



AllWays Traveller

NewcastleGateshead, UK

www.allwaystraveller.com

Two communities that have bridged the gap

Newcastle upon Tyne is a city in North East England that sits - as its name suggests - on the northern bank of the River Tyne.

Gateshead is across the river on the south bank, and seven bridges provide road, rail and pedestrian links between the two.

Despite historical rivalry, the two communities came together to make a joint, albeit unsuccessful bid for the 2008 European City of Culture (Liverpool won).

This collaboration did, however, reveal the great potential to promote their two destinations as one and the now branded *NewcastleGateshead* offers a string of attractions and a vibrant nightlife - all within easy walking distance.

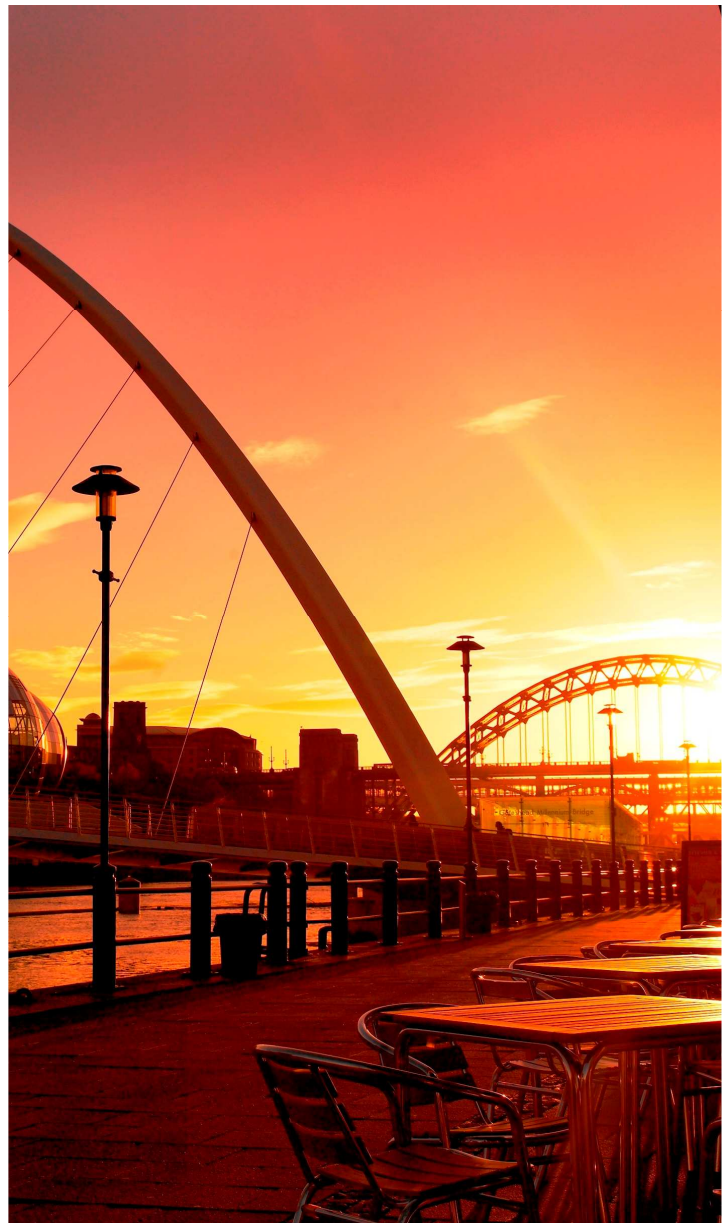
Antony Gormley's dramatic Angel of the North welcomes travellers to the area, and the blue flag beaches of Tyneside and South Shields are a short Metro ride away.

With the Northumbria University campus having 50,000 students, there is also the youthful vibrancy that is so often found in college towns.

Finally there is the genuine welcome that Geordies are known for.

Ashley Gibbins

Managing editor
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A tale of the Tyne



By Ashley Gibbins

The history of *NewcastleGateshead* is long and illustrious and one dominated, perhaps inevitably, by the Tyne.

The Romans first saw the strategic significance of the river and established a fortified settlement here that marked the start of Hadrian's Wall.

www.visithadrianswall.co.uk

The Norman's followed suit after their invasion of England in 1066.

A 'new' wooden castle was constructed - to give the area its name - to be replaced by a stone structure of which impressive parts remain to this day.

From the 13th to the mid-20th Century, the Tyne formed the major transport route for the export of locally mined coal and the river was essential to the area also becoming one of the world's most important centres for shipbuilding.

The decline of the UK's traditional coal mining, shipbuilding and steel making industries, towards the end of the 20th Century, saw the Newcastle and Gateshead river frontage fall into dereliction and decline.

A renaissance

Things changed with the focus of the river and its surrounds was geared to leisure, recreation and entertainment rather than heavy industry.



This got a great kick start with Gateshead being awarded a Garden Festival in 1990.

A large swathe of the south bank was cleared, landscaped and used for public art displays, dance, music and theatre performances and sporting events.

The festival attracted over three million visitors and laid the foundation for the visitor friendly destination the area is today.

The medieval town walls

The medieval town wall was built and reinforced during the 13th and 14th centuries to defend Newcastle from invasion. – particularly by the marauding Scots.

It did its job on at least two occasions although it was breached, during the English Civil War.

An impressive part of the west wall remains and gives a glimpse of what used to surround the then town.

The castle



The castle was built in 1080 by Robert, Duke of Normandy and William the Conqueror's eldest son.

The Castle Keep, which still stands, is one of the finest examples of its kind in the country and is a scheduled ancient monument and Grade I listed building, along with its gate house (known as the Black Gate).

The Theatre Royal



For performances of another sort the city's Theatre Royal, in Grey Street, is one of only nine Grade I Listed theatres in England.

This magnificent theatre is the regional home of the Royal Shakespeare Company, the National Theatre, Opera North and the Rambert Dance Company and stages a full programme of productions.

www.theatreroyal.co.uk

Hidden gems and bridges to boot

On first arrival, Newcastle seems pleasant enough, if a little unremarkable.

A bustling city centre with the figure of Charles Grey, 2nd Earl Grey almost out of sight atop his 140 foot monument.



Grey's Monument

The Grade I listed Grey's Monument was erected to much local hullabaloo in 1938 to acclaim Grey for his defining role in the passing of the Great Reform Act of 1832. It stands at the head of the street also named in his honour.

But little else of note at first glance.

There must be more to the city, I thought, and there is.

A great deal in fact, as I found on a three hour walking tour of the city with blue badge guide, and mine of information, Jan Williams.

When somewhere new, it is so important to seek out a guided tour or make an early visit to an information centre for advice on what to do.

Fascinating visitor attractions

This is particularly the case with *Newcastle Gateshead*, where some fascinating visitor attractions are close at hand but easily overlooked.

Jan took us for a stroll beside the medieval city walls and then on to her 'hidden gems' including Blackfriars coffee shop and restaurant.

With its origins dating back to 1239 and a long and turbulent history that included a spell as a hostel to accommodate King Henry III, Blackfriars lays claim to being the oldest dining room in the UK!

www.blackfriarsrestaurant.co.uk



The Lit and Phil

The Literary & Philosophical Society (Lit & Phil) is the largest independent library outside London, housing over 150,000 books.

The Grade II* listed library building was opened in 1825 and has magnificent reading rooms, which remain largely unchanged.

Regulars to the library use it as a 'social' club and welcome visitors into their midst.

www.litandphil.org.uk

We ended up, as most people will do, at the Quayside with its dramatic river vista.

The Laing Art Gallery



The Laing, in New Bridge Street, houses a permanent collection including landscapes by John Martin, a Lowry and sculpture by Henry Moore.

www.twmuseums.org.uk/laing-art-gallery

The Discovery Museum



The Discovery Museum houses the finest collections of scientific and technical material outside London.

It has fascinating collections of maritime history, social history, regimental militaria and costume.

For more than two centuries developments in science, technology and industry which were pioneered or became established in Tyne & Wear had a powerful influence worldwide.

Examples of world 'firsts' include Charles Parsons' Turbinia, the first vessel to be powered by steam turbine, and Joseph Swan's historic lightbulbs.

Turbinia takes pride of place in the Museum.

www.twmuseums.org.uk/discovery

Criss crossing the river

Seven bridges compete for attention with the Tyne and Millennium bridges allowing foot or bike access across the Tyne to Gateshead and back.



The Tyne Bridge

The Tyne Bridge, the most imposing and dominant, was opened in 1928 and has become an historic symbol of Tyneside's mighty industrial heritage and of its more recent regeneration.

Gulls nest on the sloping, metal crevices of a structure that is a much photographed part of the Great North Run, the world's top half marathon.



The Gateshead Millennium Bridge is an award winning pedestrian and cyclist tilt bridge, which was opened in 2001, and the world's only tilting bridge

On the town : Tiger Tiger

Tiger Tiger is a veritable 'theme park' when it comes to night time entertainment with three floors offering dining, themed bars and booths, private karaoke rooms and dancing to different musical genres and era's.



The newly refurbished Tiger restaurant offers fine dining dishes in sophisticated surroundings and after there is any number of options including, *Groovy Wonderland* - a 70's and 80's disco.

Kanaloa is a Polynesian Tiki bar, the *White Room* emulates Ibiza and *Jewels* is a chic cocktail lounge.

www.tigertiger.co.uk

The Life Science Centre



The Life Science Centre offers visitors hands-on displays, interactive games and demonstrations and includes a 4D Motion Ride and the North's biggest planetarium.

www.life.org.uk

The Biscuit Factory



The Biscuit Factory is an independent art gallery with two floors of paintings, prints, photography, sculpture, glass, ceramics and jewellery by regional, national and international artists, all of which is for sale.

www.thebiscuitfactory.com

St James Park



Newcastle United Football Club is right in the centre of the city and, while it is not easy to get match day tickets there is the chance to take a guided tour of the 52,000 capacity ground.

www.nufc.co.uk

Dining out : Barluga

Barluga is situated in the grand part of town that is Grey Street writes Ann Mealor.



Occupying a former bank, this gastro bar, comes complete with glorious high ceilings, sparkling chandeliers, original wood panelling, luxurious velvet drapes, comfortable leather chairs and a relaxed but refined ambience.



With gin being a bit of a bar speciality, I started with a Hendricks, with cucumber slices and the locally produced Fentemen's tonic.

Ashley had an Edinburgh gin crammed with juicy lime wedges. Both were delicious.

Choosing from an extensive menu, I started with plump scallops served with small deep roundels of soft black pudding and lambs lettuce. The combination worked really well.

Ashley went for puff pastry topped with melted gruyere cheese and chopped tomato garnished with endive lettuce.

My main course was a succulent rib eye steak with herb butter, tasty grilled tomatoes and hot, chunky chips- always a treat.

Ashley had a generous portion of flaky cod in a creamy seafood sauce with mussels and sweet cherry tomatoes.



Barluga has a long wine list, but we went for the house Sauvignon which was very pleasant.

The servers were very friendly and efficient.

There is no end of places to eat and drink in Newcastle, so you have to be good to stand out.

Barluga, which offer a complete dining experience deservedly does very well indeed!

www.barluga.co.uk

And while in Gateshead

BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art



The Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art (BALTIC) is an international centre for contemporary art located alongside the Gateshead Millennium Bridge.

Opened in 2002 in a converted flour mill, it offers a constantly changing programme of exhibitions and events.

www.balticmill.com

The Sage Gateshead



The Sage Is a live music venue that stages concerts of all musical tastes by local and international artists, with performances held morning, lunchtime, afternoon, evening and late at night.

www.thesagegateshead.org

In the open air

The Derwent Walk Country Park and Watergate Forest Park



The Derwent Walk Country Park and Watergate Forest Park, Gateshead has replaced the mining and heavy industry with acres of woodland walks and waterside wildflower meadows.

A place to stay : The Sandman Signature Hotel Newcastle



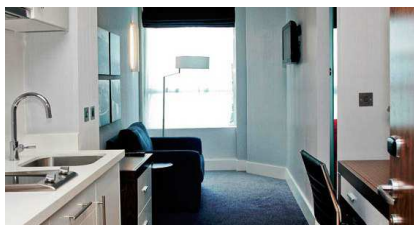
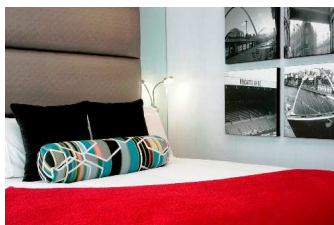
The Sandman Signature Hotel Newcastle is a modern and stylish hotel located a stroll from the city centre.

Although the Sandman group has a portfolio of hotels and resorts in Canada, this is its first venture outside of North America and was chosen carefully – and wisely.

Sandman have converted one time offices of the Scottish & Newcastle Brewery into a 175 room boutique-style hotel.



Located next to the Newcastle United Football Club Stadium at Gallowgate, and opposite the St James Metro station, it provides a fine base for walking to all of local attractions.



It is also a short ride to the Metro Centre shopping mall and the blue flag beaches of South Shields and Tyneside.

The rooms are all fully self-catering with a modern kitchen and a *Waitrose* supermarket delivery service if required.



The Shark Club

For those preferring to eat and drink 'out', the adjoining *Shark Club* is an American style sports bar with a range of beers and lively casual dining.

www.sandmanhotels.co.uk

Saltwell Park



Saltwell Park, which first opened in 1876, has a mansion and 55 acres of grounds., recently received a £9.6 million restoration and is now considered one of Britain's finest examples of a Victorian park.

Gibside



The National Trust site at Gibside includes a Palladian chapel and ruined 18th century house surrounded by parkland.

www.nationaltrust.org.uk

To the coast



A cluster of seaside towns and award-winning beaches are a short Metro ride from NewcastleGateshead, including Whitley Bay and Tynemouth.

More information :


NewcastleGateshead
Your official guide to NewcastleGateshead

www.newcastlegateshead.com



The International Travel Writers Alliance and AllWays traveller

Ashley Gibbins



AllWays

www.allwaystraveller.com

AllWays traveller provides independent travellers with a view of the world from the journalists in the International Travel Writers Alliance.

The International Travel Writers Alliance

www.itwalliance.com



The International Travel Writers Alliance is the world's largest association of professional travel journalists.



Ashley is Chief Executive of the International Travel Writers Alliance and Managing Editor of *AllWays traveller*