



Viking Way

THE COMPLETE GUIDE



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Overview

Viking Way: East Midlands Long-Distance Trail Guide

The Viking Way is a 237 km waymarked long-distance footpath across the East Midlands of [England](#), from Barton-upon-Humber on the Humber Estuary to Oakham in Rutland. Usually walked north to south over 10-12 days, it is a moderate point-to-point route: mostly gentle lowland walking, but long enough to require planning. It suits hikers who want villages, river valleys, the Lincolnshire Wolds, Lincoln's historic centre and a low-level thru-hike with varied surfaces rather than mountains.

Route Overview

The route starts beneath the Humber Bridge at Barton-upon-Humber and finishes in Oakham, Rutland. It heads through North Lincolnshire to Barnetby le Wold, climbs into the Lincolnshire Wolds AONB via Caistor, Nettleton, Normanby le Wold and Tealby, then continues through Donington on Bain, Horncastle and Woodhall Spa. South of the Witham valley it reaches Lincoln, then follows the limestone Lincoln Edge past the Cliff Villages to Ancaster, Folkingham, Sewstern Lane, the Grantham Canal, Rutland Water and Oakham. It is a linear, point-to-point walk, so plan end-to-end travel or accommodation transfers. For other English lowland trails, compare the [Amber Valley Route](#) or the [Ashby Canal Trail](#).

Danelaw Roots and the Viking Helmet Waymark

The Viking Way was developed by the Ramblers' Association and Lincolnshire County Council to link the Yorkshire Wolds Way with paths leading south towards the Chilterns. Its name reflects the Danelaw heritage of this part of England, where Norse settlement left many Scandinavian place names. The trail was officially opened at Tealby on 5 September 1976 and uses a Viking helmet on a yellow disc as its waymark. It also forms part of the European long-distance path E2.

Notable highlights

- **Humber Bridge, Barton-upon-Humber:** The trail begins beneath the Humber Bridge, a single-span suspension bridge opened in 1981, with Waters' Edge Country Park and Humber Estuary views nearby.
- **Lincolnshire Wolds AONB:** The northern third crosses rolling chalk hills and quiet villages, including high ground near Normanby le Wold and Wolds Top at around 168 m.
- **Horncastle and Woodhall Spa:** Horncastle is a historic Lincolnshire market town known for antiques shops; an easy former-railway path then leads towards the spa village of Woodhall Spa.
- **Lincoln Cathedral and Castle:** The route climbs into Lincoln past its medieval cathedral and Norman castle, one of the most memorable urban sections of the walk.
- **The Cliff Villages and Lincoln Edge:** South of Lincoln, the path follows the limestone escarpment past villages including Waddington, Harmston, Coleby, Navenby and Wellingore.
- **Rutland Water and Oakham:** Near the finish, the trail skirts Rutland Water, a major reservoir and nature reserve, before ending in Oakham, the county town of Rutland.

Challenges to expect

The Viking Way is not mountainous, but 237 km of field paths, grassy tracks, bridleways and lanes adds up. Expect undulating walking in the Lincolnshire Wolds and along the Lincoln Edge, plus muddy field and valley sections after rain. Waymarking uses the Viking helmet roundel, but carry OS mapping or a reliable digital map. Accommodation exists in towns and villages, though some nights may require off-route transfers. For harder hill walking elsewhere, see the [Beacons Way](#) or the [Anglesey Coastal Path](#) for a coastal alternative.

Key Data

Country	United Kingdom, England
Distance	237 km
Duration	10-12 days
Difficulty	Moderate
Trail type	Point to point
Elevation gain/loss	610 m
Highest point	168 m
Terrain & landscape	Hills, Rural, Forest, Wetlands
Trail surface	Dirt, Grass, Gravel, Paved
Accommodation	Hotels, Guesthouses, Campsites
Average daytime temp.	15°C
Chance of rainfall	Moderate
Estimated cost	\$
Optimal season	Spring, Summer, Autumn
Accessibility	Family Friendly, Dog Friendly On Leash
Facilities	Restrooms, Established Campsites, Picnic Areas, Public Transport Access Points
Permits & fees	No permits or fees

Introduction

The Viking Way is a long, steady crossing of the East Midlands: 237 km from Barton-upon-Humber beneath the Humber Bridge to Oakham in Rutland. It suits walkers who want a proper point-to-point journey without mountain terrain, following a waymarked line through farmland, river valleys, historic towns and quiet villages.

The northern stages give the route its shape and character, climbing into the Lincolnshire Wolds through Caistor, Nettleton, Normanby le Wold and Tealby. This is big-sky chalk country rather than high country, with the trail never rising much above 170 m.

Further south, the walk changes pace through Horncastle, Woodhall Spa and the Witham valley before reaching Lincoln. From there it follows the Lincoln Cliff and Heath, passes through the Cliff Villages, then continues by ancient green lanes, the Grantham Canal at Woolsthorpe Locks and the shore of Rutland Water.

What the Viking Way asks for is time, planning and tolerance for lowland conditions. The walking is moderate rather than technical, but accommodation is thin in some rural stretches, public transport is patchy away from the main towns, and field paths can be muddy after rain.

This guide covers the practical decisions that matter: stages, daily mileage, accommodation, food, transport, terrain and the common mistakes to avoid.

Stage-by-Stage Guide

Stage 1: Barton-upon-Humber (Humber Bridge) to Barnetby le Wold — 23 km

The route begins beneath the Humber Bridge on the south bank of the Humber Estuary, close to Waters' Edge Country Park, then leaves Barton-upon-Humber on the Viking-helmet waymarks and heads south into North Lincolnshire countryside. This is a substantial opening day rather than a gentle prologue, with a long lowland walk over field paths, tracks, bridleways and lanes.

Underfoot, expect typical lowland conditions: grassy margins, cultivated-field edges and occasional hard surfaces. After wet weather, field sections can be slow and muddy, so waterproof footwear and gaiters are more useful here than the modest elevation profile might suggest.

Food and water should be sorted in Barton-upon-Humber before leaving, as services become less predictable once the route is in open countryside. Barnetby le Wold is the overnight target, but accommodation and evening food should be booked or checked ahead rather than assumed.

Barton-upon-Humber has a railway station on the Barton line, a short walk from the Humber Bridge start. For Barnetby le Wold and intermediate access, use current local bus and taxi information; this should be checked before travelling.

Navigation is generally helped by the Viking-helmet discs, but this first stage is not a place to rely on waymarks alone. Carry OS mapping or a reliable GPX, particularly where field-edge paths meet lanes and farm tracks.

Stage 2: Barnetby le Wold to Caistor — 15 km

This shorter stage continues south towards the Lincolnshire Wolds, moving from lowland North Lincolnshire into more rolling country. It is a useful day for settling into the rhythm of the route before the more distinctly Wolds-based walking that follows.

The ground remains non-technical, with field paths, tracks, bridleways and lanes. Gradients are moderate, but the walking becomes more undulating as the route approaches Caistor.

Caistor is one of the more practical overnight stops in the northern part of the walk, with accommodation more likely here than in smaller villages. Even so, rooms should be booked ahead, especially if walking at weekends or during holiday periods.

Food and water planning is straightforward if Barnetby le Wold and Caistor arrangements are made in advance, but do not rely on finding regular supplies between them. Check opening times before setting off for the day.

Public transport away from the main rail-served endpoints is more limited, so any section-walk exit or luggage transfer around Caistor should be arranged before travelling. Navigation is not technically difficult, but watch for missed field-path turns where the route crosses agricultural land.

Stage 3: Caistor to Tealby — 15 km

This is one of the classic Lincolnshire Wolds stages, passing Nettleton, Normanby le Wold and Walesby before reaching Tealby. The route crosses rolling chalk hills and quiet valleys, giving a stronger sense of

height and openness than the mileage suggests.

Near Normanby le Wold the trail passes close to Wolds Top / Normanby Top, around 168 m, the high ground of the Lincolnshire Wolds. It is not a mountain summit day, but it is a clear high point in the character of the northern third of the Viking Way.

Expect a mix of field paths, grassy tracks, bridleways and minor lanes. Chalky and grassy sections can be slippery after rain, and exposed field edges can feel slow in wind despite the modest altitude.

Caistor is the best place to leave fully supplied. Tealby is a village finish rather than a large service centre, so food, water and accommodation should be checked and booked ahead; an off-route transfer may be needed if no suitable bed is available.

The villages on this stage give useful road access points, but public transport should not be assumed. For navigation, take particular care around field junctions and village exits, where a missed waymark can send walkers onto the wrong lane or farm track.

Stage 4: Tealby to Donington on Bain — 17 km

From Tealby the route continues through the Lincolnshire Wolds towards Ludford and Donington on Bain. This is a quieter rural stage, still within the rolling chalk landscape, with the walking broken by villages rather than towns.

Terrain is moderate and varied: lanes, footpaths, bridleways and grassy tracks, with repeated small rises and descents rather than one sustained climb. Mud can be an issue in valley and field sections after rain.

Food and water options should be treated as limited between the stage ends. Carry enough for the full day unless current village services have been checked in advance.

Donington on Bain is a small rural finish, so overnight planning matters. Accommodation may be thin or absent on-route, and a taxi or pre-arranged pickup to a nearby larger place may be required.

Road access is available at the villages, but public transport arrangements should be checked before travelling. The navigation is not complex in clear weather, yet the mix of paths and minor lanes makes a GPX or OS map useful for keeping the line through the Wolds.

Stage 5: Donington on Bain to Horncastle — 22 km

This stage links Donington on Bain with Horncastle, passing through Goulceby and gradually leaving the higher Wolds towards the southern edge of the area. It is a longer rural day, with a more practical town finish at Horncastle.

The walking remains lowland and non-technical, but the distance makes pacing important. Expect field paths, bridleways, lanes and grassy tracks, with mud likely in wetter periods.

Horncastle is a historic market town on the River Bain and is one of the better places on the route for accommodation and resupply. It is a sensible point to plan a laundry stop, food top-up or schedule adjustment if the first Wolds stages have been slow.

Carry food and water from Donington on Bain unless current facilities at villages en route have been checked. Do not rely on frequent cafés or shops during the rural middle of the day.

Road access improves as the route approaches Horncastle, but public transport should still be checked in advance. Navigation is generally straightforward with waymarks, though agricultural sections require attention at field boundaries and lane crossings.

Stage 6: Horncastle to Bardney — 24 km

This is one of the longest stages in the 12-day schedule, but it includes easier-going former-railway walking. From Horncastle the route follows the Spa Trail towards Woodhall Spa, then continues through the Witham valley via Stixwold and Southrey to Bardney.

The Spa Trail gives a flatter, more surfaced character than the Wolds stages, and the later Water Rail Way corridor through the Witham valley is also gentler underfoot. Even so, the 24 km distance is significant, and a steady start from Horncastle is advisable.

Woodhall Spa is the main place on the day where services are most likely to be useful, and it is also a possible alternative overnight stop if splitting the stage. Between Woodhall Spa and Bardney, treat food and water as limited unless current village facilities have been checked.

Bardney is a rural overnight point, so book accommodation before committing to this stage plan. If accommodation is not available in Bardney, arrange a taxi or pickup rather than expecting to sort it out on arrival.

Navigation is easier than on some field-heavy stages because of the former-railway sections, but do not become complacent at junctions and village approaches. The main warning is distance: the terrain is kind, but tired walkers can still make mistakes late in the day.

Stage 7: Bardney to Lincoln — 20 km

From Bardney the Viking Way continues along the Witham valley, passing Stainfield and Fiskerton before entering Lincoln. This is a lower, flatter stage with river-valley walking and former-railway paths giving a different feel from the Wolds.

The route uses surfaced trackbed sections associated with the Water Rail Way and follows the broad corridor of the River Witham. Conditions are generally easier underfoot than on muddy field stages, though wet weather can still affect unsurfaced links and verges.

Lincoln is the major mid-route hub and the most practical place on the trail for accommodation, food, rail connections and rest-day logistics. The route's urban highlight comes as it climbs into the historic city, with Steep Hill, Lincoln Cathedral and Lincoln Castle close to the line of the walk.

Carry enough food and water from Bardney for the day, as village services before Lincoln should be checked rather than assumed. Lincoln is the place to restock properly before the long southern half.

Lincoln has extensive rail connections to Newark, Nottingham, Sheffield, Doncaster and beyond. Navigation changes character here: waymarks lead into an urban environment, where street junctions and crowds can be more confusing than open countryside, so keep the map or GPX available.

Stage 8: Lincoln to Wellingore — 22 km

Leaving Lincoln, the route heads south through Bracebridge Heath, Waddington, Harmston, Coleby, Boothby Graffoe and Navenby to Wellingore. This is the start of the Lincoln Cliff and Heath section,

following the limestone escarpment and its line of Cliff Villages.

The walking is gently undulating rather than steep, but it is more rolling than the Witham valley. Expect a mixture of field paths, tracks, bridleways and lanes, with long views west from the escarpment in clear weather.

Lincoln is the obvious place to buy food before setting off. Villages along the Cliff may have variable facilities, so check current opening times and carry enough water and lunch for the full stage.

Wellingore is a village finish, and accommodation should not be left to chance. If no suitable bed is available on-route, arrange a taxi transfer from Wellingore or a nearby road-access point.

This stage has several village entries and exits, so navigation errors are more likely at street-to-field transitions than on open tracks. There may be short sections of lane or road walking; use normal road-walking caution, especially where verges are narrow.

Stage 9: Wellingore to Marston — 25 km

This is the longest stage in the listed 12-day itinerary and should be treated as a full day. From Wellingore the route continues south through Leadenham, Fulbeck, Carlton Scroop and Ancaster before reaching Marston.

The landscape remains lowland and gently rolling across the Lincoln Cliff and Lincoln Heath, with a mix of field paths, bridleways, lanes and tracks. Ancaster is a notable landmark on the line of the Roman road Ermine Street and provides a useful psychological break in the day.

Because of the distance, start with food and water for the full stage unless current facilities in the villages have been checked. Do not assume that every village on the map will provide a reliable resupply point.

Marston is a small end point for such a long day, and accommodation may be limited. Book ahead or arrange a transfer; this is one of the stages where logistics can matter more than the walking difficulty.

Road access exists at several villages, giving potential bailout or pickup points if pre-arranged. Navigation is mostly straightforward, but fatigue over the final kilometres can make field-path junctions and lane crossings easier to miss.

Stage 10: Marston to Woolsthorpe — 16 km

This shorter stage heads from Marston through Long Bennington and Sedgebrook to Woolsthorpe, reaching Woolsthorpe Locks on the Grantham Canal. It is a useful recovery day after the long Wellingore to Marston stage.

The terrain is still lowland, with field paths, tracks and lanes before the canal-side finish. The Grantham Canal at Woolsthorpe Locks is one of the distinctive landmarks of the southern section.

Food and water should be planned before leaving Marston, with Long Bennington and Sedgebrook treated as possible but not guaranteed service points unless checked ahead. The shorter distance reduces risk, but rural opening times can still affect the day.

Accommodation at or near Woolsthorpe should be booked in advance. If staying off-route, arrange the transfer before walking, as this is not a place to depend on finding last-minute options.

Public transport away from the main towns is limited and should be checked before travelling. Navigation around canals, lanes and field paths can involve several junctions close together, so avoid simply following the most obvious track without checking the waymarks.

Stage 11: Woolsthorpe to Sewstern — 16 km

From Woolsthorpe the route follows the prehistoric green-lane corridor of Sewstern Lane, passing through Saltby and Buckminster before reaching Sewstern. This is one of the most characteristic southern stages, trading towns for old trackways and open rural walking.

Sewstern Lane is a drove-road style green lane, so conditions can vary with weather and use. After rain, rutted or grassy sections may be muddy, and progress can be slower than the modest distance suggests.

Carry food and water from the start unless current facilities at villages en route have been checked. This is not a stage to rely on spontaneous resupply.

Sewstern is a small rural finish, and accommodation may be thin or unavailable on the route itself. A pre-booked B&B, inn, taxi pickup or self-guided operator transfer may be needed.

Road access is possible at villages, but public transport should be checked before travelling. Navigation along green lanes is often simple while on the lane, but care is needed at junctions where multiple tracks or bridleways meet.

Stage 12: Sewstern to Oakham — 23 km

The final stage leaves Sewstern and passes Thistleton, Greetham, Exton, Whitwell and Barnsdale before reaching Rutland Water and finishing in Oakham. It is a varied last day, moving from rural lanes and field paths to reservoir-side walking and a town-centre finish near Oakham Library.

The route remains lowland, with no technical ground, but 23 km is still a solid final stage. Near Rutland Water the scenery changes again, with the reservoir shore providing the main landmark before the walk into Oakham.

Carry enough food and water from Sewstern unless current services in the villages have been checked. Oakham is the reliable end-of-route resupply and accommodation centre, but the middle of the day should be treated as rural.

Oakham has a railway station on the Birmingham-Standed line via Leicester and Peterborough, making it the easiest place to leave the route by public transport after Lincoln. Accommodation in Oakham should still be booked ahead if finishing at a busy time.

Navigation is helped by the sequence of named villages and the Rutland Water approach, but keep the map or GPX active until the end. The final miles can feel deceptively easy; tired walkers should still watch waymarks through village edges, paths around the reservoir and the approach into Oakham.

Recommended Itinerary

Standard 12-day itinerary

This is the most practical through-walk schedule for most independent walkers: long enough to keep the daily distances manageable, but compact enough to avoid adding too many nights in villages where accommodation can be limited. The stages below follow the route's common accommodation hubs rather than trying to mirror every official section exactly.

Book the rural nights before committing to travel dates. If accommodation is unavailable at a stage end, the usual solution is to stay off-route and arrange a taxi or B&B pickup; this should be checked before travelling.

Day	From	To	Approx. distance	Why this stage makes sense	Services/accommodation notes
1	Barton-upon-Humber, beneath the Humber Bridge	Barnetby le Wold	23 km	A purposeful opening day that gets you away from the Humber Estuary and into the first inland section of North Lincolnshire.	Barton-upon-Humber has a railway station and is a practical access point. Check accommodation at Barnetby le Wold before relying on it, and arrange a transfer if needed.
2	Barnetby le Wold	Caistor	15 km	A shorter day after the opening stage, with the route moving towards the Lincolnshire Wolds.	Caistor is one of the more useful Wolds stops for overnight planning. Book ahead, especially in peak walking months.
3	Caistor	Tealby	15 km	A compact Wolds day through the northern hills, with Nettleton, Normanby le Wold and Walesby on or near the line of travel. The high ground near Wolds Top / Normanby Top is passed early in this part of the walk.	Tealby is a small village, so do not leave accommodation to chance. If staying elsewhere, arrange the pickup before walking the stage.
4	Tealby	Donington on Bain	17 km	A moderate rural stage through the Wolds, keeping the day short enough for slower going on field paths or muddy sections after rain.	Donington on Bain is a rural overnight point. Accommodation and evening food options should be checked before travelling.
5	Donington on Bain	Horncastle	22 km	A fuller walking day that brings you out to Horncastle, a strong resupply and accommodation stop at the southern edge of the Wolds.	Horncastle is one of the better places on the route for beds and services. It is a sensible place to reset before the Witham valley section.

Day	From	To	Approx. distance	Why this stage makes sense	Services/accommodation notes
6	Horncastle	Bardney	24 km	This stage uses the flatter former-railway corridor through Woodhall Spa and the Witham valley villages, including Stixwould and Southrey, before reaching Bardney.	Woodhall Spa can be useful if the day needs splitting, but the standard itinerary continues to Bardney. Check Bardney accommodation early, or arrange a transfer from the end of the stage.
7	Bardney	Lincoln	20 km	A manageable approach to Lincoln via the Witham valley and Fiskerton, followed by the climb into the historic city.	Lincoln is the best mid-route hub, with rail links and a wide choice of accommodation. It is the obvious place for a rest night if needed.
8	Lincoln	Wellingore	22 km	The route leaves the city and follows the Lincoln Cliff and Heath through villages such as Bracebridge Heath, Waddington, Harmston, Coleby and Navenby.	Accommodation becomes thinner again south of Lincoln. Wellingore or nearby arrangements should be booked before leaving Lincoln.
9	Wellingore	Marston	25 km	One of the longer days, continuing along the limestone escarpment and Lincoln Heath via Leadenham, Fulbeck, Carlton Scroop and Ancaster.	Treat this as a key booking stage. If Marston accommodation is unavailable, arrange an off-route overnight and transfer.
10	Marston	Woolsthorpe	16 km	A shorter day after the long Lincoln Heath stage, heading through Long Bennington and Sedgebrook to Woolsthorpe Locks on the Grantham Canal.	Woolsthorpe is not a large trail town. Confirm accommodation, food and any taxi arrangements before committing to this stop.
11	Woolsthorpe	Sewstern	16 km	A steady rural stage using Sewstern Lane, with Saltby and Buckminster in the wider line of the route.	Services are limited on this part of the walk. Carry what is needed for the day and confirm the overnight or pickup in advance.
12	Sewstern	Oakham	23 km	A satisfying final day through the southernmost countryside of the route, passing towards Greetham, Exton, Rutland Water and Barnsdale before finishing in Oakham.	Oakham has accommodation and a railway station, making it the practical end point for onward travel. Check train times before fixing the final day.

Slower 13- or 14-day variant

A slower itinerary suits first-time long-distance walkers, anyone carrying a full pack, and walkers who want more margin for muddy field paths or short winter daylight. The easiest way to add time is not to shorten every day, but to split one or two of the longer or logistically awkward stages.

Adjustment	How it works	Who it suits	Booking notes
Split Day 6 between Horncastle and Bardney	Use Woodhall Spa as an intermediate overnight or transfer point, then continue through Stixwould and Southrey to Bardney the next day.	Walkers wanting an easier transition from the Wolds into the Witham valley.	Woodhall Spa has more obvious accommodation potential than many smaller rural stops, but availability should still be checked before booking.
Split Day 9 between Wellingore and Marston	Break the long Lincoln Heath stage around the Leadenham, Fulbeck or Ancaster area, depending on where accommodation or a transfer can be arranged.	Walkers who prefer to avoid back-to-back 22–25 km days south of Lincoln.	This is a rural accommodation problem rather than a navigation problem. Check official mapping before booking and arrange any taxi transfer in advance.
Add a rest night in Lincoln	Keep the walking stages unchanged, but pause at the mid-route hub before continuing south along the Cliff Villages.	Walkers using public transport, anyone managing minor injuries, or those who want a more relaxed schedule.	Lincoln is the simplest place on the route to add a flexible night because it is a major transport and accommodation hub.

For a 13-day walk, split either Horncastle–Bardney or Wellingore–Marston. For a 14-day walk, split both, or add a Lincoln rest night and split just one long stage.

Faster 10-day variant

A 10-day schedule is realistic only for fit walkers who are comfortable with longer lowland days and who have accommodation or transfers firmly arranged. It works best in late spring, summer or early autumn when there is enough daylight to handle delays from mud, field-edge navigation or road-walking sections.

Day	From	To	Approx. distance	Why this stage makes sense	Services/accommodation notes
1	Barton-upon-Humber	Barnetby le Wold	23 km	Keeps the standard opening day.	Check Barnetby le Wold accommodation or transfer options in advance.
2	Barnetby le Wold	Tealby	30 km	Combines the shorter Barnetby–Caistor and Caistor–Tealby stages into one long Wolds day.	Only suitable if the Tealby overnight is secure. Carry enough food and water for a longer rural day.
3	Tealby	Donington on Bain	17 km	Gives a shorter recovery day after the longer Wolds stage.	Rural overnight; book ahead.

Day	From	To	Approx. distance	Why this stage makes sense	Services/accommodation notes
4	Donington on Bain	Horncastle	22 km	Rejoins the standard rhythm and reaches a stronger service town.	Horncastle is a sensible place to recover and resupply.
5	Horncastle	Bardney	24 km	Uses the flatter Spa Trail and Witham valley corridor.	Bardney arrangements should be fixed before leaving Horncastle.
6	Bardney	Lincoln	20 km	A moderate day into the main mid-route hub.	Lincoln is the best place to solve kit, accommodation or onward transport issues.
7	Lincoln	Wellingore	22 km	Follows the Cliff Villages south from Lincoln.	Book Wellingore or arrange an off-route transfer.
8	Wellingore	Marston	25 km	A long but logical continuation across the Lincoln Heath section.	This is a key rural booking point. Do not assume accommodation will be available on arrival.
9	Marston	Sewstern	32 km	Combines the Marston–Woolsthorpe and Woolsthorpe–Sewstern stages into the hardest day of the faster plan.	This is the crux of the 10-day itinerary. Accommodation, food and transfer arrangements must be in place before attempting it.
10	Sewstern	Oakham	23 km	Completes the route via the Rutland Water approach to Oakham.	Oakham has a railway station for onward travel; check current train times before fixing the finish.

If the 32 km Marston–Sewstern day looks marginal, use the 12-day itinerary instead. On the Viking Way, the main challenge is rarely altitude; it is the cumulative effect of distance, mud, field paths and rural logistics.

Planning the Route

How many days to allow

Most walkers should plan the Viking Way as a 10–12 day walk, with 12 days giving the most manageable rhythm. The route is lowland and non-technical, but the distance still adds up, and several days involve long stretches of field paths, lanes and grassy tracks rather than fast, hard-surfaced walking.

A 12-day itinerary fits the natural accommodation hubs better than a very fast schedule. The typical daily stages range from about 15 km to 25 km, with longer days such as Barton-upon-Humber to Barnetby le Wold, Horncastle to Bardney, Wellingore to Marston and Sewstern to Oakham needing an early start if the ground is muddy or daylight is short.

Fit walkers can compress the route into fewer days, but this is usually a logistics decision rather than a walking-quality decision. Longer days make the thin accommodation sections harder to manage and leave less margin for navigation checks, wet fields and slow going through the Wolds or along rural rights of way.

Let accommodation shape the itinerary

Accommodation planning matters more here than the gradients. Barton-upon-Humber, Caistor, Horncastle, Woodhall Spa, Lincoln and Oakham are the easiest places to build a plan around, but there are rural stretches where beds are limited or absent close to the line of the trail.

Book the whole route before committing to transport, especially in the Lincolnshire Wolds, the Lincoln Cliff villages and the southern section towards Woolsthorpe, Sewstern and Rutland. A workable itinerary may require a taxi transfer to an off-route B&B, inn or campsite for one or more nights.

Self-guided walking operators can simplify this by arranging accommodation, baggage transfer and some pickups, but independent walkers should check those arrangements directly before relying on them. Current availability, prices and transfer options should be checked before travelling.

Using the official sections versus practical stages

The official route is divided into 13 sections, but many walkers combine or adjust them to fit accommodation. The 12-day structure commonly used by independent walkers keeps the route practical while avoiding too many very short days.

The main planning point is that section ends do not always match the best overnight options. For example, the Witham valley and the southern rural stages need more attention than the city-to-city sections, because public transport and accommodation are less dense away from Lincoln and the larger market towns.

Do not rely on simply walking until the next village and finding a bed. Treat each overnight stop as a fixed booking, then plan food, water and transport around that booking.

Section hiking and splitting the route

Section hiking is practical, but it needs more transport planning than a trail with frequent railway stations. Barton-upon-Humber has a railway station close enough for the start, Lincoln is the obvious mid-route rail hub, and Oakham has a railway station at the finish.

Between those points, expect to use a mix of local buses, taxis and lifts to reach or leave smaller villages. Timetables can be limited in rural areas, so current bus and train times should be checked before travelling.

Lincoln is the easiest place to split the route into northern and southern halves. A northern section covers the Humber Bridge, the Lincolnshire Wolds, Horncastle, Woodhall Spa and the Witham valley; a southern section takes in the Lincoln Cliff, Ancaster, Sewstern Lane, Woolsthorpe Locks, Rutland Water and Oakham.

Food, water and daily resupply

Plan each day as if there may be no reliable shop or café between the start and finish of the stage. The route passes through many villages, but not every village should be assumed to have food, opening hours may be limited, and services can change.

Carry lunch, snacks and enough water for the full day, especially on the rural stages through the Wolds, the Cliff villages and the approach to Rutland. Refill whenever there is a dependable opportunity at accommodation or an open service in a town or larger village.

Horncastle, Woodhall Spa, Lincoln and Oakham are the most useful resupply points in a route plan. Smaller overnight stops should be treated as places to sleep first and service centres second unless current facilities have been checked.

Navigation and mapping

The Viking Way is waymarked with a Viking helmet on a yellow disc, and most of the route is also part of the European long-distance path E2. Waymarking is helpful, but it should not be the only navigation method.

Carry OS mapping or a reliable GPX, particularly for field-edge walking, woodland paths, valley sections and places where paths cross farmland. The relevant OS Explorer sheets are 234, 247, 272, 273, 281, 282 and 284; Landranger sheets are 106, 107, 112, 113, 121, 122, 130 and 141.

Check live diversion notices before setting off, especially where improvement works or path closures may affect the line. Visit Lincolnshire and Lincolnshire County Council are the key places to check for current route information.

Weather, ground conditions and timing

Spring, summer and autumn are the best seasons for planning the route. There is no mountain weather to manage, but rain can make field paths, grassy tracks and valley sections slow and muddy.

The Lincolnshire Wolds and the Lincoln Cliff are undulating rather than steep, but repeated small climbs and descents still affect pace over several days. In wet periods, allow more time than the map distance suggests and avoid overloading the itinerary with back-to-back long stages.

In shorter daylight months, the 20–25 km days need careful starts, especially where accommodation or transport is fixed at the far end. A headtorch is sensible for late finishes, but the better solution is to keep daily distances realistic.

Permits and access

Permits are not the main planning issue on the Viking Way. The important practical constraints are accommodation availability, transport between rural villages, food and water planning, and keeping to the signed public route.

If camping, use established campsites or arrange permission in advance. Do not assume that a rural stretch with few beds will also offer informal camping options.

Towns, Villages and Overnight Stops

Accommodation is uneven on the Viking Way. The larger towns and established overnight hubs are the safest places to book beds, while several rural stage ends are best treated as places where a pre-booked room, taxi transfer or self-guided walking-holiday pick-up may be needed.

Do not rely on finding accommodation or evening food by simply arriving in the smaller villages. Book well ahead, check current pub/café/shop opening hours, and confirm any taxi or baggage-transfer arrangements before travelling.

Barton-upon-Humber

Barton-upon-Humber is the practical start base for the trail, with the route beginning beneath the Humber Bridge on the south bank of the Humber Estuary near Waters' Edge Country Park. It is the best place to stay the night before starting if you want an unhurried first morning.

The town is one of the named accommodation hubs on the route, with hotels, guesthouses, B&Bs and inns available in the wider mix of Viking Way stopping places. Start-day food and water should be sorted before leaving town, as the route soon heads into more rural walking.

Barton-upon-Humber has its own railway station on the Barton line from Cleethorpes/Grimsby, connecting at Habrough. The station is a short walk from the Humber Bridge start, making this one of the easier access points on the whole route.

Barnetby le Wold

Barnetby le Wold is the usual first overnight stop on a 12-day itinerary, reached after the opening stage south from Barton-upon-Humber. It is a useful staging point because it breaks the northern approach to the Lincolnshire Wolds into manageable days.

Accommodation and food should be arranged in advance. Do not assume there will be a suitable last-minute bed or evening meal available, particularly outside the main season or on quiet weekdays.

Local onward transport may be possible, but details should be checked before travelling. If using taxis to reach accommodation off the line of the walk, book them before setting out from Barton-upon-Humber.

Caistor

Caistor is one of the key early overnight hubs and a sensible stop after Barnetby le Wold. It sits on the northern Lincolnshire Wolds section and gives a practical base before the route continues through Nettleton, Normanby le Wold and the high ground near Wolds Top / Normanby Top.

The brief identifies Caistor as one of the places with accommodation in the overall mix of hotels, guesthouses, B&Bs and inns. It is therefore one of the safer places to target for a booked bed in the northern third of the walk.

Use Caistor as a planning point for supplies and the next day's food, but check current opening hours before relying on specific services. Public transport beyond the main rail-served towns is more limited, so buses and taxis should be checked in advance.

Nettleton, Normanby le Wold and Walesby

These villages sit in the Lincolnshire Wolds between Caistor and Tealby. They are useful landmarks on the route rather than guaranteed overnight bases.

Normanby le Wold is close to Wolds Top / Normanby Top, the high ground of the Lincolnshire Wolds at about 168 m. Although that is not high by mountain standards, this is one of the more undulating parts of the Viking Way and can be slower than the flat railway-path sections farther south.

Do not build a schedule around finding accommodation or food in these villages unless it has been booked or checked directly. They are better used for navigation, pacing and route context than for dependable services.

Tealby

Tealby is a common overnight stop after Caistor and one of the most useful villages in the Lincolnshire Wolds section. It also has route significance: the Viking Way was opened at Tealby in 1976.

Accommodation may be available in the village or nearby, but this is a small rural stop and should be booked well ahead. If no suitable bed is available, a taxi transfer from the trail may be needed.

Food and pub arrangements should be checked before arrival, especially if walking midweek or outside summer. Tealby is a good place to reset before continuing towards Ludford and Donington on Bain.

Donington on Bain

Donington on Bain is a standard stage end between Tealby and Horncastle. It is useful because it breaks the Wolds section before the longer day into Horncastle.

Treat it as a rural overnight stop: book accommodation before committing to the itinerary, and check whether evening food is available on the day you arrive. If services do not line up, arrange a taxi transfer rather than assuming there will be alternatives close by.

This is also a sensible point to review weather and ground conditions. The field, valley and track sections of the Viking Way can become muddy after rain, which may affect timings into Horncastle the following day.

Horncastle

Horncastle is one of the best resupply and accommodation towns on the northern half of the Viking Way. It is a historic Lincolnshire market town on the River Bain at the southern edge of the Wolds, and it makes a strong overnight stop after Donington on Bain.

The brief identifies Horncastle as one of the towns with accommodation options, including the wider route mix of hotels, guesthouses, B&Bs and inns. It is a good place to book a proper rest night if the Wolds section has been wet or slow underfoot.

Horncastle is also a practical service point before the route heads onto the Spa Trail towards Woodhall Spa and onward into the Witham valley. Check current shop, café and pub opening hours before relying on a specific meal or resupply stop.

Woodhall Spa

Woodhall Spa lies on the flat former-railway Spa Trail section after Horncastle. It is an appealing and useful stopping place, particularly for walkers who want to shorten the Horncastle-to-Bardney day or build a more relaxed itinerary.

The village is named as one of the places with accommodation in the overall Viking Way mix. It can work well as an overnight stop if beds are available, but this may alter the following day's distance and should be planned carefully.

Woodhall Spa is also a sensible food and rest stop before the route continues via Stixwold and Southrey towards Bardney. Check current services before setting out from Horncastle, as opening hours can affect whether it functions as a lunch stop, overnight base or simply a passing point.

Stixwold, Southrey and Bardney

After Woodhall Spa the route follows the Witham valley corridor through Stixwold, Southrey and Bardney, using surfaced former-railway paths including the Water Rail Way. This is generally easier underfoot than the Wolds, though weather and surface conditions can still affect pace.

Bardney is the main practical stop in this group and a standard overnight point before walking on to Lincoln. Because rural accommodation can be thin, a Bardney night should be booked in advance rather than left flexible.

Stixwold and Southrey are useful intermediate villages but should not be assumed to provide accommodation, food or transport without checking. If planning a shorter day, confirm both the overnight bed and any taxi arrangements before committing.

Fiskerton and Stainfield

Fiskerton and Stainfield sit on the approach between Bardney and Lincoln. They are useful pacing points on the Witham-valley stage but are not the main accommodation targets for most walkers.

This part of the route is often planned as a through-walk from Bardney to Lincoln. If attempting to stop short of Lincoln, accommodation and transport should be arranged before travelling.

Lincoln is the next major service centre, so carry enough food and water for the day rather than relying on minor settlements en route.

Lincoln

Lincoln is the major halfway logistics hub of the Viking Way. The route climbs into the historic city via Steep Hill, passing Lincoln Cathedral and Lincoln Castle, and it is the best place on the trail for a rest day, resupply, laundry and public-transport connections.

Accommodation choice is much broader here than in the rural villages, and Lincoln is one of the route's named accommodation centres. Booking ahead is still sensible, especially around busy weekends or events.

Lincoln has a major railway station with services to Newark, Nottingham, Sheffield, Doncaster and beyond. It is the most practical place to join, leave or split the Viking Way into northern and southern

halves.

Bracebridge Heath, Waddington, Harmston and Coleby

South of Lincoln the Viking Way leaves the city and follows the Lincoln Cliff and Heath through a line of villages including Bracebridge Heath, Waddington, Harmston and Coleby. This is classic stage-planning country: villages appear regularly, but that does not automatically mean there are walk-in beds or all-day food options.

These places are useful for pacing the Lincoln-to-Wellingore stage and for arranging taxi pick-ups if required. Any accommodation, evening meal or public transport should be checked before travelling.

The Lincoln Cliff gives long views west, but the practical issue for walkers is exposure to weather and the cumulative distance after leaving Lincoln. Carry enough food and water from the city if services have not been checked.

Navenby and Wellingore

Navenby and Wellingore are part of the Cliff Villages section south of Lincoln. Wellingore is the standard stage end on the 12-day itinerary, making it a key place to sort accommodation or transfer logistics.

This is one of the stretches where planning matters more than improvisation. Accommodation may be limited, and a taxi transfer to an off-route bed may be needed if nothing suitable is available on the line of the walk.

Navenby can also be useful as a service or break point, but specific food, pub and shop opening times should be checked. Treat Wellingore as a booked stop, not as a place to arrive and search.

Leadenham, Fulbeck and Carlton Scroop

These villages lie on the long rural section between Wellingore and Marston. They are important for route progression along the Lincoln Cliff and Lincoln Heath, but they are not presented as primary accommodation hubs.

Because this is a longer stage, walkers should plan food and water before leaving Wellingore. Do not assume that every village will have open services at the time you pass through.

If shortening the stage, any overnight stay or taxi connection should be arranged in advance. This should be checked before travelling.

Ancaster

Ancaster is a notable village on the Viking Way, lying on the line of the Roman road Ermine Street and associated with Roman and archaeological history. It is a useful intermediate point on the Wellingore-to-Marston stage.

Its main value for most walkers is as a landmark and potential break point rather than a guaranteed overnight base. Accommodation, food and transport should be checked directly before building an itinerary around stopping here.

The stage through this area can feel more remote than the map of village names suggests. Carry enough provisions to reach the booked end point.

Marston and Long Bennington

Marston is the standard overnight stop after Wellingore on the 12-day itinerary. Long Bennington follows on the route towards Sedgebrook and Woolsthorpe.

This is another area where accommodation can be thin or may require a short transfer. Book the night before fixing the walking schedule, and confirm how you will get to and from any off-route accommodation.

Food and evening-meal arrangements should be checked in advance. If services are uncertain, carry extra food from the previous larger stop rather than relying on late-day options.

Sedgebrook and Woolsthorpe

Sedgebrook and Woolsthorpe sit on the approach to the Grantham Canal, with Woolsthorpe Locks forming one of the key southern landmarks of the Viking Way. Woolsthorpe is a standard stage end before the route continues towards Sewstern.

Woolsthorpe is useful because it breaks the southern section into manageable days, but it should be treated as a pre-arranged stop. Accommodation and food are not something to leave to chance here.

This is also the point where the character of the route shifts towards the Grantham Canal and the old green-lane line of Sewstern Lane. Check the next day's weather and ground conditions, as grassy tracks and lanes can be slow after rain.

Saltby, Buckminster and Sewstern

The route continues through the rural southern section via Saltby and Buckminster to Sewstern. Sewstern is the standard overnight stop before the final push to Oakham.

This is one of the most important places to plan carefully. Accommodation may be thin, and many walkers may need a taxi or arranged transfer to a bed off the route.

Do not rely on finding food on arrival unless it has been checked. Confirm any pick-up point, mobile reception expectations and next-morning return to the trail before setting out from Woolsthorpe.

Thistleton, Greetham, Exton, Whitwell and Barnsdale

These villages and localities form the final approach through Rutland towards Rutland Water and Oakham. The route passes Thistleton, Greetham and Exton, then reaches the Rutland Water area around Whitwell and Barnsdale before finishing in Oakham.

Most walkers will treat this as the final day from Sewstern to Oakham, so these places are more likely to be used for breaks than overnight stops. If splitting the final stage, accommodation and transport should be booked before travelling.

Barnsdale is significant because the route comes in around the shore of Rutland Water before reaching Oakham. Check food and service options in advance if relying on a stop near the reservoir.

Oakham

Oakham is the finish and the most practical end-point base, with the Viking Way ending in the town centre near Oakham Library. As the county town of Rutland, it is the natural place to book a final night rather than trying to travel away late in the day.

The brief identifies Oakham as one of the route's main accommodation centres, with the general mix of hotels, guesthouses, B&Bs and inns available across the trail's larger stops. It is also the best place at the southern end for a proper meal, onward travel and post-walk admin.

Oakham has a railway station on the Birmingham–Stansted line via Leicester and Peterborough. Check current train times before fixing the final day, especially if planning to connect onwards the same evening.

Getting to the Start

The Viking Way starts in Barton-upon-Humber, beneath the Humber Bridge on the south bank of the Humber Estuary, near Waters' Edge Country Park. The Viking-helmet waymarks lead south from there, so the main practical task is getting to Barton-upon-Humber and allowing enough time to reach the bridge-side start before beginning the first stage to Barnetby le Wold.

By train

Barton-upon-Humber has its own railway station, on the Barton line from Cleethorpes and Grimsby, with connections at Habrough. The station is the most useful public-transport access point for the start and is a short walk from the trailhead beneath the Humber Bridge.

For walkers coming from farther afield, plan the journey through the national rail network to Habrough, Grimsby or Cleethorpes, then onward to Barton-upon-Humber. Train times, connection windows and Sunday services should be checked before travelling.

If arriving late in the day, consider staying locally rather than starting immediately. The first stage to Barnetby le Wold is a full walking day, and there is little advantage in beginning tired or short of daylight.

By bus

Local bus services may be useful for reaching Barton-upon-Humber from nearby settlements, but bus provision in this part of North Lincolnshire is not the same as in a city. Do not build a tight first-day schedule around an unconfirmed bus connection.

Current routes, stops, evening services and Sunday timetables should be checked before travelling. If a bus connection is awkward, a pre-booked taxi from a nearby railhead such as Habrough, Grimsby or Cleethorpes may be simpler, especially with a full pack.

By car

Driving to the start is straightforward for drop-off, as the trail begins near the Humber Bridge and Waters' Edge Country Park in Barton-upon-Humber. For a thru-hike, however, the Viking Way is a point-to-point route finishing at Oakham, so leaving a car at the start creates a return-journey problem at the end.

Most walkers using a car should think carefully about the end-to-end logistics before booking accommodation. Options include being dropped at Barton-upon-Humber, parking at the Oakham end and travelling to the start by rail, or arranging a taxi transfer as part of the wider itinerary.

Do not assume that convenient long-stay parking is available at or beside the trailhead. Long-stay parking arrangements, restrictions and charges should be checked before travelling.

From the nearest airport

There is no airport directly tied to the start of the Viking Way, and the practical onward journey is by rail or taxi to Barton-upon-Humber. For international walkers, choose an arrival airport based on rail

connections towards Habrough, Grimsby, Cleethorpes and Barton-upon-Humber rather than on straight-line distance to the Humber Bridge.

Airport-to-rail transfers, late arrivals and weekend timetables can be the weak point in the journey. This should be checked before travelling, and an overnight stay before starting is sensible if the inbound journey is long.

Where to stay before starting

Barton-upon-Humber is the most convenient place to stay before beginning the walk, with accommodation available in the town. Booking ahead is recommended, particularly if starting at a weekend or in the main walking season.

Staying in Barton-upon-Humber allows an unhurried start from the Humber Bridge and avoids relying on an early connection on the morning of the first stage. If local accommodation is full, nearby rail-connected towns on the approach to Barton-upon-Humber may be workable, but the morning transfer to the trailhead should be planned and checked in advance.

Getting Home from the Finish

The Viking Way finishes in Oakham town centre, near Oakham Library. Oakham is a practical end point because it has its own railway station, but onward journeys should still be planned before the final walking day, especially if you expect to arrive late after the Rutland Water section.

By train

Oakham railway station is the key onward transport point from the finish. The station is on the Birmingham–Stansted line via Leicester and Peterborough, giving useful connections west, east and into the wider national rail network.

For many walkers, the simplest exit is to walk from the finish in Oakham town centre to the station, then travel via Leicester or Peterborough for onward services. Train times, late-evening departures and engineering works should be checked before travelling, particularly on Sundays and bank holidays.

If returning to the start at Barton-upon-Humber by public transport, expect a multi-leg rail journey rather than a direct service. Barton-upon-Humber has its own station on the Barton line, connecting at Habrough, so allow plenty of time and check the full itinerary before committing to a same-day return.

By bus

Local buses may be useful for short onward journeys from Oakham or for reaching nearby accommodation, but they should not be treated as a guaranteed late-day fallback. Services in rural Rutland and the surrounding villages can be limited, and timetables are especially important at weekends.

If you are finishing after a long final day from Sewstern, check bus options in advance rather than relying on finding a suitable service on arrival. This should be checked before travelling.

By car/taxi

If being collected by car, Oakham town centre is the most straightforward meeting point, with the finish near Oakham Library and the railway station also providing an obvious rendezvous. Avoid planning a pick-up from the path itself near Rutland Water unless the exact access point has been agreed in advance.

Taxis are the sensible backup for reaching accommodation outside Oakham or for linking to a pre-positioned car, but they should be booked ahead where possible. This is particularly important if finishing late, on a Sunday, or during busy holiday periods around Rutland Water.

Leaving a car at the finish before walking the route can work well for groups, but parking arrangements and any time limits must be checked locally before relying on them. A one-way taxi back towards intermediate villages on the route is possible in principle, but distances are long enough that costs can rise quickly.

From the nearest airport

Flying is rarely the simplest way to leave the Viking Way unless it forms part of a wider trip. Oakham's rail link via Leicester and Peterborough is the practical first step for most airport journeys, with onward connections depending on the chosen airport and time of travel.

The most convenient airport will depend on flight times, rail connections and whether you are heading north, south, east or west after the walk. This should be checked before travelling.

Where to stay at the finish

Staying overnight in Oakham is often the most relaxed option, especially after the final 23 km stage from Sewstern and the approach around Rutland Water. It removes the pressure of catching a late train and gives more flexibility if the day takes longer than expected.

Oakham is one of the main accommodation hubs on the Viking Way, with town facilities and onward rail access the next morning. Book ahead in busy periods, as the finish sits close to Rutland Water and demand can be higher during weekends, holidays and good walking weather.

Which Direction Should You Walk?

Standard direction: Barton-upon-Humber to Oakham

The Viking Way is normally planned north to south, from Barton-upon-Humber beneath the Humber Bridge to Oakham in Rutland. This is the direction used by the official section order and by most practical itineraries: Humber Bridge, Barnetby le Wold, Caistor, Tealby, Horncastle, Bardney, Lincoln, Wellingore, Marston, Woolsthorpe, Sewstern and Oakham.

This direction gives a clear geographical progression. The walk starts with the big landmark of the Humber Bridge, crosses the Lincolnshire Wolds early, reaches Lincoln as the major mid-route city, then continues along the Lincoln Cliff and south through Sewstern Lane before finishing via Rutland Water into Oakham.

It also works well psychologically. Oakham is a proper town finish with a railway station, and the approach around Rutland Water gives the final day a stronger sense of arrival than simply stopping in open countryside.

Reverse direction: Oakham to Barton-upon-Humber

Walking south to north is perfectly possible. The route is waymarked and navigable in either direction, provided mapping or a reliable GPX is carried and current diversions are checked before travelling.

The reverse route starts with Rutland Water and the Rutland villages, then works north through Sewstern, Woolsthorpe, Marston, Ancaster, the Cliff Villages and Lincoln before crossing the Witham valley and the Lincolnshire Wolds to finish under the Humber Bridge. That final landmark is memorable, but the transport home from Barton-upon-Humber may involve a more local rail connection than finishing at Oakham.

Reverse direction can suit walkers whose public transport, accommodation availability or baggage-transfer arrangements line up better from Oakham. It is also a sensible option for section-hikers joining or leaving at Lincoln, which is the strongest rail hub on the route.

Transport and accommodation considerations

Both ends are reachable by train, so direction is not dictated by access alone. Barton-upon-Humber has its own railway station, a short walk from the Humber Bridge start, on the Barton line from Cleethorpes/Grimsby with connections at Habrough. Oakham has a railway station on the Birmingham-Standed line via Leicester and Peterborough.

For many walkers, starting at Barton-upon-Humber and finishing at Oakham is slightly neater: the route begins at a distinctive landmark, then ends in a county town with onward rail. However, anyone travelling from the east or north may find Barton-upon-Humber convenient as an endpoint instead. Current train times should be checked before booking.

Accommodation does not strongly favour either direction. The larger service points include Barton-upon-Humber, Caistor, Horncastle, Woodhall Spa, Lincoln and Oakham, but some rural stretches have thin or absent accommodation. In either direction, book ahead and expect that a few nights may need a taxi or arranged transfer off the line of the trail.

Climbing, terrain and weather

There is no major climbing advantage either way. The Viking Way is a lowland route with about 2,286 m of total ascent over 237 km, and the high ground never exceeds roughly 170 m. The Lincolnshire Wolds and the Lincoln Cliff feel undulating, but there are no mountain passes or technical ascents where direction materially changes the difficulty.

Underfoot conditions matter more than direction. Field paths, grassy tracks and valley sections can be muddy after rain, while the Spa Trail and Water Rail Way give easier surfaced walking through parts of the Witham valley. Open farmland and the Wolds can feel exposed in poor weather, but wind direction is not a strong enough reason to choose one end over the other.

Recommendation

Walk the Viking Way north to south, from Barton-upon-Humber to Oakham, unless transport or accommodation availability makes the reverse more practical. North to south follows the standard section order, gives the best narrative flow from the Humber Bridge through Lincoln to Rutland Water, and finishes cleanly in Oakham with rail access for the journey home.

Accommodation Along the Route

Accommodation is one of the main planning constraints on the Viking Way. The route links several useful towns with hotels, guesthouses, B&Bs, inns and some campsites, but it also spends long stretches in small Lincolnshire and Rutland villages where beds can be scarce or absent.

For an end-to-end walk, book accommodation before committing to daily distances. The trail is not difficult underfoot, but a planned 16–25 km day can become awkward if the only available bed is several kilometres off-route or a taxi is needed at the end of the stage.

Best overnight stops

The strongest accommodation bases are **Barton-upon-Humber**, **Caistor**, **Horncastle**, **Woodhall Spa**, **Lincoln** and **Oakham**. These are the places most likely to suit walkers who want a choice of rooms, food nearby and easier transport options.

The official-style 12-day itinerary also uses smaller overnight stops such as **Barnetby le Wold**, **Tealby**, **Donington on Bain**, **Bardney**, **Wellingore**, **Marston**, **Woolsthorpe** and **Sewstern**. These should be treated as limited-supply stops rather than guaranteed accommodation centres. Availability should be checked before travelling.

Accommodation planning table

Place	Accommodation level	Best for	Notes
Barton-upon-Humber	Good	Starting night before the walk	Practical start base near the Humber Bridge end of the route; has a railway station within reach of the start area.
Barnetby le Wold	Limited	First-stage stop on a 12-day itinerary	Useful for splitting the opening section, but do not assume a wide choice. Book ahead or check taxi options.
Caistor	Good	Northern Lincolnshire Wolds base	One of the better early-route accommodation stops and a sensible place to reset after the first two days.
Tealby	Limited	Wolds village overnight	Attractive stage end for a steady itinerary, but accommodation should be arranged early.
Donington on Bain	Limited	Rural Wolds stop	A practical stage end between Tealby and Horncastle, though supply is likely to be limited. This should be checked before travelling.
Horncastle	Good	Strong mid-northern base	A useful market-town stop with better services before the flatter Spa Trail and Witham valley sections.
Woodhall Spa	Good	Alternative stop after Horncastle	Can work as a shorter day from Horncastle or as a base if adjusting stages; one of the named places with accommodation choice.

Place	Accommodation level	Best for	Notes
Bardney	Limited	Witham valley overnight	Useful before the approach to Lincoln, but rural availability can be tight. Book ahead.
Lincoln	Good	Main rest stop / halfway base	The strongest accommodation and transport hub on the route; a good place for a rest night, laundry, resupply or joining/leaving the trail.
Wellingore	Limited	Cliff Villages stage end	Convenient for the standard south-of-Lincoln stage, but accommodation choice is not broad. Check availability before fixing the day plan.
Marston	Limited	Lincoln Cliff / Heath stage end	Often used to break the long rural section south of Wellingore. Off-route transfer may be needed if no suitable bed is available.
Woolsthorpe	Limited	Grantham Canal / Woolsthorpe Locks stage end	A logical overnight point before Sewstern Lane, but do not rely on last-minute availability.
Sewstern	Limited	Final rural stop before Rutland	Useful before the Oakham finish, though beds are limited. Taxi transfer or a pre-arranged pickup may be needed.
Oakham	Good	Finish night	Best end-of-walk base, with accommodation and a railway station in the county town of Rutland.

Booking strategy

For a comfortable inn-to-inn walk, start by securing the awkward rural nights first: **Tealby, Donington on Bain, Bardney, Wellingore, Marston, Woolsthorpe** and **Sewstern**. Once those are fixed, the larger stops such as Lincoln, Horncastle and Oakham are usually easier to fit around them.

Weekend and summer availability can tighten quickly because the smaller villages have few options. Spring and autumn walkers still need to book ahead, especially where there is only one practical overnight stop for a given day.

Taxis, pickups and luggage transfer

The Viking Way can work well as an inn-to-inn route, but it is not a continuous chain of large accommodation centres. A few stages may need a short taxi transfer to an off-route B&B, inn or town, then a return to the same point the next morning.

Self-guided walking operators can also solve the awkward gaps by arranging accommodation, baggage movement and pickups where needed. This is particularly useful for walkers who want to keep pack weight low or avoid spending time coordinating rural taxis.

If arranging the walk independently, confirm taxi availability before relying on it for a remote stage end. Local public transport exists in places, but there is no railway along much of the route, and village bus options should be checked before travelling.

Camping

Camping is possible only where suitable campsites line up with the route or with a practical transfer. The brief accommodation pattern for this trail is mixed rather than campsite-led, so do not plan a pure camping itinerary without checking each night in advance.

For most walkers, the most reliable approach is a B&B/inn itinerary with occasional taxi support in the thinner rural sections.

Camping and Wild Camping

The Viking Way can be walked with camping gear, but it is not an easy campsite-to-campsite trail. This is a lowland route through farmland, villages, market towns and protected landscapes, with accommodation thin or absent on some rural stretches. Plan camping nights before committing to a schedule, rather than assuming there will be a pitch near every stage end.

Campsites are most realistic around the larger towns and villages used as walking hubs, such as Barton-upon-Humber, Caistor, Horncastle, Woodhall Spa, Lincoln and Oakham. Availability, opening dates, pitch types and whether walkers are accepted should all be checked before travelling.

Is the Viking Way suitable for camping?

Camping suits the Viking Way best if you are happy to combine campsites with occasional B&B, inn or taxi-supported nights. The terrain is generally gentle enough for carrying a tent, with no mountains or technical ground, but the route is long and muddy field paths can make heavier packs tiring after rain.

A fully self-contained wild-camping-style itinerary is not a good fit. Much of the route crosses private farmland, lanes, field edges, village approaches and managed landscapes where discreet camping without permission is not appropriate.

Campsites and planning approach

Do not plan this route by simply matching the standard 10–12 day stages to campsites. Some stage ends are small villages or rural settlements where accommodation of any kind may be limited, and campsites may be off-route or seasonal.

A practical camping plan is to anchor nights around the larger places, then adjust the walking days around confirmed pitches. Where there is no suitable camping option, use a booked room, a taxi transfer, or a self-guided operator's pickup arrangement.

Route area	Camping practicality	Planning notes
Barton-upon-Humber to the Lincolnshire Wolds	Moderate	Check options around Barton-upon-Humber, Caistor and nearby larger villages before setting stage lengths. Rural Wolds sections are not places to assume an informal pitch will be acceptable.
Lincolnshire Wolds to Horncastle and Woodhall Spa	Moderate	Horncastle and Woodhall Spa are more realistic planning hubs than the smaller intervening villages. Book ahead in busy periods and check seasonal opening.
Witham valley to Lincoln	Moderate	The route uses surfaced former-railway paths and passes through smaller settlements before Lincoln. Lincoln is the strongest logistics point on the route.
Lincoln Cliff and Heath	Limited to moderate	South of Lincoln the route passes villages including Waddington, Harmston, Coleby, Navenby and Wellingore, but camping options should not be assumed. Confirm pitches or arrange transfers.

Route area	Camping practicality	Planning notes
Ancaster, Marston, Woolsthorpe and Sewstern	Limited	This is one of the stretches where accommodation planning matters most. Check campsite availability and taxi options before relying on a camping itinerary.
Rutland Water to Oakham	Moderate	Near the finish, treat Rutland Water as a managed reservoir and nature reserve area, not as a place for informal camping. Use designated accommodation only.

Wild camping legality and practical reality

Wild camping is not a general right in England. On the Viking Way, camping on private land requires the landowner's permission. The fact that the trail is a public right of way does not give permission to pitch a tent beside it.

In practical terms, wild camping is especially unsuitable on this route because so much of the walk is through enclosed farmland, village margins, estate land, reservoir surroundings and managed access corridors. The Lincolnshire Wolds National Landscape and Rutland Water should be treated with particular care: use designated sites and do not camp on sensitive grassland, woodland edges, reservoir shore or nature reserve land unless explicit permission has been given.

If seeking permission from a landowner, ask early, be clear that it is for one small tent for one night, and be prepared for refusal. Where rules or land ownership are unclear, this should be checked locally.

Water and supplies for campers

Water planning is more important than the gentle terrain suggests. Do not rely on streams, rivers, canals, reservoirs or field troughs as safe drinking-water sources. Refill at booked accommodation, campsites and staffed premises where available, and carry enough between settlements.

The route passes frequent villages overall, but not every village will have open services when a walker arrives. Sundays, evenings and out-of-season days can leave long gaps between reliable food and water stops, so campsite-based walkers should carry an extra meal and sufficient water capacity.

Leave No Trace and fire rules

Use established campsites wherever possible and leave pitches clean. On any permitted private-land camp, arrive late, leave early, keep the tent footprint small and take all litter, food waste and sanitary waste away.

Open fires are inappropriate on this route. They risk damage to farmland, woodland, grassland and protected landscapes, and should not be lit. Use a small stove only where it is permitted by the campsite or landowner, and avoid cooking on dry grass or close to hedges, crops or woodland.

Seasonal considerations

Spring, summer and autumn are the normal walking seasons, but campsite opening periods vary and should be checked before booking travel. Summer gives longer evenings and easier drying conditions, but popular areas around Lincoln and Rutland Water can be busier.

After rain, field paths, valley sections and grassy tracks can become muddy. Campers should allow for slower progress with a heavier pack, carry dry bags or pack liners, and avoid relying on very long days to reach a pre-booked pitch.

Food, Water and Resupply

The Viking Way is not a wilderness route, but it is a long rural walk with several stages where services are thin. The easiest resupply points are the towns and larger settlements on or near the route: Barton-upon-Humber, Caistor, Horncastle, Woodhall Spa, Lincoln and Oakham. Between them, the route spends long periods on field paths, bridleways, lanes, former railway paths and the Lincoln Cliff villages, where a pub, café or shop should never be assumed without checking.

Plan each day as a self-sufficient walking day unless a definite stop has been checked in advance. Rural opening hours can be short, seasonal and irregular, especially on Sundays, Mondays and in the afternoon. If accommodation is providing breakfast or packed lunches, arrange this when booking rather than on arrival.

Food strategy

Carry at least a full day's lunch and snacks on most stages. This is especially important on the longer rural days such as Barton-upon-Humber to Barnetby le Wold, Donington on Bain to Horncastle, Horncastle to Bardney, Lincoln to Wellingore, Wellingore to Marston and Sewstern to Oakham.

Lincoln is the main mid-route reset point and the best place to restock properly. Horncastle and Oakham are also important resupply towns. Woodhall Spa is useful on the Horncastle to Bardney stage, but onward options along the Witham valley should be treated as limited unless checked before setting off.

For a 10–12 day itinerary, a sensible pattern is to buy food whenever passing a larger town rather than waiting for the next village. Lightweight emergency food for one missed meal is worth carrying throughout the route, as a closed pub or shop can otherwise turn a straightforward stage into a hungry one.

Water strategy

Start each day with bottles full from accommodation. Cafés, pubs and accommodation are the most reliable places to ask for refills when open; public taps should not be assumed on the route.

Most walkers should carry around 1.5–2 litres of water for a normal cool-weather stage, and more in warm weather or if walking fast through the exposed Wolds, Lincoln Cliff or open farmland. There is little sustained shade on some agricultural sections, and the low altitude should not be mistaken for low water demand.

The route passes watercourses and water bodies including the River Bain, the River Witham, the Grantham Canal at Woolsthorpe Locks and Rutland Water. These are not reliable drinking-water sources. If natural water is used in an emergency it should be treated, but agricultural runoff, canals, livestock and settlement make carried or tap water the better plan.

Section	Food availability	Water availability	Notes
Barton-upon-Humber to Barnetby le Wold	Start with food from Barton-upon-Humber; do not rely on frequent options during the day.	Fill up before leaving Barton-upon-Humber.	A long first stage by the standard itinerary, so carry lunch and snacks.

Section	Food availability	Water availability	Notes
Barnetby le Wold to Caistor	Limited between the settlements; Caistor is the key end-of-day resupply point.	Start full; refill only where services are open.	Shorter stage, but still rural enough to carry food for the day.
Caistor to Tealby	Caistor is the practical place to buy supplies before heading into the Wolds.	Carry enough from Caistor.	Villages such as Nettleton, Normanby le Wold, Walesby and Tealby should not be treated as guaranteed resupply points.
Tealby to Donington on Bain	Food options should be checked before setting off; carry a packed lunch.	Start full and plan for limited refills.	Rolling rural Wolds walking with small settlements rather than dependable shopping stops.
Donington on Bain to Horncastle	Carry food from the start; Horncastle is the main resupply at the end.	Start full; refill opportunities depend on open services.	One of the longer rural stages before reaching a proper market town.
Horncastle to Bardney	Horncastle is a good place to stock up; Woodhall Spa is the main useful settlement on the stage.	Fill in Horncastle; potential refills only where cafés, pubs or accommodation are open.	The Spa Trail and Water Rail Way make for easy walking, but the Witham valley section should still be planned as rural.
Bardney to Lincoln	Carry lunch unless a definite stop has been checked.	Start full; Lincoln is the dependable end-point for a full reset.	The route passes through Witham-valley villages before reaching the city.
Lincoln to Wellingore	Lincoln is the best place on the whole route to restock properly.	Leave Lincoln with full bottles.	After Lincoln, the route returns quickly to villages and the Lincoln Cliff/Heath; do not assume all village services are open.
Wellingore to Marston	Limited rural availability; carry food for the full day.	Start full and plan for few certain refills.	A longer stage through the Cliff Villages and Lincoln Heath area.
Marston to Woolsthorpe	Carry supplies from Marston or arrange food through accommodation.	Carry enough from the start.	The Grantham Canal at Woolsthorpe Locks is not a drinking-water source.
Woolsthorpe to Sewstern	Limited; carry a full day's food.	Start full; do not rely on natural water.	Sewstern Lane is a rural green-lane section where self-sufficiency is sensible.
Sewstern to Oakham	Carry food from the start; Oakham is the main finish resupply point.	Start full; Rutland Water should not be treated as a drinking source.	The final stage passes Greetham, Exton, Whitwell, Barnsdale and Rutland Water before Oakham, but service availability should be checked before travelling.

Navigation and Waymarking

The Viking Way is an official waymarked long-distance path, signed with a Viking helmet on a yellow disc. Most of the route is also part of the European long-distance path E2, so you may see E2 signing alongside or near the Viking Way markers.

Navigation is generally straightforward for a lowland trail, especially on the surfaced former-railway sections such as the Spa Trail and the Water Rail Way, and through the better-defined village-to-village stretches. It is still not a route to walk from waymarks alone: field paths, grassy tracks, bridleways and lanes create plenty of junctions where a missed disc can cost time.

Maps and GPX

Carry either OS mapping or a reliable offline digital map with the route loaded. A GPX track is strongly recommended, particularly for the field-path sections, the Lincolnshire Wolds, the Lincoln Cliff villages and the southern approach through Sewstern, Greetham, Exton, Rutland Water and Oakham.

The supported OS map coverage is:

Map series	Sheets
OS Explorer	234, 247, 272, 273, 281, 282, 284
OS Landranger	106, 107, 112, 113, 121, 122, 130, 141

For most walkers, 1:25,000 OS Explorer mapping is the most useful scale because the route uses many rights of way across farmland, woodland edges, lanes and village approaches. A phone app with offline OS mapping and a GPX line is practical, but a paper map or printed strip maps are sensible backup on a 237 km point-to-point walk.

Where extra attention helps

The northern third through the Lincolnshire Wolds is not technically difficult, but it is more undulating and uses a mix of field paths, quiet valleys and minor roads around places such as Caistor, Nettleton, Normanby le Wold, Walesby and Tealby. In poor visibility or after rain, check the map at field corners and lane crossings rather than assuming the obvious track is the right one.

The Witham valley section via Woodhall Spa, Stixwold, Southrey, Bardney, Stainfield and Fiskerton is simpler underfoot where it follows former-railway paths, but the official line should still be checked at village exits and path junctions. Into Lincoln, urban streets and crossings make the GPX or map more useful than waymarks alone.

South of Lincoln, the route follows the Lincoln Cliff and Heath through villages including Waddington, Harmston, Coleby, Navenby, Wellingore, Leadenham and Fulbeck. This is classic lowland navigation: short road links, field edges, bridleways and village lanes, with the need to identify the correct exit from each settlement.

The later stages through Ancaster, Marston, Woolsthorpe, Sewstern, Greetham, Exton, Rutland Water and Oakham also reward careful checking. Around Rutland Water, keep following the Viking Way line

rather than assuming every waterside or leisure path leads to Oakham.

Diversions and mobile signal

Check Visit Lincolnshire and Lincolnshire County Council before travelling for current route updates and diversion notices. Temporary closures, improvement works and field-edge diversions can alter the line, and day distances may vary slightly from published figures.

Do not rely on mobile signal as the only navigation tool. Download maps, GPX files and accommodation details before leaving larger towns such as Barton-upon-Humber, Horncastle, Woodhall Spa, Lincoln and Oakham.

Is it suitable for newer navigators?

Yes, provided basic map-reading is in place. The Viking Way is a good first long-distance trail because it is waymarked, lowland and non-technical, but it is long enough for small navigation errors to matter over repeated days.

Newer long-distance walkers should practise following a GPX line against OS mapping before starting, and should pause at every unsigned junction, field corner and village exit. The route is forgiving in terrain, but it still needs active navigation rather than blind faith in waymarks.

Terrain, Conditions and Difficulty in Practice

The Viking Way is a long lowland walk rather than a mountain route. The challenge comes from repeated days on mixed rural surfaces, occasional long stages between services, mud after rain and the cumulative distance of 237 km / 147 miles — not from altitude, scrambling or technical ground.

Total ascent is about 2,286 m, spread over the whole route. The trail never rises much above roughly 170 m, with the high ground in the Lincolnshire Wolds near Wolds Top / Normanby Top and comparable high ground later near Sewstern, so climbs are generally short and steady rather than sustained.

Underfoot surfaces

Expect a varied mix of field paths, field edges, grassy tracks, bridleways, woodland paths, quiet lanes, surfaced former-railway paths, city streets, canal towpath and reservoir-side walking. Boots or sturdy walking shoes with reliable grip are more useful than lightweight road shoes, especially after wet weather.

The easiest underfoot sections are the surfaced former-railway paths through the Witham valley, including the Spa Trail from Horncastle towards Woodhall Spa and the Water Rail Way through Stixwold, Southrey and Bardney towards Lincoln. These are generally fast, flat walking and give a welcome contrast to the field-path sections.

The slower ground is usually on field and valley paths, grassy bridleways and green lanes. These can become sticky, rutted or slippery after rain, particularly where farm traffic, horses or repeated walkers have churned the surface.

There is no rocky or technical terrain in the upland sense. The route does not require scrambling, hands-on climbing or mountain navigation, but it still needs proper long-distance walking judgement: pacing, dry feet, weather awareness and the ability to follow rights of way across farmland.

Hills, escarpments and easier miles

The Lincolnshire Wolds form the most obviously rolling part of the walk. Around Caistor, Nettleton, Normanby le Wold, Walesby and Tealby the route crosses chalk hills, dry valleys and quiet lanes, with repeated small climbs and descents rather than one major ascent.

South of Lincoln, the Lincoln Cliff and Heath give another sustained undulating section. The route passes the Cliff Villages, including Waddington, Harmston, Coleby, Navenby and Wellingore, with walking along and around the limestone escarpment.

Lincoln itself adds an urban climb, most notably the ascent into the historic centre around Steep Hill. It is short compared with the rural mileage, but it can feel sharp in the middle of a multi-day walk, especially with a full pack.

The flattest and fastest-feeling miles are in the Witham valley and on the railway-path sections between Horncastle, Woodhall Spa, Bardney and Lincoln. These stages can be physically easier, but the open, repetitive nature of valley walking can still make pacing and foot care important.

Mud, grass and seasonal conditions

Mud is the main condition issue on the Viking Way. Field paths, valley sections, grassy tracks and green lanes can be slow after rain, and waterproof footwear is a sensible default outside settled summer conditions.

Spring usually gives good walking temperatures but can leave fields and shaded tracks wet. Summer is typically the easiest season underfoot, though long exposed farmland sections can feel hot and there may be limited shade on open field and lane walking.

Autumn is often a good season for the route, but rain can quickly change easy field paths into heavier going. Later in the year, shorter daylight makes the longer stages less forgiving if mud slows progress.

The route is not primarily a winter walk. It is low enough to avoid mountain winter conditions, but wet ground, cold winds, short days and limited rural escape options can make winter completion more demanding than the moderate grading suggests.

Road walking and lanes

The Viking Way includes some road and lane walking, including quiet rural lanes and minor roads. These sections are part of the character of the route and are useful for linking villages, field paths and bridleways.

Road mileage is not the dominant surface, but it is enough to affect footwear choice and daily fatigue. Hard surfaces can be tiring on feet after several days, so blister prevention matters even though the route is not technically difficult.

On lanes, use normal road-walking caution, particularly where bends, hedges or narrow verges reduce visibility. This should be checked before travelling if any current diversion is likely to add extra road walking.

Farmland, gates and field navigation

Much of the route is across working lowland countryside. Expect regular transitions between fields, tracks, lanes and village edges, and allow time for gates, field boundaries and occasional slower navigation across open farmland.

Waymarking uses the Viking helmet on a yellow disc, and much of the route is also part of the E2. Even so, field exits, crop edges, overgrown vegetation and junctions of bridleways or lanes can make a map or reliable GPX essential rather than optional.

Where livestock is present, keep dogs under close control and follow the signed line of the right of way. Field conditions can change through the year, so do not assume every path will be as clear on the ground as it looks on a map.

Sections that tend to feel harder

The northern Wolds section can feel harder than the elevation figures suggest because of repeated undulations and mixed field-path walking. The route around Caistor, Normanby le Wold and Tealby is still low-level, but it is not flat.

The longer days also shape the difficulty. Stages such as Barton-upon-Humber to Barnetby le Wold, Donington on Bain to Horncastle, Horncastle to Bardney, Lincoln to Wellingore, Wellingore to Marston and Sewstern to Oakham are all long enough for surface conditions to matter.

Sewstern Lane and the approach through the southern countryside towards Rutland can be slow if green lanes are wet or rutted. The final approach around Rutland Water is not technically hard, but it comes after many days of walking, when small foot problems can become limiting.

What makes it manageable

The route is well suited to walkers with general hillwalking or long-distance path experience, and it is a realistic first multi-day trail for fit walkers who plan accommodation and daily distances carefully. There are no mountains, no exposed ridges and no technical obstacles that define the route.

Its manageability comes from sensible staging, dry socks, reliable navigation and early accommodation planning rather than specialist equipment. In dry weather, many days are straightforward countryside walking; in wet weather, the same miles can become much slower and more tiring.

For most walkers, the practical difficulty is best described as moderate: easy terrain in a technical sense, but a proper long-distance undertaking because of length, mud potential, rural gaps and the need to keep moving efficiently day after day.

Weather and Best Time to Walk

The Viking Way is best planned for **spring, summer or autumn**. It is a lowland route with no mountain terrain, but the length of the walk, exposed farmland, grassy tracks and field paths mean weather still has a real effect on pace and comfort.

For most walkers, the most practical windows are **late spring to early summer** and **early autumn**: enough daylight for 20–25 km stages, generally manageable temperatures, and less chance of prolonged wet ground than in the depths of winter. High summer is also feasible, but exposed sections across the Lincolnshire Wolds, the Lincoln Cliff and open farmland can feel hot and tiring, with limited shade on some days.

Seasonal conditions

Season	What to expect on the trail	Planning notes
Spring	Good walking conditions when dry, with field paths and grassy tracks improving as the season progresses.	A strong choice for the full route, but wet spells can still leave valley and field sections muddy. Book accommodation ahead, especially in smaller villages.
Summer	Long daylight hours and generally straightforward logistics. Exposed lanes, bridleways and field paths can feel hot in settled weather.	Carry enough water between villages and start early on warm days. Accommodation in places such as Barton-upon-Humber, Caistor, Horncastle, Woodhall Spa, Lincoln and Oakham should be booked well ahead.
Autumn	Often a good walking season, especially early autumn, with cooler days and fewer heat issues.	Later autumn brings shorter days and a higher chance of muddy field paths after rain. Build in time for slower going.
Winter	Realistic for fit, well-equipped walkers as a lowland route, but not the best season for a first multi-day attempt.	Short daylight, mud, cold wind and possible ice make the 20 km-plus stages more committing. Public transport, taxis and rural accommodation arrangements need careful checking before travelling.

Rain, mud and trail surfaces

Rain is the main weather factor on the Viking Way. The route uses a mix of field paths, woodland paths, grassy tracks, bridleways, lanes, former railway paths, canal towpath and reservoir shore, so conditions change noticeably from day to day.

After wet weather, expect slower going on field and valley sections, particularly where the path crosses farmland or follows grassy tracks. The surfaced former-railway sections such as the Spa Trail and Water Rail Way are less affected, but they do not represent the whole route.

Waterproof footwear or boots are sensible outside prolonged dry spells. Lightweight trail shoes can work in summer, but they are a poor choice if the route has had sustained rain and several consecutive days include muddy field paths.

Wind, exposure and heat

Although the high point is only around 168 m near Wolds Top / Normanby Top, the Viking Way often feels more exposed than its elevation suggests. The Lincolnshire Wolds, Lincoln Cliff and open arable sections can be windy, with little shelter for long stretches.

In summer, the same open terrain can become hot and draining. Plan water carefully between villages, particularly on longer stages such as Barton-upon-Humber to Barnetby le Wold, Donington on Bain to Horncastle, Horncastle to Bardney, Wellingore to Marston and Sewstern to Oakham.

Cold, fog, snow and storms

The route is not high or technical, so snow is not normally the main planning issue. However, winter ice, frozen ruts, fog and cold rain can make navigation and footing more difficult, especially on field paths, lanes and exposed ridges.

Fog can be more of a problem than height on this route: waymarking is generally good, but open fields, green lanes and valley paths are easier to misread in poor visibility. Carry OS mapping or a reliable GPX rather than relying only on waymarks.

Thunderstorms and heavy rain are a summer and autumn consideration on any long lowland walk. Avoid being caught on exposed high ground, open fields or the reservoir shore at Rutland Water during lightning or severe weather.

Daylight and stage timing

The standard itinerary includes several days of roughly 20–25 km, so daylight matters. In spring and summer there is usually enough margin for steady walking, navigation pauses and village stops.

In late autumn and winter, the same stages become more pressured. Mud, ploughed fields, wet grass and navigation checks can reduce speed, so start early and avoid depending on a late finish in a small village where onward transport or food options may be limited.

Accommodation and seasonal logistics

Accommodation is available in the main towns and larger villages, but it is thin or absent in some rural stretches. This matters more in the main walking season, when rooms can be taken, and in winter, when rural accommodation or food options may be limited.

Book the whole route before starting if walking end to end. Where a stage needs an off-route taxi transfer or a pickup from a self-guided operator, confirm the arrangement before travelling.

There are no route-specific seasonal closures to plan around for the Viking Way, but live diversions, path works and public-transport times should always be checked before setting off.

Safety Notes

The Viking Way is a moderate lowland route rather than a mountain walk, but its length, rural gaps and exposed field sections still require sensible planning. Treat it as a long point-to-point hike: know where the next village, road access and overnight stop are before leaving each morning.

Emergency help

In the UK, call **999** or **112** for police, ambulance, fire or mountain rescue assistance. Give a clear location using a grid reference, What3Words, nearby road, village, bridge, lock, church or other identifiable feature where possible.

Mobile signal should not be relied on everywhere, especially in rural field, valley and woodland sections. Carry a charged phone, a power bank, and either OS mapping or a reliable offline GPX so navigation does not depend on a live data connection.

Navigation and isolation

The route is waymarked with a Viking helmet on a yellow disc, and waymarking is generally helpful, but it is not a substitute for a map. Field-edge paths, bridleways and green lanes can be unclear after crops grow, in poor visibility, or where signs have been damaged or missed.

The walk is not wilderness, but some sections between villages are quiet and services can be thin. This matters most where accommodation is scarce and a taxi or off-route transfer has been arranged; carry enough food, water and warm clothing to finish the day if timings slip.

Roads, lanes and urban sections

The Viking Way uses a mix of field paths, tracks, bridleways, lanes and some road walking. On minor roads, walk facing oncoming traffic where there is no pavement, step well in at bends and crests, and use a light or reflective item in dull weather.

Take particular care where the route passes through larger settlements such as Lincoln and Oakham, where navigation and traffic hazards are different from open-country walking. Do not rely only on waymarks through urban streets; check the map at junctions before committing to a turn.

Mud, slips and underfoot conditions

Field and valley sections can be muddy after rain, and grassy tracks may become slippery. Waterproof footwear with a firm tread is more useful here than lightweight town shoes, especially through the Lincolnshire Wolds, the Witham valley and agricultural stretches south of Lincoln.

Former-railway paths such as the Spa Trail and Water Rail Way are generally easier underfoot, but wet leaves, frost and mud carried onto surfaced paths can still cause slips. Walking poles are useful on muddy field edges and on longer days when fatigue increases the chance of a stumble.

Weather exposure

The route never exceeds roughly 170 m, but open chalk hills, the Lincoln Cliff escarpment, Sewstern Lane and broad farmland can feel exposed in wind, rain, heat or cold. There are long stretches with little shelter, so carry waterproofs, an insulating layer and sun protection even on apparently straightforward days.

In hot weather, the main risk is a long, open day with limited shade and uncertain opportunities to refill water between villages. In cold or wet weather, the risk is slow progress through mud combined with wind chill on exposed ground; avoid starting long stages late in the day.

Livestock and farmland

Expect working farmland, field paths and occasional livestock. Give animals space, move calmly, keep to the right of way and close gates behind you unless they are clearly meant to remain open.

If cattle block the line of the path, make a wide, quiet detour within the field if possible. Do not get between cows and calves, and avoid sudden movements around horses or sheep.

Rivers, canal and reservoir sections

The route passes near the Humber Estuary at Barton-upon-Humber, follows the Witham valley, uses the Grantham Canal towpath at Woolsthorpe Locks and skirts Rutland Water near the finish. Stay on the path, keep back from steep or slippery banks, and take extra care on wet timber, stone edges, locks and waterside paths.

Do not enter the water to cool off or shortcut the route. Reservoir, canal and river margins can be cold, deep or difficult to climb out of even where they look benign.

Solo walking

Solo hikers should leave a daily plan with someone reliable, especially for the quieter rural stages. Include the planned start, finish, accommodation, expected arrival time and any taxi or transfer arrangements.

If plans change, update that person before mobile signal or battery becomes a problem. On longer stages, check progress at lunch rather than waiting until late afternoon to discover that distance, mud or daylight is becoming an issue.

Daily checks before setting off

Before leaving each morning, check:

- the weather forecast, including wind, heavy rain, heat and frost risk;
- daylight available for the planned stage;
- current route diversions on the Viking Way;
- public transport, taxi or accommodation-transfer arrangements for the end of the day;
- water and food for the full stage, allowing for limited services between villages;
- phone charge, power bank, offline maps and any printed map or guide notes;

- whether the day includes more lane walking, exposed farmland, canal towpath or urban navigation.

Transport times, live diversions and booked transfers should be checked before travelling and again before any day that depends on them.

Gear Recommendations

The Viking Way is a long lowland walk rather than a mountain route, so gear should be chosen for repeated day-after-day mileage, changeable English weather and muddy field paths rather than technical terrain. The main challenge is not altitude — the route stays below roughly 170 m — but the mix of grassy tracks, bridleways, lanes, surfaced former-railway paths and agricultural ground over 237 km.

Footwear

Waterproof trail shoes or lightweight walking boots are the most suitable choice for most walkers. The route has long easy sections on lanes, trackbeds and towpaths, so heavy mountain boots are usually unnecessary, but footwear still needs enough grip for muddy field and valley sections after rain.

A boot or shoe that dries reasonably quickly is useful on the Lincolnshire Wolds, the Witham valley and rural field-path sections south of Lincoln. Gaiters are worth considering in spring and autumn, or after wet weather, when grass, mud and field-edge paths can soak socks quickly.

Waterproofs and layers

Carry a proper waterproof jacket throughout the season. The walk crosses open chalk hills in the Lincolnshire Wolds, the Lincoln Cliff escarpment and broad farmland where there may be little shelter when weather comes in.

Waterproof trousers are not excessive on this route, especially for a full thru-hike. They are useful not only for rain but also for wet vegetation on field paths.

A light warm layer should be packed even in summer. The Viking Way is not high, but long exposed stretches, early starts and breezy conditions on the Wolds and Lincoln Cliff can feel cold once stopped.

Navigation

The route is waymarked with a Viking helmet on a yellow disc, and much of it is also signed as part of the European long-distance path E2. Even so, do not rely on waymarks alone: field exits, urban sections through Lincoln, and temporary diversions can all make navigation less obvious.

Carry either paper OS mapping or a reliable offline GPX on a phone or GPS device. Full OS Explorer coverage is spread across several sheets: 234, 247, 272, 273, 281, 282 and 284. The equivalent Landranger sheets are 106, 107, 112, 113, 121, 122, 130 and 141.

Before setting off, check current route information and diversion notices from Visit Lincolnshire or Lincolnshire County Council. This should be checked before travelling.

Water and food carry

Plan each day as a rural walk, not as a continuous village-to-village café route. Barton-upon-Humber, Caistor, Horncastle, Woodhall Spa, Lincoln and Oakham are useful service centres, but some stretches between smaller villages have limited facilities.

Carry enough water for the full day's walking, with extra capacity in warm weather and on the more open Wolds, Lincoln Cliff and Rutland Water sections. Do not assume that every village passed will have an open shop, pub or public tap.

Food planning should be equally conservative. A packed lunch and spare high-energy snacks are sensible on all stages, particularly on the longer days such as Barton-upon-Humber to Barnetby le Wold, Horncastle to Bardney, Wellingore to Marston and Sewstern to Oakham.

Trekking poles

Trekking poles are optional rather than essential. There are no mountains, no technical passes and no major sustained climbs.

They can still be useful for balance on muddy field paths, for keeping rhythm on long track and lane sections, and for reducing fatigue over a 10–12 day itinerary. Walkers who normally use poles should bring them; those travelling light can manage without.

For inn-to-inn walkers

Inn-to-inn walkers can keep the pack relatively light, but should still carry full waterproofs, spare warm clothing, navigation, food and water for the day. Accommodation is thin or absent in some rural stretches, so taxi transfers or pickups may be needed on certain nights; do not pack so lightly that a longer-than-planned day becomes uncomfortable.

A small power bank is strongly recommended if using a phone for mapping, accommodation details and taxi arrangements. Keep maps, electronics and spare layers in dry bags or a pack liner, as wet field paths and prolonged rain can soak through a rucksack cover.

For campers

Camping is possible only with careful planning, as campsites are not evenly spaced along the route. Do not assume there will be a campsite at the end of every stage; book ahead and be prepared to adjust stages or use off-route transfers where necessary.

A lightweight tent, warm sleeping system and compact stove are the practical approach, as the Viking Way is long enough for pack weight to matter. Because the trail includes lanes, towns, surfaced railway paths and towpath as well as fields and bridleways, avoid overloading the pack with mountain-expedition gear that is not needed here.

Campers should carry more food flexibility than inn-to-inn walkers, especially through the rural stretches away from Lincoln, Horncastle, Woodhall Spa and Oakham. Water planning also needs care: check campsite facilities and resupply points before each stage.

For fast and section hikers

Fast walkers and section hikers can use the route's moderate terrain to travel light, especially on stages with rail access at Barton-upon-Humber, Lincoln or Oakham. The mistake is to treat the walk as a short local footpath: even individual stages can be over 20 km and may include slow going through mud or field-edge paths.

A light daypack should still include waterproofs, a warm layer, offline navigation, snacks, water and a small first-aid kit for blisters. Trail shoes are usually the best choice for fast movement, provided they have enough grip for wet grass and mud.

Seasonal extras

In spring and autumn, prioritise waterproof trousers, gaiters and an extra warm layer. Mud is more likely on field and valley sections after rain, and short daylight can make delays more consequential.

In summer, carry sun protection for open farmland, the Lincolnshire Wolds, the Lincoln Cliff and the Rutland Water approach. A hat, sunscreen and extra water capacity are more useful here than heavy cold-weather gear.

Insect repellent can be worthwhile around river valleys, woodland edges and reservoir-side sections, particularly near the Witham valley and Rutland Water. A small tick remover is a sensible addition to a UK walking first-aid kit.

Budget and Costs

The Viking Way is not an expensive high-mountain trek, but it is a long point-to-point walk with uneven accommodation coverage. The main cost is not terrain or permits; it is booking suitable places to sleep in the right villages, plus the occasional taxi or transfer where accommodation is thin.

Prices vary by season, room type and how early accommodation is booked. Treat the figures below as planning allowances and confirm current prices before booking.

Typical daily budget

Approximate per-person allowances for a 10–12 day walk, excluding travel from home and major gear purchases:

Style	Accommodation	Food and drink	Local transport / contingency	Likely daily total
Budget	£25–£80	£15–£30	£0–£15	£40–£125
Mid-range	£80–£140	£30–£50	£5–£25	£115–£215
Comfortable	£140+	£45+	£20+	£205+

A realistic full-route budget is therefore roughly:

Approach	10–12 day total, excluding getting to Barton-upon-Humber and home from Oakham
Budget, using campsites where practical and simple rooms where needed	£600–£1,100
Mid-range, mostly B&Bs, inns and hotels	£1,200–£2,000
Comfortable, private rooms, more taxis and possible luggage support	£2,000+

Single walkers should expect higher per-person accommodation costs than two people sharing twin or double rooms.

Accommodation costs

Accommodation is straightforward in the larger places such as Barton-upon-Humber, Caistor, Horncastle, Woodhall Spa, Lincoln and Oakham, but thinner in several rural stretches. This is where costs can rise: the cheapest bed nearby may still require a taxi or an off-route transfer.

Campsites can reduce costs, but they are not available at every useful stopping point. A camping-based itinerary still needs careful planning around the rural stages, particularly where the official route passes through smaller villages rather than larger service towns.

For walkers using B&Bs, inns and hotels, booking ahead is strongly advised. Leaving accommodation late can mean either paying more or changing the day's mileage to reach an available room.

Food and resupply

Food costs depend heavily on whether evening meals are taken in pubs and hotels or bought from shops and carried. A budget walker should plan packed lunches and simple breakfasts; a mid-range walker should allow for regular pub or hotel meals.

Do not assume that every village on the route has a shop, café or evening meal available. Carry lunch and snacks on rural stages, especially through the Lincolnshire Wolds, the Lincoln Cliff villages and the southern sections towards Sewstern and Rutland Water.

Transport to and from the trail

Both ends are reachable by public transport. Barton-upon-Humber has a railway station on the Barton line from Cleethorpes/Grimsby, connecting at Habrough, and Oakham has a railway station on the Birmingham–Stansted line via Leicester and Peterborough. Lincoln, roughly halfway, is a major rail hub.

Rail fares vary widely by origin, date and ticket type, so check current train prices before booking. Advance tickets can be cheaper, but a flexible ticket may be useful if the walking schedule is uncertain.

Local taxis and transfers

There is no railway along much of the route, and smaller villages may require local buses or taxis. Build a taxi contingency into the budget, particularly if booking accommodation off the route or if a rural bus service does not match the walking day.

Taxi prices should be agreed before travel. This is especially important on stages where accommodation is thin, because a short off-route transfer each evening and morning can become a significant part of the total cost.

Luggage transfer and self-guided packages

Luggage transfer is most relevant for walkers using B&Bs, inns and hotels rather than camping. Self-guided operators, including companies such as Walk with Williams, offer Viking Way logistics and itineraries; these can simplify accommodation, transfers and baggage arrangements.

Package costs depend on trip length, room type, luggage arrangements and whether transfers are included. Check current prices before booking and compare them with the cost of arranging accommodation and taxis independently.

Where to save money

The easiest savings are made by booking accommodation early, carrying lunches from larger towns and using public transport at the start, finish and Lincoln rather than taxis where possible. Sharing rooms also reduces the per-person cost substantially.

The least reliable saving is assuming camping will work every night. On the Viking Way, campsite availability and spacing are the limiting factors, so a mixed plan of camping plus occasional rooms is usually more practical than a pure low-cost camping itinerary.

Luggage Transfer, Guided Tours and Support Services

The Viking Way is a long, rural point-to-point route rather than a heavily packaged National Trail, so support needs to be arranged deliberately. Accommodation, taxis and baggage movements are straightforward in the larger places such as Barton-upon-Humber, Horncastle, Woodhall Spa, Lincoln and Oakham, but become more awkward on the rural stages through the Lincolnshire Wolds, the Lincoln Cliff villages, Sewstern Lane and the approach to Rutland.

Luggage transfer

There is no single official luggage-transfer scheme for the whole Viking Way. If walking inn-to-inn, do not assume that bags can simply be moved each morning without prior arrangement.

Self-guided walking-holiday operators are the simplest option for walkers who want daily baggage movement. Companies such as **Walk with Williams** offer Viking Way self-guided itineraries and logistics; current inclusions, luggage limits, dates and prices should be checked before booking.

Independent walkers can sometimes arrange baggage moves through accommodation providers or local taxi firms, especially where a night is off-route. This should be agreed before arrival, with clear collection times, delivery addresses and contact numbers, because some of the smaller stage-end villages have limited services.

For a strong walker carrying lightweight kit, luggage transfer is not essential: the terrain is lowland, with no technical ground and no high mountain passes. It becomes much more useful if walking the full 237 km route over 10–12 days, staying in B&Bs and inns, or if any stages require taxi transfers to accommodation away from the path.

Self-guided packages

A self-guided package suits walkers who want the independence of walking alone or as a private group, but do not want to build the accommodation and transfer plan from scratch. On the Viking Way this can be particularly valuable because accommodation is thin or absent on some rural stretches.

A typical self-guided arrangement may include booked accommodation, luggage movement, route information and help with transfers where the overnight stop is not directly on the trail. Check exactly what is included: some packages may use off-route accommodation, and that can affect start and finish logistics for the following walking day.

Before committing, confirm:

Item to check	Why it matters on the Viking Way
Overnight locations	Some practical stops may be away from the actual line of the trail.
Luggage rules	Weight limits, bag labels and collection times vary by operator.
Transfer arrangements	Rural stages may need taxi or operator pickup rather than a walk-in overnight stop.
Route materials	Carry OS mapping or a reliable GPX as well as any notes supplied.

Diversions

Live route changes should be checked with Visit Lincolnshire or Lincolnshire County Council before travelling.

Guided walks

Fully guided end-to-end departures are not a core feature of the Viking Way in the way they are on some more commercialised long-distance trails. Walkers wanting a guide should ask self-guided operators or local walking providers whether private guiding or supported group dates are available. This should be checked before travelling.

For most competent walkers, a guide is unnecessary. The route is waymarked with the Viking helmet on a yellow disc and follows generally moderate lowland terrain, but navigation still needs attention across field paths, bridleways, green lanes and muddy valley sections.

Taxi and local transfer planning

Taxis are an important back-up on this route. They are most useful for reaching off-route accommodation, shortening a day in poor weather, or linking small villages where public transport is limited.

Plan taxi use particularly carefully around the quieter rural stages, including the Lincolnshire Wolds, the Wellingore–Marston–Woolsthorpe area, Sewstern Lane and the final approach through Rutland. Barton-upon-Humber, Lincoln and Oakham are much easier transport points because they have railway stations, but there is no railway exactly on much of the route.

If relying on taxis, book ahead rather than trying to arrange a lift at the end of the day. Give the driver the village name, accommodation address, expected finish time and a grid reference or clear landmark if meeting away from a settlement.

When support is most worth paying for

Support services are most useful if:

- walking the full route in one continuous trip;
- using accommodation that is sparse or off-route in the rural middle and southern sections;
- wanting to avoid carrying a full pack for 10–12 days;
- travelling without a support driver;
- walking at a time when mud, short daylight or limited public transport could make delays more disruptive.

They are less necessary for section-walkers based around Lincoln, Oakham or other transport-accessible towns, or for experienced long-distance walkers happy to carry their own kit and arrange occasional taxis as needed.

Shorter Hikes and Best Sections

The Viking Way is easy to break into shorter linear walks, but it is not a trail with many convenient rail-to-rail sections. Barton-upon-Humber, Lincoln and Oakham are the key railheads; elsewhere, plan around local buses, taxis or pre-arranged accommodation transfers. This should be checked before travelling, especially for rural start and finish points.

Best for	Section	Approx. distance	Why choose it	Transport notes
Best day walk	Caistor to Tealby	15 km	A compact Lincolnshire Wolds day with chalk hills, villages, Nettleton, Normanby le Wold and the high ground near Wolds Top / Normanby Top.	Rural logistics. Use local buses or taxis and check times before committing.
Best long day / easy underfoot	Bardney to Lincoln	20 km	A good Witham valley section on the approach to Lincoln, finishing with the trail's major urban highlight.	Lincoln has a major railway station. Bardney access is by local bus or taxi; check current options.
Best weekend	Horncastle to Lincoln via Bardney	44 km over 2 days	Links the Spa Trail, Woodhall Spa, the Water Rail Way, the Witham valley and the final approach into Lincoln.	Lincoln is the easiest transport anchor. Horncastle and Bardney require bus, taxi or transfer planning.
Best 3-5 day section	Barton-upon-Humber to Horncastle	92 km over 5 days	The strongest choice for a short version of the northern Viking Way: Humber Bridge start, Lincolnshire Wolds, Wolds Top / Normanby Top, Caistor, Tealby and Horncastle.	Barton-upon-Humber has a railway station near the start. Horncastle onward transport is by local bus or taxi; check before booking.
Best for scenery	Caistor to Donington on Bain	32 km over 2 days	A concentrated Wolds section through rolling chalk country, quiet valleys and villages including Nettleton, Normanby le Wold, Walesby and Tealby.	Public transport is limited in the Wolds. Pre-book accommodation and taxis if needed.
Best for beginners	Caistor to Tealby	15 km	Manageable distance, clear waymarked lowland walking and enough Wolds scenery to feel like a proper section without taking on a multi-day commitment.	Best done with a lift, taxi or carefully checked local bus arrangements.

Best for	Section	Approx. distance	Why choose it	Transport notes
Best for public transport at the ends	Lincoln to Oakham	102 km over 5 days	A practical longer section between two rail-served towns, taking in the Cliff Villages, Lincoln Cliff, Ancaster, Sewstern Lane, Woolsthorpe Locks, Rutland Water and Oakham.	Lincoln and Oakham both have railway stations. Intermediate villages still need careful accommodation and transfer planning.
Best for villages and accommodation planning	Horncastle to Lincoln	44 km over 2 days	Uses larger or better-known stopping points on and near the route, with Horncastle, Woodhall Spa and Lincoln giving more options than the remoter Wolds or Heath sections.	Accommodation should still be booked ahead, particularly around Bardney or if splitting the section differently.
Best camping option	Horncastle to Lincoln or Barton-upon-Humber to Horncastle	44 km / 92 km	These sections pass several larger settlements compared with the more isolated rural stretches, giving the best chance of fitting campsites into a workable itinerary.	Campsites are not continuous along the Viking Way. Identify and book legal overnight stops before setting off; this should be checked before travelling.

Best day walk: Caistor to Tealby

Caistor to Tealby is the best single-day sample of the Viking Way. At about 15 km, it is long enough to show the character of the Lincolnshire Wolds without becoming a demanding expedition day.

The route passes through or near Nettleton, Normanby le Wold and the high ground around Wolds Top / Normanby Top, the highest part of the Lincolnshire Wolds at about 168 m. Expect lowland walking rather than mountain terrain, but the Wolds are still rolling and field paths can be muddy after rain.

Transport is the main complication. This is a rural section, so local buses, taxis or a pre-arranged lift should be planned before setting out.

Best weekend: Horncastle to Lincoln

Horncastle to Lincoln makes a strong two-day walk of about 44 km, usually split at Bardney. It combines some of the easiest underfoot walking on the trail with one of its best finishes.

The first day runs from Horncastle towards Bardney, using the Spa Trail, passing Woodhall Spa and continuing through the Witham valley area via places such as Stixwould and Southrey. The second day follows the route from Bardney towards Lincoln, ending with the climb into the historic city around Steep Hill, Lincoln Cathedral and Lincoln Castle.

Lincoln is the simplest transport point, with rail services to Newark, Nottingham, Sheffield, Doncaster and beyond. Horncastle and Bardney need local bus, taxi or transfer arrangements, and those should be checked before travelling.

Best 3–5 day section: Barton-upon-Humber to Horncastle

For a shorter trip that still feels like a substantial Viking Way journey, Barton-upon-Humber to Horncastle is the best 5-day option. It covers about 92 km using the stages Barton-upon-Humber to Barnetby le Wold, Barnetby le Wold to Caistor, Caistor to Tealby, Tealby to Donington on Bain and Donington on Bain to Horncastle.

This section gives the full northern character of the route: the start beneath the Humber Bridge, big-sky farmland, Caistor, the Lincolnshire Wolds, Nettleton, Normanby le Wold, Tealby and the approach to Horncastle. It is also the best choice if scenery matters more than easy transport.

Barton-upon-Humber has a railway station a short walk from the Humber Bridge start. Accommodation and end-of-stage logistics become thinner after the larger settlements, so book ahead and arrange taxis or transfers where necessary.

Best section for public transport

Lincoln to Oakham is the most practical longer section if the priority is starting and finishing at railway towns. It is about 102 km over five days, following the Viking Way south from Lincoln through the Cliff Villages, Wellingore, Marston, Woolsthorpe, Sewstern and on to Rutland Water and Oakham.

This is not the easiest section for daily public transport, because the intermediate villages are rural and services can be limited. Its advantage is that both ends are rail-served: Lincoln is a major rail hub, and Oakham has a railway station on the Birmingham–Stansted line via Leicester and Peterborough.

Treat it as a linear mini-thru-hike rather than a series of casual day walks. Accommodation, baggage transfer and any taxi links should be arranged before travel.

Best section for scenery

Caistor to Donington on Bain is the most concentrated scenic Wolds section. At about 32 km over two days, it gives rolling chalk hills, quiet valleys and some of the most distinctive countryside on the route.

The strongest part is the Caistor to Tealby stage, with Nettleton, Normanby le Wold and the high ground near Wolds Top / Normanby Top. Continuing to Donington on Bain extends the Wolds experience without committing to the full northern half of the trail.

This is a rural walking choice, not a transport-led one. Check buses or book taxis in advance, and do not assume every village has accommodation available.

Best section for beginners

Beginners wanting a first taste of the Viking Way should start with Caistor to Tealby rather than attempting one of the longer 20–25 km stages. The distance is moderate, the navigation is helped by the Viking helmet waymarks, and the section gives a rewarding Wolds day without requiring an overnight plan.

The main beginner risk is not technical terrain, but underestimating rural logistics and muddy field paths after rain. Carry proper mapping or a reliable GPX, wear footwear suitable for wet fields, and arrange transport before starting.

Camping considerations

Camping can work on parts of the Viking Way, but it is not the simplest way to walk the route. The briefest practical advice is to plan around known overnight stops rather than assuming a campsite will appear at the right distance.

Horncastle to Lincoln and Barton-upon-Humber to Horncastle are the most sensible sections to investigate first, because they pass through or near larger settlements compared with the more thinly serviced rural stretches. Campsite availability, opening dates and exact locations should be checked before travelling.

Highlights and Points of Interest

The Viking Way is strongest on landscape variety rather than high drama: estuary, chalk wolds, river-valley railway paths, Lincoln's historic core, limestone escarpment villages, ancient green lanes and Rutland Water. The places below are the main points worth building into a slower itinerary or using as natural pause points during the walk.

Humber Bridge and Waters' Edge Country Park

The route begins beneath the Humber Bridge on the south bank of the Humber Estuary, beside Waters' Edge Country Park. It is a memorable start: the scale of the suspension bridge gives the opening miles a clear landmark before the path turns inland towards Barton-upon-Humber and the Lincolnshire countryside.

This is worth allowing a little extra time for photographs and orientation before setting off. Barton-upon-Humber is also one of the more practical start points for last-minute food, transport and overnight arrangements.

The Lincolnshire Wolds

The northern third of the walk crosses the Lincolnshire Wolds National Landscape, through rolling chalk hills, dry valleys and quiet villages including Caistor, Nettleton, Normanby le Wold and Tealby. This is the most consistently rural and undulating part of the route, with open farmland, green lanes and big views rather than dramatic summits.

Wolds Top / Normanby Top, near Normanby le Wold, is the high ground of the Lincolnshire Wolds at about 168 m. The height is modest, but on this lowland trail it gives one of the clearest senses of elevation and exposure.

Tealby is one of the most attractive village stops on the northern half of the route. It also has trail significance: the Viking Way was opened there in 1976.

Horncastle, the Spa Trail and Woodhall Spa

Horncastle is a useful and interesting halt at the southern edge of the Wolds, set on the River Bain and known for its antiques shops. It is one of the better places on the route to slow down, resupply and break up the transition from the Wolds into the flatter Witham valley.

South of Horncastle, the Spa Trail gives a very different walking rhythm: a flat former-railway path towards Woodhall Spa. Woodhall Spa itself is an Edwardian spa village and home to the famous Hotchkin golf course, making it one of the more distinctive settlement stops on the route.

The Witham valley, Bardney and the Lincolnshire Limewoods

Beyond Woodhall Spa the Viking Way uses former-railway paths, including the Water Rail Way, through the Witham valley via Stixwold, Southrey and Bardney. This is one of the easiest underfoot sections of the trail, especially compared with muddier field paths after rain.

The River Witham corridor is also close to the Lincolnshire Limewoods, an area noted for Britain's greatest concentration of ancient small-leaved lime woodland. Walkers interested in natural history may want to allow time here, though any off-route visits should be planned carefully around transport and accommodation.

Lincoln: Cathedral, Castle and Steep Hill

Lincoln is the major urban highlight of the Viking Way and the best place on the route for a rest day. The trail climbs into the city up Steep Hill, passing Lincoln Cathedral and Lincoln Castle — the clearest concentration of historic sights on the whole walk.

It is also the most practical mid-route base, with rail connections and a wider choice of accommodation, food and outdoor supplies than the smaller villages. If visiting the Cathedral or Castle interiors, check current opening times and admission arrangements before travelling.

The Lincoln Cliff and the Cliff Villages

South of Lincoln the character changes again as the route follows the Lincoln Cliff and Lincoln Heath. The path passes a chain of villages including Waddington, Harmston, Coleby, Navenby and Wellingore, with long views west from the limestone escarpment.

This section is less about a single landmark and more about steady, elevated walking through old settlements and open countryside. It is one of the best parts of the trail for wide views without hard climbing.

Ancaster and the Lincoln Heath

Ancaster is a notable historical stop on the Lincoln Heath, lying on the line of the Roman road Ermine Street. The village has Roman and archaeological interest, and it makes a useful landmark in the long southern half between the Cliff Villages and the Vale of Belvoir.

For walkers who enjoy route history, Ancaster helps connect the Viking Way's modern waymarking with much older lines of travel across the East Midlands.

Sewstern Lane, Woolsthorpe Locks and the Grantham Canal

Sewstern Lane is one of the most atmospheric route features in the southern half: a prehistoric green-lane drove road followed by the Viking Way towards Woolsthorpe. Expect a more enclosed, old-track feel here than on the open Wolds or Lincoln Cliff.

At Woolsthorpe Locks the trail meets the Grantham Canal in the Vale of Belvoir. The canal towpath and locks provide a useful change of pace and a strong navigational feature before the route continues towards Sewstern and Rutland.

Rutland Water and Oakham

Near the finish, the Viking Way skirts the shore of Rutland Water via Barnsdale. The reservoir is one of England's largest and is also a major nature reserve, so it is worth leaving time rather than treating the final miles as only an approach to Oakham.

Oakham, the county town of Rutland, is a satisfying finish with onward rail travel and town-centre services. If time allows, the Rutland Water approach and Oakham town centre make the best place to turn the final day into a slower end to the walk.

Common Mistakes and Planning Tips

Treating the Viking Way as “easy” because it is low-level

The route has no mountains and never rises much above 170 m, but it is still a 237 km point-to-point walk with about 2,286 m of total ascent. The Lincolnshire Wolds and the Lincoln Cliff add repeated short climbs, and long field-path days can feel harder than the profile suggests, especially in mud.

Fix: plan the walk as a proper long-distance trail, not a series of village strolls. If this is a first multi-day walk, the 10–12 day range is sensible; stronger walkers can compress it, but the 22–25 km days still need an early start and realistic pacing.

Leaving accommodation too late

Accommodation is straightforward in places such as Barton-upon-Humber, Caistor, Horncastle, Woodhall Spa, Lincoln and Oakham, but it is thin or absent on some rural stretches. The awkward nights are not always the longest walking days; they are the places where the trail passes through small villages with limited beds.

Fix: book the whole itinerary before committing to travel dates. Where there is no practical bed on the line of the route, arrange an off-route taxi, B&B pickup or self-guided operator transfer in advance rather than trying to solve it at the end of the day.

Assuming every village has food, water and evening meals

The Viking Way passes many villages, but that does not mean there will be an open shop, café or pub when you arrive. Rural opening hours can be limited, and Sundays or bank holidays can make resupply more awkward.

Fix: check food stops day by day before travelling, especially between the larger hubs. Carry enough water and snacks to finish the day without relying on a village service being open.

Relying only on Viking helmet waymarks

The Viking helmet waymarks are helpful and the route is generally well signed, but field edges, bridleways, woodland paths and village exits are still easy places to miss a turn. Mud, vegetation, temporary diversions or damaged signs can also make waymarking less obvious.

Fix: carry OS mapping or a reliable GPX in addition to following waymarks. The relevant OS mapping spans several sheets, so digital mapping is often simpler, but a phone should not be the only navigation tool unless battery management and offline maps are sorted.

Using an outdated or wrong southern itinerary

The correct southern line runs from the Lincoln Cliff villages towards Ancaster, Marston, Woolsthorpe Locks, Sewstern, Greetham, Exton, Rutland Water and Oakham. Stamford is not on the Viking Way.

Fix: use current route information from Visit Lincolnshire, Lincolnshire County Council, LDWA mapping or an up-to-date GPX. Check live diversions before setting off, particularly where rights of way or

improvement works may affect the line.

Underestimating the transport logistics

The start and finish are rail-accessible, but much of the middle of the route is not. Barton-upon-Humber has a railway station near the Humber Bridge start, Lincoln is the main rail hub around halfway, and Oakham has a railway station at the finish; between those points, smaller villages may require local buses or taxis.

Fix: plan transport around the actual overnight stops, not just the trailheads. If section-walking, Lincoln is the easiest major break point; elsewhere, check current bus and taxi options before booking accommodation. This should be checked before travelling.

Planning over-long stages in the muddy months

The official and commonly used stages include several days around 22–25 km, including Barton-upon-Humber to Barnetby le Wold, Donington on Bain to Horncastle, Horncastle to Bardney, Lincoln to Wellingore, Wellingore to Marston and Sewstern to Oakham. In dry summer conditions these are manageable for fit walkers; after rain, field paths and valley sections can slow progress considerably.

Fix: allow shorter days if walking in spring or autumn after wet weather, or if carrying full kit. Build in enough daylight for slower field sections and do not judge the route purely by its low altitude.

Forgetting that Lincoln changes the rhythm of the walk

Lincoln is a useful halfway rail hub and a major resupply point, but it is also the one substantial urban interruption on the route. The trail climbs through the city via Steep Hill, and time can disappear quickly around the cathedral, castle, shops and accommodation logistics.

Fix: decide in advance whether Lincoln is a normal walking day, a short day or a rest/half-rest stop. It is the best place on the route to reset kit, replace food and adjust onward plans.

Expecting the Wolds and Cliff sections to be sheltered

The Lincolnshire Wolds, open farmland and the Lincoln Cliff can feel exposed in poor weather despite the modest height. Wind, rain and low cloud are not mountain hazards here, but they can make long agricultural sections colder and slower than expected.

Fix: pack proper waterproofs and layers even for a lowland route. Check the forecast for the Wolds, the Witham valley and the open escarpment sections, and start early on long wet days.

Ignoring the difference between official sections and practical walking days

The official Viking Way is divided into 13 sections, but many walkers use accommodation-based stages of around 10–12 days. These do not always match the official break points exactly.

Fix: build the itinerary from available beds, transport and personal daily distance, then match it to the route. Do not assume that an official section end automatically has the best accommodation or onward transport for that night.

Final Advice

The Viking Way is best for walkers who want a long, waymarked English lowland trail without mountain terrain or technical difficulty. It suits a first multi-day walk, provided daily distances are planned realistically, and it also rewards experienced walkers who enjoy Wolds villages, historic towns, river-valley paths, escarpment walking and a varied rural route rather than high drama.

The main thing to organise early is accommodation. Barton-upon-Humber, Caistor, Horncastle, Woodhall Spa, Lincoln and Oakham give useful service points, but some rural stretches have thin or absent overnight options, so off-route taxi transfers or a self-guided operator's pickup may be needed. Book beds ahead, and check current public transport, taxi availability and any baggage-transfer arrangements before relying on them.

Do not underestimate the walk because the high point is only around 170 m. The challenge is cumulative: 237 km of field paths, grassy tracks, bridleways, lanes and surfaced former-railway paths, with mud likely after rain and enough undulation in the Lincolnshire Wolds and along the Lincoln Cliff to make consecutive days tiring. Carry OS mapping or a reliable GPX as well as following the Viking-helmet waymarks.

The most rewarding section for many walkers is the progression from the Lincolnshire Wolds through Lincoln and on to the Cliff Villages: rolling chalk country, a major historic city, then the long limestone escarpment south of Lincoln. The final approach via Rutland Water into Oakham gives the route a strong finish and is worth keeping unhurried if the itinerary allows.

As a full thru-hike, the Viking Way has a satisfying north-to-south line from the Humber Estuary to Rutland. It also works well as a section hike, especially using Lincoln as a practical midpoint because it is a major rail hub. Away from Barton-upon-Humber, Lincoln and Oakham, access is more dependent on local buses and taxis, so section walkers should plan exit points as carefully as overnight stops.

Before setting out, check Visit Lincolnshire or Lincolnshire County Council for current route information and diversions. With accommodation booked, transport checked and navigation prepared, the Viking Way is a highly achievable long-distance walk — gentle in terrain, but still long enough to demand proper planning.