First of all: I will skip the part where I tell you how to get to Durham because after all it’s the 21st century and there are numerous ways to get here, my advice though: try as many as you can.

(Or read previous reports.)

And now the important aspects of your stay in Durham.

Module choices

Before you get to Durham in the fall you are asked to fill out a Learning Agreement with your module choices and most of them should be at the department you are linked with. You should definitely do so but you have to know that this won’t be the final draft of your Learning Agreement.

Therefore I recommend that you still have a look at modules from other departments (especially students that are linked with the German Department) because when you get to Durham you will get the chance to change some courses on your Learning Agreement. The International Office will set up meetings for the Erasmus students at their assigned department(s) in the week before university starts. During these meetings you might get the chance to squeeze in some courses from the English department or any other of your choice.

This is of course not always the case but if you show that you are keen to do so (in a patient and nice manner) they will be accommodating.

Don’t take to many courses at the English department though. One special topic and one lecture will keep you busy enough. Then I would recommend the modules especially designed for Erasmus students: ‘English and its Social Context’ and ‘English Past & Present’ (well, the latter one wasn’t exactly my favourite, still other students enjoyed it). The History department offers a great range of module choices for Erasmus students as well. Be careful with the Tudor’s module though, apparently it’s the only period English pupils studied at school, so they basically live and breathe it. I can recommend the Africa module because it will introduce you the modern history of Africa and it will give you a good insight into the historical debates. (HISTORICAL DEBATES are everything here; they don’t really have anything like ‘Quellenuebungen’.)

(BTW don’t panic if you aren’t able to figure out the times for your courses yet, they will sort out everything for you in Durham.)
Where to live

As an Erasmus student you won’t get a spot at the accommodation of your assigned college hence you have to find a place all by yourself. You can do that upon your arrival or before you get to Durham. I choose the latter option because I wanted to make sure that I have at least the slightest chance of sharing a house with some natives. The best way to find a house/flat is to get an account at http://www.durhamstudentpad.co.uk/Accommodation which is a side run by the DSU. It will not only help you to get an overview of the available properties in Durham but it also might help you to find your future house/flatmates. Try to find a house with 3rd year students (or above) because it won’t be their first year living on their own in a house (before that most of the students enjoyed a full board college accommodation with a cleaning staff that even cleaned their rooms) and there is the chance that they are actually your age.

The cheapest areas to live are by far Gilesgate and Claypath and both areas aren’t too far away from the important university facilities. Stay away from areas like Framwellgate Moor or Neville’s Cross. I know the rent prices there will try to seduce you but Durham is a really hilly city, seriously know it will be the first thing you will notice when you get here. So, the low rent won’t be worth walking up the hill to Framwellgate Moor every day, especially without a 32 or 31 to Universitaetsplatz.

(Read now the other reports that will tell you all about the colleges at Durham University or just visit http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLB0537DA4AD9871B2.)

Induction Week

The Induction Week (aka Fresher’s Week) is the week right before University starts. During this week you will sort out your time table and do a lot of activities with your college. Participate and Enjoy!! Furthermore you will get the chance to join different University clubs and societies that will be introduced at the Fresher’s fair. From ‘Whisky tasting’ to ‘Sky diving’, - there is a society for everything.

Final words

Your stay here will make all your English textbooks that you have been studying since, well basically since forever, come to life, especially if you are lucky and get to leave with some Brits. From burning Guy Fawkes to weird dishes like Yorkshire puddings, you will get to experience it all.

Durham offers the scenery of a beautiful Northern English city which looks quite ‘harry pottery’ especially during winter time. It’s dominated by the incredible cathedral which is not only the centre piece of the historic site Palace Green but of Durham itself. There is no reason not to like it here.
Must ‘haves’ for Durham:

WELLIES – you can try and be ignorant about it (like me in the beginning) but I came to the conclusion that it is basically impossible to survive a year in the north without them (just look at the bride side, you can get them in any colour)

Rail Way Card – just get one (you need a pic in passport size for it, so bring one with you to England)

NUS card – saves you a lot of money, f.ex especially in slightly more expensive restaurants you can get a discount up to 30%

General Tips:

USE YOUR STUDENT IDENTITY CARD – a lot of stores in England offer a discount for students

USE THE UNIVERSITY WELCOME SERVICE- it’s a student’s organized service that will pick you up from the airport in Newcastle or the train station in Durham and get you to Durham, doesn’t matter if you want to get to your college or to your house/flat!!

DSU – they will help and support no matter what problem

To Do List for Durham (of course you don’t have to):

Beamish Museum: seriously now it’s one of the best museums I have been to (I would suggest you go there at the beginning of your stay because the ticket is valid for a whole year!!)

NUFC Game: you can get European football for a tenner and the NUFC fans are a really welcoming family

Finchale Abbey – beautiful hiking trail along the river Wear

Klute- apparently the worst night club in Europe BUT a guarantee for a great night