



Manchester, Liverpool & Northwest England

Includes »

MANCHESTER.....	531
CHESHIRE	547
Chester	548
LIVERPOOL	552
Speke.....	562
LANCASHIRE.....	562
Blackpool	562
Lancaster	564
Ribble Valley.....	565
ISLE OF MAN.....	566
Douglas.....	568

Why Go?

Music, history and hedonism: three great reasons to venture into England's once-mighty industrial heartland, the cradle of capitalism and the Industrial Revolution. Among the hulking relics of the region's industrial past are two of the most exciting cities in the country, a picture-postcard town dripping with Tudor charm and the most stomach-turning roller coaster we've ever been on. If you fancy a bit of respite from the concrete paw print of humankind, there's some of the most beautiful countryside in England. Oh, and a rich musical tradition that defines your MP3 playlists as much as anywhere else in the world.

The northwest helped define the progress of the last two centuries, but these days it's all about making an imprint on the 21st. A tall order, but the region knows a thing or two about mighty achievements, urban redesign and bloody good music: look and listen for yourself.

Best Places to Eat

- » Lime Tree (p542)
- » Italian Club (p558)
- » Mark Addy (p542)
- » Upstairs at the Grill (p551)
- » Tanroagan (p568)

Best Places to Stay

- » Green Bough (p550)
- » Hard Days Night Hotel (p558)
- » Hope St Hotel (p557)
- » Velvet Hotel (p540)
- » Number One (p563)

When to Go?

Steeplechase lovers should head to the world-famous Aintree Grand National, run just outside Liverpool, on the first weekend of April, while petrol heads should make a beeline to the Isle of Man's TT Festival, held for two weeks in May/June. For fans of the region's most important sport, football (soccer), August/September is a good time to visit as it's the start of the season.

Those with an appreciation of culture shouldn't miss the Manchester International Arts Festival, a biennial show-stopper held in July. To appreciate the area's rich musical past visit Liverpool in the last week of August for madness at Creamfields (dance) and Matthew St Festival, an ode to all things Beatles.

Activities

Although predominantly an urban area, the northwest does have some decent walking and cycling options, most notably in the Ribble Valley in northern Lancashire, home to plenty of good walks including the 70-mile **Ribble Way**. The historic village of Whalley, in the heart of the Ribble Valley, is the meeting point of the two circular routes that make up the 260-mile **Lancashire Cycle Way**.

The Isle of Man has top-notch walking and cycling opportunities. Regional tourism websites contain walking and cycling information, and tourist offices stock free leaflets as well as maps and guides (usually £1 to £5) that cover walking, cycling and other activities.

Information

Discover England's Northwest (www.visitnorthwest.com) is the centralised tourist authority; for the Isle of Man, check out the main **Isle of Man Government** (www.gov.im) site.

Getting Around

The towns and cities covered in this chapter are all within easy reach of each other, and are well linked by public transport. The two main cities, Manchester and Liverpool, are only 34 miles apart and are linked by hourly bus and train services. Chester is 18 miles south of Liverpool, but is also easily accessible from Manchester by train or via the M56. Blackpool is 50 miles to the north of both cities, and is also well connected. Try the following for transport information:

Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Authority (www.gmpte.com) Extensive info on Manchester and its environs.

Merseytravel (www.merseytravel.gov.uk) Taking care of all travel in Merseyside.

National Express (www.nationalexpress.com) Extensive coach services in the northwest; Manchester and Liverpool are major hubs.

MANCHESTER

POP 394,270

'Manchester has everything but a beach.' Former Stone Roses' frontman Ian Brown's description of his native city has become Manchester's unofficial motto – and even accounting for a bit of northern bluster Brown isn't far wrong. The uncrowned capital of the north was the world's first modern city and the birthplace of capitalism; it is where the Industrial Revolution blossomed; where communism and feminism

were given theoretical legs; and where the first computer beeped into life.

Manchester was raised on lofty ambition, so it stands to reason that it likes to plan on an impressive scale. Its world-class museums and heavyweight art galleries – spread across the city centre and west in Salford Quays – are noteworthy, but what makes this city truly special are its distractions of pure pleasure: you can dine, drink and dance yourself into happy oblivion in the swirl of nightlife that once made the city a key stop on the global party tour; from the boho Northern Quarter to the elegant eateries of the southern suburb of Didsbury.

History

Canals and steam-powered cotton mills were what transformed Manchester from a small disease-infested provincial town into a big disease-infested industrial city. It all happened in the 1760s, with the opening of the Bridgewater Canal between Manchester and the coal mines at Worsley in 1763, and with Richard Arkwright patenting his super cotton mill in 1769. Thereafter Manchester and the world would never be the same again. When the canal was extended to Liverpool and the open sea in 1776, Manchester – dubbed 'Cottonopolis' – kicked into high gear and took off on the coal-fuelled, steam-powered gravy train.

There was plenty of gravy to go around, but the good burghers of 19th-century Manchester made sure that the vast majority of the city's swollen citizenry (with a population of 90,000 in 1801, and 100 years later, two million) who produced most of it never got their hands on any of it. Their reward was life in a new kind of urban settlement: the industrial slum. Working conditions were dire, with impossibly long hours, child labour, work-related accidents and fatalities commonplace. Mark Twain commented

WANT MORE?

For in-depth information, reviews and recommendations at your fingertips, head to the Apple App Store to purchase Lonely Planet's *Manchester City Guide* iPhone app.

Alternatively, head to **Lonely Planet** (www.lonelyplanet.com/england/northwest-england/manchester) for planning advice, author recommendations, traveller reviews and insider tips.