

Get away for... THE WEEKEND!

Pack your modern-day bow and arrow
(or just a camera) because we're heading to Robin
Hood's Bay for smugglers, sea views and stories

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY: Carol Kubicki

The red-roofed houses of Robin Hood's Bay lean against each other for support, each one striving to stop their neighbours tumbling into the North Sea. Held together by a net of narrow paths and steps that traverse and climb the hillsides around King's Beck, this former fishing village is so picturesque it hardly seems real. And yet this wasn't built as an attraction or theme park, it was built for people to live and work in.

Wind your way between the cottages and you find streets ghosted with souls from the past, and behind the gaily painted front doors are cherished homes. Hidden beneath the cobbles and behind the stone walls are secret cubbyholes and passageways from the centuries when this isolated place was a smugglers' haven.

Fishing was a legitimate activity and villagers loaded panniers with the fish and stepped out over the moors to markets. In 1885 the railway arrived in Robin Hood's Bay, making it accessible for visitors, and the tourist-welcoming village we enjoy today began to develop.

From our west coast home, we are in North Yorkshire before we have even cracked open the mint imperials, but it is a big county to cross and, on our way to Robin Hood's Bay, we took a break in Knaresborough.

We jumped out of our campervan, keen to reacquaint ourselves with this historic town that sits on a gorge of the River Nidd.

Walking underneath the airy elegance of the arches that carry the railway across the river, red kites circled overhead. A squirrel, ➤



Why?... To enjoy cliffs and bay and picturesque places on a stunning stretch of coastline



MAIN The beach at low tide at the picturesque old fishing village, Robin Hood's Bay*

FAR LEFT The tall arches of the railway viaduct at Knaresborough

BELLOW LEFT We walked between carpets of snowdrops

BELLOW RIGHT Looking over the rooftops of Whitby



US AND OUR 'VAN



Carol Kubicki...

and her husband, Anthony, explore beautiful places in their camper whatever the season. Carol is a keen walker, cyclist and improving birdwatcher



2015 Devon Tempest on a Renault Master MWB 2.3-litre. This is our third blue campervan and we have called them all the 'Blue Bus'

exploiting the detritus ditched by visitors, amused us. Netting draped over the crumbling cliffs will trap both falling rocks and litter and the squirrel acrobatically searched for food, particularly interested in the dregs from a can of cider!

The climb to the castle ruins and town raised my heart rate before we bagged a table in Blind Jack's in the market square. The wooden floors of this cosy pub, soaked with years of beer, led us into a room smaller than the average sitting room, with colourful lanterns strung around the ceiling. Bizarre prints, combining old masters with modern-day objects such as jets and bubble gum, hung on the walls.

We couldn't linger long as we wanted to reach the east coast before nightfall. Whereas the Lancashire coast is characterised by long evenings filled with sunsets, dusk arrives earlier at the North Yorkshire seaside, as this is the land of the morning sun.

It was mercifully still light when we reached Middlewood Farm. We found reception in the solid farmhouse of dressed sandstone with a red pantile roof, so distinctive of this area and, after booking in, we rolled our Renault onto our allocated pitch and soon had the kettle on.

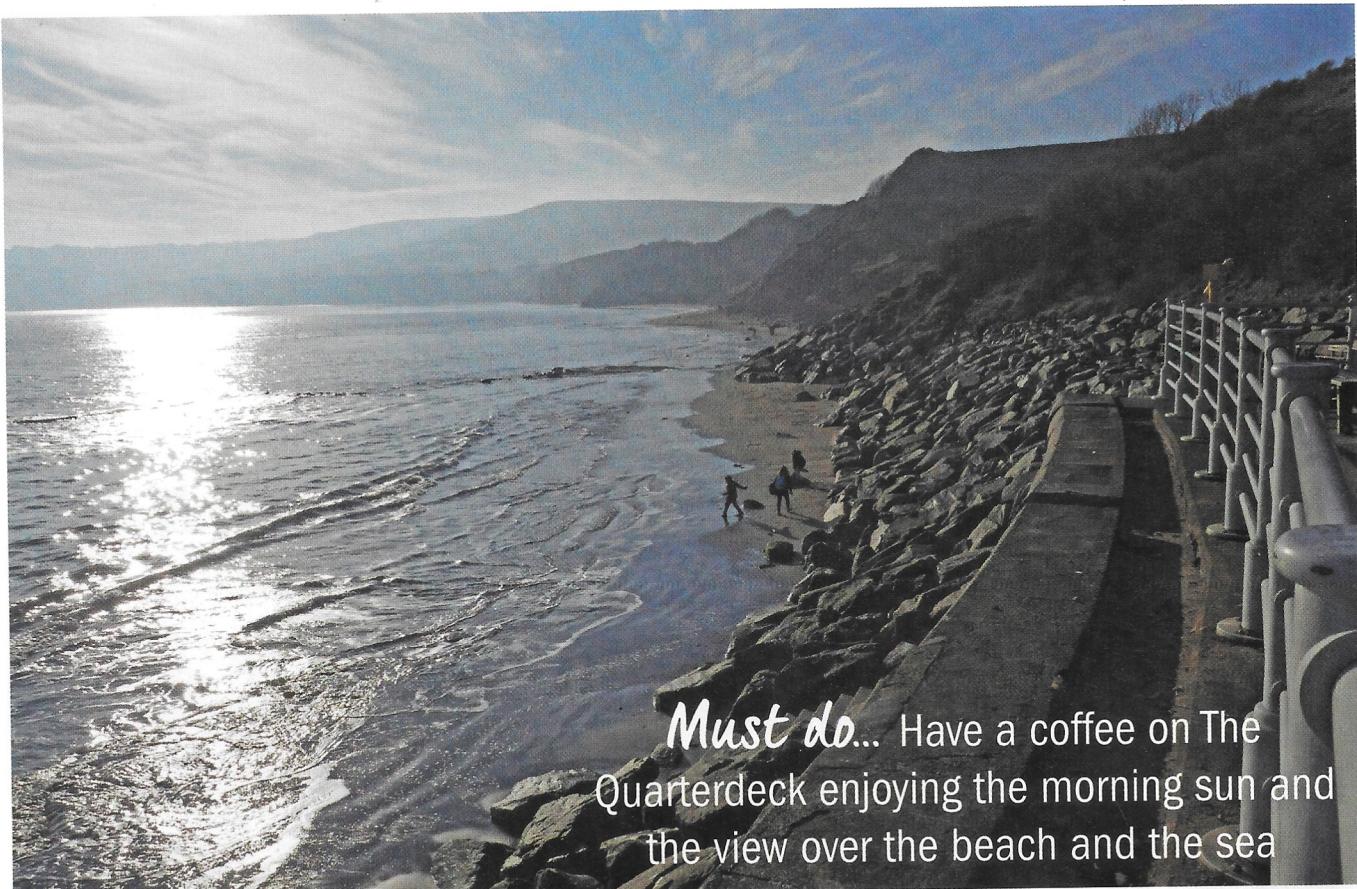
I tend to rise with the sun in the winter months and, as it became light around 10

minutes earlier than it does at home, we were waiting for the early bus at the end of the lane in good time. A double-decker pulled up and from the top deck I winced as the vehicle squeezed between the houses and cars above Robin Hood's Bay, making its way to Whitby.

We leaned on the railings of the swing bridge in Whitby and soaked in the panorama. With hidden yards, cobbled streets and links with Dracula, this seaside town is as picture-perfect as a stage backdrop and I cannot help but fall for it every time we visit. We lost ourselves in the streets of the old town wedged between the cliffs and the water and succumbed to a second breakfast in a café.

Whitby was already crowded by the time we set off up the 199 steps to the abbey. I stopped frequently to look back as the views changed and improved. But instead of visiting the lofty ruins of Whitby Abbey, we strode out along the coastal path, following the cliffs to Robin Hood's Bay.

This section of the Cleveland Way is about seven miles and easy to navigate but isn't the horizontal hike you might expect. Every time a stream meets the cliffs, a deep channel has been eroded to the sea and the path suddenly drops, crosses the stream and immediately ascends back up to the cliffs,



often on worn and irregular steps.

The path meandered around the automated Whitby Lighthouse and the whitewashed keeper's cottages that are now available to rent from Trinity House. I peered over the wall, fantasising about waking up to those expansive sea views and sunrises for a week.

We came into Robin Hood's Bay on the Cinder Track, a 21-mile-long cycling and walking route between Whitby and Scarborough that uses the disused railway line. Negotiating the steep descent into the village, we couldn't resist a pub that advertised having Theakston Old Peculier.

We entered a small room, heavy with coal smoke and reminiscent of times past. A family were playing card games in a corner under the beams and I ordered from the wooden corner bar adorned with blue and white Delph-style tiles. Bottles of spirits crowded on old shelves behind the bar and the firelight reflected brightly in the copper tops of the tables. I tapped my feet, enjoying my favourite beer as 'Johnny B Goode' played on the music system and wondered if I had slipped back to the 1950s.

Later, we explored some of the narrow streets, noticing many of the pretty houses are now holiday cottages. These cluttered streets, with buildings arranged chaotically

on the hillside, do not necessarily suit modern life; your neighbours might be uncomfortably close; there is nowhere to park and confused and inquisitive visitors may suddenly appear in your yard!

The next morning we woke to a perfect February day with sunshine and just a touch of frost. We walked through the fields and woodland to Robin Hood's Bay and bought coffees from the stall on The Quarterdeck overlooking the sea.

It was high tide and the beach and rock pools had disappeared under the waves that lapped against the seawall. The barista told us they get visitors who don't understand the rhythm of the tides and cannot grasp why the beach they had played on the day before has disappeared overnight!

There were more streets of tightly packed houses to wander through and we discovered new corners, including the mosaic on the seawall that tells the story of the area from the Jurassic to the present day. We were too early to visit the local museum, whereas the day before we had been too late, but we picked up a handy leaflet that helped to find our way around.

We could see the Ravenscar headland on the horizon and, picking up the Cleveland Way again, set off to hike south.

The path climbs up between hedges to ➤

ESSENTIALS

HOW LONG

Three nights

WHEN

We visited in February and, while Whitby can be very busy in the school summer holidays, the shoulder months also make a great time to visit North Yorkshire

HOW MUCH

Fuel Average 35mpg (From Lancashire to Robin Hood's Bay, return trip 270 miles)	£58
Site fees.....	£84
Attractions Burton Agnes Hall gardens	£19
Public transport Bus to Whitby.....	£4
TOTAL	£165



BELOW FAR LEFT The coastline at Robin Hood's Bay in the winter sunshine

BELOW Burton Agnes Hall is an ornate Elizabethan house

INFORMATION

Places to eat, what's on and village maps

 robin-hoods-bay.co.uk

Making memories on the North York Moors National Park

 northyorkmoors.org.uk

Whitby stories and seaside charms

 visitwhitby.com

TOP TIPS

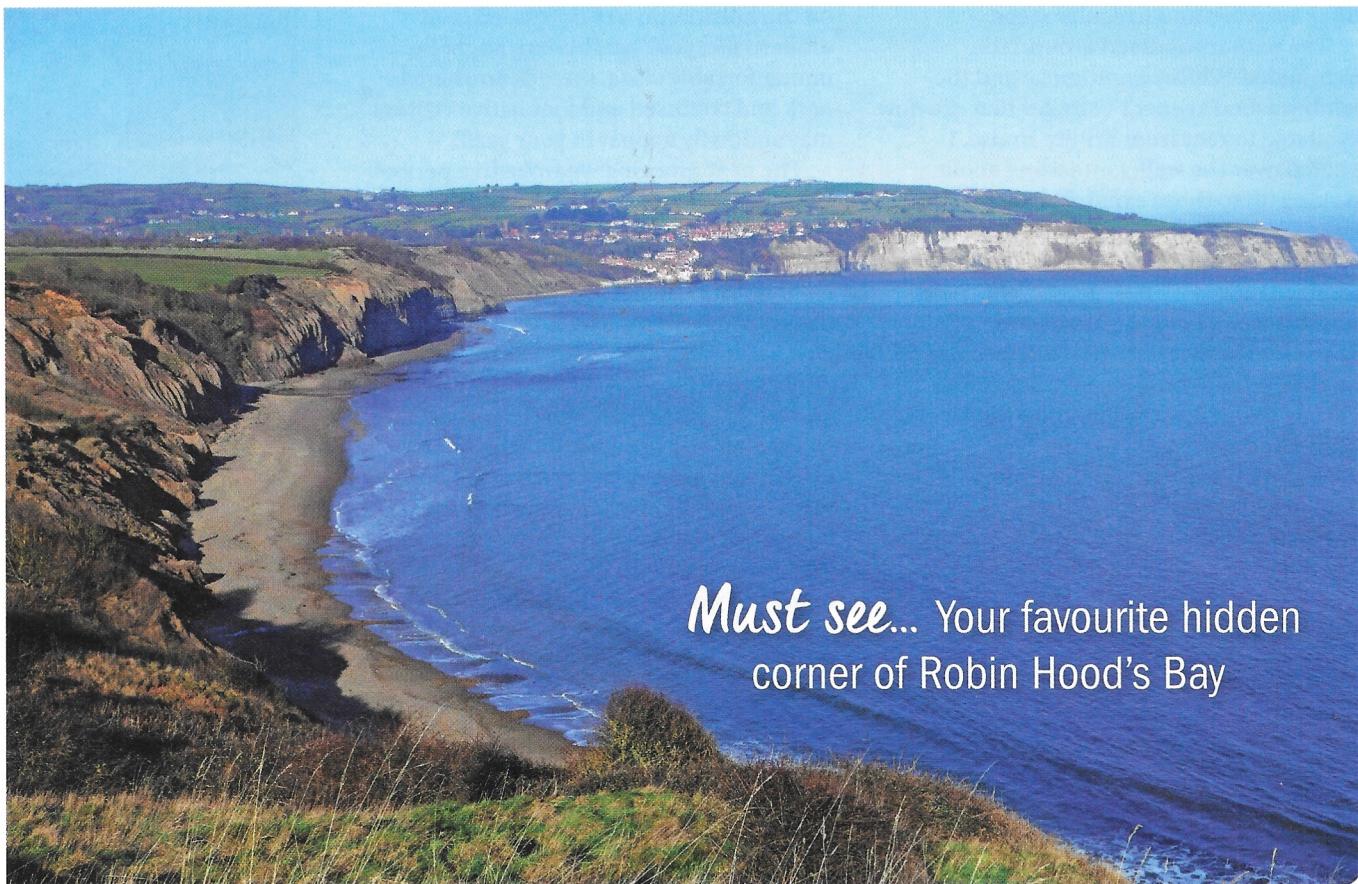
The snowdrops in Burton Agnes Hall gardens are accessible on paths that are suitable for wheelchair users and pushchairs. There are, however, a few steps into the walled garden

 burtonagnes.com

The X93/X94 Middlesbrough to Scarborough bus service stops in Fylingthorpe (about 10 minutes' walk from Middlewood Farm Holiday Park) and in Robin Hood's Bay and Whitby and runs at least every hour during the daytime

 arrivabus.co.uk





Must see... Your favourite hidden corner of Robin Hood's Bay

the clifftop where it opens out.

Crags and the sea were below us to our left and grassy fields of sheep were on our landward side. Once again, the path undulated from cliff height to sea level, the steps into Boggle Hole and the youth hostel feeling particularly arduous.

After climbing up from Stoupe Beck Sands, we rested before heading to the Peak Alum Works, where the National Trust has erected plenty of information boards. We learnt about the unpleasant process of quarrying and making alum for textile dyeing, eventually making sense of the complex process and grasping the scale of the industrial activity on this picturesque stretch of coast.

Raven Hall Country House Hotel sits on the headland at Ravenscar. Visitors can wander around the castellated gardens, and sit and enjoy the view. Looking over the walls, we were grateful to a couple pointing out the large group of seals on the shore below. Without their help we'd have assumed the motionless seals were just rocks!

In the hotel we ordered tea and home-made shortbread and the formally attired waiter presented us with heart-shaped biscuits arranged on a doily especially for Valentine's Day.

The Cinder Track took us on an easier, if

meandering, route back to our campsite where it was even warm enough to leave the 'van door open while we had a brew.

The small clumps of snowdrops left me hankering for carpets of them and, before we crossed the country to get home, we stopped at Burton Agnes Hall. Plenty of other people had apparently had the same whim as we joined a long queue to pay and enter the gardens. The magnificent bay windows of the Elizabethan hall face south, overlooking the formal gardens that are dotted with statues. Beyond the ornamental pond, to the rear of the hall, are winding woodland walks and, in February, the ground under the trees is ankle-deep in brilliant white snowdrops.

Stopping to admire a snow-like blanket of flowers on the edge of the woodland, I got chatting to two women. They were watching a robin as it chirped loudly about territory and mating. "Each robin is a sign of a dead relative," they informed me.

Having had our fill of spring flowers, we walked back to the café, but the lunchtime queue stretched across the stable yard.

Fortunately, we own a campervan and so could throw together a sandwich from what we had to hand. Very soon we were pointing the Blue Bus back towards Lancashire and into the sunset. **mmm**

ABOVE Robin Hood's Bay picturesquely set on the North Yorkshire coast

BETWEEN One of the many narrow streets in Robin Hood's Bay



THE CAMP SITE

Middlewood Farm Holiday Park, Fylingthorpe, Robin Hood's Bay Y022 4UF

01947 880414

middlewoodfarm.com

All year

£ Two adults, pitch and electric: From £24