

FOLLOW IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE NORMANS

Marking 1,000 years since the birth of William the Conqueror with the European Year of the Normans in 2027 - offers a unique opportunity to explore one of the most transformative periods in England's history. From mighty castles and dramatic cathedrals to ancient cities reshaped after 1066, England's Historic Cities offer an unrivalled journey through the Norman legacy.

This 6-day multi-city suggested itinerary connects some of England's most remarkable Norman destinations, showcasing castles, cathedrals, UNESCO World Heritage Sites and immersive experiences ideal for groups and FIT travellers. The route can be extended or adapted to suit different markets, group sizes and travel styles.

Day 1 - CARLISLE

Begin in **Carlisle**, England's northern frontier city, where the Normans transformed a former Roman settlement into a powerful medieval stronghold.

Visit **Carlisle Castle**, founded in 1092 by William II, Carlisle Castle was one of the first royal fortifications established after the Norman takeover of Carlisle. Its imposing Keep and surviving medieval defences reveal the strategic importance of England's northern frontier.

Continue to **Carlisle Cathedral**, which remains one of England's smallest cathedrals and one of the finest surviving examples of Norman architecture in northern England. Discover its remarkable Romanesque nave, with its distinctive round arches and massive columns and the beautiful medieval stained glass in the famous East Window.

If time allows, visit **Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery**, which provides valuable historical context for Carlisle's Roman, Norman and Border history.

Overnight at **The Halston**, with its contemporary boutique apartments and hotel rooms, ideal for FIT. Or **Farlam Hall Hotel**, a luxury country house hotel approximately 20 mins out of the city.

Travel from Carlisle → Durham (122 km)

- By Train: 1h 48m (Northern / LNER)
- By Car: 1h 34m

Day 2 – DURHAM

Durham offers one of the most complete Norman landscapes in England and one of Europe's finest Norman destinations. Its magnificent cathedral, historic castle and dramatic riverside setting combine to create a medieval masterpiece, recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Begin your day at **Durham Cathedral**, one of the finest examples of Norman (Romanesque) architecture in Europe and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Explore its magnificent nave, ancient shrines and impressive stone vaulting, which helped inspire later Gothic architecture.

Take a guided tour of **Durham Castle**, founded in 1072 following the Norman Conquest. Discover the historic Norman Chapel, medieval halls and fascinating stories of the Prince Bishops who ruled the region. Afterwards, enjoy a stroll around Palace Green, and the River Wear, with viewpoints for iconic views of the Cathedral and Castle.



Carlisle © Ioan Said Photography

Overnight at the **Delta Hotels by Marriott Durham Royal County**, situated on the banks of the River Wear in the heart of the city. Alternatively, stay in **Durham University Accommodation** (outside of university term time) for a unique night set within a Norman fortress at the heart of this UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Travel from Durham → Lancaster (164 km)

- By Train: 3h (Cross Country /Northern/ TransPennine Express)
- By Car: 2h

Day 3 - LANCASTER

Start the day in **Lancaster** with a visit to **Lancaster Castle**, granted to Roger de Poitou by William the Conqueror after 1066 as a strategic Norman stronghold guarding England's western approaches. The castle's imposing walls reveal centuries of history, from medieval defence and justice to the trials of the Pendle Witches in 1612. Guided tours explore the historic courtrooms, prison cells and execution sites, bringing the castle's dramatic past to life.

Continue with a guided city tour with **Lancaster Walks, Talks and Tours**, discovering **Lancaster Priory Church**, where a church has stood since 1094 and an image of Roger de Poitou can be seen in the stained glass. Explore Lancaster's wider heritage at the nearby Roman Bath House and **Lancaster City Museum**.

Overnight in the heart of the city at **Domain Boutique Rooms**, perfect for the history-loving FITs to relax and enjoy the surroundings. Alternatively, group accommodation can be found at nearby **Lancaster House Hotel**.

Travel from Lancaster → Chester (126 km)

- By Train: 1h 24m (Avanti West Coast / Northern)
- By Car: 1h 30m

Day 4 - CHESTER

Begin the morning with a **Welcome to Chester Tour** exploring the city's ancient walls, extended under Norman rule to defend the earldom granted by William the Conqueror to his nephew, Hugh d'Avranches, in 1071. Nearby, discover St John the Baptist's Church, home to some of Cheshire's finest surviving Norman masonry and atmospheric ruins. Visit **Chester Castle**, where the Agricola Tower contains the chapel of St Mary de Castro with its medieval wall paintings.



Chester © Ioan Said Photography

Spend the afternoon exploring **Chester Cathedral** discovering the Chapter House window featuring Hugh d'Avranches in Norman battle dress. For a closer look at the building's history, book onto the Cathedral Tower Tour, climbing 216 steps to the top of the Tower for sweeping views across one city, two countries and five counties. Stop for lunch or afternoon tea at Café 1092 in the Cathedral's medieval Refectory, named for the year Hugh, nicknamed "the Wolf," founded the Benedictine Abbey of St Werburgh.

Overnight at **Hotel Indigo & The Forge Restaurant** or head to **The Queen at Chester Hotel**. For evening entertainment head to **Rooftop Social Club** for a lively, informal evening.

Travel from Chester → Lincoln (198 km)

- By Train: 3h 23m (Avanti West Coast / EMR / Northern)
- By Car: 2h 49m

Day 5 - LINCOLN

Few cities tell the story of the Norman Conquest as dramatically as **Lincoln**. William the Conqueror ordered the construction of Lincoln Castle in 1068, establishing royal authority in one of England's most important medieval cities.

Spend the morning at **Lincoln Castle** built just two years after the Norman Conquest, the castle occupies the site of the former Roman fortress and remains one of England's finest Norman castles – the only surviving one with two mottes. It includes the impressive Norman curtain walls, the Lucy Tower, the medieval Wall Walk, the original Norman gateways and the 1215 Magna Carta.

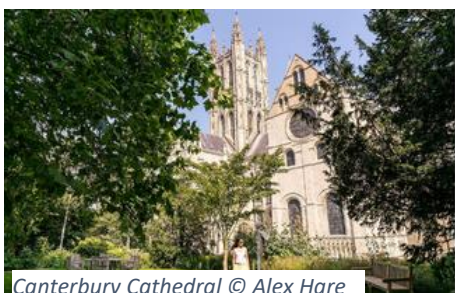
In the afternoon take a visit to **Lincoln Cathedral**, founded in 1072 by the first Norman Bishop, Remigius de Fécamp, the Cathedral retains significant Norman architecture despite later Gothic rebuilding. Visitors can see the magnificent Norman West Front, Romanesque arches, Norman carved frieze and hear the story of the Norman bishops relocating to Lincoln.

Overnight at the **White Hart Hotel** or **The Lincoln Hotel**.

Travel from Lincoln → Canterbury (320 km)

- By Train: 3h 40m (LNER / Southeastern)
- By Car: 3h 28m

Day 6 - CANTERBURY



Canterbury is one of England's most significant Norman destinations, revealing how the Normans transformed the country's religious, political and architectural landscape after 1066. Following the Conquest, it became the centre of Norman religious power.

Visit **Canterbury Castle**, built shortly after 1066 by order of William the Conqueror and one of England's earliest royal Norman castles. Although now a ruin, its Keep and the surrounding Dane John

Gardens provide insight into Norman military strategy and the establishment of royal authority in Kent.

Explore **Canterbury Cathedral**, rebuilt on a grand scale by Archbishop Lanfranc after a devastating fire. Visitors can discover remarkable Norman features including the Norman staircase, the impressive Norman Crypt (completed c.1100) and connections to influential Norman archbishops including Lanfranc and Anselm of Canterbury.

If time allows, visit **St Augustine's Abbey**, thought to be where the Bayeux Tapestry was first stitched. Norman rebuilding transformed the original Anglo-Saxon monastery into a Romanesque monastic complex. Together with **Canterbury Cathedral** and **St Martin's Church**, it forms part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site, celebrating Canterbury's role in the development of Christianity in England.

Overnight at **Canterbury Cathedral Lodge**, with its views over the Cathedral or **The ABode** - right in the heart of the city centre.

To extend your Norman journey, visit York's Clifford Tower and York Minster, and Salisbury's Old Sarum, the Norman foundations of Salisbury Cathedral.

