



Hiking The James Herriot Way

Monday, August 4, 2008

Through

Saturday, August 9, 2008



A Special Note From John

This is a very special journey for me and I look forward to showing you the part of England where I grew up. The Yorkshire Dales are not as famous as the Lake District, but in my (admittedly biased) opinion they are just as lovely - and much less visited.



However, before you sign on, I would politely ask you to make sure it is the right trip for you – because for me, this is not so much an official Fresh Tracks trip as a labor of love.

Frankly I want to travel with a few people (12 max) who I like, and who are happy to travel in my informal and relaxed style. I don't intend to tell you what to do or hold your hand too much.



My dream is that we will really enjoy each other's company and -- who knows -- if we like traveling together, we may do other adventures as a group for many years to come!

Cheers,

John Parker
CEO, Fresh Tracks Travel
1-800-667-4744

Day-By-Day Itinerary

(Please note – you would ideally arrive in London at least the day before the first day but it might be possible to get a flight that arrives in the early morning if you are willing to cut it fine. Ask us if you need accommodation in London or extra arrangements in England.)

Day 1 – (Monday) – London To Yorkshire

Whether you have spent a few days exploring the sights of London or are just off the plane and anxious to get to the countryside, meet your guide and fellow adventurers at King's Cross Station.

From King's Cross, enjoy scenic views as you travel by train north to Northallerton (about 4 hours). Here, a transfer awaits to take us to our first B&B in the pretty village of Aysgarth.

Aysgarth Falls are quite famous and there is also an eccentric Rock Garden here. After settling in we may take a short walk before dinner, to soak up the atmosphere and enjoy the peace and quiet after London. (Dinner included)

Day 2 – Walking - Aysgarth to Hawes (about 6 hours hiking)

Dust off your boots, ready your camera, and prepare to discover this beautiful landscape on your first full day of hiking. Today we walk up Wensleydale, one of the most famous 'Dales' or valleys – following ancient footpaths along the River Ure or through fields enclosed by stone walls.

Along the way we may stop for lunch in the pub that was actually the 'local' of James Herriot in the television series All Creatures Great and Small. Pubs are great places for wholesome meals – and this one has a bench outside where we can sit in the sun.

By late-afternoon we will be in Hawes, a pleasant market town and the place where they make Wensleydale cheese – the cheese supposedly beloved by the cartoon characters Wallace and Gromit (and others)! (Breakfast included)

Day 3 – Walking – Hawes to Keld (about 7 hours)

After a leisurely (and big) Yorkshire breakfast, we leave behind the winding streets of Hawes to rejoin the path of the James Herriot Way.





Today is quite a big day because we cross Great Shunner Fell (the third highest mountain in the area and the highest point on the tour) for great views of the surrounding moors.

We may have a picnic on the windy tops before descending to the village of Thwaite in Swaledale, before climbing again to The Highest Pub in England, near Keld. This place is a rustic gem – last year a pet sheep guarded the entrance to the bar and a brood of ducks cozied up in a basket next to the fire! (Breakfast and lunch included).

Day 4 – Walking – Keld to Reeth (about 6 hours)

From Keld, today's hike starts over the moors and a climb to the aptly named ruin 'Crackpot Hall' – a model for Wuthering Heights if ever there was one.



We may break for lunch by the old mine buildings at Blakethwaite on the Gunnerside Gill, or along the scenic banks of the River Swale, before continuing to Reeth. This market town of 18th century houses and Saxon heritage make for an interesting stop for the night. (Breakfast included).

Day 5 – Walking – Reeth to Aysgarth (about 6 hours)

From Reeth we walk across the river to Grinton, and climb along the miners' track across beautiful Harkerside Moor, passing old lead mines to reach Apedale Head, the highest point of the day, with its views of the Dale's drystone walls, stone bars, and endless greens.



Descend into the beautifully lonely valley of Apedale before crossing the East Bolton Moor to reach Castle Bolton, a medieval castle where Mary Queen of Scots was once held captive. We will do a tour of the castle and see the rooms where Mary spent many lonely years.

Our final descent from Castle Bolton leads through Wensleydale, back to Aysgarth and a farewell dinner. (Breakfast and dinner included).

Day 6 – Departure for London and home

Today we transfer back to Northallerton and the train for London and home. The trip officially ends in London but ask about adding extra time in York (only about an hour south of Northallerton) or in London. (Breakfast included).



More Details:

Is this the trip for me?

So here's a question: What if you went on an adventure vacation and your guide was good company and very competent - but one day he got you more than slightly lost!?

And as a result you ended up walking an extra two hours, and ate dinner late – and on top of that the dining room of the pub you were staying in had no electric lights!?

I say that only because I am a friendly fellow -- and I used to lead expeditions to the Himalayas so you are in safe hands - but last year, when I explored this area, I got a bit lost one day.

It was a lovely walk but we didn't reach 'The Highest Pub in England' until it was nearly dark; we had a lovely bath, ate a delicious home-cooked meal, and sat in a parlor lit only by candles and a fire, laughing and playing Scrabble until midnight.

In other words, if you like your trips planned to the last detail and you like to complain, this is probably not the right trip for you and I am not your guide. I am too old and crotchety - I might well abandon you on the moors!

But, if the idea of a real, authentic adventure with moderate exercise, fantastic scenery, great company and good old-fashioned Yorkshire cooking appeals to you – then I look forward to sharing this experience with you this summer!

Fitness

The hiking on this trip is not difficult and is something that anyone of any age with reasonable fitness could do if they put their mind to it.

Each day your main baggage will be shuttled to your next stop for you – so all you need for walking is a 'day pack' with a few essentials.

Generally we will walk for 2-3 hours in the morning, stop for lunch, then walk the same in the afternoon. One day is a bit longer – and a couple of days are a bit shorter, but this is the kind of time walking.





Some days we are walking along fairly flattish land, other times climbing up moorland paths, and occasionally it is quite steep for a short time.

You should have good boots and prepare by walking regularly in them for several hours at a time. We will send out a full equipment list nearer to departure.

Accommodation

We will be staying in a combination of bed & breakfasts (private houses), pubs and small hotels. Everywhere we stay is clean and very comfortable – but not fancy, because in these very rural areas there generally are no fancy places.



You can have a hot bath or a shower after your walk – mostly in an en-suite bathroom, but sometimes you might have to tip-toe across the landing to a shared bathroom.

Food

To a Yorkshireman like me there is no more perfect gift to culinary art than the Yorkshire Pudding - but, I admit, it can seem a little on the stodgy side to less educated palates!



Fear not, these days good food and restaurants have reached even remote Yorkshire villages - and you will dine well on home-cooked, mostly organic fare.

Besides, you really cannot contemplate a long walk without starting your day off with a hearty Yorkshire farmhouse breakfast, washed down by about a bucket of tea!

If you want further clarification on anything else related to this trip just give Alison Norrie a call – or myself, John Parker -- on 1-800-667-4744.



Beyond that, I would just encourage you to sign on early with a modest deposit, because space is very limited and we expect this trip to fill fast.



**Dates**

August 4th - 9th

Starts

London

Grade

Moderate

Accommodation

B&Bs

**Included**

- 5 nights accommodation on twin-share basis in B & B's, inns or small hotels
- 5 breakfasts
- 2 dinners
- 1 lunch
- Incidentals, water, soft drinks, snacks etc during hiking days
- All transport from London and back
- All supporting van transport and luggage transfer
- Services of a hiking guide (John Parker)

Not Included

- Flights
- Airport transfers to and from Kings Cross station, London
- Food not mentioned, alcoholic drinks and all evening drinks
- Insurance



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