

Packhorse Trails

Five horse riding routes in the North Pennines



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AONB family



Upper Teesdale

Contents

How to use this guide	4
Horse riding code	5
Route basics	6
Places to eat and drink	8
Finding accommodation	11
Foundations of the landscape	12
People and place	14
Moving the lead	16
The Routes	
1. Alston	18
2. Baldersdale	20
3. Blanchland	22
4. Hamsterley	24
5. Hartside	26
GPS waypoints	28
Livery, stabling and horse riding	30
Further information	34

Disclaimer:

Information is correct at the time of going to print (September 2011). Every effort has been made to ensure that information is accurate. However, the AONB Partnership and its Staff Unit cannot be held responsible for errors or omissions. Please check critical information before travel. Inclusion in this guide is not a recommendation by the AONB Partnership and in itself is not necessarily a guarantee of quality.

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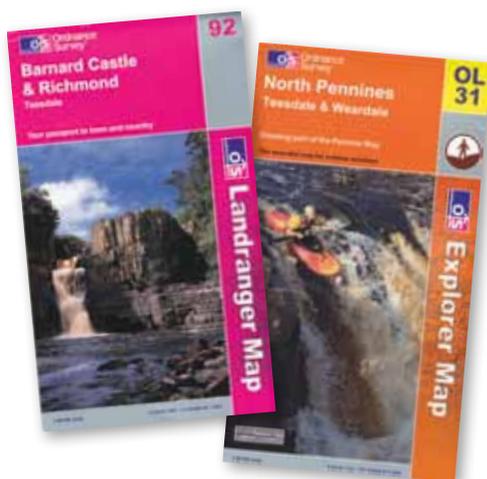
How to use this guide

On horseback is a great way to explore the fantastic scenery of the North Pennines. These five 'do in a day' routes are great to get you out into the wilds with nothing to disturb you other than the clip clop of your horse's hooves, curlews calling and the wind in your hair!

The guide comes in two parts:

- Five waterproof route cards
- This booklet

If you don't want to risk getting the booklet wet then you can do the routes just using the cards. Taking a back-up OS map (and compass) is a good idea. If GPS is your thing you'll find waypoints on pages 28-29.



Safety first

The routes cross some fairly remote terrain and it's probably best to go in a group. However you do them it is definitely advisable to let someone know where you are going and when you plan to get back.

Weather

The weather can change rapidly in the North Pennines. It is perfectly possible to experience all four seasons in one day at almost any time of year. All the routes also cross high ground. It's a good idea to check the forecast before you set off (www.metoffice.gov.uk) and to carry waterproofs and spare clothing just in case!

Take care!

The five routes are promoted as mountain biking AND horse riding routes. Please follow the code on page 5. Ride carefully and be aware of other users, including walkers.



Watch out for mountain bikers!

Route basics

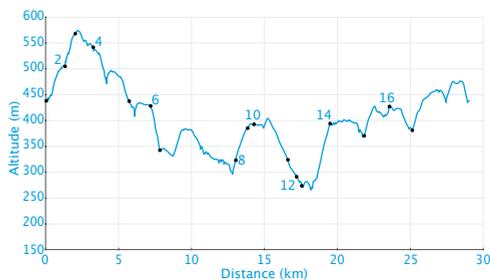


Riding the Hamsterley Route

All the rides are circular and are easily completed within a day's riding. All the routes include on and off-road riding. None of the routes are enormously difficult, although you will encounter some narrow, rocky trails, stone tracks and rough sections across moorland. All the routes cross high, upland ridges – are you and your horse up to the challenge?

Route 1: Alston

- Length: 29km (18 miles) – 30% off-road
- Ascent: 912m (2,992ft)
- Start: Nenthead Mines car park (NY 781 436)
- OS maps: Explorer OL31/Landranger 87



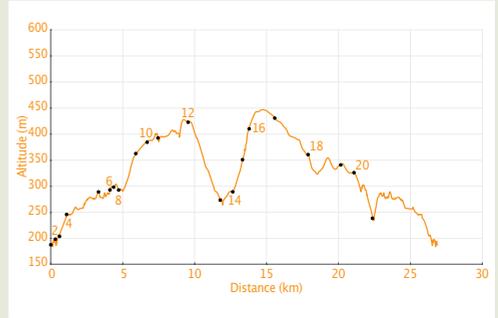
Route 2: Baldersdale

- Length: 18km (11 miles) – 60% off-road
- Ascent: 370m (1,212ft)
- Start: Northumbrian Water car park on south side of Hury Reservoir (NY 966 192)
- OS maps: Explorer OL31/Landranger 92



Route 4: Hamsterley

- Length: 26km (16 miles) – 75% off-road
- Ascent: 846m (2,775ft)
- Start: Grove car park (NY 066 298) on the Hamsterley Forest Drive
- OS maps: Explorer OL31/Landranger 92



Route 3: Blanchland

- Length: 21km (13 miles) – 70% off-road
- Ascent: 1,027m (3,370ft)
- Start: Baybridge car park (NY 957 500)
- OS maps: Explorer OL43/Landranger 87



Route 5: Hartside

- Length: 11km (7 miles) – 75% off-road
- Ascent: 458m (1,501ft)
- Start: Car park at Hartside Top Café (NY 646 418)
- OS maps: Explorer OL31/Landranger 86



Route 4 - Hamsterley

A ride of contrasts - in the forest and out over the open moor. You'll follow an old drove road on the return to the forest from Eggleston.

Points of interest

A Hamsterley Forest

Hamsterley Forest is 2,000 hectares of mixed woodland looked after by the Forestry Commission. Passing through the forest you can see how its management has changed over the years, with more native broadleaved trees now being planted as conifers are felled.

B Eggleston Moor

Eggleston Moor is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). It is part of one of the largest areas of dry heath habitat in the North Pennines. As well as being significant for its plant communities it is also important for birds, such as short-eared owl, redshank and twite.



If you're really lucky you might just see a short-eared owl hunting across the moors
© Brian Rafferty

C Managed moorlands

Moorlands in the North Pennines are managed by shooting estates for red grouse. Much of the heather moorland would once have been covered in natural woodland with a mixture of birch, oak and rowan trees. Clearance of this woodland started in Neolithic times – from around 4,000BC. Controlled burning and grazing (by sheep and cattle) keep the trees from growing back.



Controlled burning of the moorlands in the North Pennines is a widespread tool used by estates to manage the moors for red grouse shooting © RDI

D Smelt mill flue

Passing by Blackton Beck, the course of an old smelt mill flue can be seen alongside the track. Industrial remains such as this can be seen all over the North Pennine landscape.

E Eggleston Saddle House

This small building is a short detour from the main route. It is thought to have been built by the London Lead Company to store spare saddles for the packhorses that transported lead and lead ore along the packhorse trails.

F The Hett Dyke

Look to the NW from point F and you'll see these interesting looking hills. They were formed by a combination of the underlying rocks and the action of glacial meltwater. The hills are part of a 'dyke', a vertical sheet of rock which was once molten. This dyke formed deep underground and is now exposed after millions of years of erosion. It may have been a conduit for the molten rock that formed the Whin Sill (see page 13). At the end of the last ice age, glacial meltwater was dammed in the upper reaches of the Eggleston Burn by the ice that filled Teesdale. As the ice melted in stages, the water overflowed and cut successive nicks in the hard rock of the Hett Dyke, creating these little hills.



These hills were formed by a combination of the underlying rocks and the action of glacial meltwater

G Drove road

This part of the route follows an old drove road which passes just to the south of Coldhorn Nook (the 442m spot height on the map). These routes were used to drive livestock on foot from one place to another, such as to market or between winter and summer pasture.



Old drove road on the flanks of Coldhorn Nook

H Ark on the Edge

Animal rescue and sanctuary – www.arkonthedge.org.uk for details.

Points of interest

See pages 22-23 in the booklet for full details.

- A** Baybridge
- B** Bronze Age settlements
- C** The Carriers' Way
- D** Barn at Wester Byres



This barn at Wester Byres was used to store bark chips used in the Hexhamshire leather tanning industry

E Dukesfield

F Ladycross Quarry



Thin sandstone slabs cut by hand at Ladycross Quarry

G Blanchland Moor

H Pennypie House

I Shildon Engine House



The 19th century engine house at Shildon

J Blanchland



Roofs in Blanchland are made out of sandstone from Ladycross Quarry

NORTH PENNINES
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



Route 3: Blanchland

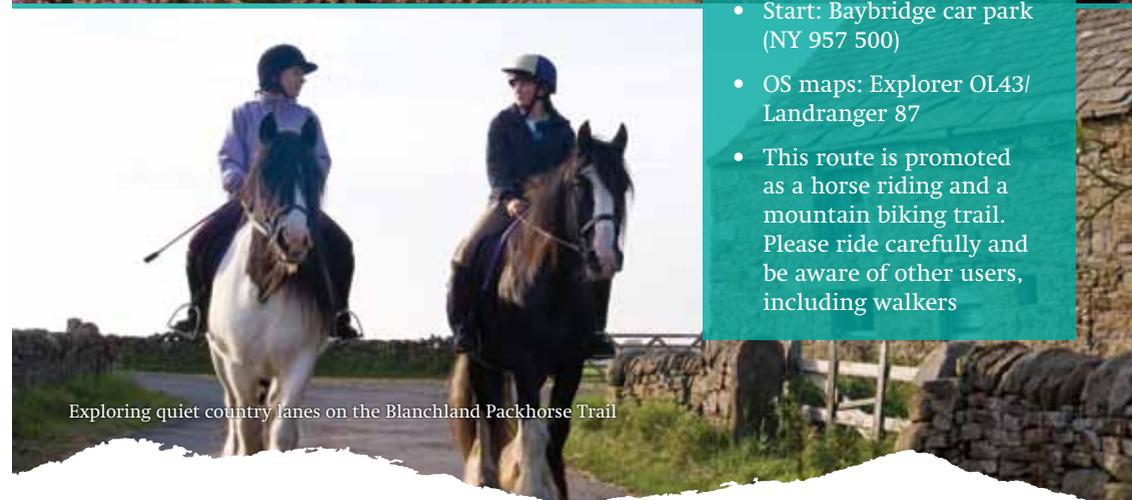
This stunning ride starts at Baybridge, close to the village of Blanchland. You'll follow the Carriers' Way across Bulbeck Common, alive with the evocative calls of wading birds in the spring and early summer.



Cycling across Blanchland Moor is an exhilarating ride

Fact file

- Length: 21km (13 miles)
- Off-road: 70%
- Ascent: 1,027m (3,370ft)
- Terrain: Steep climb at start, followed by undulating moorland riding. Stony tracks and rough ground in places
- Start: Baybridge car park (NY 957 500)
- OS maps: Explorer OL43/Landranger 87
- This route is promoted as a horse riding and a mountain biking trail. Please ride carefully and be aware of other users, including walkers



Exploring quiet country lanes on the Blanchland Packhorse Trail

Funded by:



This trail has been upgraded by the North Pennines AONB Partnership in collaboration with Northumberland County Council's Countryside Access Team.