



# Birmingham, the Midlands & the Marches

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## Why Go?

If you're searching for quintessential English landscapes – green valleys, chocolate-box villages of wonky black-and-white timbered houses, woodlands steeped in legend such as Nottinghamshire's Sherwood Forest, and stately homes that look like the last lord of the manor just clip-clopped out of the stables – you'll find it here in the country's heart.

You'll also find the relics of centuries of industrial history, exemplified by the World Heritage-listed mills of Ironbridge and the Derwent Valley, and by today's dynamic cities, including Britain's second-largest, Birmingham: a canal-woven industrial crucible reinvented as a cultural melting pot and creative hub, with striking 21st-century architecture and red-hot restaurant, bar and nightlife scenes. Beyond them are tumbling hills where the air is so clean you can taste it. Walkers and cyclists flock to these areas, particularly the Peak District National Park and the Shropshire Hills, to vanish into the vastness of the landscape.

## Best Places to Eat

- ➔ The Cross (p406)
- ➔ Hammer & Pincers (p457)
- ➔ Hercules Revived (p456)
- ➔ Chatsworth Estate Farm Shop Cafe (p474)

## Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ Warwick Castle Accommodation (p405)
- ➔ George Hotel (p449)
- ➔ Brownsover Hall (p411)
- ➔ Hotel Maiyango (p454)

## When to Go

- ➔ February or March (depending when Lent falls) sees the wonderful chaos of Shrovetide football in Ashbourne.
- ➔ Shakespeare takes a back seat to contemporary wordsmiths at Stratford's Literary Festival in April/May.
- ➔ Foodies will want to head to Ludlow's famous Food and Drink Festival in September.
- ➔ From May to September, the Long Mynd and Stiperstones Shuttle runs from the Carding Mill Valley near Church Stretton to the villages atop the Long Mynd heath and moorland plateau in the glorious Shropshire Hills.
- ➔ June to September is the best season for walking and cycling in the Peak District.

# Birmingham, the Midlands & the Marches Highlights

## 1 Library of

### Birmingham (p392)

Surveying the buzzing city of Birmingham from its library's rooftop 'secret garden'.

## 2 Peak District

(p463) Hiking, cycling or driving through England's inaugural national park.

## 3 Woolsthorpe

### Manor (p447)

Contemplating the apple tree that inspired Isaac Newton's theories on gravity at his former home.

## 4 Ironbridge

### Gorge (p424)

Museum-hopping in the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution.

## 5 King Richard

### III: Dynasty, Death

### & Discovery (p451)

Learning about King Richard III's life, death and the extraordinary discovery of his remains in Leicester.

## 6 Stratford-upon-

### Avon (p406)

Visiting the Bard's schoolroom and reimagined town house before catching a Royal Shakespeare Company performance in his Tudor home town.

## 7 Morgan Motor

### Company (p416)

Touring Great Malvern's venerable car factory and taking a car for a spin through the surrounding hills.

## 8 Burghley House

(p448) Wandering the opulent halls and grand gardens of this stately Stamford home.

