



July Itinerary

Discover the distinctive character of Hull, Leeds, Manchester and Liverpool with the TransPennine Express North of England 4 in 8-Day Rover ticket. These four lively, post-industrial cities are linked by the Trans-Pennine rail route, and this new city trail for 2017 is designed to highlight the very best of the bold cultural programming on offer in each.

This is a standout year to visit, as Hull unveils its 12 month programme as the [UK City of Culture](#), including the [PRS Foundation's New Music Biennial](#). At the height of summer, Manchester hosts the sixth [Manchester International Festival](#), the world's first festival of original, new work and special events. Highlight fashion and culture event The Clothes Show moves to Liverpool after 27 years in Birmingham - and acclaimed performance artists lead a week-long workshop at The Tetley in Leeds.

All four cities boast boutique and high street shopping, independent bars and restaurants serving a global range of cuisines, quality accommodation and good transport links - with each of the cultural trails here designed to be within walking distance unless otherwise specified.

HULL

The [UK City of Culture programme](#) brings a transformative buzz to the home of the formidable poet Philip Larkin (1922-1985), who described Hull - with its ancient harbour, historic Fruit Market area and coastal feel - as a city of 'sudden elegancies'.

Event Highlights

PRS Foundation's [New Music Biennial](#). 20 pieces of music across a wide range of genres, both new and written in the last ten years, showcase the UK's contemporary music scene. *30 June - 2nd July, Free ticketed across Hull City Centre*

[LGBT 50](#). The first ever UK Pride will be taking place in Hull with a very special *Duckie Summer Tea Party*. *22-29 July, Free across Hull City Centre*.

Day One

Start at the [Ferens Art Gallery](#) (daily, free), close to the railway station. Newly reopened after a major refurbishment, the gallery features a magnificent permanent collection as well as changing exhibitions, such as a selection of incredibly life-like sculptures by [artist Ron Mueck](#) (22 April - 13 August). Nearby is Queen Victoria Square, home to the [Maritime Museum](#) (daily, free), which tells the story of Hull's role as a port and gateway to Europe through objects including some excellent ship models and a full-sized whale skeleton.

Next, walk to the Old Town and revived waterfront area, where plenty of options for lunchtime food and drink are to be found, as well as [Wilberforce House](#) (daily, free), museum and birthplace of William Wilberforce, an influential figure in the movement to eradicate the slave trade. On the same street - and good for families - is the interactive [Streetlife Museum](#) (daily, free), filled with recreated street scenes (including sounds and smells). For a small diversion, stop by Market Place to see the statue of King William III on horseback - locally known as King Billy - before returning to the city centre for events as part of the PRS Foundation's [New Music Biennial](#) (1-2 July), a showcase of the UK's contemporary music scene through 20 pieces across a wide range of genres. Alternatively, check out the evening programme at [Hull Truck Theatre](#) or make a visit to [Kardomah94](#), a restaurant, bar and exhibition space with an event line-up that includes theatre, film, spoken word nights and gigs.

Day Two

Start your day with a visit to the new, pop-up [Humber Street Gallery](#) (daily, free) in the Fruit Market cultural quarter, a warehouse space filled with exhibitions and gallery takeovers by world-leading artists throughout 2017. In this area - which is currently undergoing £80m of regeneration - you'll also find a microbrewery, bars, clubs and restaurants. Don't miss [The City Speaks](#) (2 February - 31 December, free) nearby; designed by Michael Pinsky, this installation relays your words, spoken into a microphone onto the west tower of Hull's tidal surge barrier.

The afternoon can be spent following a [city centre trail](#) of the places frequented by Larkin (keep an eye out for the giant, colourful, artist-decorated Toad sculptures that are a legacy of a public art project in Hull). Close by is the **Scale Lane footbridge**; go with a picnic, or simply find a sheltered spot to ride the bridge as it opens to let shipping pass. From there, make your way to [Früit](#), a venue that combines theatre, film, music, comedy, markets, club nights and festivals - making it the ideal place to while away the hours. Further out from the city centre is [The Adelphi Club](#), a popular live music venue that's host to regular gigs.

LEEDS

Along with its reputation for being a shopping hotspot, Leeds - with its Victorian facades, covered arcades and shining waterfront buildings - is also a centre for dance, sculpture, festivals and a vibrant independent food and drink scene. No wonder, then, that the city is making a bid to be European Capital of Culture 2023.

Event highlights

[Machines Restrict Their Movement](#). Discover this exhibition of sculptures and large scroll drawings inspired by factory workers from Ghisa Koenig, a former student of Henry Moore, at the Henry Moore Institute. *25 May - 13 August, free*

[The Barbershop Chronicles](#). Barbershops are places to sit and listen, stand and talk or even get a haircut. Inua Ellam's new play is heart-warming, insightful and funny, set in five African cities and London.

Day one

The [Henry Moore Institute](#) (Monday - Sunday, free), founded by Leeds College of Art graduate and acclaimed sculptor Henry Moore, is a good place to start the day. Discover Ghisa Koenig's thirty-year study of industrial labour and factory workers in [Machines Restrict Their Movement](#) (25 May - 13 August) and an exhibition of more than 50 works by innovative Japanese sculptor Jiro Takamatsu in [The Temperature of Sculpture](#) (13 July - 22 October) - as well as the excellent [Sculpture Research Library](#) on the first floor. Next door is the [Craft Centre and Design Gallery](#) (Tuesday-Saturday, free), beneath Leeds Art Gallery: here you'll find work by over 300 UK designer makers on display, including glass, ceramics, jewellery, textiles and prints - best of all, everything on display is for sale. Although Leeds Art Gallery itself is currently closed for refurbishment, its [Victorian Tiled Hall Cafe](#) (Monday - Sunday, free) is worth a visit - for lunch, or just to admire the stunning barrel-vaulted mosaic ceiling.

From here, walk to Leeds' award-winning [Kirkgate Market](#) (Monday - Saturday, free) where you'll find food, drink, fashion, haberdashery, flowers and hardware at one of the largest indoor markets in Europe. It's also worth dropping by the Grade I listed [Leeds Corn Exchange](#) (daily, free), where you'll find a wide roster of independent retailers beneath the stunning domed roof. To plan your evening, take a look at the programme at the [West Yorkshire Playhouse](#) (Monday - Saturday), where you can see Inua Ellam's [Barber Shop Chronicles](#) (12-29 July, tickets £13.50-£30) - or check to see if there are tickets available for the live music, comedy and variety performances that take place at the historic [City Varieties Music Hall](#) (Monday - Saturday) six nights a week. To round out the evening, make for Leeds' [Belgrave Music Hall and Canteen](#), a former recreation hall and nursery school that's been transformed into a 200 capacity event space for gigs, comedy, film and exhibitions, complete with two bars, two kitchens and a roof terrace.

Day two

A short bus or taxi ride across the River Aire from the city centre is [The Tetley](#) (daily, free); housed in the striking art deco headquarters of the former Tetley Brewery, this contemporary art centre - complete with bar and kitchen - is a great way to spend a morning. Also on the south side of the river is [The Royal Armouries](#) (Monday - Friday, free), the Leeds branch of the national museum of arms and armour and home to around 8,500 objects in six themed galleries.

Spend the afternoon back in the city centre, exploring Leeds' characterful [Victorian Quarter](#), a beautiful shopping centre resplendent in marble, gilded mosaics, cast iron and the biggest stained glass window in England. Nearby are the [Queens](#) and [Thorntons](#) Arcades, which are also worth a visit, as well as the newly Michelin-starred restaurant that's causing a stir [The Man Behind the Curtain](#) (Tuesday - Saturday, booking essential), plus two new rooftop restaurants open in July in [Victoria Gate](#). Take a bus or taxi to [Hyde Park Picture House](#) (daily), a Grade II listed arthouse cinema with an Edwardian balcony and original gas lights. It's also not far from the [Brudenell Social Club](#) - a former working men's club turned live music venue and ideal spot to while away the rest of the evening.

MANCHESTER

International culture, industrial heritage, political thought and medieval history run through Manchester's historic city centre, edgy Northern Quarter, trailblazing university campuses, progressive Gay Village, the lively districts surrounding Deansgate and the cutting-edge surrounds of MediaCityUK.

Event highlights

[Manchester International Festival](#) is the world's first festival of original, new work and special events. The festival is staged every two years and takes place in venues all over the city, *29 June-16 July, ticketed and free events*

[Fatherland](#). Manchester International Festival will transform the Royal Exchange Theatre for this new production exploring contemporary fatherhood and life in the heart of England, by Frantic Assembly's Scott Graham, Karl Hyde from Underworld and playwright Simon Stephens. *From 15 July, tickets from £16.50*

[10000 Gestures](#). Created by Boris Charmatz, one of Europe's leading dance makers, a 25-strong ensemble will perform in succession without repeating a single movement, for this Manchester International Festival production in Mayfield. 13-15 July, tickets £25

Day one

[Manchester Art Gallery](#) (daily, free) in the city centre is a great introduction to the combined civic pride and cultural ambition of the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution: designed by the architect behind Highclere Castle (or Downton Abbey), it houses 25,000 artefacts across six centuries and contemporary exhibitions by world-leading artists. The place to hang out during [Manchester International Festival](#) is at Festival Square in front of the gothic Manchester Town Hall, packed full of quality food and drink offerings plus music, theatre and DJ nights and you can buy tickets for all performances. One of the highlights of the festival includes [10000 Gestures](#), a large-scale dance performance created by choreographer Boris Charmatz with 25 dancers. On the other side of Piccadilly Gardens is the sprawling Northern Quarter, perhaps Manchester's most characterful district with enough diversions for a morning of exploring, including independent coffee shops, bars, restaurants - and some great spots for vintage clothing bargains. Here you'll find [Manchester Craft & Design Centre](#) (studios open Monday - Saturday, free); formerly a Victorian fish and poultry market, it's now home to a café and 18 different studios, where you can buy stunning jewellery, ceramics, prints, knitwear and more direct from the makers. Close by is the [Centre for Chinese Contemporary Art](#) (Tuesday - Sunday, free), a small but fascinating gallery that champions cutting-edge Chinese art.

Spend the afternoon in Manchester's medieval quarter, the heart of which is the 600 year-old [Manchester Cathedral](#) (daily, free), which hosts a range of events from live gigs to vintage clothing fairs. Circling a pleasant, grassy area behind the Cathedral are [Chetham's Library](#) (Monday - Friday, suggested donation £3), the oldest free public reference library in Britain, and the [National Football Museum](#) (daily, free), an ideal spot for families - and football fans. Alternatively, take a tram out to [MediaCityUK](#), where the old working docks have been replaced with shining cultural beacons [The Lowry](#) (daily, free) - home to contemporary art exhibitions, dance and theatre - the [Imperial War Museum North](#) (daily, free), which charts the global history of conflict, and the [BBC](#), including the [BBC Philharmonic](#) orchestra. Make your way back into town by tram or bus towards evening: theatre-lovers should head for the [Royal Exchange Theatre](#) and Manchester International Festival production [Fatherland](#) (from 1 July, tickets from £16.50), while music fans will find a whole roster of venues ready to cater to their needs. Check out the programming at astounding Wesleyan Chapel turned live music venue [The Albert Hall](#), jazz bar [Matt & Phreds](#) or legendary venue [Band on the Wall](#).

Day two

The beautifully redesigned [Whitworth](#) art gallery (daily, free) is a short bus ride down Oxford Road away from the city centre - and a great place to start the day. Here you'll find exhibitions including 40 years of photographs of Mumbai by [Soonie Taraporevala](#) (from 4 March) as part of [New North and South](#), a three-year programme of artistic commissions and events to celebrate the shared heritage of South Asia and the North of England covering Manchester, Leeds and Liverpool (full details to be announced soon), and two exciting temporary exhibitions for Manchester International Festival (details to be announced soon), as well as a stunning cafe among the trees. Keep going further down Oxford Road (by bus or taxi), past the (in)famous Curry Mile, and you'll reach Manchester's [Gallery of Costume](#) (Thursday - Sunday, free), where an exhibition of outfits by [Mary Quant](#) (3 November 2016 - 5 November 2017), fashion designer to an international clientele of hip young things in the '60s and '70s.

Don't forget to take in the two universities that populate Oxford Road as you head back towards the city centre; they boast Hogwarts-esque buildings, the [Holden Art Gallery](#) (Monday - Friday, free) and some serious alumni between them.

Your next stop is the [International Anthony Burgess Foundation](#) (Monday - Friday, free), a small arts venue tucked away in an old mill where a season of [events celebrating the centenary](#) of prolific writer, composer and journalist Anthony Burgess is unfolding. A short walk from here is [HOME](#) (daily, free) an arts complex with ambitious cross-arts programming across its two theatres, five cinema screens and 500 square metres of gallery space. From HOME, walk on towards the arterial road of Deansgate where you'll find Manchester landmark the Beetham Tower (71-metres tall, it hums in high winds) and the [John Rylands Library](#) (daily, free), which houses a collection of rare books that spans five millennia in a neo-Gothic building that took nine years to build. Not far from here is the [People's History Museum](#) (daily, free), the national museum of democracy.

Evening plans might include a return to HOME's theatre - or a classical music concert at the stunning [Bridgewater Hall](#) (including Manchester International Festival concert performances to be announced soon). This astonishing venue was built in 1996 for £46m so that, incredibly, all 22,000 tons of it float on nearly three hundred earthquake bearings, or giant springs. Specially designed to allow the perfect amount of cubic space per person the acoustics (and programme) here are incredible.

LIVERPOOL

This waterfront city with UNESCO World Heritage Site status has an international reputation for its music scene, and the bands that began here - but its cultural credentials now include major museums and art galleries, theatres and festivals along streets busy with quirky shops, top notch coffee spots and high quality, independent restaurants.

Event highlights

[British Style Collective presented by The Clothes Show](#). Rebranded and relocated to five key locations in Liverpool's city centre after 27 years in Birmingham, this three-day festival remains a hallmark of fashion, art and culture in the North. *7-9 July, tickets from £27*

[Portraying a Nation](#). Six pencil drawings never before seen in the UK feature in this exhibition, which documents the glamour and misery of the Weimar Republic through the work of painter Otto Dix and photographer August Sander. *23 June - 15 October, tickets from £6*

Day one

Get a feel for Liverpool's maritime past by beginning the day at the city's waterfront - with [Tate Liverpool](#) (daily, free) on Albert Dock your first port of call. Here you can see an exhibition that showcases painter Otto Dix and photographer August Sander's works documenting the Weimar Republic in [Portraying a Nation](#) (23 June - 15 October). Next, stop off at the [Merseyside Maritime Museum](#) (daily, free entry), which charts the city's seafaring history, and the [International Slavery Museum](#) (daily, free entry), which explores Liverpool's role in the slave trade - and is next door. For fans of the Beatles, the [Beatles Story](#) (daily, adult tickets £14.95) on the other side of Albert Dock is a must, while photography enthusiasts should head for [Open Eye Gallery](#) (Tuesday - Sunday, free) next, a short walk away along the waterfront. Nearby is the newly opened [British Music Experience](#) (daily, adult tickets

£16) in the grand Cunard Building, the UK's museum of popular music featuring artefacts pivotal to the UK's musical history.

Head back into the city centre for the afternoon, to take part in the [British Style Collective](#) events (7-9 July) or visit historic arts venue [Bluecoat](#) (daily, free) where Siobhan Davies Dance presents a [performance installation](#) (1-9 July) and group exhibition [Abacus](#) (21 July - 1 October) upturns the conventions of the gallery. Stop at the cafe for lunch, or walk to Liverpool's Ropewalks district; packed with independent shops and food and drink options, this area is also home to [FACT](#) (daily, free), a cinema, gallery and new media arts centre. Not far from here is Liverpool's [Everyman Theatre](#), with productions that make a worthwhile evening's diversion - otherwise, the city's live music scene is one of the most vibrant in the North. Check out the line-up at [Arts Club](#) back in the Ropewalks district and [The Cavern Club](#) (made famous by The Beatles) or, for classical music, [Liverpool Philharmonic Hall and Music Room](#).

Day two

A trip to Liverpool wouldn't be complete without a visit to the city's two cathedrals: the imposing [Anglican Cathedral](#) (daily, free) and the modernist [Metropolitan Cathedral](#) (daily, free) - home to a stunning, newly commissioned art installation [Sevenfold](#) by internationally renowned artist Liz West - are at either end of the aptly-named Hope Street. Walking between the two, you'll pass the [Everyman Theatre](#), which reopened in March 2014 after extensive - and now award-winning - renovation to its stage, restaurant and backstage areas (including a metal façade with 105 Liverpool residents cut into it), a number of good bars and restaurants - including the [Liverpool Philharmonic Dining Rooms](#), an incredibly ornate Art Deco drinking den, not to be confused the [Liverpool Philharmonic Hall and Music Room](#) (home to the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic orchestra) on the same street.

Spend the afternoon exploring the area around Liverpool Lime Street Station: here you'll find the looming, neo-classical grandeur of the Grade I listed [St George's Hall](#) (daily, free), which boasts a striking 25 metre-high barrel vaulted ceiling and an exquisite, original Minton tiled floor made from around 30,000 individual tiles (only occasionally unveiled to the public). Behind the hall is the [Walker Art Gallery](#) (daily, free), an impressive gallery with a collection of paintings, sculpture and decorative art from 13th century to present day alongside temporary exhibitions. Next door is the Grade II-listed [Liverpool Central Library](#) (daily, free) - the largest of the 22 libraries in the city and restored to its full historic glory thanks to a £50m refurbishment - and next door to that, Liverpool's [World Museum](#) (daily, free). For the evening, head to the city's up and coming Baltic Triangle, only a ten minute walk from the city centre: here you'll find the epic feeling [Camp and Furnace](#) bar and event space, mid-19th century pub [The Baltic Fleet](#), and Black Lodge Brewery's [Tap Room](#).



Aug/ Sept Itinerary

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This is a standout year to visit, as Hull unveils its 12 month programme as the UK City of Culture, including an award-winning grassroots music festival and a kaleidoscopic dreamscape where live performance, installation and technology combine. As autumn draws in, Manchester focuses on LGBT+ rights with a major new exhibition and the return of the city's legendary Pride events. Meanwhile, Liverpool presents 50 Summers of Love, a season of events and performances that celebrate the landmark cultural shifts that took place in the UK in 1967, and Leeds welcomes the 50th anniversary of its West Indian Carnival.

All four cities boast boutique and high street shopping, independent bars and restaurants serving a global range of cuisines, quality accommodation and good transport links - with each of the cultural trails here designed to be within walking distance unless otherwise specified.

HULL

The UK City of Culture programme brings a transformative buzz to the home of the formidable poet Philip Larkin (1922-1985), who described Hull - with its ancient harbour, historic Fruitmarket area and coastal feel - as a city of 'sudden elegancies'.

Event Highlights

DreamThinkSpeak - One Day, Maybe - conjures a kaleidoscopic dreamscape where live performance, installation and pioneering technology. 1 Sept - 1 October, ticketed.

Freedom Festival. Established in 2007 to celebrate the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade, the annual Freedom Festival brings international bands, theatre, comedy, performance poetry, fireworks, aerial displays and more to Hull, mostly for free. 1-3 September across Hull City Centre.

Day One

Start at the Ferens Art Gallery (daily, free), close to the railway station. Newly reopened after a major refurbishment, the gallery features a magnificent permanent collection as well as changing exhibitions, such as a selection of incredibly life-like sculptures by artist Ron Mueck (22 April - 13 August). Nearby is Queen Victoria Square, home to the Maritime Museum (daily, free), which tells the story of Hull's role as a port and gateway to Europe through objects including some excellent ship models and a full-sized whale skeleton.

Next, head to the Old Town and revived waterfront area, where plenty of options for lunchtime food and drink are to be found, as well as Wilberforce House (daily, free), museum and birthplace of William Wilberforce, an influential figure in the movement to eradicate the slave trade. On the same street - and good for families - is the interactive Streetlife Museum (daily, free), filled with recreated street scenes (including sounds and smells). For a small diversion, stop by Market Place to see the statue of King William III on horseback - locally known as King Billy - next head to the city centre to explore Freedom Festival. Alternatively, check out the evening programme at Hull Truck Theatre or

make a visit to Kardomah94, a restaurant, bar and exhibition space with an event line-up that includes theatre, film, spoken word nights and gigs.

Day Two

Start your day with a visit to the pop-up Humber Street Gallery (daily, free) in the Fruit Market cultural quarter, a warehouse space filled with exhibitions and gallery takeovers by world-leading artists throughout 2017. In this area - which is currently undergoing £80m of regeneration - you'll also find a microbrewery, bars, clubs and restaurants. Don't miss The City Speaks (2 February - 31 December, free) nearby; designed by Michael Pinsky, this installation relays your words, spoken into a microphone onto the west tower of Hull's tidal surge barrier. Also closeby is the hub of Hull's annual Freedom Festival (1-3 September) at the Stage @The Dock, a buzzing programme of theatre, comedy, performance poetry, fireworks and more.

The afternoon can be spent following a city centre trail of the places frequented by Larkin (keep an eye out for the giant, colourful, artist-decorated Toad sculptures that are a legacy of a public art project in Hull). Close by is the Scale Lane footbridge; go with a picnic, or simply find a sheltered spot to ride the bridge as it opens to let shipping pass. From there, make your way to Frūit, a venue that combines theatre, film, music, comedy, markets, club nights and festivals - making it the ideal place to while away the hours. Further out from the city centre is The Adelphi Club, a popular live music venue that's host to regular gigs.

LEEDS

Along with its reputation for being a shopping hotspot, Leeds - with its Victorian facades, covered arcades and shining waterfront buildings - is also a centre for dance, sculpture, festivals and a vibrant independent food and drink scene. No wonder, then, that the city is making a bid to be European Capital of Culture 2023.

Event highlights

Leeds West Indian Carnival. Celebrating its 50th anniversary, the city's legendary carnival is set to be bigger and better than ever. 25-28 August, free

Carnival Ballet. A contemporary dance celebration of 50 years of Leeds West Indian Carnival, choreographed by Leeds dance company Phoenix Dance and staged at West Yorkshire Playhouse. Dates, tickets TBC [no link]

Day one

The Henry Moore Institute (daily, free), founded by Leeds College of Art graduate and acclaimed sculptor Henry Moore, is a good place to start the day. Discover Ghisa Koenig's thirty-year study of industrial labour and factory workers in *Machines Restrict Their Movement* (25 May - 13 August) and an exhibition of more than 50 works by innovative Japanese sculptor Jirō Takamatsu in *The Temperature of Sculpture* (13 July - 22 October) - as well as the excellent Sculpture Research Library on the first floor. Next door is the Craft Centre and Design Gallery (Tuesday-Saturday, free), beneath Leeds Art Gallery: here you'll find work by over 300 UK designer makers on display, including glass, ceramics, jewellery, textiles and prints - best of all, everything on display is for sale. Although Leeds Art Gallery

itself is currently closed for refurbishment, its Victorian Tiled Hall Cafe (daily, free) is worth a visit - for lunch, or just to admire the stunning barrel-vaulted mosaic ceiling.

From here, walk to Leeds' award-winning Kirkgate Market (Monday - Saturday, free) where you'll find food, drink, fashion, haberdashery, flowers and hardware at one of the largest indoor markets in Europe. It's also worth dropping by the Grade I listed Leeds Corn Exchange (daily, free), where you'll find a wide roster of independent retailers beneath the stunning domed roof. To plan your evening, take a look at the programme at the West Yorkshire Playhouse (Monday - Saturday). Leeds West Indian Carnival will partner with Leeds based Phoenix Dance to stage the world premiere of Carnival Ballet (free, dates to be confirmed soon), a celebration of 50 years carnival through dance, music and carnival costume. Check to see if there are tickets available for the live music, comedy and variety performances that take place at the historic City Varieties Music Hall (Monday - Saturday) six nights a week. To round out the evening, make for Leeds' Belgrave Music Hall and Canteen (Monday - Sunday), a former recreation hall and nursery school that's been transformed into a 200 capacity event space for gigs, comedy, film and exhibitions, complete with two bars, two kitchens and a roof terrace.

Day two

Depending when you visit, you may want to plan day two in the city around Leeds West Indian Carnival's 50th anniversary (25-28 August, free). Otherwise, contemporary art centre The Tetley (daily, free) - complete with bar and kitchen and a short bus or taxi ride from the city centre. Also across the River Aire is The Royal Armouries (Monday - Friday, free), the Leeds branch of the national museum of arms and armour and home to around 8,500 objects in six themed galleries.

Spend the afternoon back in town, exploring Leeds' characterful Victorian Quarter, a beautiful shopping centre resplendent in marble, gilded mosaics, cast iron and the biggest stained glass window in England. Nearby are the Queens and Thorntons Arcades, which are also worth a visit, as well as the newly Michelin-starred restaurant that's causing a stir The Man Behind the Curtain (Tuesday - Saturday, booking essential), plus look out for two newly opened rooftop restaurants in Victoria Gate. Leeds Grand Theatre is a short distance away - alternatively, take a bus or taxi to Hyde Park Picture House (daily), a Grade II listed arthouse cinema with an Edwardian balcony and original gas lights. It's also not far from the Brudenell Social Club - a former working men's club turned live music venue and ideal spot to while away the rest of the evening.

MANCHESTER

International culture, industrial heritage, political thought and medieval history run through Manchester's historic city centre, edgy Northern Quarter, trailblazing university campuses, progressive Gay Village, the lively districts surrounding Deansgate and the cutting-edge surrounds of MediaCityUK.

Event highlights

Pride. Featuring a fiercely decorated parade, Big Weekend of events and candlelit vigil, Manchester's legendary LGBT+ celebration returns. 25-28 August

Never Going Underground: The Fight for LGBT+ Rights. An exhibition and series of events at the People's History Museum charting the development of LGBT+ activism and rights from 1967 to the present day. 25 February - 3 September, free

Day one

Manchester Art Gallery (daily, free) in the city centre is a great introduction to the combined civic pride and cultural ambition of the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution: designed by the architect behind Highclere Castle (or Downton Abbey), it houses 25,000 artefacts across six centuries and contemporary exhibitions by world-leading artists. Also in the city centre will be Manchester's legendary LGBT+ celebration, Pride (25-28 August). On the other side of Piccadilly Gardens is the sprawling Northern Quarter, perhaps Manchester's most characterful district with enough diversions for a morning of exploring, including independent coffee shops, bars, restaurants - and some great spots for vintage clothing bargains. Here you'll find Manchester Craft & Design Centre (studios open Monday - Saturday, free); formerly a Victorian fish and poultry market, it's now home to a café and 18 different studios, where you can buy stunning jewellery, ceramics, prints, knitwear and more direct from the makers. Close by is the Centre for Chinese Contemporary Art (Tuesday - Sunday, free), a small but fascinating gallery that champions cutting-edge Chinese art.

Spend the afternoon in Manchester's medieval quarter, the heart of which is the 600 year-old Manchester Cathedral (daily, free), which hosts a range of events from live gigs to vintage clothing fairs. Circling a pleasant, grassy area behind the Cathedral are Chetham's Library (Monday - Friday, suggested donation £3), the oldest free public reference library in Britain and its newly opened concert hall - Stoller Hall, and the National Football Museum (daily, free), an ideal spot for families - and football fans. Alternatively, take a tram out to MediaCityUK, where the old working docks have been replaced with shining cultural beacons The Lowry (daily, free) - home to contemporary art exhibitions, dance and theatre - the Imperial War Museum North (daily, free), which charts the global history of conflict, and the BBC, including the BBC Philharmonic orchestra. Make your way back into town by tram or bus towards evening: theatre-lovers should head for the Royal Exchange Theatre, while music fans will find a whole roster of venues ready to cater to their needs. Check out the programming at astounding Wesleyan Chapel turned live music venue The Albert Hall, jazz bar Matt & Phreds or legendary venue Band on the Wall.

Day two

The beautifully redesigned Whitworth art gallery (daily, free) is a short bus ride down Oxford Road away from the city centre - and a great place to start the day. Here you'll find exhibitions including 40 years of photographs of Mumbai by Sooni Taraporevala (from 4 March) as part of New North and South, a three-year programme of artistic commissions and events to celebrate the shared heritage of South Asia and the North of England, as well as a stunning cafe among the trees. Keep going further down Oxford Road (by bus or taxi), past the (in)famous Curry Mile, and you'll reach Manchester's Gallery of Costume (Thursday - Sunday, free), where there's an exhibition of outfits by Mary Quant (3 November 2016 - 5 November 2017), fashion designer to an international clientele of hip young things in the '60s and '70s. Don't forget to take in the two universities that populate Oxford Road as you head back towards the city centre; they boast Hogwarts-esque buildings, the Holden Art Gallery (Monday - Friday, free) and some serious alumni between them.

Your next stop is the International Anthony Burgess Foundation (Monday - Friday, free), a small museum tucked away in an old mill where a season of events celebrating the centenary of prolific writer, composer and journalist Anthony Burgess is unfolding. A short walk from here is HOME (daily, free) an arts complex with ambitious cross-arts programming across its two theatres, five cinema

screens and 500 square metres of gallery space. From HOME, walk on towards the arterial road of Deansgate where you'll find Manchester landmark the Beetham Tower (71-metres tall, it hums in high winds) and the John Rylands Library (daily, free), which houses a collection of rare books that spans five millennia in a neo-Gothic building that took nine years to build. Not far from here is the People's History Museum (daily, free), the national museum of democracy: not to be missed is Never Going Underground: The Fight for LGBT+ Rights (25 February - 3 September), a major exhibition marking 50 years of LGBT+ activism.

Evening plans might include a return to HOME's theatre - or a classical music concert at the stunning Bridgewater Hall. This astonishing venue was built in 1996 for £46m so that, incredibly, all 22,000 tons of it float on nearly three hundred earthquake bearings, or giant springs. Specially designed to allow the perfect amount of cubic space per person the acoustics (and programme) here are incredible.

LIVERPOOL

This waterfront city with UNESCO World Heritage Site status has an international reputation for its music scene, and the bands that began here - but its cultural credentials now include major museums and art galleries, theatres and festivals along streets busy with quirky shops, top notch coffee spots and high quality, independent restaurants.

Event highlights

67-17: 50 Summers of Love. A spectacular season of events in honour of 1967, a year of huge cultural shifts in UK, including International Beatles Week and new music festival Folk on the Dock. 23 April - 3 September

Coming Out. A major new exhibition responding to the 50th anniversary of the 1967 Sexual Offences Act - featuring David Hockney, Steve McQueen, LINDER, James Richards and Sarah Lucas. Walker Art Gallery 28 July - 5 November, free

Day one

Get a feel for Liverpool's maritime past by beginning the day at the city's waterfront - with Tate Liverpool (daily, free) on Albert Dock your first port of call. Here you can see an exhibition that showcases painter Otto Dix and photographer August Sander's works documenting the Weimar Republic in Portraying a Nation (23 June - 15 October). Next, stop off at the Merseyside Maritime Museum (daily, free entry), which charts the city's seafaring history, and the International Slavery Museum (daily, free entry), which explores Liverpool's role in the slave trade - and is next door. For fans of the Beatles, the Beatles Story (daily, adult tickets £14.95) on the other side of Albert Dock is a must, while photography enthusiasts should head for Open Eye Gallery (Tuesday - Sunday, free) next, a short walk away along the waterfront. Nearby is the newly opened British Music Experience (daily, adult tickets £16) in the grand Cunard Building, the UK's museum of popular music featuring artefacts pivotal to the UK's musical history.

Head back into the city centre for the afternoon, and to historic arts venue Bluecoat (daily, free) where group exhibition Abacus (21 July - 1 October) upturns the conventions of the gallery. Stop at the cafe for lunch, or walk to Liverpool's Ropewalks district; packed with independent shops and food and drink options, this area is also home to FACT (daily, free), a cinema, gallery and new media arts

centre. Not far from here is Liverpool's Everyman Theatre, with productions that make a worthwhile evening's diversion - otherwise, the city's live music scene is one of the most vibrant in the North. Check out the line-up at Arts Club back in the Ropewalks district and The Cavern Club (made famous by The Beatles) or, for classical music, Liverpool Philharmonic Hall and Music Room.

Day two

A trip to Liverpool wouldn't be complete without a visit to the city's two cathedrals: the imposing Anglican Cathedral (daily, free) and the modernist Metropolitan Cathedral (daily, free) - home to a stunning, newly commissioned art installation *Sevenfold* by internationally renowned artist Liz West - are at either end of the aptly-named Hope Street. Walking between the two, you'll pass the Everyman Theatre, which reopened in March 2014 after extensive - and now award-winning - renovation to its stage, restaurant and backstage areas (including a metal façade with 105 Liverpool residents cut into it), a number of good bars and restaurants - including the Liverpool Philharmonic Dining Rooms, an incredibly ornate Art Deco drinking den, not to be confused the Liverpool Philharmonic Hall and Music Room (home to the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic orchestra) on the same street.

Spend the afternoon exploring the area around Liverpool Lime Street Station: here you'll find the looming, neo-classical grandeur of the Grade I listed St George's Hall (daily, free), which boasts a striking 25 metre-high barrel vaulted ceiling and an exquisite, original Minton tiled floor made from around 30,000 individual tiles (only occasionally unveiled to the public). Behind the hall is the Walker Art Gallery (daily, free), an impressive gallery with a collection of paintings, sculpture and decorative art from 13th century to present day alongside temporary exhibitions - including *Coming Out* (28 July - 5 November) an exhibition of works by high profile artists responding to the 50th anniversary of the 1967 Sexual Offences Act. Next door is the Grade II-listed Liverpool Central Library (daily, free) - the largest of the 22 libraries in the city and restored to its full historic glory thanks to a £50m refurbishment - and next door to that, Liverpool's World Museum (daily, free). For the evening, head to the city's up and coming Baltic Triangle, only a ten minute walk from the city centre: here you'll find the epic feeling Camp and Furnace bar and event space, mid-19th century pub The Baltic Fleet, and Black Lodge Brewery's Tap Room.