

# One region, many worlds

Brilliant Birmingham & the West Midlands –  
a guide for international media





# Discover the many sides to this dramatic destination, with our guide to Birmingham and the West Midlands.

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# Did you know?

## Birmingham 2022 fast facts

- The [Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games](#) will be held across Birmingham & the West Midlands from July 28 – August 8, 2022.
- Birmingham 2022 marks the first time in history that a major multi-sport event will feature more women's than men's medal events. It will also have a fully integrated para-sports programme.
- Shining a light on the West Midlands, Birmingham 2022 takes place at 19 venues across the region, from Birmingham, Coventry, Solihull, and Royal Leamington Spa to Cannock Chase, Sutton Coldfield, and Wolverhampton.
- Birmingham 2022 has pledged to be the most [sustainable](#) Games in history – with a carbon-neutral legacy, minimising waste, planting 2,022 acres of Commonwealth Forest and 72 urban forests, clearing 22 miles of canals and putting equality, diversity, inclusion and accessibility at the heart of the Games.
- [The Birmingham 2022 Queen's Baton Relay Tour](#) began on October 7, 2021 and visits all 72 nations and territories of the Commonwealth, carried by inspirational Batonbearers, before returning to the opening ceremony in Birmingham's Alexander Stadium, on July 28.
- Birmingham and beyond is buzzing to the beat of the [Birmingham 2022 Festival](#), a celebration of creativity taking place until September.
- It's set to be one colourful summer, as the region has many shared celebrations, including [Flatpack](#) arts festival in May, the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in June and [Birmingham Pride](#) in September.



# Bring it on – How to be part of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games

[The Commonwealth Games](#) promises one colourful summer, with many shared celebrations. Taking place at venues across the West Midlands in the heart of the UK, from the cities of Birmingham, Coventry and Wolverhampton to the parks of Royal Leamington Spa and Sutton Coldfield, here's how to join the action.

## Follow the Birmingham 2022 Queen's Baton Relay

In the run-up to the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, the [Queen's Baton Relay](#) makes its way to all corners of the Commonwealth, visiting and connecting 72 nations and territories across a 294-day journey. Beginning last October, when the Queen placed a message for the Commonwealth within the baton at Buckingham Palace, the Baton will be presented back to Her Majesty, or one of her representatives and the message read out, at the opening ceremony at Birmingham's Alexander Stadium on July 28.

## Did you know?

In keeping with Birmingham 2022's sustainability pledge, the Baton will travel almost half the distance of previous Commonwealth Games in order to cut its carbon footprint – covering 140,000 km in total.

## Get tickets for key venues

Birmingham 2022 is all about shared celebrations, with women's cricket T20, basketball 3x3, wheelchair basketball 3x3 and mixed synchronised diving all making their debut. Around 4,500 elite athletes will compete across 19 sports at a number of venues in the West Midlands. Each is easily accessible and local bus, train and tram travel is even included with tickets. Shuttle bus services will also operate between the main venues.

Birmingham's newly renovated [Alexander Stadium](#) hosts the opening and closing ceremonies and athletics. The city's premier cricketing venue, [Edgbaston](#), hosts the women's T20 competition, with rugby sevens, judo and wrestling taking centre stage in [Coventry Stadium and Arena](#).

Both basketball 3x3 and beach volleyball play at [Smithfield](#), in Birmingham's city centre, as the former Smithfield Market site turns into a temporary venue. Diving and swimming make a splash at the brand new [Sandwell Aquatics Centre](#), in Smethwick.

Badminton, boxing, table tennis, netball and weightlifting fans can catch the action at the region's famous [National Exhibition Centre \(NEC\)](#), close to Birmingham Airport, while a number of parks across the West Midlands will host cycling, triathlon and lawn bowls events.

## Join the party

It's not just sport, there's lots of other action to court as the [Birmingham 2022 Festival](#) runs alongside the Games, with a spectacular programme of events across the region, celebrating culture, art and diversity in the West Midlands.

Whether it's telling stories of the city's cultural past or finding creativity through artwork and sculptures, the jam-packed agenda spans six months and runs until September, allowing visitors to discover much more about the West Midlands, beyond the live-action sport of the Games.

[Pride House Birmingham](#) also provides a safe and inclusive LGBTQI+ space in the run-up to the Games and beyond with an extensive entertainment programme.

## Did you know?

95 per cent of the cultural programmes during Birmingham 2022 Festival are free.

## Look to the future

Pledging to be the [most sustainable](#) Games yet, Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games aims to leave a legacy that positively impacts the city and community. It is the first games to have more female than male medal events, and plays host to the largest para-sport programme in Commonwealth Games history.

As part of its sustainability commitment, it is providing electric vehicles, accessible venues and routes, free water refill points and free public transport to and from sporting events. The Games aims to be carbon neutral and as such is planting 2022 acres of forests and creating 72 urban forests throughout the West Midlands.

As part of the Birmingham 2022 Festival, over 150 projects also shine a light on diversity by bringing together community groups and artists to produce a range of creative work.

## Getting tickets

All remaining sporting and festival tickets are on general sale. [Accessible tickets](#) are also available. Visit the [Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games](#) official site.

## Fan zones

If you miss out on a ticket, there's another way to enjoy the live action, in fan zones. From the opening and closing ceremonies to the festival and Queen's Baton Relay, Birmingham 2022 will be a region-wide celebration of art and culture and live sites allow everyone to experience the thrill and excitement. Fan zones are planned for areas across Birmingham, visit the Games [website](#) for up to date information, which can be subject to change.

# Introducing the West Midlands – One region, with many worlds

## Regional highlights

### *What we love:*

There are many ways to discover the heart of the UK. From sport to music, history and culture and stunning natural landscapes, the West Midlands has it all. From the fabulous food and stand-out shopping of Birmingham, to the popular Black Country Living Museum, home to the Peaky Blinders, dramatic underground canals of Dudley, cool events of UK City of Culture, Coventry, or historic Warwick Castle, there's something for everyone here.

### *At a glance*

- The [Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games](#) shines a light on the region's strong sports pedigree, from its Premier League Football clubs including [Aston Villa](#) and [Wolverhampton Wanderers](#), to its world-class [Edgbaston Cricket Ground](#) and golf course [The Belfry](#).

The West Midlands has a rich heritage as the centre of the Industrial Revolution and you can discover its past at fascinating museums including the [Black Country Living Museum](#) and [Museum of the Jewellery Quarter](#).

- The region is a foodie's paradise – from Michelin-starred restaurants to Birmingham's famous curries of its Balti Triangle. Little [Ludlow](#) is also a great gourmet getaway with its range of restaurants and cafes.
- You can travel back in time at one of the region's many historic homes, including [Warwick Castle](#), [Kenilworth Castle](#) and [Coombe Abbey](#).
- Running like veins through the heart of the UK, the [canals](#) are a great way to see the sights, either on a boat trip, walking or cycling.
- Go potty for the world's finest collection of Staffordshire ceramics at Stoke-on-Trent's [Potteries Museum and Art Gallery](#) and the [World of Wedgwood](#).
- The [Peak District National Park](#) is also within easy reach, with its dramatic landscapes, forests and lakes.
- It's a motoring centre, full of museums and tours, from Solihull's [Jaguar Land Rover Experience](#), to the [British Motor Museum](#).



# West

# MIDLANDS

Cheshire

1.5  
hours

Birmingham to Manchester  
by train



# England

Derbyshire

Staffordshire

Shropshire

Leicestershire

Black Country  
Living Museum

Villa Park

JLR Experience

Birmingham

Coventry Cathedral

West Midlands

Worcestershire

Warwick  
Castle

Warwickshire

Herefordshire

Anne Hathaway's  
Cottage

Oxfordshire

# Wales

Gloucestershire

1.5  
hours

Birmingham to London  
by train



Gas Street  
Basin

The Jewellery  
Quarter

Bullring  
& Grand  
Central

Edgbaston

Balti Triangle

Gadbury World

Birmingham

## Birmingham

### *What we love:*

It might be Britain's "second city", but Birmingham is taking first place on the podium this summer, for the Commonwealth Games. This fun, vibrant city has gone from industrial hub to creative heartland and has something for everyone, from world-class shopping, to amazing architecture. It's full of buzzing bars and fabulous food, from fine-dining to cool street food and its famous curries. Easy to walk around, you can wander its historic Jewellery Quarter and along its twinkling canals, before stopping at one of its stand-out cafes.

### *At a glance*

- Bournville in Birmingham is home to [Cadbury World](#), the famous chocolate factory where it all began.
- Sitting amongst its historic buildings are architectural gems like the futuristic [Library of Birmingham](#) and iconic [Bullring](#) shopping centre.
- The city is famous for its food, from its five Michelin-starred restaurants, to the curries of the Balti Triangle.
- Birmingham has more miles of canals than Venice and a [boat trip](#) along them is a great way to see the industrial heart of the city.
- The historic Jewellery Quarter still produces around 40 per cent of British jewellery.

## Coventry

### *What we love:*

Cool Coventry, the [City of Culture 2021](#), gave birth to Two Tone music and is home to the [2-Tone Village](#), [Coventry Music Museum](#) and [Herbert Art Gallery and Museum](#). You can take a walk back in time, from the city's industrial past in the Canal Basin and the medieval buildings of Spon Street and Bayley Lane, or come up to date in the city's famous modern [Cathedral](#).

### *At a glance*

- Coventry is UK [City of Culture for 2021](#) and celebrations continue through 2022.
- The 14th century [Coventry Cathedral](#) was heavily bombed in World War II and is now home to a show-stopping 25-metre stained glass window.
- [Coventry Music Museum](#) is where you can discover the rise of Two Tone.
- [Coventry Transport Museum](#) is home to the biggest publicly-owned collection of British cars in the world.
- [Kenilworth Castle](#) is one of the country's biggest historical sites, where you can walk in the footsteps of Elizabeth I.



## Stratford-upon-Avon

### *What we love:*

To be honest, you can't come to the West Midlands and not visit Shakespeare Country. The timbered house that is [Shakespeare's Birthplace](#) is an unforgettable experience and deservedly the town's star attraction. Historic Stratford-upon-Avon is one of those places you'll never forget, especially seeing Shakespeare performed there by the [Royal Shakespeare Company](#). The market town's many independent shops, boutiques and cafes are also a draw.

### *At a glance*

- Stratford-upon-Avon is all about Shakespeare. See where it all began for the Bard with a visit to [Shakespeare's Birthplace](#) and his family homes.
- [Mary Arden's Farm](#), was the family home of Shakespeare's mother and is now a fascinating working museum bringing to life a Tudor farm.
- There's no better place to see Shakespeare performed than in his home town and the [Royal Shakespeare Company](#) performs at its three theatres.
- You can see more of pretty Stratford-upon-Avon on a [boat tour](#) down the river.
- Stratford-upon-Avon is also ideally situated for a day trip around the beautiful nearby [Cotswolds](#).



# Did you know? The West Midlands

- Birmingham is a foodie's paradise, with five [Michelin](#)-starred restaurants in the city – more than any other UK city outside London.
- Famous brands, past and present, associated with Birmingham and the wider region, include HP Sauce, Bird's Custard, Jaguar Land Rover, Aston Martin and Cadbury's.
- Chocolate lovers can go all Willy Wonka on a [Cadbury World](#) factory tour, as Cadbury's chocolate and Bournville Drinking Chocolate both started life in Birmingham. Fast fact: if all the Creme Eggs made in a year at the Cadbury's chocolate factory were put in a line end to end, it's thought they would reach Australia.
- From the invention of the steam engine in the 18th century and the self-adhesive stamp in the 1960s, to the UK's first multi-city testbed for 5G technology – the West Midlands has remained at the forefront of industry for centuries.
- With more than 8,000 acres of parks and open space, Birmingham is one of the greenest cities in the UK.
- The iconic [Library of Birmingham](#) sits at the heart of the city. Visit its secret garden and view thousands of items of Shakespearean history in its Everything to Everybody: Your Shakespeare, Your Culture [exhibition](#), running until November.
- Birmingham famously has more miles of canals than Venice, thanks to its innovative 18th century industrialists. The 35 miles/56 kilometres of [waterways](#) now provide lovely boat trips, canal tours, waterside walks and cycling trails.
- The [Dudley Canal & Tunnel Trust](#) takes anywhere from 45-minutes to six-hours to explore, meandering through multiple tunnels, canals, locks, and caves. The two-hour tour includes the 9,000-foot-long Dudley Tunnel, where boats are propelled by human power.
- If you're in the market for a ring, Birmingham's historic Jewellery Quarter with its 700 artisan workshops, still produces around 40 per cent of the UK's jewellery and has been at the centre of jewellery production for over 250 years.
- Famous items such as the Wimbledon's Ladies Singles trophy, the original Football Association (FA) Cup and whistles for the Titanic were made in the Jewellery Quarter;
- Birmingham is home to many past and present rock bands and musicians, including Ocean Colour Scene, Duran Duran, ELO, UB40, Black Sabbath and Laura Mvula with nearby Coventry the home of two-tone music.
- J.R.R. Tolkien, author of The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings, lived in a village called Sarehole, a short drive from Birmingham. It's widely understood that this spot was inspiration for Hobbiton and the Shire.
- Peaky Blinders – who carried razor blades in the peaks of their caps – were a Victorian criminal gang, made world famous by screenwriter Stephen Knight and his BBC drama series.
- Aston Villa Football Club – whose fans include Prince William – were founding members of the Football League in 1888.
- Lawn Tennis was first played in 1859 in Edgbaston. Spanish merchant Augurio Perera marked out an outdoor rackets game on his back lawn with his friend Major Harry Gem.

# How to discover another side of Birmingham

All eyes will be on Birmingham this summer, as the region hosts the 2022 Commonwealth Games – but there's so much more to discover. From cultural festivals and graffiti tours, to a hotel set in a zoo, Birmingham has new and quirky adventures galore, as well as a packed events calendar. It sits in the centre of Britain, drawing inspiration from all over the nation and further afield – so look forward to globetrotting dining, multicultural celebrations, and a warm welcome wherever you go.

## Alternative things to do in Birmingham

There's a real buzz in the West Midlands this year. Alongside the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games (July–August), six months of music, dance and cultural celebrations will make up the Birmingham 2022 Festival, showcasing the region's remarkable creative spirit (March–August). But away from the spotlight, there's plenty in Birmingham to dazzle. You can take a kayaking tour through the city centre, exploring the wildlife-rich canals which run through Birmingham's heart, or discover vibrant street art on a free self-guided walk.

Love the great outdoors? Meet the red pandas and meerkats at Birmingham Wildlife Conservation Park, or soak up the tropical splendour of Birmingham Botanical Gardens – which also hosts events throughout the year. Or take on the daredevil high-ropes at The Bear Grylls Adventure, with challenges designed by the world-renowned British explorer himself. © The Black Country Living Museum

The streets of Birmingham also provided the inspiration for the hit TV show *Peaky Blinders*. With many scenes filmed at the Black Country Living Museum, here you can walk in the footsteps of Cillian Murphy and learn how to speak like a Peaky. There's even themed evenings in September for an immersive feel of the show. A Peaky Tour of the city reveals even more about the original gangs, with a walking tour of their former hangouts, grisly insights from expert historians, and dinner in the city's oldest pub.

If it's striking city views you're looking for, venture to the top of the Library of Birmingham. This striking contemporary landmark is home to two secret rooftop gardens – they're free to visit, as are the library's various exhibitions, which feature leading authors and artists. But that's just the tip of Birmingham's diverse cultural scene. From Chinatown's eateries and Centrala's Eastern European art exhibitions, to the South Asian music and dancing at Birmingham Mela (27–28 August 2022), countless customs are represented here.

And foodies will love the 'Balti Triangle', an area of balti restaurants in the south of the city, where this spicy dish was reportedly invented in the 1970s. Fusing traditional Kashmiri recipes with British ingredients, and named after the dish in which it is cooked, this vibrant area is full of hidden gems serving their fresh take on this regional favourite.



## Birmingham's quirky places to stay

While central Birmingham has an abundance of luxury boutique hotels, including The Rotunda, Hotel Du Vin and the Frederick Street Townhouse, how about something totally unique? Just 15 miles outside the city, The Rockhouse Retreat offers an idyllic romantic retreat for two. The 800-year-old cave house, set in beautiful wild woodland, comes complete with a kingsize bed and inglenook fireplace, as well as a picturesque brook right on its doorstep.

Warwick Castle provides hands-on history by day, and an opportunity for Medieval-themed glamping by night. Visitors can stay overnight in its grounds at the Knight's Village – book a King's Tent (sleeps four), for a four-poster bed and throne-style seats, set amid the castle woodlands.

Or step into one of the West Midland Safari Park's luxury lodges for a front row seat inside the animal habitats. Elephant Lodge is right next to the watering hole, while Red Panda Cottage overlooks the climbing den – and there are giraffe, gorilla, rhino and cheetah ones too. The lodges sleep up to five or six people, with two-day entry tickets to the safari park included.

## Where to dine differently in Birmingham

For great cocktails, street food and a whole host of games – from baseball and curling to table golf – The Floodgate is a big kids' playground, with a buzzing bar and street eats aplenty (think juicy burgers, dirty fries, hot dogs and cinnamon waffles).

Or for table tennis, arcade games and beer pong, head to Roxy Ball Room – it's set in a graffiti-covered warehouse, complete with a bowling alley and pool tables. The pizzas are loaded, the playlist is rocking, and there's a huge choice of cocktails and craft beers.

If you prefer the finer things in life, the West Midlands has ten Michelin-starred restaurants and five are in Birmingham itself – that's more than any other British city outside of London. In central Birmingham, look to Adam's for British classics with haute cuisine flair, Opheem for sumptuous Indian dining (with veggie and pescatarian tasting menus), and Carters of Moseley for sustainably-sourced seasonal fare, plus organic and biodynamic wines.

## Getting there and around

As well as Birmingham International Airport, the city also has several major railway stations. Birmingham New Street and Birmingham International connect with train services from all over the country, while fast services from London Marylebone arrive at Birmingham Moor Street, right in the city centre, in just one hour 40 minutes.

Thanks to its traffic-free cycle routes, Birmingham is easy to explore on two wheels: you can rent bikes from a West Midlands Cycle Hire hub or a Brompton Bike station. The city also has an extensive network of wheelchair-accessible buses and trams: with a pay-as-you-go Swift card, you can hop on (and off) the services throughout Birmingham and beyond.



# One city, many worlds: Birmingham's diverse precincts

It is known as the heart of England, but [Birmingham](#) has many different beats to it. From the bustling city centre with its theatres, museums, bars and restaurants, to the urban, arty Digbeth, here's a taste of some of the different flavours of the city.

## City Centre

Packed with bars and restaurants, the centre of Birmingham is easy to walk around and bursting with life. It's here you will find its famed shopping district with its iconic [Selfridges](#) building and [Bullring](#) shopping centre and high-end Mailbox centre with its branch of [Harvey Nichols](#). The cultural hub is centred around the landmark [Birmingham Library](#) building and Rep theatre and the gleaming new Paradise scheme development links it to the [Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery](#) with its huge collection of Pre-Raphaelite paintings.

## Brindley Place

Overlooked by the fabulously-named Black Sabbath Bridge, Brindley Place along the canal, is rocking at night. With bars and restaurants of all cuisines, it's easy to walk to from the city centre and sits next to some of the city's top concert venues, like [Utilita Arena Birmingham](#) and [Symphony Hall](#).

## Jewellery Quarter

Birmingham's industrial heart is alive in the Jewellery Quarter, which is full of diamond jewellers and craftspeople still producing 40 per cent of Britain's jewellery today. If you're planning on getting engaged, this is the place to do it. Look carefully at the Georgian houses in St Paul's Square and you'll see the original workshops tucked behind them. Book a walking tour of the Jewellery Quarter with the knowledgeable [Mary Moore](#) and visit the [Museum of the Jewellery Quarter](#), where you can also join jewellery-making workshops. Grab a coffee in award-winning community hub [The Hive](#), and finish off with a G&T at [40 St Paul's](#).

## Digbeth

It's been dubbed the "coolest neighbourhood in Britain," and Digbeth is the place to be for a vibrant independent arts scene. Check out the street art with a [self-guided tour](#) and relax in the bars and shops of the Custard Factory – the regenerated industrial centre that was the former home of Bird's Custard. You can also follow in the footsteps of the Peaky Blinders, as Digbeth was where the term was first coined. Join a [tour](#), or get right into the spirit in a Peaky Blinders [escape room](#).

## Gay Village

Birmingham has a large LGBTQI+ community and its [Gay Village](#) is buzzing with life, packed with bars like [Sidewalk](#) and [Equator](#) and cafes and restaurants such as [The Meat Shack](#). Grab a coffee at the city's popular roastery [Quarter Horse Coffee](#) before dancing the night away at [The Nightingale](#).



## Edgbaston

You'll know it for its world-famous cricket ground – which you can [tour](#) – but leafy Edgbaston is also one of Birmingham's most upmarket districts. It's home to the pretty [Botanical Gardens](#), some excellent gastro pubs, as well one of Birmingham's five Michelin-starred restaurants, [Simpsons](#).

## Moseley

Another of the city's Michelin-starred diners is [Carters of Moseley](#) – tucked in the leafy suburb south of the city centre. This hip area is full of venues like [One Trick Pony Club](#) and [The Dark Horse](#) as well as the home of popular Birmingham music festivals [Moseley Folk and Arts Festival](#) and [Mostly Jazz Funk and Soul](#).

## Balti Triangle

Birmingham is famous for its curries and rightly so. The home of the balti, the dish was invented in restaurants around Ladypool Road. Taste for yourself at the traditional [Shababs Balti Restaurant](#), [Adil's](#) or [Al Faisal's](#) and then burn off all the calories with a running tour of Birmingham with [Run of a Kind](#).





# Top 10 amazing things to do in Birmingham

Britain's second city, [Birmingham](#) is located in [central England](#), making it easily accessible from London and most other major cities. Once at the heart of the global Industrial Revolution, the city is now leading the way in culture, shopping, dining and more, and is host of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games. Sport is just the beginning here, and if you're looking to visit the city, you'll discover an eclectic destination with so much to explore...

## 1. Indulge your sweet tooth at a real-life chocolate factory

Famous British chocolate-maker Cadbury is based in Birmingham. [Cadbury World](#) takes you on an immersive 4D chocolate adventure even Willy Wonka would be proud of, with a ride in a bean mobile that gives you the chance to watch big vats of chocolate being made into your favourite bars. The best bit comes at the end when you get to taste-test a warm pot of melted Cadbury Dairy Milk with sprinkles of your favourite topping. There's even the opportunity to try doodling your name in chocolate in the "Have a Go" zone, before the tour ends in the world's biggest Cadbury store!

## 2. Strike gold at Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery

This [impressive museum](#) is a great starting point if you want to find out about the city's place in the history books and how it's evolved over the years. It's home to a vast Pre-Raphaelite collection of paintings, prints and drawings – one of the largest in the world, in addition to The Birmingham School of Art collection, which reveals the creative energy and impact of the city at the start of the 19th century. The museum is closed until 2022 for upgrades, with [major online events](#) continuing until its re-opening.

## 3. Discover sensational shopping

The [Bullring & Grand Central shopping centre](#) is instantly recognisable as the entire building is adorned with thousands of shimmering aluminium discs – perfect for a prize-winning Instagram shot. You won't want to hang around outside too long though, as there are lots of shiny new things to buy inside. The Bullring has more than 200 shops, including a branch of luxury department store Selfridges, the biggest designer brands and an abundance of popular high-street retailers.

## 4. Find the jewel in Birmingham's crown

Birmingham's historic [Jewellery Quarter](#) is home to one of Europe's largest concentrations of manufacturing jewellers, as well as hundreds of independent specialist retailers and craftspeople, from florists and chocolatiers to tattoo artists! The [Museum of the Jewellery Quarter](#) is built around a carefully preserved workshop and details the rich heritage of the region.

## 5. Stroll along Birmingham's canals

Did you know Birmingham has 35 miles (56km) of canals? You can look forward to taking a walk along the banks, or for an even more leisurely experience, hopping on a colourful [narrowboat for a gentle cruise](#) along the historic waterways.

## 6. Warm up with a fiery balti curry

Birmingham's [Balti Triangle](#), in the southern part of the city, is a cluster of restaurants all making curry in this unique way. The balti was reportedly invented in Birmingham, inspired by traditional Kashmiri recipes, and refers to a quick cooking process using a thin pressed steel wok. This handy [directory](#) showcases the region's excellent balti dining.

## 7. Embark on a unique underwater journey

The National [SEA LIFE](#) Centre in Birmingham is home to Britain's only 360-degree Ocean Tunnel, where sharks, a 20-stone giant green sea turtle and many other colourful species swim above and below you. The centre's Marine Mammal Rescue Facility also welcomed two [Alaskan sea otters](#) in 2020, part of a ground-breaking education and conservation project.

## 8. Follow in the footsteps of the Peaky Blinders

Hit gangster drama *Peaky Blinders*, starring Cillian Murphy, follows the Shelby family and much of the action has been filmed in Birmingham. Eagle-eyed fans of the show will recognise parts of the [Black Country Living Museum](#) in Dudley - an open-air recreation of what life was like for local people during those first days of industry in the region known as the Black Country. The show's creator Stephen Knight has even called the museum the "home of *Peaky Blinders*".

## 9. Experience life in old Birmingham

The [Birmingham Back to Backs](#) attraction is a courtyard of houses conserved to show what life was like for residents from when they were built in the 1840s up until their last occupants left in the 1970s. You'll also have the chance to meet different characters from each era, who help to add flavour as they reveal the stories and experiences of life in the Back to Backs.

## 10. Embark on some time travel

Birmingham is a great base for further exploration of central England. Within easy reach of the city is the medieval [Warwick Castle](#), complete with a number of interactive attractions, and [William Shakespeare's birthplace, Stratford-upon-Avon](#). Here it's possible to see the home where the famous Bard grew up and to discover how his works have shaped the world we live in today.

For more practical information on Birmingham, visit our [Birmingham destination page](#) or discover more about the West Midlands.



# Four days in Birmingham and surrounds

From its rich industrial past to its cultural highlights, the West Midlands is full with outdoor adventures and a foodie scene waiting to be discovered. With internationally recognised TV series *Peaky Blinders* telling tales of Birmingham's notorious gangsters, to being the birthplace and home to playwright William Shakespeare, the West Midlands is buzzing with stories that have shaped Great Britain.

Wander historic streets filled with independent shops from record stores to jewellery makers, taste the delicacies at artisan food markets, and discover a host of hidden gems to make your time in the region one to remember. Kayak your way through Birmingham's city centre, tuck into mouth-watering street food in Coventry and hear spooky tales from Stratford-upon-Avon's past. Whether you're into immersive art, being active or are a foodie seeking out new flavours – our four-day itinerary has got you covered.

## DAY 1: Venture around Birmingham

### *Take to the water*

Whether you're a keen kayaker or a first-time paddler, take to Birmingham's canals on a [kayak tour](#) for a new way to experience the city from a different perspective. Alternatively, venture west of the city centre and test your balance with [stand-up paddle boarding](#).

Or set sail from Brindelyplace aboard a self-drive [electric boat](#) for an eco-friendly and extraordinary way to explore the city.

### *Seek something different*

For a unique hangout try Birmingham's [Tilt](#), with craft beer, speciality coffee and pinball machines. For thrill seekers, face the daring high ropes of [Bear Grylls Adventure](#) – there's even challenges designed by the intrepid British explorer himself.

The city welcomes the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games this year, and in addition to the top-quality sport on show in late July and early August, there's a six-month cultural festival to enjoy. Teeming with creativity, the [Birmingham 2022 Festival](#) has a packed agenda of exhibitions and performances.

Or head to [Swordfish](#), a haven for music devotees filled with classic collectables, eclectic artwork and rows of vinyls to dive into. Step through the doors you'll be joining an impressive list of customers, from rock legend Dave Grohl to rock band Franz Ferdinand and Duran Duran.

### *Have a brush with Digbeth's art scene*

Wander down to [Digbeth](#) to find a funky arts scene. Discover [Eastside Projects](#) – once home to a cabinet maker, the space is now brimming with artistic flair and multiple exhibitions throughout the year. Or, celebrate the females of Birmingham's art scene at Stryx, a female artist-led studio and exhibition space full of modernity and socio-cultural themes.

For an immersive experience, follow the [self-guided art tour](#) to see the graffitied walls of Digbeth come alive with stories of creativity. If you find yourself here in September, don't miss the [Birmingham Pride celebrations](#), one of the country's largest LGBTQ+ festivals which brings music and a carnival feel to the city's streets.

### *Tuck into Birmingham's diverse food scene*

With its canal-side setting and an abundance of eateries, [The Mailbox](#) is a firm favourite for those seeking some sustenance. For cocktails of magical and abnormal proportions head to [Aluna](#). You can even shake things up at a [cocktail masterclass](#) and test your skills as a mixologist, creating Aluna's iconic tipples such as a Bubblegumtini and a Lava Lamp.



Alternatively, tuck into hearty food and sample over 60 beers at [The Canal House](#), or enjoy Indian spices at [Indico Street Kitchen](#).

For vegan delights, try [The Birmingham Stable](#) – with its sourdough vegan pizzas and a bottomless brunch option, you won't struggle to find something to tickle your taste buds. Or for food that's made with love and a little bit of dancing (yes, the owners bust out the moves for the love of their vegan creations) pick up a burger and some rhythm at [Ba-Ha](#).

## DAY 2: Pack your bags for Coventry, UK City of Culture 2021

### *Take history to new heights*

Discover Coventry Cathedral where old meets contemporary. Climb the [tower](#) of the 12th century cathedral ruins – largely destroyed during the Second World War – for a birds-eye view of the city. Brave the 181 steps to experience England's third highest cathedral spire, at a height of 295ft and gaze out over Coventry's cityscape.

### *Immerse yourself in art and culture*

For an out-of-this-world experience, voyage into Machine Memoirs: Space, a collaboration between NASA and artist Refik Anadol at [The Reel Store](#), the UK's first permanent digital art gallery. Find the exhibition in Coventry from May 2022.

### *Tuck in at the food village*

Discover [FarGo Village](#) – a fiercely independent re-purposed industrial space filled with top-notch eateries and artisan street-food vendors. Head into [Factory](#) for an eclectic mix of craft beers and cocktails, or indulge in artisan food at [Gourmet Food Kitchen](#). Look out for handcrafted vegan inspired gifts, vivid artwork and film and television memorabilia. For a little late-night entertainment, enjoy cabaret and drag at one of Coventry's most vibrant gay bars, [The Yard](#).

## DAY 3: Follow in the footsteps of the Bard in Stratford-upon-Avon

### *Explore Shakespearean England*

A visit to Stratford-upon-Avon wouldn't be complete without some Shakespearean influence. Join a backstage tour at the [Royal Shakespeare Company](#), or if theatre isn't your thing, head up the building's [tower](#). With its waterside location and far-reaching views of Bancroft Gardens, the Tramway Bridge and the River Avon, it's a sight not to be missed.

Once the sun goes down the ghosts come out play on the Tudor World Museum [ghost walk](#). Listen to ghastly tales of Stratford-upon-Avon's past, as you are guided through the building by lantern light.

### *All aboard a boat tour*

Hop on a [Gin-tasting Cruise from Avon Boating](#), and sample gins from the award-winning Shakespeare Distillery as you voyage down the picturesque River Avon. Don't forget to toast the captain and crew with a gin and tonic in hand.

### *Rooftop restaurants and dining delights*

With unparalleled views, head to the [Royal Shakespeare Company rooftop restaurant](#) for a cocktail and a bite to eat. Alternatively, try [Salt](#), Stratford-upon-Avon's first ever Michelin star restaurant, for fine dining and a menu packed with local ingredients.

## DAY 4: Travel to Dudley

### *Stepping back into history at the Black Country Living Museum*

Travel back north to Birmingham and discover a moment in time at the [Black Country Living Museum](#) in Dudley. Relive life during the Industrial Revolution and walk in the footsteps of the Peaky Blinders, as filming for the hit TV series took place here. For a truly immersive experience, look out for upcoming [themed events](#).

### *Dudley's canals*

Glide into an underground world which spans 428 million years of history on a guided [underground boat tour](#). The magical subterranean world comes alive with stories of the area's mining past coupled with magical light and sound displays. But watch out, the journey might not be for the faint-hearted – look out for the poltergeist of a man in old-fashioned workwear hidden in the deepest depths of the limestone hollows!

### *The wild side of life*

Come face to face with tigers, mischievous lemurs and playful penguins at [Dudley Zoo and Castle](#). Surrounded by ancient woodland and the ruin's of the 11th century Dudley Castle, explore the zoo for a world of exotic animals, heaps of history and even England's only vintage chairlift. Look out for exciting [events and experiences](#) from late night ghost hunts to becoming a zoo-keeper for a day.



# How to discover another side of Coventry

As the birthplace of the British motor industry and 2-tone music, Coventry is constantly reinventing itself. The award-winning cathedral rubs shoulders with its 14th century ruin, while in 2021 the city became UK City of Culture, hosting the Turner Prize at its [Herbert Art Gallery](#). Former industrial areas are now packed to the rafters with unusual and sustainable shops, street food and crafts, while colourful artwork adorns its walls. Whether it's a trip to a [gluten-free, vegan brewery tap house](#) or a knee-knocking ghost walk, here's how to discover another side of Coventry.

## Quirky things to do in Coventry

Coventry's very own Bohemian village, [FarGo](#), is jam-packed with things to do. Turn your hand to an [animation class](#), boost your [vinyl collection](#) or indulge in some [gourmet grub](#).

A short walk from the city centre finds you in outer space. The Reel Store, Britain's first permanent immersive digital art gallery, hosts [Machine Memoirs: Space](#), a 360-degree cinematic experience made up of two million NASA images. Or swing into action at [Teezers Retro Golf](#), combining crazy indoor golf based on retro themes, with a brightly-coloured cocktail or two. Don't miss [Coventry Pride](#), an annual celebration of the city's diverse LGBTQI+ scene, or catch top drag acts at Coventry's LGBTQI+ venues, [The Yard](#) or [Glamorous](#).

Looking for an injection of history? Head to Coventry Transport Museum for a uniquely human perspective on the city's motoring heritage and land speed records. Alternatively, pose in the real ghost car of 2-tone band The Specials at the [Coventry Music Museum](#), and learn all about the birthplace of Jamaican ska. Explore Coventry Cathedral's impressive 14th century ruins and try an energetic climb up for citywide views from the [cathedral's tower](#) – at 89 metres tall it's the third highest in England. Don't miss the striking colours of the 25-metre high Baptistry window too, a stunning feat of design.

As dusk approaches prepare to be scared witless by [Coventry's haunted past](#). Be guided through the streets of Coventry at your own pace, or wander along the Canal Basin for an insight into the city's industrial past. Once a buzzing centre for the coal industry, it is now laden with colourful narrowboats, rejuvenated warehouses full of quirky crafts and an [art trail](#). While here, why not check out [The Tin Music and Arts](#)? Based in an old coal storage building, it offers everything from live music evenings to morning tai chi classes.



## Quirky places to stay in Coventry

The former headquarters of the [Coventry Evening Telegraph](#) is now a 1950s retro hotel in the city centre, with neat nods to its newspaper history everywhere.

Or escape to the tranquil setting of [Coombe Abbey Hotel](#) on the outskirts of the city, a former 12th century Cistercian Abbey set in 500 acres of parkland. Its candlelight corridors and the occasional medieval banquet adds to the atmosphere. Or sleep in a room fit for a king, with an exclusive stay inside one of the towers of [Warwick Castle](#).

[Lychgate Cottages on Priory Row](#) may be one of Coventry's oldest buildings, but they're packed with modern luxurious features. Located in the heart of the city, the timber-framed cottage dates back to 1415.

## Where to dine differently in Coventry

[Coventry Dining Club](#) is coming this summer, offering street food and tastings at Coventry Cathedral, Coombe Abbey and The Lunt Roman Fort. FarGo Village is a haven for the avid foodie too. As well as markets offering everything from cheese to chocolate, there's posh nosh at [Gourmet Food Kitchen](#), or head to the [Factory](#) for enticing independent kitchens serving craft beer, cocktails and street food. FarGo Village has several options for vegans too, from [its own vegan brewery](#) to southern-style food at Dirty Kitch.

Helping to give young people a second chance is the kitchen of chic art deco diner [The Metropolis](#). It comes complete with its own gallery on Coventry's changing architecture, and features an inclusive menu, where identical-looking main courses are available as traditional, vegan or vegetarian options. Alternatively, head to [Esmies](#) for a taste of the Caribbean in the heart of the city.

## Getting there and around

The nearest airport to Coventry is Birmingham International, which is located just over ten miles (16km) – and a 15-minute train journey – from the city centre.

Coventry is around 100 miles (160km) from London. If you're planning a future road trip from the capital, you can pass through the historic city of Oxford, or discover shopping hotspot, Bicester Village. A direct train service from London Euston to Coventry takes around one hour.

Much of Coventry city centre can be explored on foot, although you could also hire a bike from [West Midlands Cycle Hire](#), with docking stations found across the city.



# How to discover another side of Stratford-upon-Avon

The birthplace of William Shakespeare, Stratford-upon-Avon places a lot of emphasis on the bard himself. Take in a play at one of three theatres or walk in his footsteps from [cradle](#) to the grave where his [bones still rest](#). Yet there's another side to this picturesque market town. Whether you're exploring the River Avon by [paddleboard](#), scaring yourself rigid on a ghost tour, or raising a glass to the bard himself in its [Shakespearean-influenced gin distillery](#), the only thing that remains is: what to see or not to see – that is the question?

## Quirky things to do in Stratford-upon-Avon

With three performance spaces dotted around Stratford-upon-Avon, you'll find the biggest in a scenic riverside location – the [Royal Shakespeare Theatre](#). It's here you'll see the bard's works brought to life in flamboyant fashion. There's also the intimate [Swan Theatre](#), and finally in town, The Other Place, with its cosy bar, and small performance area. [A theatre tour](#) around the Royal Shakespeare Theatre gives you an insider's peek at what the public don't see, including its vast costume workshop. It ends in the tower, which at 32 metres above street level is the height of seven double decker buses. From here you can take in panoramic views of the town and the surrounding Warwickshire countryside.

Head into town to discover [MAD, Britain's only kinetic art museum](#). Think massive marble runs, giant 3D faces and flying mechanical birds. And best of all, you can play with nearly all of the exhibits. Across the River Avon, you'll find the [Stratford Butterfly Farm](#). Discover rare minibeasts, exotic butterflies and the world's largest and most camouflaged caterpillars.

As darkness calls, it's time for some spooky chills for those who dare take the [Stratford Ghost Walk](#). Led by witches and ghosts, you'll learn about the town's most hallowed and haunted sites. And if all of this is a bit teeth-chattering for you, there's a tamer daytime version around medieval life.

If you fancy experiencing a new perspective on sight-seeing altogether, then why not take to the river itself. You can [hire a punt](#) or take on a [guided paddleboard tour](#). Alternatively, hit new heights and soar over the timbers of Stratford-upon-Avon by [hot air balloon](#), which floats from the south west edge of the town. Or, raise a glass aboard a [gin cruise](#). Learn about gin distilled in Stratford-upon-Avon, as well as the landmarks like The Holy Trinity Church and Royal Shakespeare Theatre. If you prefer to stay on dry ground, try a masterclass or tour at the multi-award-winning [Shakespeare Distillery](#).

## Stratford-upon-Avon's quirkiest places to stay

The boutique [Hotel Indigo](#) has wood panelled rooms and original features dating back to the 16th century, as well as cosy nooks and a fresh feel following multi-million restoration a few years ago.

For something a bit different, try glamping in the luxurious wooden pods at [Wootton Park](#), a 20-minute drive from Stratford-upon-Avon.

[Bluebell Cottage](#) in the village of Shottery, just over a mile (1.8km) from Stratford-upon-Avon provides a taste of Tudor life with its black beams and white walls, situated just a three-minute walk from Anne Hathaway's Cottage.



## Where to dine differently in Stratford-upon-Avon

[The Countess of Evesham](#) is an opulent 70-metre restaurant cruiser which drifts up and down the River Avon, taking in some of its prettiest stretches. The evening service operates daily, as does a weekend lunch cruise, while a Monday-Friday lunch offering runs from early May through to late September. Its menu is based on what's in season and is packed with local produce.

You can indulge in pre-theatre dinners, [Sunday lunches and afternoon teas](#) overlooking The River Avon at the Royal Shakespeare Company's rooftop restaurant.

Or visit the oldest pub in Stratford, predating even Shakespeare, for proper pub grub and home-made cakes. The Grade II listed [Old Thatched Tavern](#) serves a range of homemade food from local producers, just a short walk from Shakespeare's Birthplace.

## Getting there and around

Stratford-upon-Avon is located in the heart of England, with a number of road and rail connections.

Train services operate from Birmingham International to Stratford-upon-Avon via Birmingham Moor Street station, with the journey taking around one hour 40 minutes. Trains from London take around two hours 30 minutes. Megabus and National Express services also run from Birmingham to Stratford-upon-Avon, taking from one hour.

Once in Stratford-upon-Avon, it's possible to walk around the town centre and its main attractions in as little as 15 minutes. Alternatively, bike hire is available – a great way to explore the town and the Stratford Greenway, a five-mile traffic-free route cycle path through the countryside.





# Dramatically different ways to see the West Midlands

A journey around the heart of the nation can take many twists as the region offers something for every type of traveller – from the foodie, to the sports fan, shopaholic or culture vulture. The hardest thing is choosing which one to do first.

## The culture vulture:

Birmingham and the West Midlands is a cultural hub, packed with festivals, theatre and arts for every taste. Classical lovers can marvel at the [Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery](#), watch the [Birmingham Royal Ballet](#), or [The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra](#). For something more contemporary, catch some live music in one of the city's arenas, or smaller venues like [The Mill](#), Digbeth. Head to Coventry's cool [FarGo](#) Village creative hub, or take in one of its many events in the City of Culture's [festival](#) or the [Birmingham 2022 Festival](#) celebrating creativity across the region. Finally, Peaky Blinders fans can see the city that spawned the gang with a [tour](#) or visit to an [escape room](#).

## The history buff:

From castles to canals, the West Midlands is awash with history, so it's just a case of choosing where to launch your journey. Marvel at medieval [Warwick Castle](#) and wander in the footsteps of Elizabeth I at [Kenilworth Castle](#). Visit the heart of the Industrial Revolution at the World Heritage Site [IronBridge Gorge](#), or take a canal tour through Birmingham and see its industrial heritage brought back to life. Or head to the [Black Country Living Museum](#) and see what it was really like to live in the past.

## The foodie:

You are spoilt for choice in this gastronomic region, which has cuisine from all over the globe. With an incredible five Michelin-starred restaurants in Birmingham alone, you can enjoy some of the finest food in the nation, from sustainable British fayre at [Carters of Molseley](#) to creative Indian food at [Opheem](#). Enjoy Birmingham's famous baltis at Shabab's or a veggie pizza at [Peacer](#). Then there's little [Ludlow](#), in Shropshire, which has been dubbed "foodie heaven," with its array of eateries from [Mortimers](#) to [The Charlton Arms](#).

## The literary lover:

"All the world's a stage," Shakespeare wrote and the region certainly has many acts. You can't visit the West Midlands without including the birthplace of the Bard, [Stratford-upon-Avon](#), and seeing his family [homes](#). See Shakespeare brought to life at the [Royal Shakespeare Theatre](#), with its exciting new immersive and VR performances and take a cruise along the river Avon. Book lovers can also head to Middle-Earth at the 250-year-old Sarehole Mill, which inspired nearby resident, J.R.R. Tolkien, to create his magical world. Visit the spectacular [Library of Birmingham](#), the literary heart of the city and its Everything to Everybody: Your Shakespeare, Your Culture exhibition, running until November, where you can immerse yourself in the People's Shakespeare Library, home to thousands of items of Shakespearean history. Then discover the fascinating story of printer John Baskerville and his palatial home next door, on a historical [tour](#). While he met an ignominious end, his name lived on thanks to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle who lived and worked in Aston for a few years.

### The adrenalin junkie:

For those who enjoy more high-voltage activities, there is plenty of action to be had in the West Midlands. Try your hand at axe-throwing or free-flying at the [The Bear Grylls Adventure centre](#), or have a go at treetop-walking at one of the many [Go Ape](#) forest sites in the region, including Buxton in the Peak District, Cannock Chase, Coventry and Wyre Forest. Go climbing and abseiling in the Peak District on one of its adventure [tours](#) or take a [hike](#) in the Malverns. You can even up the ante on a canal tour – trust us – with an unforgettable underground boat journey through the vast caverns of the Dudley Canal Tunnel, with the [Dudley Canal Trust](#).

### The shopaholic:

Birmingham is famous for its shopping and the city centre is a shopper's dream. At one end of the budget you have designer emporiums [Selfridges](#) in its iconic building and [Harvey Nichols](#) in the upmarket Mailbox centre. The [Bullring](#) shopping centre has every brand you can think of, from Zara to H&M and bargain-lovers will adore the world's biggest [Primark](#) store. For more independent finds, head to [Birmingham Rag Market](#) and [The Custard Factory](#).

### Outdoor enthusiast:

The great thing about Birmingham is you can walk everywhere – it's easy to get around the city centre on foot and take a long walk along one of its many canals. In fact, you could walk or cycle all the way to London along the historic waterways. It's a very green city, with outstanding parks such as the [Botanical Gardens](#) and [Sutton Park](#). And it's surrounded by beautiful countryside – from the lovely forest [Cannock Chase](#) to the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, [The Malverns](#). [The Peak District National Park](#) is also within easy reach.

### Wellbeing warriors:

Victorians used to flock to [Royal Leamington Spa](#) to “take the waters” for the health benefits of its famous springs, but now you can relax in one of its many hair and beauty salons and day spas, or make a break of it at a hotel and spa like [Mallory Court Hotel and Spa](#) or [The Belfrey](#). Another town famous for its water is [Buxton](#) – home of, you guessed it, Buxton Water. The spa town is in the Peak District and its lovely Georgian and Victorian architecture hosts an array of independent shops, cafes, salons, clinics, spas and yoga centres.

### Road warriors:

Last but not least, get your engine running with one of the many attractions in the West Midlands for car lovers. There are many motor museums parked in the region, including the [British Motor Museum](#), with the world's largest collection of historic British cars; the [National Motorcycle Museum](#) and the popular [Jaguar factory tour](#) at Castle Bromwich. [The Coventry Transport Museum](#) is where you'll find two of the world's fastest cars including British-built ThrustSSC, which holds the current world land speed record of 763mph/1228kmph. Set in 1997, it was also the first land vehicle to officially break the sound barrier. For an unforgettable day out, head to the [Land Rover Experience Solihull](#) for a tour or thrilling off-road adventure. Or for something more genteel, take a [Morgan Driving Tour](#) of The Malverns.



# How to have an unexpected adventure in the West Midlands

Turn up the volume on your trip to Birmingham and beyond, with these dramatic new ways to discover the region. Leave the museums and galleries for a day and head into the great outdoors for an unforgettable experience.

## Like Birmingham's canals:

Birmingham has 56 km of canals – more, famously, than Venice – and travelling around or on them makes for a great day out. Whether you [walk](#) or cycle alongside the city's waterways and explore its industrial past, or take a [boat trip](#) along the canals, it's the best way of seeing the many sides of the city from its heart.

## Love the Dudley Canal Tunnel:

For something truly unforgettable, take an underground boat trip through the 2,900.5 m [Dudley Canal Tunnel](#) and caverns, with the Dudley Canal Trust.

## Explore the West Midlands waterways:

If a day on Birmingham's canals inspires you, then speed off, albeit at 6 km per hour into the sunset, on the wide network of waterways, taking the Grand Union Canal to Warwick, or the Oxford Canal, which goes all the way to the City of Dreaming Spires. There are many narrow boat hire companies in the region such as [Grand Union Narrow Boats](#).

## Like Go Ape outdoor adventure:

Swing through the tree-tops with the popular [Go Ape](#) franchise, which has forest sites all over the Midlands, including Buxton in the Peak District, Cannock Chase, Coventry and Wyre Forest. It makes a brilliant day out for children and adults – we challenge anyone not to enjoy the mega-zipline at the end.

## Love The Bear Grylls Adventure:

We're not going to lie, shark-diving in Birmingham isn't something we'd expect either, but [The Bear Grylls Adventure](#) offers just that in its awesome indoor/outdoor activity centre. Other extreme pursuits include a high-rope challenge, free-flying and new for 2022, axe-throwing, we kid you not.

## Explore Ackers Adventure:

For more unexpected high-adrenaline activities, head to [Ackers Adventure](#) in Sparkbrook, where you can hit the dry ski slope and try everything from abseiling to archery, climbing to canoeing.



### Like the Peak District National Park:

The Peak District was Britain's first National Park and is still one of its most popular. There are loads of ways of enjoying it, from a leisurely walk and afternoon tea, to something more energetic, with one of its many adventure tours. How about a spot of [weaselling](#) (squeezing yourself between rocks), climbing, abseiling, caving, or mountain-biking?

#### *Love Cannock Chase:*

We know forest-bathing is good for our health, so take a tree prescription and walk or cycle around the lovely forest [Cannock Chase](#), or go horse-riding on one of its bridleways.

#### *Explore the Malverns by foot:*

There's no better way (apart from maybe a [Morgan Driving Tour](#), which sounds pretty good) to see the Malverns, than on foot. As one of the UK's most beautiful landscapes, this protected Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) has many [walks](#), from easy to strenuous.

### Like a day trip to Warwick Castle:

For a spot of medieval adventure, you can go all dungeons and dragons at [Warwick Castle](#). The almost 1000-year-old castle has loads of immersive experiences, Bird of Prey events and live shows, as well as a Horrible Histories maze. Castles have never been so energetic.

#### *Love a day at Chatsworth House:*

The estate of the grand [Chatsworth House](#) in Bakewell is so vast, it covers 1,000 acres and you can roam through the rolling landscape all day – before you even tackle the 105-acre formal garden and maze.

#### *Explore Kenilworth Castle:*

Walk in the footsteps of Elizabeth I in the restored Elizabethan Garden of the vast [Kenilworth Castle](#), near Coventry. This medieval fortress is one of the country's biggest historical sites.



# Uncover the sporting side of the West Midlands

It's not just the [Commonwealth Games](#), sport is at the beating heart of Birmingham and the West Midlands. From tennis to cricket, football to golf, discover the rich sporting pedigree of the region.

## Love Wimbledon?

### Then the West Midlands is a must-do for you:

While everyone associates Wimbledon as the home of lawn tennis, fans may be surprised to learn the game was invented in the West Midlands. The first game of lawn tennis is said to have been [played in Edgbaston in 1859](#). And the oldest purpose-built "real tennis" club in the world, is in Leamington Spa. [The Leamington Tennis Court Club](#) was established in 1846 and still thrives today.

## Edgbaston is simply cricket:

Leafy Edgbaston, the upmarket suburb of Birmingham, is world-famous for its cricket. You can get tickets for matches or take a [stadium tour](#) and learn some of its long history in "the gentleman's game". It has been the home of Warwickshire County Cricket Club since 1885 and hosted its first Test, against Australia, in 1902. It's widely regarded as having the best atmosphere of British venues – for the home team, that is.

## It's home to many football clubs:

It's not just cricket, football is also at the heart of the West Midlands and visitors can experience some of the passion of the beautiful game at one of the region's many clubs. The Premier League's Aston Villa is based in Villa Park, Birmingham, which offers stadium [tours](#) of its historic venue, as does Wolverhampton Wanderers in [Molineux Stadium](#) in Wolverhampton. Or you can get into the [spirit](#) at Birmingham City's home of St Andrew's. [Coventry City](#) plays at Coventry Building Society Arena and [West Bromwich Albion](#) at The Hawthorns.

## You can get in a few rounds of golf:

The West Midlands is also home to one of the world's leading golf courses and resorts – [The Belfry](#). Situated just outside of Birmingham, near Sutton Coldfield, it has three golf courses and has hosted the Ryder Cup four times, more than any other venue. It is also home to a luxury [hotel](#) and spa.

## There are many ways to get moving in the West Midlands:

If the Commonwealth Games inspires you, then there are plenty of ways to get active in the region. From simply walking around Birmingham, to renting a bike and cycling the extensive [canal paths](#), right up to [abseiling](#) in the Peak District, there's really no excuse for sitting down. You can play some tennis at one of the city's many [courts](#), or combine your exercise with entertainment at [Birmingham's Treetop Adventure Golf](#) or the cool [Ghetto Golf](#) in the Custard Factory. Then get some lengths in at [Droitwich Lido](#) – one of the last inland outdoor salt-water pool in the UK.

# Culinary delights in the West Midlands

The West Midlands is packed with award-winning restaurants and an abundance of food and drink highlights. From sampling Michelin-starred fine dining, to discovering the dish that put the Balti Triangle on the map, our round up takes you on a gastronomic tour of the West Midlands, revealing just some of the delights the region has in store.

## Michelin-starred fine dining

Birmingham is home to five different Michelin-star restaurants, the most of any British city outside of London. [Carters of Moseley](#) offers a blend of modern and classic dishes and champions a sustainable approach, with lots of produce coming from its own garden and a selection of natural, organic and biodynamic wines on offer. Chef Adam Stokes serves up an array of modern cuisine amid the art deco surroundings of [Adam's](#), while [Purnell's](#) is renowned for its contemporary fine dining, with chef Glynn Purnell creating British classics influenced by Europe and the Far East. [Simpson's Restaurant](#) offers flavoursome modern dishes in a sleek suburban Georgian mansion and Opheem is a boldly decorated Indian restaurant, where you can enjoy dishes packed with distinct flavours and a delectable tasting menu.

- The Michelin Guide reveals further [fine dining options in Birmingham](#)

## The home of the Balti

Discover the original home of the Balti on a trip to the West Midlands. Located around three miles (4.8 km) from the centre of Birmingham, the Balti Triangle is filled with authentic family-run establishments offering this much-loved classic. Shababs has called the Balti Triangle home since 1987 and is one of multiple restaurants specialising in this style of dish, inspired by traditional Kashmiri recipes and cooked quickly using a thin pressed steel wok, with other options including Lahore Village. Try your hand at creating your own fusion of Indian flavours at The Spice Club – located in the picturesque West Midlands countryside, learn how to cook authentic Indian dishes from experts in the field.

- Discover more about the Balti Triangle with [Visit Birmingham](#)

## A celebration of food and drink

Held in the medieval ruins of Ludlow Castle, Shropshire, the [Ludlow Food Festival](#) celebrates produce found in the Welsh Marches, which run along the border of England and Wales. Alongside the Ludlow Spring Festival and Ludlow Magnalunga, it's also one of a trio of events making the town a must-see spot. And with more than 180 local food and drink producers offering tastings, sampling and more, it's an unmissable feast for foodies.

- Find more information at [Ludlow Food Festival](#)

## A world of chocolate

Sweet tooth? Discover a piece of chocolate heaven at [Cadbury World](#) while embarking on a unique 4D adventure through chocolate making. After jumping aboard a chocolate bean mobile to revel in the magic of Cadbury, you can test your chocolate piping skills in the "Have A Go" zone and learn about the region's heritage in the Bournville Experience. Finish up in the world's biggest Cadbury's shop, to stock up on chocolatey delights!

- Opening days and times vary. Pre-booking tickets is recommended.



## Sampling the flavours of gin

Stratford-upon-Avon is home to [Shakespeare Distillery](#), join a gin tour or shake things up with a cocktail making masterclass. Or take to the River Avon aboard a Gin Tasting Cruise (link?) – with a guided tasting session and views of the riverside sights.

For something more hands on, test your gin-making skills at [Pinnock Distillery](#) in Warwickshire – learn about the history and processes that go behind producing the botanical spirits, while indulging in plenty of gin samples along the way. Or indulge in gin, cheese and chocolate at Birmingham's [40 St Pauls](#) for a fusion of unique flavours.

## Delectable street food

From small food wagons to collections of street vendors, you don't need fine dining to enjoy the best of what the West Midlands has to offer. [Digbeth Dining Club](#) operates at a number of venues and events across the region, welcoming a diverse mix of vendors and cuisines. Two permanent sites at Hockley Social Club and Herbert's Yard can be found a short distance from the centre of Birmingham, as well as the Open Arms, an open-air beer garden within the grounds of Warwick Castle.

- Hockley Social Club – Open Thursday to Sunday, opening hours vary.
- Herbert's Yard – Opening hours vary.

## Brewing up a storm

Craft beer has surged in popularity in Britain, and there are plenty of breweries, microbreweries and tap rooms across the West Midlands where you can sample their creations. Based in Coventry's FarGo Village, the [Twisted Barrel Ale Brewery and Tap House](#) has 23 beers on tap and a range of bottled options to try, including monthly specials and numerous seasonal concoctions. [Birmingham Brewing Company](#) is a short walk from Bournville Station and serves a delicious selection of vegan and gluten-free beers, as well as natural wines, local cider and an array of spirits and soft drinks. Discover the history of Birmingham's beer making on a [Two Towers Brewery tour](#), or become a brewing expert and learn the craft for yourself at one of their brew day experiences. Down in Digbeth, join [Dig Brew Co](#) for a brewery tour finishing in their inhouse pizzeria. Alternatively, stop off at [Brewhouse & Kitchen](#) in Sutton Coldfield for freshly-brewed craft beers, as well as experiences including beer and gin tasting masterclasses and even the chance to be a brewer for the day.

- Twisted Barrel Ale Brewery and Tap House – Tap House open Wednesday to Sunday with varied hours.
- Birmingham Brewing Company – Tap Room open Thursday to Sunday with varied hours.
- Brewhouse & Kitchen – Open daily from 11am. Closing times vary.
- Two Towers Brewery – Tap Room open daily with varied hours.
- Digbeth Brew Co – Tap house open Friday and Saturday with varied hours.

## Carefully crafted cocktails

Central Birmingham is home to several cocktail bars renowned for serving up a collection of bold and colourful signature creations. With canal-side views of The Mailbox to accompany its menu of carefully crafted cocktails, [Gas Street Social](#) also has a range of brunch and other dining options. Alternatively, head into the heart of the historic Great Western Arcade to sample the handcrafted cocktails on offer amid the funky surroundings of [The Pineapple Club](#). Expect magical concoctions at [The Alchemist](#), floral flavours at [The Botanist](#) and a twist on classic cocktails at [The Lost and Found](#).

- Gas Street Social – Open daily from 12pm to 11pm on weekdays, with varied hours at weekends.
- The Pineapple Club – Open Tuesday to Sunday from 12pm. Closing times vary.
- The Alchemist – Colmore Row and Brindley Place: open daily from 10am with varied closing hours.
- The Botanist – Open daily from 12pm on weekdays, with varied hours at weekends.
- The Lost and Found – Open daily from 12pm on weekdays, with varied hours at weekends.

## Varied vegan delights

You'll find an eclectic mix of food choices across the West Midlands, including an array of vegan and plant-based delights. Falafel Corner, in the heart of Coventry, serves up fresh falafel wraps and salads, accompanied by a range of smoothies and juices. Or there's [Dirty Kitch](#), in FarGo Village, for homemade vegan chick'n dishes that take inspiration from America's Deep South. Meanwhile in Birmingham, Indico Mailbox serves up a selection of Punjab-style street food from a dedicated vegan menu, while [Mowgli](#) in Grand Central offers moreish Indian street food packed with flavour. For something a bit different, trot down to [The Birmingham Stable](#) to tuck into delectable plant-based and veggie sourdough pizzas, or head to Digbeth for some vegan-loaded fries and a burger from [BA-HA](#).

- Falafel Corner – Open daily from 10am to 6pm.
- Dirty Kitch – Open Thursday to Sunday with varied hours.
- Indico Mailbox – Open daily from 12pm to 10pm.
- Mowgli – Open daily from 12pm. Closing times vary.
- The Birmingham Stable – Open daily from 11.30am to 11pm.
- BA-HA at The Rainbow – Open daily with varied hours.



# 10 sustainable ways to visit the West Midlands

We all know we have to look after our planet, and that goes for the beating pulse of the UK. There are many ways to explore the West Midlands sustainably and bring back some eco-friendly ideas as souvenirs.

All eyes will be on Birmingham and surrounds this British summertime, as the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games leads the world as the most sustainable Games ever, [pledging](#) winning initiatives which include being zero-waste, leaving a carbon-neutral legacy, clearing canals, planting 2,022 acres of forests and creating 72 urban forests.

So, whether your team tops the medal tally or not, here are 10 ways to make a trip to the wonderful West Midlands gold-medal standard...

- 1. Go carbon neutral at the Commonwealth Games:** As well as reducing its carbon footprint during the Games in July and August, [Birmingham 2022](#) is pledging to offset its entire carbon footprint for the first time, through initiatives such as planting forests. When flying long-haul to the UK, you can reduce your footprint by choosing direct flights and taking a train instead of a plane within the nation. Economy class uses the least emissions and look out for booking sites which list the greenest routes and let you offset your carbon.
- 2. Don't go off the rails:** Travelling by train is one of the greenest and scenic ways of getting around. [Birmingham](#) is easily accessible from major cities, with journeys taking around 1.5 hours from London. Once there, short train trips will take you around the region to cities like [Royal Leamington Spa](#) and [Stratford-upon-Avon](#). [West Midlands Railway](#) also offers 2FOR1 discounts on attractions in the area, including [Warwick Castle](#), [The Bear Grylls Adventure](#) and [Winterbourne House and Garden](#).
- 3. Get on your bike:** The Birmingham Cycle Revolution has seen extensive cycle routes open all over the city and you can also pedal the paths along the canal network. The new [West Midlands Cycle Hire](#) costs just £1 to unlock a bike, then 5p per minute after that. Look out for docking stations around the region.
- 4. Or scoot about town:** Alternatively, you can rent a [Voi e-scooter](#), found in docking stations in central Birmingham, Coventry and West Bromwich, for a similar cost to cycles.
- 5. Take a walking tour:** Seeing a city on foot is good for the planet and your health and [Positively Birmingham](#) has lots of walking tours, on topics from history to canals and, of course, Peaky Blinders, or you can go solo with the [Walk Run Cycle Birmingham app](#). If you want to pick up the pace, try [Run of a Kind](#) running tours of Birmingham.
- 6. Pick up a paddle:** Birmingham famously has more kilometres of [canals](#) than Venice and one of the most sustainable ways of enjoying them is by kayak. New visitor hub [Roundhouse](#) offers kayak tours of the canals for some water-wellness.



7. **Waste not, want not:** Enjoy guilt-free eating at a sustainable restaurant such as Michelin-starred [Carters of Moseley](#), [Chapter](#) in Edgbaston, or [The Hive Café and Bakery](#) in the Jewellery Quarter. And stock up in the UK's largest zero-waste supermarket, [The Clean Kilo](#), in Moseley and Bournville.
8. **Enjoy some vintage shopping:** They say everything old is new again, so hunt out some unique pieces in vintage fashion shops like [Urban Village Vintage](#) in Henley-in-Arden, or antique treasure troves like [Moseley Vintage Hub](#). Even iconic Birmingham department store [Selfridge's](#) has vintage designer items.
9. **Go green:** The West Midlands is home to stunning countryside. Birmingham's 2,400-acre [Sutton Park](#) is one of the largest urban parks in Europe and the [Peak District National Park](#), [Sherwood Forest](#) and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty including [Cannock Chase](#), [the Cotswolds](#), [Shropshire Hills](#) and [Malvern Hills](#) are all nearby.
10. **Stay sustainably:** There are many eco-friendly accommodation options in the region, including Staying Cool's [Rotunda](#) serviced apartments in Birmingham and the city's [Clayton Hotel](#).



# Top 10 things to do in the West Midlands

Legendary teams, game-changing history and iconic sporting venues...there are many reasons to explore the West Midlands. And if you're travelling to the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, you'll see sport is just the beginning! From ancient castles and Michelin-starred dining to some of Britain's best shopping, we reveal the icons that put the region on the map, as well as its lesser-known gems.

## Discover a jewel in the crown

### ***Like... Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter***

The national epicentre for jewellery production for more than 250 years and home to more than 700 jewellers and independent retailers, the Jewellery Quarter is located just to the north-west of Birmingham's city centre and produces an estimated 40 per cent of Britain's jewellery. In addition to gems of all shapes and sizes, it offers an abundance of unique shopping experiences, as well as a mix of pubs, cafés, galleries and museums.

### ***Love... bohemian Digbeth***

Alongside street food by Digbeth Dining Club, this bohemian hot spot just a 15-minute walk from Birmingham city centre is home to independent shops, cinemas and arts venues, not to mention [Peaky Tours](#), a journey through the people and places behind the hit *Peaky Blinders* TV series!

## Explore the world of the Bard

### ***Like... Shakespeare's birthplace***

[William Shakespeare's Birthplace](#) in Stratford-upon-Avon explores the early life of the world's most famous playwright and features a range of artefacts. Wandering around Anne Hathaway's Cottage – the former home of his wife-to-be – also provides a glimpse into Elizabethan life and the Bard's future marriage.

### ***Love... performances by the Royal Shakespeare Company***

Set on the banks of the River Avon, The Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon seats more than 1,000. The grand building is the home of the Royal Shakespeare Company which regularly brings the works of the Bard to life - including *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Comedy of Errors* and *Hamlet* - close to where the great playwright was born.

## Bring history to life

### ***Like... Warwick Castle***

Journey through more than 1,100 years of Britain's past at [Warwick Castle](#), as you wander the battlements, enjoy historic re-enactments, and see the castle's resident Bowman showing off his archery skills. Get lost in the Horrible Histories maze and embark on an immersive journey through the Castle Dungeon, before finishing the day with a medieval glamping experience, with guests able to stay the night within the castle grounds.

### ***Love... reliving Elizabethan life at Kenilworth Castle***

If you're a history buff, you can walk in the footsteps of Queen Elizabeth I at [Kenilworth Castle](#), just a short train ride from Coventry. From its roots as a medieval fortress which saw England's longest siege, to its time as one of the grandest Elizabethan palaces, the Castle is steeped in tales of royalty, treachery and love.



## Score a piece of footballing heritage

### *Like... exploring Villa Park*

The home of Aston Villa since 1897, [Villa Park](#) is one of Britain's oldest stadiums and sits in the shadow of Aston Hall, a Jacobean stately home. Go behind-the-scenes on a stadium tour and learn more about one of the 12 founding clubs of Britain's football league in 1888.

### *Love... touring Molineux*

As another of the founding clubs, Wolverhampton Wanderers have played at Molineux Stadium since it was constructed in 1889. An immersive football museum – the only one of its type in the Midlands – delves into the club's past and features an interactive Games Zone alongside a Hall of Fame.

## Sample award-winning cuisine

### *Like... the Balti Triangle*

The Balti Triangle is an area close to the city centre renowned for the delectable flavours of the Balti, a dish believed to have originated in Birmingham. If you're a foodie looking to sample this local highlight, you can choose from a variety of family-run restaurants including [Shabab's](#) Balti Restaurant.

### *Love... Birmingham's Michelin-starred dining*

Birmingham has five Michelin-starred restaurants, more than any British city outside of London, and you can look forward to sampling fine dining at any of them - from classic British cuisine with a twist at [Adam's](#), to the finest Indian flavours at [Opheem](#).

## Gaze at art and architecture

### *Like... Coventry Cathedral*

[Coventry Cathedral](#) is an enthralling mix of old and new, as its modern cathedral sits alongside the ruin of its 12th century counterpart, largely destroyed by bombing raids during the Second World War. Looking for a different perspective? Climb the 180+ steps of the tower, for panoramic views of the city.

### *Love... the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum*

Alongside a wide range of talks and ever-changing exhibitions, the [Herbert Art Gallery and Museum](#) is also the host of the 2021 Turner Prize. Four shortlisted artists are on show from late September 2021 until mid-January 2022, with the winner announced in early December.

## Enjoy top-quality shopping

### *Like... the Bullring*

Birmingham's biggest shopping centre brings together around 150 brands under one roof, as well as a host of restaurants and other eateries. Look out for sculptor Laurence Broderick's 2.2-metre-tall bronze Bull, which oversees the [Bullring's](#) entrance.

### *Love... the Mailbox*

The [Mailbox](#) is packed with high-end brands and a plethora of restaurants and bars serving up everything from colourful cocktails to delectable Indian street food. Located in the heart of the city, it's easy to access and is just a matter of minutes from Birmingham New Street station.



## Wander the waterways

### *Like... the Gas Street Basin*

With more than 35 miles of canals in Birmingham, and more than 100 miles of waterways making up the Birmingham Canal Network, old meets new in the Gas Street Basin – here you can wander canal towpaths where industrial heritage and moored narrowboats blend with modern architecture, bars and restaurants, right in the heart of Birmingham.

### *Love... The Black Country Living Museum*

If you're looking for a taste of life in the Industrial Revolution, you can explore the open-air [Black Country Living Museum](#). Home to a host of reconstructed shops, houses and industrial areas, the venue also includes part of the Dudley Canal which regularly features in scenes from *Peaky Blinders*.

## Be bowled over by the best sport

### *Like... Edgbaston*

Birmingham's premier cricketing venue regularly hosts international matches such as the iconic Ashes, and is home to Warwickshire County Cricket Club and Birmingham Phoenix. A host venue for the [2022 Commonwealth Games](#), you'll find this historic stadium a short distance from Birmingham city centre.

### *Love... the Alexander Stadium*

This stadium in Perry Barr, to the north of Birmingham, is being redeveloped ahead of hosting athletics at the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, not to mention both the opening and closing ceremonies.

## Unearth captivating attractions

### *Like... Cadbury World*

[Cadbury World](#) takes you on an immersive journey through the magic of chocolate making, from exploring the origins of Cadbury in Birmingham in 1824 through to tasting zones, a 4D cinema experience, and the world's largest Cadbury shop!

### *Love... the National SEA LIFE Centre*

Home to Britain's only 360-degree ocean tunnel, the [National SEA LIFE Centre](#) in the heart of Birmingham allows you to get up close with sharks and a giant turtle, while also meeting the UK's first sea otters in the Marine Mammal Facility.



# Top ways to experience the West Midlands

From getting out on two wheels to taking to the skies, there's an abundance of ways to experience the magic of the West Midlands. From relaxing canal cruises or captivating exhibitions, to adrenaline-fuelled off-roading or miles of walking and cycling trails, the West Midlands is a bounty of holiday riches. Our round-up reveals some of the top ways see the region from a different perspective.

## Wander the walking trails

From the industrial heartlands of the cities to the rolling hills and countryside that surrounds them, much of the West Midlands can be explored on foot. [Birmingham Heritage Walking Tours](#) take you on an immersive journey through Birmingham's past, while numerous [Coventry Trails](#) – developed as part of the Coventry City of Culture programme – explore the city's heritage and cultural roots.

### *Like this?*

Love the vast expanse of the [Pennine Way](#) National Trail to the north, a long-distance walking route stretching for 268 miles (435km) through some of England's wild northern landscapes.

## Get on your bike

The West Midlands is peppered with cycling trails, from picturesque canal-side routes to tracks which follow old industrial lines. You can cycle the eight miles (13km) from central Birmingham along part of the Tame Valley Canal to explore the 970-acre Sutton Park, located to the north of the city centre. Known as [National Cycle Network Route 535](#), it's a largely traffic-free trail.

### *Like this?*

Love the [Tissington Trail](#) through the Peak District National Park, a 13-mile (20km) former London and North Western Railway route linking Parsley Hay and Ashbourne, with bike hire available at both destinations.

## Wind along the waterways

As a region dominated by waterways, the canals of the West Midlands offer a chance to discover some of its hidden gems. Whether you prefer to hire a rowing boat or explore via an organised boat tour, there are a range of options to choose from. Narrowboat tours operate from central Birmingham, taking you on a journey through the city's industrial heritage, while river cruises in Stratford-upon-Avon allow you to see Shakespeare Country from a different perspective. You can even tuck into a unique dining experience aboard the restaurant boat, The Countess of Evesham.

### *Like this?*

Love the 5.5-mile (9km) [Art Trail](#) along the Coventry Canal, which features works paying homage to the region's rich industrial heritage.

## See Shakespeare's England

As the town synonymous with William Shakespeare, Stratford-upon-Avon houses many attractions related to the great playwright. Shakespeare's England provides access to the five fascinating family homes linked to the Bard, including his birthplace, New Place and Anne Hathaway's Cottage.

### *Like this?*

Love some of the other attractions in Warwickshire available with the pass, including Warwick Castle, Kenilworth Castle and the MAD Museum.

## Head off road

The West Midlands is home to a number of car manufacturers, including Jaguar Land Rover. The firm's main car factory can be found in Solihull, alongside a mix of [off-road driving experiences](#) which allow you to push the Land Rover's capabilities to the limit. From a short taster session to a half- or full-day drive, you can test your obstacle handling at the Land Rover Solihull Experience as you take on a series of steep inclines, water wading and other challenging terrain.

### *Like this?*

Love getting behind the scenes at this, one of the most advanced car manufacturing facilities in the world, when Factory Tours resume from autumn 2021.

## Take to the skies

With miles of rolling countryside to enjoy, why not take to the skies to experience a bird's eye view of the West Midlands and its surrounds? Numerous companies provide hot air balloon trips across Staffordshire, Warwickshire and the West Midlands. Among them, [Wickers World](#) operates from the grounds of Shugborough Hall (near Stafford) and Trentham Gardens (close to Stoke-on-Trent), while [High Road Balloons](#) fly from Stratford-upon-Avon, as well as several other locations.

### *Like this?*

Love a [helicopter tour](#) to take in the sights across the West Midlands.

## Discover the real Peaky Blinders

The original Peaky Blinders gangs can be traced to Birmingham, and many scenes from Steven Knight's hit show were filmed in the city. Operated by Brum Tours, [Peaky Tours](#) looks into the characters behind the TV series, for a fascinating insight into the fictional show and the real-life locals that inspired it. You'll also find many other key Peaky Blinders sites around the city, including a six-storey mural of Cillian Murphy's character Tommy Shelby, on the walls of a factory in Digbeth.

### *Like this?*

Love following in the footsteps of Tommy and the gang at the [Black Country Living Museum](#) in Dudley, which has provided backdrops in all five series to date.

## Celebrate the 2022 Commonwealth Games

As the host city for the [2022 Commonwealth Games](#), Birmingham's sporting venues are gearing up to welcome some of the world's best athletes. Both the opening and closing ceremonies will be held at the newly renovated Alexander Stadium in Perry Barr, to the north of Birmingham city centre, while Edgbaston, the region's premier cricketing venue, will host the women's T20 competition. Arena Birmingham, the National Exhibition Centre (NEC) and Coventry Stadium and Arena are among the other West Midlands' venues being used for the Games.

### *Like this?*

Love trying out the [Bear Grylls Adventure Activity Centre](#) ahead of the games next year. Located at the National Exhibition Centre, it gives you the chance to test your own physical endurance with climbing, high ropes and archery adventures!



## Go mad for museums

The rich industrial, musical and cultural heritage of the West Midlands can be explored at the region's vast array of museums and galleries. The [Coventry Transport Museum](#) pays homage to the city's car-making past with the world's largest publically owned collection of British vehicles, as well as the two fastest cars on the planet. [Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum](#) delves into the world of science and technology with 200 hands-on displays, while the [Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery](#) houses an unrivalled collection of Pre-Raphaelite art and will reopen its doors in 2022.

### *Like this?*

Love the ever-changing exhibitions which tell the story of Coventry's social heritage at the [Herbert Art Gallery and Museum](#).

## Discover gardens galore

From the grounds of stately homes to Victorian glasshouses, the West Midlands offers an abundance of outdoor and garden spaces to explore. The 15-acre [Birmingham Botanical Gardens](#), located just over a mile to the south of Birmingham city centre in Edgbaston, is an oasis of colour where four glasshouses showcase tropical rainforest, subtropical, Mediterranean and arid environments. The 17th century Moseley Old Hall, north of Wolverhampton, provided refuge for King Charles II during the English Civil War. Looked after by the National Trust, its walled gardens house plants cultivated for centuries. Alternatively, explore one of the largest contemporary perennial plantings in Europe at the [Trentham Estate](#).

### *Like this?*

Love the Elizabethan Gardens at [Kenilworth Castle](#), packed with colour and fragrance and recreated to be just how they were presented to Queen Elizabeth I around 400 years ago.



# Top things to do in Stratford-Upon-Avon

As the birthplace of William Shakespeare, Stratford-upon-Avon offers endless insights into the world of the great playwright, but it's also packed with plenty of exciting activities to add to your to-do list. From getting up-close to wildlife to getting hands-on with mechanical art, here's the top 10 things to experience on a visit to the market town.

## 1. Visit the Bard's birthplace

[William Shakespeare's birthplace](#) and childhood home delves into the family life of the great Bard, exploring his influence on the world today via a vast collection of artefacts and other memorabilia. There are many locations within the town that are associated with the playwright, and literature lovers shouldn't miss [Anne Hathaway's Cottage](#), which lies around a mile to the west of Stratford-upon-Avon. As the former home of Shakespeare's wife-to-be, it's in this famous cottage that you can relive his love story and see much of the original building, which remains as it was 500 years ago.

## 2. Learn about Shakespeare's life in a New Place

You can follow the trail of the Bard all the way to Shakespeare's New Place, the site of his family home for 19 years until his passing. The land where the house once stood is now adorned with gardens and artworks, and you can discover several sculptures inspired by the Bard's work while learning more about [New Place](#) and the captivating stories behind it.

## 3. Catch a show by the Royal Shakespeare Company

Experience the theatrical talents of the Royal Shakespeare Company, which regularly brings the works of the Bard to life in Stratford-upon-Avon. In the last decade, performances of *Macbeth*, *Twelfth Night*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Measure for Measure* are among those to have been showcased at the 1,000-seat Grade II-listed Royal Shakespeare Theatre, which is situated on the banks of the River Avon.

## 4. Relive the past at Tudor World

If you're a history buff, you can step back in time to discover what life was really like under the rule of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I at [Tudor World](#). Set in a Grade II-listed 16th century building, the living history museum is packed with interactive elements for visitors of all ages and also runs a number of different tours and events, including a chance to explore Stratford-upon-Avon with [Shakespeare](#) himself.

## 5. Take in the sights along the River Avon

Want to discover the market town from a new perspective? Head out onto the waters of the River Avon. Hire is available from several traditional boating firms, with the option to pick from rowing boats, punts or even motorboats. Alternatively, opt for a relaxing dinner and river cruise aboard the restaurant boat, [Countess of Evesham](#).



## 6. Discover the mechanics of art and design

Delve into the world of kinetic art and robots at Britain's [MAD Museum](#), a space dedicated to mechanical art and design which is packed with interactive exhibits. Featuring around 60 moving sculptures and designs from inventors and artists all over the world, it's a small museum that packs a punch!

## 7. Come face-to-face with wildlife at Charlecote Park

With roaming deer and plenty of grand Tudor architecture, the 16th century [Charlecote Park](#) is four miles (6.5km) to the east of Stratford-upon-Avon, and a short distance from the town of Warwick. On a trip to this National Trust site, you can explore the rooms of the country house and enjoy a picnic in the estate's vast parklands and gardens, which are a haven for herons, kingfishers and a host of other wildlife.

## 8. Cycle through an oasis of greenery

Stretching for around five-and-a-half-miles (9km) from the centre of Stratford-upon-Avon, the Stratford Greenway follows a former railway line and is part of the long-distance [National Cycle Route 5](#), which runs between Reading and Holyhead. The traffic-free trail meanders through a host of green space that you can explore on foot or by bike, with cycles available from [Stratford Bike Hire](#), and there's an abundance of wildlife and picnic spots en route.

## 9. Delve into ancient history in Warwick

Situated just nine miles (14.5km) from Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwick is home to one of Britain's most impressive early medieval castles. Discover ancient myths and spellbinding tales, or get some green-fingered inspiration at the town's [Hill Close Gardens](#), a set of restored Victorian greenery packed with eye-catching plants and shrubs.





# Start the party - an LGBTQI+ guide to the West Midlands

## Birmingham

Birmingham has a thriving LGBTQI+ scene, with its famous gay club nights and [Birmingham Pride](#) - the UK's largest two-day LGBTQI+ festival.

### *Explore the Gay Village:*

On the city's south side, Birmingham's LGBTQI+ scene, known as the [Gay Village](#), is centred around Hurst Street, near Chinatown. As well as pagodas and oriental-influenced architecture, you can see gay street art - look out for a sparkly, rhinestone-encrusted rhinoceros on the roof of Wynner House.

The area is full of bars, restaurants and cafes, such as [The Loft](#), [Missing](#), [The Fox](#) and [Sidewalk](#).

### *Diary dates:*

As well as the [Birmingham 2022 Festival](#), Birmingham Pride, the UK's largest two-day LGBTQI+ festival, is held in September this year. The streets of Birmingham's Gay Village pulsate with a carnival parade, live music, cabaret stage, women's arena and a community village.

Championing queer arts and culture, [SHOUT](#) produce a number of annual events to showcase LGBTQI+ film, art, music, theatre and literature.

## Coventry

Coventry celebrates diverse LGBTQI+ communities in the city, with a number of locations across the city centre.

### *Nightlife:*

Coventry's two gay bars, [Glamorous](#) and [The Yard](#), feature cabaret with some of the best drag acts from across the country, DJs and more, so you're guaranteed a good night out, every time.

### *Diary dates:*

Coventry plays host to an annual Pride event, attracting thousands of people to the city centre across the festival weekend. [Coventry Pride](#) also hosts events through the year, runs support groups and promotes local initiatives. Coventry's [City of Culture programme](#) continues through 2022, with a wide range of events. The popular Assembly Festival Garden is also open, the centrepiece of City of Culture events.



# LGBTQI+ guide to Birmingham

The UK's second city, Birmingham is also one of its most exciting. Its LGBTQI+ scene is thriving, with its famous gay club nights and Birmingham Pride - the UK's largest two-day LGBTQI+ festival. Explore our guide to LGBTQI+ Birmingham for the rundown of the best neighbourhoods, hotels and events in the city.

## Daytime diversions

Birmingham is renowned for its shopping. The Bullring, in the heart of the city, was the UK's first indoor city-centre shopping complex when it opened in the 1960s. Completely rebuilt in 2000, the shimmering The Bullring & Grand Central is one of Britain's biggest shopping malls. With more than 200 retailers and more than 460 restaurants and cafés, there's plenty for discerning shoppers.

Just north of the city centre, the Jewellery Quarter has Europe's largest concentration of jewellery traders, producing 40% of all jewellery made in the UK – making this an ideal place for anyone planning a romantic gesture on their trip (wink wink).

A little-known fact, Birmingham has more miles of canals than Venice - just over 35 miles compared to Venice's 26 miles. The life-blood of Victorian Birmingham, today these canals and towpaths provide a fascinating route for walkers and joggers. The bustling hub of the canal network, Gas Street Basin, has colourful narrowboats and busy cafés, restaurants and bars in set in revamped warehouses under a mile from the Gay Village.

## Out & about

On the city's south side, Birmingham's LGBTQI+ scene focuses on Hurst Street, just minutes from the Hippodrome theatre, the Bullring and the Chinese Quarter. As well as pagodas and oriental-influenced architecture, you can see gay street art - look out for a sparkly, rhinestone-encrusted rhinoceros on the roof of Wynner House.

To mingle with Birmingham's stylish 30-something crowd, head to The Loft, a plush bar with velvet couches, chandeliers and exposed brickwork. Missing is a lively gay party bar with events and DJs or if you're after cocktails, contemporary lesbian bar The Fox is a popular choice. A former car showroom, Sidewalk retains its huge plate-glass windows and warehouse-style décor and is popular with a predominantly younger mixed crowd.

## Stylish stays

### *Hotel Indigo*

Occupying the 23rd and 24th floors of the distinct Cube building, the bedrooms of four-star Hotel Indigo maximize their elevated status with private balconies and floor-to-ceiling windows and are located just under a mile from the Gay Village. Guests have access to the club and spa, thermal pools, treatment rooms and even a Champagne Nail Bar for luxury manicures and Laurent Perrier champagne. The cherry on the cake is the top floor MPW Steakhouse Bar & Grill, a Birmingham hotspot from celebrity chef Marco Pierre White.

### *Staying Cool at the Rotunda*

Staying Cool offers serviced apartments on the top four floors of a Birmingham landmark, the Rotunda building. Available in four configurations, from studios to two-bed penthouses, this funky self-catering option is a great choice for a chic, centrally-located stay.

### *BLOC Hotel*

A budget choice that doesn't compromise on style, BLOC Hotel describes itself as pared-down chic. The 73 rooms are stylishly efficient with the things you want, like powerful drench showers, comfortable beds with Egyptian cotton sheets, super-fast Wi-Fi and HD TVs, all just over a mile from the party atmosphere of Hurst Street.

## Dates for the diary

### *TBC | SHOUT*

Championing queer arts and culture, SHOUT produce a number of annual events to showcase LGBTQ+ film, visual art, music, theatre and literature. Annual events include the SHOUT Film Festival, but look out for other events via their website.

### *24 – 25 September 2022 | Birmingham Pride*

The UK's largest two-day LGBTQI+ festival, Birmingham Pride. The streets of Birmingham's Gay Village pulsate with a carnival parade, live music, cabaret stage, women's arena and a community village.

## Getting here

Birmingham is situated in the Midlands, 120 miles northwest of London. Regular trains connect Birmingham to London in one-and-a-half hours. Birmingham Airport is 10 minutes by train from the city centre and is served by flights from Europe, the Middle East, India, Pakistan, North America and the Caribbean.





# 72 hours in Birmingham

Located in the heart of the Midlands, Birmingham is an accessible location with international connections. Visit now and you'll find a city filled with a bustling foodie scene, vibrant street art and nightlife that'll have you dancing from dusk 'til dawn.

Discover the home of the Balti curry, wander through revitalised industrial streets on a graffiti tour, and learn more about the host city for the [Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games](#). Or join in the celebrations of the [Birmingham 2022 Festival's](#) jam-packed programme full of vibrant art and culture.

## Day 1

### *Hit the shops*

Explore Britain's heart of jewellery manufacturing, the [Jewellery Quarter](#) with over 100 specialist craft jewellers to choose from, as well as numerous cafes, bars and restaurants. More than just a historic gem in the city, it's home to Europe's largest School of Jewellery and boasts intricate creations from the original FA Cup to the Queen's birthday honours medals. For a splash of art, wander to just beyond the Jewellery Quarter train station and you'll find a Banksy original – *Ryan and his Reindeer*.

If it's retail therapy you're after, look no further than Birmingham's [Bullring](#), located in the heart of the city. Home to more than 200 stores and restaurants, its neighbour Grand Central also contains more than 60 premium brands. Keep an eye out for the 2.2-metre-tall bronze Bull, designed by sculptor Laurence Broderick, which stands proudly by the Bullring's entrance.

### *City perspectives*

For a unique way to see the sights, paddle through some of the city's 160km of waterways on a [Roundhouse kayak tour](#). Or if you're seeking nature, join a [Green Escape Tour](#) to get away from the hustle and bustle of city life and discover Birmingham's green spaces.

Take the cityscape to new heights at [The Library of Birmingham](#), Europe's largest public library which is impossible to miss with its standout design. Venture up to the rooftop garden for citywide views from one of Birmingham's highest points. There's even an entire floor dedicated to one of the region's most iconic people, William Shakespeare.

### *Foodies delight*

Pick up some food from the [Balti Triangle](#). Known as the original home of the Balti curry, a trip to Birmingham wouldn't be complete without sampling the spiced flavours that the city has to offer.

Or for the finer things in life, Birmingham is home to the most Michelin starred restaurants in Britain outside of London. Discover decadent delights at [Adam's](#), including a Signature Tasting Menu packed with delicious dishes. Or step into a world of cultural fusion at [Opheem](#), where Indian and British cuisine comes together – five or ten-course tasting menus let you explore the flavours of both nations.

## Day 2

### **Discover Digbeth**

Birmingham's [creative quarter](#) is filled to the brim with vibrant street art, independent shops, cafes and bustling bars. Let the twinkling fairy lights guide you as you wander through transformed Victorian industrial architecture.

Step into a neon arcade with old-school gaming at [NQ64](#) or enjoy a movie with a bottomless brunch at the [Mockingbird Cinema](#). For top-grade nosh from 2021 Michelin Young Chef of the Year winner Kray Tredwell – hit up [670 Grams](#). With its graffitied walls and downtown LA style, the restaurant is housed in the Custard Factory, allowing you to experience first-hand how the Solihull-born chef is stirring up the Michelin scene.

### **Touring Digbeth**

Embark on a fascinating [self-guided walk](#) through art and graffiti in Digbeth. Once an unsung hotbed for street art, 2014 saw the area welcome artists from around the world to transform the streets into an outdoor gallery for City of Colours. Don't forget to stop off to refuel along the way – try [Baked in Brick](#) for freshly-baked treats.

A hidden gem in Digbeth, Dig Brew Co serves up independently-brewed IPAs, pale ales, stouts and more. Discover the inner workings of the taproom with a [brewery tour](#) – sample new flavours as you learn about its history, brewing processes and unique ingredients. To top things off, the tour ends at the in-house pizzeria.

### **Explore Birmingham's nightlife**

If you're looking for a lively night scene, check out [Birdies](#) for cocktails. Alternatively, bring out your competitive side at [Roxy Ball Room](#), where shuffleboard, ping pong and bowling can be accompanied by craft beers and signature cocktails.

## Day 3

### **Tuck into brunch**

Dive into the flavours of Cuba at [The Cuban Embassy](#) - expect mouthwatering grilled cheese sandwiches, over 120 varieties of rum and authentic Havana cocktails. Continue into the evening and add a bit of Latin rhythm with live music playing six nights a week.

Find fresh, feel good food at [Kanteen](#), or for something a little more boozy discover [Gas Street Social](#) for a bottomless brunch feast at Birmingham's longest serving indie cocktail bar.

### **Culture and creativity**

Contemporary art in one of Birmingham's unique neo-gothic buildings. Immerse yourself in [exhibitions](#) from paintings, sculptures and photography, and take time to visit Birmingham's only independent arts bookshop and cafe located within the gallery.

If you're visiting during the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, keep an out for Arrivals which brings diverse exhibitions to Ikon, including Nigerian artist [Abdulrazaq Awofeso's](#) sculptures that shed light on human migration.

### **Step into the world of the Peaky Blinders**

Travel north of the city to Dudley, home of the [Black Country Living Museum](#). As the backdrop for some scenes in hit TV show Peaky Blinders, the museum shows life in the West Midlands during the Industrial Revolution. Look out for [themed events](#) throughout the year, including behind-the-scenes tours and 1940s weekends.

# Travel tips: Getting to and around the West Midlands

The great thing about the West Midlands is it really is the heart of the UK – so it's easy to get to, whether you are arriving internationally, or from within the UK.

## Getting there

### ***By air:***

International travellers can arrive at [Birmingham Airport](#), which connects to its own train station. Birmingham International Station is just 10 minutes by rail into the centre of Birmingham and links to the rest of the region. Alternatively, international travellers can fly into London airports, or [Manchester Airport](#) – a two-hour journey by train or car from Birmingham.

### ***By train:***

One of the easiest ways of travelling to the region from within the UK is by [train](#). Birmingham New Street is 1 hr 30 mins by train from London Euston; Wolverhampton is around 2 hrs from Euston, and Coventry just over 1 hr.

### ***By road:***

For those travelling by road, the West Midlands has good motorway links to London. Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Coventry can be reached by the M40 or the M1/M6, taking around two and a half hours to Birmingham. You can self-drive or take one of the regular bus services from London, via [National Express](#) coaches.

## Getting around

Once in the West Midlands, it's easy to get around.

### ***Birmingham:***

Within Birmingham, you can walk, hire a [cycle](#) or [e-scooter](#) from a docking station, or [take a tram or bus](#).

### ***Wolverhampton:***

Wolverhampton is 20 minutes by train, or 16 minutes by [tram](#) from Birmingham. Once there, you can travel around by rent a bike from [West Midlands Cycle Hire](#) docking stations, or take a bus.

### ***Coventry:***

Coventry is 20 minutes by train from Birmingham. Once there, you can travel around by [West Midlands Cycle Hire](#) or take a local bus.

### ***Stratford-upon-Avon:***

Stratford-upon-Avon is 45 minutes by train or car from Birmingham, or 2 hrs by train from London. For more information visit Transport for West Midlands, [tfwm.org.uk](https://tfwm.org.uk).



# Essential Resources

## Birmingham 2022

Birmingham 2022 will be a West Midlands celebration with Birmingham at its heart. Discover what we stand for and meet the teams responsible for delivering this iconic sporting event. [www.birmingham2022.com/](http://www.birmingham2022.com/)

## West Midlands Growth Company

Discover a region of many worlds where adventure waits around every corner. [wmgrowth.com](http://wmgrowth.com)  
[visitbirmingham.com](http://visitbirmingham.com)

## VisitBritain Website

Discover everything you need to know about visiting England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland with the official guide. Go to [www.visitbritain.com](http://www.visitbritain.com)

## VisitBritain Image Library

VisitBritain's online image bank for media & trade partners gives free access to hundreds of images for use in marketing materials, presentations and client communications. Go to [assets.visitbritain.org](http://assets.visitbritain.org)

## VisitBritain Media Centre

By registering on our media centre you'll be the first to hear important travel news, press releases on top events and new attractions and great media story ideas. Go to [www.visitbritain.com/media](http://www.visitbritain.com/media)

## VisitBritain Shop

Be sure to check out the VisitBritain Shop, where you can book everything from BritRail Passes to commissionable tickets and sightseeing passes for attractions and tours throughout the UK, as well as the smart travel Visitor Oyster Card. Go to [www.visitbritainshop.com](http://www.visitbritainshop.com).

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## Know Before You Go

Find the latest information and resources on travelling to and around the UK including: how to travel responsibly; UK Government websites / useful links; and what to do in an emergency, visit [www.visitbritain.com/gb/en/know-you-go](http://www.visitbritain.com/gb/en/know-you-go)

