

RYA North East

The Best Windsurfing Locations

(Northumberland, Tyneside, Co Durham, Cleveland and Cumbria)

These descriptions have been provided by experienced windsurfers residing in and around the North East and Cumbria. Many are popular with other water users and therefore if sailing these venues, have regard for your own safety as well as that of others and above all, treat the environment with care and respect - don't tarnish the image of the sport by reckless and careless behaviour!

Acknowledgements: Photographs by permission of Northumbrian Windsurfing Club, which also publishes a locations guide on its website at <http://www.northumbrian-windsurfing.org.uk/>

Berwick upon Tweed (Spittal)

Access is available at various sites on the south bank of the River Tweed particularly at the car park at Sandstell Point from which launching into Spittal Bay is possible. Watch for ebb tides with strong westerlies and high river flow. Sailing is best at high tides. Berwick Sailing Club situated near the mouth of the river on the south shore has a windsurfing section. Beware of the shipping which uses Tweedmouth Dock and has limited manoeuvring capability in the river mouth. Best wind direction easterly or westerly.

Bamburgh

Just north of the castle is one of the most picturesque venues in the country. To access the beach, turn right after the cricket square along a small road called the Wynding. There is a free car park on the right after the last house. This venue often provides excellent wave sailing and is popular with surfers. Best wind directions are NW or SE and it is possible to launch north of the rocky point by the golf club but be prepared to carry your gear for a reasonable distance. There are no facilities but Bamburgh itself is close by, providing access to numerous pubs, cafes and hotels.

Seahouses

North of the town between Seahouses and Bamburgh there is a long sandy beach with spectacular views of the Farne Islands. There are several launch sites along the beach with car parking and access from the roadside.

The best sites are just out of Seahouses, after the last house on the left, (park on the right) and then a mile further north by the coastguard lookout. The best conditions can be found in NW round to SE winds. There are no facilities but they abound in Seahouses. The harbour at Seahouses is close by, providing a launch site for boats as well as housing the inshore lifeboat.

Beadnell Bay



One of the most popular north eastern venues with the majority of windsurfers sailing from the north end of this 2 mile long sandy bay where there is a manned car park with showers. This end of the bay boasts the only west facing

harbour on the east coast and sailing can take place in all wind directions, with SW being cross shore at the southern end of the bay, where there is a voluntary pay car park next to the "Peacock" farm. Conditions can vary from classic wave sailing to flat water blasting, however beware of the rocks situated in the middle of the bay which are hidden at high water and exposed at low tide.

This is also a very popular location for divers and there is a tractor available for launching boats from the north end car park. Facilities in the area are good with local shops, pubs caravan parks and camp sites and in the summer months the north car park is home to ice cream, baked potato and hot meal vendors.

Newton by the Sea



The site of one of the first windsurfing schools in the country, this small bay is an ideal location for an introduction to sea sailing. The water is flat due to a rocky point and outcrop protecting the bay. Parking in the summer is at the top of the hill but equipment can be off-loaded at the beach first. During the winter, parking is allowed on the square or access roads as parking restrictions do not apply. Flat water can be found in most wind directions except north easterlies. Facilities are restricted to a small pub in the corner of the square and public toilets to its rear.

Seaton Point



This most picturesque beach offers mainly flat water blasting conditions. Best in WSW or SW directions. Sailable at all points of the tide, but beware that high tide leaves no beach, and an awkward carry up stone steps. Suitable for all levels of sailor but beware its exposed nature

and gusty winds close to the shore. Parking is free but limited. No facilities.

Directions: A1068, heading for Alnwick, from the south, follow signs to Boulmer. 0.5 miles before Boulmer, take an unsignposted right turn at the yellow emergency telephone and follow the track to the dunes.

Amble Links

Amble is the preferred location when the sea is rough as Coquet Island and its reefs, situated 1.5 miles directly off this beach, provide an effective barrier to the largest waves, especially at low tide. Sailable in SE, S, W, NW and N directions, this most versatile beach provides a variety of conditions from flat water to great wave sailing. Best suited to advanced intermediates to experts. Best at low to mid tide, beware of dumping waves and rip currents at high tide. No facilities. Directions: A1068, heading for Amble, from the south, take the right turn for Hauxley/Low Hauxley and follow the road for 1.5 miles to the dunes. Take the right fork and drive 300m to the caravan park. Free parking is to the right.

Druridge Bay - Hadston Carrs



Situated at the north end of this six-mile sandy bay, Hadston Carrs is the most often sailed location. Best in S or SW wind directions. This is a regularly sailed beach, best suited to experts, intermediates due to its exposed nature. Offers flat water and good wave sailing depending on wind direction and sea state. Sailable at all points of tide. Free parking is right next to the beach. No facilities.

Directions: A1068, heading for Amble, from the south, take the un-signposted right turn after the turn off for Druridge Bay Country Park.

Blyth South Beach



Launching at the north end of the sandy beach that stretches from Seaton Sluice to the south, Blyth South Beach offers great wave sailing at all points of the tide, but beware of groynes, dumping waves and rip currents at high tide. Best in S or SW wind direction. Pier and jetty at the nearby river mouth to the north offer some element of safety. Free parking is right next to the beach. Facilities include chip shop and ice cream van in high season. Great surfing beach. Directions: A193 from Whitley Bay. First main roundabout before Blyth, first exit and first right immediately after, follow the sign for beach.

Tynemouth Long Sands

A good wave sailing venue with the right conditions. It works best in a NE or SE wind with a good swell running. Access is down the ramp at the southern end of the bay, which has metered parking most of the way down. Facilities include public toilets, a cafe, various ice cream vendors, fish and chip shop and a surf shop. These shops are about half way along the bay at main road level. This used to be the venue for the famous "Roller-Coaster" windsurfing race which took place between here and Blyth and back again. Sailing is possible at all tide states and in other wind directions but gusty off shore winds are prevalent.

Kielder Water

The biggest man-made lake in Western Europe, Kielder Water can provide some exciting sailing on its 9 mile length if you're prepared for the occasional gusts. The main launching area is at Leaplish Waterside Park, approximately half way up the south shore where there is ample parking and rigging facilities. There is also a cafe, public toilets, caravan park and even a swimming and sauna facility.



There is no rescue cover provided so be sure you can cope with the prevailing conditions. Kielder is an ideal stretch of water for longboard cruising with numerous inlets to explore. The prevailing S-SW winds make the leapish shore gusty and fluky but sailing out north towards Plashetts or east toward Tower Knowe provides more constant winds. Short board blasting in westerlies is best launching from Leapish but then sailing downwind to Bullcrag where you have access to a mile long reach across to the north shore and back. If you enjoy sailing on Kielder, consider joining Kielder Water sailing Club. The Club welcomes windsurfers and is located just behind the Visitor Centre at Tower Knowe. More information from 01434 240052. For details of the facilities at Leaplish tel: 01434 250312.

Queen Elizabeth II Park, Ashington

Situated off the A189 Amble road approximately 3 miles outside Ashington, this small stretch of water provides an ideal location for beginners through to intermediates. The lake can be sailed in most wind directions but is best in a westerly. There are limited changing facilities but there is an adequate car park and grassy rigging area. There is a large

Brewsters Family Restaurant and pub on site and Ashington town is only a short drive away. A launch fee is payable at the museum and a season ticket can be obtained from Wansbeck Council Tel 01670 81980. Details of this RYA training centre can be obtained by ringing 0191 2651311.

Derwent Reservoir Sailing Club

Derwent Reservoir offers 3 miles of prime sailing water in a most picturesque setting just off the A68 near Shotley Bridge. It's elevated position guarantees wind on most days with southerly and westerlies providing the best directions.

Open on Wednesdays from 1.00pm (April to September), Saturday and Sundays (mid March till mid December), the Clubhouse has heated changing rooms with showers, a galley serving a range of hot and cold food and a bar.

Day tickets purchased on arrival are required and full information can be obtained from the Club's website at www.drsc.co.uk or telephone 01435 675258. For increased security of vehicles and equipment a card swipe entry system is in place and visitors can simply press the intercom for assistance. The Club has many windsurfing members and offers a warm welcome to everyone wanting to enjoy some excellent sailing with great facilities in a picturesque setting.

Druridge Country Park



Situated off the north east "coastal route" at Hadston village south of Amble, this inland stretch of water offers safe sailing with most wind directions. Best direction is SW where you

can get some good flat water blasting. Launching is best from the ramp at the west end of the lake where there is good parking and rigging facilities. There are no rescue facilities but you're never far from the safety of the shore. For those who want to combine windsurfing with some time on the beach there is an excellent sandy beach some 200 yards away. More information can be obtained from the Wardens office. There are no facilities at the preferred launch site but there is an information and visitor centre at the east end of the lake where you can access toilets. The lake is used by Coquet Sailing Club, an RYA approved training centre.

South Shields

Situated on the south side of the Tyne, park in the Council car park next to the Sand Dancer pub. Car parking charges are in force between March and October, with season tickets available for those who use the area regularly. The best wind direction is NW, northerly is good with waves starting to get larger. NE is OK. but waves start to dump. If you can get through the shore break an easterly is good. S and SW don't bother to get your kit out. Westerly direction produces good flat water but beware this is directly off shore.

Sunderland

Park on the main road along Roker sea front for direct access to the beach. Best wind direction is SW with a southerly producing quite a large swell and chop.

Seaton Carew

Situated on the north side of the Tees and above Redcar, Seaton is easterly facing with a headland to the north which protects it from the worst of the northerly swells. There are some rocks to the south of the sailing area that are only visible at low water. Best wind directions can range from NW to SE but SW blow off the town giving gusty conditions. Parking at Seaton is on grass but launching at high water can be tricky due to the sea wall defences. From A19 follow A689 toward Hartlepool. At the Owton Manor Lodge pub roundabout turn left onto the

A178 and travel past the amusement arcades and the houses leading to the Marina. The car park is approximately 1/2 mile on the right.

Redcar, Majuba Beach

One of the most popular venues in the region and sailable in almost any wind direction, but beware of a slight south running rip and rocks to the southern part of the beach which are only visible at low water. Majuba faces north/north east and gets cross-shore conditions in a SE and W/NW giving good flat water blasting. Any kind of on-shore wind very quickly builds up a swell which can produce very good waves but can also produce "kit destroying" dumpers. There are no facilities but car parking is right by the beach and public toilets can be found at the south end. The beach is situated to the north end of the town centre and can't really be missed.

South Gare

South Gare is a lagoon in the mouth of the Tees which provides a safer sailing venue if the on-shore swell at Redcar is too high. It is sailable in most directions but is frequented mainly when Redcar is unsailable. From Majuba beach turn right at the roundabout and continue on this road for 2-3 miles. the road actually leads to the lighthouse and is rarely used. If it appears you shouldn't be on this road you're heading in the right direction.

Bishopton Lake

Home to Surfstore, the biggest windsurfing retailer in the north, Bishopton Lake provides the ideal location for taking your first steps on a board. But don't stop there, for in a strong SW its the ideal location for practising those short board techniques on flat water. Sailable in all wind directions, the lake provides a safe haven for those who shy away from big expanses of water and is ideal for junior and novice sailors. Facilities are superb with changing rooms and showers, adequate parking, refreshments and of course an excellent stocked shop retailing all the top brands. Equipment for all sailing abilities is available for hire together with wetsuits and buoyancy aids. As an RYA

approved training centre, it offers a wide range of courses including Windsurfing Instructor courses to level 3. The lake is situated on the outskirts of Bishopton Village, just off the A66 between Stockton and Darlington. For further information tel: 01740 631199.

Scaling Dam Sailing Club

Scaling Dam is situated approximately half way between Whitby and Guisborough on the A171 Moor Road and is sailable in most wind directions.

The clubhouse is open every Saturday and Sunday from 1st March to 31st October and Wednesday and Friday evenings from April until the season ends. Club racing takes place on Wednesday evenings and Sundays.

Day sailing is administered by the club and is open to non-members on a 'buddy' system between 1st May until 31st October from Monday to Friday only. Day sailors must obtain a permit from the fishing lodge and pay the day fee.

There is an active windsurfing membership and you can be assured of a warm friendly welcome.

Ullswater



One of the largest English lakes, Ullswater offers some very scenic sailing with the main launch sites being at the north end of the lake on the eastern shore, close to Pooley Bridge. The road from Pooley Bridge to Howton leads to both locations the first being Waterside Farm Campsite. The campsite offers a wide range of

facilities and charges for both camping and day sailing. Car parking is easy and there is wide expanses of grass upon which to rig. Further on toward Howtown is Ullswater Yacht Club where you can sail subject to paying a day fee. The club has all the facilities you would expect and welcomes windsurfers. Both locations are within easy reach of Pooley Bridge where there is a variety of shops, pubs and a cafe. Best wind directions are SW, N or NE. Further down the lake on the west side opposite Hallin Fell are several lay-bys by the waters edge. These are not ideal launch spots for novices and should be avoided. Power boats are rarely seen on Ullswater due to the rigidly enforced speed restrictions but beware of the steamer which ploughs up and down the lake between Glenridding and Pooley Bridge.

Bassenthwaite Lake

Not a particularly well known venue but in NW to N winds produces some good short board sailing with lighter winds producing good sailing in almost all directions. A permit is needed to launch and these can be obtained from the Keswick Tourist information Centre. There are some areas designated as being of special scientific interest where sailing is forbidden and these are mainly at the south end of the lake. This provides a nicely grassed area for rigging, trees for shelter and a lovely spot for a picnic, but camping is not allowed.

Coniston Water

Ideal for a weekend away and popular with north east residents. Launch from Coniston Hall campsite which has all the necessary facilities. Equipment can be left rigged in relative safety and sailing is possible in most wind directions with SW being the best when the wind funnels down the surrounding hills.

Allonby Bay



This venue tends to be for the experts. The bay is in a crescent shape and cross shore winds from SSW to N can be found by moving from car park to car park. The tidal range is huge (up to 9 metres) and the streams are strong. Due to this range it is only sailable 3 hours either side of high water. The shallow waters of the Solway lift up the wave height so you can find suprisingly good wave sailing after a couple of days of strong winds. The rips can be powerful and there is something of a dump at high water. Facilities are limited to a traditional seaside cafe in Allonby itself. For the saner, a moderate wind and high water at sunset can make for some pleasant sailing with very romantic views across to Scotland.