

The Wild Flowers of Upper Teesdale

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline Itinerary

- Day 1** Arrive at hotel; Low Force (River Tees)
- Day 2** Widdybank Farm and Cetry Bank
- Day 3** Harwood and Cow Green
- Day 4** Cronkley Fell (weather permitting)
- Day 5** High Force (River Tees); Depart

Departs

June

Focus

Flowers with birds, butterflies and other wildlife

Grading

A/B. There will be a reasonable amount of quite strenuous walking on this holiday, covering between two and eight miles each day, but this will be at a slow 'botanising pace'.

Dates and Prices

See website (tour code GBR29) or brochure

Highlights:

- Biggest diversity of rare plants & species in one location in Britain
- Search for rare Arctic-alpine flora
- Melancholy Thistle, Meadow Cranesbill & Sweet Cicely on road verges and upland hay meadows
- Visit botanical hotspots & see as many species of the Teesdale Assemblage as possible
- Red Grouse, Black Grouse, Lapwing, Snipe & Curlew
- Walk along River Tees & visit the famous waterfalls of Low & High Force



Alpine Bartsia (Dave Shute)



Yellow Mountain Saxifrage (Dave Shute)



Naturetrek Mingledown Barn Wolf's Lane Chawton Alton Hampshire GU34 3HJ UK

T: +44 (0)1962 733051

E: info@naturetrek.co.uk

W: www.naturetrek.co.uk

Introduction

Upper Teesdale is a plant lover's paradise, a wide glaciated valley with the majestic River Tees tumbling through it, backed by high fells. Dry-stone walled fields contain flower-filled hay meadows. Even the road verges are floriferous with showy Melancholy Thistle (*Cirsium heterophyllum*), Meadow Cranesbill (*Geranium pratense*) and Sweet Cicely (*Myrrhis odorata*). But there is far more to explore: this upland region with its rugged scenery has a broad range of rare species in its Arctic-alpine flora, derived from its complex geology. Two hundred and ninety-five million years ago, molten magma from the Earth's mantle intruded into the limestone and solidified to form quartz dolerite, known as Great Whin Sill. As it pushed through, the magma baked the surrounding limestone to form Sugar Limestone, which weathers into a course thin soil where the rare Arctic-alpine plants grow. Nowhere else in Britain are so many species of different distributions found together as in the comparatively small area of Widdybank and Cronkley Fells and Pastures. During the last Ice Age this area was covered in ice, which shaped the landscape we see today. Arctic-alpine plants such as Spring Gentian (*Gentiana verna*) colonised the area when the ice melted and have survived here ever since. The unique collection of rare and local flowering plants found in the area is known as the Teesdale Assemblage.

The North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), of which Upper Teesdale is an integral part, became the first area in Britain to be awarded the status of UNESCO European and Global Geopark, in June 2003. This is due primarily to its world class geological heritage and interest which, coupled with the conservation efforts of those who care for it, leads to incredible plant and animal diversity.

On this week-long break we will visit some of the main botanical hot-spots taking in a variety of habitats, from low-lying hay meadows, rough grazing and juniper woods to limestone grassland, blanket bogs and the summit heaths of the high fells. Nowhere else in Britain is there such a diversity of rare habitats and species in one location. It is a truly unique place ... come and explore it!



Mountain Pansy (Dawn Nelson)

Day 1 Arrive Middleton-in-Teesdale; Low Force towards High Force

We will meet in the early afternoon at our hotel in Middleton-in-Teesdale, a prime location for our exploration of the area. For those travelling by public transport there is an hourly bus service from the railhead in Darlington, or it may be possible for the tour leader to arrange a pick-up at the railway station.

After settling in, we will meet up and after a short drive have a riverside walk on the southern,



High Force (Dave Shute)

Yorkshire side, of the River Tees between the waterfalls of Low Force and High Force. This will not only delight us with its fantastic scenery and leaping salmon, but also produce finds such as Good King-Henry (*Chenopodium bonus-henricus*), Shrubby Cinquefoil (*Potentilla fruticosa*) and Saw-wort (*Serratula tinctoria*), Glaucous Dog-rose (*Rosa caesia* ssp. *vosagiaca*), Rock Whitebeam (*Sorbus rupeicola*) and a variety of lady's-mantles (*Alchemilla* sp), Northern Marsh Orchid

(*Dactylorhiza purpurella*), Early Marsh Orchid (*Dactylorhiza incarnata*) and Wood Cranesbill (*Geranium sylvaticum*). Birds we might see include Dipper, Common Sandpiper, plus Yellow and Pied Wagtails.

Day 2 Widdybank Farm & Cetry Bank

Today after breakfast we will visit the National Nature Reserve at Widdybank Farm where we will explore the hay meadows to see Marsh Arrowgrass (*Triglochin palustris*) and Marsh Lousewort (*Pedicularis palustris*), Eyebright species (*Euphrasia* agg.) amongst others. Hair Sedge (*Carex capillaris*) and Flea Sedge (*C. pulicaris*) grow with more common sedges, rushes and grasses. There is an estimated 100+ species in such a meadow. After enjoying our picnic lunch beside the River Tees we will move on to Cetry Bank, which will enable us to see some of the local specialities such as Alpine Bartsia (*Bartsia alpina*), Bird's-eye Primrose (*Primula farinosa*) and Scottish Asphodel (*Tofieldia pusilla*), as well as Sea Plantain (*Plantago maritima*), Thrift (*Armeria maritima*) and Lesser Clubmoss (*Selaginella selaginoides*). Ring Ouzel, Wheatear, Lapwing and Golden Plover may be found. We may spot Grass of Parnassus (*Parnassia palustris*) which will flower in August. On our return journey we will explore Bowlees Quarry to see orchid species as Northern Marsh Orchid (*Dactylorhiza purpurella*), Fragrant Orchid (*Gymnadenia conopsea*) and Common Twayblade (*Neottia ovalis*), as well as Flat Sedge (*Blysmus compressus*) and Pale Lady's-mantle (*Alchemilla xanthochlora*).

Day 3

Harwood & Cow Green

For those wishing for an early start we will visit the site of a Black Grouse lek to scan for any very late breeding displays, with a chance to see Brown Hare and waders. Following breakfast we will revisit the area to explore the hay meadows and verges of the remote Harwood valley. We will look for stunning stands of Globe-flower (*Trollius europaeus*) and Melancholy Thistle (*Cirsium heterophyllum*), Meadow Cranesbill (*Geranium pratense*) along with good numbers of Lesser Butterfly Orchid (*Platanthera bifolia*). A stream should be full of Hybrid Monkeyflower (*Mimulus x robertsii*), Bottle Sedge (*Carex rostrata*), other interesting plants and possibly dragonfly and damselfly. We will also scan the fields to look for Red Grouse, Snipe, Curlew and Lapwing.

The trail along Cow Green Reservoir is a good place to learn about the fascinating geology of the dale, its unique weather patterns, as well as the complex issues of conservation here. Where small streams, 'sikes', cross the road can be productive places for seeing more rare species. Mountain Pansy (*Viola lutea*), Matt Grass (*Nardus stricta*) and Blue Moor-grass (*Sesleria caerulea*) are obvious along the roadside. We will also carefully search the low vegetation for rarities such as Teesdale Violet (*Viola rupestris*), Moonwort (*Botrychium lunaria*), False Sedge (*Carex simpliciuscula*), and Spring Gentian (*Gentiana verna*) and the diminutive Variegated Horsetail (*Equisetum variegatum*). Two insectivorous plants, Sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*) and Butterwort (*Pinguicula vulgaris*) grow amongst the Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) and *Sphagnum* mosses. Golden Plover may fly over and Ring Ouzle is a possible sighting near Cauldron Snout.

Day 4

Cronkley Fell

Today we will visit higher ground at Cronkley Fell where the limestone outcrops overlie the Great Whin Sill. On weathering, this metamorphic limestone breaks down to form separate crystals, producing white limestone sand which closely resembles coarse granulated sugar, hence its name of Sugar Limestone. This readily disturbed soil maintains its own unique vegetation including rarities such as Mountain Avens (*Dryas octopetala*), Spring Sandwort (*Minuartia verna*), Mountain Everlasting (*Antennaria dioica*), Hairy Lady's-mantle (*Alchemilla filicaulis ssp vestita*) and Hoary Rockrose (*Helianthemum oelandicum ssp levigatum*) which is endemic to Cronkley Fell. If we are lucky we may also find and Hoary Whitlow-grass (*Draba incana*) in flower among others. On the way up and down we will see a variety of rare ferns including Parsley Fern (*Cryptogramma crispa*) and Beech Fern (*Phegopteris connectilis*) and we will pass through the largest Juniper wood in England. We have an option to visit a tarn to look for aquatic species, but this does depend upon it being wet. Red Grouse are likely to be seen, as are Meadow Pipit and Skylark. This evening, on our last night back at our hotel, we can discuss our finds.

Day 5

Morning excursion and Depart

After breakfast we will leave the hotel and there will be the option of a morning excursion before the tour ends back at the hotel by 1pm. We will then say our goodbyes and return homewards, hopefully filled with happy memories of this beautiful region.

NB. Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather and other local considerations can necessitate some reordering of

the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.

Tour Grading

A/B. There will be a reasonable amount of quite strenuous walking on this holiday, covering between two and eight miles each day, but this will be at a slow 'botanising pace'. A reasonable degree of physical fitness is required and an enjoyment of hill walking.

Climate

Please bear in mind that we will be spending some of our time on high ground. Weather conditions, even in June, can be cold and inclement, with mist, rain and limited visibility. However, we do hope that the weather will be kind to us during our stay! Waterproof clothing and stout footwear/walking boots are essential, and warm outer garments are strongly recommended. Whilst we hope for pleasant warm sunshine in midsummer we must also be prepared for rain and a subsequent drop in temperature.

Food & accommodation

Breakfasts and evening meals are included in the holiday cost, beginning with the evening meal on Day 1 and finishing with breakfast on Day 5. Accommodation will be in the homely Teesdale Hotel located in the quaint and pretty Dales village of Middleton-in-Teesdale in the heart of the Durham Dales near Barnard Castle. Accommodation will be in twin, double or single rooms, all en suite and with tea and coffee-making facilities. The tour price includes a 3-course dinner using fresh, seasonal, good quality locally sourced ingredients.

Lunches, and daytime snacks and drinks, are not included in the cost of this tour. We will need to carry our own picnic lunch each day (these can be provided by the hotel at a small extra charge).

How to book your place

In order to book your place on this holiday, please give us a call on 01962 733051 with a credit or debit card, book online at www.naturetrek.co.uk, or alternatively complete and post the booking form at the back of our main Naturetrek brochure, together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost plus any room supplements if required. If you do not have a copy of the brochure, please call us on 01962 733051 or request one via our website. Please stipulate any special requirements, for example extension requests, at the time of booking.

Receive our e-newsletter

Join the Naturetrek e-mailing list and be the first to hear about new tours, additional departures and new dates, tour reports and special offers. Please visit www.naturetrek.co.uk to sign up.

Included in the tour cost

The holiday cost includes breakfast and evening meals, accommodation, plus guiding, transport and park entrance fees during the break. Lunches are not included, nor travel by public transport to and from Darlington.



Wood Cranesbill (Dave Shute)