Nature



Panoramic



Wildlife

# Roker Park

Thanks to its close proximity to the sea, this is one of the city's most popular parks and a great place to visit for a family day out.

There's an excellent children's play area, a model railway and a small boating lake - not to mention basketball and tennis courts.

Marine walk with all its eateries is only a very short walk away too. The northern end of the park is dissected by Roker Ravine.

In the 17th and 18th centuries the ravine was notorious as a site frequented by smugglers. One of the caves in the ravine was home to 'Spottee', an 18th century sailor whose ship was wrecked off the North Sea coast.

Legend has it that a tunnel leads from the cave up to St Peter's church and even to Hylton castle.

Despite being surrounded by housing the park is home to all kinds of wildlife. Keep an eye open for the park's resident fox, greater spotted woodpecker and sparrowhawk.



**Where:**

Roker Park Rd, Roker, Sunderland SR6 9NB



**Parking and nearby facilities:**

Roker Park Rd, Roker, Sunderland SR6 9NB



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Landmarks



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# Penshaw Monument and Herrington Country Park

The Greek style temple dominates the skyline, but it wasn't built as an attraction or a means of enjoying those amazing vistas. It's actually a monument to one of the most popular men Sunderland has ever known, the first Earl of Durham, John George Lambton.

The 70ft high Penshaw Monument was built as a memorial to him in 1844 after over £6,000 was raised by local people. It's modelled on the Greek temple of Hephaestus in Athens. During weekends and Bank Holidays from Easter to the end of September you can get an even more spectacular view by climbing to the top as part of a National Trust tour.

Just across the road from Penshaw Monument is Herrington Country Park. Once the site of a Lambton colliery, today it is a peaceful green oasis. It's a great place for family bike rides or strolls past the lake loved by swans and ducks. There's a play park and café too all under the watchful gaze of Penshaw Monument of course!

If you're feeling more adventurous, it's not too far to riverside strolls beside the Wear at Fatfield, famed home of the legendary Lambton Worm. In folklore the worm was a 'horrible beast' which terrorised the local people and the Lambton Family until finally defeated by John Lambton.



## Where:

Penshaw Monument and Herrington Country Park are just off the A183, a couple of minutes from the A19, DH4 7EL.



Go North East bus numbers 2 and 78 call at the foot of Penshaw Monument.



**Parking and nearby facilities:**  
Free parking

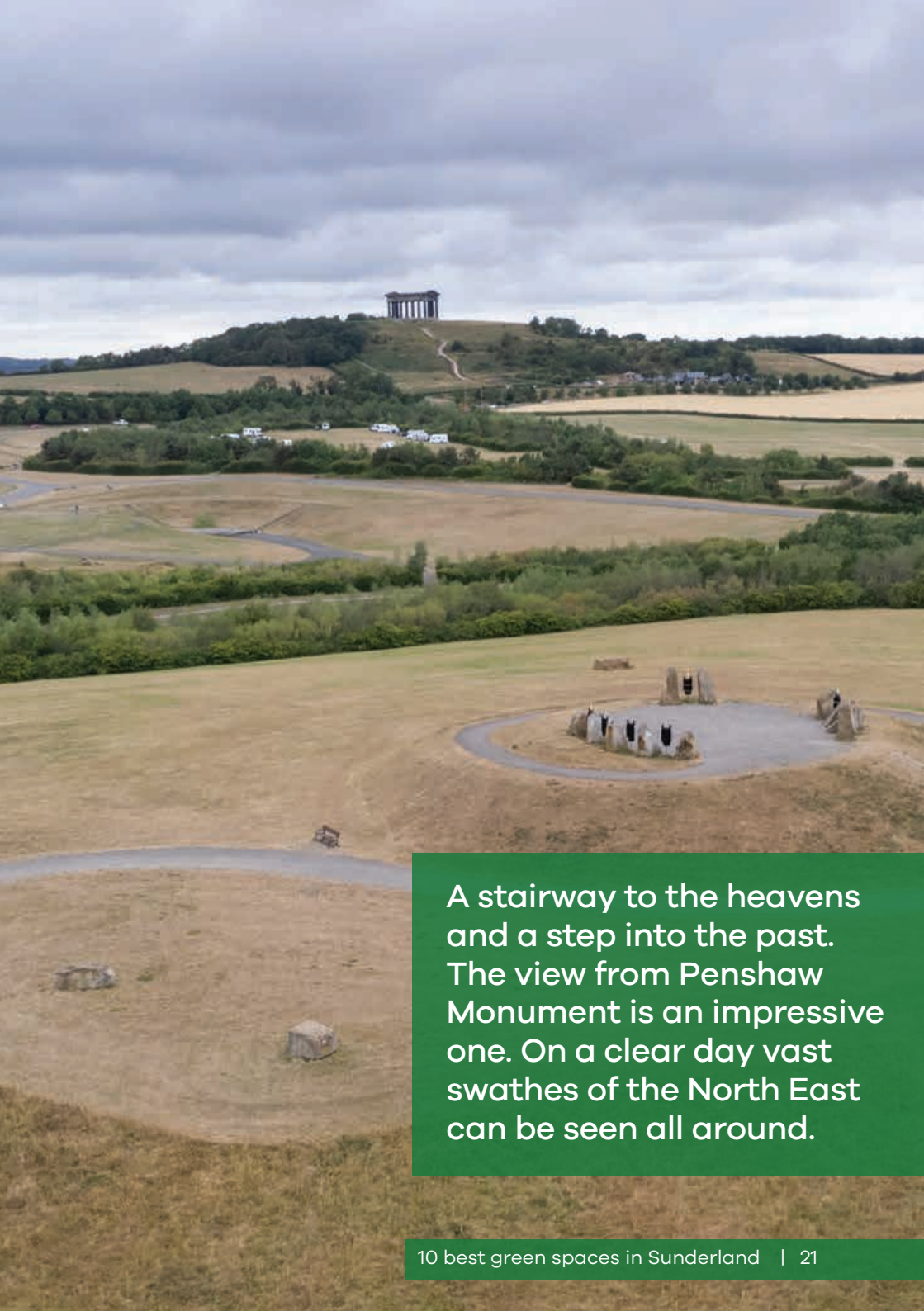


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A stairway to the heavens and a step into the past. The view from Penshaw Monument is an impressive one. On a clear day vast swathes of the North East can be seen all around.



Landmarks



Beaches



Lighthouse

# England Coast Path

Sunderland is home to some of the most dramatic coastline in the country. 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.



**Where:**

Seaburn and Roker, Sunderland  
SR6 0PR



**Parking and nearby facilities:**

Seaburn and Roker, Sunderland  
SR6 0PR



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# 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, right on our doorstep.





# Getting to Sunderland

A hassle free journey to our city by the sea.



## 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

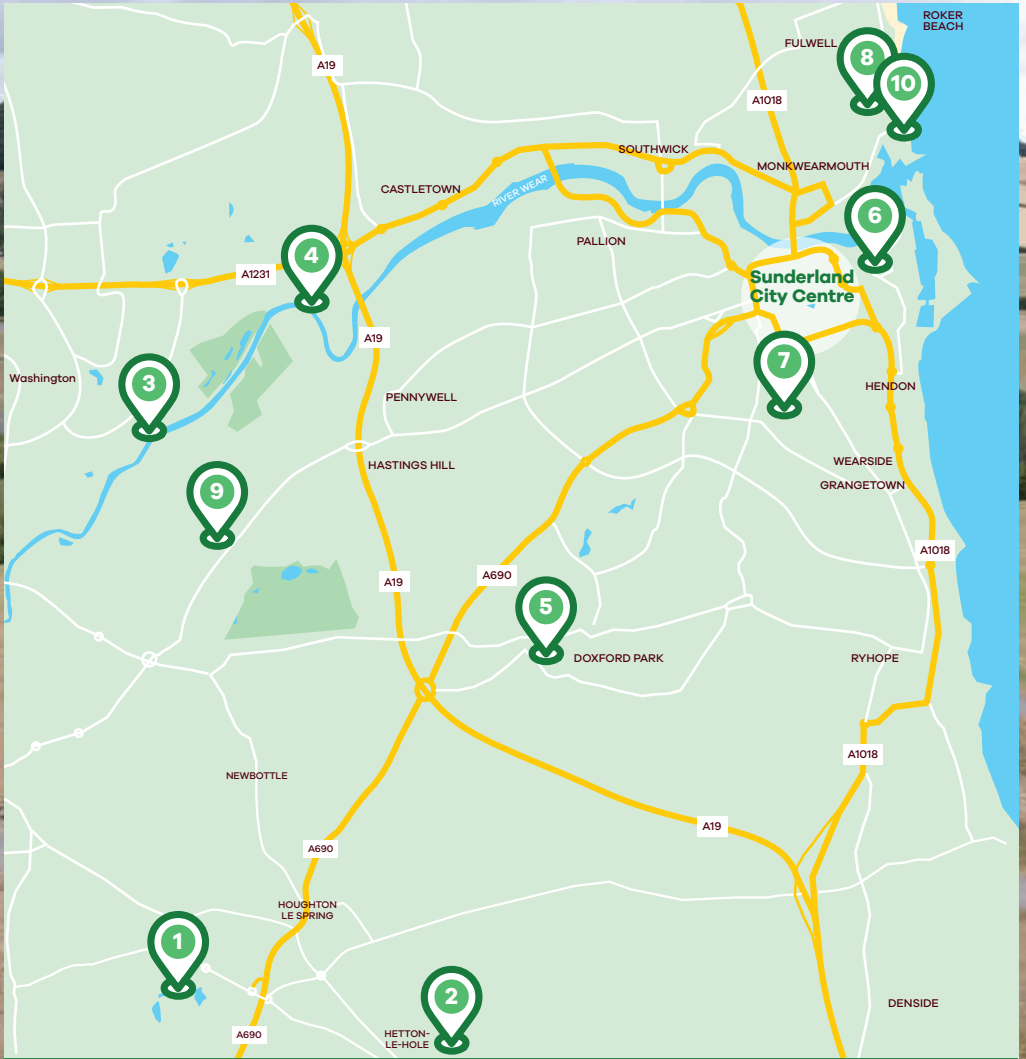
National Express bus services from Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool, Chester, North Wales and London serve Sunderland. All services call at Park Lane interchange in the heart of Sunderland city centre for easy onward connections to local bus services and the Tyne and Wear Metro.



## 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.



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