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This tour will take approximately seven hours. Time to visit tourist attractions is allowed for in our itineraries.



Castle Howard

Castle Howard is one of Britain's finest stately homes, located in the beautiful city of York. Built in 1699, Castle Howard is, today, still the private home of the Howard family. The magnificent house itself, built by the architect Sir John Vanbrugh, and distinguished by its famous dome. Inside there are enormous collections of art treasures that include important paintings by Canaletto, Holbein, Gainsborough and Reynolds, a magnificent collection of antique sculpture, and the porcelain collections include a spectacular Crown Derby botanical dessert service. Outdoors there are temples, lead statues and a startling array of monuments



Helmsley

Just a few miles north, nestling on the edge of the North York Moors in Ryedale, lies the unspoilt market town of Helmsley, complete with four former coaching inns and a dazzling half timbered rectory. The town, with its beautiful riverside walks, traditional tea rooms and genteel country pubs, has certainly lost nothing of its timeless appeal which draws people from all over the world. The Helmsley skyline is dominated by its castle ruins, which date back to around the year 1200. Like so many Royalist strongholds, it was blown up by the Parliamentarians in the Civil War to prevent it from being used again.



Rievaulx Abbey

The majestic, almost regal, appearance of Rievaulx looming from the depths of a narrow river valley symbolises the power and importance of monasticism in medieval England. This enormous Cistercian house, numbering some 150 monks and 500 lay brethren at one time, was the nucleus from which several other northern abbeys were colonised. Although the early 13th century church – reputed to have been one of the finest monastic churches in the North - remains substantially intact, less than half of the outbuildings, recorded at the time of the suppression in 1538, are still in existence.

Byland Abbey

In the early part of the 12th century, a group of Savigniac monks were trying to establish a colony in England, their first base being near Preston in Lancashire, but eventually relocating to Furness in Cumbria. This site suited their purposes very well enabling the monks to prosper and soon they were able to send a small colony of monks to found a daughter house. Initially the monks settled at Calder but, after suffering a Scottish raid and then becoming caught up in a series of monastic disputes with Furness Abbey, they eventually established a base in the small North Yorkshire village of Coxwold. By 1177 Byland Abbey, now under the new Cistercian rule, was finally founded having overcome four false starts and lots of problems. Today the impressive west front of the abbey church, deeply hollowed out where once a great wheel window existed, provides a distinctive landmark to approaching visitors. If you are fortunate enough to see this marvellous ruin bathed in early morning or late afternoon sunlight, the full glory of the mellow sandstone is reflected in an array of soft tones. The village of Coxwold is a little off the beaten track, but the quiet and unspoilt location makes it all the more fitting for such a majestic abbey.

