

Visit County Durham Update



Introducing Durham's Year of Pilgrimage

Following the success of the county's Year of Culture, 2020 has been designated as Durham's Year of Pilgrimage – #Pilgrimage2020.

A pilgrimage is a journey with meaning and purpose, and in 2020 there are many reasons to visit, from wellbeing and walking to food and sport, and from events and festivals to art and history.

The Northern Saints Trails, which will position the North East as the 'Christian Crossroads of the British Isles', promote the region's Christian heritage but will appeal to those of other faiths - whether it be visitors looking for relaxation, a walking challenge,

the chance to get back to nature and discover stunning landscapes, or to uncover the region's fascinating history. Durham Cathedral will be at the centre of the trails recognising its role as a destination for pilgrims for centuries.

#Pilgrimage2020 will provide a platform to promote many of the reasons, including events, festivals, activities and attractions, that can inspire a visit to the county.

#pilgrimage2020

Michelle Gorman on a modern pilgrimage

So, what is the significance of Durham's Year of Pilgrimage for tourism businesses, and how can the theme inspire visitors to make their own pilgrimage to the county in 2020? Michelle Gorman, managing director of Visit County Durham, said: "We view pilgrimage in the broadest sense of the word. It means to go on a

“ We view pilgrimages in the broadest sense of the word. It means to go on a journey with purpose and meaning. ”

journey with purpose and meaning. For many of us that will be very different from the religious pilgrimages of the past.

Examples could be sporting pilgrimages, such as when Durham successfully hosted the Cricket World Cup last summer, and fans arrived from all over the world. It could be architecture or art, with the county revered for the works of Turner or the Pitmen Painters.



Perhaps it is a focus on wellbeing, escaping the digital world to wide-open spaces and stunning landscapes, such as the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or the raw, unspoilt wildness of our heritage coast. Or it could even be a calling to ancestral roots, for relatives seeking to learn more about their family history."

The Northern Saints Trails



At the heart of the Year of Pilgrimage celebrations is the launch of the Northern Saints Trails. Launching in Spring 2020, the six new walking trails are based on historic pilgrim routes across the North East, but also serve as an introduction to what the region has to offer in terms of beautiful landscapes, attractions, pubs, restaurants and accommodation.

Starting in the north at Lindisfarne and moving south towards Hartlepool, the Northern Saints Trails are designed to appeal to those of all faiths, or those simply looking for their own personal spirituality and wellness. Some may rise to the challenge of long-distance trails, while others may prefer to try out sections of the routes, visiting some of the regions world-class attractions along the way.

To find out more about the Northern Saints Trails, and how your business can get involved in Durham's Year of Pilgrimage, go to: visitcountydurham.org/pilgrimage2020



10.5m

the number of Britons who visit England's Cathedrals each year

Emotional wellbeing

the top reason for visitors to make a pilgrimage

#pilgrimage2020

the official hashtag of Durham's Year of Pilgrimage

Taking Durham to the world

TXGB

Tourism Exchange
Great Britain

As part of the autumn conference programme in November 2019, Visit County Durham shared the latest tourism updates for 2020, which included the launch of the TXGB platform to Partners.



TXGB (Tourism Exchange Great Britain) is VisitEngland's online platform for distributing and selling tourism products to international suppliers. From accommodation to experiences, the site has been developed to help make tourism products more bookable to international markets.

James Berzins, Director of TXGB, said: "It was a pleasure to introduce TXGB to tourism businesses from across Durham. The benefits for businesses moving forward are fundamental when looking at how distributors from across the world can tap into their tourism products, and we're looking forward to seeing the results going into 2020".

We'd urge all Visit County Durham Partners to get involved. Please get in touch with partners@visitcountydurham.org to find out more.

Durham tourism businesses offer world-class welcome

12 individuals from the county's tourism industry have been recognised as ambassadors after successfully completing the 'Welcome to Durham' training programme, an initiative led by Visit County Durham.

The course provides practical skills that can make the difference between a visitor being satisfied, and a visitor feeling special.

The latest course was delivered at The Witham in Barnard Castle, a Visit County Durham Visitor Information Network Partner committed to providing excellent customer service and visitor welcome.

Welcome to Durham was first introduced by Visit County Durham in 2013 and since its launch, over 159 individuals have completed the course and are recognised as qualified Welcome to Durham ambassadors.



Helping businesses go the extra mile

Visit County Durham has published 12 new business support toolkits to help tourism businesses go the extra mile and attract more visitors. From writing award submissions to glamping accommodation development, the toolkits cover a range of themes and growing markets and include useful tips, case studies and advice on how to start offering additional products and services to your visitors.



The toolkits are free and available now on visitcountydurham.org.

Dates for your diary - Spring 2020

28 JAN 2020	→ Weddings Workshop (VCD Partners only)	25 FEB Taste Durham Workshop
04 MAR 2020	→ Visit County Durham Spring Conference	18 MAR Welcome to Durham Training
MARCH Product Knowledge Session (VCD Partners only)	MAY 2020 →	Taking England to the World Workshop

Make sure you sign up to the Wednesday Grapevine to hear all about the latest Partnership events, go to: visitcountydurham.org/wednesday-grapevine

Aiming for Durham's first £1bn visitor economy

2020 is a significant year for tourism in more ways than one. Not only is it the county's designated Year of Pilgrimage, but it's also the year for Durham to reach its £1bn visitor economy target. With consultations for the 2021-2024 Durham Tourism Management Plan already underway, we thought we'd take a look back at the progress and highlight some of the key activities delivered as part of the plan, which contributes towards achieving the ambitious target.

Back in 2016, the Durham Tourism Management Plan (DTMaP), identified eight priorities to deliver a more vibrant visitor economy. The key priorities are:

- Lengthen the amount of time that visitors spend in the county
- Improve the quality of the visitor experience post arrival
- Differentiate Durham for external audiences
- Attract new staying visitors to the county
- Retain existing day visitors to the county
- Address seasonality
- Develop new product and support existing product strengths
- Improve SME and micro business performance



Examples of the DTMaP in action

- **Moorcock Inn** – Visit County Durham provided market intelligence, evidence based on demand, arranged a site visit and supported the business through the planning process for their new glamping accommodation.
- **Café Cheesedale** – Visit County Durham provided Teesdale Cheesemakers with economic and market demand guidance and support through the planning process for their new café venture, Cheesedale.
- **Ushaw, Historic House Chapel & Gardens** – Visit County Durham participated in Ushaw's development options over a number of years and provided market intelligence and evidence bases. The priorities, ambitions and guidance outlined in the DTMaP document was central to the support they were offered.
- **The Auckland Project** – Visit County Durham provided evidence bases on potential visitor economy impacts and visitor market potential for the developments at The Auckland Project. They successfully navigated through a project evaluation process, which culminated in a formal letter of support to assist funding applications.

Durham's visitor economy in numbers . . .



How Durham visitors rate their experience

Doing well

- + Quality of visitor attractions
- + Eating establishments
- + Variety of things to do
- + Cleanliness of the area

>70% satisfaction

Doing ok

- + Distinctive shopping experience
- + Ease of parking
- + Road signposts
- + Nightlife
- + Cleanliness of public toilets
- + Accommodation

51-69% satisfaction

Room for improvement

- + Availability of public toilets
- + Visitor information provision
- + Public transport

<50% satisfaction

What is the role of a Destination Management Organisation?

With the publication of the first edition of the Visit County Durham Update, we wanted to take the opportunity to detail the role of Visit County Durham as a Destination Management Organisation, and how our work benefits the county's overall visitor economy.

Visit County Durham is the destination management organisation (DMO) for the county of Durham working on behalf of businesses and public agencies. We work closely with VisitEngland, VisitBritain and a wide range of public and private sector partners and tourism businesses, both in Durham and across England.

The purpose of a Destination Management Organisation

Our purpose is to provide strategic added value to tourism activity in the county and leadership to both the public and private sectors on the visitor economy. We work to put the visitor at the heart of everything we do, when it comes to decisions affecting the visitor economy.

We bring coordination and leadership to tourism activity and our main role is destination management. This means influencing or delivering directly activities that relate to visitors and the visitor economy, including marketing, information services, product development, visitor experience, business engagement and workforce development.



“Our work improves the visitor experience, as well as enhancing the county for residents”

The Durham Tourism Management Plan

The Durham Tourism Management Plan is used as an example of best practice nationally and internationally. We are one of only 11 destinations from around the world invited to participate in a study on Destination Management for the Icelandic Tourist Board as an example of best practice. The consultation process focussed primarily on Durham's Tourism Management Plan, but reviewed staff structures, finance, operating model and stakeholder engagement.

Improving Durham's tourism offer

Over the last few years our focus has been on tourism product development to fill some of the product gaps identified in our Destination Management Plan. Our initiatives focus on product development which makes the most of Durham's assets – history and heritage, and outstanding natural landscapes. Two such initiatives include making more of Durham's Dark Skies offer through the development of the first North Pennines Stargazing Festival, in partnership with the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty & UNESCO Global Geopark, and most recently, the Northern Saints Trails project launching in Spring 2020.

What does the future look like for a destination management organisation?

Many people are involved in delivering a vibrant visitor economy and one organisation cannot do it alone, which is why we are a proud partnership. Destination Management Organisations need to be responsive and adaptable responding to the many changes to the industry's structures, markets and consumer behaviour. Looking ahead, we welcome the UK's first ever sector deal for tourism. This is a really important milestone for the sector and moves tourism right up the UK Government's agenda as a priority for future economic growth.

Durham's great outdoors

– national destination marketing campaign

Visit County Durham runs two national destination marketing campaigns a year, delivered by working in partnership with tourism businesses across the county.

Whether it's walking, cycling, water sports, nature watching or something to get the adrenaline pumping, our current campaign will showcase one of the county's core tourism offers - our great outdoors.

The campaign will feature outdoor experiences through a series of videos, which will appeal to couples and families. Focusing on people's personal motivations to get outdoors, from discovering stunning landscapes to taking on a challenge, and from wellbeing to leisurely family walks, activity will provide ideas and inspiration which drive overnight stays to the county.

The great outdoors in numbers

The campaign will run for six months, with key activity including a partnership with a national outdoor-themed media partner, along with e-newsletters to our database of over 45,000 contacts, social media and a series of press visits from national titles and high-profile influencers.

All campaign activity will drive traffic to the dedicated campaign site on thisisdurham.com, where visitors will be presented with all of the information required to book a break to Durham.

A range of cost-effective marketing opportunities have been created to ensure that Visit County Durham Partners have the opportunity to be part of, and benefit from, the national marketing campaign. For further details, go to: visitcountydurham.org/opportunities



UK spend motivated by long walks, hikes and rambles among domestic visitors is valued at **£1.5bn**



Leisure and tourism cycling on the National Cycle Network supports over **15,000** jobs and directly contributes **£650m** to the UK economy each year (Sustrans)



Tel: 03000 261220
Email: info@visitcountydurham.org
Web: visitcountydurham.org

Supported by:



VCDBusiness



VCDBusiness



Visit County Durham



Printed on recycled paper