



# Doncaster

Visitor Guide

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## Welcome to Doncaster

Tourist Information  
01302 734309

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*Clockwise from top:  
Doncaster Market;  
Celebrations at the  
St Leger*

A historical market town, at the southern edge of Yorkshire, Doncaster is renowned for its horse racing, rich railway heritage and its wealth of Georgian and Regency architecture on the Great North Road.

The town of Doncaster sits at the very heart of this borough, and has more than enough to pleasantly surprise the visitor, especially if you have never been here before. History is all around and the architecture in Doncaster reflects the different ages. We have the remains of the original **Roman wall**; **Saxon church architecture**; Norman

castles at **Conisbrough** and **Tickhill**; and a wealth of **Georgian and Regency** architecture reflecting the glory days of Doncaster when it really was the most important town in this part of England. We even have a **Mansion House** dating from 1749 - one of only three surviving examples in England. From the very day the Romans founded the town as "**Danum**", Doncaster has been a great place to meet, do business, relax and enjoy life to the full.

With a wide variety of **museums and galleries**, wonderful green open spaces, or live entertainment, there is something to cater for every taste and every age range. Doncastrians are extremely friendly people and refreshingly honest about life in general!



Take a walk down the **High Street** and down **South Parade**, the original Great North Road, and it's easy to imagine the great stage coaches arriving in town, stopping for rest on their way north or south. Some superb examples of coaching inns survive, such as the **Salutation Inn** or the **Crown** in Bawtry.

Shopping in Doncaster is second to none, especially given the compact size of the town centre, offering the very best in modern retail therapy in the **Frenchgate Shopping Centre**, which sits at one end of Baxter Gate, or the chance to step back hundreds of years and experience **Doncaster Market**, which must surely be one of the finest traditional markets in England at the other end of Baxter Gate.

And for the sheer thrill and excitement, there's nothing to beat a day at the races, especially during September each year when 60,000 visitors descend on the town for the four-day **St Leger Festival**, which culminates in the St Leger Stakes itself, the oldest Classic horse race in the world.

Where to start! There's simply so much to see and do in Doncaster and truly, something for everyone. We hope this guide gives you a glimpse of what's on offer.

Whether you are here on business and have a few hours spare, or have decided to come and explore for a short break, or maybe even longer, we hope we can inspire you to let us give you a warm welcome to Doncaster very soon.



*Clockwise from top:  
Sunny Bar gateway  
to town centre;  
Doncaster Racecourse;  
Mansion House;  
Floral display of  
St George and the Dragon  
in front of the Minster*





## Exploring Doncaster

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*Clockwise from top:  
St Peter's Church,  
Conisbrough;  
Wyre Lady at  
Sprotbrough;  
Elmfield Park and  
Cenotaph*

Doncaster is the largest metropolitan borough in the country, yet remains essentially green and rural, offering a wide variety of landscapes and natural features, interrupted only by picturesque villages and smaller market towns.

With rural Nottinghamshire to the south, the wetlands of Lincolnshire to the east and with gently undulating hills to the north and west we have many wonderful green spaces in and around Doncaster.

Doncaster has a host of nature reserves and country parks, such as the picturesque **Don Gorge** or **Hatfield Moor**. Or why not visit **Potteric Carr**, one of several SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) locations in Doncaster and the largest urban wetland area in the UK outside of London at approximately 500 acres - and just two miles from Doncaster town centre! Within town there are also many fine parks, such as Elmfield Park.

It may surprise you to know that we even have our own **vineyard** at **Skellow**, Summerhouse vineyard, and the very first house in Yorkshire, simply called "**No. 1 Yorkshire**" as you cross the border from Nottinghamshire into Yorkshire on the original Great North Road at **Bawtry**.



For those interested in literary connections, **Conisbrough Castle** was the inspiration for **Sir Walter Scott's "Ivanhoe"**. A visit is well worthwhile, especially if you combine it with a visit to the local **church of St Peter's**, the oldest building in southern Yorkshire and **Saxon** in origin, dating from around AD675. Inside is one of the earliest known **carvings of St George slaying the dragon** found anywhere in England!

Doncaster's position as the wealthiest town in the area, prior to the industrial age, has left us with a legacy of wonderful stately homes in stunning settings, such as **Cusworth Hall** and **Brodsworth Hall**.

And if you're looking for family fun days out, why not visit the **Yorkshire Wildlife Park**, complete with the recently-arrived pride of lions from Romania!



## Pilgrim Fathers

Historians will be delighted to discover the Pilgrim Fathers' connections with the area: **William Bradford** was born in **Austerfield** (as was fellow Pilgrim William Butten) and was Governor of the Plymouth colony from 1621 until his death in 1657. Just four miles down the road, **Scrooby** was the birthplace of **William Brewster** who also sailed on the Mayflower in 1620 and led the celebrations, which have developed into the American Holiday of **Thanksgiving**. William Brewster's home, The Manor House in Scrooby still stands, although it is in private ownership, while the **Churches of St Wilfrid's and St Helena's**, can still be visited.

*Clockwise from top:  
**Cotton Grass on Hatfield Moor;**  
**Brodsworth Hall Gardens;**  
**Bawtry;**  
**St Helena's Church, Austerfield***



## History of Doncaster

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*Clockwise from top:  
Roman coins and  
soldier in Doncaster  
Museum;  
Conisbrough Castle;  
The Danum Shield in  
Doncaster Museum;  
Doncaster Minster  
and Waterfront*

Founded in AD71 by the Romans due to its strategic position on the River Don, transport and connectivity continue to play an important part to this day.

The Romans settled in Doncaster and built a large fort here, naming their town "Danum". A section of the Roman Wall from the fortification remains and can still be seen from within the grounds of Doncaster Minster. Despite much of our Roman history still hidden tantalisingly beneath the streets of Doncaster, many fine exhibits can be

seen in Doncaster Museum, including the famous "Danum Shield", the first of its type found anywhere and named after Doncaster where it was discovered. Even Constantine the Great, first Christian Emperor of Rome and founder of Constantinople, sent his own son, Crispus, to be stationed here.

King Richard I, the Lionheart, granted Doncaster its first charter in 1194, followed by a Royal Markets Charter in 1248 - and we've been busy selling and buying in the same historic market ever since. The market prospered as the town grew and during the English Civil War, Doncaster was captured and re-captured many times.



Due to its position on the **Great North Road**, our **coaching inns** flourished and many still survive, with inviting archways to courtyards behind, still welcoming the thirsty or hungry traveller. Naturally, interest in racing horses developed and despite the local corporation of the time trying to ban the sport, they finally gave in, with the first racecourse being laid out in 1614. The Doncaster Cup, first run in 1766, is the oldest regulated horserace in the world. And just 10 years later in **1776**, the **world famous St Leger Stakes**, the oldest Classic horse race in the world, was run for the first time. It still brings in 60,000 visitors from across the world every year, giving a festival atmosphere to the town each September.

Increased wealth meant that a great many fine buildings were built during this time, including the **Mansion House**, one of only three surviving examples left in England.

With the advent of the industrial age, once again, Doncaster's central position and transport connections played an important part with the main North/South train line coming to Doncaster. With rich coal seams to the west of the town and many mining communities nearby, Doncaster's position was perfect. The now legendary "**Doncaster Works**", known affectionately and very simply as "**The Plant**", was established in 1853 by the Great Northern Railway. Over the following years many of the very finest steam trains were built here, including what is arguably the most famous steam train in the world, the "**Flying Scotsman**" and also the fastest steam train in the world, the "**Mallard**", which reached a speed of 126mph in





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*Clockwise from top:*  
**Brass plaque in the Red Lion pub, where the St Leger Stakes was instituted;**  
**Market Place;**  
**Memorial inside Minster;**  
**Mansion House**

1938. Both trains are from the glory days of LNER, possibly the most romantic era for train journeys. The Doncaster Works is still an operational facility for railway engineering, but its many fine historic buildings are "listed" and safe for future generations. During the 150th anniversary of "the Plant" the doors were opened and thousands came to see many of Doncaster's finest return home. Many artefacts from the age of steam

can be seen in Doncaster Museum and Art Gallery, including the iconic painting by Terence Cuneo, "Giants Refreshed" which is set in the Works.

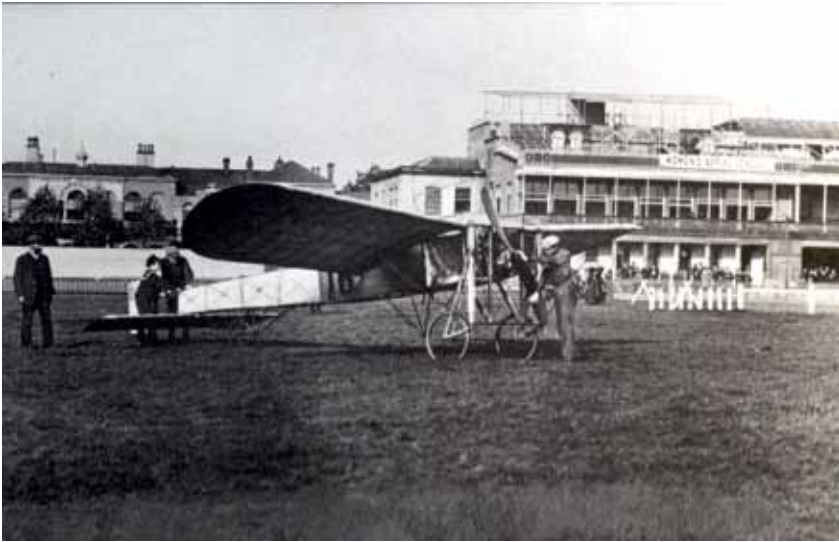
The aeroplane too has played an important part in Doncaster's history from the very dawn of aviation. Doncaster Racecourse played host to **Britain's first ever Aviation Meeting in 1909**, with pioneer aviators arriving



from all parts of the world in aeroplanes which today look rather unsafe. The site of RAF Doncaster now houses **Aeroventure, South Yorkshire Aircraft Museum**, still with many of the original RAF Buildings in use and many historical planes on view, with many more waiting to be restored. Just outside the town centre, RAF Finningley was home to the famous **Vulcan bombers** and when the

station closed, the former base became Britain's newest international airport as **Robin Hood Airport**, which now welcomes passengers from all corners of the globe.

What started with the Romans has left a huge historical legacy and fantastic infrastructure, making Doncaster such an easy place to get to.



*Clockwise from top:  
Robin Hood statue  
at Doncaster's  
international airport;  
Roman 'Rossington  
Dagger';  
Mallard;  
Bleriot monoplane  
at 1909 Aviation  
Meeting*