

# Walk St. Cuthbert's Way



## Highlights

The Scottish Borders is a region steeped in tumultuous history, its castles, ruined abbeys and priories a testament to its violent past. This four- to seven-day self-guided walk along St. Cuthbert's Way is the perfect introduction to this stunning historical landscape, famed for its sweeping vistas and the dramatic Holy Island causeway

The Scottish Borders region offers some of the most diverse scenery in Britain, with lochs, rivers and marshes, wooded hills and valleys and the spectacular coastline. It's an area of rich cultural heritage too, with castles, towers, country houses and the renowned Border Abbeys of Kelso, Jedburgh, Melrose and Dryburgh. Centuries of strife and conflict have left an indelible mark on the landscape and its monuments. During Roman times, the Borders region was fought over for its strategic importance; later, it was a cradle of Christianity for Scotland and Northern England, hence the abundance of (often ransacked!) priories. And in the medieval period, the region was home to the infamous Border Reivers, fierce Anglo-Scottish raiders who gave us the words blackmail and bereaved!

St Cuthbert's Way is a long distance route through the Scottish borders region named after St Cuthbert, a 7th Century Saint from the Scottish borders associated with Melrose Abbey. This four- to seven-day self-guided walk is the ideal way to explore this intriguing region, its landscape, history and culture. Starting your journey at Melrose, spiritual birthplace of St. Cuthbert, you'll head for the Eildon Hills with their commanding views of the local landscape. It's then on to St. Boswells, where you'll follow the banks of the River Tweed for a while, perhaps stopping in a riverside pub to try some of the famous local smoked salmon! At the charming village of Kirk Yetholm you'll pass the northern end of the Pennines – 'the spine of Britain' - before heading on for Wooler, the Cheviots and the coast. The walk ends in unforgettable style: a pilgrimage across the sands at low tide to the enigmatic island of Lindisfarne, also known as Holy Island. (It was here that St. Cuthbert, a hermit by nature, spent the last years of his life, studying the plants and animals of the island and engaging in quiet meditation.) St. Cuthbert's Way is well marked, but if you want to make any side trips – to see the other abbeys, for example – you can; you'll be supplied with a detailed map and comprehensive guidebook, with loads of information on the life and times of St. Cuthbert and the fascinating history of the Borders and Northumberland. Then at the end of a leisurely day's walking you can relax and enjoy some fine dining in the hand-picked bed and breakfasts, country inns and guesthouses dotted along the path – your bags will be waiting for you when you arrive.

## Is it for me?

St. Cuthbert's Way isn't a particularly challenging walk – it's fairly flat and very well signposted – but as for any hiking holiday you'll need a good level of fitness and also some experience of hill walking. If it's been a while since you've done regular exercise you might be better off trying a shorter walk first, perhaps two to three days. Then there's the question of midges. Not really a problem when you're walking and the breeze is blowing, but these small biting insects will probably hone in on you at some point, especially when you're down near the Tweed or crossing onto Lindisfarne. For most it's only a minor irritation, but if you really can't tolerate itching then maybe the Borders in summer isn't the place for you! The St. Cuthbert's Way walk is best suited to lovers of historic landscapes where the past is writ large across every vista. Foodies will enjoy the trip too – the hotels and guesthouses where you'll be staying have been carefully chosen for their excellent dining (their rooms aren't bad either!). And if you like smoked salmon, you've come to the right place!

## Accommodation

Prices from

**325** GBP (4 - 7 days) per person

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One of the highlights of this tour is the high standard of the accommodation you will enjoy. The hotels, inns, guesthouses and B&B's used are hand-picked to ensure that you enjoy every minute of your stay. All offer a warm welcome to walkers, traditional hospitality and delicious local food. A hearty breakfast is included each morning while lunch and dinner are not included so you are free to choose from the available options.

Examples of some of the B&BS, inns and country hotels used include the Buccleuch Arms Hotel which stands beside the village green in St Boswells, The Templehall Inn in the small village of Morebattle with comfortable ensuite rooms and great home cooked food and the Mill House in Kirk Yetholm, a newly converted Grain Mill & Granary standing proudly at the foot of the Cheviot Hills looking out over Bowmont Water.

## Itinerary

**Arrive Start (Melrose):** Check in time for most accommodation is from mid-afternoon onwards so please contact your accommodation directly if you are going to be late/early. Melrose is a pretty market town in the Scottish Border's with more than enough to keep you interested for a few hours. Melrose Abbey is the centrepiece of the town and operated by Historic Scotland, while the Priorwood Walled Garden and Trimontium Exhibition are also worth a visit. The Melrose Rugby Club occupies a prime position and is famous for hosting an important Sevens Rugby Tournament every April. There are several excellent restaurants and pubs in Melrose although Burts Hotel stands head and shoulders above the rest. This award winning pub does excellent food and it is advisable to book.

### Section 1: Melrose to St Boswells – 6 miles – 10 km

The day starts with a steep climb of the Eildon Hills which is rewarded by fantastic views of the surrounding countryside. You may also choose to climb from the saddle to the summit at 422m if you are feeling energetic. From the saddle the way drops steadily through Bowden and then along Bowden Burn to Newton St Boswells, which has accommodation and refreshments available. Shortly after leaving the town you rejoin the River Tweed and follow it to St Boswells. If you are staying in St Boswells Dryburgh Abbey makes for a very pleasant side trip.

### Section 2: St Boswells to Ancrum/Harestanes/Jedburgh – 8/9/10 miles

A lovely day of walking through the rolling scenery of the Scottish Borders with a touch of Roman history. Leaving St Boswells you again follow the Tweed before leaving it just before the hamlet of Maxton. After a short section of minor road you then join Dere Street, an ancient Roman Road. If staying at Ancrum or wanting to visit the Harestanes Visitor (tea room) centre turn right when you reach the B6400. Alternatively follow the way to reach Jedburgh.

### Section 3: Ancrum/Harestanes/Jedburgh to Morebattle – 11/10/9 miles.

This is a varied section with a fair bit of ascent and descent as you follow a network of tracks, paths and minor roads through farmland. There are no stops on the way so you must take sufficient food/water.

### Section 4: Morebattle to Town Yetholm/Kirk Yetholm – 8 miles – 12 km

A relatively short but strenuous section. After crossing Kale Water you climb steadily to reach the summit of Wideopen Hill at 369m. The paths are indistinct in places so care is required in poor visibility. The views from the summit are spectacular and it's all down hill to Kirk Yetholm.

### Section 5: Kirk Yetholm to Wooler – 13 miles – 21 km

A challenging day – be prepared. As well as crossing into England today you also cross the Cheviots and this means numerous ups and downs as you travel east to Wooler. The good news is that you are high up for much of the day and this means more great views and lots of fresh air.

### Section 6: Wooler to Fenwick – 12 miles – 20 km

A much easier day after the rigours of the past few days as you head towards the coast and the end of your journey. Enjoy the pleasant mix of farmland and forest.

### Section 7: Fenwick to Lindisfarne – 6 miles – 10 km

The final section of your walk and one of the most spectacular and unusual. The scenery is unique and although you follow the road for most of the way to Holy Island the changing vistas and abundant birdlife will keep you occupied. There is also a pilgrim's route across the tidal sands but I would not recommend taking this route due to the dangers posed by incoming tides.

## Details

### Getting there

The nearest mainline station to the starting point of St Cuthbert's Way (Melrose) and the finishing point of St Cuthbert's Way (Lindisfarne) is Berwick Upon Tweed. You will need to catch a bus or arrange a taxi to transfer to and from the rail station.

### Price includes

Included in the price: B&B accommodation as close as possible to the trail (en-suite wherever possible), baggage transfer, transfers as detailed in the itinerary. Detailed map, guidebook and information pack are all included. Not included in the price: travel insurance, transport to the start or from the finish of the walk, transfers should you wish to skip a stage, lunches, dinners, snacks, drinks and walking equipment.

### Price details

Price depends on duration as follows;

GBP 325.0 p.p. (4 days, 5 nights); GBP 365.0 p.p. (5 days, 6 nights); GBP 405.0 (6 days, 7 nights); GBP 445.0 (7 days, 8 nights)

**Available**

Mar—Oct

**Typical Duration**

4 days - 1 week