

## **South West**

Fine weather and miles of fabulous coast line have made this region of England an ever popular destination. The regions of Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Somerset and Avon really have got everything you need. From quaint villages to vast beaches of golden sands and from towering cliffs with crashing waves to bleak and windswept moorland of Dartmoor.

This region is also rich in history, it's home to numerous Iron Age forts as well as sites such as Cheddar Gorge, Glastonbury Tor, and the Jurassic Coast that's renowned for its rich fossils finds. With cities such as Bristol, Exeter and Portsmouth you'll never be short of things to do.

### **Avon**

Avon is a mainly agricultural area in the South West, bounded by the Severn estuary in the north and next door to Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Somerset. Noted for dairy farming, the area attracts a huge number of tourists to Bristol, which is set on the River Avon and has plenty of small boats visiting this once important port.

Massive investment has turned the harbourside into a buzzing place:

Explore at-Bristol  
Wildwalk at-Bristol  
IMAX Theatre

A stunning view of the Avon Gorge can be seen from the nearby Clifton Suspension Bridge.

### **Cornwall**

From rugged cliffs with crashing waves to the many sheltered fishing villages and sandy coves. Along with the mild climate and warm summer temperatures make Cornwall a great destination.

Cornwall can also offer a wide range of activities.

Surfing, sailing and windsurfing - check out the Billabong and Ripcurl annual Surf Competitions  
Wide range of golf courses  
Horse riding,  
Walking  
Cycling.  
Walk part of The Cornish Coastal Path that runs all the way from Bude in the north to Plymouth

Some of the rich history of this area is reflected in the many historic sites open to visitors. King Arthur is said to have had his Camelot near the village of Tintagel, and many early Christian saints founded settlements around the coast.

### **Devon**

Glorious coastline, fabulous surfing beaches and hidden coves, Devon is a great place for sunbathers, surfers and families. It's a beautiful county to explore with its narrow lanes, Rolling Meadows, and thatched cottages. To many it's a place that symbolises 'authentic' England.

Devon has played a leading role in British maritime history and the region is rich in nautical reminders, particularly in the coastal cities of Exeter and Plymouth. The mild climate and superb coastline have given part of the Devon coast around Torbay, the name of the 'the English Riviera'.

Dartmoor and Exmoor are some of the regions highlights, supporting a multitude of rare wildlife such as red kites and otters, as well as being home to some important Bronze Age historic remains.

### **Dorset**

With its stunning countryside, over 88 miles of coastline, and good links to major towns, Dorset offers an ideal place to live or getaway from the hustle and bustle. Not only is it home to some beautiful inland villages and historic towns but part of the coastline at Chesil Beach has become England's first natural World Heritage Site. Here the Jurassic rocks reveal fossils from 200 million years ago, and hence this 25-kilometre stretch of beach is known locally by the nickname of the Jurassic Coast.

### **Somerset**

Somerset is a mix of countryside and coastline, set in five ranges of hills.

The county town of Taunton is an ideal base from which to live. One of the prettiest places is Wells, said to be England's smallest city. Nestling in the Mendip Hills, the city has a spectacular cathedral in the centre and nearby Vicar's Close is thought to be one of the oldest planned streets in Europe. Further south are pretty market towns like Yeovil and Glastonbury, now as well known for the annual summer music festival as for its' mystical spiritual qualities. The caves of Cheddar Gorge are well worth exploring, if you can find them amongst the hoards of gift shops and cafes.

## South East

Visitors could be forgiving for assuming the South East counties of Kent, Surrey and Sussex were extensions of Greater London but nothing could be further from the truth.

A lot of people do work in London but they choose to live in these gentle surrounding counties for the combination of pretty market towns and countryside just half an hour from the metropolis.

From the seaside fun of Brighton to the Christian pilgrim's centre of Canterbury, they are places which very much their own identity. Explore the lush countryside of Kent - known as the Garden of England because of the rich harvest of crops provided by the county.

Discover the sporting traditions in Surrey, home of the Derby race at Epsom Downs and Surrey Cricket Club. Take a gentle river trip from Kingston-Upon-Thames down to Hampton Court Palace and discover there's far more to the so called 'stockbroker belt' than meets the eye.

## Sussex

Sussex is home to some of Britain's best-loved seaside resorts, including the king of them all, Brighton. For sheer fun Brighton is hard to beat, with beaches, amusements on the pier and the grandeur of the Royal Pavilion.

Sussex is also '1066 country' - the scene of a battle, which changed the course of English history.

Head for Hastings to find out all about history or drive away from the coast to explore market towns like East Grinstead or Arundel.

**Brighton** - A bright and breezy place with plenty to do no matter what the weather. Explore The Lanes - modest fisherman's cottages, which are now boutiques and antique shops, or take a ride on the world's first ever-public electric railways - the Victorian Volks Railway. On sunny days there's nothing better than a walk to the clean beaches, followed by a stroll along Brighton Pier, with amusements, restaurants and funfair. For rainy days try the newly refurbished Brighton Museum and Art Gallery, which is well known for an outstanding collection of Art Nouveau and Art Deco work. Brighton also is known for a lively nightlife and thriving gay scene. As well as the first official beach to allow nude bathing - Telescombe Beach.

**Eastbourne** - For a better chance of soaking up the sunshine than most resorts in Britain, head for Eastbourne. Nestling in the shelter of Beachy Head, this is said to be one of the sunniest places in the country and a bit less manic than busy, bustling Brighton. There's plenty to enjoy here - from the beauty spots of Beachy Head and the Eastbourne Downs to the glorious colours of the Carpet Gardens next to the Victorian pier.

**Chichester** - If you love theatre, then Chichester could be the place for you. The Festival Theatre hosts a range of innovative shows during the summer and whatever time of year there's also jazz, pop music, ballet and opera to enjoy. Chichester was built by the Romans and the town streets are still laid out the same way, like a compass, with an octagonal market cross in the middle. Worth seeing is the Pallant House Gallery - filled with modern art and also nearby Chichester Harbour, which is a popular yachting area and haven for birds.

**East Grinstead** - East Grinstead is a popular place for London commuters to live but is a pretty market town, with plenty of attractive black and white half-timbered buildings. The High Street is a Conservation area and there are plenty of speciality shops to explore among the colourful flowerbeds. Away from the town there are a number of spots like Deers Leap Mountain Park, a working farm with 230 acres of countryside and a trail of mountain bike tracks and nature trails.

## Kent

From mysterious marshlands and breathtaking countryside to the dramatic white cliffs of Dover, from medieval towns, historic castles and towering cathedrals to bustling seaside resorts, a lively café society and contemporary arts scene, Kent has something for everyone.

From Kent, you can hop over to France or Belgium for a day trip in less than 90 minutes. Whatever you decide - it's sure to be a memorable experience.

**Canterbury & Coastal** - Framed by a distinctive, historical coastline and nestling amongst quintessential English countryside you'll find one of the Country's greatest cities offering a wonderful blend of heritage, culture and tradition.

Stretching along the historical coastline is a wonderful mix of traditional seaside resorts such as Ramsgate & Folkestone with their Regency and Victorian elegance. So why not relax on the beach or stroll along the famous White Cliffs at Dover with their spectacular views across the channel - you can even see France on a clear day! Or perhaps you'd rather wander inland to explore and discover the hidden towns and picturesque villages set amidst the East Kent landscape.

**Medway & Maritime** - Medway - the historic capital of Maritime Kent - is situated midway between

London and the Channel Ports. It's an ideal short break destination offering a relaxing and enriching experience. Whether you browse the speciality shops in Rochester's Victorian High Street, take in majestic Rochester Cathedral, or visit The Historic Dockyard, Chatham you'll go away both informed and refreshed. Alternatively, relax and watch the world go by on a river cruise aboard Britain's last surviving paddle steamer, the Kingswear Castle, taking in the views of Upnor Castle and village.

**Swale**- incorporating Sittingbourne, Faversham and the Isle of Sheppey - has lots to offer visitors. With a strong maritime feel from the creeks of Milton and Faversham, and the award winning beaches of the Isle of Sheppey, Swale is a popular destination. If your interests lie in historic homes and gardens, museums, walking, cycling or leisure, Swale has something for you.

**Dartford** - an historic market town which boasts Holy Trinity Church with its medieval mural and Henry VIII's Royal Manor Gatehouse. The Orchard Theatre and Mick Jagger Centre are leading arts venues. Twice weekly markets in the town centre complement the ultimate shopping experience at Bluewater to the south are beautiful and very ancient rural parishes.

**Heart of Kent** - The Heart of Kent is English countryside at its best. A landscape of rolling hills and wooded valleys, orchards and vineyards, splendid castles, gardens and many historic houses. In fact it has more castles, stately home and gardens open to the public than any other region in Britain. Tonbridge Castle, set in an attractive river setting, stands guard over the town, whilst the world famous Leeds Castle rises from two small islands in a lake, the ruins of a 14th century moated castle form the backdrop for one of England's most romantic gardens of all, Scotney Castle Garden.

The Heart of Kent countryside surrounds the 5 historic towns of Maidstone, Sevenoaks, Ashford, Tonbridge and Royal Tunbridge Wells. Each town is distinctive whether you like browsing in antique shops or in lively shopping centres, or enjoy good food and drink in gourmet restaurants or simple eateries, you'll be spoilt for choice!

## **Surrey**

Surrey is these days dubbed the 'stockbroker belt' because of the large number of people who work in London but live in this part of England. But it's much more than a convenient stop for stressed out Londoners. There's a great deal of gentle countryside, woodland and pleasant towns to enjoy.

Much of the area is agricultural and in between are pretty market towns and mills to explore.

Sport is a big part of life here with the world famous Derby held every year at Epsom Downs racecourse, Surrey Cricket Club and the Wentworth Golf Course. Much of Surrey has been absorbed into Greater London. Even so, Wimbledon, and Richmond still have close associations with the area.

**Kingston-upon-Thames** - Offers riverside walks, pleasant pubs and lots of green spaces. Although close to London it still retains its own character and the museum gives lots of interesting snippets of information about the town whose coat of arms represent the five mills and three salmon fisheries. This is the ideal place to set sail for a pleasant trip down the river to one of the grandest houses in Britain - Hampton Court Palace, with the famously confusing maze.

**Guildford** - It's a busy town but there's an attractive riverside area along the River Wey, where you can visit the National Trust museum at Dapdune Wharf or enjoy a trip down the river. Guildford Cathedral is worth a look as is the museum, where there's information on Alice in Wonderland author Lewis Carroll, who spent much of his time in Guildford. Just a few miles from the town is the Royal Horticultural Society garden at Wisely - a treat for gardening fans.

**Reigate** - Essentially a commuter town, Reigate has its own castle remains, an old Market House dating back to the 1700s and ruins of a priory. There isn't much remaining of the castle except for a folly in the grounds where it once stood. The town centre is a mixture of old and new buildings. One big advantage is the town's close proximity to Gatwick Airport but it's also near Surrey Downs, where there's plenty of opportunity for walking.

**Dorking** - Situated right in the heart of Surrey, in Mole Valley the town was built on sand and no visit would be complete without a trip to the Dorking Caves. Over the years they have been used for everything from smuggling to storing beer. They are opened to the general public twice a month - well worth the trip 75 feet underground.

**Epsom** - Epsom is home of one of Britain's best known horseracing events, the Derby. The racecourse is on Epsom Downs, 600 acres of land from which London can be seen. The Derby is a one and a half mile flat race, which takes place in June and has been run for over 200 years. It challenges the top runners and riders.

## **East Midlands**

East Midlands covers a largely rural area including the counties of Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire and Britain's smallest county - Rutland. From the Robin Hood country of Nottinghamshire to the industrial steel town of Corby in Northamptonshire, there's a surprising amount to discover and many of the towns and villages are rich in history.

It's a great part of the world for outdoor activities with a National Watersports Centre in Nottinghamshire and Rutland Water, the largest man-made reservoir in Europe, providing plenty of opportunity to ski, sail and canoe.

Admire the spectacular sight of Lincoln Cathedral or take a space-age ride into the future at Leicester's National Space Centre.

The beauty of areas like the Fens - the flat reclaimed land of Lincolnshire - is that it's not as crowded as other parts of rural England, yet can be just as picturesque.

### **Leicestershire**

Leicestershire is an intriguing mix of quiet market towns and multi-cultural cities. The main city of Leicester prides itself on ethnic diversity, so here you will find a Caribbean Festival and the largest Diwali (Festival of Light) outside India. There's also a lot of countryside to enjoy, whether it be down by the canal at the 10 strong flight of Foxton Locks near Market Harborough or Swithland Wood, with ancient oaks and carpets of bluebells and views of Loughborough. Bringing the area right up to date, Leicestershire is home to the new National Space Centre, where visitors can have a day that's really out of this world.

### **Lincolnshire**

Lincolnshire is primarily an agricultural area, much less populated than other areas so visitors can really feel away from it all. Stretching from the Humber to the Wash it's a great place for walking or cycling with the 147 mile Viking Way crossing Lincolnshire from north to south. The area was badly affected by the Black Death during medieval times and there's said to be remains of at least 235 of these abandoned villages dotted around the countryside. The area is not quite as flat as people believe. The hills - known as the Wolds, form a ridge through the county but the Fens allows you to see neverending horizons. Explore Lincoln with its awe inspiring cathedral or head for some good old-fashioned fun, at Skegness, where there are amusements for all.

### **Nottinghamshire**

It's hard to escape the legend of Robin Hood in Nottinghamshire - after all the main town has Robin Hood re-enactments and Sherwood Forest covers much of the county.

Right in the heart of England, this is a contrasting county of rural towns and villages to the buzz of Nottingham itself, which is a much-improved shopping and tourist area. The fashion designer Sir Paul Smith was born in Nottingham and opened his first shop there in 1970.

*Sherwood Forest* is a great day to combine some Nottinghamshire history lessons about Robin and his band of Merry Men with a taste of the outdoors as well.

Towns like Newark, Mansfield and Southwell are easy places to wander around.

Fans of the outdoor sports should head straight for the National Watersports Centre at *Holme Pierrepont*, where there's superb water sports facilities including a 2,000 metre regatta lake, a slalom course, water-skiing lake and a fitness training centre. Hardly surprising that it's a top venue for athletes doing training.

For a relaxing alternative, take time out to visit the *Pureland Zen Garden*, near Newark, where you can contemplate the Buddhist way of life and enjoy a traditional Japanese tea ceremony.

### **Northamptonshire**

Bordered by the counties of Leicestershire, Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire is a pleasant mix of busy towns, churches and outstanding buildings.

Indeed the area is nicknamed the county of 'squires and spires', because of the large amount of churches and historic houses.

Despite growth of the main towns like Northampton and Daventry, this is still very much an agricultural area.

The main county town is Northampton, which hosts a colourful balloon festival every year.

Elsewhere around the county, between main towns like Daventry, Towcester, Corby and Wellingborough are attractions well worth spending time at, such as the Stoke Bruerne Canal Museum

and Sulgrave Manor.

For thrill seekers the Silverstone motor racing track is not far away and you don't need to go just on a race day to get behind the wheel.

## **West Midlands**

The West Midlands is often thought of as an industrial centre but there is a lot of lovely countryside in and around the main cities.

Undoubtedly the heart of the West Midlands is Birmingham - Britain's second city and a leader in the way it has transformed its image from concrete jungle to vibrant up and coming city over the past decade.

You can easily spend a few days exploring the city itself, which offers everything from canals to the famous Jewellery Quarter. Or venture into the suburbs of the city and visit some of the more unusual tourist attractions, like Cadbury's Chocolate World - a must for the kids!

Plenty of country pubs to enjoy a stop on a sunny afternoon.

The Midlands is also the ideal place for a real take-it-easy holiday with a huge network of canals stretching from the heart of Birmingham and the Black Country to idyllic rural routes on the way to Warwick, Stratford or London.

## **Cheshire**

Cheshire covers the north west of the country, stretching over to the historic walled city of Chester.

The city is one of the most attractive not just in Cheshire but in the whole country.

With its famous walk around two miles of walls and unique shops called The Rows, piled one on top of the other, it's a memorable place to visit.

Also well worth seeking out is the Boat Museum at Ellesmere Port, where hundreds of traditional narrowboats and barges have been carefully restored so that visitors can get an idea of what life was like living on the canals.

Cheshire is also a good place for exploring the countryside, with six recognised walks across the county.

## **Gloucestershire**

The county of Gloucestershire is like a picture book of essential England. The village greens, churches, cottage gardens and characteristic pubs and rich diversity of local customs makes Gloucestershire a fascinating county to visit.

A major attraction of this region is The Cotswolds. For that picture-book English village look, a trip to the Cotswolds is a must. It's an area of thatched stone cottages, villages clustered around greens and duck ponds, valleys and wooded hills. The Cotswolds are also famed for antiques with Stow-on-the-Wold, Chipping Campden, Chipping Norton and Broadway all considered to be marvellous hunting grounds for antiques and hidden treasures.

## **Shropshire**

Shropshire is a beautiful rural county renowned for its peace and tranquility. It offers a wide range of attractions from outdoor pursuits to the birthplace of the industrial revolution whilst all around are riverside pubs, market towns and country houses to explore. The Severn Valley Steam Railway near Bridgenorth is a major attraction along with the shire horses that can be seen still ploughing at Acton Scott Historic Farm.

In Shropshire you can see the world's first iron bridge that spans the river Severn at Ironbridge Gorge, and visit the series of world-class museums dedicated to this industrial era. For keen walkers and horse riders Wenlock Edge and the Clee Hills are ideal and offer some wonderful views. The Aircraft and Missile Museum at RAF Cosford will give you plenty to do, with over 80 aircraft, 50 missiles. The nostalgic will enjoy the Allied and Axis warplanes, but anyone can marvel at the strange, exotic aircraft in the Research and Development Collection.

## **Staffordshire**

Staffordshire boasts an array of top attractions, from theme parks to rolling countryside and miles of inland waterways. The county town of Stafford offers an array of architectural, cultural and entertainment attractions.

The county is also home to Stoke-on-Trent, the birthplace of English ceramics, known affectionately as 'The Potteries'. To this day Stoke-on-Trent remains the world centre for ceramics production, so there's no better opportunity to visit some factory shops or one of the many museums and visitor centres.

For sheer breathtaking exhilaration there's Britain's number one attraction, Alton Towers. It hosts over 125 rides and attractions for all the family all beautifully landscaped into magnificent gardens.

## **Warwickshire**

The heart of Warwickshire is the historic town of Warwick - best known for its' magnificent Castle which towers over the banks of the River Avon. Just a few miles away is Stratford-upon-Avon - the kind of place where you'll find a tourist whatever time of year. Try to go in quieter times of the day to really appreciate the Shakespeare connections, sailing on the River Avon or enjoying a night out at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre. Escape the hustle and bustle and head for Cotswolds countryside where you'll be spoiled for choice with loads of honey coloured Cotswold stone cottages and buildings in Broadway, Chipping Camden and Bourton-on-the-Water.

### **Worcestershire**

The county of Worcestershire offers a delightful mix of rolling countryside, the Malvern Hills, picturesque villages, and of course the Cathedral city of Worcester. The county is also famous for Malvern Water, Worcester Sauce and the Morgan Sports Car!

In the centre of the county lies the City of Worcester - here the attractions include touring the Royal Worcester Factory Visitor Centre, and the Museum of the Commandery. To the north of Worcester the Avoncroft Museum at Bromsgrove provides an insight into seven centuries of English history, and in the Wyre Forest is home to The Severn Valley Steam railway that runs past some of the best riverside scenery in the country. Meanwhile to the south of Worcester lies the Vale of Evesham, which is well known as for cultivating soft fruits, and the Victorian Spa towns of Malvern and Droitwich are well worth a visit.

## **North East**

The North East of Britain has an industrial feel about it. Here, shipbuilding, steel and mining shaped the area for many years.

Some places, like Whitley Bay and Bridlington are traditional seaside towns with beaches, candyfloss and amusements while others like Sunderland have had to work a lot harder to convince tourists to visit.

Newcastle is a buzzing city, full of but the North East also has quieter places - the walks through the almost deserted Yorkshire Wolds and the grandeur of Durham.

**Durham** - Durham is a great example of a mediaeval city, dominated by the cathedral, which stands on a rock high above the River Wear. This city was the seat of power for the so called Prince Bishops, who were clergy appointed by Norman kings to keep control over the northern part of their kingdom. They feared the area was too near Scotland and would be a potential target for the Scots.

Echoes of their importance can be seen in the cathedral and castle. Since 1836 the Castle has also been the home of Durham's University College, the foundation college of England's third oldest University.

## **South Yorkshire**

South Yorkshire is inextricably linked with coalmining, nowhere more so than in Barnsley, where coal was king for over 100 years. Those days are long gone and many of the towns, which relied on one big employer, have had to move on.

**Sheffield** - one of the greenest cities in England, with more than 50 parks, woodland and much of the area lying within the Peak District National Park. Built on the cutlery, iron and steel industries, Sheffield is a modern industrial city but with plenty to see and do. It's also a thriving centre for the arts, with the Lyceum, Studio and Crucible Theatre drawing the crowds. The Crucible is also home to one of the biggest sporting events of the year - the annual Snooker World Championships.

Take a Supertram to Meadowhall, a huge shopping complex with 270 stores. Skiing fans will enjoy Sheffield Ski Village, Britain's largest artificial ski slope, which caters for all the family.

**Rotherham** - has been a market town for 900 years and is a pleasant place to visit, with a pedestrianised shopping area, medieval church and traditional market place.

Nearby are attractions like the Tropical Butterfly House, an award-winning park (Rother Valley Country Park) that is great for canoeing, water-skiing and golf. There's plenty of gentle countryside, with picturesque villages like Wentworth to explore or the ruins of Roche Abbey.

## **North West**

A region of stunning countryside and coastline, historic and fashionable cities, five National Parks and its own magical island...The Kingdom of the Isle of Man. A region that begins with Roman occupation through Viking, Norman, Medieval and Victorian times and extends to the vibrant culture of today.

Manchester International Airport is the gateway to the North and to England's Northwest region, the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution, the Rolls Royce, the first passenger trains, great soccer clubs and the Beatles!

The region is dominated by the great Victorian cities of Manchester and Liverpool, two of England's most dynamic spots, with grand old architecture alongside modern museums, art galleries, restaurants and a thriving nightlife.

In Manchester, look out for the new Lowry Gallery complex or take a trip to sporting legend at Old Trafford, home of Manchester United Soccer Club.

No trip to Liverpool would be complete without a Magical Mystery Tour of the Fab Four's famous haunts, but also check out the Maritime Museum or take a ferry across the Mersey from the renovated waterfront.

The magnificent Roman city of Chester, with its distinct black and white Tudor architecture and Norman cathedral, is the heart of Cheshire, a county rich in gardens and manor houses including Tatton Park with its wonderful annual flower show.

Travel through the Ribble Valley in Lancashire and follow the Pendle Witches Trail to medieval Lancaster Castle, where the witches stood trial.

There's plenty of golf here, too, at Lytham St Anne's and the elegant resort of Southport. Blackpool with its Pleasure Beach and its world famous Illuminations is Britain's most popular seaside resort.

## **Derbyshire**

The town of Bakewell grew up around twelve mineral-water springs, which have been attracting settlers since the Iron Age. Most of these springs have now run dry but one still delivers warmish water. Bakewell also holds the only market in the National Park, held on Mondays, selling domestic goods and livestock.

Jane Austen's novel 'Pride and Prejudice' is thought to have been based on the surrounding area with Lambton being the portrayal of Bakewell and Chatsworth House being the model for Pemberley.

## **Lancashire**

The historic county town of Lancaster, surrounded by the Forest of Bowland and the Lune Valley, is a perfect place for an overnight stop on your way to the nearby Lake District or as a base to explore the surrounding countryside. The city's position on the coast by the river led to its development as a one of England's main trading ports in the 18th century and you can see evidence of this in the modern day Lancaster. Today the narrow and leafy Georgian streets are home to a wide variety of shops, restaurants and lively pubs.

The city is dominated by Lancaster Castle sited above the River Lune. Williamson Park is Lancasters highest point and it offers great views of the town, Morecambe Bay and the Lakeland Hills. The centerpiece of the park is the 220ft high Ashton Memorial built by the son of a local statesman and important lino manufacturer Lord Ashton in memory of his second wife. There is also a butterfly house and bird garden in the grounds.

## **Liverpool & Merseyside**

Visit Liverpool, the 2008 European Capital of Culture.

Discover the heart of Liverpool in the city's national museums, galleries, theatres and concert halls.

The grand, iconic architecture of the waterfront, the cathedrals and the cultural quarter have earned Liverpool its World Heritage Status and are truly awe-inspiring.

And sports lovers can back their own favourite at the Grand National, follow their heroes through the high and lows of British Open Golf Championships or experience the electrifying atmosphere of premiership football.

Elsewhere at Albert Dock is the Maritime Museum, which traces Liverpool's sea-faring history, shops and the art gallery Tate Liverpool.

## **Manchester**

Sophisticated, stylish, stimulating, and streets ahead, Manchester is the original 24-hour party city.

From fine dining and chic hotels, to cutting-edge clubs and bars and the world's most progressive music scene, Manchester is the place to see and be seen.

And the shopping is legendary. With exclusive independent boutiques in the funky Northern Quarter and prestigious designer stores lining the handsome architecture that is King Street, the city has grown to fill every corner with fashion and style.

The past, the present and the future are intertwined in this city that continues to astound. Historical landmarks compliment bold, contemporary structural design, surrounded by beautifully sculptured open spaces where you can reminisce, recuperate or simply have a rest away from the bustling crowds. World-class live events, international sporting competitions, and award-winning museums and galleries make Manchester one of the most entertaining places in the world. Add to this the passion of two premiership football clubs, and an exceptional programme of drama, dance and comedy, and you'll discover why this is the place everyone is talking about.

### **West Yorkshire**

West Yorkshire includes Leeds - a city that has experienced a huge turnaround in fortunes over the past decade.

Thanks to some foresight from council leaders and planners, businesses have been brought back, the area has been cleaned up and 40,000 new jobs have been created.

Old warehouses are now open plan flats and there's a buzz about the place, making it one of the places to be.

Away from the cities, West Yorkshire is Bronte country, so named because it was the inspiration for sisters Charlotte, Emily and Anne who between them produced some of the best-known novels like Wuthering Heights and Jane Eyre.

The landscape, often described as somewhat bleak and desolate, includes Haworth, where the sisters lived, Ponden Hall (inspiration for Wuthering Heights) and Oakwell Hall.

## **North**

The overall landscape of the North of England is arguably the best in the country.

Take the great natural scenery of the Lake District, add the Yorkshire Moors and Dales and mix in the gentleness of Northumbria and you've got a heady cocktail of all that's great about the English countryside.

For fans of the great outdoors, this is the place to be. There's no shortage of routes to follow or villages to meander through. Not a place to be rushing about - a part of the world for quiet reflection and for gulping in that fresh air.

Follow the route of Hadrian's Wall - one of the finest Roman legacies - through Northumberland.

Explore Heriot Country in Yorkshire or get the hiking boots out and head for the hills of the Lake District.

## **Cumbria**

Cumbria is an absolute haven for outdoor lovers. The Lake District National Park is a spectacular mix of dramatic hills, calming lakes, historic locations, and a diverse array of wildlife. There are 16 major lakes here that are squeezed in between some of England's highest mountains that have created a perfect walking and watersports paradise.

From the spring daffodils immortalised by Wordsworth to the golden cloak of autumn's leaves, from sailing boats on sparkling summer lakes to the majestic snow-capped fells of winter. Take in the views, breathe in the fresh air, watch nature work its magic through the changing seasons and experience what has been an inspiration to generations of artists and writers alike. Whether it's a gentle stroll or a challenging hike, with pathways winding through valleys, over fells and along lake shores, you could be forgiven for getting lost in the view.

Once you've found your way back to one of the Lake District's legendary hotels, take the time to enjoy the delicious flavours of locally produced cuisine under a magical west coast sunset, and you too will be captivated by Cumbria - The Lake District.

## **North Humberside**

East Riding covers the east of Yorkshire, a combination of market towns, traditional seaside resorts and the busy port of Hull, right at the mouth of River Humber.

Kingston-upon-Hull (to give it the correct title) surprisingly, has its' own museum quarter, which includes Wilberforce House - displays about the man who abolished slavery and came from the town. Elsewhere, there are market towns like Beverley and Driffield, Howden and Market Weighton and on the coastline, seaside towns like Bridlington and Hornsea.

Also worth seeing, especially when lit up at night, is the Humber Bridge, which carries traffic across the River Humber. It is designed to move in the wind and bends more than three metres in the middle during winds of 80mph.

With a main span of 1410 meters the Humber Bridge was the longest single-span suspension bridge in the world till from 1981 till 1998.

The Humber itself is an estuary of about 37 miles formed by the meeting of the rivers Trent and Ouse. It widens from 1 mile at the head to 13 miles at the mouth. The large width, and shallow depth leads to tricky navigation, but that has not stopped the Humber being an important shipping route throughout the ages.

## **North Yorkshire**

Yorkshire is actually England's largest county and in the north it stretches from the coastline of the east, across the windswept Yorkshire Moors to the Yorkshire Dales in the West.

The people of Yorkshire have a reputation for friendliness but also for telling it how it is.

Whilst most people visit this part of Britain for the hills and dales, the area also has traditional seaside resorts like Scarborough and Whitby as well as one of Britain's most historic towns, the walled city of York.

**York** - The walled city of York is a history lesson on the rest of Britain. York recreates the sights, sounds and SMELLS of the time with an interactive trip round the Jorvick Viking Centre. The city comprehensively covers all these significant moments in history with several museums. Away from the history, York is a charming city of cobbled streets with good shopping and hundreds of restaurants and cafes.

**Yorkshire Dales** - The 'Dales' of Yorkshire are the lush, green valleys topped by the limestone, which is such a feature of this area. Not only will you see lush farmland with dry stone walls criss crossing the fields but it's also a hotspot for caving and potholing. But everyone can see this fascinating

underground world at so called 'show caves' like White Scar Caves near Ingleton, Ingleborough Cave near Clapham and Stump Cross Caverns at Pateley Bridge. The Yorkshire Dales (Swaledale, Wensleydale, Wharfedale and Ribblesdale) also have their own man made attractions as well as great natural beauty. Bolton Abbey at Wharfedale, and Skipton - dubbed the Gateway to the Dales - will bring you back to civilization.

**Yorkshire Moors** - A National Park since 1952, the Yorkshire Moors are rugged and exhilarating for fans of the outdoor life. It's the largest area of heather moorland in England and Wales, covering 554 square miles, from coastline to mountains. From shaded woodland to villages nestling in the Esk Valley, there's plenty to see. For the best places to go why not get hold of some of the Park's Walk about leaflets, which detail some of the more popular and accessible routes.

### **Northumberland**

Northumberland is the most northern and least populated county in England, stretching into the borders of Scotland. The border town of Berwick-upon-Tweed it has changed hands so much it's difficult to tell where England ends and Scotland begins. It's a county of grand castles, that most symbolic of barriers - Hadrian's Wall - and its' own national park. Here you'll find some rolling hills, not quite as dramatic as the Lake District, but very picturesque.

## Scotland

A warm welcome is guaranteed but go prepared for any kind of weather. Scotland, more than other parts of Britain, is used to sunshine one minute and storm clouds the next.

Get active - try everything from golf to hill walking and mountain climbing.

Indulge in some retail therapy in Aberdeen, Glasgow or Edinburgh, now among some of the best shopping cities in Britain.

Or take it really easy and just enjoy exploring the winding roads with a surprise around every corner - breathtaking views, rugged landscapes and spectacular scenery.

### **Central**

Central Scotland covers a wide area, from Edinburgh in the east to Glasgow and Greenock and north up as far as Dundee.

But essentially it's where you will find the largest towns and cities and the most choice in the way of nightlife, restaurants, shopping and entertainment, which you don't need to search far to find.

It's also where the largest concentration of the Scottish population lives and works - with more in common with other towns and cities in Britain than in the 'other' Scotland - that of the Highlands and Islands.

It may be busier but can still be as picturesque and if you are after beautiful scenery but prefer the bustle of towns and cities it's an ideal combination.

**Edinburgh** - Edinburgh is visually Scotland's most impressive city. The city itself is fairly evenly split into the Old Town and New Town: the centuries old Town with its winding streets and steep staircases is heaven for fans for boutique shopping.

And being steeped in history it's the best side of the town for exploring- dungeon tours and world famous Castle can all be found here.

Edinburgh's status as the place Scotland does business has increased when it became home to the Scottish Parliament.

Edinburgh is busy, bustling and always filled with tourists so if the streets are too packed take one of the city bus tours which actually goes outside the city centre and you'll see just how big the city really is - from 'posh' Morningside to seaside towns like Portobello.

The city has worked hard to promote their now legendary New Year celebrations as well as the cultural event of the year - *The Edinburgh International Festival*, and *Fringe*, held every August.

**Glasgow** - Winning the UK City of Architecture and Design in 1999 and prior to that European City of Culture in 1990, Glasgow is one of the cultural destinations of Europe.

The Burrell Collection, The Art Gallery and Museum and The Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery are some of the greatest art collections in the UK.

Glasgow is also the place for shoppers, with the specialist boutiques of Princes Square to designer shops in nearby Buchanan Street.

For a complete change of scene take a trip on the city's underground system - known locally as The Clockwork Orange - and explore the West End of Glasgow. Just off Byres Road you'll find a bewildering array of unusual and unique shops and excellent restaurants.

Not for nothing is Glasgow known as The Dear Green Place - it has more than 70 parks. One of the best is the Botanical Gardens at the top of Byres Road. On a sunny people watch in the peaceful surroundings - an oasis of calm in a busy city.

**Stirling** - Stirling is steeped in history - from the castle which dominates the town, to the National Wallace Monument just outside it, which tells the tale of Braveheart himself - William Wallace. The Mel Gibson film re-ignited an interest in the history of the area and there's even a statue of Wallace who looks uncannily like the Australian filmstar! The Wallace monument afford stunning views of the surrounding countryside but be prepared for a steep climb. Stirling is an ideal stop on the way from Glasgow or Edinburgh up to Fife and beyond. And for shopping fanatics it's a pleasant alternative to Glasgow and Edinburgh.

### **Highlands**

The Highlands is really what most people think of when they imagine the rugged, mountaineous countryside of Scotland.

It's certainly a dramatic part of the world - with castles, glens and Britain's highest mountain, Ben Nevis.

The Highlands start just after Perth and Stirling and much of the area is all about Scotland's history - Robert the Bruce, William Wallace and Rob Roy McGregor. The battles won and lost and the tales of legend are all to be found here.

Much depends on the weather- it can look bleak and forbidding on a wet day.

But if it's the great outdoors you're after then this is the place to ski, hillwalk, mountaineer, cycle or just soak up the atmosphere.

Here you can feel truly away from it all - explore the glens and lochs, and make your mind up about the Loch Ness Monster legend or take it slowly and cruise along the Caledonian Canal.

Capital of the Highlands is Inverness, known for good food, places to stay and shopping.

The Highlands are ideal for touring but remember many of the roads are very twisty and some quite steep, so take it easy. It's where you'll also find that Gaelic is the main language. English is understood but Gaelic is the traditional tongue.

**Aberdeen** – Scotland's whisky and castle capital has the benefit of outstanding coastal scenery and the awesome backdrop of the Grampian mountains. The claim to be Whisky Capital is well earned as Speyside is home to more than half of Scotland's distilleries. Aberdeenshire has over 1000 castles or sites of castles within its' boundaries. The Granite City - Aberdeen - is the centre of the area and is a bustling modern city centre with plenty to entertain. It naturally has close links with the sea, as an important port, but it's also the capital of the oil industry. Here is where many people who work in the industry are based. The area is a favourite with the Royal Family and they are guaranteed to be seen at one of the area's major annual events - the Braemar Gathering, a Highland Games of caber tossing and Highland dancing which dates back 1,000 years. For those with an active lifestyle this area provides excellent opportunity to take part in a wide variety of sports, from fishing to skiing.

**Inverness** - Inverness is the self-styled Capital of the Highlands. It's not the most historic of areas but for the modern day tourists it has a good selection of shops, restaurants and places to stay. Inverness boasts a good arts venue- the Eden Court Theatre - which has a bit of everything to offer from ballet to cinema, theatre and concerts. If you do have a thirst for some bloody battles, then pay a visit to nearby Culloden Moor. It's the place where in 1746 Bonnie Prince Charlie and his Jacobite army were butchered by George II's army. Of course the other well-known feature in this area is Loch Ness - the reputed home of that creature from the deep the Loch Ness Monster. The loch is 24 miles long and 700 feet deep. For keen walkers or cyclists there is the Great Glen Way - a 70-mile route across Scotland from Inverness to Fort William. Cyclists can try the Great Glen Cycle Route - 75 miles to Fort William.

### **Southern Scotland**

Rich, rolling farmland, rugged seacoasts and Clyde coast islands characterise the South of Scotland. Robert Burns and Sir Walter Scott both lived in this land of ancient abbeys, castles and historic houses. The real Scotland starts right at the border. Different accents in the shops and different names for beer in pubs are just two of the ways in which Scotland stamps its' own personality straight away. In scenery, too: the hazy blue hills running out to a wide horizon have lifted the hearts of generations of travellers at the border on the A68 at Carter Bar. Then there are the forests and wild moors of upland Galloway and the vivid greens of Ayrshire's pastures, with the mountain profile of the island of Arran as a backdrop. Wherever you travel here, you can be sure of a real Scottish experience.

## **Wales**

Wales might be physically attached to England but there's no doubt when you go over the border that you're in a distinctly different place.

This is a land of rolling hills, and lush valleys, an ancient Celtic lilted language. Wales is often known as the Land of Castles, because there are more than 400 of them dotted all over the country - reminders of their proud past.

It's also a country of contrast - rural and with little population in Mid Wales, yet busy and thriving in the south. Two thirds of the country's 2.95 million citizens live around the capital Cardiff and just eight per cent of the country is classed as urban with the vast majority being agricultural.

Welsh culture is proudly celebrated each year with the Eisteddfod, a celebration of all things Welsh.

The Welsh language - a form of Celtic thought to be among the oldest languages in Europe - is on the increase after nearly a century of decline.

### **Mid**

Mid Wales is the place for lovers of the great outdoors as it's the most rural part of the country. The area boasts two National Parks - Snowdonia and Brecon Beacons - and both are well worth exploring. Snowdonia - which although named after the country's highest mountain doesn't actually include it (the peak is actually in North Wales) has a feast of activities on offer all in a stunning setting. In 840 square miles of unspoilt beauty there's no shortage of things to do. And you don't have to be a fitness fan to enjoy them. Outdoor activities abound - walking, cycling and mountain climbing.

In Brecon Beacons there's plenty to do - sailing on the Brecon Canal, golfing, and museums charting the history of the area.

On Mid Wales' coastline Cardigan Bay is hard to beat - and part of it has been designated a Marine Heritage Coast, meaning it's home to a whole host of flora and fauna. Here you'll also find grey seals, bottlenose dolphins and porpoise in the waters.

Aberystwyth is probably the best-known town in this area and a popular holiday base. A university town, it has its own castle and the longest cliff railway in Britain, from where there are some lovely views of the town and the surrounding landscape to enjoy.

### **North**

The area has sandy beaches at popular tourist spots like Colwyn Bay, Rhyl and Prestatyn. The young and young at heart will find plenty to do in these busy seaside towns - the ideal place for even a day out at the coast as North Wales is easily accessible from the English town of Chester. But there's also many a market town to explore and countless mediaeval castles, which dwarf the surrounding towns. Also well worth seeking out is little known Ceiriog Valley, close to the border with England - famously described by one of the best known Welshmen, David Lloyd George, as "a little bit of heaven on earth."

It's also home of the Pistyll Rhaedar waterfall at 240 feet it's the highest anywhere in England or Wales. Off the coast is the Isle of Anglesey, a stunning sanctuary for wildlife and classed as an area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

To get there from Bangor visitors cross a well-known place - the station with the longest name in the world - Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwillllandysiliogogoch!

And for something really different why not visit Portmerion, an Italian style town where not everything is as it seems. Built from 1925 until 1975 by architect Clough William-Ellis, television fans will instantly recognise it as the setting for cult 1960s series The Prisoner.

### **South**

South Wales is the part of the country where most people work and live. Naturally most tourists flock to Cardiff, the capital city, which once relied on coal exports but has undergone huge transformation in recent years. There's no shortage of things to do, places to shop and venues to eat and drink.

Site of one of Britain's more successful Millennium projects, The Millennium Stadium - with its retractable roof - has been widely praised as a venue for top sporting and musical events, including the FA Cup Final and Six Nations Rugby.

Cardiff is also an important business centre, especially as it is now home of the Welsh National Assembly.

The other main city is Swansea, which has more of a Welsh feel to it and benefits from being right on the coast.

Surfers will head for the nearby Gower Peninsula - Britain's first ever Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty - with endless sandy beaches and 21 bays and coves.

Enthusiasts have a great choice, from Swansea Bay itself to Caswell (ideal for beginners) and Broughton Bay (for the experts). Probably the best-known surfer's paradise is Llangennith Sands, which is so vast there's little danger of it getting too crowded.

Along the coastline from Swansea is the wonderfully named seaside resort of Mumbles. The unusual name is thought to come from the French word Mamelles, meaning breasts, a cheeky description of the two islands off Mumbles Head!

**Cardiff** - Cardiff has only been the official capital of Wales since the 1950s but it's making up for lost time. It's a vibrant city, very much on the up, with regeneration along the waterfront and new restaurants, shops and entertainment venues appearing all over the place.

Cardiff is considered more Anglicised than Swansea, something that works for and against it in equal measure. For those after the lilting Welsh language you're not likely to hear much of it spoken here, although, interestingly, more people are speaking it now.

But for those who enjoy a city with a buzz about it, Cardiff is a good place to be with plenty of shopping, museums and entertainment.

For international sports events it's hard to beat, thanks to the Millennium Stadium. With its retractable roof, which can be closed in just 20 minutes and capacity to hold 72,500 spectators, it has already established itself as one of the best entertainment venues in Britain.

As anyone might expect, Cardiff is the commercial centre of Wales and now also home to the Welsh Assembly, which was created in 1999 following a referendum.

Like all the best places Cardiff also has a castle - worth having a look round the opulent surroundings, especially to spot the clock tower and the Animal Wall, where animals stone sculptures are frozen in time. Locals call it Cardiff Zoo!

Cardiff is also home to the National Museum and Gallery, which includes the Evolution of Wales - a journey from the beginnings of Wales to the present day.

## London

London is a centre for all the arts including theatre, opera and galleries. It leads the world in fashion and therefore offers a vast array of options for shopaholics from discount designer outlets outside the city to huge department stores, from reasonably priced chain stores on local high streets to one-off boutiques and bustling markets.

Moreover, with a pub on virtually every street corner of London there is no excuse for not sampling the local ales!

For up to the minute information on upcoming concerts, plays, musicals, exhibitions, sporting and other outdoor events and cinema listings, you will need to buy the weekly *Timeout* guide to London from your local newsagent. Alternatively, the free, daily edition of the Tube's Metro Newspaper and again the weekly TNT magazine also offer much-needed socialising. The West End (Leicester Square or Covent Garden Tube) is where you will discover London's famous array of theatres. You can either purchase tickets from the theatre itself or from one of the many individual ticket offices. There is a constant 'buffet' of both classical and contemporary plays showing throughout the day and in to the night.

## Sightseeing

The following is a list of some of London's most popular tourist attractions:

- **Tate Modern** - art gallery on the eclectic South Bank of the Thames
- **The London Eye** - sky scraping wheel with superb city and river views
- **British Museum** - massive collection of artefacts from all over the world
- **Buckingham Palace** – the London home of the Royal family
- **St Paul's Cathedral** - impressive cathedral
- **Westminster Abbey** - abbey where most royal occasions held
- **Houses of Parliament & Big Ben** - breathtaking Thames architecture
- **Tower Bridge** - intricate bridge leading to the Tower of London
- **The Tower of London** - home of the Crown Jewels
- **Madam Tussauds** - wax museum full of the rich and famous
- **Harrods** - London landmark department store
- **Science Museum** – conventional and interactive
- **The All England Tennis Association, Wimbledon** – Museum
- **Natural History Museum**
- **Victoria and Albert Museum** – Historical Britain

## Pubs and Bars

London boasts an endless selection of pubs and bars including the cavernous Market Bar in Covent Garden, the West End's Sports Café or the Havana salsa bar, as well as the White Horse, a great summertime pub in Parsons Green.

## Restaurants

There are a huge variety of choice, prices and decors. You could, for example, visit Chinatown in the West End or check out the various Belgos with their mussels, fries and Belgian beer. Wagamamas serves noodles and Asian delights while the Churchill Arms in Kensington is a cosy pub with a terrific Thai restaurant.

However, remember - you will not feel like a true Londoner until you find your local curry house (often open late and with a late license) and make it a late Friday night staple.

## Clubs

London's club scene is thriving with many of the world famous dance DJs based here. London is also a must-stop for any touring artist, so you may have the opportunity to attend concerts and gigs live. If it is free and spontaneous entertainment you are after, street performers are many and varied, especially at the Covent Garden Piazza and Leister Square. As a rule most clubs and pubs close at 11pm,

although some premises have later licences. If you choose to party-on, remember the tube ceases to operate at around 12.30am, however night buses operate all through the night. Trafalgar Square is a good place to start if you are beginning your expedition home by night bus. Do not hesitate to ask bus drivers for the appropriate numbered bus to take home!!

### **Sport**

Sport Centres and facilities can be found throughout London. The National sport is football, of which there is a premier league, a first, second and third division. London teams to follow include Arsenal, Tottenham Hotspurs, West Ham and Chelsea. There is several top Rugby Union sides, as well as many athletic clubs, both disciplines of which play at Crystal Palace.

A plethora of gyms exist which make exercising a much more attractive option as opposed to braving the more often than not cold weather. Many gyms offer long term, short term or daily membership. Gyms are well equipped and usually boast additional services such as saunas, sun-beds, massage and relaxation/meditation classes (e.g. yoga).

There are some company-like clubs, which provide the opportunity to register individually or as a team for sports like netball and Australian Rules football. Keep your eyes and ears open. Again, do not hesitate to ask the locals. Touch Rugby Clubs operate at different venues throughout London (e.g. North London, Richmond). These venues alter from year to year.

### **Shopping**

For chain-department stores, for example Selfridges, Liberty and Dickens and Jones, Oxford Street, Regents Street, Knightsbridge and Sloan Square are perfect areas to start. The famous Harrods is located in Knightsbridge. For a more local-feel, investigate Kensington High Street, Covent Garden and The Kings Road in Chelsea where many unique, boutique-like shops offer great retail therapy and the chance to purchase more individualised items. For the best value in town and the ultimate chance to hunt for the most unique of gifts, explore the street markets that operate on weekends. Most boroughs will have their own market. Some more established ones are the Portobello Road Market, specialising in strange and exotic wares, the Camden Market, brimming with antiques, clothing, footwear and ethnic artefacts, and the Bermondsey Market, which provides affordable antiques and jewellery.

### **Areas to live**

Popular areas for people from overseas to live include

South West	Fulham, Putney and Wimbledon
West	Shepherds Bush, Acton and Ealing
North	Kilburn, West Hampstead, Golders Green, Hendon and Willesden Green

Earls Court has long been a popular haunt and the Docklands is becoming an increasingly favoured spot. Obviously it is dependent upon your individual tastes and more importantly, your financial status.

Please note that generally house prices and rent are much more expensive in London than almost anywhere else in the world. One of the best places to look for accommodation in London is the **LOOT** [www.loot.com](http://www.loot.com) newspaper. This is published daily and available from newsagents and supermarkets. However, be warned - the best places go in a flash so you will need to get up early.

Other places to look include the 'Flats to Let' and 'Flat share' sections of the London Evening Standard and free magazines such as TNT. You could also look in shop windows in your prospective areas.

Always consider where the nearest tube station is and how long it will take to travel to your place of work in relation to any potential accommodation. You do not want to spend the majority of your precious time walking to the station nor sitting on a bus or tube. Granted, travel around London in general can be time-consuming, but if you can decrease this time by choosing your accommodation carefully you will thank yourself in the long term.