

# Outdoors

With bountiful wildlife, flower-strewn clifftops, golden meadows, wild moorland and lakes like mirrors, England's natural landscape is a wonderful adventure. In the north, walk ancient trails, climb jagged mountains and cycle rugged hillsides; in the south, discover idyllic sandy beaches, spot sharks and trot through ancient woodland.



> Hadrian's Wall ©VisitBritain Rod Edwards



> Farne Islands, Northumberland ©VisitBritain



> New Forest ©David Gsteadman

## 1 Exmoor National Park International Dark Sky Reserve, Devon

After dark, the remote hills and moorland of Exmoor National Park in southwest England become prime stargazing spots. Remarkably low levels of light pollution allow thousands of stars to shine across the inky darkness on a clear night. This twinkling nighttime spectacle was officially recognised in 2011 when the park became Europe's first International Dark Sky Reserve.

[www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk](http://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk)

## 2 Lake District National Park

Great glacial lakes fringed with clouds of green woodland gleam amid this elevated landscape. The mountainous Lake District is England's largest national park, and the blissfully unspoiled home of Scafell Pike and Windermere: the country's highest peak and biggest lake. Explore on foot, by boat and bike, and unwind with log fires, real ale and hearty meals in the area's historic taverns.

[www.golakes.co.uk](http://www.golakes.co.uk)



> Lake District ©VisitBritain Joe Cornish



> Exmoor National Park ©VisitBritain - Britain on View

## 3 Coasteering in Devon

Get an adrenalin kick on Devon's rocky coastline with extreme sport coasteering. Kitted out with a wetsuit, life jacket and helmet, participants of all ages traverse overhangs, explore hidden caves and relish the frequent opportunities to leap into the deep cobalt waters below. Among Devon's most popular coasteering locations are Torquay, Ilfracombe and Croyde.

[www.adventure-devon.co.uk](http://www.adventure-devon.co.uk)

## 4 Hadrian's Wall Path

Follow the remains of the Roman Empire's mighty stone frontier Hadrian's Wall and see historic forts, modern cities, rolling farmland, weathered heath and miles of far-flung views along the way. This 135km path runs from Wallsend near Newcastle-upon-Tyne on the east coast to the sands and salt marshes of Bowness-on-Solway on the west, largely tracing the wall's original line.

[www.visithadrianswall.co.uk](http://www.visithadrianswall.co.uk)

## 5 Horse riding in the New Forest

Trot through the ancient woodland and leafy glens of this national park in Hampshire. Once a royal hunting ground, the New Forest is today a charming collage of forest paths and wide heathland. Find several riding schools, including those in Beaulieu, Bramshaw, Brockenhurst, Fordingbridge and Sway. Some accommodation also offers stabling services for those travelling with their own horses.

[www.thenewforest.co.uk](http://www.thenewforest.co.uk)



> Whinlatter Forest ©Alistair Young



> Crosby Beach ©VisitBritain Pete Seaward



> Seaham, Durham Coast ©Simon James



> Norfolk Broads ©VisitBritain James McCormick

## 6 Boating on the Norfolk Broads

Glide through England's largest wetland on a river boat. Whether sailing off on an electric craft for a morning's exploration, or relaxing atop an eight-bed cruiser for a week's break, enjoy 200km of waterways lined with wildlife-rich riverbanks, quaint villages and lively market towns. At night, moor up beneath star-filled skies. Guided daytime boat tours are also available.

[www.norfolkbroads.com](http://www.norfolkbroads.com)

## 7 Altura Mountain Bike Trail, Whinlatter Forest, Cumbria

Cycling is serious business at Whinlatter Forest in the Lake District, with the 19km red-grade Altura Trail giving capable mountain bikers a tough course of steep descents, jumps and challenging climbs – as well as breathtaking lake and mountain views. This alpine forest also has a moderate blue-grade route, the 7.5km Quercus Trail, with gentle inclines and a snaking track.

[www.visitcumbria.com](http://www.visitcumbria.com)

## 8 Durham Heritage Coast

Once a coal mining area, this northeastern stretch of coastline snaking between Hartlepool and Sunderland is today a sparkling series of grass-topped cliffs, limestone rock faces and rugged sands. Walk the 14km of shoreline footpath lined with invigorating sea views and populated with wildflowers and burgeoning wildlife.

[www.durhamheritagecoast.org](http://www.durhamheritagecoast.org)

## 9 Beaches

English beaches are a varied bunch. Wide sands and clear waters fringe Cornwall; surfers revel in reliable waves at southwestern spots such as Bantham in Devon; colourful seaside fun fills vibrant Brighton in the south and brazen Blackpool in the northwest; miles of deserted shingle swaths Dungeness in Kent; and north of Liverpool, the cast iron figures of artist Anthony Gormley's Another Place dot Crosby Beach.

[www.visitengland.com](http://www.visitengland.com)

## 10 Wildlife

From the flourishing seal and seabird colonies on Northumberland's rocky Farne Islands to the New Forest National Park's enchanting wild ponies, England is full of wonderful wildlife-spotting opportunities. See playful otters on the squishy bogs of inland nature reserve Whitelee Moor, and head southwest to see basking sharks near Cornwall and dolphins frolicking in the warmer currents lapping the sub-tropical Scilly Isles.

[www.visitengland.com](http://www.visitengland.com)

## 11 Richmond Park, London

Cycle the Tamsin Trail around the edge of London's largest royal park, and roll beneath ancient trees as red and fallow deer graze amid this sweeping mass of soft greenery. In the park's interior absorb the tranquillity of the floral Isabella Plantation, and take in the glorious far-flung view of St Paul's cathedral from King Henry VIII's Mound.

[www.royalparks.gov.uk](http://www.royalparks.gov.uk)



> Richmond Park ©Laura Nolte



› North Pennines ©Peer Lawthe



› Chipping Camden, Cotswolds ©VisitBritain



› Botallack mine, Cornwall ©VisitBritain

## 12 Walking paths

Enchanting walking trails are England's forte. Take in famous London sights on the Thames Path; tread the magnificent beauty of Devon and Cornwall's coastline on the whopping 1,000km South West Coast Path; cross the country on the north's Coast to Coast Walk, or head south to follow the South Downs Way from ancient former capital Winchester in Hampshire to the gentle East Sussex seaside town of Eastbourne.

[www.nationaltrail.co.uk](http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk)

## 13 Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape

In the 18th and 19th centuries the mines scattered across Cornwall and West Devon were a prime supplier of copper and tin throughout the world. This mining heritage is quite literally etched into the land. Across the West Country's World Heritage status metal mining landscape see preserved mineshafts cutting into hillsides, deserted engine houses and museums displaying artefacts, minerals and family histories.

[www.cornish-mining.org.uk](http://www.cornish-mining.org.uk)

## 14 Cotswold Way

Venture through flower-filled pastures and past charming honey-coloured villages on the 102-mile trail that runs from the comely streets of Chipping Campden to the golden hues of Bath. The Cotswolds bask in an abundance of classic English countryside and preserved sacred sites; observe the atmospheric ruins of Hailes Abbey, see statuesque Sudeley Castle and stroll through shimmering barley fields and historical woodland.

[www.nationaltrail.co.uk](http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk)



› St Michael's Mount, Cornwall ©VisitBritain Daniel Bosworth

## Hidden Gems



› Birmingham ©VisitBritain

## 15 River Wey and Dapdune Wharf

Winding through rural Surrey, this historic set of waterways was once a vital transportation route for goods bound for London. Learn about the area's history with the interactive exhibits at the Dapdune Wharf visitor centre, and step aboard the Reliance – one of the last river barges. Join a boat trip for the best way of seeing more of the area.

[www.northpennines.org.uk](http://www.northpennines.org.uk)

## 16 Canal boating, Midlands

Relax amid inland scenery from aboard a traditional English narrow boat. Once the passage of cargo boats chugging raw materials across the country, the Midlands' canal network now offers a wonderfully slow-paced break on the water. Roam peaceful countryside, or explore the waterways of Birmingham, England's canal capital, and see restored heritage buildings and a waterside bustling with life.

[www.visitbirmingham.com](http://www.visitbirmingham.com)

[www.shropshiretourism.co.uk](http://www.shropshiretourism.co.uk)

[www.enjoystaffordshire.com](http://www.enjoystaffordshire.com)