Out and About

Walking and cycling in Stockton-on-Tees

12 great places to explore

Big plans for great experiences
In Stockton-on-Tees we are very lucky to have so many fantastic parks and other places to visit right here on our doorstep, and lots of attractive traffic-free paths for getting around.

This guide shows you twelve great destinations which you can reach easily by walking or cycling. Whether you’re looking for a park with a playground, a place to walk your dog, or somewhere peaceful to enjoy wildlife you’ll find somewhere that’s just right for you.

Use the handy key below to see at a glance what each destination has to offer. There’s also a map at the end of this guide showing the featured parks and selected routes for walking and cycling. This includes the National Cycle Network, other linking cycle paths, the Teesdale Way and the Thornaby Trail.

For more detailed information about these (and other) parks and trails please use the web links provided.

Welcome to Stockton’s great outdoors!
Wynyard Woodland Park

You'll need plenty of time to explore every corner of this wonderful country park: from Thorpe Wood, an ancient woodland of oak, ash and wych elm, right up to Tilery Woods, Brierley Woods and Pickards Meadow in the north.

The Castle Eden Walkway provides a wonderful cycling and walking route through the heart of the park, and can be followed south all the way past Thorpe Thewles into Stockton (National Cycle Network Route 1).

Children will love the big adventure play area and the former Thorpe Thewles Railway Station provides a special setting for the tea rooms and a beautiful arts venue run by Missing Piece. The park is also home to Wynyard Planetarium and Observatory. Visit their websites for information about forthcoming events.

• Admire the carpets of bluebells and ramsons (wild garlic) on a springtime walk in Thorpe Wood
• Stroll through Pickards Meadow – the size of over ten football pitches, it’s one of the biggest wildflower meadows in the Tees Valley
• Find out what’s cooking in the Celestial Kitchen – a sculpture in Stony Field inspired by the park’s astronomical associations

A great place for a cycle ride – whatever your age or ability
Newham Grange Park is a beautiful landscaped park with mature trees, meadows and a play area.

A cycleway links the park to Hardwick Dene; a patchwork of meadows, woodlands and hedgerows in the heart of urban Stockton. Over 90 plant species flourish in the meadow area south of Hardwick Beck, including common spotted orchid, devil’s-bit scabious, betony and ragged robin.

This abundance of grasses and flowers attracts numerous butterflies with one notable species being the white-letter hairstreak butterfly which gets its name from a white line in the shape of the letter “w” on the underside of the hind wing.

From Hardwick Dene you can walk across Darlington Back Lane to the delightful Elm Tree Wood.

- Eat outdoors at the special artist designed picnic tables in Newham Grange Park
- In spring listen out for the drumming sound of the great spotted woodpecker in Elm Tree Wood

Start small – 10 minutes of activity at a time can give real benefits
Grangefield Park

A lovely natural park with cycleway linking Oxbridge Lane and Grangefield Road (part of National Cycle Network Route 14).

Lustrum Beck flows along the edge of Grangefield Park and there are lovely views across the beck towards Oxbridge Cemetery. It’s also a great place for children and adults to get active with a toddlers play area, multi-use games area and outdoor gym equipment set out along a fitness trail.

From the north end of the park you can continue along the cycle route into Stockton, or from the southern end there is a cycle link to the Castle Eden Walkway.

- Fancy a longer walk? Then walk the full length of the park and return via Oxbridge Cemetery on the opposite side of Lustrum Beck.
- Challenge yourself on the park’s 400 metre fitness trail, including situp bench, push-up bars, upper body trainer and body flexer (suitable for people aged 14 years and over).

An active body is an active mind!
Ropner Park/Six Fields

Ropner Park has been fully restored to its original Victorian splendour. Stroll by the lakeside or along tree-lined avenues and admire the splendid floral displays. There’s a fabulous play area, tennis courts, bowls club and large grassed areas for games and picnics.

First opened in 1893 the park is named after the wealthy Victorian ship owner and ship builder Major Robert Ropner, who provided the money needed to establish the park.

The main entrance to the Six Fields is a short walk away down Darlington Road. Informal footpaths criss-cross this fine stretch of countryside, with its woodlands, meadows and hedgerows. A cycleway joins the Castle Eden Walkway to the north and continues to Preston Park to the south.

- Look out for ‘Fish Swallowing Bird’, a sculpture by Mick Thacker
- Enjoy refreshments in the pavilion café and summertime concerts at the bandstand, all organised by the Friends of Ropner Park

Step outside to increase your happy hormones!
On the edge of Long Newton village is Coatham Wood; a vast new woodland created by the Forestry Commission. Its mix of broadleaved and conifer trees, ponds and meadows make it a great habitat for all kinds of wildlife. Look out for newts and dragonflies around the ponds, or if you’re lucky you may see (or hear) any of the five species of owl commonly found in the UK.

There are two waymarked walking routes to help you find your way around Coatham Wood, or you can simply wander along the many mown rides. Horse riding is by permit only.

You can easily reach Coatham Wood by bike, following National Cycle Network Route 14 from Hartburn and the Castle Eden Walkway.

- Look out for roe deer grazing in open areas of the woodland
- Barn owls, tawny owl, little owls, long-eared owls and short-eared owls - keep your eyes and ears open because they’ve all been spotted here
Preston Park/Quarry Wood

Preston Hall dates back to the 1820s and the surrounding farmland was gradually transformed into a landscaped estate which provides the setting for the present-day park. There really is something for everyone, whether you want to explore the museum, visit Butterfly World, ride on the small-gauge railway, or take a trip on the river with the Teesside Princess or Rivershack’s RiverBoat. For something a bit more active, Rivershack also have rowing boats, or back on dry land there’s a fantastic play area and skate park.

A short walk alongside the River Tees brings you to Quarry Wood Nature Reserve. Now a beautiful woodland, this was once a busy whinstone quarry, with the stone transported by river and later via the adjacent Stockton to Darlington Railway.

- Enjoy a taste of life in the 19th century Preston Hall by visiting the restored walled kitchen garden and orchard
- Leave the car at home. Cycle or walk to Preston Park from Ingleby Barwick, Hartburn or South Thornaby by using the excellent traffic-free paths – suitable for all of the family

Walk or cycle to the park - the journey is all part of the fun
Romano Park

The impressive landscaped play area is the main attraction in this small park. It’s a wonderful play environment for children of all ages, with features such as a rope bridge, zip wires, balancing wires, sand play and, crowning the skyline, a ‘Hill Fort’ made of vertical pillars of green oak.

There’s also more traditional play equipment such as swings, slides and roundabouts. Good footpaths wind their way through the park, and there’s plenty of picnic tables.

If you prefer some peace and quiet then seek out Barwick Pond which is adjacent to the park. It was created in the 1990s to provide a home to great crested newts.

• Rest on the unique female and male great crested newt seats, designed by artist Andrew McKeown with help from children from nearby Barley Fields and Myton Park Primary Schools

• Climb, jump, swing, dig, run, balance, spin... explore every corner of the fantastic play area

Playing outside helps children to learn
Tees Heritage Park
Nature Reserves

The Tees Heritage Park stretches from Yarm to Stockton along the valley of the River Tees. Not all the land is open to the public, but you can explore the area by following the Teesdale Way, Thornaby Trail and many other paths.

From Preston Park a short walk or cycle ride brings you to Bowesfield and Preston Farm Nature Reserve where pools, reedbeds and other wetland habitats attract vast numbers of ducks and wading birds including teal, curlew, gadwall, shoveler, ruff and golden plover. You may even catch a glimpse of the otters which sometimes use the reserve as a stopping point on the river.

On the Thornaby bank of the Tees is Bassleton Wood and from here the Thornaby Trail leads to The Holmes; a finger of land enclosed within the massive ‘horseshoe bend’ of the river. Black Bobbies Field lies further north, near to Thornaby Green. The name dates back to a time when a local police football team played on these fields!

- Seek out the artworks inspired by the landscapes of the Heritage Park at Bowesfield, The Holmes and Black Bobbies’ Field created by artist Keith Barrett and Linda Watson

- Take a walk of two halves: through the colourful hay meadow of The Holmes and then along the tranquil riverside at Bassleton Wood
Tees Barrage/ Portrack Marsh

With the International White Water Course, Air Trail and some fantastic places to walk and cycle, the Tees Barrage is a great place to visit. A café at the White Water Centre offers fabulous views over the river.

Beyond the Talpore Pub is Portrack Marsh, a tranquil oasis for wetland wildlife. Its mix of ponds, pools, reedbeds and wet grassland attract a diverse range of birds, as well as harvest mice and many species of damselfly and dragonfly.

The Tees Barrage itself, opened in 1995, is just one of several iconic structures that span this stretch of the river. A short walk or ride upstream on the Teesdale Way or National Cycle Network Route 14 brings you to Infinity Bridge (opened in 2009). Downstream you can continue to the Newport Bridge (1934) and the Transporter Bridge (1911).

• Book an adventure on Air Trail, the stunning high ropes course above the River Tees

• Go seal-spotting along the riverbank downstream of the barrage
Known locally as ‘Billingham Bottoms’ a mill once operated here, using the power of Billingham Beck to grind flour. The opening of the A19 in the 1980s dramatically changed the landscape of the valley, but the park remains a peaceful haven for wildlife and people.

The low-lying land frequently floods which, in combination with traditional summer hay cutting or grazing, has resulted in a vast array of wildflowers such as meadowsweet, flag iris and valerian. The wet fields also attract wildlife such as orange tip and comma butterflies and birds including snipe, sedge warbler and reed bunting.

The park is split into three parts. It’s well worth taking time to explore the whole area, but take care crossing the A1027 to reach the southern part of the site and when using the rail crossing to reach the northern section. National Cycle Network Route 14 runs right past the park.

- Wander through the colourful wildflower meadows
- Watch carefully when near Billingham Beck itself and you may catch a fleeting glimpse of a kingfisher
John Whitehead Park

Recent improvements have made this popular town park even better and visitors can now enjoy a fabulous play area, multi-use games area, refurbished tennis courts, outdoor gym, skate park and bowling greens.

Also don’t miss the Café in the Park (now with a lovely outdoor seating area) and the Community Hub - both managed by Billingham Town Council.

The park is named after John Whitehead who was Clerk of Billingham Urban District Council. He served the town for 25 years until his death in 1948. During that period the town grew rapidly as local chemical industries developed and much of the work of John Whitehead was to develop the facilities needed for the new town, including this park.

National Cycle Network Route 14 links the park to Billingham Beck Valley Country Park and Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park.

- Enjoy a game of tennis or improve your fitness on the outdoor gym
- Bring your wheels and try out the fantastic skate park

Take the path through the park on your way to work!
With its woodlands, meadows, wetlands, ponds and lake, Cowpen Bewley Woodland Park is a great place to experience wildlife and enjoy a variety of walks. There is also a small play area for children.

There were once clay pits on the site, with the clay used locally for making bricks. A lake now occupies one of those former pits and is home to a variety of birdlife including coot, pochard, swan, grebe and tufted duck. The impressive mounds on the site are another relic of its industrial past.

National Cycle Network Route 14 runs along the edge of the park, continuing south through Billingham and north towards Hartlepool.

• Climb to the top of the big mound to enjoy a fantastic panorama over the park and wider landscape

• Watch for hares bounding across the meadows, and listen out for skylarks singing overhead

A walk is as good as a run
More information

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council:
www.stockton.gov.uk/outandabout
Tel: 01642 391959 Email: careforyouarea@stockton.gov.uk

Billingham Town Council:
www.billinghamtowncouncil.co.uk
Tel:01642 551171 Email: Info@billinghamtowncouncil.co.uk

Forestry Commission:
www.forestry.gov.uk or
www.forestry.gov.uk/forestry/englandstocktononteesnointercoathamwood

Friends of Ropner Park:
www.forp.org.uk Tel: 01642 633767 [cafes]

Friends of Tees Heritage Park:
www.teesheritagepark.org.uk

The Hub, Stockton-on-Tees:
https://thehubstockton.wordpress.com/

Missing Piece:
www.missingpiecearts.com
Email: info@missingpiecearts.com

Preston Park Museum and Grounds:
www.prestonparkmuseum.co.uk
Tel: 01642 527375 Email: prestonhall@stockton.gov.uk

Rivershack:
www.rivershack.co.uk
Tel: 07795613299 Email: crew@rivershack.co.uk.

Tees Barrage International Whitewater Centre:
www.tbwwc.com
Tel: 01642 678000 Email: enquiries@tbwwc.com

Tees Valley Wildlife Trust:
www.teeswildlife.org
Tel: 01287 636382 Email: info@teeswildlife.org

Teesside Astronomical Science Centre:
Teesside Astronomical Science Centre (who run Wynyard Planetarium and Observatory, with the assistance of Cleveland and Darlington Astronomical Society and Durham Astronomical Society:
www.wynyard-planetarium.net

Teesside Princess:
www.facebook.com/theteessideprincess
Tel: 01642 608038 Email: teessideprincess@btinternet.com

For information on cycleways and public rights of way:

Stockton Council
Information on walking and cycling, including local maps:
www.stockton.gov.uk/arts-culture-and-leisure/

National Cycle Network route maps:
www.sustrans.org.uk/ncn/map

Out and About

Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council wish to thank all the organisations who have assisted with this publication.

This guide can also be downloaded from Council’s website:
www.stockton.gov.uk/outandabout