



enjoyEngland[®]

There has never been a better time to visit!

www.realnorthengland.ie

WIN
ONE OF THREE
AMAZING
BREAKS!

History, heritage and
beautiful countryside
in Lancashire

Fun for all the
family in Blackpool

Breathtaking scenery
and adventure in
the Lake District

England: offering eu more for eur euro!

As thousands of shoppers who regularly cross the border to shop up North will attest, there has never been a better time to spend sterling, says Manchester native **David Jørgensen**.

Whilst the credit crunch may be hurting, one of the few positive effects for the hard-pressed Irish (and expat) traveller to the UK is that the euro is stronger than it ever has been against the pound, making England one of the best value destinations around.

At the time of writing, one euro was equal to around 90 pence sterling, meaning that prices have been reduced substantially for Irish visitors across the board - food, drink, entertainment and especially accommodation. With excellent fares available for getting to England by both air and sea, the possibilities for a break across the channel are endless.

Ideal for a quick escape from the stresses of work, England has an unrivalled range of destinations and activities to appeal to everyone. From the vibrant cultures of England's cities, to the more traditional image of England's green and pleasant land, an excellent transport network



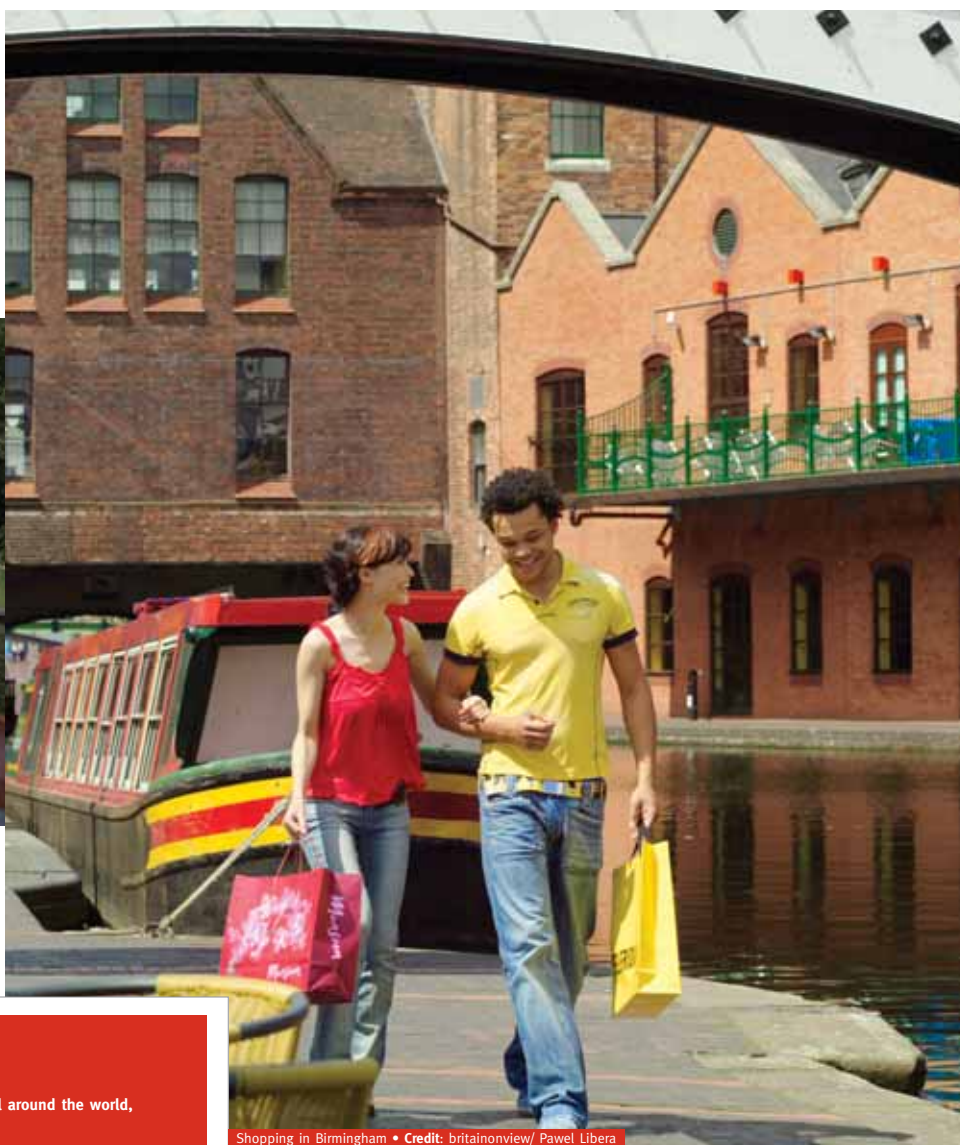
River ride on the Cam, Cambridge • Credit: britainonview/Rod Edwards

combined with direct flights to all the major airports means that everything is on your doorstep. From shopping and the theatre in London's West End, to walking in the Peak District,

enjoying the vibrant nightlife of NewcastleGateshead to surfing in Cornwall, the options for visitors of all ages are endless.

Right on our doorstep, but perhaps not considered a

destination in its own right, England offers the Irish visitor a whole new type of break. A land of real contrasts, there is certainly something for everyone, just a short hop across the water!



Shopping in Birmingham • Credit: britainonview/ Pawel Libera

England with a difference

Thought you knew England? Think again. Continuing a long tradition of eclectic style and custom that has seen its culture exported all around the world, England's cities, north and south, have something to offer the most discerning of visitors.

FOOD AND DRINK

Far from being the home of bad food, England's gourmet culture has undergone a revolution in the last few years. With every imaginable cuisine available at excellent standards, you can easily take a tour of the world on your plate, and still have change for a drink in a traditional pub!

OUR FAVOURITES

• Borough Market, London

Tune to the UKTV Food channel on Sky for the Market Kitchen show to get a flavour of London's venerable Borough Market. Selling the very best of fresh food, and surrounded by excellent cafés and restaurants, this is the highlight of any food-lover's trip to England's capital.

• Chinatown, Manchester

Fabulous Chinese flavours with increasing influences from other Asian countries such as Japan, Thailand, Vietnam and Korea. Eager diners can enjoy the very best of Oriental dishes, and those on a budget can chow down on one of the authentic Chinese buffets that have opened up in this colourful neighbourhood.

• CAMRA's Beer Festivals, across England

The English take their ale so seriously that there's a campaign group that aims to preserve their vastly different brands. CAMRA's work has extended to the support of a variety of different festivals throughout the year across England, where visitors can see how ale is developing, and of course sample the products! A far cry from warm beer in front of the cricket. See www.camra.org.uk for more details.

ROMANCE

Forget Paris! Whilst England may not be the first destination that comes to mind when thinking about where to bring your partner for a romantic getaway, accommodation such as secluded countryside cottages, and stylish boutique hotels, combined with a huge range of special activities and events to share, makes England a fabulous destination for love.

OUR FAVOURITES

• Punting on the Cam, Cambridge

Home of the esteemed university, relaxing on one of

the city's famed punts has long been a tradition for both students and visitors. Get someone else to do the punting for you as you sit back and admire the wonderful views.

• Diwali, Birmingham

A taste of India much closer to home, Birmingham has long been home to a significant Hindu and Sikh population who have made their own mark on the city's culture and vibrant life. The festival of lights in mid November attracts visitors from all backgrounds to enjoy the amazing lights, fireworks, live music, dancing and sweet treats.

• Wine time, Gloucestershire

English wine? It does indeed exist, grown on estates mainly in the south of England, and gaining in popularity and standards with those in the know. Vineyards such as The Three Choirs offer guided tours, accommodation, and the obligatory tasting of its vintages.

MUSIC

England hardly needs any introduction as a home of global music. With some of the most famous bands in the world hailing from its cities and towns, each place has its own unique musical history and future, yet to be discovered.

OUR FAVOURITES

• Beatlemania, Liverpool

Familiar to many an Irish visitor, what many still regard as 'Ireland's second city' has undergone a massive transformation, partly as a result of being the 2008 European Capital of Culture. Uncover the legacy of the Fab Four all over the city, before paying a visit to the Cavern Club itself on Mathew Street.

• Concerts all over England

The beneficial exchange rate means that it could actually be more cost-effective to travel to England to see your favourite stars perform. With venues in Manchester, Birmingham, Newcastle and London all providing spectacular arena settings, a break combined with performances from the world's best stars is a must.

• Choral heaven, Oxford and Cambridge

The success of The Tudors (actually filmed in Ireland) has brought England's brutal, but fascinating past back into present. Part of this is its rich choral tradition that provided the aural backdrop to coronations and other ceremonies. Part of our own tradition too, the music can still be heard, performed by the prestigious choirs such as that of King's College in Cambridge.

ADDICTED TO ADRENALINE

Thrill-seekers will always find something to get the blood pumping in England. A huge variety of stomach-churning activities is on offer for those who like their breaks to go faster than usual!

OUR FAVOURITES

• Abseiling in the South West

Devon and Cornwall are home to some of England's most spectacular scenery. Make the journey south for an abundance of activities such as abseiling, caving, canyoning (jumping down waterfalls!) and rock climbing - all supervised to the highest safety standards.

• Zorbing, across England

Zorbing, for those not familiar, is the equivalent of being a hamster in an exercise ball, being thrown down a hill. Not for everyone, admittedly, those who practise this strangest of pastimes love the thrill they get from being rolled down a steep hill whilst strapped inside a plastic ball - sometimes with water thrown in for good measure. Available across England for those who dare!

• Going ape!

Not just for the kids, high-wire forest adventure is a unique way to spend the day with friends. An adventure course with swings, slides and rope bridges, all set high in the trees, Go Ape centres across England offer a fun challenge in the safest of environments.

For more information on these activities, and a guide to the thousands more ideas that can make your break in England special, visit www.enjoyengland.ie



Paragliding from Mam Tor in the Peak District • Credit: britainonview/ McCormick-McAdam

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The Big One, Pleasure Beach • Credit: britainonview/Adrian Houston



For inspirational ideas and great value breaks, go to www.realnorthernengland.ie



Events

Out2Dance

(May 22nd-25th)
Blackpool's newest festival brings dance outside. There will be a number of free shows and workshops for all ages located around the town and with a range of styles from ballroom to roller disco, from salsa to ice dancing, and free online lessons at www.out2dance.co.uk, it's time to put on your dancing shoes and find the stage that's right for you!

World Firework Championships

(Sept 6th, 11th, 18th, 25th, Oct 2nd)
Top firework companies from around the globe will be invited to stage pyrotechnical displays, bringing an international flavour to Central Promenade. www.visitblackpool.com

Blackpool Illuminations & the Festival of Light

(Sept 4th-Nov 8th)
Blackpool's annual Illuminations have been a major part of Blackpool since 1879 when they were described as 'Artificial Sunshine'. The brightest night of all is the Big Switch On, when thousands of people gather to witness the first illuminating night of the season. www.visitblackpool.com

Beach Volleyball

(September 2009)
Blackpool will host the CEV European Championship Tour English Masters Beach Volleyball event in September 2009. See top European beach volleyball! www.visitblackpool.com

Family fun for everyone!

Fun and games by the sea and accessibility to other areas in the UK has made Blackpool a firm favourite with Irish visitors for many years. There has never been a better time to visit Blackpool, so **Collette Devlin** caught a very short flight from Dublin (with Aer Arann) to Blackpool International airport for a weekend break in the city by the sea.

According to Camelot (organisers of the UK Lotto), more multi-million-pound lottery winners choose Blackpool as their favourite place over any other British destination. And with everything Blackpool has to offer, it's easy to see why. But don't worry, you don't need to be a lottery winner to visit Blackpool; this resort has been accessible to families from all backgrounds for decades - you only have to ask your granny to get an idea of how long!

Attractions

Blackpool is brimming with family attractions and guarantees a great holiday for all with everything from white-knuckle rides to sedate horse-drawn carriage rides along the promenade. The Golden Mile, where the world-famous Blackpool Tower dominates the skyline, is at the heart of this seaside resort. The tower offers five floors of fun and entertainment that includes a grand ballroom and a tower circus.

No family trip to Blackpool is complete without a trip to the iconic Pleasure Beach (www.blackpoolpleasurebeach.com). This has been the number one destination for generations of families

from the UK and Ireland, who flocked to Blackpool each year to enjoy the multitude of steel and wooden coasters. If you're not a rollercoaster buff then there are plenty of other family rides and activities to choose from as well shows to catch and an ice skating rink where you can learn to skate all year round. If you buy your ticket in advance online you will save £5 off the cost of entry. Now that is value!

Blackpool is brimming with family attractions and guarantees a great holiday for all.

The Sandcastle Waterpark is the largest waterpark in the UK and a great place for family fun. I had a splashing time in the 84-degree tropical climate, braving the 18 slides and attractions - the exhilarating Masterblaster and the relaxing Ushi Gushi Action River were my two favourites. Check out www.sandcastle-waterpark.co.uk.

As an animal lover, I found the award-winning Blackpool Zoo one of the highlights of my trip. I spent hours just watching the lions, gorillas and elephants. I also got up close to a baby giraffe, the latest arrival at the zoo, and came face to face with monkeys in a walk-through forest. Set in 32 acres of maturing parkland this zoo is home to 1,500 beautiful, rare and exotic animals from all around the world and is definitely worth the visit! www.blackpoolzoo.org.uk

I had a fun afternoon at Blackpool's award-winning attraction the Blackpool Model Village and Gardens. The village of handcrafted models and figures and the gardens are set into a stunningly beautiful landscaped 2 1/2 acres of carefully tended gardens with pathways that provide full access for all visitors. This Victorian designed park has been recognised as a Grade II* listing of historical importance.

One of the UK's best-known aquariums, the Blackpool Sea Life Centre, houses Europe's most comprehensive collection of tropical sharks. It also features literally dozens of displays of all conceivable shapes and sizes, showcasing native and tropical marine life, plus a superb Amazon exhibition, complete with piranhas and poison dart frogs. Don't miss its latest attraction, Suckers, which is dedicated to octopuses and their relatives. The brand new feature Scary Monsters brings together some of the scariest-looking creatures of the deep.



Sandcastle Waterpark

Did you know? Blackpool Illuminations comprises an amazing one million lamps in various types and styles and costs £2.4 million to stage.

It takes seven years to paint Blackpool Tower from top to bottom and the tower's lifts travel 3,500 miles every year.

Accommodation

There are so many places to stay in Blackpool that accommodation is never a problem. The great news is that more options have been developed, specifically designed to offer family luxury. The Big Blue Hotel is a 4 star family boutique hotel that has won numerous awards. It is a contemporary haven of luxury for families and kids alike. While mam and dad relax after a long day of sightseeing with an episode of Corrie, the kids can relax in specially

designed bunk beds with their own kids' TVs!

If you're more of a self-catering family but still prefer luxury, then the 5

star Beach House is the perfect holiday location for your family. If you're on your own, like I was, or on a business trip, then I would recommend the luxurious Herons' Reach hotel, which is perfectly situated right next door to the zoo and only 15 minutes from the airport. Everything I could have possibly needed was here: a spa, gym, pool, bar, restaurant. If you are a golf fan then this is definitely the place for you because it has its very own golf course, designed by Ryder Cup players, right in the hotel's backyard.

Eating out

Blackpool has a huge range of places to tempt your taste buds, from small and friendly coffee shops to award-winning restaurants. Wherever you choose you will find a warm welcome and quality local produce cooked to your personal requirements. Blues Bar & Brasserie, Seniors Fish Experience, and Jali Fine Indian Dining all come highly recommended. I also recommend Kwizeen, the Taste Lancashire (Lancashire and

Great value breaks

Stena Line Blackpool hotel breaks from €70 half board per adult per night. Minimum 2 night stay with 2 adults sharing and includes travel with a car on the Stena Superferry. Up to 2 children sharing a family room travel and stay for FREE, however they must pay a small supplement for their meals. www.stenaline.ie/hotels



Stena Line self-catering family breaks from €255 at Marton Mere, near Blackpool. Prices are per family - 2 adults and up to 4 children - for 3 nights and include return travel with a car on the Stena Superferry. Weekend and fastcraft supplements apply. www.stenaline.ie/selfcatering

Blackpool Tourist Board) Award winner and AA Rosette winner.

Entertainment

Blackpool has plenty to offer you when the sun sets over the Irish Sea. From pool bars to wine bars, from fun pubs to stylish clubs, you can find the perfect

place to relax and enjoy an evening with friends or celebrate that special night and party until the sun comes up. Why not have a night out at the Grand Theatre or go see a spectacular show. For more information on visiting Blackpool log on to www.visitblackpool.com

Number One South Beach



Accommodation

Number One South Beach - 5 star

Fabulous boutique accommodation with breathtaking views of the sea. www.numberonesouthbeach.com

Number One St Lukes - 5 star B&B

The perfect place for a hassle-free stay; an intriguing, affordable option. www.numberoneblackpool.com

Four Seasons - 4 star Silver Award

One of Blackpool's best-kept secrets - a small but very high quality hotel. www.fourseasonsblackpool.co.uk

Burbridge Holiday Lodge & Queens Mansions

- 3 to 5 star self-catering
Superior well-appointed apartments, many with fine sea views. www.burbridgeholidaygroup.co.uk

The Waterford - 4 star Gold Award guest accommodation

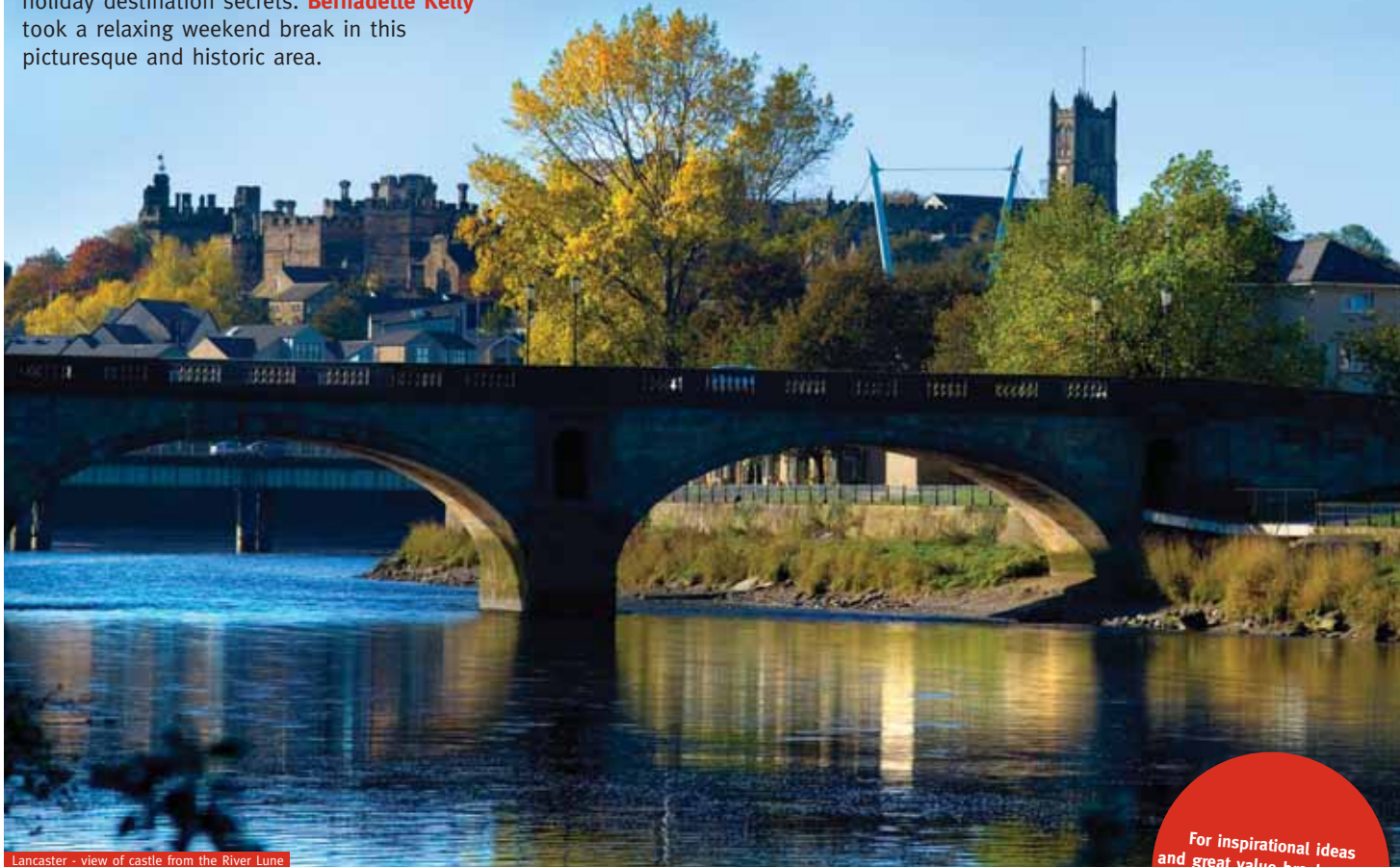
Tastefully designed hotel providing a friendly and relaxing atmosphere. www.thewaterfordblackpool.co.uk

Aer Arann flies from Dublin to Blackpool 7 days a week from only €29 one way including taxes and has no baggage charges, no check-in fees and only 30 minutes check-in. For great deals check out www.aerarann.com



Explore Lancaster and Morecambe

Lancashire is one of England's greatest holiday destination secrets. **Bernadette Kelly** took a relaxing weekend break in this picturesque and historic area.



Lancaster - view of castle from the River Lune

Whether you're planning a weekend break, a romantic getaway or a family holiday, the Red Rose County has so much to offer. The rural beauty of Lancashire really is astounding; the fells and rolling valleys are dotted with charming communities and of course there is the historic city of Lancaster.

I spent my first day in the small city of Lancaster, which is surrounded by

historic buildings - I felt like I had been transported back in time. Lancaster Castle, situated on a city-centre hilltop, was a definite highlight for me. The castle, which dates from 1093, is one of the best-preserved in England and still functions as a prison and court house, and is where the famous Lancashire witches were tried. Owned by the Duke of Lancaster, who is also Her Majesty the Queen, it

consists of an extensive group of historic structures and is a Grade One Listed Building. I took a tour of this historic structure, gaining an insight into what it was like for prisoners (that included petty thieves, slaves and witches) throughout the ages and learning about the present day prisoners and courts. Our guide put on a theatrical performance throughout, making the visit all the more enjoyable. A virtual tour is also available on www.lancastercastle.com.

Only ten minutes from Lancaster, I stayed at the 4 star Midland Hotel in Morecambe. This lovingly restored, historic hotel is a gem on the North West coast. The Art Deco-inspired interior is simply divine and adds a lot of character to the building. My room was one of 44 modern boutique-style rooms that look right onto the beach. Stunning sea views and a delicious menu in the restaurant also made dining a delight. After dinner I indulged in cocktails in the stylish Rotunda bar before retiring to the most comfortable bed I have ever lain my head on. www.midlandmorecambe.co.uk

An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

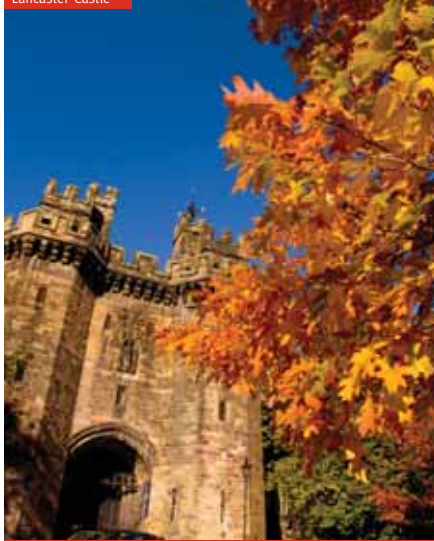
With such beautiful surroundings it's easy to see why Lancashire has provided many poets and painters with inspiration. It is thought that parts of JRR Tolkien's Lord of the Rings was inspired by the Ribbles Valley countryside. Lancashire has two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty: the Forest of Bowland and Arnsdale and Silverdale. Bowland provides some of the most remote rugged walking and cycling areas in the North West, while Arnsdale and Silverdale spans the boundary between Lancashire and Cumbria, offering views of the beautiful Morecambe Bay.

I thoroughly enjoyed my

“The rural beauty of Lancashire really is astounding; the fells and rolling valleys are dotted with charming communities and of course there is the historic city of Lancaster.”

For inspirational ideas and great value breaks, go to www.realnortnernengland.ie

Lancaster Castle



Attractions

There is plenty to do in Lancashire – here are a few ideas

Williamson Park and Ashton Memorial

www.williamsonpark.com
The impressive Ashton Memorial folly dominates the park and can be clearly seen from miles around; there's also an outdoor theatre in the summer.

Lancaster Canal Cruises

www.budgettransport.co.uk
Offers perfect cruises whether you're relaxing or partying. Themed evening cruises include a Fish & Chip Quiz Cruise and the Lancashire Hot Pot Cruise.

Morecambe Bay

www.tern.org.uk
See the Eric Morecambe Statue and the award-winning TERN Art Project – a collection of unique artworks along the promenade.

Carnforth Station & Visitor Centre

www.carnforthstation.co.uk
Visit the museum and then have a cuppa in the teashop. The station is also where David Lean filmed his romantic classic Brief Encounter in 1945.

Lunesdale Studio Trail

www.lunesdalearts.co.uk
A fascinating trail of art galleries and studios in the Lune Valley area that takes place in June each year.

RSPB Leighton Moss Nature Reserve

www.rspb.org.uk
The largest reedbed in the North West of England, and home to some really special birds such as breeding bitterns, bearded tits and marsh harriers.

time in Beacon Fell Country Park, one of the oldest in the UK, consisting of 110 hectares. I spent my second morning here, learning about the Lancashire countryside and the Forest of Bowland, and took a leisurely afternoon stroll. What's wonderful about this park, is that visitors of all abilities can enjoy the beauty. Two electric Trampler buggies are available for less mobile individuals who wish to get around the hills and they are free to use. The summit offers spectacular views of the Forest of Bowland and Morecambe Bay and on a clear day it is even possible to see the Isle of Man.

For further information on these Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty check out www.visitlancashire.com

Lancashire Landscapes – walk, cycle and explore

Lancashire is the perfect

cycling country – with such varied terrain, so many special cycle routes and beautiful scenery, getting lost would be a pleasure. My afternoon cycle heightened my appreciation of the sheer beauty of this area.

I recommend taking a cycle through the Forest of Bowland or heading to Gisburn Forest for Mountain Biking. Cycle hire is available from Cycle Bowland and Cycle Adventure, who will deliver hire bikes to various locations, provide helmets and routes and give advice.

After an exhausting trip, take a well-earned rest in The Priory Inn, in Scorton, which has long been a destination and rest stop for cyclists and walkers from all over the North West. The Priory's comprehensive menu can refuel even the most leg-weary pedlar. It certainly helped me get to the next stage of my journey. Whatever the weather, early or late in the day, the cyclist can always find rest and refreshment here. This family-run establishment welcomed me like a member of their family, even though my shoes and clothes were muddy. For more details check out www.theprioryscorton.co.uk

Taste Lancashire

Discover the diversity of Lancashire's food and drink on a visit to this scenic county, which is often frequented by foodies, who dine in Michelin-starred restaurants and in local pubs that offer gastro delights.

Hire a Hertz

Hire a Hertz vehicle at Blackpool International airport from as little as €28* per day including unlimited mileage, collision damage waiver, theft protection, location service charge and all taxes. Rate is based on a 7 day rental on a Ford Fiesta size vehicle during the month of April. Check out www.hertz.ie for more great rates!



* Rate correct at time of going to press.



The Midland Hotel, Morecambe

Accommodation

Finding quality accommodation is never a problem, whether you are after a luxurious hotel, a comfy bed and breakfast or a country cottage.

The Midland Hotel www.midlandmorecambe.co.uk

An Art Deco-inspired tour de force with 44 modern boutique-style rooms and a stunning sea-view restaurant.

The Ashton www.theashtonlancaster.com

5 star Gold Award guest accommodation with everything you'd expect from such a standard and more – seriously comfortable.

Penny Street Bridge www.pennystreetbridge.co.uk

4 star Silver Award guest accommodation offering a contemporary blend of bar, food and 28 stylish rooms.

Patty's Farm Barn www.pattysfarm.co.uk

4 star quality accommodation on the rural outskirts of Lancaster; a collection of restored self-catering apartments finished to the highest standard. Free cycle hire and fishing available to guests. Cycle on the coastal route to Morecambe or into Lancaster.

Shepherds Barn www.longtonsheepdogs.com

Dog-friendly 5 star self-catering accommodation on the farm of the internationally-acclaimed sheepdog handler Thomas Longton. Sheepdog training workshops available.

Check out www.visitlancashire.com for further information on the Lancashire area.



The Forest of Bowland – An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



Great value breaks

Great value Lancashire hotel breaks from €69 per adult per night. Minimum 2 night stay with 2 adults sharing and includes travel with a car on the Stena Superferry. Up to 2 children sharing a family room travel and stay for FREE. www.stenaline.ie/hotels



Stena Line self-catering family breaks from €245 at Cala Gran, near Blackpool. Prices are per family – 2 adults and up to 4 children – for 3 nights and include return travel with a car on the Stena Superferry. Weekend and fastcraft supplements apply. www.stenaline.ie/selfcatering

The Lake District – Lake Windermere. • Credit: britainonview/ Rod Edwards



The Lake District – Wastwater, voted Britain's favourite view. • Credit: britainonview



Activities

There is plenty to do in the Lake District – here are a few ideas

Whinlatter Forest Park Cycling

www.forestry.gov.uk

The new Altura Mountain Bike Trail is 19 kilometres and the longest in the Lake District!

Go Ape!

www.goape.co.uk

Tree-top adventure and thrills! Their highest course rises to 790m above sea level.

Honister Slate Mine

www.honister.com

Home to England's only remaining working slate mine and first ever Via Ferrata, now with a terrifying aerial zip slide from one cliff face to another.

Walks and climbs

England's highest mountains

Blencathra, Helvellyn and Skiddaw all on the Lake District's doorstep.

Walla Crag

Great views of Derwentwater and over to Grisedale and Causey Pikes.

Catbells

A relatively easy uphill walk for stupendous views over the lake.

Latrigg

Fine views over Keswick from the top

For inspirational ideas and great value breaks, go to www.realnorthernengland.ie

Fall in love with the Lake District

The Lake District is the UK's adventure capital and was voted the UK's Top Holiday Destination at the British Travel Awards in 2008 – as **Collette Devlin** discovers it's the perfect location for a long weekend away.

Until the 1780s very little was known about the Lake District. Early travellers regarded it as 'barren, wild and of no use to man or beast' and 'melancholy to behold'. In the early 19th century, writers Thomas Gray, William Wordsworth and William Gilpin began to write 'Guide Books' to the Lakes and the first real tourists began to arrive. Now travellers come from all over the world to hike the hills, sail the

lakes and take in the gorgeous scenery. Less than an hour's drive from my arrival point at Blackpool International airport, the village of Windermere, where I was taking a lake cruise, was breathtaking. Even the journey to the lakes from the airport was amazing; the sun was shining on the rolling green hills, open waterways and historic buildings. Windermere is England's largest lake, in the heart of

the Lake District. I had the choice of cruises with Windermere Lake Cruises (www.windermere-lake-cruises.co.uk), lasting from 45 minutes to 3 hours, or I could spend all day on and around the lake with a 'Freedom of the Lake' ticket. Even before I left dry land I was having the perfect day out, happily playing with the tame swans and admiring the views in the distance. No matter where you start your cruise - Bowness, Ambleside or Lakeside - the spectacular voyage gives visitors magnificent views of mountain scenery, secluded bays and the many wooded islands. Bowness is the 'heart' of the Lake District, a holiday village with every sort of shop you can imagine, cafes and restaurants, and just a five minute walk from the pier is The World of Beatrix Potter Attraction, which I thoroughly enjoyed (www.hop-skip-jump.com). Ambleside is set amongst breathtaking majestic mountains and gentle rolling fells, this distinctive and very attractive Lakeland village is always a popular point to leave the vessel, as I did, before returning on a later boat. Lakeside, at the most southern point of the lake, is home to the Lakeside and Haverthwaite Railway (www.lakesiderailway.co.uk). Connecting with the large Windermere Lake Cruises steamers, the railway is on the opposite side to the jetty and takes you by the river scenery of the beautiful Leven Valley. Also at Lakeside is the award-winning freshwater Lakes Aquarium (www.lake-aquarium.co.uk). The aquarium features over 30 fascinating displays and has a large collection of freshwater fish, as well as mischievous otters and diving ducks. After a picture perfect day I headed back to my accommodation on the shores of Lake Windermere near Ambleside.



The Lake District – Martindale. • Credit: britainonview/ Rod Edwards

Accommodation & food

The Lake District has so much beautiful accommodation

Here are a few of our recommended places to stay.

The Cottage in the Wood

www.thecottageinthewood.co.uk

A former coaching inn situated in one of the most scenic and dramatic areas of the Lake District.

Overwater Hall

www.overwaterhall.co.uk

Elegant 3 star 18th-century country house, tucked away in the unspoilt beauty of the northern Lake District.

Brackenrigg

www.brackenrigg.com

Homely 4 star self-catering cottages with terrific views of Helvellyn and Blencathra.

Food in the Lake District is amazing!

Nothing beats a delicious warm meal after a day of hiking and walking. Here are a few of our recommended eateries.

Morrels Restaurant – www.morrels.co.uk

www.brysonsofkeswick.co.uk

www.simplygoodtaste.co.uk

www.lakedistrictinns.co.uk

The Waterhead Hotel (www.elh.co.uk) was a haven of absolute luxury to feast and lay my head after my jam-packed day. This 4 star town house hotel is part of the award-winning English Lakes Hotels group of five individually-styled hotels. Dinner in the contemporary surroundings of the Bay Restaurant in the hotel was by far the most mouth-watering meal I have had in

a long time. Uncomplicated modern European cuisines were presented so beautifully that I didn't want to disturb them. However, anticipation got the better of me, much to the delight of my taste buds. Indeed, the Waterhead hotel is the ultimate in stylish sophistication with every detail designed to offer a relaxed, intimate atmosphere with wonderful views and delightful dishes.

The next morning I literally took to the hills, rambling around Loughrigg Terrace and Grasmer with guides, Pete Jackson and John Nicholls who run Knobbly Stick, a walking and hiking company. I had a wonderful morning with these two characters, who made great companions and taught me about the surrounding area as I walked. The spectacular view really made the early start worth while. (www.knobblystick.com) Grasmer is a charming village right in the heart of the Lake District National Park. This was once the home of the famous poet William Wordsworth and where he was laid to rest in the churchyard of St. Oswald's. I went to visit two of his former homes - Dove Cottage and Rydal Mount (www.words-worth.org.uk and www.rydal-mount.co.uk) and also sampled some of the local gingerbread!

Natural environment

Your almost constant companions during your walking will be sheep. The sheep perform a valuable service in keeping the countryside as it is - without their constant munching, it would revert to less attractive scrubland.

You may see red deer in any part of the Lakes, but they are shy, and make themselves scarce when humans are about and blend in well with the colours of the hillside. The other Lake District curiosity is the red squirrel, which is under threat from the grey

squirrel. You will see many birds in the Lakes including England's only pair of breeding ospreys which return to Bassenthwaite Lake every Spring (from April) to rear their chicks. Check out Osprey Watch - www.ospreywatch.co.uk where you can view them by video camera at the Whinlatter visitor centre.

Areas of interest

Borrowdale is arguably one of the Lake District's finest valleys, running south of Keswick and ending at the hills around Scafell Pike, England's highest mountain at 3210 feet. Ullswater has long been a

source of inspiration for poets. Wordsworth's famous daffodils were on the shore and Sir Walter Scott also wrote about the lake. Conistone is also a beautiful stretch of water where Donald Campbell broke the world water speed record in Bluebird on 23 July 1955, when he reached a speed of over 215mph.

The Coast-to-Coast Walk was the brainchild of Alfred Wainwright, the well-known writer and hill-walker. It crosses three National Parks, and passes through some of England's finest scenery.

For more information check out: www.golakes.co.uk



The Lake District – Windermere Lake Cruises. • Credit: Windermere Lake Cruises.

Additional things to do and places to visit

Keswick Launch

www.keswick-launch.co.uk

Fun lake cruises around Derwentwater, the setting for some of Beatrix Potter's famous books.

Castlerigg Stone Circle

A mysterious ring of 38 stones, which are thought to be more than 3,500 years old.

Theatre by the Lake

www.theatrebythelake.com

A year-round professional theatre with an impressive summer programme in particular; the building is designed to complement the beautiful landscape.

Keswick Brewing Co

www.keswickbrewery.co.uk

A newly opened family-run brewery set up with quality and environmental issues at its heart. Tours and samples of beers are available!

Great value breaks

Great value Lake District hotel breaks from €105 per adult per night. Based on a minimum stay of 2 nights and 2 adults sharing and includes travel with a car on the Stena Superferry. Up to 2 children sharing a family room travel and stay for FREE. www.stenaline.ie/hotels



Self-catering family breaks from €259 at Lakeland Holiday Park. Prices are per family – 2 adults and up to 4 children, for 3 nights and include return travel with a car on the Stena Superferry. Weekend and fastcraft supplements apply. www.stenaline.ie/selfcatering

Lakeside Hotel – A Treasure in the Lake District

Lakeside Hotel is situated on the southern shores of Lake Windermere in the English Lake District. Spacious, richly decorated and sumptuously furnished throughout, Lakeside retains the warm and welcoming atmosphere of its 17th century coaching inn origins, with oak panelling, real fires and grand floral displays. Snug lounges and traditional bars provide a relaxing retreat, while the conservatory looks out over landscaped gardens that lead down to Lake Windermere.

As the Lake District has become one of the most popular destinations in the UK for both tourist and business users alike, with the development of tourism and improved travel networks, Lakeside Hotel has changed accordingly.

In the 1900s the hotel was used as a staging post and resting place for travellers working in the thriving cotton trade of Lancashire and Yorkshire; guests stayed here en route to local businesses such as the bobbin mills in the area. Over the years, the luxury hotel has continued to

develop to meet the needs and wants of guests, aiming to exceed their expectations at every turn. Lakeside is recognised as one of the best 4 star hotels on the shores of Lake Windermere – and they aim to be a bigger attraction than the Lake District itself!

Surrounding the hotel is an archetypal Lake District countryside of fells, forests and crystal clear streams – nothing comes close to Lakeside, except the Lake!

As soon as you step inside you feel at home. The service reflects the pleasure the staff take in entertaining customers – ever-smiling, attentive and helpful. Lakeside is an escape from the everyday, where life takes on a sense of ease, comfort and luxury. You can relax on the terrace, gazing across the lake; unwind amongst the gardens or in the cosy lounges or light-filled conservatory.

A delicious choice of dining experiences are on offer, to cater for all tastes – sometimes you want a grand affair, on other occasions a simple appetising snack will suffice. The 2 AA Rosette Lakeview Restaurant is arguably one of the best restaurants in the Lake District, serving classic and Cumbrian dishes, using the finest local produce, fresh from Lakeland farms, lakes and estates.

The Brasserie offers a contemporary dining experience, with chic décor and a light, bright choice of food. Ruskin's Bar is perfect for a quick snack, scrummy



sandwich or healthy salad. Families are always welcome in Ruskin's.

Refreshments and light meals are served throughout the day in the conservatory and on the terrace, where you can enjoy a bite to eat whilst drinking in the amazing Lake District view.

Lakeside's richly appointed bedrooms and generously proportioned suites are sanctuaries of peace and privacy – each one individually

designed using rich Designers Guild fabrics and wall coverings. Many of them have stunning views overlooking the quiet waters of Lake Windermere and the spectacular fells of the Lake District beyond, and boast luxurious hotel accommodation features such as fabulous four-poster beds, idyllic sunken baths and sparkling Jacuzzis.

The hotel's exclusive Health & Leisure Spa intro-

duces a new dimension in luxury and tranquility. Facilities are state-of-the-art: a 17-metre pool incorporating a shallow, "beach-style" family area and etched glass panels of the surrounding scenery; a steam room and traditional sauna; poolside Jacuzzi; gymnasium; and three wonderful spa treatment rooms with a private relaxation area.

Lakeside's Lake District short breaks are the perfect way to escape the everyday for a weekend and recharge your batteries. You can book throughout the year, so you can organise a special treat at the drop of a hat or arrange a surprise Lake District break in advance. You can opt for a midweek or weekend break and enjoy two or three days of sheer luxury and total relaxation.

www.lakesidehotel.co.uk
www.lakedistrictconferences.co.uk
Tel: +44 15395 30001

Tourism Award winners for Lancashire and Blackpool 2008

BED AND BREAKFAST OF THE YEAR
Number One South Beach, Blackpool
www.numberonesouthbeach.com

SMALL HOTEL OF THE YEAR
The Shireburn Arms Hotel, Hurst Green
www.shireburnarmshotel.com

LARGE HOTEL OF THE YEAR
Big Blue Hotel, Blackpool
www.bigbluehotel.com

SELF CATERING HOLIDAY OF THE YEAR
The Beach House, Blackpool
www.thebeachhouseblackpool.co.uk

CARAVAN HOLIDAY PARK OF THE YEAR
Newton Hall Holiday Park, Blackpool
www.newtonhall.net

Tourism Award winners for the Lake District 2008

BED AND BREAKFAST OF THE YEAR
Augill Castle, Nr Kirkby Stephen
www.stayinacastle.com

SMALL HOTEL OF THE YEAR
Appleby Manor Country House Hotel, Appleby
www.applebymanor.co.uk

LARGE HOTEL OF THE YEAR
The Old England Hotel, Windermere
www.macdonaldhotels.co.uk/oldengland

SELF CATERING HOLIDAY OF THE YEAR
The Lodge, Brampton
www.the-lodge-holiday-cottages-cumbria.co.uk

CARAVAN HOLIDAY PARK OF THE YEAR
Park Cliffe Camping and Caravan Estate, Windermere
www.parkcliffe.co.uk

Win one of three amazing breaks!

Enjoy England and England's North Country are giving you the chance to win one of three amazing breaks! Each break includes return flights with Aer Arann. Simply fill in your details below, choose your preferred prize break and we'll enter you into our draw.



enjoyEngland®



1 | Lancaster city break



Enjoy a two-night break for two people staying at the 4 star Lancaster House Hotel. Savour the good things in life in this elegant country-style hotel and explore the historic city of Lancaster.

The prize includes

- Two nights B&B for two people at the Lancaster House Hotel www.elh.co.uk
- Dinner at the Lancaster House Hotel Foodworks Restaurant www.elh.co.uk
- Dinner at a Mitchells pub/restaurant www.mitchellsolancaster.co.uk
- Tickets to see a production at Dukes Theatre www.dukes-lancaster.org
- Tickets for Lancaster Castle www.lancastercastle.com
- Two return flights with Aer Arann www.aerarann.com

2 | Blackpool family break



Get ready for an action-packed family break in Blackpool. Stay at the Best Western Carlton, just minutes away from the Golden Mile and with panoramic views of 12 miles of sandy beaches.

The prize includes

- Two nights B&B for a family of four at the Best Western Carlton www.carltonhotelblackpool.co.uk
- Family of four tickets to Blackpool Zoo www.blackpoolzoo.org.uk, Blackpool SEA LIFE centre www.sealifeeurope.com, Sandcastle Waterpark www.sandcastle-waterpark.co.uk
- Ride wristbands for Pleasure Beach Blackpool www.blackpoolpleasurebeach.com
- Four return flights with Aer Arann www.aerarann.com

3 | Lake District break



Enjoy a two-night break for two people at the stunning 4 star Lakeside Hotel situated on the shores of Lake Windermere. Spacious and sumptuously furnished, Lakeside retains the welcoming atmosphere of its 17th century coaching inn origins.

The prize includes

- A lake view double room at the Lakeside Hotel for two people sharing on a B&B basis for two nights www.lakesidehotel.co.uk
- Complimentary 45 minute spa treatment in Lakeside Hotel's luxurious Health and Leisure Spa www.lakesidehotel.co.uk
- Two Freedom of the Lake passes for Windermere Lake Cruises www.windermere-lakecruises.co.uk - the most popular visitor attraction in Cumbria
- Two return flights with Aer Arann www.aerarann.com

Entry Form

Either enter online at www.realnorthernengland.ie or simply fill in the form below and return it in an envelope to: FREEPOST, Enjoy England, c/o Mail Marketing Ltd, 117-118 Bann Road, Glasnevin, F4564, Dublin 11. (No stamp required.)

For your chance to win answer the following question: **What famous national park can be found in the North of England? (Tick one)**

- Dartmoor
 The Lake District
 Yellowstone

Title _____

First name _____

Surname _____

Address _____

Town/city _____

E-mail _____

Preferred competition prize (tick one)

1. Lancaster city break
 2. Blackpool family break
 3. Lake District break

- I would like to receive special deals, great offers and further information from Enjoy England
 I would like to receive special deals, great offers and further information from Enjoy England's carefully-selected partners

All entries must be received by 30 June 2009. Terms and conditions apply. Open to 18s and over. For full terms and conditions visit www.enjoyengland.ie/terms or write to Enjoy England, Thames Tower, Blacks Road, London W6 9EL.

www.realnorthernengland.ie

Discover Bristol in 48 hours

Collette Devlin takes a city break in beautiful Bristol.



Clifton Suspension Bridge • Credit: Gary Newman

What do Buenos Aires, Gdansk, Washington DC, Vienna, Cape Town, Copenhagen, Fes, Seattle (USA), Vilnius and Bristol have in common? They have all been selected as the world's top ten cities for 2009 by DK Eyewitness, the world's best-selling guidebook publisher.

Lively and dynamic, cosmopolitan and ambitious Bristol is truly a 21st century city, combining a rich maritime heritage, state-of-the-art attractions, world-class events, stunning architecture and a wonderful new shopping and leisure quarter. Add to this its close proximity to coast and countryside and it's easy to see why Bristol is an appealing short break destination.

Bristol is also gaining status as a "green" city. It was the only city in the UK to be shortlisted for the European Green Capital award and the first in Britain to be named a Cycling City. Other green credentials include the fact that it is home to the Soil Association (Britain's leading promoter of sustainable organic farming), and the pioneering conservation work at Bristol Zoo Gardens.

This city really has a heart and soul of its own and with a very short flight time from Dublin (the plane was barely in the air when we had landed again), low-priced airfares and the current exchange rate there has never been a better time to visit Bristol.

Out and about

Bristol is very easy to get around - buses are regular and taxis are cheap, but it's so compact that you can easily walk around. Bristol is so well signposted that losing your way becomes impossible.

I stayed in the luxurious Bristol Hotel, a member

of the Doyle Collection (www.doylecollection.com), recently refurbished and rebranded. This 4 star hotel, with 5 star quality, is situated on the harbourside, in close proximity to all the city centre sights. The simple understated luxury of Mulberry couches welcomed me at the foyer and lobby. I was further delighted by the sheer luxury and bespoke interiors of my room, which also had everything I could possibly need for my stay.

There are various walking tours available taking you around Bristol's quayside and Old City. A traditional walking tour with a Blue Badge Guide incorporates Queen Square, King Street and Corn Street. If you are an independent explorer, why not download one of five free MP3 audio tours from VisitBristol.co.uk including "The Bristol Quayside Adventure", based on Robert Louis Stevenson's famous novel Treasure Island, which has links with Bristol. For those seeking a walk with a difference, discover Bristol's historic past on an entertaining Pirate Walk with Bristol's very own Pirate Pete!

See the city from a different perspective with a Bristol ferry boat, operating 364 days a year. Bristolians use these to commute to work, while visitors can take them to see major sights such as Brunel's ss Great Britain. I had a lovely time sailing past vessels of various colours and magnitude and the multi-stop ticket meant I could hop on and off all day.



Piers Bridge

Explore what Bristol has to offer

Isambard Kingdom Brunel left part of his legacy for Bristol to enjoy and almost everywhere you go you can see evidence of his time here. The ss Great Britain, one of Brunel's crowning glories, was the largest ship in the world at its time and the first major ship to use a screw-propeller. This luxury liner hosted the Victorian rich and famous and ferried passengers to Australia and even soldiers over the years.

Once on board you can travel back in time to discover what it was like to be a passenger on this majestic vessel. This attraction is a great day out, whatever the weather - truly a deserved winner of Enjoy England's Large Visitor Attraction of the Year award in 2007. (www.ssgreatbritain.org)

Discover Explore-At-Bristol, a world-class science attraction that is fun for all the family. Take part in the interactive learning activities that will engage and amaze you - even I learned a few new things from the kids' corner! I also went stargazing in the huge silver dome Planetarium, where a dedicated space expert took us on a tour of the universe. Unlike other planetariums I have been to, this was very child-friendly, the guide often stopping to take questions from astounded children in the audience. (www.at-bristol.org.uk)

The perfect way to spend a morning is at Bristol Zoo Gardens in Clifton, one of the oldest zoos in the world. With over 450 amazing species including lions, penguins and gorillas, and a butterfly forest, it is no wonder this is a firm favourite with visitors and locals alike. A new exhibit, Explorers' Creek, will open this spring. (www.bristolzoo.org.uk)

After the zoo take a walk across Brunel's iconic Clifton Suspension Bridge, routing around Clifton Down and the sea walls for spectacular views. The White Lion Bar offers magnificent views of the bridge itself, especially when it is illuminated at night. The Georgian village of Clifton is very pretty and just a couple of minutes' walk from the bridge. On a stroll I discovered Royal York Crescent, one of the longest crescents in Europe; sampled a latte or two in the many coffee shops; browsed the collection of small boutiques, second-hand shops, jewellery and antique stores; and admired the fine Georgian architecture.

Shopping

Bristol is a shopper's paradise with something for every style and budget. In fact, Bristol's new £500m retail development Cabot Circus won the 'Best Shopping Centre'



Did you know? Bristol was recently identified as the most attractive English city outside London for Foreign Direct Investment (fDi magazine, 2008).



Explore-At-Bristol



Brunel's ss Great Britain

development in Europe at the 2008 MAPIC convention in Cannes. This shopping and leisure development is open late each evening and boasts some of the best shopping in England with over 120 shops, a European café-style piazza, 16 bars and restaurants and a Cinema De Lux. (www.cabotcircus.com)

Food and entertainment

You will be spoiled for choice when it comes to eating out. Bristol offers plenty of quirky little restaurants and venues to cater for every need. I adored Bordeaux Quay on the Harbourside, where all the ingredients for its restaurant, brasserie, deli, bakery and cookery school are sourced locally from sustainable sources. Get there early in the morning for their famous scones because they literally do sell like hot cakes!

Set Wednesday morning

aside to immerse yourself in St Nicholas Market on Corn Street, which was recently declared the UK's Greenest Market. From 9am until 2pm you can sample the fresh organic food and drink that includes various meats, cheese, fruit, vegetables, breads, cakes and pies, to name but a few.

For evening entertainment, why not see what's on at The Bristol Hippodrome, the Tobacco Factory Theatre, St George's Concert Hall or the Watershed Media Centre, where I caught a movie in a very retro cinema.

Bristol hosts a year-round programme of world-class events, from kites and hot air balloons to live music and food festivals, there is always something exciting happening.

For further information on planning a trip to the city of Bristol log on to www.visitbristol.co.uk

Useful links

For great city break ideas, go to www.enjoyengland.ie
www.visitbristol.co.uk
www.visitbirmingham.com
www.visitnottingham.com
www.visitlondon.com

Ben Murnane spends 48 hours in...

Birmingham

Birmingham is perfect for a day out, a relaxing weekend or a longer stay - full of cultural delights and an inspiring choice of entertainment. There are over half a million works of art within one square mile and the Birmingham Hippodrome is the UK's busiest theatre outside the West End!

The Museum of the Jewellery Quarter has free entry and was voted the third best visitor attraction in Europe by TripAdvisor.



Shopping in Birmingham • Credit: britainonview/Martin Brent

Nottingham

From Robin Hood to Paul Smith, Nottingham has always been home to heroes and highwaymen. With over 1,000 shops and a great mix of independent retailers, designer boutiques and high street brands, it's no surprise that Nottingham is rated in the top five shopping destinations in the UK. The City of Caves, which descends into the dark depths of the original Anglo-Saxon tunnels, is well worth a visit.



Robin Hood statue, Nottingham • Credit: britainonview/ East Midlands Tourism/ Daniel Bosworth

London

This city surely needs no introduction but it's worth reminding ourselves just how much it has to offer. Visit some 300 museums and art galleries or enjoy any of London's 6,000 restaurants. The London Eye, at 135 metres, is the world's tallest observation wheel - take a spin and enjoy stunning, 40-kilometre panoramic views on a clear day.



The London Eye • Credit: britainonview

Great value breaks

- Bristol hotel breaks from €79 per adult per night.
- Birmingham hotel breaks from €85 per adult per night.
- Nottingham-Alton Towers hotel breaks from €105 per adult per night.

London hotel breaks from €89 per adult per night. All based on minimum 2 night stay with 2 adults sharing and includes travel with a car on the Stena Superferry. Up to 2 children sharing a family room travel and stay for FREE. See www.stenaline.ie/hotels

Self-catering family breaks from €245 at Brean Sands, Burnham, near Bristol. Prices are per family - 2 adults and up to 4 children for 3 nights - and include return travel with a car on the Stena Superferry. Weekend and fastcraft supplements apply. www.stenaline.ie/selfcatering



