PRINTABLE ITINERARY

A 3-Day York Day Trip Itinerary

From our guide **Top 10 Best Day Trips from York**. Print it or save it to your phone.



This plan groups the trips by direction so each day is realistic, mixing train, bus and short walks.

Day 1: Harrogate and Knaresborough

Take a morning train from York to Harrogate. Spend the first part of the day in Valley Gardens and the town centre, with lunch or afternoon tea at one of the tea rooms. Then take the train on to Knaresborough for the viaduct view, the riverside and Mother Shipton's Cave. Return to York by train in the evening, checking the last service before you settle in.

Day 2: Scarborough and Malton

Catch the direct train to Scarborough and spend the morning on the beach and at the castle. Have a fish and chip lunch near the harbour, then head back along the line and stop at Malton for an early evening browse of the food court and a snack before the short train to York. If you have a car, swap Malton for Castle Howard and see the house and gardens in the afternoon.

Day 3: Durham or Leeds

For history, take the train to Durham for the cathedral, a riverside walk and a look around the old centre. For a livelier day, go to Leeds for the Royal Armouries, the Victorian arcades and Kirkgate Market. Both are easy rail trips with plenty of return services. With a fourth day or a car, Whitby, Fountains Abbey and the North York Moors Railway are the natural additions.

The 10 places at a glance

1. Harrogate

How to get there: Trains run from York to Harrogate, typically in around 40 minutes. Check Northern for current times.
How long to spend: Four to six hours; longer if you add Harlow Carr.
Best time to go: Spring and summer for the gardens, though tea rooms and shops make it a good year-round trip.
Tip: Book afternoon tea or the Turkish Baths ahead, especially at weekends.
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2. Knaresborough

How to get there: Trains from York to Knaresborough run on the line towards Harrogate, usually in 30 to 40 minutes. Check timetables as services can change.
How long to spend: Two to four hours.
Best time to go: Late spring to early autumn, when boats are out and the riverside is at its best.
Tip: Walk from the station to the viewpoint near the viaduct for the classic photograph before exploring the town.
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3. Castle Howard

How to get there: Bus from York (check the current operator and days), or drive. The estate has its own car park.
How long to spend: Four to six hours for the house, gardens and lake.
Best time to go: Spring to autumn for the gardens; check winter opening arrangements.
Tip: Buy tickets online ahead if you can, and wear walking shoes because the grounds are large.
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4. Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal

How to get there: Drive, or use a summer Sunday and bank holiday bus (check DalesBus timetables).
How long to spend: Four to five hours for the abbey, water garden and a lunch stop.
Best time to go: Spring to early autumn, though the valley is atmospheric in frosty winter light too.
Tip: Wear good footwear for the paths, and note that some routes include slopes and steps.
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5. Whitby

How to get there: Yorkshire Coastliner bus (check the current timetable and days), or drive.
How long to spend: A full day if you take the bus; five to six hours if you drive.
Best time to go: Spring and autumn for fewer crowds, summer for the best chance of beach weather.
Tip: Climb the 199 steps early in the day, and book or check abbey tickets before you go.
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6. Scarborough

How to get there: Direct train from York to Scarborough. Check TransPennine Express for current times.
How long to spend: A full day, or half a day if you combine the castle with a beach walk.
Best time to go: Late spring to early autumn for beach weather.
Tip: Book train tickets in advance for lower fares, and leave time to walk up to the castle.
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7. Leeds

How to get there: Frequent trains from York to Leeds; the station is in the city centre.
How long to spend: Four to six hours, or a full day with museums and shopping.
Best time to go: Any season, and especially useful in wet weather.
Tip: Travel off-peak for cheaper tickets, and start at the Royal Armouries, which is a short walk from the station area.
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8. Durham

How to get there: Direct train from York to Durham. Check the operators' sites for current times.
How long to spend: A full day if you visit the cathedral, castle tour and river walk.
Best time to go: Any season, but spring and autumn are lovely for the river path.
Tip: Check cathedral visiting and tower arrangements before you go, as they can change for services and events.
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9. Malton

How to get there: Train from York to Malton on the line towards Scarborough, or drive.
How long to spend: Three to five hours with lunch and shopping.
Best time to go: Market days and weekends, though some producers keep limited hours.
Tip: Bring a bag or a small cool bag for your purchases, and check opening days for the food court.
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10. Pickering and the North York Moors Railway

How to get there: Train to Malton then a bus to Pickering (check current services), or drive.
How long to spend: A full day for the railway and a wander around Pickering.
Best time to go: Spring to early autumn, when the heritage services run more often.
Tip: Book steam train tickets in advance on busy days, and bring a layer, as the moors can be breezy.
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Getting around from York

York station is the hub for the easiest trips. Trains run to Harrogate, Knaresborough, Leeds, Durham, Scarborough and Malton, and many connections are frequent. Buy tickets in advance when you can, and check whether an off-peak or day ticket suits your plan. The operators' own sites, including TransPennine Express and Northern, have timetables and live updates.

Buses reach places that trains do not, such as Castle Howard and the coast, but services vary by season and day, and some are limited to summer or weekends. Always check current timetables rather than relying on older guides. Taxis from the nearest station can fill gaps, but ask the price first.

Opening times, prices and transport change often, so check with each venue or operator before you go. For the full guide, photos and FAQs, see https://toptravelinsider.com/top-10-best-day-trips-from-york/.