



Birmingham, the West Midlands & the Marches

Includes »

Birmingham	502
Warwickshire.....	513
Coventry.....	513
Warwick.....	515
Stratford-upon-Avon....	518
Staffordshire	524
Worcestershire.....	530
Worcester	530
Herefordshire	534
Hereford	535
Shropshire.....	542
Shrewsbury	543
Ironbridge Gorge.....	547
Ludlow	556

Best Places to Eat

- » Grameen Khana (p509)
- » Simpsons (p509)
- » Church Street Townhouse (p523)
- » Drapers Hall (p546)
- » Richard Booth's Bookshop Cafe (p538)

Best Places to Stay

- » Hotel du Vin (p508)
- » Castle House (p536)
- » Silken Strand (p529)
- » Old House Suites (p546)

Why Go?

Few other places in the country come so close to the dream of England. If you are searching for chocolate-box villages of wonky timbered houses and ancient stone churches, or stately homes that look like the last lord of the manor just clip-clopped out of the stables, or the chance to walk in the footsteps of William Shakespeare, you'll find it here.

You'll also find the dust and grime of centuries of industrial history – exemplified by the World Heritage-listed mills of Ironbridge – and tumbling hills where the air is so clean you can taste it. Walkers and cyclists flock to the Marches, the long line of hills that marks out the border between England and Wales, only to vanish into the vastness of the landscape. Then there's the city of Birmingham, an industrial crucible reinvented as cultural melting pot, with the best food and nightlife in the Midlands.

When to Go

Literary buffs take note: Shakespeare takes a back seat to contemporary wordsmiths at Stratford's Literary Festival in April/May, and in May/June bookworms descend on Hay-on-Wye for the annual book festival. If you're up for a belt-loosening, belly-stretching good time, head to Ludlow's famous food and drink festival in September.

On weekends from April to September, shuttle buses provide access to wonderful walking trails on the Long Mynd and the Shropshire Hills.

Birmingham, the West Midlands & the Marches Highlights

- 1 Enjoying England's great contribution to the world of curry in the balti restaurants of **Birmingham** (p509)
- 2 Walking in the footsteps of the Bard in Shakespeare-obsessed **Stratford-upon-Avon** (p518)
- 3 Forging a path across the Shropshire Hills at the Long Mynd and Superstones near **Church Stretton** (p554)
- 4 Gazing out over the bewitching night-time panorama of **Bridgnorth** (p552)
- 5 Leafing through worthy tomes in the eccentric secondhand bookstores of **Hay-on-Wye** (p537)

