



Harrogate

Famous for its fine architecture and its springs, you can test the natural waters of this North Yorkshire town

WHY GO?

Harrogate's town motto is 'arx celebris fontibus' (citadel famous for its springs), so if you're after a bit of northern spa culture set within a beautiful Georgian backdrop you're in luck. Not only can you still take the town's waters, but ornate Regency architecture abounds too, with tree-lined boulevards and arcades dotted by countless flower baskets hanging above traditional cobbled streets.

Or you can put to the test Charles Dickens' assertion that the Harrogate is the 'queerest place, with the queerest people leading the queerest lives!'

GETTING THERE

By rail

Leave your car at home and catch the train. The service from York to Harrogate will teeter its way over the aqueduct spanning the beautiful River Nidd, affording you (brief) views of picture-postcard Knaresborough.

From London: Trains take around two hours and 45 minutes via York.

From Leeds: Direct trains run taking around 30 minutes.

From York: Direct trains run and take around 30 minutes.

■ **Try splitting your tickets and you could save money** Instead of buying one direct ticket from A straight through to C, consider buying two separate tickets – from A to B and then on to C.

For example, when we booked a journey to Harrogate online with National Rail enquiries (☎ www.nationalrail.co.uk), we found a single from London King's Cross to Harrogate cost £85. However, a single from London to York was £35, and another single from York to Harrogate cost £6.60 – saving over £40. Split-ticketing is perfectly valid as long as your train stops at your B station (York in our case). The amount you can save depends on how far in advance you are booking, the time of day your service leaves and where your B station is.

GETTING AROUND

The centre of Harrogate is fairly compact and you'll find most of its sights nearby to each other, well within walking distance.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

■ The Royal Pump Room Museum

☎ www.harrogate.gov.uk/immediacy-987
You can taste the Harrogate waters here, yet the beautiful exterior of the Royal Pump Room Museum is in sharp contrast with the unpleasant egg odour emanating from the tap. Truly the 'unforgettable experience' promised on the website! The building encloses the strongest sulphur well in Europe, which used to attract 15,000 visitors each summer, while the museum tells of Harrogate's story along with other enjoyable exhibitions.

Admission adults £3.20, child £1.80, concession £2.20, family £8.50

■ The Turkish Baths and Health Spa

☎ www.harrogate.gov.uk/turkishbaths
The other, far more enjoyable way of taking the waters (though not from a spring) is at Harrogate's Turkish Baths and Health Spa. Turkish Baths were common in Victorian times though few remain today and likely none as functional and faithful to the time as this. The Moorish arches and screens

along with the walls of flamboyant glazed brickwork and arabesque painted ceilings float you back through the centuries in a haze of hot scented steams. Brace yourself for the plunge pool before working your way up through the hot chambers – the Tepidarium (warm), the Calidarium (hot) and Laconium (hottest) getting the warmth in to your muscles. **Admission** off-peak (Tues) £12.50, peak (Sat and Sun) £18, all other times £15, six visits £83, 10 visits £136, 12 visits £156

■ Harlow Carr Royal Gardens

☎ www.rhs.org.uk/Gardens/Harlow-Carr
The Winner of a 'Gardeners' World Readers' Choice Award, the Royal Gardens of Harlow Carr provide the perfect backdrop for an appetite-cultivating meander through the array of handsome plant life and beautiful flower arrangements.

Admission adults £7, students £3, children (over the age of 6) £2.50. RHS Affiliated Societies are allowed one free visit per year

■ The Mercer Art Gallery

☎ www.harrogate.gov.uk/harrogate-995
The Mercer Art Gallery houses Harrogate's fine art collection, consisting of some 2000 pieces, mainly from the 19th and 20th centuries. Collections include works by William Powell Frith, Atkinson Grimshaw, Sir Edward Burne-Jones, Dame Laura Knight, Alan Davie and more.

Admission free

■ The Yorkshire Dales

☎ www.yorkshiredalesandharrogate.com
A short drive away from Harrogate, you'll find the Yorkshire Dales. Miles and miles of green, natural beauty wherein you'll see a mosaic of flower-filled meadows, high fells, heather moors and dry-stone barns – perfect for a quiet and tranquil walk to shrug off your worries. You can also enjoy a picnic if the weather is fine.

GOOD PLACES TO STAY

■ The Old Swan Hotel

☎ 0844 879 9071

🌐 www.macdonaldhotels.co.uk/oldswan

This ivy-clad and stately old building, formerly the Swan Hydro, was very much part of Harrogate's spa town culture, once housing its own baths. It's a large-scale hotel, with 136 rooms, the comfort of one of which Agatha Christie enjoyed in 1926 when she pulled her famous disappearing act. **Double room B&B £81**

■ Hotel Du Vin Harrogate

☎ 01423 856800

🌐 www.hotelduvin.com/harrogate/

Located near the centre of town, this hotel overlooks The Stray, a 200-acre common, formed after an act of Parliament was passed in 1778 to protect the land containing many of Harrogate's famous mineral springs. The hotel occupies eight Georgian-style houses, comprising 48 bedrooms and spacious loft suites, and featuring monsoon showers and similar trimmings. Rooms offer a curious mix of chic yet impersonal feel.

Standard rooms £110

GOOD PLACES TO EAT AND DRINK

■ Betty's Tea Rooms

🌐 www.bettys.co.uk

The famous Betty's Tea Rooms were founded by a young Swiss confectioner in 1919, who mistakenly boarded the train from London northwards. But finding the pretty depths of Yorkshire reminded him of his homeland, he stayed. Dales meet Alps at this tea and cakes emporium, serving up traditional meals alongside continental treats. A cup of Betty's Tea Room blend costs £2.95.

■ The Royal Baths Chinese Restaurant

☎ 01423 536 888

🌐 www.royalbathschineserestaurant.com

A one-and-a-half-million pound refurbishment has maintained this plush restaurant in the style of the original famous baths (the modern-day baths sit next door). And plush is what you're struck by as you enter through the revolving doors framed by Doric columns beneath a domed roof. The menu is also suitably posh, though you can devour a lunchtime set menu deal for a reasonable £10.50 up until 5pm.

■ The Old Swan Lounge and Bar

☎ 0844 879 9071

🌐 www.macdonaldhotels.co.uk/oldswan

The peaceful Swan Lounge offers an understated space decorated in pale creams and Victorian cornicing to do, well just that, lounge. The bar serves up a variety of light lunches, afternoon tea, drinks and cocktails. Expect to pay around £2.50 for a soft drink.

TOP TIPS

■ If you can, visit the Turkish Baths on Tuesday, which is off-peak reducing tickets to £12.50.

■ If you're planning to eat out, try and reserve a table in the morning to ensure a place as certain favourites get very busy.

■ Knaresborough might not warrant a whole day's visit, so visit for a few hours and use Harrogate as your base.



GUIDEBOOK AND WEBSITE

🌐 www.harrogate.gov.uk/harrogate-266

🌐 www.yorkshiredalesandharrogate.com

A fine example
of Harrogate's
Victorian architecture



For the report on English spa towns, see p36 of the January 2010 issue of Which? Holiday