



STUNNING SEASCAPE: Whitby lies amidst the natural wonders of Yorkshire's Jurassic Coast

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a large woman wearing a long leather coat, regales us with tall tales full of the town's early history as a haven for ne'er-do-wells. Thanks to Whitby often being cut off in winter by bad weather on the moors, newcomers, presumably in search of a haven, were not greeted with: "Where do you come from?" but rather "What did you do?"

The next morning we take the 199 steps – yes, we did count them – to the abbey and St Mary's. The audio tour of the ruins gives an insight into how the Benedictine abbey, which dates to 657, fell into disrepair when Henry VIII dissolved the monasteries in 1540. From here, the views of the town, North Sea and Yorkshire's Jurassic Coast are stupendous.

Over on the West Cliff, we can just make out the Whale Bone Arch, a tribute to the old whalers, and the statue of James Cook who set off from here on HMS Endeavour in 1768 to chart Australia and New Zealand.

There's more on the town's maritime history at Whitby Museum in the beautifully manicured Pannett Park. It's home to a hotchpotch of fossils, stuffed seabirds and an exhibit dedicated to the town's other famous sailor, William Scoresby, who saved the lives of countless seamen with the invention of the crow's nest. There is even a mummified Hand Of Glory, the severed hand of a thief used to cast sleeping spells on houses before they were burgled.

We retire for a final meal at Woodlands – Eat restaurant, a short walk from the hotel itself. A tiny, minimalist eatery, it's where Natasha's fiancé and head chef Alex Perkins has been cooking up a local storm and it's not hard to see why. We sample carrot, roast garlic and parsley soup and potted North Sea shrimp, followed by twice-baked Ribblesdale salad and local lobster with hollandaise sauce and home-cooked chips. Again, the portions are Yorkshire-sized but the flavours are deserving of a much, much wider recognition.



COUNTING DOWN: 199 steps from the abbey to the town

THE KNOWLEDGE:

Woodlands – Sleep (01947 893272/www.thewoodlands-sandsend.com) offers doubles from £110 per night (two sharing), B&B. Woodlands – Eat (01947 893438) offers three-course meals from £30. Bram Stoker's Dracula Experience (01947 601923/www.draculaexperience.co.uk), £3 per adult, £2.50 per child (up to 13). Whitby Museum (01947 602908/www.whitbymuseum.org.uk), £4 per adult, £1 per child (five-16). Welcome to Yorkshire: 0113 322 3500/www.yorkshire.com

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