

CULTURE IS

GREAT

BRITAIN

A guide
for international media
December 2014

Brought to you by



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*Shakespeare's Globe
South Bank, London*

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Contents

Quick facts about British Culture.....	2
Culture is GREAT - <i>why?</i>	3
ART AND ARCHITECTURE.....	5
New galleries and museums to watch	5
Cutting-edge and contemporary art destinations	7
Contemporary art at historic houses.....	14
Star architects and where to see their masterpieces.....	17
Arts fairs and open studios	19
Step into British paintings and poems.....	22
If you liked that... you'll love this! Culture tips for second-time visitors	26
Hot 2015 Exhibitions For Your Diary	28
THEATRE, DANCE, OPERA & MUSIC.....	37
The Leading Lights of 2015 - a year of thrilling theatre beckons.....	37
Entertainment all over Britain - theatres to frequent	41
Shakespeare in 2015	44
Immersive cultural experiences to dive into	45
A night at the opera, ballet and concert hall.....	48
Live the high life for less: affordable opera & ballet	50
Dance - see it, do it!.....	52
Useful Theatre Organisations	54
FESTIVALS	55
Hull - City of Culture 2017.....	55
Edinburgh, the Festival City: 12 festivals, 12 months.....	57
Britain's Festival cities.....	58
CREATIVE EXPERIENCES	64
Creative courses in cool places	64
Nourish your brain with talks, lectures and courses.....	68
Britain's great outdoors - the perfect cultural venue	69
FILM	72
Britain's starring role on screen in 2015	72
Macbeth the movie: something wicked this way comes.....	76
Film Festivals	77
LITERATURE	79
Alice in Wonderland's big 150th birthday (tea) party!	79
Celebrating 200 years of Jane Austen's <i>Emma</i>	81
Literary Britain: follow in the footsteps of Darcy, Dumbledore, Dickens and Dahl	82
Literary Festivals	90
Directory: Museums & Galleries	91

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Quick facts about British Culture

Did you know..?

- You can swim in a Zaha Hadid-designed swimming pool, ride on a Thomas Heatherwick-designed bus and, very soon, see Frank Gehry first London commission! *Read about 'starchitects' and where to see their works in Britain on p17.*
- Hull is City of Culture for 2017 and is the only city in the UK where you'll find white telephone boxes, a museum of club culture, giant toad statues and theatre in garden sheds. *See p55.*
- As 2015 marks the 200th anniversary of Jane Austen's *Emma*, you can channel your inner Regency lady in bonnets, fans and parasols at Bath's Jane Austen Centre. *Read more on p81.*
- Bond is back! Plus Cinderella, Macbeth, Wolf Hall and more - they're set to hit the big screen in 2015. *Read about Britain on screen in 2015 and 2016 on p72.*
- 2015 will see the opening of Damien Hirst's Newport Street Gallery, housing exhibitions of his own art collection. *Read about that and more exciting gallery openings on p5.*
- The novel Alice in Wonderland turns 150 in 2015 and, to celebrate, you can book a Mad Hatter's Afternoon Tea with a ticking clock Victoria sponge! *Read more on p79.*
- Edinburgh is not Britain's only festival city! As well as the Scottish capital's 12 festivals in 2015, the year will serve up the Manchester International Festival and many more parties devoted to culture across Britain. *Read all about them from p57.*
- You can sleep in an artwork. Renowned British artist Antony Gormley designed ROOM at the Beaumont Hotel, which guests are encouraged to enter naked..! *See p14 for more on contemporary art in the outdoors and public art.*
- From Secret Cinema where you dress up as extras on a giant film set, to masked balls and theatrical events where you run after the actors to see what happens next, immersive theatre is thrilling. *Get involved, see p45.*
- Take the Dylan Thomas Birthday Walk (featured in his classic work *Poem in October*) in Laugharne, south Wales, on your actual birthday and claim free gifts at local businesses on the way! *Step into famous poems or paintings on p22.*
- There are lots of places in Britain where you can buy art - from the Frieze Fair in October to Open Studios events all over the country. *Take back something original, see p19.*
- Have afternoon tea surrounded by artworks at London's sketch, or take in ping-pong, music and art all at one in Manchester's Twenty Twenty Two. *Read about contemporary art cities and the artiest hipster hangouts from p7.*
- From Turner to Alexander McQueen, 2015's exhibition diary looks beautiful. *See p28.*
- *Bend It Like Beckham - The Musical* and Benedict Cumberbatch in *Hamlet* are just two of the treats the British stage has to offer in 2015. *Find out everything on p37.*
- Learn hat-making in London, capture the Lake District on camera, make stationery in Scotland and try 'TED meets Burning Man meets Where The Wild Things Are' in Wales! *Broaden your mind and exercise your creativity all over Britain from p64.*
- Opera for £30? Ballet for £14? Live the high life for less at smashing performances. *See p50.*

Culture is GREAT - *why?*

It would be almost impossible to avoid Britain's cultural assets while on a visit here: from famous sculptures situated slap bang in the middle of the Yorkshire countryside, to Banksy graffiti gracing the walls of the most ordinary suburban street, you can appreciate art, culture and creativity at every turn. If you're actively seeking out fantastic exhibitions, entertaining theatre and musicals or a silver-screen-for-real experience, you'll be spoilt for choice.



Henry Moore's Three Piece Reclining Figure at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park

2015 promises to be a great year for culture. It marks the anniversaries of two world-famous works of literature, *Alice in Wonderland* and *Emma* by Jane Austen, it'll see the opening and transformation of several galleries - including Damien Hirst's first - and will also have us captivated by movies shot in Britain including *Cinderella*, *Macbeth* and everyone's favourite spy, *Bond*.

So much cultural activity means plenty of reasons to visit Britain, and lots of fantastic stories for media to cover - which is why we've put together this guide full of information and ideas especially for media. Delve into Britain's cultural scene and come out inspired.

ART AND ARCHITECTURE

As well as Damien Hirst's **new gallery** opening, Manchester's cultural transformation continues apace, with new arts space HOME and the reopening of The Whitworth in 2015. Looking further ahead, the National Museums of Scotland and Design Museum in London will see major changes in 2016, and all eyes will be on Dundee in Scotland come 2017 for the new Victoria and Albert Museum (see p5). Contemporary art in Britain isn't just about cities - though aforementioned Manchester, Turner Prize host-to-be Glasgow, Welsh capital Cardiff offer **artspots and hipster hangouts** aplenty (p7). Britain's **countryside** and **stately homes** (p14) are beautiful backdrops for new works of art and await fresh eyes to admire them.

Architecture buffs can find their fix of Hadid, Heatherwick and Foster (p17), while those who want to **buy art** can choose from the big guns at Frieze, to the next big thing at the Affordable Art Fair, or local artists at Open Studios (p19). And if you've ever wanted to **step into** the beauty evoked by a poem or depicted in a famous painting, you can (p22)!

Continued...

THEATRE, DANCE AND OPERA

It's not just paintings and poems you can step into in Britain, but theatre sets as well. **Immersive theatre** is literally alive (but hopefully not kicking!) with Alice in Wonderland and Secret Cinema hot tickets for next year (p45). Benedict Cumberbatch and James McAvoy are just two big name stars who'll tread the boards in 2015, find out **what's on** - including new musicals (p37). The 400th anniversary of **Shakespeare's** death is in 2016, while it was 450 years since his birth in 2014, but there's still lots to do in 2015 (p44). **Opera, ballet** and **classical** music in Britain are world class (p48) but you can experience them on at affordable prices (p50). And if **dance** is your thing, you can not only see it, but do it! (p52.)

CULTURAL FESTIVALS

Britain is the place to celebrate, and **Edinburgh** is no doubt the place to do it, every year - not just in August for the Fringe and International Festival, but throughout (p57). There are lots more **festival cities** though, and Manchester is a must-visit in 2015 for its International Festival, but the rest of the country joins in with its own parties all year round (p58). Hull will be in the spotlight in 2017, and preparations for its year as **UK City of Culture** are underway. Why not go now, and see what's in store? (p55.)

CREATIVE EXPERIENCES

Don't just look in Britain, be hands on! From millinery (hat-making) to photography, via handbag-making and life-drawing, there are **creative courses** in interesting locations all over the nation (p64). You can also **expand your mind** at talks, lectures and other courses (p68).

FILM

Britain has a starring role on screen in 2015, so read about **upcoming releases** that benefitted from a beautiful, rugged or fairytale backdrop during filming, so that you'll be inspired to get behind the scenes of the action in situ (p72). **Macbeth** was filmed in Scotland (of course) and England, so get the lowdown on the locations (p76).

LITERATURE

The books that have come out of Britain capture the minds of readers all over the globe, and we tell you where to **follow in the footsteps** of your favourite authors and characters. Alice in Wonderland's 150th birthday will be celebrated in true magical style (p79) while the slightly older *Emma* will be feted with Regency balls, no less! (p81).

The VisitBritain Destination PR team hopes you enjoy this guide and find it useful. If you have any comments or questions, please get in touch at pressandpr@visitbritain.org.

ART AND ARCHITECTURE

Find out everything you need to know about Britain's world-class art and architecture, and why to experience it now!

New galleries and museums to watch

Britain looks set for a cultural renaissance, with a host of new gallery openings and multiple, multi-million pound refurbishments to existing cultural treasures. Find out what the next big culture destination will be – first stop, Manchester, which is welcoming a trio of hot new arts attractions.

SPOTLIGHT ON MANCHESTER

The Whitworth, formerly The Whitworth Art Gallery, reopens on 14 February 2015 following a stunning £15million new extension and major redevelopment. Built in 1889 as the very first English gallery in a park, The Whitworth has been transformed and extended into its parkland home and will feature an art garden by the award-winning Sarah Price, sculpture terraces, orchard garden, landscape gallery and the café in the trees – all reflecting the building's beautiful setting. With doubled public space and new state-of-the-art facilities, The Whitworth launches with a major solo exhibition from one of Britain's most acclaimed contemporary artists, Cornelia Parker, and an exhibition entitled 1960s: BOOM, which will feature works by Peter Blake, Allen Jones, Bridget Riley and Peter Phillips that manifest the riot of colour, fashion and art of the era.

www.manchester.ac.uk/whitworth

When **HOME** opens on 21 May 2015, it will kick off with a weekend of world premiere theatre, new visual arts commissions and a unique film and music project that will introduce Manchester and the world to HOME's spaces and truly contemporary artistic vision. HOME forms the next step in Manchester's cultural regeneration and when it opens it will become England's largest combined arts centre outside of London. From gallery to screen via café bar and bookshop, HOME will

aim to create a space 'where ideas, hopes and moments of wonder ricochet off walls and lodge themselves in the headspace of audiences old and new'. Manchester has undergone transformations to its cultural landscape of late, with developments to Manchester Central Library, and the reopening of Elizabeth Gaskell's House and, along with The Whitworth (above), this will be another addition to the cultural vibrancy of the city.

<http://homemcr.org>

Looking ahead, another new arts space is in the offing for Manchester, which will expand the city's cultural offer even further. **The Factory Manchester** will be a large scale, ultra-flexible arts space capable of transforming from a 2,200-seat theatre to an immersive artistic environment with a standing capacity of up to 5,000 and will be the permanent home to the fantastic Manchester International Festival (MIF). £78million is being invested



*Manchester's HOME will be a world-class centre for the arts.
Credit Mecanoo Architects*

in the new arts space, which aims to attract the best national and international artists and companies. In naming this new arts space as 'The Factory Manchester', the city is paying tribute to the cultural legacy of Factory (Records), which still resonates strongly as a creative influence worldwide.

MORE NEW AND REVAMPED GALLERIES IN BRITAIN

2015: Damien Hirst will be opening the Newport Street Gallery in London's up-and-coming Lambeth area in 2015. The gallery has been in development for over three years and is the product of both Hirst's long-term ambition to build a museum to share his collection with the public, and his love of curating, which dates back to the beginning of his artistic career. The exhibitions presented at Newport Street will vary between single artist and group shows, and will be free of charge to the public. Hirst's expansive and diverse collection, which he has been acquiring since the late 1980s, includes artists such as Francis Bacon, Banksy, Mat Collishaw, Tracey Emin, Jeff Koons, Sarah Lucas, Picasso, Haim Steinbach, Gavin Turk, and North American Haida artists such as Robert Davidson, Jim Hart and Don Yeomans as well as natural history specimen, taxidermy, anatomical models and other historical objects. Designed by architects Caruso St John, the building will contain six interconnected galleries as well as a restaurant and shop. It has been converted from five warehouses: three listed late Victorian scenery-painting studios flanked by two new-builds at either end. Hirst bought the buildings in 1998 and converted part of it into a studio which he and other artists have used.

Early 2015: At the **Victoria and Albert Museum** in London, spectacular examples of textiles and fashion, painting and sculpture, ceramics and glass, furniture and metalwork, prints and books will be represented in stunning new Europe: 1600-1800 galleries, opening in early 2015. As well as a significant opening in the art world, it's one for architecture lovers too - windows that have been covered for decades will be reinstated and controlled daylight introduced to the galleries, plus the 1970s interiors will be stripped back to reveal the original Aston Webb architecture. www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/f/futureplan-new-europe-galleries.



How the new National Museums Scotland's Art and Design galleries will look

2016: The **National Museums of Scotland** will open brand new galleries in 2016; the £14.1million project will create ten new galleries displaying National Museums Scotland's internationally important collections of Science and Technology and Art and Design. Showcasing more than 3,500 objects, display space for these exhibits will increase by more than 40%, with three-quarters of them not having previously been on permanent display for generations. Six Wedgwood plates designed by Sir Eduardo Paolozzi, a flamboyant coat by internationally renowned fashion designer Zandra Rhodes, an early camera by William Henry Fox Talbot - the father of photography - and a state-of-the-art prosthetic i-limb designed by Scottish firm Touch Bionics, are a selection from the collections that will be displayed in the new galleries. www.nms.ac.uk/national-museum-of-scotland/discover-the-museum/new-galleries

2016: The **Design Museum** will be moving, and the premises will no doubt dazzle, given the subject matter of the museum! The former Commonwealth Institute in London's Kensington will be the museum's new address, after a long search for the perfect spot. It's a Grade II-listed building that has stood vacant for more than a decade, and will provide the museum with three times more space to display its permanent collection and exhibitions. <http://designmuseum.org>



How the Design Museum will look when it opens in Kensington

2016: Beautifully located overlooking Porthmeor Beach in Cornwall in south-west England, **Tate St Ives** is undergoing refurbishment that will see the gallery space double and visitor experiences improved. The gallery was set up to mark the legacy of the modernist artists who lived and worked in the town during the mid-20th century. The gallery and its programme attract more than 200,000 visitors a year and bring approximately £12million into the regional economy. www.tate.org.uk/about/projects/tate-st-ives-phase-two

2017: The **Victoria and Albert Museum** is one of London - if not the world's - best museums, so it's good that **Dundee** in Scotland - newly crowned UNESCO City of Design - will be getting a new outpost of the museum there in a couple of years. Unlike the original museum, the new one will be uber-modern in design and is architect Kenzo Kuma's first British commission. It will showcase world-class touring exhibitions from the V&A - the only purpose built galleries in Scotland large enough to show these shows in their entirety. www.vandadundee.org

Cutting-edge and contemporary art destinations

Contemporary art enthusiasts will find galleries galore to satisfy their interest in Britain, and arty hangouts where they can act like a local, do some people-watching and unwind post-art crawl (or fuel up beforehand!)

In addition to London's buzzing art scene, there are modern and contemporary art galleries all over in Britain to explore, so pack your best art lover outfit and get gallery-hopping.

London, England

The capital is a cultural hub, not just for Britain but the world. The first stop on the lists of many visitors to London, art-lovers and tourists alike, is **Tate Modern**. The former power station opened as a contemporary art gallery in 2000 and, since then, more than 40 million people have visited. Its imposing Turbine Hall has made for a dramatic entrance since the first display there in 2000 by Louise Bourgeois entitled *Maman*, an enormous, towering spider sculpture. The gallery is undergoing expansion with the opening of the building's former oil tanks, which will be devoted to performance art - a world first. The gallery is free to visit although visitors pay for some exhibitions.

www.tate.org.uk/visit/tate-modern

The **Saatchi Gallery** is one of London's most exciting modern art spaces and presents work by largely unseen young artists,



The Saatchi Gallery features work from upcoming young artists. Credit Stephen White. Image courtesy of Saatchi Gallery

or international artists whose work has never before been seen in Britain. The gallery was opened by global advertising magnate and art collector Charles Saatchi in 1985, and has had a huge influence on British contemporary art since then. It moved from County Hall on London's South Bank to a purpose-built 70,000 sq ft building on Chelsea's Kings Road in 2008, an area previously known more for its swanky shops and restaurants than cutting-edge art. www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk

The **ICA** (Institute of Contemporary Art) is another of the capital's most exciting spaces, and has been around a lot longer than both of the above yet still feels edgy and unique. It was set up by a group of radical artists and writers in the 1940s as 'a space for experimental and challenging arts practice.' In an unrivalled position on The Mall (a stone's throw from Buckingham Palace and Piccadilly), the ICA calls itself the 'home of the British avant-garde' and holds fantastic free exhibitions, evening events (many involving DJs and dancing late into the night) and has a cinema showing arty flicks. www.ica.org.uk

The **Whitechapel Gallery** in what is now one of London's trendiest neighbourhoods, the East End, was founded in 1901. The gallery exhibits work from both British and international contemporary artists; in its early days it premiered the works of Pablo Picasso, Jackson Pollock and Frida Kahlo; more recently it did the same for Lucien Freud, Gilbert & George and Sophie Calle. www.whitechapelgallery.org

Look out for the **Newport Street Gallery** in 2015, on the street of the same name in London's Vauxhall, which will house Damien Hirst's private collection of art in a selection of changing exhibitions.

Where to hang out after? **sketch** is a must for art lovers, with a recent transformation by David Shrigley who was let loose on everything from the walls (lined with 239 of his works) to the crockery. Go for two Michelin star dining or afternoon tea <http://sketch.london> | Dine at **Tramshed** with Damien Hirst's 'Cock and bull' tank towering over you www.chickenandsteak.co.uk | Spend the last Friday of the month partying at the **V&A** gallery www.vam.ac.uk



Dine in a fluffy pink chair while enjoying tea and art by David Shrigley at sketch London. David Shrigley and India Mahdavi, the Gallery at sketch, Courtesy sketch

Where to stay? It has to be ROOM at The Beaumont Hotel in London's elegant Mayfair, a suite in the form of an inhabitable sculpture by Antony Gormley. www.thebeaumont.com

Manchester, north-west England



HOME will be a new cultural powerhouse in already arty Manchester

Manchester just keeps on adding to its enticing array of cultural riches, and looks set to become something of a cultural powerhouse in the next few years. In 2015 **HOME** will be England's largest combined arts centre outside London when it opens in May (<http://homemcr.org>). Meanwhile old favourite **The Whitworth** has been revamped, and millions invested to make it a magnet for contemporary art fans who will be able see a selection of exhibitions in England's very first gallery in a park from 14 February 2015. It's going to have an art garden, so creativity and fresh air can be enjoyed in one go

(www.manchester.ac.uk/whitworth). **The Factory** will add even more arts appeal when it opens in 2019, as a large-scale, ultra-flexible arts space capable of transforming from a 2,200-seat theatre to an immersive artistic environment with a standing capacity of up to 5,000. It will house the biennial Manchester International Festival (www.mif.co.uk). The city's Old Granada Studios is at the heart of Manchester's cultural renovation, and you can find local talent at **Artzu** there (as well as fun vintage festivals and crafty happenings), which has been a hotspot for buying Manchester artists' work for more than a decade (www.artzu.co.uk). **The Cornerhouse** is three floors of contemporary visual arts and film (www.cornerhouse.org), and those interested in the area's rich Chinese heritage should pay a visit to the **Centre for Chinese Contemporary Art** (www.cfcca.org.uk).

Where to hang out after? **Twenty Twenty Two** in the Northern Quarter for ping pong, music and art in equal measure (www.twentytwentytwo.co.uk) | Head to nearby **Common Bar** later for DJs and exhibitions (www.aplacecalledcommon.co.uk) | Stop by at the **Cornerhouse** bar after an exhibition (www.cornerhouse.org).

Manchester is just over two hours by train from London. For more information on the city visit www.visitmanchester.com

Liverpool, north-west England

'Tate of the North', **Tate Liverpool** is housed in a disused warehouse at the city's historic Albert Dock. The gallery opened in May 1988 and 20 years later, when Liverpool was crowned European City of Culture 2008, it hosted the Turner Prize, the first time the prize had left London. www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-liverpool

The city also hosts the largest contemporary art festival in Britain, **Liverpool Biennial**, which takes over the city for ten weeks every two years. It's a chance to head out on an arty treasure hunt through the city and discover unusual and unexpected places through art. The festival attracts more than 600,000 visitors each time. The ninth edition is in 2016. www.biennial.com

FACT (Foundation for Art and Creative Technology) is a leading media arts centre, based in the centre of Liverpool, which offers a programme of exhibitions, film and participant-led art projects. The award-winning FACT building is home to three galleries (showing four exhibitions per year), a cool café and bar, and three state-of-the-art film screens (including intimate sofa-seated The Box), programmed by Picturehouse@FACT and showing the best in independent and mainstream film. www.fact.co.uk



*Tate Liverpool hosts world-class exhibitions and is located in the city's iconic Albert Dock.
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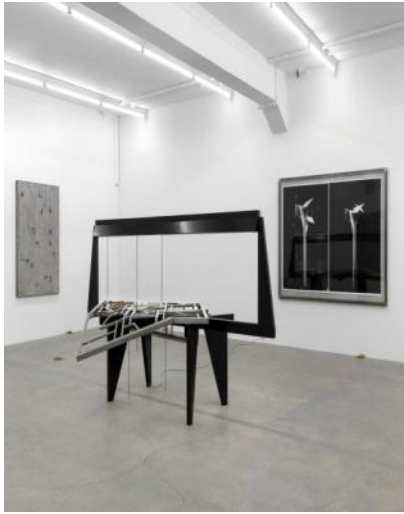
Where to hang out after? **Bold Street Coffee** - when you want pre-arty breakfast www.boldstreetcoffee.co.uk | **Constellations** - for passionate and conversations about art... or a chilled beer and live music session www.constellations-liv.com | **Kazimier** - when you want to dance www.thekazimier.co.uk |

Liverpool is just over two hours from London by train. See www.visitliverpool.com for more info on the city.

Newcastle/Gateshead, north-east England

Since spreading its wings in February 1998, artist Antony Gormley's **The Angel of the North** has become one of the most talked about pieces of public art ever produced. Rising

20 metres from the earth near the A1 road in Gateshead, the Angel dominates the skyline, dwarfing anyone who comes to see it. It's a warm welcome to a buzzing, modern city, whose art scene always offers something new; you're spoilt for choice with exhibitions.



The BAL TIC Centre for Contemporary Art was the first non-Tate venue to host the Turner Prize outside London.

The **BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art** is housed in what was formerly a flour mill in Gateshead, and was the first non-Tate venue outside of London to host the Turner Prize in 2011. It's regularly home to exhibitions from leading contemporary artists such as Damien Hirst and Yoko Ono (www.balticmill.com). Baltic 39 is an outpost of the larger venue, situated in the middle of Newcastle and is open late on Thursday nights (to 8pm). If you're interested in a very different kind of gallery, **The Outsiders** is there 'to make buying and collecting art accessible and affordable'. The Outsiders shows 20 exhibitors each year, many of whom honed their craft through graffiti, design, and illustration. They are described by the gallery as 'often self-taught, usually rejected by the art world' (www.theoutsiders.net).

There's also the **Ouseburn Valley** to the east of the Newcastle Quayside and a ten-minute walk from the centre of the city. It is home to lots of galleries, from the big - **The Biscuit Factory**, Britain's largest independent art gallery (www.thebiscuitfactory.com) - to the small, which have their spotlight at the annual **Ouseburn Open Studios** event. The weekend event allows artists to open up their studios to the public, who in turn can buy or commission work. The area is home to **Northern Print**, a gallery and studio dedicated to printmaking (www.northernprint.org.uk).

Where to hang out after? Tyneside Bar Café, Tyneside Cinema - the Tyneside is one of Britain's best cinemas, and its newly opened Bar Café is a magnet for movie lovers. It's got a cabaret-style secret cinema inside, and is open from 8am until late www.tynesidebarcafe.co.uk | **SIX** - when you want to gaze over Newcastle from a great height (the bar at the brilliant BALTIC gallery) www.sixbaltic.com | **The Jazz Café on Pink Lane** - when you want some jazz or django and coffee or wine www.jazzcafe-newcastle.co.uk

Newcastle is a three-hour train journey from London. The city also has its own airport, served by European and some longer-haul airlines. See www.newcastlegateshead.com for more information.

Birmingham, central England

The **Custard Factory** is an assortment of lovingly restored, 100-year-old factories - built by Sir Alfred Bird, the inventor of ready made custard - that have been transformed into a pioneering arts and media quarter in the heart of Birmingham's city centre. Many artists are based in its Scott House and the whole complex is home to a community of more than 500 artists and small enterprises, studios, theatre, cafés, antique shops, dance studios, art galleries, restaurants and bars; all creating a flourishing arts quarter

(www.custardfactory.co.uk). Housed in a neo-gothic former school, Ikon is a free, highly acclaimed contemporary art gallery, in central Birmingham (<http://ikon-gallery.org>).

Where to hang out after? The **Custard Factory** is home not only to shops and galleries, but little bars and hangouts | Head to promisingly named Paradise Place for jazz at the **Yardbird Jazz Club** <http://livebrum.co.uk/venues/the-yardbird> | sip cocktails from sweets jars, watering cans and miniature bathtubs at **Jekyll & Hyde!** www.thejekyllandhyde.co.uk

Birmingham is less than 90 minutes by train from London. The city also has its own airport serving Europe. See www.visitbirmingham.com for more information.

Glasgow, Scotland

Some say that while Edinburgh is the grander and more outwardly beautiful-looking of Scotland's two most major cities, Glasgow's appeal lies in its more rough-and-ready appearance, hidden gems and boisterous charm. It's an exceedingly elegant city in parts, with the gothic architecture around its West End, notably the University, and Charles Rennie Mackintosh's designs dotted all around. Glasgow's edgier character makes it the ideal place for contemporary art galleries to spring up and artists to thrive. The **Glasgow School of Art** is where you'll find many of the artists of tomorrow experimenting and exhibiting; many students host the guided tours of the Mackintosh-designed building and the city itself, telling its past and present story with infectious enthusiasm (www.gsa.ac.uk). Next off, you can consult the fantastic **GRID** art map, which lists all the major and small museums and galleries in Glasgow and Edinburgh, and also tells you what's on where (www.gridartmap.com).

One place definitely worth checking out is the Tramway, which will host the Turner Prize in 2015 (www.tramway.org). Also worth a look is Trongate 103, a six-storey Edwardian building full of different creative organisations that holds funky arts and culture nights on the first Thursday of every month (www.trongate103.com).



The Tramway will host the Turner Prize in 2015

Where to hang out after? **Kelvingrove Café** (not the art gallery!) - when you want a killer cocktail... or three www.kelvingrovecafe.com | anywhere on cute and cobbled **Ashton Lane** - when you want to pretend you're in Woody Allen's sure-to-be-made-soon Glasgow movie | Dance at electronic music venue and art gallery SWG3 www.swg3.tv.

Glasgow is four-and-a-half hours by train from London or an hour from Edinburgh. It also has its own international market serving short-haul and long-haul destinations. Visit <http://peoplemakeglasgow.com> for more information.

Cardiff, south Wales

The Welsh capital is home to **Artes Mundi**, which takes place over 12 weeks at the National Museum of Art every two years. Established in 2003, Artes Mundi supports groundbreaking contemporary visual artists from around the world who compete every two years



Chapter is a fantastic multi-arts space where Cardiff's creative types like to convene

for £40,000, one of the largest cash prizes up for grabs in the art world. Head to **Chapter**, a multi-artform cultural space where Cardiff's art lovers and creators tend to gather. The centre produces and presents international and Welsh art, performances and film, and is an Artes Mundi venue too (www.chapter.org). If it's Welsh and Wales-based artists you want to explore, the **Martin Tinney Gallery** exhibits work by the most important living Welsh artists (www.artwales.com), or else there's **Craft in the Bay** in Cardiff Bay, where you can buy contemporary crafts made by the members of the Makers Guild in Wales, from jewellery to bookbinding (www.makersguildinwales.org.uk). Also in the capital is The Albany Gallery (www.albanygallery.com). One of the longest-established private galleries in Wales, the monthly exhibition programme of leading Welsh and British artists provides a showcase for solo and mixed exhibitions in a variety of media.

Where to hang out after? Stay on at **Chapter** for seasonal food, homemade pizza, tea, cake and regular events at the Caffi Bar www.chapter.org | **Brava** has brilliant breakfasts and local art on the walls, turning into a bistro come nightfall www.bravacardiff.co.uk | **Milgi** is home to installation art, vegetarian food, fab cocktails, life-drawing classes (in its yurt!), a vintage craft market once a month and a monthly 'Art and Curry' night! www.milgilounge.com

Cardiff is two hours by train from London. For more information visit www.visitcardiff.com

Belfast, Northern Ireland

Belfast is a city that's undergone a real transformation of late, and part of the change took place when the **MAC** landed in 2012. This arts venue, situated next to some fab restaurants in the hip Cathedral Quarter, is fun, funky and should be a must for fun-loving art-loving people visiting the city. MAC launched its own art prize, the MAC International, which runs as an exhibition across all three of MAC's galleries in the autumn, and comprises sculpture, painting, photography, film, installation and performance. The MAC is also home to a lovely canteen and café, which made it into the 50 best coffee shops in Britain list, compiled by *The Independent* - to date (end 2014) 70,408 cups of coffee have been drunk there, and 600,000 people visited the MAC! <http://themaclive.com>

Where to hang out after? Stay for a coffee at the **MAC** of course, then venture out for *cicchetti* at Coppi www.coppi.co.uk | Head for **Muriel's Bar** for a gin, where there's a hat theme and the story of Muriel will entertain www.facebook.com/muriels.cafebar | Is it a hair salon? An art gallery? A café? A shop? It's **Crafty Belfast** www.crafty-belfast.com.

Belfast has its own international airport; it's around 90-minutes flight from London or Edinburgh, one hour from Manchester and one hour, 15 minutes from Glasgow.

Countryside and coastal artspots

Yorkshire, north England

The beautiful northern English county of Yorkshire, known as 'God's own country', has



some truly divine art to keep culture vultures busy - especially those who love sculpture. The **Yorkshire Sculpture Park** won Museum of the Year in 2014, thanks to its display of modern and contemporary art inspired by the natural beauty of the Bretton Estate. And what natural beauty! The region is so picturesque it's an artwork in itself,

though valuable Henry Moore, Andy Goldsworthy, Elisabeth Frink and James Turrell add to the aesthetic allure! www.ysp.co.uk

Making up the **Yorkshire Sculpture Triangle** are the Park, **The Henry Moore Institute**, **The Leeds Art Gallery** and **The Hepworth Wakefield** (www.ysculpture.co.uk). The latter is a real gem for contemporary art fans who want to see their art somewhere unusual. It is sited where the famous British sculptor Barbara Hepworth lived. Architecturally striking – it was designed by David Chipperfield – it's almost as interesting to look at as to look *in*, though the collections span the 16th century to the present day and include works by Henry Moore, David Hockney, Jacob Epstein, LS Lowry and many more. It opened in May 2011. www.hepworthwakefield.org

Where to hang out after? The Café Bar at the **Hepworth Wakefield** serves delicious local produce and its very own beer 'Masterpiece' www.hepworthwakefield.org/cafe | Local and regional artists grace the walls at **Arts Café Bar** in Leeds www.artscafebar.com | Take in live jazz and good food at **Showroom Bar** in Sheffield www.showroomworkstation.org.uk

The nearest train station to Yorkshire Sculpture Park is Wakefield Westgate, around a two-hour journey from London. For more information visit www.yorkshire.com

Margate, Kent, south-east England



The Turner Contemporary is a star attraction in the seaside town Margate

Many international visitors will be forgiven for not knowing what or where Margate is. Known among the Brits as the former holiday resort of choice (a good few generations ago), the seaside town lost out when package holidays to the Mediterranean became popular and its glory faded. Now it is back in the spotlight thanks to its newest addition, the **Turner Contemporary**. The gallery was designed by David Chipperfield Architects and opened on the beachfront in 2011. Named after the famous British artist JMW Turner, who was a frequent visitor to Margate, the gallery has had rave reviews since it opened, and hosted great exhibitions such as Tracey Emin's – a Margate native – and has staged art events

throughout the town (www.turnercontemporary.org) It's not contemporary, but definitely artistic and worth a look – the **Shell Grotto** is a network of tunnels adorned with mosaics made entirely from sea shells that was discovered in 1835 (www.shellgrotto.co.uk).

Where to hang out after? You can't miss **Mad Hatter**, a completely out-of-this-world café run by a top-hatted man and filled with eccentric Victorian knick-knacks. Eat boozy cakes and drink tea (don't miss the toilets, trust us) | **BeBeached** is an artsy café-restaurant that serves delicious Sunday roasts www.bebeached.co.uk

Margate is less than two hours' train journey from London. For more information, visit www.visitkent.co.uk

Hastings, East Sussex, south-east England

Hastings may be best known as the site of the 1066 battle that saw England come under Norman rule, but it's also a charming seaside town that is home to the **Jerwood Gallery**. Nestled between the town's iconic fishermen's huts and the historic Old Town, the gallery was established to create a public, permanent home for the Jerwood Foundation's

Collection of modern British Art. There are 200 oil paintings on display, covering figurative and abstract works from between the First World War and the 1960s, and includes works by L.S Lowry, Sir Stanley Spencer and Walter Sickert (www.jerwoodgallery.org).

Where to hang out after? Hastings' Old Town is home to the buzzy and artsy **Dragon Bar**, that's part-pub, part-restaurant and part-art gallery; lovely outside seating on a summer's day | Talking of outdoor dining, nothing is better than the **Jerwood Gallery's** terrace for a relaxing post-art wine and fish lunch.

Hastings is a 90-minute drive from London and around the same journey time by train. For more information visit www.visit1066country.com

Bruton, Somerset

It's got a place on the art map thanks to the opening of Hauser & Wirth's new gallery. Bruton might be just a small town of about 3,000 inhabitants - "global art powerhouse" Hauser & Wirth" have transformed a site on the edge of the town, endowing it with contemporary art spaces, a guesthouse and gardens by leading Dutch garden designer Piet Oudolf. The Roth Bar & Grill on site combines gastronomy and contemporary art, with all ethically-sourced ingredients and food-themed works of art on the walls.
www.hauserwirthsomerset.com

Where exactly is it? The nearest rail station to Bruton is Castle Cary, about five miles/ten minutes' drive away - trains from London Paddington take about 90 minutes. To the north of Bruton is Bath. Direct trains from Castle Cary to Bath take about an hour.

What else is there to see near Bruton? The landscaped gardens of Stourhead are a few miles east; Glastonbury, with its Abbey, tor and New Age shops, is about 15 miles/half an hour's drive to the west.

Contemporary art at historic houses

Thanks to the growing importance of contemporary art in Britain's cultural landscape, you find it popping up in the most unexpected locations, with Britain's stately homes providing sympathetic backdrops for bold artworks.

Stately homes

Collaborations with contemporary artists bring a sense of fun to these historic homes; in 2014 **Chatsworth House** in the beautiful Peak District (a 30-minute drive from Chesterfield railway station, itself a two-hour train journey from London) featured Michael Craig-Martin sculptures on its elegant lawns, while indoors saw the arrival of a permanent ceramic installation by Jacob van der Beugel. Meanwhile, the Artist Rooms scheme continues to promote the installation of contemporary art away from major institutions.
www.chatsworth.org

Increasingly known for its displays of contemporary art is **Waddesdon Manor** in Buckinghamshire, south-east England, thanks in part to the inspiration of its previous owners, the Rothschild family, still involved in its running. Around the extensive gardens of this French-style château you will find sculptures from the family's collection along with commissions that add to the manor's interior and its own collection. From June 2015 the grounds will host



From June 2015 the grounds of Waddesdon Manor will be home to contemporary sculptures as well as the classic

contemporary art by Simon Periton, who will design two sculptural bedding installations, continuing the tradition of three-dimensional bedding begun by Alice de Rothschild. A pair of sculptures by Joana Vasconcelos will also be installed on the manor's North Front in 2015; the giant pair of candlesticks made of glass wine bottles (from Château Lafite Rothschild) will symbolise the Rothschild family's connection to the world of wine. Waddesdon Manor is less than two hours' drive from London. www.waddesdon.org.uk



Cool and contemporary; from Burghley House's 'Elemental' exhibition in 2014, 'Lunicycle' by Pete Rogers

One of England's grandest houses, **Burghley House** in Stamford, Lincolnshire (around two hours by train from London), is devoted to promoting contemporary sculpture in a historic setting - so much so that it has its own dedicated sculpture garden. Annual exhibitions of sculptures run from April to October - 2014's exhibition was entitled 'Elemental' and explored sculptures that responded to elements such as the wind or sun. There are also permanent pieces, which can be viewed all the year round,

including the grass maze designed by Peter Randall Page. www.burghley.co.uk

In Cornwall, in the south-west of England, the National Trust-owned **Lanhydrock** is a glorious Victorian country house and estate. Among the magnificent gardens visitors will discover some more contemporary additions - metalwork sculptures that have been installed by local professional artists and blacksmiths. Here you'll discover Matisse-inspired figures, giant creatures made from recycled materials and large geometric structures. www.nationaltrust.org.uk/lanhydrock

Trust New Art

Many of the collaborations between modern artists and stately homes arise thanks to the **National Trust's Trust New Art** annual programme of events, residencies and commissions that aims to bring different experiences to its historic properties based across the country. Recent collaborations in late 2014 included the Paradise exhibition at Tyntesfield and Leigh Woods in west England, when Trust New Art Bristol collaborated with Bristol's leading contemporary art gallery Arnolfini. For updates on the 2015 programme as, and when, they are announced, see www.nationaltrust.org.uk.

Artist Rooms

Another initiative bringing modern art to unlikely places is **Artist Rooms**, which seeks to ensure the bequest of influential art dealer Anthony d'Offay is displayed as widely as possible. For example, the east England-based medieval fortification of Norwich Castle will be hosting an exhibition of work in its Museum & Art Gallery by influential and controversial American artist Jeff Koons between 9 May - 6 September 2015. Norwich is just under two hours by train from London.

Artist Rooms also helps support smaller museums in remote areas of Britain, allowing them to exhibit high-profile works that would otherwise be beyond their reach. One such is the Pier Arts Centre on the far north Scottish island of Orkney, which will host a selection of Damien Hirst works between 20 June - 12 September 2015.



Thanks to Artists Rooms, leading contemporary artists will exhibit in remote areas of Britain, such as Scotland's Orkney Islands

You can fly to Orkney from major Scottish airports or catch the ferry from Aberdeen in northern Scotland. www.artfund.org/what-to-see/artist-rooms

More art in the great outdoors!

There's a lot of incredible art you can see out and about in Britain, and much of it for free, if you know where to look.

Millions will have seen the **ArcelorMittal Orbit** in person at the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, and millions others on television. Love it or hate it – the sculpture incites conflicting views – the Anish Kapoor-designed work has now become synonymous with the Olympic Park. The East London landmark is at the heart of the newly named Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, and tickets to the Park in Progress tours (available on the VisitBritain shop) include a trip up the Orbit. www.noordinarypark.com
www.visitbritainshop.com

Antony Gormley's **Angel of the North** dominates the A1 road near Newcastle/Gateshead, and is Britain's own answer to Brazil's Christ the Redeemer at Rio... well, almost. At 20 metres high and 54 metres wide, it does dominate the skyline. More of Gormley's figures can be seen on the beach at Crosby near Liverpool, 100 sculptures made from casts of the artist's own body, and stretching up to a kilometre out to sea entitled *Another Place*. Spy another Gormley body double up on the top of the Hayward Gallery at London's South Bank, and yet another outside the millennium Forum in Derry~Londonderry, which was the UK City of Culture in 2013. Oh, and you can stay in Antony Gormley's artwork ROOM at The Beaumont Hotel in London!

Grizedale Forest in the Lake District is the UK's first forest for sculpture, with around 50 artworks sited throughout the forest, and has been built up over 30 years, making it now the largest collection of site-specific art in the environment in the UK. The Forest also plays host to temporary exhibitions and events, so even if you've seen some of the artworks, you may be in for a surprise on a return visit. Pick up a Sculpture Guide from the forest shop, take off in the beautiful surroundings and start ticking them off.

<http://grizedalesculpture.org>



Grizedale Forest has the largest collection of site specific art in the environment in the UK

But some of the most exciting art you can spot on your travels in Britain is by more undercover agents... and you don't know where the next will pop up. **Banksy** is perhaps the most famous of them all, not least thanks to the frequent scandals involving the removal his works from walls almost as fast as they go up. See Banksy in context, right here in Britain. A good place to start is his home city, Bristol, west England, where he has adorned many a wall with graffiti, including a chilling grim reaper rowing over the river Avon, as if over the Styx. The tourist board Visit Bristol's self-guided walking tour is a good place to start, and there's also an app you can download. (<http://visitbristol.co.uk/things-to-do/banksy-walking-tour-p1354013>). London is filled with his work (and the internet filled with websites devoted to finding them) and coming upon the amusing, and often thought-provoking, depictions will bring a smile to your face. See www.banksy.co.uk.

Star architects and where to see their masterpieces

Britain's architecture giants are influential not just at home, but abroad too - with people like Norman Foster, Zaha Hadid and Thomas Heatherwick known the world over. Take in their British creations on vacation, whether that means riding in a Heatherwick-designed London bus, or swimming in a Hadid-designed Olympic pool!

Zaha Hadid

A winner of architecture's highest accolade, The Pritzker Prize, Zaha Hadid is known for neo-futuristic structures. Britain's foremost example is the **London Aquatics Centre**, found inside Stratford's **Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park** (<http://londonaquaticscentre.org>). Used for London 2012's swimming and diving events, the eye-grabbing centre was then modernised and opened to the public in March 2014. Beneath the 160m-long wave-like roof, two 50 metre pools and a 25 metre diving pool render this London's premier aquatic venue. Across town in west London is another Hadid project: Hyde Park's **Serpentine Sackler Gallery**. Free to enter, this former gunpowder store contains 900 square metres' worth of contemporary art. Across a bridge, the **Serpentine Gallery** commissions a leading architect to design its yearly summer pavilion: past luminaries have included Frank Gehry, Daniel Libeskind and, yes, Zaha Hadid (www.serpentinegalleries.org). Hadid is now working on an innovative approach to roadside advertising billboards, which will be visible on the West Cromwell Road, one of the main routes connecting Heathrow Airport with central London.

Thomas Heatherwick

British architect and designer Thomas Heatherwick's ideas always stress regional identity. Take his **New Routemaster buses** in London, currently serving 11 routes around the capital and a 2012 reprise of the seminal red double-deckers that were phased out seven years earlier (www.tfl.gov.uk/modes/buses/new-routemaster). Three entry/exit doors pay tribute to Londoners' independent spirits, while the airy design is modern yet classical. Seventeen miles west of Brighton, another iconic Heatherwick project awaits in the town of **Littlehampton**. **East Beach Café** was built with its seafront setting in mind: a rugged structure - boasting English Channel views and cosy interiors - that Heatherwick says resembles a piece of weathered flotsam washed onto the beach (www.eastbeachcafe.co.uk). Not only has the café earned Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) acclaim, but its food is highly regarded too.



Picture-perfect spot for the iconic Thomas Heatherwick-designed East Beach Café

Norman Foster

While most Norman Foster projects are found in London, arguably the most striking sits deep in west Wales. Set amid Carmarthenshire's Tywi Valley - 50 miles north-west of Cardiff - the Great Glasshouse is the **National Botanic Garden of Wales's** headline act (www.gardenofwales.org.uk). The world's largest single-span glasshouse, it contains waterfalls, a lake, a Spanish olive grove and even the recreated aftermath of an Australian bush fire. Imitating the rolling hills all around, the tilted, rainwater-collecting roof comprises 785 glass panes. Back in London, more wizardry by Foster + Partners includes the **Millennium Bridge** (linking St Paul's Cathedral and the Tate Modern), the **British**

Museum's vast Great Court and **30 St. Mary Axe** - a famous office building known as the 'Gherkin', and one of five Foster structures encountered on 'Designs of the Times', an architecture-themed self-guided walking tour around the City (www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/visiting-the-city/walks-tours-and-architecture).

Charles Rennie Mackintosh

Living most of his life in **Glasgow**, Charles Rennie Mackintosh was Britain's chief proponent of Art Nouveau. The architect's masterpiece was the **Glasgow School of Art**, heavily influenced by Arts-and-Crafts, Japanese detailing and Scottish baronial styles, and considered an example of 'total design' upon completion in 1909 (www.gsa.ac.uk). Sadly, the School was severely damaged by a fire in May 2014 and, while restoration plans are ongoing with help from adoring trustees like Brad Pitt, only limited areas are currently open to visitors. Details about those, plus many other Mackintosh works, can be found on the CRM Society website (www.crm-society.com). So too can one-day Mackintosh Trail Tickets, which allow for unlimited subway and bus travel, free entry to **The Mackintosh House** and **Queen's Cross**, and 10% discounts at the Mackintosh-designed **Willow Tea Rooms**.



The striking façade of Manchester's Imperial War Museum is a must-see for fans of its designer Daniel Libeskind

Daniel Libeskind

Manchester's **Imperial War Museum North** (www.iwm.org.uk/visits/iwm-north) is a must-see for Daniel Libeskind disciples. Sitting beside the glittering MediaCityUK development in the Salford Quays area, Libeskind's complex is structured around three interlocking shards. Representing air, earth and water, they are remnants of a metaphorical globe ravaged by conflict. Doubling as the museum's entranceway, the 55m-high air shard also has a viewing balcony which faces the Manchester skyline.

What's hot?

Riba's annual Stirling Prize is awarded to the year's best British building. 2014's winner was the **Everyman Theatre** (in **Liverpool**, north-west England), designed by Haworth Tompkins and memorable for the large shutters on its frontage, featuring images of locals 'like saints on a cathedral' (www.everymanplayhouse.com). Another way for tourists to keep abreast of British architectural trends is by visiting **the Bartlett School of Architecture**: this renowned London faculty hosts regular free lectures that anyone can attend (www.bartlett.ucl.ac.uk/architecture).

Architecture News

V&A in Dundee, Scotland

Set to open in 2017, the harbourside **V&A Museum of Design Dundee** (30 miles north of Edinburgh) will be a shrine to Scotland's artistic heritage (www.vandadundee.org). Dreamt up by Japanese architect Kengo Kuma, the ship-like building will also serve as a relaxing 'living room for the city'.

Design Museum move

Foregoing its current home in an old banana warehouse, London's **Design Museum** is to relocate to Kensington's former Commonwealth Institute in 2016 (<http://designmuseum.org>). Under its copper-clad hyperbolic roof, this Grade II-listed

building will boast snazzy new interiors by John Pawson – famous for past work in galleries and Calvin Klein stores alike.

Damien Hirst's gallery

Damien Hirst's personal art collection will be on display in 2015 in south London's Lambeth district. Designed by Caruso St John Architects – they of Tate Britain's recent revamp – **Newport Street Gallery** will merge three listed warehouses and two new structures to stretch the eponymous road's entire 240 metre length.

www.carusostjohn.com/projects/newport-street-gallery

Next for Living Architecture

The non-profit Living Architecture asks fabled creatives to design British holiday-rental houses. Due in spring 2015 to the north-east of London is **A House For Essex**, designed by abstract British artist **Grayson Perry** to colourfully evoke ancient pilgrimage chapels. In 2016 comes architect Peter Zumthor's Secular Retreat, a serene glass-and-concrete bolthole in beautiful **Devon**, south-west England.

www.living-architecture.co.uk



Something special – a taster of Living Architecture's A House For Essex, designed by Grayson Perry

Frank Gehry's London debut

Phase Three of the redevelopment of London's iconic **Battersea Power Station** – establishing the cultural quarter of Nine Elms – marks Frank Gehry's permanent London debut (www.nineelmslondon.com). Gehry Partners, together with Foster + Partners, are to install a new high street, **The Electric Boulevard**, which will connect to a new part of the area to be known as **Malaysia Square**.

Arts fairs and open studios

Britain has some of the world's most exciting Art Fairs, with the biggest contemporary carnival in London's art calendar, **Frieze**, coming to town every October. As well as being able to see and buy art by more than 1,000 of the world's leading artists, the fair features [Frieze Projects](#), a unique programme of artist commissions, as well as [Frieze Talks](#), debates, panel discussions and keynote lectures. In 2014, the fair also introduced Live, a new section dedicated to ambitious performance-based installations. Frieze London is housed in a bespoke structure in Regent's Park, located in the heart of London and within easy walking distance of the city's West End. www.friezelondon.com



Frieze! It's time to buy some art – or ogle some of the priciest paintings before someone else does

Taking place in **Bristol** in September, **Battersea Park** in London in October and **Hampstead Heath** in June, **The Affordable Art Fair's** formula is simple: a relaxed, inspiring environment and a diverse range of quality contemporary art at affordable prices. In Bristol, you will be able to visit 55 galleries in one afternoon, under one roof and buy paintings, original artist-made prints, sculpture and photography from a reasonable £40 all the way up to £4,000. www.affordableartfair.com

Held each year in March, the **BADA Antiques and Fine Art Fair** is known for quality and elegance, located as it is in one of London's most fashionable and upmarket districts, Duke



BADA Antiques and Fine Art Fair is a chance to pick up a special piece to take home

of York Square. With art and antiques for sale ranging from 16th-century works of art to contemporary furniture, collectors and first-time buyers alike flock there to pick up something special. Just around the corner is **The Saatchi Gallery** for even more cultural stimulation. www.bada-antiques-fair.co.uk

Belfast's International Arts Festival is the largest festival of its kind in Ireland and brings international attention to the city's dynamic arts practitioners. Covering theatre, dance, classical music, literature, jazz, comedy, visual arts, folk music and popular music, it's no wonder the festival attracts audiences of 60,000 annually. Spreading out over

the entire city and lasting for 16 days, there are plenty of opportunities to buy a piece of original art. www.belfastfestival.com

Scotland is an artists' haven with the **Edinburgh Art Fair**, its largest annual arts show, a top event in the arts calendar. Bringing the finest emerging talent, as well as the established, big name artists to Edinburgh in November, the city's art fair has artists demonstrations, printmaking and painting classes and 'Painting with Leo', where old and young come together to create their own work. Check the website for some helpful advice on buying art at the fair (main thing is to go in with an open mind as you never know what you might find!) What's more, all purchased artworks will be complimentary and professionally wrapped to ensure safe transportation home and shipping can also be arranged worldwide. www.artedinburgh.com

Open Studios are another way to immerse yourself in Britain's cultural life and many offer the chance to meet the makers for a unique insight into their craft and to buy original art direct from the makers.

In **north Wales**, Helfa Gelf /Art Trail is the biggest Open Studio Event that takes place each September. A free annual event that spreads across north Wales with studios taking part in Gwynedd, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham, it offers a unique chance for visitors to experience this normally hidden world and get to chat to the artists about their creative process and buy directly from them (www.helfagelf.co.uk). Elsewhere in Wales, **Pembrokeshire** (on the south-west coast) has a high concentration of small independent galleries that consider themselves 'on the edge' of the arts scene and so is well worth a visit to pick up something a little different to take home. www.artpembrokeshire.co.uk

The Late Shows are a cultural tapas of after-dark events and exhibitions centering on the cultural venues in Newcastle/Gateshead that are usually closed in the evening. Museums, galleries and visitor attractions stay up late and programme an event or activity different to their normal offering with plenty of opportunities to purchase an artwork that might catch your eye on your way around the city. Over the years everything from interactive art, treasure trails, behind the scenes tours and exhibition previews to live music, DJs, discos and artist talks have taken place and buses take visitors from venue to venue with lots of opportunities to stop off in the city's many bars and pubs. www.thelateshows.org.uk

Made Brighton Design and Craft Fair takes place in November in the historic Corn Exchange in a city known for its cool and quirky arts scene. Over 120 innovative and original makers and designers show and sell their work, from beautiful and unique jewellery, textiles, glass, ceramics and furniture directly to the public. Brighton is one hour by train from London. www.brighton-made.co.uk.

In Northern Ireland, **Belfast's Cathedral Quarter** is home to more than 50 creative and cultural organisations, all clustered together in an art lovers haven. Among them is a dedicated photographic gallery that hosts exhibitions by local and international photographers and runs photography courses, a print workshop that exhibits and sells work by local artists. **The MAC** is where all ages can create art in a fun environment, and **Golden Thread Gallery** offers a dedicated sales area for art lovers and collectors to enjoy. www.thecathedralquarter.com



Belfast's Arts Festival combines theatre, music, dance and the chance to buy art

Championing creativity through exhibitions, open studios, performance, fetes, music, workshops and tours, **Hackney Wicked** in London's trendy East End allows visitors the chance to explore the labyrinth of artist studios, live-work spaces and up-and-coming galleries hidden behind the normally unwelcoming façades of industrial streets and warehouse walls. Meet the artists and buy directly from them while winding your way around Hackney in August, when the neighbourhood becomes alive with creative activities and an unbeatable atmosphere of laid-back arty fun. www.hackneywicked.co.uk

In Bristol, **Spike Island** is an international centre for the development of contemporary art and design where people of all ages can engage directly with art through participation and discussion. Pay a visit to browse their reasonably priced prints and support the up-and-coming artists of tomorrow. Bristol is approximately two hours by train from London. www.spikeisland.org.uk

In Yorkshire, each year **York Open Studios** selects the best artists and makers living or working within a ten-mile radius of the city, to exhibit painting, sculpture, printmaking, textiles, jewellery, photography, stained glass, wood-carving, furniture and ceramics. Open over two spring weekends, visitors can talk to and experience the world of the selected artists and makers and buy their wares. www.yorkopenstudios.co.uk

If you are looking for quirky galleries from which to buy British art, **The New Craftsmen** in central London's affluent Mayfair curates a selection of art, ceramics, textiles and jewellery from around Britain, working with a selection of our finest craft makers to showcase the materials, skills and craft products of the British Isles. www.thenewcraftsmen.com

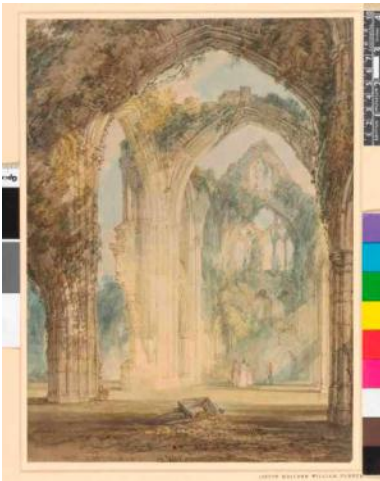
Step into British paintings and poems

Instagramming and blogging about a destination's breathtaking scenery may now be an integral part of today's cultural experiences but artists and poets have been capturing the British landscape and its essence for centuries. You can step right into your favourite piece of art, or the emotive words of a much-loved poem, by visiting the landscapes that inspired some of Britain's most well-known poets and painters.

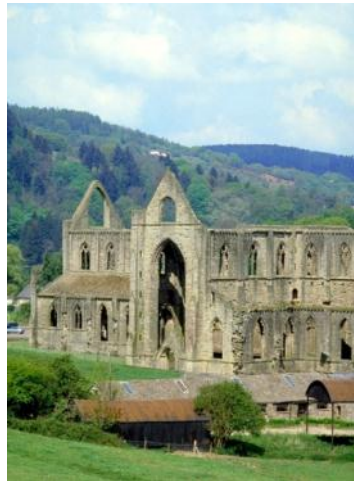
The painters

JMW Turner

Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775 - 1851) was unlike many artists of his day, in that he was successful during his lifetime, throughout his entire career. Regarded as one of Britain's masters of landscape art, he left more than 19,000 watercolours, drawings and oils to the nation in his will, many of which are displayed in London's **National Gallery** and **Tate Britain**.



JMW Turner's masterpiece of Tintern Abbey... © The Trustees of the British Museum



...and Tintern Abbey as it stands today

In this particular painting he has captured **Tintern Abbey** in south Wales - and today you can see this extraordinary Cistercian abbey in very much the same revealing light as Turner did. Set in an area of outstanding beauty, hugging the banks of the River Wye and sitting on the cusp of the Wales/England border, Tintern Abbey is Wales' best-preserved medieval abbey. While the shell of the 12th century abbey may no longer have a roof, the monastery retains plenty of its original design - visitors can still admire the huge windows and impressive archways, while elaborate

decorative details are still prevalent on the walls. And the abbey's awe-inspiring church, built in the 13th century, stands pretty much the same today as it did then.

<http://cadw.wales.gov.uk/daysout/tinternabbey>

The countryside around Tintern Abbey is spectacular; experience its natural beauty with a walk around the nearby woodland and footpaths, including a pleasant 5km walk to the limestone cliffs known as the **Devil's Pulpit**. There's a wealth of traditional pubs and tearooms offering refreshment from the very start of the route - with Tintern Abbey as its backdrop, **The Anchor Inn's** bar is situated in the original cider mill of Tintern Abbey.

www.theanchortintern.com

How do I get there? The nearest train station to Tintern Abbey is Chepstow (a 15-minute drive from the abbey), which can be reached from London in just under three hours. You can reach Chepstow by train from Wales' capital Cardiff in around half an hour.

Where can I see the painting? The painting of Tintern Abbey is at the **British Museum**.

www.britishmuseum.org

John Constable

The **Dedham Vale and Stour Valley** regions in the county of Essex, around an hour from London, was immortalised by John Constable in many of his paintings more than 200 years ago - now classified as an Area of Outstanding Beauty.

The Hay Wain is arguably Constable's most well-known painting; the scene was set next to the **Flatford Mill**, by farmer Willy Lott's House, in the charming hamlet of Flatford (which also inspired some of his other famous works, such as *The Mill Stream*, *Boat-Building* and *The White Horse*).



*Constable's The Hay Wain
1821 © The National Gallery
London 2014*



*Visit the very place that
inspired Constable's famous
painting - Willy Lott's cottage
in the Essex village of Flatford*

Admirers of *The Hay Wain* can follow the riverside footpath next to the mill, past the lock and over the bridge, and find out more about Constable in an exhibition about his life and works at the National Trust-owned **Bridge Cottage**. There are daily tours, with a guide showing copies of Constable's pictures while standing next to the scene as it is today (www.nationaltrust.org.uk/flatford-bridge-cottage). Budding artists can even recreate their own Constable image at the Flatford Mill - it's also the home of the Field Studies Council Field Centre, which offers a wide-ranging programme of environment and art-based courses. www.field-studies-council.org/centres/flatfordmill

Many of Constable's paintings feature the town of **Dedham**, including Dedham Mill (which his father owned), and Dedham Parish Church, St. Mary the Virgin; this is also home to an original Constable - *The Ascension* - one of only three religious paintings by the artist. Mix in a little contemporary art with your Constable pilgrimage with a visit to the Dedham Art & Craft Centre. Housed in a magnificent converted church it showcases work from more than 30 artisans and specialist retailers. www.dedhamartandcraftcentre.co.uk

How do I get there? The nearest train station to both Dedham and Flatford is Manningtree, an hour from London by train and then a ten-minute drive.

Where can I see the painting? *The Hay Wain* is on display at London's **National Gallery**.

David Hockney

Born in 1937 in the city of Bradford in Yorkshire, north England, David Hockney's work may be synonymous with the US and his use of vivid colours to depict its urban life, but it was to the county of his birth that he turned to for inspiration for the paintings shown in one of his most recent exhibitions *David Hockney RA: A Bigger Picture*. Exhibited at London's Royal Academy of Arts in 2012, this body of work celebrated the artist's depiction of landscape, with a particular focus on the **Yorkshire Wolds**.

It's this part of England that admirers of Hockney's work should travel to, to see the landscape and sites captured in the paintings. The Yorkshire Wolds is an attractive stretch of countryside packed with gentle rolling hills, chocolate box villages and market towns, and unspoilt scenery. Welcome to Yorkshire (www.yorkshire.com) has produced a special

David Hockney Trail, which takes you on the road from Bridlington to York, veering off to take in the surrounding countryside scenery depicted in his paintings. Three of the most popular stops on the route include the pretty village of **Thixendale** – the location for Hockney’s series of paintings called *Three Trees near Thixendale*, in which he studied the same trees throughout the seasons, and also makes for a perfect picnic spot! Venture to the village of Kilham to see the location that inspired Hockney’s July/Winter Tunnel series of paintings and films, and Hockney enthusiasts should also put Salts Mill in **Bradford** on their itinerary. Hockney knows the family that own Salts Mill, the Silvers, well and it’s reported that they are the reason he started to paint his native Wolds. It’s now the location for one of the world’s largest collections of Hockney’s work in its 1853 Gallery, which is located in the impressive World Heritage Site of **Saltaire**. www.saltsmill.org.uk

How do I get there? Saltaire is less than an hour’s drive from Leeds, which can be reached from London in just over two hours by train. Alternatively, travel to York by train from London in just under two hours and Thixendale is then around 45 minutes’ drive from York.

Where can I see the paintings? Salts Mill is currently exhibiting ‘25 Trees and Other Pictures’ by David Hockney.

The poets

William Wordsworth

‘I wandered lonely as a cloud/ That floats on high o’er vales and hills/ When all at once I saw a crowd/ A host, of golden daffodils.’ Back in April 1802 William Wordsworth’s sister Dorothy made an entry into her journal describing how she and her brother came across an abundance of daffodils in Glencoyne Park near **Ullswater**, one of the largest lakes in Cumbria’s Lake District, in north-west England. It is thought that this journal entry inspired Wordsworth to write one of his most famous poems, *Daffodils*. Visitors can fully immerse themselves in the poem; see Dorothy’s original journal containing the entry at **The Wordsworth Museum at Dove Cottage in Grasmere**, and head up to Ullswater around the same time of year and experience those host of daffodils. <http://wordsworth.org.uk>



It's little wonder that William Wordsworth was inspired by the beauty of Ullswater in the Lake District

Yet the views around Ullswater are simply stunning at any time of year, on land that is now cared for by the National Trust. Take a walk through the tranquil Ullswater Valley and stop for a picnic by Aira Force, a 65ft drop waterfall that can be reached through atmospheric woodlands and glades. www.golakes.co.uk

How do I get there? The nearest train station to Ullswater is Penrith, around a three-hour train journey from London, or 90 minutes by train from Glasgow.

Where can I see the original manuscript? It’s on display at the **British Library** in London.

Dylan Thomas



Soak up the literary atmosphere: Dylan Thomas' Boathouse in Laugharne is a must-see for fans of Wales' most famous poet

Take a stroll over St John's Hill in the town of **Laugharne**, south-west Wales, and you'll be walking in the footsteps of Wales' most famous poet, Dylan Thomas; he immortalised this very walk in his 1944 work *Poem in October*. Now entitled the Dylan Thomas Birthday Walk (so called because he took this route on his 30th birthday), it is a pleasant two-mile walk; the views you experience will bring to mind the words he used to describe the stroll he took here. There are information boards at all the viewpoints of what Dylan described as the 'heron-priested shore', where you can discover more about Dylan's life and work. If you wait to do the walk on your own birthday (and can prove it's on that date), you can claim complimentary

goodies at several local businesses! www.visitwales.com/explore/literature/laugharne-famous-attractions

Laugharne has many strong connections with Dylan Thomas. Visit **The Boathouse** located on the Taf Estuary, where Dylan and his family lived between 1949 - 1953, for a host of Thomas memorabilia and original family furniture on display (www.dylanthomasboathouse.com). And why not stay at the five-star boutique **Browns Hotel** while you're in Laugharne; it's documented as one of Dylan's favourite pubs when he lived in the town (www.browns-hotel.co.uk). Ardent Dylan fans will be pleased to know that Laugharne also hosts a series of Dylan Weekends between May and September, each inspired by a different element of Dylan's talent, looking at his poetry and life story, music and film, plus radio and comedy. <http://thedylanweekends.com>

How do I get there? Laugharne is around a 90 minutes' drive from Cardiff.

Where can I see an original manuscript? Two original manuscript worksheets for Dylan's *Poem in October* are on display at the **Dylan Thomas Centre** in his birthplace of Swansea (a 3.5-hour train journey from London, one hour from Cardiff) www.dylanthomas.com/dylan-thomas-centre

Robert Burns

Often regarded as 'Scotland's Bard', Robert Burns wrote passionately about Scottish life, the land's regions, traditions, culture, class and religion. One of his best-known poems/songs - after *Auld Lang Syne*, sung as the clock strikes midnight every 31 December - is *Ye Banks and Braes of Bonnie Doon*. The Doon he describes is the Ayrshire river that flows past Burns's birthplace in **Alloway**, south-western Scotland.

It's here, near the shores of the river, that you can visit the **Robert Burns Birthplace Museum** and soak up the literary atmosphere among the collection of his works before exploring **Burns Cottage** where the poet was born (www.burnsmuseum.org.uk). Also worth visiting is the region of Dumfries & Galloway where Burns moved with his family; you'll see why he chose to use these picturesque landscapes as inspiration for some of his works. Original writings and some of



The Robert Burns Birthplace Museum is fittingly near locations, such as the River Doon, that inspired his poems and songs

his original possessions are on display at his former home, **Ellisland Farm**, which is now a museum. www.ellislandfarm.co.uk

How do I get there? The nearest station to Alloway is Ayr (a ten-minute drive away), while Ayr is less than an hour's train journey from Glasgow. Dumfries is under two hours by train from Glasgow.

Where can I see the original manuscript? **Glasgow Libraries** recently obtained the manuscript of *Ye Banks and Braes of Bonnie Doon*, which had been in a private collection for more than 100 years. It is now kept at the Special Collections at the Mitchell Library, which houses more than 5,000 items of Burns' work. While this area is not open to the general public, material from the Collection can be viewed during library opening hours. www.glasgowlife.org.uk/libraries/the-mitchell-library

If you liked that... you'll love this! Culture tips for second time visitors

If it's your second time to Britain, and you've done the British Museum (well - admittedly that would take a few goes) partied like there was no tomorrow at Glastonbury and exhausted yourself at the Edinburgh Festivals, try some of Britain's less fêted, but equally fantastic, alternatives to the tried, tested and well-trodden cultural haunts.

If you like... the historical riches of the British Museum, go to the **Ashmolean Museum**. Hop on the Oxford Tube (actually a bus) from outside London Victoria station and in two hours you'll be in the historic city of Oxford. One of the city's gems it is, in fact, Britain's first public museum. You could spend hours exploring the objects and artworks but also make time for a visit to the opulent tapestries, the world's largest collection of Raphael drawings and one of the best collections of modern Chinese art in the western world. There's also a rooftop café with deckchairs in the summer - the perfect sun spot and place to be inspired by Oxford's celebrated spires. www.ashmolean.org



The magnificent Ashmolean in Oxford, home to art treasures and a lovely rooftop terrace. Credit Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford

If you loved the dinosaurs... at the **Natural History Museum** head to the **Ulster Museum** in Northern Ireland for more prehistoric delights. There are dinosaur bones, rare objects from the Americas, Africa and Oceania, British and Irish masters' paintings and plenty more besides. The layout is fun - you start at the top and wind your way down the museum, going from pottery down to fossils. The museum is in the **Botanic Gardens** and surrounded by plant life and trees, located in the buzzing **Queen's Quarter**, home to funky bars, restaurants and the city's university. www.nmni.com



The Manchester International Festival is a hot ticket for 2015

If you had a ball... at the Edinburgh International Festival, it's your chance to experience the **Manchester International Festival** and explore one of Britain's most buzzing cities. Manchester is one of Britain's most exciting cultural hotspots. For nearly three weeks opera, pop, ballet and experimental art come together in one big feast of artistic enjoyment.

Visitors to the 2015 festival will be able to see *Tree of Codes*, a new contemporary ballet directed and choreographed by Wayne McGregor with music composed by Jamie xx and visual concept by Olafur Eliasson. Also confirmed is *The Age of Starlight*, in which Professor Brian Cox writes and presents. Families can enjoy *The Tale of Mr Tumble*, a new theatre show for young children where TV presenter Justin Fletcher invites audiences to step inside the colourful world of one of Britain's most cherished children's TV characters. The full programme for MIF15 will be announced in February 2015. www.mif.co.uk

If you were spoilt for choice... at the National Gallery, visit the **Bowes Museum** in Northumberland (a three-hour train journey from London). The location is spectacular, though a far cry from the National Gallery's urban setting of Trafalgar Square. The Bowes is surrounded by green parkland and housed in a French chateau. John Bowes and his love Joséphine Coffin-Chevalier collected 15,000 objects and artworks to marvel at, including El Grecos and an 18th-century mechanical swan, that has enchanted millions of people. One not to be missed painting is the *Portrait of Olive Boteler Porter*, which was revealed to be an authentic Van Dyck. www.thebowesmuseum.org.uk



Anthony van Dyck (1599-1641), Portrait of Olive Boteler Porter, The Bowes Museum

If you've partied at Glastonbury... you'll have been blown away by good music and mud, but you'll probably know that the festival has become so very popular that it's almost impossible to lay your hands on a ticket. No matter! Boutique festivals are much more hip these days anyway. **Festival no 6** in Wales was a new addition to the scene in 2012, and takes place once again at the enchanted village of Portmeirion in Wales in September 2015. The setting is curious, a purpose built Italianate village that has seen filming of the *Prisoners* series, and whose well-tended gardens and beautiful green spaces make a special backdrop to the music. And the Secret Garden Party in Cambridgeshire, east England, is not quite so secret anymore, so those at the vanguard of culture head to its sister festival **Wilderness**. Less well known, it includes a gourmet feast and some naked wild swimming on the bill alongside the live acts, all in the gorgeous Oxfordshire countryside, around a two-hour drive from London. The 2015 festival will be held between 6 - 9 August.

Hot 2015 Exhibitions For Your Diary

There's no excuse not to be cultured next year. Britain has cracking exhibitions, from man of the moment (on screen and in the galleries) JMW Turner's paintings on show, to exhibitions that will teach you something new about subjects as diverse as Coral Reefs and computer games - and not forgetting sure-fire blockbuster *Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty*, there's plenty to get your culture claws into.

Here's our calendar of exhibitions to diarise now.

'The Beginning of that Freedom' **Houses of Parliament, London**

20 January - November 2015

Westminster Hall will host a colourful banner exhibition that charts an 800-year history of rights and representation. Nine artists have been commissioned to create 18 large banners that will line the walls of this magnificent medieval space where numerous trials, banquets and important state occasions have taken place. www.parliament.uk/visiting

Turner in January 2015 **Scottish National Gallery, Edinburgh, Scotland**

1 - 31 January 2015

These works, bequeathed to the Scottish National Gallery by collector Henry Vaughan, span Turner's career, from his early topographical wash drawings to his atmospheric sketches of continental Europe from the 1830s and 1840s. Vaughan stipulated they should be 'exhibited to the public all at one time, free of charge, during the month of January' which has happened for more than a century.

www.nationalgalleries.org/whatson/on-now-coming-soon/turner-in-january-2015



Sea View, by J M W Turner, at the Scottish National Galleries in January

Self: Image and identity - self-portraiture from Van Dyck to Louise Bourgeois **Turner Contemporary, Margate, Kent, south-east England**

24 January - 10 May 2015

Organised in collaboration with the National Portrait Gallery, the exhibition presents artist self-portraits from the 16th-century to the present day. More than 60 works from the National Portrait Gallery will be presented alongside key 20th-century and contemporary self-portraits from major public and private international collections.

<http://turnercontemporary.org>

Rubens and his Legacy: Van Dyck to Cézanne **Royal Academy, London**

24 January - 10 April 2015

The Royal Academy of Arts will present the first major exhibition in Britain to examine Rubens' influence on art history. *Rubens and His Legacy: Van Dyck to Cézanne* is an exploration of the artistic legacy of Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640), the most influential of

Flemish painters. The exhibition will bring together masterpieces by Rubens and the artists who were inspired by him, during his lifetime and up until the 20th century, including Van Dyck, Watteau, Turner and Delacroix, as well as Manet, Cézanne, Renoir, Klimt and Picasso. *Rubens and His Legacy* will present more than 160 works, comprising paintings, drawings and prints drawn from some of the finest collections world-wide.

www.royalacademy.org.uk

Cornelia Parker; and The 1960s: BOOM **The Whitworth, Manchester, north-west England**

The Whitworth reopens 14 February 2015 with a major solo exhibition from one of Britain's most acclaimed contemporary artists, Cornelia Parker - her work invites you to witness the transformation of ordinary objects into something compelling and extraordinary. It is an extensive exhibition that features a wide range of work made during Parker's career, from her signature piece *Cold Dark Matter; An Exploded View* (1991) alongside two new commissions and many other new works.



ColdDarkMatter by Cornelia Parker, whose solo show opens The Whitworth, Manchester, following refurbishment

Reflecting a uniquely British artistic perspective, in The 1960s: BOOM, works by Peter Blake, Allen Jones, Bridget Riley and Peter Phillips manifest the riot of colour, fashion and art of the era. Richard Hamilton's acerbic riposte to a western obsession with youth and consumerism, Colin Self's chilling reflection of subversive cold war activity and Elizabeth Frink's brutish depictions of masculinity also serve to remind us of the incendiary nature of this radical decade. BOOM opens the newly refurbished Whitworth, Manchester.

www.whitworth.manchester.ac.uk/whats-on/exhibitions/upcomingexhibitions

Inventing Impressionism: How Paul Durand-Ruel created the Modern Art Market **National Gallery, London**

4 March - 31 May 2015

Impressionism produced some of the most controversial images of its time, yet is now one of painting's best-loved movements. It owes much of its global success to the endeavours of one man: art dealer Paul Durand-Ruel (1831-1922) a key figure that discovered Monet, Pissarro, Degas and Renoir in the early 1870s, buying their works when they were still largely ignored or ridiculed. www.nationalgallery.org.uk

Alexander McQueen - Savage Beauty **Victoria and Albert Museum, London**

14 March - 19 July 2015

Celebrating the extraordinary creative talent of one of the most innovative designers of recent times, Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty will be the first and largest retrospective of McQueen's work to be presented in Europe. When originally shown at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2011 it became one of the Museum's top ten most visited exhibitions. The V & A exhibition will have more emphasis on his London roots.

www.vam.ac.uk/content/exhibitions/exhibition-alexander-mcqueen-savage-beauty

Canaletto: Celebrating Britain
Compton Verney, Warwickshire, West Midlands, England

14 March - 7 June 2015

This exhibition spotlights the paintings and drawings which Canaletto created between 1746 and 1755, when he chose to celebrate the latest achievements of British architecture and engineering. This is the first time that these painting have been gathered together.

www.comptonverney.org.uk

Painting Paradise: The Art of the Garden
The Queen's Gallery, London

20 March - 11 October 2015

Whether a sacred sanctuary, a place for scientific study, a haven for the solitary thinker or a space for pure enjoyment and delight, gardens are where mankind and nature meet. A new exhibition at The Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace will explore the many ways in which the garden has been celebrated in art through more than 150 paintings, drawings, books, manuscripts and decorative arts from the Royal Collection, including some of the earliest and rarest surviving records of gardens and plants.

From spectacular paintings of epic royal landscapes to jewel-like manuscripts and delicate botanical studies, Painting Paradise: The Art of the Garden reveals the changing character of the garden and its enduring appeal for artists from the 16th to the early 20th century, including Leonardo da Vinci, Rembrandt van Rijn and Carl Fabergé. www.royalcollection.org.uk



Marco Ricci, A View of the Cascade, Bushy Park Water Gardens, c. 1715. Credit Royal Collection Trust © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth

The Body Beautiful: Art and Thought in Ancient Greece
British Museum, London

26 March - 05 July 2015

The ancient Greeks invented the modern idea of the human body in art as an object of sensory delight and as an expression of the intelligent mind. The exhibition invites visitors to engage with artworks that have shaped the way we think about ourselves, with more than 100 artworks spanning more than 2,000 years, including ten pieces of free standing sculpture. www.britishmuseum.org

Coral Reefs: Secret Cities of the Sea
Natural History Museum, London

Opens 27 March 2015

Coral Reefs: Secret Cities of the Sea will include a live coral reef, a virtual dive and more than 200 specimens such as corals, fish and fossils. Opening on 27 March 2015, this exhibition will explore the richness of life beneath the waves, and its announcement marks World Oceans Day. www.nhm.ac.uk

Against Captain's Orders: A Journey into the Uncharted National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London

28 March - August 2015

In an exclusive first for the museum industry, the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich is collaborating with Punchdrunk Enrichment to create an exhibit for six- to 12-year olds and their families. *Against Captain's Orders: A Journey into the Uncharted*, takes audience members on the adventure of a lifetime through the National Maritime Museum's extraordinary collection of maritime artefacts. Exciting, enlightening, and, who knows, perhaps just a tiny bit dangerous, *Against Captain's Orders: A Journey into the Uncharted* promises an unusual theatrical journey through the museum.

www.rmg.co.uk/national-maritime-museum

Indigenous Australia: Enduring Civilisation British Museum, London

23 April - 2 August 2015

Discover Indigenous Australian objects - products of a continuing culture dating back more than 55,000 years. The impact of European colonialism was profound leaving a legacy that is still contested. This exhibition showcases remarkable objects from the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries and includes some of the oldest objects collected in Australia.

www.britishmuseum.org

What is Luxury? Victoria and Albert Museum, LONDON

25 April - 27 September 2015

The exhibition will interrogate ideas of luxury today and address how luxury is made and understood in a physical, conceptual and cultural capacity. Extraordinary works of craftsmanship will be on display including a couture gown by fashion designer Iris van Herpen and fine examples of haute horlogerie by British watchmaker George Daniels. www.vam.ac.uk

Love Is Enough - Andy Warhol and William Morris, curated by Jeremy Deller Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, West Midlands, central England

25 April - August 2015

Love is Enough brings together two major international artists for the first time - Andy Warhol and William Morris to explore and reveal their similar interests and ideas and parallels between their works. The exhibition is being curated by the artist Jeremy Deller and is being developed by Modern Art Oxford. Both artists are a significant influence on his work, which explores socio-political aspects of contemporary culture, in particular in relationship to class and politics. Warhol and Morris were both strongly committed to creating a more democratic context for art, through both the design and production of their work. The exhibition will bring together significant and iconic works by both artists from public and private collections including some rarely seen work. It will include archival



*Andy Warhol meets William Morris
and love is the topic - at Birmingham
Museums and Art Gallery*

material owned or made by both artists that sheds light on their influences and working practices. www.bmag.org.uk

Turner's Wessex: Architecture and Ambition, Salisbury Museum, Wiltshire, England

22 May - 27 September 2015



'View of Salisbury from Old Sarum' by J.M.W. Turner, photo courtesy of Salisbury Museum

The exhibition throws new light on the earliest work of the young Turner in and around Salisbury and its magnificent cathedral. Turner first visited Salisbury in 1795 when he was 20 years old and later returned to paint an area that captivated him as an artist. His depictions of Stonehenge in particular proved to be among his most hauntingly atmospheric works and he produced a series of watercolours of Salisbury. The third part of this exhibition will chart Turner's fascination with the wider Wessex region - spanning the area of Wiltshire around Salisbury, as well as the Dorset coast, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. It culminates in Turner's record of the historic visit made by the French King, the first

such visit to England since the 14th century, to Queen Victoria in 1844.

www.salisburymuseum.org.uk

Game On

Life Science Centre, Newcastle upon Tyne, north-east England

25 May 2015 - 1 November 2015

Game On - the ultimate exploration of the history, culture and future of videogames. Showcasing the finest arcade machines, consoles and hand held games to have been produced, the exhibition also features the newest advancements in game design and technology. Learn about early gaming from Penny Arcades, Pinball, Pachinko, Space Wars, Computer Space and Pong and demo 3D technology and gaming, as well as exploring the latest development in virtual reality. Game On takes an in-depth look at the people and technologies that have revolutionised games and how we play them. Highly interactive, with more than 150 playable games, experience the best of both new and retro games. The exhibition includes a dedicated section to arcade games, with titles such as Pac-Man, Defender and Donkey Kong. Get your hands on playable consoles ranging from back in the day through to the latest must-haves! *Depending on the game played - age restrictions may apply. www.life.org.uk

Shoes - Pain and Pleasure

Victoria and Albert Museum, London

13 June 2015 - 31 January 2016

This exhibition will look at the extremes of footwear from around the globe, presenting around 200 pairs of shoes ranging from a sandal decorated in pure gold leaf originating from ancient Egypt to the most elaborate designs by contemporary makers. It will consider the cultural significance and transformative capacity of shoes and will examine the latest developments in footwear technology creating the possibility of ever higher heels and dramatic shapes. Examples from famous shoe wearers and collectors will be shown

alongside a dazzling range of historic shoes, many of which have not been displayed before. www.vam.ac.uk/content/exhibitions/shoes-pleasure-and-pain

Jackson Pollock: Blind Spots **Tate Liverpool, Liverpool, north-west England**

30 June - 18 October 2015

Widely considered to be one of the most influential and provocative American artists of the 20th century, Pollock famously pioneered action painting, a process that saw him drip paint on canvases resting on the studio floor. Jackson Pollock: Blind Spots presents the first exhibition in more than three decades of Pollock's paintings made between 1951 and 1953, shedding light on a less well known, but extremely influential, part of his practice and departure from his signature technique.

www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-liverpool/exhibition/jackson-pollock-blind-spots



Jackson Pollock, 1912-1956. Yellow Islands 1952 © The Pollock-Krasner Foundation ARS, NY and DACS, London 2014.

"The Grand Tour Season One" **Nottingham Contemporary, Chatsworth, Derby Museums and the Harley Gallery, Welbeck, East Midlands, England**

July - September 2015

Contemporary artists including Turner Prize-winner Simon Starling, Peter Blake and architect Rem Koolhaas have been invited to create work in this modern Grand Tour aiming to reveal hidden treasures from private collections, juxtaposing them with contemporary art exhibitions across the four venues. www.thegrandtour.uk.com

Soundscapes: Listening to Paintings **National Gallery, London**

8 July - 6 September 2015

After the highly successful and experimental Metamorphosis: Titian 2012, where contemporary artists - including choreographers, composers, dancers, poets and visual artists - responded to paintings by Renaissance master Titian, the National Gallery is inviting six sound artists and musicians to each select a painting from the National Gallery's collection and to create new work in response to it. Each artist will be given a room in the Sainsbury Wing exhibition galleries in which their chosen painting and their sound/musical response will be installed.



The new sound pieces will be site specific and can only be heard in the context of the Soundscapes exhibition with the painting that inspired it. Relying on minimal text, the idea is to give visitors the opportunity to experience and think about these works of art in a very different way, through what they hear as much as what they see.

www.nationalgallery.org.uk

Bailey's Stardust at the National Galleries of Scotland features some of the starriest subjects in photography, including Kate Moss

Bailey's Stardust
National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh

18 July - 18 October 2015

Hundreds of photographs by David Bailey, one of the world's most famous photographers will be on show from July to October 2015 in the largest exhibition of David Bailey's portraits to be shown in Britain. It will feature more than 300 portraits including works that depict Bailey's time in East Africa, Papua New Guinea, Australia, Delhi and the Naga Hills, as well as icons from the worlds of fashion and the arts, striking portraits of the Rolling Stones, Catherine Bailey and the East End of London.

www.nationalgalleries.org/whatson/on-now-coming-soon/baileys-stardust

Nature Camera Action!
M Shed, Bristol, south-west England

18 July - 1 November 2015 (exact dates TBC)

Celebrating Bristol European Green Capital it will reveal the secrets of making incredible wildlife films, and is produced with support from the BBC Natural History Unit, BBC Earth and BBC History.

www.nationalmediamuseum.org.uk/PlanAVisit/Exhibitions/NatureCameraAction/About.aspx

Scottish Artists 1750 - 1900: From Caledonia to the Continent
The Queen's Gallery, Palace of Holyroodhouse, Edinburgh, Scotland

6 August - 7 February

This is the first-ever exhibition devoted to Scottish art in the Royal Collection and brings together paintings, drawings and miniatures collected by monarchs from George III to Queen Victoria. It includes the work of painters who were born in Scotland and travelled abroad, such as Allan Ramsay and Sir David Wilkie, and of those whose inspiration remained firmly rooted in their native land, such as Alexander Nasmyth and James Giles. In particular, the exhibition highlights the importance and influence of artists whose work was shaped by the ideas of the Scottish Enlightenment.

www.royalcollection.org.uk

THE WORLD GOES POP
Tate Modern, London

17 September 2015 - 24 January 2016

This groundbreaking exhibition will reveal how artists around the world engaged with the spirit of pop art, from Latin America to Asia, and from Europe to the Middle East. Exploding the traditional story of pop art, The World Goes Pop shows how different cultures contributed, re-thought and responded to the movement. Around 200 works from the 1960s and 1970s will be brought together, many shown in Britain for the first time. The exhibition will reveal how pop art was never just a celebration of western consumer culture, but was often a subversive international language. www.tate.org.uk



Ushio Shinohara, Doll Festival 1966
Photo courtesy of Tokyo Gallery+BTA. Part of The World Goes Pop at Tate Modern, 17 Sep 2015-24 Jan 2016

Ai Weiwei, Royal Academy of Arts, London

19 September 2015 - 13 December 2015

The Royal Academy will present a landmark exhibition of the Honorary RA, Ai Weiwei. As the first significant British survey of his artistic output, the exhibition will include major works spanning Ai Weiwei's career, as well as including new work by the artist.

www.royalacademy.org.uk/article/from-rubens-to-ai-weiwei-2015

Celts

British Museum, London

24 September 2015 - 31 January 2016

Celtic art flourished in Britain and Europe from 500 BC and was reinvented and transformed during the Roman and early medieval periods, particularly in the British Isles. Powerful objects decorated with Celtic art helped shape the identities of the ancient peoples who made and used them, and the real and imagined legacy of the ancient Celts continues to influence modern identities across the British Isles and beyond.

www.britishmuseum.org

The Fabric of India

Victoria and Albert Museum, London

26 September 2015 - 10 January 2016

The highlight of the V&A's India Season, this will be the first major exhibition to explore the dynamic and multi-faceted world of handmade textiles from India from the third to the 21st century, including a spectacular 18th-century tent belonging to Tipu Sultan, a stunning range of historic costume, highly prized textiles made for trade, and fashion by contemporary Indian designers such as Manish Arora and Rajesh Pratap Singh.

www.vam.ac.uk



E. R Hughes's Night With Her Train Of Stars is one of the beautiful paintings that will go on show at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery

Enchanted Dreams: The Pre-Raphaelite Art of Edward Robert Hughes
Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery, West Midlands, central England

17 October 2015 - February 2016 (dates TBC)

Enchanted Dreams will be the first exhibition dedicated to Hughes and his work in more than a century. It will bring together paintings, drawings, watercolours and photographs from public and private collections in Britain and overseas, many of them unseen since the artist's own lifetime. This unique exhibition has been organised

by Birmingham Museums Trust, which holds the single finest collection of works by the Pre-Raphaelites and their associates anywhere in the world. *Enchanted Dreams* will present Hughes' delightful child portraiture, exquisite drawings and the lyrical late 'blue pictures' such as *Night with her Train of Stars* and *Twilight Phantasies*, which have become famous and loved worldwide. Drawing on major new research and revealing many works that have been unseen for more than a century, this exhibition will rediscover and reassess a fascinating and neglected figure in the history of British art. www.bmag.org.uk

Goya: The Portraits
National Gallery, London

7 October 2015 - 10 January 2016

Francisco de Goya y Lucientes (1746 -1828) is one of Spain's most celebrated artists, considered a supremely gifted portrait painter and an excellent social commentator who took the genre of portraiture to new heights through his ability to reveal the psychology of his sitter. The first-ever focusing solely on his portraits will re-appraise Goya's genius as a portraitist and provide a penetrating insight into both public and private aspects of his life.
www.nationalgallery.org.uk

Brick Wonders
Life Science Centre, Times Square, Newcastle upon Tyne, north-east England

28 November 2015 - 31 January 2016

Brick Wonders is a new exhibition of the wonders of the ancient, modern and natural worlds built out of Lego. One of the exhibition highlights is a large airport with working lights. There will also be a chance to get 'hands-on' at one of several Lego activity stations. This is a follow-up exhibition to *Brick City* and is based on the *Brick Wonders* book.
www.life.org.uk

THEATRE, DANCE, OPERA & MUSIC

Being entertained, wowed and inspired is easy in Britain – find out what's on in 2015 and where to see it.

The Leading Lights of 2015 – a year of thrilling theatre beckons

British theatre, take a bow! 2015 promises to be another bumper year for new plays and musicals as Britain's theatre offering continues to go from strength to strength. So whether you dote on drama or are crazy about comedy, relish romance or are mad about musicals, they're all just a ticket away.

London theatre

An evening at a West End musical is an unmissable part of a trip to London. The capital's historic 'Theatreland' is concentrated in the city's West End, with 40 theatres showing world-class plays and musicals. Recent smash hits include *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*, *The Commitments* and *Miss Saigon* as well as the classics such as *Les Miserables*, *The Lion King* and *Mamma Mia*. We lift the curtain on what's hot to watch in 2015.

***Taken at Midnight*, Theatre Royal Haymarket (15 January – 14 March)**

Downton Abbey star Penelope Wilton (Isabel Crawley) will return to the West End for the first time in five years when the Chichester Festival Theatre production of *Taken At Midnight* transfers to the Theatre Royal Haymarket from 15 January until 14 March 2015. Wilton plays the mother of German lawyer Hans Litten, who put Hitler on the witness stand in pre-war Nazi Germany. Maternal love is put centre stage in Hayhurst's drama as Litten's mother confronts the Nazis who have imprisoned her son. www.trh.co.uk



From Downton to the West End – Penelope Wilton stars in Take at Midnight. Credit Manuel Harlan

***The Ruling Class*, Trafalgar Studios (16 January – 11 April)**

BAFTA-winning and Golden Globe-nominated actor James McAvoy (*Filth*, *The Last King of Scotland*, *Atonement*, *X-Men*) returns to Trafalgar Transformed, following his performance in Jamie Lloyd's *Macbeth*. McAvoy will play Jack, the 14th Earl of Gurney, in the first revival of Peter Barnes' satirical comedy, *The Ruling Class*. <http://trafalgartransformed.com>

Beautiful – The Carole King Musical*, Aldwych Theatre (from 10 February) *Musical

The story of singer songwriter Carole King, who wrote hit songs for some of the biggest pop acts of the 1960s, including The Shirelles, Aretha Franklin, The Monkees and The Drifters, before she stepped into the spotlight herself. <http://beautifulinlondon.co.uk>

***Man and Superman*, National Theatre (25 February – 17 May)**

Award-winning British actor Ralph Fiennes (*The Grand Budapest Hotel*, *Skyfall*, Voldemort in the *Harry Potter* films, *The English Patient* and *Schindler's List*) returns to the National as Jack Tanner in Bernard Shaw's classic, *Man and Superman*, opening in the Lyttelton

Theatre on 25 February. A mix between a romantic comedy and a strong philosophical debate, the play asks fundamental questions about how we live.

www.nationaltheatre.org.uk



Emma Thompson swaps the big screen for the stage in *Sweeney Todd: the Demon Barber of Fleet Street*. Credit Richard H. Smith

***Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, ENO London Coliseum (30 March - 12 April)**

Academy Award-winner Emma Thompson and international opera sensation Bryn Terfel star in a strictly limited run of 13 performances at ENO's London Coliseum of the gloriously gruesome *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*. The ENO orchestra will appear on stage alongside the cast in this semi-staged production. www.eno.org

***The Audience*, Apollo Theatre (21 April - booking until 25 July)**

Another star of the screen and stage, Kristin Scott Thomas, will reprise the role of Queen Elizabeth II (played by Helen Mirren in 2013) in a new production of *The Audience*. For 60 years Elizabeth II has met each of her 12 Prime Ministers in a weekly audience at Buckingham Palace. Both parties have an unspoken agreement never to repeat what is said, not even to their spouses and this play imagines a series of pivotal meetings between the Downing Street incumbents and their Queen.

www.apollotheatrelondon.co.uk

Bend It Like Beckham*, Phoenix Theatre, (15 May - booking until 11 July) *Musical

Twelve years after the box office success of *Bend It Like Beckham*, the tale of a football-infatuated London Sikh teenager who defies her parents and joins a local women's team has been turned into a stage musical. www.phoenix-theatre.co.uk

Productions of *Peter Pan*, *The Seagull*, *Lord Of The Flies* and *Seven Brides For Seven Brothers* (*Musical*), Regent's Park Open Air Theatre (from 15 May - 12 September)

The season at Regent's Park Open Air Theatre begins with JM Barrie's tale of the boy who wouldn't grow up, *Peter Pan*, before making way for Chekhov's *The Seagull* from 19 June - 11 July. The venue then returns to the classic golden age of movie musicals, staging *Seven Brides For Seven Brothers* before *Lord Of The Flies* closes the season (3 - 12 September).

<http://openairtheatre.com>

***Hamlet*, Barbican Theatre (5 August - 31 October)**

Tickets have been on sale since May 2014 for William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, to be played by Benedict Cumberbatch at the Barbican Theatre in summer next year - promising to be one of the hottest tickets of the year. <http://hamlet.barbican.org.uk>

Musicals: all singing, all dancing

The language of musicals is international; vivid performances, uplifting music and eye-catching costumes and sets means everybody can capture the essence of the story. From long-standing favourites such as *Les Misérables* and *Phantom of the Opera* to new overnight sensations, London's West End is the heart and soul of



One of 2015's hottest tickets - Benedict Cumberbatch takes on *Hamlet*. Credit Photographer Tim Gutt, Poster Art Direction Shona Heath

musical theatre. And success here often means popular musicals will head out to other British cities.

5 West End newcomers

***Cats*, London Palladium (6 December 2014 - 28 February 2015)**

Pop star Nicole Scherzinger will be making her West End stage debut as Grizabella in Andrew Lloyd Webber's record-breaking musical *Cats*. Returning to the West End for a strictly limited run, the story is based on T. S. Eliot's *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* and the original creative team - including director Trevor Nunn and composer Andrew Lloyd Webber - have reunited to bring *Cats* back to the West End.

www.london-palladium.co.uk



Hit musical Made in Dagenham is all about girl power! Credit Alex James

***Made in Dagenham*, Adelphi Theatre (now booking into 2015)**

Based on the hit British film, this musical comedy stars international stage and screen actress Gemma Arterton in the lead role of Rita O'Grady. It's Essex 1968. Like millions of other working women, each morning Rita O'Grady is just trying to get her husband out of bed, get the kids off to school and get to work at the factory on time. But life is about to change forever when it's announced that the girls

in the sewing room of Ford's Dagenham car plant will have their pay grade dropped to 'unskilled'. Rita leads her friends in a battle against the might of Ford and the corruption of the Union supposed to protect them. <http://adelphi.londontheatres.co.uk>

***Sunny Afternoon*, Harold Pinter Theatre (booking until 23 May 2015)**

1960s British pop supergroup The Kinks exploded onto the music scene with a new sound and *Sunny Afternoon* (named after one of their classic hits) tells their back story and what happened next. Music and lyrics by Kinks frontman Ray Davies.

<http://sunnyafternoonthemusical.com>

***Urinetown*, Apollo Theatre (booking until early 2015)**

Satirical comedy - and intriguingly named - *Urinetown* tells of a fictional future where water is so scarce, thanks to a 20-year drought, that the government slaps a ban on all private toilets! It's a story of greed, love and corruption. www.urinetown.co.uk

***Memphis The Musical*, Shaftesbury Theatre (booking into 2015)**

Award-winning British recording artist Beverley Knight stars as club singer Felicia Farrell alongside West End star Killian Donnelly in a musical inspired by true events from the underground dance clubs of 1950s Memphis, Tennessee. www.memphisthemusical.com

And don't miss...

Miss Saigon - Cameron Mackintosh's new production of *Miss Saigon* returned to the West End stage in mid-2014 for the first time in 15 years. This epic musical love story tells the tragic tale of young bar girl Kim, orphaned by war, who falls in love with an American GI called Chris - but their lives are torn apart by the fall of Saigon. www.miss-saigon.com

Dirty Rotten Scoundrels - Based on the classic comedy film starring Steve Martin and Michael Caine, two swindlers compete to con a millionaire heiress on the French Riviera. Starring three-time Olivier and Tony Award winner Robert Lindsay.

www.atgtickets.com/venues/savoy-theatre

Matilda the Musical - Roald Dahl's much-loved tale of an extraordinary child with hideous parents is given the musical treatment by the combined talents of comedian Tim Minchin and the Royal Shakespeare Company. Booking into 2015 at the Cambridge Theatre. www.matildathemusical.com



Still playing to packed theatres - *Matilda the Musical*. Credit Manuel Harlan

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory - Roald Dahl's much-loved children's tale *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* has been transported to the stage as a musical at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane. The story follows a poor young boy, Charlie Bucket, who gets the once-in-a-lifetime chance to visit the famous and magical Willy Wonka's Chocolate Factory. www.charlieandthechocolatefactory.co.uk

The Book of Mormon - The Prince of Wales theatre welcomes the Broadway smash hit musical, telling the story of two American Mormons who go to Uganda in a bid to convert the natives. www.bookofmormonlondon.com

Les Misérables - The musical has seen a surge in popularity since the film version came out, and die-hard fans say nothing compares to experiencing the drama live. It's been running for more than 27 years and is currently booking until September 2015 at Queen's Theatre. www.lesmis.com/uk

Phantom of the Opera - One of the most successful musicals of all time, Andrew Lloyd-Webber's Phantom has been playing in London for 28 years at Her Majesty's Theatre. www.thephantomoftheopera.com/london

The Lion King - Disney's award-winning musical *The Lion King* is now in its 15th year at London's Lyceum Theatre and is also on its first tour of Britain. www.thelionking.co.uk

Wicked! - The multi award-winning show at the Apollo Victoria Theatre tells the tale of a friendship between two girls who first meet as sorcery students. Their extraordinary adventures in Oz will ultimately see them fulfil their destinies as Glinda the Good and the Wicked Witch of the West. www.wickedthemusical.co.uk

Billy Elliot - The inspirational tale of a young boy from a northern England mining town, following his dream to be a ballet dancer, has been playing to packed-out West End audiences since 2005. See fantastic dancing, a moving storyline and brilliant music by Elton John at the Victoria Palace Theatre. www.billyelliottthemusical.com/london-site

The Commitments - Now in its second year at the Palace Theatre, *The Commitments* is the story of working-class music fan Jimmy Rabbitte who turns a group of amateur musicians and friends into a live act in Dublin and features more than 20 soul classics that will get the audience dancing. www.thecommitmentslondon.com

Mamma Mia - Classic ABBA songs are cleverly woven into the feel-good story of a young woman's journey to uncover the identity of her father before she gets married. A huge hit

in the West End (and worldwide) since its London debut in 1999, it's showing at the Novello Theatre. www.mamma-mia.com/london.asp

Jersey Boys - The Piccadilly Theatre is the current home of *Jersey Boys*, which tells the story of Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons and their rise to fame; enjoy hits such as *Can't Take My Eyes Off You*, *Oh What A Night* and *Big Girls Don't Cry*. Booking into October 2015. www.jerseyboyslondon.com

The nearest tube stations to the West End are Leicester Square, Covent Garden, Oxford Circus and Tottenham Court Road. As well as buying tickets from the theatres, tickets agents or online you can head to one of the ticket booths dotted around Leicester Square that sell tickets for shows on the day you visit.

Entertainment all over Britain - theatres to frequent

A trip to the theatre is a must-do on a visit to Britain, but few visitors realise that there is a fantastic network of regional theatres dotted across the country, often showing productions before they transfer to London. Booking tickets at a regional theatre is a great way to see a play or a musical before it hits the West End - with tickets more easily available and often more affordable than in London theatres.

One of the most high-profile regional theatres is **Chichester**, in the south of England (around 90 minutes by train from London Victoria). The theatre re-opened in summer 2014 after a multi-million pound renovation, and combines mainstream productions in the newly-opened auditorium with more avant-garde plays in the smaller Minerva Theatre. The summer's highlights included Rupert Everett in *Amadeus*, and its early 2015 line-up

includes productions of *The King's Speech* (5 - 14 February) and the world premiere of *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* (19 - 28 February). www.cft.org.uk



Looking good: The Everyman Theatre in Liverpool will stage some unmissable performances in 2015. Credit Philip Vile

After ten years of planning and two years of construction, the new **Liverpool Everyman**, in the north-west of England, opened its doors in March 2014. The spectacular glass-fronted building houses a sleek new restaurant as well as a theatre and workshop spaces and the programme for the coming Spring season includes a revival of *Educating Rita*, plus *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the world premieres of *The Hook* and *The Hudsucker Proxy*. Liverpool is around two hours by train from London Euston. www.everymanplayhouse.com

The **Royal Exchange in Manchester** staged a first in 2014, with actress Maxine Peake being the first woman to play Hamlet. The theatre offers an in-the-round experience, making the audience feel completely involved in the drama taking place. This Spring 2015 programme includes *Anna Karenina* (19 March - 2 May) and *The Rolling Stone* (21 April - 1 May). Manchester is just over two hours by train from London Euston. www.royalexchange.co.uk

Birmingham's REP theatre company, located in central England, only 90 minutes by train from London, is fully deserving of its reputation as a centre for excellent drama. 2015 will see the stage adaptation of award-winning film *The King's Speech* (25 February - 7 March), starring Raymond Coulthard (*The English Patient*) as King George VI and singer and actor

Jason Donovan as Lionel Logue, as well as an adaptation of Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* (27 April - 2 May). www.birmingham-rep.co.uk

Famed for being the hotbed for new talent during the Edinburgh Festival, you can find top-quality performances in Scotland's capital throughout the year. The **Edinburgh Festival Theatre** has the biggest stage of any theatre in Britain and is the venue for Edinburgh's most well-regarded shows. 2015 will see performances of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (28 April - 9 May) and musical favourites *Oklahoma!* (21 - 25 April) and *Carousel* (2 - 6 June). www.fctt.org.uk/festival_theatre

One of Scotland's oldest theatres is in Glasgow. The city's **Theatre Royal Glasgow** stages performances by Scottish Opera and Scottish Ballet, as well as musicals and plays. In 2015 audiences can catch Scottish Opera's *Jenufa* (7 -11 April), gripping live theatre experience *The Woman in Black* (20 -25 April) and thriller *Dead Simple* (18 - 23 May). www.atgtickets.com/venues/theatre-royal-glasgow

In Wales, the **National Theatre Wales** specialises in putting on plays in different and unusual locations throughout the destination. It uses forests and beaches, towns, nightclubs...and even aircraft hangars! New for 2015 is the staging of *Crouch, Touch, Pause, Engage*, a Welsh story about learning to be yourself, sport, politics and life. www.nationaltheatrewales.org

Also in Wales, the capital **Cardiff** is home to the **Millennium Centre Wales**, which hosts a wide range of performances (even free daily concerts in the foyer!), from ballet and modern dance to touring West End musicals in a high-tech building that's a visitor attraction in itself. Coming to the venue in 2015 are *The Bodyguard* in June, *Annie* in August and *Shrek the Musical* in December. www.wmc.org.uk

And in Northern Ireland, since opening more than a century ago, the majestic **Belfast Grand Opera House** has hosted some of the biggest names in entertainment; from burlesque acts and musical comedies in its earliest days, through to the UK debut of a then-unknown Pavarotti in 1963. Coming to the stage in 2015 include musical *Jesus Christ Superstar* (16 - 28 Feb) and drama *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (12 - 17 August) www.goh.co.uk

In addition, there are a number of smaller, more off-beat theatres dotted around the country that stage new and more avant-garde productions. The **Traverse Theatre** in Edinburgh and the **Tinderbox theatre** in Belfast focus on new plays by Scottish and Irish writers respectively (www.traverse.co.uk, www.tinderbox.org.uk). In London, **St James Theatre** - which was the first newly-built theatre to open in London for 30 years - hosts new and lesser-known works (nearest underground station is Victoria). www.stjamestheatre.co.uk

West End shows on tour

No longer the domain of the West End, hit plays and musicals are played out in theatres across Britain, due to popular demand, once they finish showing in London. So wherever you are in Britain you can experience first-class theatre. Here's just a taster of what you can find coming to the regions' stages in 2015.

Legendary rock musical *Godspell* is set to tour the UK in 2015, opening at London's **Hackney Empire** on 4 April. The UK tour will feature a new, modern-day rock score packed

with favourites such as *Light of the World*, *All Good Gifts* and *Day by Day*.
www.godspellinconcert.com

The hilarious farce *One Man, Two Guvnors* continues its third UK tour, with forthcoming visits to Leicester, Aberdeen, Leeds, Belfast, Brighton, Nottingham, Bromley, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Oxford, and York, among other cities. www.onemantwoquvnors.com/buy-tickets

War Horse will conclude its tour of the UK at Bristol Hippodrome (14 Jan - 14 Feb 2015), while the West End production continues at the New London Theatre, now booking until October 2015. www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/discover/war-horse-on-tour

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time - winner of seven Olivier Awards - is currently running at the Gielgud Theatre and will tour the UK from December 2014 - June 2015, visiting - among others - York, Newcastle, Plymouth, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Canterbury and Birmingham. www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/discover/the-curious-incident-of-the-dog-in-the-night-time-on-tour

Check websites at individual theatres or at www.musicaltheatrenews.com to find out more on touring West End shows.

2015 may be the year between the two anniversaries of Shakespeare's birth and death, but performances of the Bard's work are perennially popular. Theatre-goers should explore Shakespeare's spiritual home, **Stratford-upon-Avon** in the west of England. Catch a play by the Royal Shakespeare Company, which has announced its summer 2015 season, peppering the programme with classic plays as well as Shakespearean specials in the Royal Shakespeare Theatre. Its Swan Theatre will show contemporary takes on classic plays; *Volpone* by Ben Jonson, *The Jew of Malta* by Christopher Marlowe and *Love's Sacrifice* by John Ford.

www.rsc.org.uk/whats-on



The home of Shakespeare. Stratford Upon Avon's Royal Shakespeare Theatre and Swan Theatre ©VisitBritain/LeeBeel

Plus there's always plenty to see at London's **Globe Theatre**. A brilliant recreation of the original Elizabethan theatre, the Globe - on the south bank of the River Thames - is a great place to watch a play by the Bard; there's also now the **Sam Wanamaker Playhouse**, an indoor Jacobean Theatre next door to The Globe that stages plays by Shakespeare and his contemporaries, as well as atmospheric candlelit concerts. www.shakespearesglobe.com
www.rsc.org.uk

Shakespeare in 2015

With 2014 as the 450th anniversary year of Shakespeare's birth and 2016 set to mark the 400th anniversary of the Bard's death, fans of his work may well think that 2015 will be a bit of a quiet one on the Shakespeare front! But that's the beauty of the Bard - his work, his life and his hometown are perennially popular. While there may not be the influx of celebrations that 2014 saw or there will be in 2016, there's still plenty of Shakespeare to be found in the gap year of 2015!



There's still plenty of Shakespeare to be seen in 2015! Credit Visit Britain/Britain on View

Shakespeare's birthplace of **Stratford upon Avon** (two hours by train from London), is, of course, a must for visitors keen on all things Bard. It's here you can roam the home where the great playwright was born, played and grew up, as well as exploring his wife's childhood home and **Hall's Croft**, the beautiful home of his daughter and granddaughter. **Nash's House & New Place** (part of the five homes that are looked after by Shakespeare's Birthplace Trust and Shakespeare's final home) are closed for a major restoration project. They will reopen as a new visitor attraction in spring 2016 to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death, but in the

meantime, head to the Elizabethan home **Harvard House**, which will be open to the public during this time. The people who lived in Harvard House, which will form part of the Town House ticket, along with Shakespeare's Birthplace and Hall's Croft, were neighbours of Shakespeare. You can experience what life was like 400 years ago - why not try out its Tudor Apprentice Trail and find out whether you could have cut it as a 16th-century butcher or glover? www.shakespeare.org.uk

With such impeccable literary connections, Stratford upon Avon naturally hosts an annual Literary Festival. In 2015 the festival will celebrate its eighth year between 25 April - 3 May, with a packed programme of literary events, including writing workshops, debates, celebrity author events and poetry at the **Stratford Artshouse**. www.stratfordliteraryfestival.co.uk

And there's always plenty of Shakespeare being performed! The **Royal Shakespeare Company** (RSC) has revealed its summer 2015 season at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, which will include *The Merchant of Venice* from 14 May - 2 September and *Othello*, which will run from 4 June - 28 August. Of course, the RSC offers more than Shakespeare, and the company will perform *Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller in the Royal Shakespeare Theatre between 26 March - 2 May and three contemporary takes on classic plays in the Swan Theatre; *Volpone*, *The Jew of Malta* and *Love's Sacrifice* (www.rsc.org.uk). If you're in London, head to the Globe Theatre located on Bankside by the River Thames, where no less than 12 Shakespeare classics - including *Romeo and Juliet*, *As You Like It*, *Measure for Measure*, and even *Richard III* performed in Mandarin - will grace its stage throughout 2015. And



Get booking! Stratford upon Avon's Royal Shakespeare Theatre has announced its summer 2015 programme. Credit ©VisitBritainLeeBeel

don't forget to try to book what is already shaping up to be one of the hottest tickets in town - when Benedict Cumberbatch takes on the title role of Hamlet at London's **Barbican** theatre in August 2015.

www.shakespearesglobe.com/theatre/whats-on/globe-theatre, www.barbican.org.uk

If you have budding Shakespeare enthusiasts, it's always a good time to introduce young ones to Shakespeare's plays on a visit to Stratford upon Avon. The RSC will launch a 'First Encounter with Shakespeare' tour in 2015: *The Famous Victories of Henry V* will tour theatres across England in a new production specially created for young people aged eight and upwards.

What to expect in 2016:

In commemoration of the 400 years since the death of William Shakespeare, Shakespeare's England will host a range of new exhibitions in Stratford-upon-Avon in 2016, as part of the celebrations of Shakespeare's legacy. These include a new immersive theatrical experience at the Royal Shakespeare Company; a reimagining of New Place and Shakespeare's School room, open for the first time at King Edward VI School. Meanwhile, at the RSC, a new exhibition will open, highlighting the work of the directors, writers, actors, designers and creative theatre makers who have shaped the RSC in its 130-year history.

Immersive cultural experiences to dive into

Britain is full of fantastical, immersive activities to lose yourself in. Get swept away and you could end up going back to the future or partying with goblins.

Eminent theatre company **Punchdrunk** is the pioneer of the immersive theatre experience. Audiences are let loose in its jaw-dropping performance spaces, from a disused factory on the London Docklands to abandoned tunnels beneath Waterloo Station, where the boundaries between actor and spectator blur. Past shows have recreated LA in the 1960s, Prospero's island, and a small Midwest town in the 1950s. Prices vary. In August 2015, Punchdrunk Enrichment will be collaborating with London's National Maritime Museum to put on a show for six- to 12-year olds that promises to open the doorways to other worlds that the museum offers, and lead visitors on the adventure of a lifetime.

Against Captain's Orders - a Journey into the Uncharted opens 28 March - August 2015. www.punchdrunk.com



Get up close o - and even involved with - the action at a Punchdrunk production. Fernanda Prata and Jesse Kovarsky in The Drowned Man: A Hollywood Fable

While the internationally famous **Edinburgh Fringe** is the ultimate in immersive culture (the entire city becomes a stage with comedians, actors and performers to entertain visitors), **The Vintage Festival** in Glasgow is the destination to go back in time to celebrate seven decades of British cool. Bringing together the music, fashion, film, art, dance and design from the 1920s to the 1980s that made Britain the world's creative and cultural hot bed, festival goers can get into the full spirit with decade specific hair and beauty makeovers from the Vintage Salon, vintage shopping and workshops.

www.vintagefestival.co.uk

Secret Cinema has brought the silver screen to life by creating experiences around popular films, with the film's story being incorporated into an event before the film itself is screened. Previous productions include *Back to the Future*, where visitors were given new identities, encouraged to dress up and leave their phones and gadgets at the door before they entered an authentic 1950s fun-fair. Locations are, naturally, a secret, but are usually held around London. Tickets are approximately. £50 and sell quickly!

www.secretcinema.org

Late nights across many museums and galleries make exhibitions three dimensional and interactive. Most are to be found in London, though many other cities, like Newcastle and Liverpool in the north of England run similar events, letting you fully immerse yourself in the cities cultural offerings. In the capital, **Friday Late at the V&A** is one of the best, offering an ever-changing, curated programme of live performances, cutting-edge fashion, film, installations, debates, special guests and DJs, with bars, food, and late-night exhibition openings. It's totally free, you can just drop in, and the best thing is that you'll never know what you might find. Last Friday of every month. www.vam.ac.uk.

Elsewhere around London, every few months the **Barbican** galleries run a lates night with fun interactive events and DJs. On selected Fridays, the **Design Museum** is open until 10pm for Design Overtime, where you can take part in design workshops, talks, tours and special events. At the **Museum of London** Lates activities from grisly Halloween card-making to Cleopatra-style makeovers, take place throughout the year so check the website for upcoming events. The **National Portrait Gallery** is open until 9pm on Thursdays and Fridays for Late Shift where entertainment includes tours, talks, DJs, films, art workshops and performances by the Gallery's own choir-in-residence. www.barbican.org.uk; www.designmuseum.org; www.museumoflondon.org.uk; www.npg.org.uk



Opera comes to life at the Manchester Camerata's immersive performances

Throw out your preconceptions about opera as a staid and serious spectator event with a visit to **The Manchester Camerata**. They encourage audiences to relax, grab a drink, clap when you like and enjoy international classical musicians performing among you. Previous immersive concert, Challenging the Senses, used everything from scent bombs to blindfolds during an eclectic programme of chamber music. Manchester, in the north west of England, is around two hours by train from London.

www.manchestercamerata.co.uk

For those with a make-believe temperament, **The Goblin King's Masquerade Ball** is an annual night of mischief and revelry in the form of a themed and costumed ball that explores the darker side of fantasy. Featuring promenade theatre, music, interactive creatures, puppetry, art installations, goblin markets and many other surprises in suitable goblin habitable locations in London, dressing up is an absolute must. Tickets are approximately. £50. www.goblin-king.co.uk

National Theatre Wales is one of the most exciting places to experience groundbreaking immersive theatre. While it has offices in Cardiff, it has no base so takes work to locations across Wales, and not just traditional spaces. Staging shows in an aircraft hangar, a nightclub, a former library, on a beach, and combining online and offline gaming simultaneously for the Border Games Project, in which participants attempted to illegally

cross a closely guarded border between England and Wales, this is theatre and play at its best. The theatre achieved international attention when it staged *The Passion*, a 72-hour epic that unfolded through the streets of Port Talbot and starred Michael Sheen as a modern-day messiah. Check the website for more information about upcoming shows.

www.nationaltheatrewales.org

Swing yourself back to the 1920s jazz era with a visit to Watford, north of London, in February for **Goodnight Sweetheart**, one of the UK's largest swing camps. Lindy has well and truly hopped back into fashion, so get your dancing shoes on and immerse yourself in a world of all-night dancing. Tickets include parties on Friday night with a Saturday Valentine's dinner and 1940s ball, and Sunday farewell party and competitions. On-site accommodation is available for overseas dancers and the site is easily accessible from central London via Tube. Tickets (including workshops, tasters, the evening dances with live music, and complimentary lunch, dinner and drinks) are approx. £169.99.

www.gnsh.co.uk



Choose your own adventure with the immersive theatrical experience Alice's Adventures Underground...

Get lost in the supercalifragilisticexpialidocious world of your favourite childhood film with a **four-course dining experience with Mary Poppins** or go down the rabbit hole for an **Alice in Wonderland** version. Hosted in a secret London location, follow the magical Mary and her parrot-handled umbrella to Cherry Tree Lane to dine with the Banks family, where you can expect a fantastical feast of delectable cuisine and fanciful theatre. As the evening progresses, guess the delights that reside in Mary's bottomless carpet bag, try your luck as a chimney sweep and even fly a kite. On the Alice nights, you can feast on delectable cuisine, fanciful theatre, and try your luck at cards and croquet... all the while watching out for the Queen of Hearts! Tickets approximately. £60; Various dates in February and March 2015. www.hothotstore.com

The Alice theme continues in April, as **Alice in the Underground** unravels in the atmospheric Vaults, underneath Waterloo station in London. Your night begins with a choice of EAT ME and DRINK ME, which will dictate how your journey through Wonderland unfolds. Tickets cost £35-£47.50, and are available at www.alice-underground.com.

A night at the opera, ballet and concert hall

Get dressed up and head to an opera, ballet or classical concert in Britain's most sumptuous and iconic venues. Choose from seeing a traditional performance of your favourite art form, or enjoy a contemporary spin on the expected.

Ballet

The internationally renowned **Royal Ballet** is Britain's largest ballet company. Its wide repertoire showcases great classical ballets and heritage works by founder choreographer Sir Frederick Ashton, one of the most influential dance figures of the 20th century. The principal guest artist is Cuban dancer Carlos Acosta, who joined the company in 1998. The Royal Ballet is based at the **Royal Opera House** in Covent Garden, central London. Book one of the backstage tours available and you may be fortunate enough to see the ballet in class. www.roh.org.uk

The **English National Ballet** is a premier touring company, taking productions all over England. The company, which is based at the **London Coliseum** theatre in the West End, prides itself on innovative collaborations and creating bold ways of honouring, but adding to, traditional ballet. www.ballet.org.uk

Birmingham Royal Ballet celebrates its 25th anniversary in 2015 with a new ballet, *The King Dancers*, to be premiered at the Birmingham Hippodrome theatre in June. Chinese principal dancer Chi Cao, who starred in the movie *Mao's Last Dancer* in 2009, is part of the 250-strong company, including 60 dancers and a 50-strong orchestra, which makes it Britain's largest touring company. www.brb.org.uk

Both the Royal Ballet and Birmingham Royal Ballet have their roots at **Sadler's Wells** in Clerkenwell, north London, where there has been a theatre on the same site since 1683. Today, Sadler's Wells is one of the capital's leading contemporary dance venues, but offers performances in a range of other dance forms besides. In May 2015, one of the world's greatest ballet dancers, Sylvie Guillem, will perform her final dance programme here, including two new works. www.sadlerswells.com

Scottish Ballet is Scotland's national dance company. It performs new versions of classic ballets and contemporary works to audiences at theatres in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen (on Scotland's north-east coast) and Inverness in the Highlands. www.scottishballet.co.uk

Opera

The **Royal Opera** company, which shares the magnificent **Royal Opera House** in London's Covent Garden with the Royal Ballet, features operas that are sung in their original language. Among the international stars whose careers were formed in the ranks of the company are Dame Joan Sutherland and Dame Kiri Te Kanawa. www.roh.org.uk

The **English National Opera** stages more new productions and contemporary opera than any other company in Britain, all of which are sung in English. It has a reputation for very dramatic productions and works with high-profile companies from around the world, such as the Metropolitan Opera of New York. The ENO shares the **London Coliseum** with English National Ballet in London. www.eno.org

The **Wales Millennium Centre** is home to the acclaimed **Welsh National Opera** and is the national centre for the performing arts. The architecturally stunning, waterside arts complex in Cardiff celebrates its tenth anniversary in 2015. The large opera company also

tours, taking productions to Venue Cymru in Llandudno on the north Wales coast, as well as to other theatres across Britain.

www.wmc.org.uk, www.wno.org.uk



The epicentre of Wales' performing arts - the Wales Millennium Centre in Cardiff

Opera North has its home in the splendid **Leeds Grand Theatre** built in 1873, but this thoroughly modern company aims to challenge conventional perceptions of opera with new interpretations of classics and by showcasing lesser-known works. Its tour programme regularly takes productions to theatres in north England, in cities such as Newcastle and Salford and Nottingham in central England. Leeds is two hours 15

minutes by train from London King's Cross. www.operanorth.co.uk

First-rate opera in the idyllic setting of the English countryside is a highlight of the summer social season. **Glyndebourne** is in the county of Sussex in the south of England, around 90 minutes from London Victoria by train and shuttle bus. Come for the opera and enjoy the long interval that gives the audience, in formal evening dress, time to enjoy a leisurely picnic supper on the lawn. www.glyndebourne.com

Classical Music

Two acoustically excellent auditoriums, the **Royal Festival Hall** and the **Queen Elizabeth Hall**, are part of the Southbank Centre along the Thames in central London. This arts complex is home to no less than four orchestras: the **London Philharmonic**, one of the world's finest orchestras established in 1932; the **Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment**, specialising in playing music as the composer would have heard it, using original instruments; the **London Sinfonietta** focusing on contemporary works; and the pioneering **Philharmonia**, which has commissioned more than 100 new works in its 70-year history.

www.southbankcentre.co.uk

The **Hallé Orchestra**, based at the architecturally stunning **Bridgewater Hall** in central Manchester, is named after its founder, the conductor Sir Charles Hallé. The orchestra first played in 1852 making it one of Britain's oldest symphony ensembles. Manchester can be reached in just over two hours by train from London Euston station. www.halle.co.uk



Manchester's Bridgewater Hall is home to the internationally renowned Hallé Orchestra, one of Britain's oldest symphony ensembles

Ulster Hall in Belfast, Northern Ireland's capital, first opened in 1862 as a ballroom. Seven years later Charles Dickens held audiences spellbound with readings from his novels. Its Mulholland organ is one of the oldest examples of an English classic pipe organ in use today and can be heard at lunchtime recitals. The concert hall, which was restored and refurbished in 2009, is now home to the **Ulster Orchestra**, the only full-time professional orchestra in Northern Ireland.

www.ulsterhall.co.uk

Live the high life for less: affordable opera & ballet

Opera and ballet were once the leisurely pursuits of only the wealthy; but today, everyone has access to these art forms. From the Royal Opera House in London to the Wales Millennium Centre in Cardiff, visitors to Britain can immerse themselves in high-end classical culture at affordable prices.

Opera

Royal Opera House, London

With an auditorium dating back to 1858, London's Royal Opera House in Covent Garden has long been an iconic feature on the capital's arts scene and now hosts ballet and performance art in addition to opera; it is also the home of the Royal Ballet. In addition to keeping 40% of tickets under £40, advance booking tickets from as little as £3 and, occasionally, standby tickets four hours before a performance at half the price, the Royal Opera House continues to make opera and ballet more accessible with its Cinema Season. It offers screenings of both opera and ballet at a wide range of cinemas across Britain, meaning you can see world-class performances for the prices of a cinema ticket.

www.roh.org.uk <http://cinema.roh.org.uk>

Glyndebourne, East Sussex, south-east England

While synonymous with the British 'summer season' the world-renowned opera festival at Glyndebourne – around 90 minutes by train from London to the nearest town of Lewes – does cater for opera fans looking for tickets that won't break the bank. If you are aged under 30, for example, you can register with its 'Glyndebourne <30' to receive exclusive ticket offers from £30. And each year the productions, which feature both classical and contemporary opera, go on tour to various theatres in Britain, with tickets starting from a reasonable £20.

www.glyndebourne.com



Take a group to Glyndebourne for a fraction of the usual price if you're all under 30!

Garsington Opera, Wormsley, Oxfordshire

Excellent performances in a stunning setting, Garsington Opera puts on a classy show – and if you're under 35, you can sign up for GO<35 membership – it costs £10 to become a member, but that gives you priority booking of two £30 tickets, champagne when you get there and all transfers from the nearest station. Garsington is on the **Wormsley Estate**, a 2,500-acre estate and 18th-century country house nestling in the rolling, verdant countryside of the Chiltern Hills in **Oxfordshire**. 2015's programme includes *Così fan Tutte*, *Death in Venice* by Benjamin Britten and Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

www.garsingtonopera.org/support-us/go35

Opera North, various cities, north England

Proving you don't need to be in London to absorb classical culture, operatic company Opera North tours theatres across the north of England, putting on edgy performances of

classic productions and with tickets starting from just £15. Among the shows on the 2015 bill are *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Swanhunter* (which premiered at Opera North in 2009), *La Traviata* and the musical *Carousel*.

www.operanorth.co.uk



Experience the marvellous acoustics at the Wales Millennium Centre starting at only £5!

Wales Millennium Centre, Cardiff

The Welsh capital's leading performance arts venue hosts regular productions from the **Welsh National Opera**, with tickets starting from the accessible price of £5. The 2015 programme will include Welsh National Opera's *The Magic Flute*. The venue was opened in 2000 and is a magnificent building to visit in itself, with regular free concerts and performances in the airy foyer.

www.wmc.org.uk

Scottish Opera, Glasgow

Scotland's largest performing arts organisation is based out of the **Theatre Royal in Glasgow**, and offers £10 tickets to the under 26s.

www.scottishopera.org.uk

Ballet

English National Ballet

Artistic director of England's leading touring ballet company Tamara Rojo has been quoted saying that the English National Ballet (ENB) is committed to "bringing ballet to everyone, wherever they are, whatever their means". Its Christmas *Nutcracker* is always one to watch, at the London Coliseum in Covent Garden's St Martin's Lane. Tickets start at just £14.

www.ballet.org.uk

Northern Ballet

Based in Leeds, Yorkshire, in the north of England, Northern Ballet is a dance company that produces full-length ballets designed to 'appeal to as many people as possible from all walks of life'. In 2015, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Wuthering Heights* will bring dramatic romance to the stage in theatres across the north of England and Scotland, including Leeds, Sheffield and Edinburgh. Regularly touring throughout the UK, it will be bringing its fantastic version of *The Great Gatsby* back to London's dance mecca, Sadler's Wells, while its *Madame Butterfly* will tour extensively. Tickets start at £10 depending on the theatre and performance time.

www.northernballet.com

Dance – see it, do it!

Britain is the perfect place to indulge your love of dance: from world-leading contemporary in London, to ballroom in Blackpool up to ceilidhs in Scotland. Inspired to get your dancing shoes on and give a jig or jive a go yourself? Britain offers a class or party to suit any style (and stamina).

BALLET BODS

Britain is home to some of the most highly regarded ballet companies in the world so lovers of plié and pirouettes have plenty to enjoy.

Highly regarded as one of the leading classical ballet companies in the world, **The Royal Ballet** was founded in 1931 and is now the resident ballet company of the **Royal Opera House** in London's Covent Garden. With its wide-ranging repertoire of classical ballets like the beautiful *Swan Lake*, as well as new works by today's leading choreographers, this is ballet with the Queen's seal of approval. (www.roh.org.uk)



Dancers Bethany Kingsley-Garner and Remi Andreoni get kilted up for Matthew Bourne's Highland Fling. Photo by Nisbet Wylie. ©Scottish Ballet

The **English National Ballet** tours the UK with new work and classic productions such as *Romeo and Juliet*. The Royal Ballet's leading rival, these "two households, both alike in dignity" are too hard to choose from - so it's best to visit both! Time your visit in December to see the English National Ballet's *Nutcracker*, part of a London Christmas since the 1950s and as much a part of the season as Santa's red trousers and mistletoe. (www.ballet.org.uk)

Further north and Scotland's national dance company, **Scottish Ballet**, is one of four major companies in Britain. Presenting a wide range of classical and contemporary work, the company are based at the purpose-built international arts centre, **Tramway** (a former tram depot) in Glasgow, one hour by train from Edinburgh. (www.scottishballet.co.uk)

Get your dancing shoes on... at the world-famous **Pineapple Dance Studios** in London's buzzing Covent Garden. Founded in 1979 in an old pineapple warehouse, they host more than 250 classes a week catering for all levels and ages. As well as ballet, they also offer jazz, Latin, tap and contemporary. (All classes are drop-in with no need to book; from £7 per class; www.pineapple.uk.com).

STRICTLY BALLROOM

Ballroom dancing has enjoyed something of a renaissance in Britain in recent years, in large parts thanks to the popular TV show *Strictly Come Dancing*. So grab a partner and get ready to cha-cha!

A must-visit destination for ballroom fans is Blackpool, a fun-filled seaside town in the north west of England and the undisputed home of ballroom dancing in Britain. Head to the stylish **Blackpool Tower Ballroom**, which dates back to 1894, and is world famous for its unique sprung dance floor and spectacular architecture. You can either dance the day away to the sounds of the famous Wurlitzer organ, or watch from the sidelines as you enjoy a delicious afternoon tea. (Blackpool is around three hours by train from London; www.theblackpooltower.com)

Get your dancing shoes on... with a specially designed dancing holiday at destinations around Britain, including the pretty seaside towns of Torquay and Bournemouth on the south coast of England. Learn from experienced teachers and socialise with your fellow dancers in a friendly atmosphere. (Destinations vary; prices start from £139 per person; www.holidayanddance.co.uk)

IRISH JIGGERS

From the spectacle of internationally-renowned *Riverdance*, to community events celebrating the traditional 'Festival' Irish dance, there are plenty of opportunities to get your toes-tapping to an Irish jig in Britain.

Lord of the Dance, Michael Flatley, popularised Irish dancing way back in 1995 when he performed an intermission piece in the 1994 Eurovision Song Contest. Celebrating its 20th anniversary, the energetic dance phenomenon, **Riverdance**, will be touring the UK from September 2014. (Tickets start from approx £28; various dates and locations; www.riverdance.com)

No trip to Northern Ireland would be complete without enjoying some traditional Irish dancing. The **Ballymoney Irish Dancing Festival** is held annually in April in County Antrim. Situated just 15 miles from the breathtaking Causeway Coast, Ballymoney is in the north east of Ireland, approximately one hour by train from Belfast. (www.visitballymoney.com).

In County Fermanagh, the village of Maguiresbridge holds a 'Festival Fun Weekend' with Highland Dancing, Irish Dancing, Line Dancing, Irish Traditional music groups as well as bouncy castles, climbing wall, Tug O War and plenty of food on offer. An opportunity to experience real life in Northern Ireland away from the well-trodden tourists spots, County Fermanagh is well-worth a visit as it is also home to ancient castles and breathtaking scenery. (Maguiresbridge is approximately 2.5 hours by bus from Belfast; www.discovernorthernireland.com)

Get your dancing shoes on... at the London Irish Centre's 'Wednesday Social' in Camden. With its mix of live Country and Irish music, plus fun raffles and bingo, be prepared that the Irish know how to party! (Admission is only £2; Camden is easily accessible via Tube; www.londonirishcentre.org)

HIGHLAND FLINGERS

The jigs and reels of Highland dance, and the Scottish country dances enjoyed at ceilidhs form an important part of Scotland's cultural heritage.

The Cowal Gathering, held every August in Dunoon, on the west coast of Scotland, is the biggest Highland games in the world. With a mix of Highland dancing, pipe bands and ceilidh music, it's the perfect place to experience traditional Scottish dancing. It's also home to the **World Highland Dance Championships**, a spectacular display that attracts more than 650 dancers from all over the world each year. (Dunoon is 1.5 hours by train from Glasgow plus a 20-minute ferry crossing; www.cowalgathering.com)

Get your dancing shoes on... at a traditional Scottish ceilidh. Popular ceilidh dances include the Flying Scotsman, Gay Gordons, Strip the Willow and the Dashing White Sergeant all of which are accompanied by music provided by a traditional ceilidh band with instruments including fiddles, accordions and drums. Usually a member of the band will talk everybody

through the steps first, allowing beginners to join in the fun. **The Ceilidh Club** in Edinburgh is popular (www.edinburghceilidhs.com) and these fun events have even spread to London (www.ceilidhclub.com).

MORE BESIDES...

If your tastes are more on the modern side, you can indulge your love of contemporary dance at many of Britain's purpose-built studios and theatres.



*Matthew Bourne's **The Car Man** at Sadler's Well. Photo credit Bill Cooper*



Alexander Ekman's 'Tuplet' which was new for National Dance Company Wales in Autumn 2014. Photo credit Rhys Cozens

In London, **Sadler's Wells** is a world leader in dance presenting a vibrant year-round programme of dance of every kind, from tango to hip hop, ballet to flamenco, Bollywood to cutting-edge contemporary dance (www.sadlerswells.com). For cutting-edge dance, London is also home to **Rambert**, an experimental and risk-taking dance company who are located on the South Bank. (www.rambert.org.uk)

Based in Cardiff at the Wales Millennium Centre, **National Dance Company Wales** offers a raft of opportunities to experience contemporary dance in new ways. Visitors can observe dance rehearsals, enjoy post-show talks and even photograph or sketch dancers as they take part in classes. (www.ndcwaales.co.uk/en)

Get your dancing shoes on... at the **Greenwich Dance Agency**. Not only does the agency offer contemporary dance classes that aim to strengthen the body as well as encouraging creative expression and improvisation, there are also drop-in classes in lindy hop, flamenco, salsa and hip-hop too! (Drop-in classes from £7 ;greenwichdance.org.uk)

Useful Theatre Organisations

MADE

A Tourism Marketing, Representation & PR company whose client base includes private sector companies in the entertainment, arts and sports industries. Sign up to their mailing list for regular info on current and upcoming West End shows and productions touring the UK. www.made2010.com

AKA

An international entertainment agency that promotes West End shows and other cultural productions in London and the rest of the UK. Join the distribution list for regular arts and entertainment news. www.akauk.com

The Society of London Theatre (SOLT)

Founded in 1908, Society of London Theatre (SOLT) is the organisation that represents the producers, theatre owners and managers of the major commercial and grant-aided theatres in central London. It promotes theatregoing and developing audiences through activities including The Olivier Awards with MasterCard, operation of TKTS ticket booths, the Official London Theatre guide, West End LIVE and the promotions *Kids Week* and *Get Into London Theatre*. www.solt.co.uk/press.html www.officiallondontheatre.co.uk

FESTIVALS

Join the party - Britain has a calendar of cultural festivals to dive into headfirst!

For information on fabulous gay and lesbian festivals, including Prides, and much more on LGBT Britain, look out for our Love is GREAT guide in 2015!

Hull - City of Culture 2017

What is the UK city of culture?

Inspired by Liverpool's time as European Capital of Culture back in 2008, the UK City of Culture programme was launched the following year by the British government, designed to offer cities the opportunity to use culture to increase visitor numbers and media interest.

The Northern Ireland city of Derry~Londonderry was awarded the first UK City of Culture status in 2013 and was under the artistic spotlight for a year packed with festivals and fireworks, dance, song, art, theatre and comedy. For 2017, the honour has been awarded to the north England city of Hull, which swept to victory a year ago, beating off stiff competition from Dundee in Scotland, Swansea in south Wales, and the central England city of Leicester.



Hull is planning a busy programme of cultural activities, and its strong maritime heritage will play an important part

What is Hull planning for 2017?

The city already has a strong cultural offering, a fascinating heritage, and its location on the north eastern coast of England - it has been a key gateway throughout history - has helped it to be influential in, and influenced by, the world around it.

Plans for a packed programme of festivals, special events and major projects are already in full swing; although full details aren't currently available, visitors to the city can expect a number of themes to be incorporated within its year celebrating culture.

'Roots and Routes' will explore the city's migration history and people's roots within Hull; its location on the coast means that it's a city at the heart of migration. It's also a city with a proud cultural heritage, which will be a key focus throughout 2017 - did you know that Hull is home to renowned sculptor Richard Wilson, who was commissioned for the new 'Slipstream' sculpture for Heathrow Airport? Or that Hull's **Truck Theatre** is one of the leading theatres in the country for contemporary new writing? Hull was also the inspiration to some of Britain's greatest artists and writers; the artist David Hockney worked here, as did poet Philip Larkin.

Perhaps one of Hull's greatest gifts to the world was its contribution to the freedom movement; one of the city's most famous sons was politician **William Wilberforce**, a key leader of the movement to abolish the slave trade in the British Empire. The theme of freedom is likely to feature widely in the 2017 celebrations, as is the city's off-beat sense of humour - whether it's its white phone boxes or **Museum of Club Culture**, **Larkin's giant Toads** or theatre in garden sheds.

Can't wait for 2017? Here's why you should visit Hull now

Hull is buzzing. Its historic **Fruit Market and Marina** - where visitors will find the maritime museums and an attractive waterfront - have rapidly become the hip areas of town, as well as one of the region's top spots to go for food.

Already home to the world's first and only **Museum of Club Culture**, this area is also where you'll find the **Studio Eleven Art Gallery**, as well as the markets, club-nights and cult cinema of Hull's newest arts space, **Früit**, which has everything from music to markets, club nights to cult cinema. www.museumofclubculture.com, www.fruitspace.co.uk



Hull is home to the world's only Museum of Club Culture - as well as a host of funky clubs and bars

Hull also ticks the box both for those after classical culture, and anyone looking for something a bit edgier. The **Ferens Art Gallery** is free and, in addition to some fantastic exhibitions, has permanent works from European Old Masters like Frans Hals and Canaletto, through to British artists like David Hockney and Gillian Wearing (www.hullcc.gov.uk/ferens). The **Hull Truck Theatre** is one of Britain's most innovative theatre companies, and is definitely worth checking out for a guaranteed good night's entertainment on your trip. www.hulltruck.co.uk

The Deep is another of Hull's leading landmarks, and boasts the title of being the world's only 'submarium' - there are seven species of shark and thousands of other sea creatures to try to identify. www.thedeep.co.uk

If it's award-winning restaurants you're looking for in the area, book a table at **1884 Dock Street Kitchen**. Developed and situated against the backdrop of the Marina, it's the epitome of a new-look culinary experience starting to take-shape in Hull, modelled on the Meat Packing District of New York. It serves a modern British menu, working around seasonal ingredients from local suppliers. One of the highlights of dining at 1884 Dock Street Kitchen is its Chef's Table, where guests can enjoy a front row seat for a fully guided tour of the eight-course tasting menu. www.1884dockstreetkitchen.co.uk

Nearby **Thieving Harry's**, meanwhile, first opened its doors in July 2011 as a 'pop-up' café in an old warehouse in Hull's former Fruit Market. It's now a permanent fixture on Humber Street, at its now-refurbished original location, overlooking Hull Marina. It focuses on good food, speciality coffee, tea and freshly baked cakes.



Secrets and ales - Hull has some brilliantly quirky pubs with rich and mysterious histories

Fans of the British pub can now discover the secrets of Hull's traditional taverns in some of its oldest pubs, thanks to the free pocket book 'Ale Trail' available to visitors. Head for the 'Land of Green Ginger' - which must be one of the UK's strangest street names - and pop into historic ale house **The George Hotel**, dating back to the 17th century, to look through England's smallest window. While today it serves food and ales, rebellion used to be on the menu at **Ye Olde White Harte**, a Grade II-listed pub in Silver Street, which, in 1642, was at the heart of the outbreak of the English Civil War. Look out too for the mysterious skull behind the Small Saloon Bar before supping a pint in **Ye Olde Corn Exchange**, which has been serving ale and food since the 18th century. Don't forget to head to **Ye Olde Black Boy** either - Hull's oldest pub dating from 1337.

www.visithullandeastyorkshire.com

Hull is also the ideal gateway to the county of Yorkshire, one of the most beautiful regions of Britain. Yorkshire has inspired cultural figures through history, from the Bronte sisters through to the painter David Hockney. Visit the picturesque **Yorkshire Wolds**, home to great walking and cycling opportunities, or venture to the pretty market town of Beverley for the day for some high end shopping or the Saturday market - Beverley is a 13-minute train journey from Hull.

Hull is connected to the rest of Britain by rail (2.5 hours from London Kings Cross) and its ferry port handles more than a million passengers each year.

Edinburgh, the Festival City: 12 festivals, 12 months



Edinburgh's Fringe Festival is world-renowned, but the city is a festival destination all year round

Experiment with science, debate at literary salons, stir the imagination with storytelling, party to swing, soul and samba - Scotland's capital Edinburgh will once again deliver a host of themes to visitors during its feast of festivals in 2015.

World renowned as a festival city, Edinburgh is perhaps best known for its energetic **International Festival** and **Fringe Festival** that will, in 2015, both take place throughout the month of August; both have been running since 1947 so are well established on the world festival stage. But anyone seeking a dynamic cultural experience in the city can do so year round, as it hosts 12 festivals over 12 months.

Attending an Edinburgh festival is also a fascinating way of getting under the skin of the city; the festivals tend to take place in every part of this historic destination, from private Georgian gardens to the old university halls, from the Edinburgh Castle Esplanade to residents' living rooms!

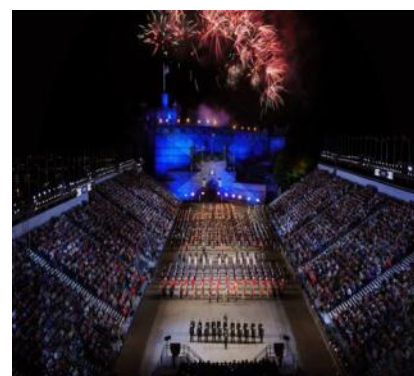
Kicking off the year is the **Edinburgh International Science Festival** (4 - 19 April). Expect a cutting-edge programme; 2014's festival featured interactive pods and hands-on workshops, many designed for the whole family, while Gastrofest - a mini festival on the science of food and drink - and LateLabs - evening talks, performances, interactives and installations - were aimed at an adult audience.

Hot on its heels will be the **Imagine Festival** (11 - 17 May), the **Edinburgh International Film Festival** (17 - 28 June) and the **Edinburgh Jazz and Blues Festival** (17 - 26 July). Imagine is *the* festival for the kids, being the largest for performing arts for children and young people in Britain. Film fans are treated to a showcase of original ideas and new talent at the film festival, while music lovers can groove at more than 140 gigs in 13 venues (as eclectic as a 17th-century church turned funky jazz club!) in the Jazz and Blues Festival.

Whatever art style you love, visitors can spend an entire month exploring the **Edinburgh Art Festival** (30 July - 30 August); 2014's festival brought 45 exhibitions into the city showcasing contemporary



A ballet performance at the world-renowned Edinburgh Festival



The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo is one of the city's annual showpieces

and historical art, artists talks, art 'Lates' and family activities, and much of the same can be expected in 2015.

August is, of course, the month of the celebrated **International Festival** and **Festival Fringe** (both running 7 - 31 August in 2015), when the capital comes alive with all sorts of performing arts, from comedy and opera to street performers and ballet, and much more. August 2015 is also the time to catch three other festivals. The **Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo** (7 - 29 August) will bring talent from four continents to audiences; its showpiece for 2015 will be 'East Meets West', where pipers, drummers, singers and dancers will come together. The **Edinburgh International Book Festival** (15 - 31 August) gives visitors the opportunity, through more than 700 events, to meet authors, attend high-profile literary debates, workshops, book signings plus there will be a dedicated children's programme. The packed month ends on a music and dance high with the **Edinburgh Mela** (29 - 30 August), which celebrates these genres from around the world.

Imaginations will continue to be inspired as the **Scottish International Storytelling Festival** arrives in the city in late October (23 October - 1 November) bringing with it live storytelling from Scottish and international narrators and musicians. Music is, of course, one of the highlights of the last festival of the year; closing the year with a bang is the world-famous **Hogmanay** celebrations (30 December - 1 January 2016).

All the programme details will be announced throughout 2015.

www.edinburghfestivalcity.com

Britain's Festival cities...

Britain is one festive destination! Many of the major cities celebrate diversity, tradition and international music, dance, literature, film and food. Here are some of the highlights of the cultural feasts you can expect to find in Britain's cities in 2015 (see separate section on Edinburgh's Festivals).

Glasgow

15 January - 1 February: Celtic Connections

Glasgow's annual folk, roots and world music festival, Celtic Connections, celebrates Celtic music and its connections to cultures across the globe. More than 2,000 musicians from around the world will descend on Glasgow and bring the city to life with concerts, ceilidhs, talks, art exhibitions, workshops and free events. www.celticconnections.com

18 February - 1 March: Glasgow Film Festival

Film fans can expect a fantastic mix of feature films, shorts, special events, and live and interactive happenings. www.glasgowfilm.org/festival

12 - 29 March : Glasgow International Comedy Festival

The 2015 festival will, once again, boast an incredible line-up of talent from around the globe at more than 400 shows staged at venues across the city.

<http://glasgowcomedyfestival.com>

April TBC: Aye Write! Glasgow's Book Festival

A ten-day celebration of the written word, with events to suit all ages. www.ayewrite.com

June: West End Festival

Every June this festival takes over the imaginations of participants and visitors in the west end of Glasgow. Events include classical, folk, rock and jazz music, theatre, dance, children's authors, guided walks and local gala days. www.westendfestival.co.uk

June: Glasgow Mela

Scotland's biggest multi-cultural festival lights up Glasgow's **Kelvingrove Park** every summer in a kaleidoscope of colours and taste from around the globe with a world of music, dance and performance. www.glasgowmela.com

July: Merchant City Festival

Glasgow's cultural quarter comes to life with this annual celebration, offering five days of live music, street performances, art, dance, theatre, comedy, food and drink. www.merchantcityfestival.com

August: Piping Live!

Make sure you are part of a week-long piping festival that makes Glasgow the centre of the world stage for piping brilliance. It's exciting and challenging, traditional and contemporary. www.pipelive.co.uk



Bagpipes galore! Glasgow hosts a week of performances from the world's best pipers

Bristol

11-12 July: Grillstock

Grillstock is a two-day festival of meat, music & mayhem. Now in its sixth year, Grillstock is a celebration of all things BBQ with thousands of visitors attracted to the hillbilly hysteria each year.

<http://grillstock.co.uk>

17-19 July: Bristol Harbour Festival

The Bristol Harbour Festival is one of the biggest free cultural events in the UK outside of London and is ideal for all the family. The two-mile site, which stretches along the picturesque harbourside, is filled with free entertainment including dancing from ballet to Bollywood, live music and culinary creations.

<http://bristolharbourfestival.co.uk>

Date TBC: Upfest

Upfest, established in 2008 has grown to become Europe's largest Urban Arts Festival. Over the past six years the festival has played host to more than 600 different artists, predominantly street artists, from across the globe who have travelled to Bristol to be

watched at work by tens of thousands of visitors. The festival had a break in 2014, but will be back in 2015 (dates TBC).

Manchester

25 - 28 February: FutureEverything

Collaborative arts festival FutureEverything, brings together a variety of artists to each present their visions and concepts of 'the future'. FutureEverything festival uses digital culture, music art, and performance together to create something truly unique for the audience. <http://futureeverything.org>

3 May: Sounds from the Other City

After the success of 2014's tenth birthday celebrations, Sounds from the Other City returns once again with a celebration of new music and performance. The festival brings together independent promoters, collectives and club nights with a selection of fantastic new music. It takes place across numerous venues in Chapel Street, Salford (ten minutes' drive from Manchester city centre). <http://soundsfromtheothercity.com/home>

2 - 19 July: Manchester International Festival

One of the world's leading festivals of original, new work and special events returns to the city for its fifth outing in summer 2015. After a phenomenal 2013 - with highlights including *Macbeth* with Kenneth Branagh, Massive Attack v Adam Curtis and *Masque of Anarchy* with Maxine Peake, the 2015 festival promises to deliver a further dose of ground-breaking and innovative work. Visitors to the 2015 festival will be able to see *Tree of Codes*, a new contemporary ballet directed and choreographed by Wayne McGregor with music composed by Jamie xx and visual concept by Olafur Eliasson. Also confirmed is *The Age of Starlight*, in which Professor Brian Cox writes and presents. Kevin MacDonald directs this new kind of show about the history of the universe, with technology by Rony Abovitz and Magic Leap, CGI by Tim Webber and Framestore. Families can enjoy *The Tale of Mr Tumble*, a new theatre show for young children where TV presenter Justin Fletcher invites audiences to step inside the colourful world of one of Britain's most cherished children's TV characters. The full programme for MIF15 will be announced in February 2015. www.mif.co.uk



New contemporary ballet, creative visual concepts and youth theatre are set to delight the crowds at 2015's Manchester International Festival

Liverpool

21 - 24 May: Sound City

Liverpool Sound City is an unrivalled three-day festival of live music and arts.

A groundbreaking two-day music and digital industry conference runs alongside the festival, showcasing some of the most influential people from the creative industries. www.liverpoolsoundcity.co.uk



24 - 26 May: Three Queens

Liverpool will play host to a Royal rendezvous as Cunard's Three Queens ships gather on the River Mersey. The spiritual home of Cunard, the city will see the ships *RMS Queen Mary 2*,

Queen Victoria and *Queen Elizabeth* stage a stunning salute to the city as part of the 175th anniversary of Cunard's first crossing of the North Atlantic.

5 - 7 June: International Mersey River Festival

One of Liverpool's most popular maritime events celebrates all things music and maritime. A whole host of vessels from Tall Ships, Navy boats and barges line the waterfront and a free concert takes place under the watchful eye of the iconic Liver Birds. A weekend of maritime-themed activities suitable for all the family.

3 - 5 July: Transatlantic 175 - From the Mersey to Manhattan

To celebrate 175 years of transatlantic travel, Cunard's flagship *Queen Mary 2* will sail from Liverpool, recreating the original voyage of *Britannia* from Liverpool to Halifax and Boston on 4 July 1840. Wayne Hemingway will curate a series of events celebrating the glamour of cruise travel and how an industry that was born in Liverpool changed the world culturally.

21 - 31 August: Liverpool International Music Festival (LIMF)

One of Europe's largest free music festivals, LIMF will return for the third time in 2015 bringing together global acts, up-and-coming stars, radio favourites and provide a platform to local artists to hone their skills and, for many, perform live in front of an audience for the first time. Central to the festival is LIMF Summer Jam - the free August Bank Holiday music extravaganza at Sefton Park. www.visitliverpool.com/whats-on/liverpool-international-music-festival

Newcastle

April: Gateshead International Jazz Festival

Arts and music venue the **Sage Gateshead** hosts the city's International Jazz Festival. While the 2015 line-up has yet to be announced, it's one of the largest jazz festivals in Britain outside of London and last year attracted some of the biggest names in jazz, including the Spring Quartet, Robert Glasper and Django Bates. www.sagegateshead.com

April: Gateshead International Festival of Theatre

2015 will see the Gateshead International Festival of Theatre return for its fifth year, bringing together new theatre-makers from around the world for performances, workshops and discussions. www.giftfestival.co.uk

25 - 26 April: Maker Faire UK

This two-day family friendly festival of invention and creativity brings together more than 300 crafters, coders, DIYers and garden shed inventors from across the globe - people who love to make stuff and who want to share their passion. Explore and create with the Makers and enjoy playful installations, drop-in workshops and fascinating speakers. www.life.org.uk

May: The Late Shows

The Late Shows is an 'after-dark' programme of events and exhibitions centering on the cultural venues in Newcastle Gateshead that are usually closed in the evening. Museums, galleries and visitor attractions stay up late to encourage people to do something cultural with their evening - in celebration of the international event 'Museums at Night'. www.thelateshows.org.uk

June: ¡VAMOS! Festival

¡VAMOS! Festival celebrates Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking cultures with events across north-east England, bringing a vibrant Mardi Gras performance, exclusive film premieres, outdoor family picnics, large scale pop-up restaurants, a major literary conference with internationally renowned speakers and cutting-edge visual art from international artists. www.vamosfestival.com

Belfast

2 - 25 January: Out to Lunch Festival

Theatre, music, literature, art and comedy take centre stage in Belfast at the beginning of the year. www.cqaf.com/ottolunch/2015

March: Belfast Film Festival

In addition to its film competitions, the festival is dedicated to hosting classic films in unusual sites (one year it showed *Jaws* at the Bangor Aurora swimming pool). The festival usually features more than 100 events across more than 20 venues.

www.belfastfilmfestival.org

May: Festival of Fools

Laugh your socks off at Belfast's weekend of comedy street shows, which features more than 120 shows and more than 50 street performances. Last year's festival saw performances in unusual venues such as inside a 60-foot inflatable whale!

www.foolsfestival.com



Ulster Hall welcomes international authors, comedians and politicians during the annual Belfast Book Festival

June: Belfast Book Festival

Internationally famous authors, politicians, comedy performances and a poetry slam – all part of Belfast's book festival, which takes place in arts centres and one of the city's leading venues, the **Ulster Hall**.

www.belfastbookfestival.com

2 - 5 July: Tall Ships Festival

In July, tall ships from across the globe will anchor in Belfast for the start of The Tall Ships Races 2015, welcomed by the annual Belfast Titanic Maritime Festival. This will be the third time the city has hosted

the races; the ships will be berthed in and around **Belfast Harbour** and the **Titanic Quarter** area. www.tallshipsbelfast.com

3 - 6 September: Belfast Mela

Thousands of people enjoy a vibrant line-up of music, dance, food, fashion, street theatre, circus and carnivals from across the globe at Belfast's annual Mela (meaning 'meet up').

The celebrations are usually kicked off with a colourful opening carnival procession and a world food market runs alongside the festival. www.belfastmela.org.uk

October: Belfast Festival at Queens

A two-week contemporary international arts festival dedicated to theatre, music, dance, talks and family activities at **Queens University**. www.belfastfestival.com



*Belfast's Queens University hosts an international arts festival every year.
©VisitBritain/Britain on View*

November: C S Lewis Festival

The *Chronicles of Narnia* author C S Lewis was born in Belfast in 1898 and spend much of his childhood in the east of the city. 2013 was the first year it was held, to mark the author's 50th anniversary. www.communitygreenway.co.uk/cslewisfestival

Cardiff

June - September: Cardiff Festival

Cardiff Festival is celebrating its 30th year in 2015! The festival is synonymous with 'Summer In The City' and will once again feature colourful parades, exciting live music and theatre, popular family entertainment, sporting and foodie events. www.cardiff-festival.com

10 - 12 July: Cardiff International Food and Drink Festival

Cardiff International Food and Drink Festival is one of the most popular highlights of 'summer in the city' and is a free event. Sample an array of mouth-watering produce from local, national and international food and drink producers. Grab a bite to eat from the Food Piazza and something to drink from the Champagne bar and soak up the atmosphere while listening to live music from the bandstand.

Museums at Night - Nationwide

14 - 16 May will be a weekend to stay up all night and get cultured! Culture24's fantastic Museums at Night programme sees museums, galleries and arts spaces all over Britain open their noise much beyond normal closing time, with most putting on a special event to get people involved. Many run bars and offer food, and it's a brilliant way to tap into the buzz of Britain's cultural spaces.

www.culture24.org.uk/museumsatnight



London's National Gallery at night.

CREATIVE EXPERIENCES

For the kind of people who can't look-but-don't-touch - take part in creative courses and expand your mind in Britain.

Creative courses in cool places

Leave Britain with new skills as well as good memories and a hand-crafted memento of your trip, by indulging a passion or exploring a new hobby.

LONDON

Join The Print Club in London

The Dalston Print Club draws arty types from across the city. With a gallery and studio showcasing the latest in screen-printing and print-making techniques, Print Club also runs beginners workshops to get you started. Design is taken seriously at the club's home on a Hackney industrial estate, so expect an intense day of taking your work from a digital image through to a print good enough to hang on your wall.

Hackney is in east London, easily accessible via Overground and Tube; A Beginners Workshop costs £50 and Deluxe weekend workshop is £150; www.printclublondon.com

Learn millinery and handbag design at the London College of Fashion

Where better to learn the art of millinery or handbag design than at the prestigious London College of Fashion? Offering a range of courses from one or two days for absolute beginners up to two-week intensives, the college offers expert tuition and access to traditional equipment. On the 'Introduction to Millinery' Course, expect to walk away with two hats of your chosen design and material.

Prices vary, e.g. a four-day 'Introduction to Millinery' Course costs £425; Courses run throughout the year; www.arts.ac.uk

Make your own scent or even lamp shade

Homemade London runs workshops from how to make paper flowers and lamp-shades to 'luxurious' workshops where you can even design your own scent. (Prices vary, from £12 - £65; booking required; www.homemadelondon.com)

Create comics and graphic novels at The Guardian Newspaper

The Guardian newspaper run a varied selection of creative courses in everything from food photography to how to write about art at their funky central London offices in Kings Cross. Aspiring graphic novelists can learn techniques for honing original ideas and getting them published from professional comic creator Karrie Fransman at this informative and entertaining evening course. Fire up your imagination and focus your ambition through its mix of talks, games and practical exercises.



Get busy with Homemade London's creative courses

Course dates and prices vary; Price for 6.30pm - 9.30pm graphic novels and comics class is £49; www.theguardian.com

Drink, Shop AND Do all in one go!

You can probably hazard a guess at what goes on at **Drink Shop Do**. The quaint cafe just around the corner from Kings Cross station in London is home to courses as varied as tea towel screen printing to making flowery headbands or Lego robots. (Prices vary with some crafts offered free; www.drinkshopdo.com)

Also in London, **The Book Club** in trendy Shoreditch plays host to 'Come Get Felt Up' a night of crafts, live rockabilly and beer, with prizes for the silliest creation, as well as DIY t-shirt screen-printing classes. (www.wearetdc.com)

Learn life drawing

Set up ten years ago by French artist Tony Pianto, the Life Drawing Society hosts regular classes in all sorts of unusual venues, from pubs and restaurants to libraries, boats, roof terraces, theatres and even churches. Artists of all levels are welcome. The Society even likes to mix it up a bit when it comes to hiring models - Olympic gold medallist Greg Rutherford has bared (nearly) all, and the events regularly feature burlesque and stage performers.

Various locations around London; london-life-drawing-society.ning.com

Become a bookbinder

Learn the ancient craft of bookbinding at **Shepherds Bookbinders** in central London where patient and knowledgeable teachers will have you crafting a Japanese paper-covered notebook in no time.

Shepherds Bookbinders courses are held at its Victoria branch, nearest tube Victoria or Westminster. Courses from £65 for one day; booking required; www.bookbinding.co.uk



Learn an ancient craft at Shepherds Bookbinders in London

ENGLAND

Learn basket-making, pottery or woodworking at West Dean College

Formerly the home of Edward James, patron of surrealist artists including Dali and Magritte, the 19th-century West Dean College is a centre to study traditional and contemporary arts, crafts, writing, gardening and music. Offering a choice of more than



Pick up a new skill in a beautiful location, choosing from writing, gardening, basket weaving pottery, and more!

700 short courses including basket-making, writing, textiles, jewellery-making and woodworking, its location in the slopes of the South Downs makes a sensational setting to spend a day or a week learning a new skill.

Courses run from Saturday to Friday. Accommodation comprises 52 bedrooms on site. The College is in the South Downs, near Chichester in south-east England, 1.5 hours by train from London; www.westdean.org.uk

Capture the Lake District landscape on camera

Capture the stunning scenery of the Lake District on camera on a guided walking holiday with a professional landscape photographer. Accomplished amateurs to absolute novices will get expert tuition from prizewinning photographer Bill Birkett each day to improve exposure, composition and processing skills. Be prepared for some early starts to catch the best light.

Prices and dates upon request; ideally bring your own digital camera; The Lake District is in the north west of England, approximately three hours by train from London;
www.mountainguides.co.uk

Weave your own fabric in idyllic Somerset

Janet Phillips, a weaver for more than 30 years, runs residential weaving, spinning and dyeing courses at her studio in the attractive village of Nether Stowey in Somerset. Learn how to operate a loom and design your very own woven fabric.

From £40 a day; Somerset is in south-west England, 2.5 hours by train from London; www.janetphillips-weaving.co.uk

Get funky and crafty at Make, Do & Mend

Make, Do & Mend in Essex is a cool and funky one-stop shop for crafters who run a variety of weekly clubs in knitting, sewing and drawing - the perfect place to indulge your love of knitting while having a good chat with tea and cake included. (Knitting club is £5 and you can just drop-in; Essex is only 40 minutes via train from London; www.makedomend.com)



Learn the ways of the loom at Janet Phillips' weaving school

SCOTLAND

Make a silver trinket box at the Glasgow School of Art

A buzzing creative atmosphere is to be found at the world-renowned Glasgow School of Art, where notable alumni include Turner Prize winning artist Douglas Gordon and Professor of Fashion Design Louise Wilson. On this weekend course students learn the art of silversmithing by making a cylindrical trinket box in silver, with an individually designed etched pattern on the lid.

Evening and week-long courses are offered, subjects and prices vary; 'Make a Trinket Box' runs Saturday/Sunday from 10am-4pm for £140; Accommodation is available during the summer on campus in Glasgow; www.gsa.ac.uk

Become a portrait photographer in a Scottish eco-house

The Adult Residential Colleges Association has around 17 rurally-sited, residential colleges offering creative courses for adults in the UK. Enjoy a course on subjects from photography to art and writing while sharing a luxurious large eco-friendly house set in the heart of Galloway countryside. Small group sizes and experienced tutors mean maximum individual attention and a friendly atmosphere. Participants are also welcome to help feed llamas, collect eggs, use the mini cinema/games room or have a motorcycle sidecar trip.

Durhamhill is in south-west Scotland and is approximately two hours from Edinburgh/Glasgow by train; www.arca.uk.net

Take stationery to another level in the Scottish capital

In Scotland's capital Edinburgh, Get Creative is an Aladdin's cave of craft materials – everything from velvet paper to rubber stamps and stencils. They also run free onsite demonstrations or more in-depth workshops on card-making and even metal embossing. (Workshops approximately £16 each)

Edinburgh is Scotland's capital, and accessible by train from many other parts of Britain (4.5 hours from London) www.getcreativeonline.co.uk

WALES

Be inspired to paint the Welsh countryside

Be inspired by wild flowers gathered from the Wales countryside on this course, which is suitable for both beginners and those wanting to improve their skills. A relaxed atmosphere is created by course leader, artist Diane Stuart at Little Hen Cefn, a charming cottage peacefully situated in 6.5 acres of gardens, woodland and stream bordered pasture. Spectacular countryside views in the heart of the Welsh marches are perfect for artists, crafters, nature lovers and walkers who can spot deer, barn and tawny owls, woodpeckers, red kites and nuthatches in between classes.

Little Hen Cefn is in Powys in Mid Wales, 4.5 hours via train from Cardiff; £599 for six nights, bed, breakfast and evening meals and tuition for five full days;

www.littlehencefn.co.uk

Get crafty with candles and chocolate in Mid Wales

Eight craft studios, each specialising in everything from candles and soaps to glass sculpture or wooden toys, means the beautiful **Corris Craft Centre** in Mid Wales is worth spending a whole day in. Learn to make your own pair of hand-dipped candles or bar of chocolate while you're there. (Prices and activities vary; the craft centre is accessible via car or bus from nearby Powys, three hours by train from Cardiff;

www.corriscraftcentre.co.uk)



Be inspired by the Northern Ireland landscape with Dermot Cavanagh

NORTHERN IRELAND

Paint with Dermot Cavanagh at The Argory in Northern Ireland

Fans of Dermot Cavanagh's BBC TV Series *Awash With Colour* will enjoy a visit to his native Northern Ireland where they can join him on a painting course in the majestic setting of National Trust property, The Argory. Learn about colour mixing, perspective and washes in an atmospheric Irish gentry house and wooded riverside estate. Catering for all levels of artistic ability including absolute beginners, all the painting materials required will be provided.

A three-day course is approximately. £199; Moy in County Tyrone is just over two hours from Belfast; www.learntopaintwithdermotcavanagh.com

ALL OVER BRITAIN

Explore the outdoors as a family through creative art

Families looking to spend quality time together will love the courses offered by the Field Studies Council, which combine arts and natural history in FSC centers across Britain. Take to the Derwent Water on canoes and explore mountain tops on foot, making quick sketches and collecting nature to work from, try orienteering and bush-craft skills, and learn about other artists who work from and with the Lake District landscape.

Adults cost £170 and children £135 to include tuition, full board and food; The Lake District is in the north west of England, approximately three hours by train from London;
www.field-studies-council.org

Nourish your brain with talks, lectures and courses

Britain is stuffed-to-bursting with talks on curious subjects and courses where you can pick up a new skill while making memories and taking snaps of your trip.

TALKS TO BROADEN YOUR MIND

From talks on arts and culture to politics and philosophy, Britain is a hotbed for new ideas so broaden your mind at a talk or lecture.

Café Culture is a series of free events held at a café in central Newcastle upon Tyne, that provide a space for people to think and share ideas on science, politics, philosophy and culture. Each talk involves an interesting speaker then plenty of lively debate over a coffee or glass of wine. (Newcastle-upon-Tyne is in the north east of England, reached in three hours by train from London; First and third Monday's of the month; Free)
www.cafeculturenortheast.org.uk

The Edinburgh International Science Festival is held in April each year and explores how science is everywhere - from the complexity of our bodies and minds, to the food we eat, clothes we wear, games we play and the music that provides the soundtrack to our lives. Spanning food, politics and art, the festival takes over Edinburgh and combines talks, lectures and hands-on workshops to keep the whole family busy. Prices vary. www.sciencefestival.co.uk

Sunday Papers Live in London bills itself as, 'An experiment in creating the perfect shared Sunday' by combining a day of talks, walks, performances and food that 'bring the broadsheets to life'. Visitors can indulge in Sunday roasts and Bloody Marys while listening to guests speakers dissect the newspapers, all in the comfort of a giant living room. (Tickets from £30) www.sundaypaperslive.com



Discuss your thoughts on the affairs of the day with Sunday Papers LIVE

The Do Lectures in Wales are described as 'TED meets Burning Man meets Where the Wild Things Are'. If you get through the application process (and have nearly £1,000 to spend on a ticket), you'll experience four days sleeping in wigwams, participating in talks ranging from the sustainability of eating fish to the importance of hope. Bills itself as a bit of a 'life-changer'. (Tickets cost £995 excluding

VAT; Cardigan in west Wales is accessible by car and bus and is just under three hours drive from Cardiff) www.thedolectures.com/events/do-wales-2015

The Southbank Centre is a world-famous arts centre on the South Bank of the River Thames in London and, as well as home to music, dance, art and performance, also regularly hosts talks and lectures in the Royal Festival Hall. Well-known authors and artists 'in conversation' make for fantastic events - Caitlin Moran and Lena Dunham's meeting was a roaring success there have been talks on subjects as broad-ranging as 'Being a Man' and 'Neighbourhoods' and many are completely free with no booking required - just turn up and learn! www.southbankcentre.co.uk

Ulster Museum in Northern Ireland offers talks on everything from figurative ceramic sculpture to Irish street art and reptiles (the perfect way to keep kids occupied as they can even handle the reptiles if they dare!) Most talks are free although longer lecture courses carry a small charge. The Ulster Museum is situated in Belfast's Botanic Gardens. www.nmni.com

The School of Life in London is the brain-child of philosopher Alain De Botton and offers 'semesters' of events designed to develop emotional intelligence through culture. Their 'classroom' offers talks, lectures and workshops on everything from finding fulfilling work to achieving calm and even how to worry less about money. (Prices vary from £25 upwards and booking is usually required) www.theschooloflife.com

Britain's great outdoors - the perfect cultural venue

What better way to spend a British summer evening than enjoying a picnic, surrounded by beautiful gardens or rolling hills, and getting the chance to enjoy a Shakespeare play or some live music? In recent years there's been an explosion in alfresco culture, with everything from movie showings to opera recitals staged in historic castles, stately homes and even rural woodland. Whatever your taste there's something to suit, so pack up the hamper and settle in for an evening of culture beneath the stars.

Cinema

Every summer, **Luna Cinema** puts on a series of alfresco cinema events at stately homes and parks around the country, offering a chance to enjoy a great movie in classically British surroundings. The season runs from 2 July until 28 September and, in 2014, offered the chance to view everything from vintage musicals such as *Grease*, through to kitsch classics like *Dirty Dancing*, and to the more recent releases such as *Gravity* and *The Wolf of Wall Street*. Venues range from central London locations to a range of gardens in south-east England including Sissinghurst and Leeds Castle in Kent. Check the website for further details of the 2015 programme. www.thelunacinema.com

One of the most beautiful alfresco cinema locations is **Somerset House** in London. Every August, a two-week film festival brings together classic movies, new releases and avant-garde favourites; in 2014 the programme included Marilyn Monroe in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and Wes Anderson's classic *The Royal Tenenbaums*. Its website will reveal the 2015 programme in the new year. www.somersethouse.org.uk



Cinema under the stars; London's Somerset House screens classic movies in classic surroundings

Opera

When it comes to alfresco opera, **Glyndebourne** is a must; a pre-performance picnic is an integral part of a visit to the beautiful Sussex estate, but the performances themselves are actually inside the purpose-built theatre. Glyndebourne has been staging opera in the heart of the South Downs National Park in south-east England since 1934, after John Christie built an opera house for his soprano wife, Audrey Mildmay. The Festival is recognised as one of the most beloved European opera Festivals and runs from 21 May to 30 August consisting every year of six operas; 2015's bill includes *Carmen* and Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*. Lewes station is just over an hour from London Victoria, and there is a regular shuttle bus to the venue. www.glyndebourne.com



Something to sing about; Garsington Opera is set in the beautiful Wormsley estate, home of the billionaire Getty family

To see opera performed in an outside space, one of the best choices is **Garsington Opera**, which runs from early June until the end of July at the beautiful Wormsley Estate, home of the billionaire Getty family. The 2015 programme will feature *Così fan Tutte*, *Intermezzo*, *Death in Venice* and *A Midsummer's Night's Dream*. With Wormsley within easy reach of Oxford, it makes it ideal for a short-break out of London. Garsington is 20 minutes by taxi from High Wycombe station, itself around one hour from London Marylebone by train. www.garsingtonopera.org

In London, **Opera Holland Park** is a long-running alfresco festival that offers classic opera by the likes of Puccini and Benjamin Britten, while the capital's Royal Opera House show live relays of performances at venues around Britain, including outdoor locations in Belfast and Cardiff, among others. www.rbkc.gov.uk, www.roh.org.uk

Theatre

Open-air Shakespeare is a classic alfresco choice; the most famous location is the long-running **Regent's Park Open Air Theatre** in London, home to the New Shakespeare Company. The 2015 season will run from 15 May until 12 September, with a combination of Shakespeare plays, musicals and family productions. In Wales' capital, Cardiff, the **Everyman Open Air Theatre Festival** takes place. Expect everything from classics to children's theatre to musicals; 2014's programme included the likes of *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Sweeney Todd* and the *Little Mermaid*. In Scotland, the **National Trust for Scotland** hosts a range of Shakespeare plays at its castles and stately homes. www.openairtheatre.com, www.everymanfestival.co.uk, www.nts.org.uk



Going to the open-air theatre in London's Regent's Park is one of the must-dos on the alfresco cultural calendar

Lancashire in North West England is home to the largest outdoor walkabout theatre in the UK, which sees flocks of people gather to form an audience, who follows the performance around the beautiful Edwardian Williamson Park. The show always culminates in a sunset ending at Ashton Memorial, once described as the grandest monument in England. In 2015, *Oliver Twist* will be played out al fresco in the Park. www.visitlancashire.com

Britain is home to several touring theatre companies that put on a range of plays at castles, stately homes and gardens around the destination. **Illyria** is staging four plays in

summer 2015; with *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Three Musketeers*, *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* and *Iolanthe*. Historically Illyria's plays show in a rich variety of venues; in the past they've been performed everywhere from Drumlanrig Castle in Scotland to Chepstow Castle in Wales and Corfe Castle in Dorset on the south coast of England. **Chapterhouse Theatre** is a similar company that also offers dates in Northern Ireland; in summer 2015 Chapterhouse will stage *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Pride and Prejudice* and *The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes*, among other plays, around Britain. www.illyria.uk.com, www.chapterhouse.org

Of course, alfresco theatre is not a new invention; the spectacular **Minack Theatre** in Cornwall, south-west England, has been running since 1931, perched on the cliffs high above the Cornish coastline. The theatre season runs from April through to September, with matinees on Tuesdays and Thursdays and storytelling mornings for children in school holidays. Minack is around 20 minutes from Penzance station by taxi, itself around five hours from London Paddington. www.minack.com

Contemporary Music

For lovers of pop music, you don't have to attend a weekend festival to see your favourite artists perform under the stars. **Forest Live** is a programme of concerts hosted by the Forestry Commission who look after some of England's most beautiful woodland. There are outdoor concerts at seven sites, from Sherwood Pines Forest in Nottingham, around two hours north of London, to Westonbirt Arboretum, near to the beautiful city of Bath (90 minutes from London Paddington by train). Artists confirmed for 2015 include Irish pop and rock band, The Script. www.forestry.gov.uk/music



Lush, green locations are the backdrop to some top pop acts during Forest Live's summer concert programme

In Cornwall, the world-famous **Eden Project** holds the 'Eden Sessions' every summer, with a huge outdoor stage and A-list names performing. The guest list for 2014 included Ellie Goulding, Elbow and Dizzee Rascal and, while the line-up for 2015 is still to be announced, early bird tickets are now available from its website. St Austell station is around five hours from London Paddington and there are buses connecting the station with the Eden Project. www.edensessions.com

Jazz lovers visiting Northern Ireland should head to **Mount Stewart House** in the summer, for an afternoon of Jazz in the Gardens, just 15 miles south of Belfast. Mount Stewart is just one of dozens of National Trust properties that have alfresco music and arts events over the summer; for specific dates and locations visit its website. www.nationaltrust.org.uk

FILM

Find out about Britain as a film set in 2015. For lots more information on British film and TV locations and stars download the [Film is GREAT guide](#) at [visitbritain.com/media](#).

Britain's starring role on screen in 2015

Many of Britain's countryside, castles, cities and cathedrals have played a leading role in iconic films and television programmes. With a multitude of British-based films coming up in the next 12 months and beyond, you too can step on to a real film location: Britain.

Movies

Into The Woods: Kicking off the new year (although released on Christmas Day in the US) will be the release of Disney film *Into The Woods*, a fantastical tale of a witch who wants to teach important lessons to various children's characters, including Cinderella, Rapunzel and Little Red Riding Hood. Step into the fairy tale film locations that include the magnificent medieval fortress of **Dover Castle** in Kent, England's first Cistercian abbey, **Waverley Abbey** in Surrey and the pretty village of **Hambledon** in Buckinghamshire (all in south-east England and around an hour from London by train or car). www.english-heritage.org.uk/daysout/properties



The medieval Dover Castle makes a perfect backdrop for a fairytale-themed movie

Kingsman: The Secret Service: Released on 12 February in Britain, the film - based upon the acclaimed comic book - tells the story of a super-secret spy organisation that recruits an unrefined but promising street kid into the agency's ultra-competitive training programme. All just before a twisted tech genius presents a global threat! Starring Colin Firth, Samuel L. Jackson and Michael Caine, film locations include **London** (although, in keeping with the film's subject matter, specific locations in the capital haven't been disclosed!) as well as the **Bluebell Railway** in the county of West Sussex in south-east England. The Bluebell Railway is a great heritage day out - only a couple of hours' drive from London - and runs steam trains along track for 11 miles. The railway line is quite the star of film and TV - it has appeared numerous times on-screen, including in *A Room With A View*, *The Railway Children*, *Miss Potter*, *The Woman in Black* and *Downton Abbey*. www.bluebell-railway.co.uk

Cinderella: March 2015 welcomes the release of a new live action adaptation of *Cinderella*. It has a distinctive British flavour; directed by British actor and director, Kenneth Branagh, and featuring many British cast, including Lily James (Lady Rose in *Downton Abbey*) as Cinderella and Helena Bonham Carter as the Fairy Godmother. Plus it was filmed at some of Britain's most romantic destinations! You'll feel like you're stepping back in time when



The baroque-style Blenheim Palace evokes the romance of the tale of Cinderella - the latest movie version was filmed here

visiting one of its film locations, **Blenheim Palace** in Oxfordshire (which is a good option for a day out from London, being less than two hours' drive away). This 18th century palace - the birthplace of Sir Winston Churchill - is famed for its fine baroque architecture and 2,000 acres of landscaped grounds. Another lovely romantic spot for a stroll or to take the family for a picnic is another *Cinderella* film location **Black Park** in Iwer Heath, Buckinghamshire. Around an hour's drive from London and not far from Pinewood Studios (where many

great movies are made), the park boasts more than 500 acres of heathland and woodland. www.blenheimpalace.com

Far From the Madding Crowd: Due to hit cinemas worldwide from May 2015, *Far from the Madding Crowd* has been shot on location in the south-west England county of **Dorset** and stars British actress Carey Mulligan in the latest adaptation of the famous Thomas Hardy novel. Filming locations are said to include the picturesque town of **Sherborne** and country houses, **Mapperton at Beaminster** – surrounded by rolling hills and countryside – and **Forde Abbey in Somerset**, which includes a fruit farm for visitors to pick their own berries. National Trust-owned **Claydon House in Buckinghamshire**, around an hour's drive from London, also played a starring role in the dramatic Christmas party scenes – Claydon was lavishly dressed with Christmas trees, mistletoe and garlands. The house reopens to the public on 14 March 2015. Other National Trust locations in the film include **Cogden Beach** and the **Golden Cap** in Dorset. The Trust also looks after **Hardy's Cottage** in Dorset where the novelist was born, and wrote *Far From The Madding Crowd*, and the home he designed in 1885, Max Gate in Dorchester (Hardy's Cottage re-opens from 11 March 2015 please check nationaltrust.org.uk for full opening times).

www.mapperton.com, www.fordeabbey.co.uk, www.nationaltrust.org.uk/claydon

Spectre: The name of the latest James Bond film, plus its release date of November 6 2015 and details of the key cast members have been announced to great fanfare, but the makers aren't giving much away in terms of film locations; Bond's London is likely to feature however. While we wait with anticipation for the next instalment, Bond fans have plenty of film locations to visit. Right from the start of the Bond franchise, London's *M16* headquarters on the bank of the River Thames has been an iconic feature in the films. The city has often played an essential role in Bond films, most recently in *Skyfall* and *Quantum of Solace*; the **National Gallery** was used as a location for the former, for example. Elsewhere, classics such as *The Living Daylights* and *View to a Kill* have respectively featured historic country house **Stonor Park** near the picturesque town of Henley-on-Thames in Oxfordshire, and the town made famous by Royal Ascot, **Ascot** in the county of Berkshire (both around an hour's drive from London). www.nationalgallery.org.uk, www.stonor.com

Pan: Starring Hugh Jackman and due out in July 2015, this Warner Bros. production offers a darker, fantasy take on the story of Peter Pan. The south-east England counties of **Buckinghamshire** and **Bedfordshire** are being used in filming; both are around an hour's drive from London, making them easy days' out from the capital, and both are known for their beautiful countryside and National Trust properties. Fans of Roald Dahl should head to the Buckinghamshire town of **Great Missenden** – it's where the author lived and wrote many of his books, plus it's home to the **Roald Dahl Museum and Story Centre**. www.roalddahl.com/museum

Macbeth: Michael Fassbender and Marion Cotillard star in the new take on William Shakespeare's bloody tragedy. Set in Scotland, it seems only natural that one of the locations used in the film is the **Isle of Skye** off the west coast of Scotland. Its sea lochs and mountain scenery make for a tantalisingly brooding atmosphere! Film locations in England include Northumberland's **Bamburgh beach** (north-east England), with the glorious medieval Bamburgh Castle looming in the background, as well as the magnificent



The distinctive lochs and rugged mountains of Scotland's Isle of Skye lend to the atmospheric setting of the new film version of Macbeth

Norman-built **Ely Cathedral** in Cambridgeshire, east England. www.visitscotland.com, www.visitnorthumberland.com, www.elycathedral.org

Mission Impossible 5: Star of the film Tom Cruise was spotted filming in central London's **Piccadilly Circus** in December 2014, which means the filming of the fifth instalment of the Mission Impossible series is well and truly underway! Other London locations are rumoured to include the **Houses of Parliament**, **The Shard**, **Olympic Stadium** and **Emirates Airline cable cars** - iconic London landmarks that should be on the must-see list of any visitor to the capital. Cruise's character Ethan Hunt may not have time to stop off for a cup of tea, should he film scenes at the Houses of Parliament or The Shard, but as a visitor you can enjoy afternoon tea at both! www.parliament.uk/visiting/visiting-and-tours/tours-of-parliament/tours-teas-of-parliament, www.the-shard.com/restaurants/aquashard

And looking ahead to 2016...

Tarzan: Tarzan, now living in London, is called back to his former home in the jungle to find out the goings-on of a mining encampment; a plot that has led to filming taking place in several British locations. **Windsor Great Park**, **Kedleston Hall** in Derbyshire and **Dinorwig Quarry** in Gwynedd, Wales have been listed. A visit to these destinations demonstrates Britain's diversity as a film location. Windsor Great Park is 5,000 acres of parkland, comprising a Deer Park, formal avenues, gardens, woodland and open grassland (and Windsor Castle as its backdrop!). Windsor is only an hour by train from London. Kedleston Hall, close to the city of Derby (around 90 minutes by train from London), is a National Trust-owned 18th-century mansion, while Dinorwig Quarry in Llanberis, north Wales, is a former slate quarry and also home to the Welsh National Slate Museum. Llanberis is around two hours' drive from Manchester. www.thecrownestate.co.uk/windsor/windsor-great-park www.nationaltrust.org.uk/kedleston-hall, www.museumwales.ac.uk/slate



Visit Windsor Great Park and you'll be stepping into one of the film locations of the new Tarzan movie, out in 2016. Clearly the story is no longer just in the jungle!

Through the Looking Glass: Coming up in May 2016, Disney will release *Through the Looking Glass*, a sequel to *Alice in Wonderland*. Johnny Depp and Helena Bonham Carter are said to be reprising their roles with filming rumoured to be taking place in Britain. The *Alice in Wonderland* story was originally written by English author Lewis Carroll and **Oxford** is considered the birthplace of the story as Carroll lived in Oxford for most of his life as a student and then as a don at the college of Christ Church. To create your own Alice adventure, download the new app, *Follow the White Rabbit*, and follow a digital 3D audio-visual trail through **Llandudno** in north Wales where the real Alice used to holiday. www.alicetowntrails.co.uk

Television

Wolf Hall: Hilary Mantel's Booker Prize-winning novel, *Wolf Hall*, is being turned into a new TV series for the BBC and PBS MASTERPIECE in the US. Damian Lewis will play Henry VIII opposite Mark Rylance as Thomas Cromwell in the series that will air in 2015. Filming has begun in **Somerset**, **Dorset** and **Wiltshire**, south-west England, including at six National Trust properties across the region such as **Montacute House**, a masterpiece of Elizabethan Renaissance architecture, and **Barrington Court** near Ilminster, which dates back to Tudor times. www.nationaltrust.org.uk

The Crown: Netflix is planning a £100million new epic drama all about the Queen, due to start filming in 2015. *The Crown* will focus on Queen Elizabeth II's six decades on the throne from 1952 to the present day and will be Netflix's first original production to be filmed in Britain.



The magnificent city of York is an ideal base for historical dramas, such as the Knifeman, where it doubles as 18th-century London

Knifeman: York in the north of England has been doubling for 18th-century London in a new drama, *Knifeman*, from the makers of *Breaking Bad* and *Mad Men*, and will star Tom Hollander. The historic city is said to be Britain's best-preserved medieval city, home to more than 2,000 years of colourful history. Visit the impressive **York Minster**, one of Britain's most magnificent cathedrals, or chocoholics will love **York's Chocolate Story**, where you can discover the history of York's chocolate families with tasty treats along the way. www.yorkminster.org, <http://yorkschochocolatestory.com>

Hinterland: Series two of the noir drama *Hinterland*, set in Wales, has started filming. The show, featuring British countryside, debuted in Britain in 2014 and was also screened on Netflix for US and Canadian viewers. It's filmed in and around the town of **Aberystwyth** on the coast of west Wales (around four hours by train from Manchester), all sweeping beaches, rolling hills and picturesque bridges and waterfalls. www.visitwales.com

Outlander: New US TV series *Outlander* has been filmed on location in Scotland with castles and the Highlands providing a dramatic backdrop for the show set in the lead up to the Battle of Culloden. Described as Scotland's answer to the *Game of Thrones*, the series has been shot at locations including **Doone Castle**, a magnificent late 14th-century courtyard castle, which features a 100ft high gatehouse. The show is also said to have filmed at **George Square in Glasgow**, **Perthshire** and **Loch Rannoch**. www.visitscotland.com

Awards season approaches - Britain's Oscar nominee hopefuls

As we race towards 'awards season' - the annual Academy Awards take place in February 2015, with nominations announced in January. We take a look at two British films which may get a nod from the Academy and the locations that inspired them.

The Theory of Everything: British star Eddie Redmayne takes on the role of physicist Stephen Hawking, which follows his story from his early days as an undergraduate at **Cambridge**, focusing on his diagnosis with motor neurone disease and his relationship with his first wife Jane Wilde. The famous university city of Cambridge was the background of the story; just an hour's train journey from London, explore the stunning colleges of one of the world's oldest universities, punt along the river Cam and visit the university's museums that house more than five million works of art, artefacts and specimens. www.cam.ac.uk



A seat of learning and the setting for a potential Oscar-nominee; Cambridge University is one of the 'stars' of The Theory of Everything

The Imitation Game: Picturesque **Dorset**, south-west England, is the location used for *The Imitation Game*, starring Benedict Cumberbatch and Keira Knightley. The historical drama tells the real life story of code-breaker and pioneering mathematician Alan Turing. Locations, including Sherborne, a market town in Dorset, as well as **Bletchley**

Park, were used. Once Britain's best-kept secret where code-breakers worked, Bletchley Park is now a lively tourism attraction with themed events and family fun days. As well as the film hopefully getting a nod for an award, its two leading British stars could net Oscar nominations. www.bletchleypark.org.uk

Macbeth the movie: something wicked this way comes...

2015 could be called something of a 'sandwich year' for Shakespeare fans. 2014 marked the 450th anniversary of The Bard's death, while celebrations in 2016 will herald the 400th anniversary of his birth. In between, fans of Shakespeare, Michael Fassbender and the rugged landscapes of Scotland and England are in for a treat. A new movie version of *Macbeth* will be released next year, with Fassbender in the title role and Academy Award-winner Marion Cotillard opposite him as the complex and persuasive Lady Macbeth.

The movie's creative team travelled extensively around Scotland, exploring its Highlands and islands looking for locations in which to shoot the movie. The **Isle of Skye** seems an appropriate choice, as one of the most unusual and atmospheric places in Britain, if not the world. The movie's producer Iain Canning, remarked "You go to Skye, and it's almost an

otherworldly place, and you imagine witches could come out of that landscape." As far as supernatural creatures go, the **Faerie Pools** are definitely bewitching (in a good way - and were perhaps too beautiful a location for filming the dark atmosphere of *Macbeth*!) The rugged **Quiraing** area of the island provided the backdrop for scenes involving Macduff and a charge of men; the same area featured in *Snow White and the Huntsman*. It provides atmospheric and challenging terrain for walkers - one rock formation is dubbed The Prison - with breathtaking vistas. www.visitscotland.com



The dramatic view over the Quiraing on the Isle of Skye, where scenes in Macbeth were filmed

Three Chimneys, a Skye highlight. Included in the top ten restaurants in the world and located lochside with views stretching to the Outer Hebrides, it's Michelin-starred dining that truly merits the accolade. Stay on site for the ultimate in comfort.

www.threechimneys.co.uk

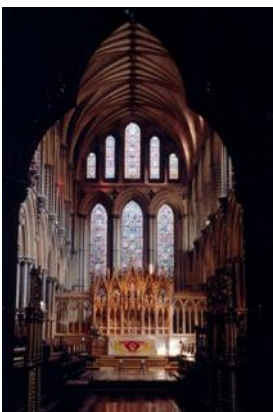
Other movie locations can be explored over the border in England, where **Bamburgh Castle** in Northumberland (on the north-east coast of England) stood in for Macbeth's home.



Bamburgh Castle and its sweeping beach is the backdrop for Macbeth on screen

The superstar cast and extensive crew set up around the castle and on the sweeping beach it perches above. The beach is a beautiful place to visit - and even swim, when the weather is less moody than it no doubt will be in the movie - and you can take a look inside the actual castle too. www.bamburghcastle.com

Ely Cathedral in Cambridgeshire, down in the south of England, stands in for Dunsinane Castle. The magnificent cathedral has also played the part of Westminster Abbey on screen, in *The Kings Speech*. Regardless of its on-



Ely Cathedral, which stands in for Dunsinane in the movie

screen persona, it's magnificent to visit for its own history - it was founded in 673 as a monastery by a Saxon Princess - and elegant Norman architecture. www.elycathedral.org

Another popular haunt for fans of the play *Macbeth* includes **Glamis Castle**, less than two hours' drive from Edinburgh and dubbed 'Scotland's most spectacular castle'; 'Great Glamis!' is referred to in the play. Among the oldest and eeriest parts of the castle, Duncan's Hall commemorates the killing of King Duncan by Macbeth - but it didn't actually happen there in real life, instead it was near the beautiful cathedral city of **Elgin**, in Moray, north-east Scotland. www.glamis-castle.co.uk

Film Festivals

It doesn't matter if you can't attend Cannes and Sundance - you can enjoy the very best in cinema and film-making here in Britain. Whether you're an avid fan of the silver screen, are interested in upcoming screenwriters and directors, or simply keen to watch an exciting premiere, Britain's cities have long played host to some of the world's finest film festivals held throughout the entire year. Start buying the popcorn!

Wales One World Film Festival, Wales

March 2015 TBC

The WOW Film Festival in Wales is about celebrating world cinema and aims to bring powerful stories to audiences. Special events including live music, panel discussions and Q&As also form part of the festival, which takes place at a variety of locations in Wales; a trip to the festival can be a holiday in itself. It visits the buzzing capital, Cardiff; Swansea, an hour's train journey from Cardiff and also a stone's throw from some of the most beautiful beaches in the world on the Gower Peninsula; and Pembrokeshire and Aberystwyth in west Wales, around a two-hour drive from Cardiff and home to some of the most spectacular coastline in Britain. www.wowfilmfestival.com

Bird's Eye View Festival, London

April 2015

Championing female film-makers and highlighting their contribution to cinema, the Bird's Eye View utilises leading London film venues including the BFI Southbank, the Barbican and Electric cinema in Notting Hill. It then takes the Festival's highlights on a touring programme to other venues and events across Britain, including music festivals and arts centres. www.birds-eye-view.co.uk

Edinburgh Film Festival, Edinburgh, Scotland

17 - 28 June

Both smash-hit and critically acclaimed films have premiered at the Edinburgh Film Festival, one of Britain's major film events and part of the world-famous Edinburgh Festivals group. *Brave*, *The Hurt Locker*, *Knocked Up*, *Little Miss Sunshine* and *Billy Elliot* have premiered there in recent years, with 2014 welcoming *Palo Alto*, *Joe* and *We'll Never Have Paris* to the city's screens. It's here you can witness some of the most innovative film talent that will go on to dominate the world. The Scottish capital is a film-lover's paradise; many internationally successful films have been shot in the capital - *One Day*, *Chariots of*

Fire, *Trainspotting* to name a few. A visit to Edinburgh means the chance to see iconic locations used in these films, such as Arthur's Seat (overlooking the magnificent city skyline) and the thriving shopping hub of Princes Street. www.edfilmfest.org.uk

Cambridge Film Festival, Cambridge, east England

August 2015

The elegant university city celebrates film-making almost as much as it celebrates academia. The festival bases itself at the city's Arts Picturehouse, which itself is within walking distance of some of the colleges and their must-see architecture. There's a line-up of around 150 films and documentaries at indoor and outdoor venues, allowing filmgoers to experience new ways of viewing cinema. It may be an intimate festival but it still attracts big names; Cate Blanchett, Gary Oldman and Tilda Swinton have all been part of past special discussions. All this just an hour's train journey from London. www.cambridgefilmfestival.org.uk

BFI London Film Festival, London

October 2015 TBC

Take a stroll down London's lively Southbank in October and not only will you have the chance to visit the London Eye, the London Aquarium and the London Dungeons but witness the esteemed British Film Institute (BFI) London Film Festival. This 12-day celebration of cinema attracts large audiences; last year's festival hosted 248 feature films, opening with *The Imitation Game* - starring Benedict Cumberbatch and Keira Knightley - and closing with Brad Pitt's World War Two epic *Fury*. The programme will be announced later in 2015. www.bfi.org.uk/lff

London Bicycle Film Festival, Barbican Centre, London

October 2015 TBC

Ride into London for a film festival with a quirky side - London's Bicycle Film Festival. It was launched by its director Brendt Barbur following a bicycle accident, which he then turned into a positive experience by advocating bicycles through film, music and art. The festival showcases bicycle-related films and many other bike-related events. www.bicyclefilmfestival.com

Leeds International Film Festival, Yorkshire, north England

4 - 19 November 2015

The bustling city of Leeds - around an hour by train from Manchester - has hosted its own film festival that has proved so popular that it is now in its 29th year. Evidence from last year's festival, which showcased cult films, documentaries detailing vital issues, short films, retrospectives among other, suggests that the 2015 programme will be as equally acclaimed. The festival is very much part of the city's heritage and Leeds' compact city centre presents plenty of opportunities to visit its other leading attractions, such as the Royal Armouries Museum (www.royalarmouries.org/visit-us/leeds), Leeds City Museum (www.leedsmuseum.co.uk) and Leeds Art Gallery (www.leedsartgallery.co.uk). www.leedsfilm.com

Foyle Film Festival, Derry-Londonderry, Northern Ireland

November 2015 TBC

Derry~Londonderry's Foyle Film Festival aims to feature unusual screenings at unusual locations, director's talks and an initiative involving local communities in making and screening films about their areas. Visitors won't be short of things to do and places to go during Derry~Londonderry's - it's still riding high following its year as the first UK City of Culture in 2013 and there is plenty of culture and history to explore.

www.foylefilmfestival.org

LITERATURE

Find out where to follow in the footsteps of your favourite books and authors, and what to read in 2015 to be in keeping with the celebration year!

Alice in Wonderland's big 150th birthday (tea) party!



Choose your own adventure with the immersive theatrical experience Alice's Adventures Underground

26 November marks the 150th anniversary of the publication of one of the most enchanting works of literature: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, better known as Lewis Carroll, famously first outlined his story to the ten-year-old Alice Liddell - the inspiration for the tale - as he and the Reverend Robinson Duckworth punted her and her sisters Lorina and Edith up the Isis River, which runs through the city of Oxford ('punting' involves a leisurely ride in a boat, more on that below!)

Thanks to the book, and its sequel *Through The Looking Glass*, characters like the Mad Hatter, the Cheshire Cat and The Queen of Hearts have captured the imaginations of

children and adults alike, and been incarnated on screen and stage to bring the quirky tale to life. Next year, special celebrations will be taking place to mark the 150th year of the book's publication.

One of the most intriguing events taking place to mark Alice in Wonderland's century-and-a-half will be the production by renowned immersive theatre company Les Enfants Terribles in April. *Alice's Adventures Underground* (in fact the original title of the novel) will invite you to 'A land full of Wonder, Mystery and Danger', as written about by Carroll in his masterpiece. The Vaults, deep underneath London's Waterloo station, will house a Wonderland that blends storytelling, live music, puppetry, circus and spectacle. Groups of 52 will be led down the Rabbit Hole and invited to choose between EAT ME or DRINK ME. Their choice will affect the way their show will unfold... Curiouser and curiouser? Tickets cost £35-£47.50, and are available at www.alice-underground.com.

As the birthplace of *Alice in Wonderland* (as the book is most commonly known), **Oxford** is a must-visit for Alice fans, and such is the city's close tie with the novel that an annual Alice Day is held by its Story Museum; in 2015, Alice Day will be extra special, held on 4 July, with events including a Mad Hatter's tea party, exhibitions, storytelling, promenade theatre and Alice-themed walks and talks. In addition, Alice's Shop Oxford runs Alice in Wonderland-themed tours year-round, taking in many places of significance to Alice and Lewis Carroll in Oxford and highlighting the many ways in which Oxford influenced and inspired Carroll's writings.

Fancy trying your hand at **punting**, and seeing whether you can come up with a work of literature along the way like Carroll did? Punting is easy once you get the hang of it - just propel your boat along using a large stick that pushes off the riverbed. The risk of falling in is small - but there is one! If you'd rather not take your chances, and would prefer to stay seated to eat strawberries and drink champagne, you can opt to have an expert steer you around. Both self-drive and chauffeured punts are available from Magdalen Bridge Boathouse. The beautiful Trout Inn, a pub on the outskirts of Oxford (said to have inspired Lewis Carroll) will be offering an electronic punt from next year, the likes of which Oxford has never seen!



Try your hand at punting (or get someone to chauffeur!)

www.storymuseum.org.uk, www.aliceinwonderlandshop.co.uk/tours, <http://oxfordpunting.co.uk>, www.thetroutoxford.co.uk

A lesser-known Alice location is **Llandudno** in Wales, where Alice Liddell used to spend her holidays with her family, and where the town recently marked their link to the story with a series of beautiful wooden statues. Explore the seaside town and spot the Mad Hatter, Queen of Hearts and White Rabbit - there's even an app offering an 'augmented reality tour' to find them all!



Fall down the rabbit hole where Alice did in the movie at the National Trust's Antony House

www.visitwales.com/explore/north-wales/llandudno-colwyn-bay/a-girl-called-alice, www.alicetowntrail.co.uk

The *Alice in Wonderland* movie directed by Tim Burton, and starring Helena Bonham Carter as a memorable Red Queen, partly recreated the magic of Wonderland through the magic of technology, however real-life 18th-century stately home **Antony House** featured in the opening scenes just before Alice dove down the rabbit hole, and is somewhere you can definitely imagine extraordinary events taking place! It's managed by National Trust, and makes a fantastic family

visit. **Charlestown Harbour**, a tiny Grade II-listed harbour was where Alice sailed away from at the end of the film. It's in Cornwall, on the south-western tip of England, and reached by train from London in just over four hours.

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/antony



EAT ME! DRINK ME! That's what The Sanderson's Mad Hatter's Afternoon Tea wants you to do to it

If you always wanted to have tea with the Mad Hatter, head to London's Sanderson Hotel, which puts on a splendid **Mad Hatter's Afternoon Tea**. Served on bespoke crockery that echoes the story's surreal mood, you'll eat homemade marshmallow mushrooms, a carrot meringue served on a bed of pea shoots and a 'Tick Tock' Victoria sponge clock among other delights. www.morganshotelgroup.com/originals/originals-sanderson-london/eat-drink/mad-hatters-afternoon-tea

Celebrating 200 years of Jane Austen's *Emma*

Jane Austen fans are in for an anniversary treat in 2015 as the year marks the 200th anniversary of one of her most popular novels. Hot on the successful heels of *Pride and Prejudice*'s bicentennial anniversary in 2013 comes that of *Emma*, the story of the young, genteel Emma Woodhouse setting herself up as a matchmaker. Published in December 1815, it's a lively comedy of manners that looks at the concerns and trials of refined women in early 19th-century England.



Stepping back in time - Jane Austen's house in Hampshire is a must-see during the anniversary celebrations

The novel's anniversary means it's a good time for Austen fans to visit Jane Austen's house, Chawton, near Alton in Hampshire, south England - around an hour by train from London. The charming house was where she spent the last eight years of her life and it's where she did the majority of her mature writing. She wrote *Emma* here, as well as *Mansfield Park* and *Persuasion*, in addition to revising *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility* and *Northanger Abbey*.

Now called the **Jane Austen's House Museum**, it runs a programme of events throughout the year to keep even the most ardent of Austen aficionados happy! Every year the museum celebrates the author's birthday on 16 December with free entry, hot drinks and mince pies for visitors. And although the full programme for 2015 has yet to be announced, going on Austen's birthday is a rather nice time to visit, especially for *Emma* fans, which itself was published in December. 2015 will see the museum running book-making workshops, historic food workshops and

writing workshops. Since it's 200 years since the publication of *Emma*, one of the workshops in May, 'Building the Village of your Story', will look at how the village of a story can help with plotting, managing a cast of characters, building tension and creating a sense of place - much like was done in *Emma*. www.jane-austens-house-museum.org.uk

Emma, like most heroines in Jane Austen novels, adored a ball. And what better way to celebrate the novel's publication then donning your finest Regency outfit and heading to the beautiful city of **Bath** in west England for the Regency costumed Summer Ball. It plays a fun part in the city's annual **Jane Austen Festival**. In 2015, the festival will run between 11-20 September. Empire-line gowns and bonnets at the ready! www.janeaustenfestivalbath.co.uk

Bath is certainly the place to visit if you want to embroil yourself in all things Austen - the author lived there between 1801 and 1805, and features regularly in her writings. Head to the city's **Jane Austen Centre** for exclusive films, costumes,



The city of Bath was a big influence in Jane Austen's work

temporary and permanent exhibits, maps and books all dedicated to the life and times of Austen. Plus you can channel your inner Emma as the centre offers visitors the chance to dress up in Regency bonnets, top hats, shawls, fans and parasols! Bath is around 90 minutes by train from London. www.janeausten.co.uk

Austen's fine storytelling and beguiling characters have led to many small-screen and silver-screen adaptations; *Emma* itself was turned into a hit film, starring Gwyneth Paltrow, in 1996. Celebrate the novel's bicentennial by visiting some of the fabulous locations used in the film and transport yourself into the world of Emma and her early 19th-century world.



Imagine the elegant balls! Now you can when you visit Claydon House, one of the film locations for the 1996 film of Emma. Credit VisitBritain/Britain on View

The picturesque village of **Evershot** in Dorset, south-west England, a village of thatched cottages and charming 400-year old inns, played the role of Highbury Village in the film. Explore the area and then stay in the luxury country house hotel **Summer Lodge**, a Grade II-listed building set in four acres of land; it's easy to imagine yourself stepping back in time in these atmospheric surroundings

(www.summerlodgehotel.co.uk). Evershot is around 3.5 hours drive from London. And, if you loved the film's elegant ball scenes, visit **Claydon House** in Buckinghamshire, where the Crown ball interiors scene was filmed. Cared for by the National Trust, this

idyllic country estate, just under two hours' drive from London, is packed with ornate and lavish 18th-century English interiors that the original owner Sir Ralph Verney intended to wow his neighbours and political rivals with. www.nationaltrust.org.uk/claydon

Literary Britain: follow in the footsteps of Darcy, Dumbledore, Dickens and Dahl

Shakespeare, Jane Austen, the Brontë sisters, Charles Dickens, George Orwell, Dylan Thomas, J.K. Rowling, Roald Dahl, William Wordsworth, Robert Burns – the list of great British authors, poets and playwrights seems infinite. Here we tell the tale of literary Britain; the places that inspired the stories and the poems, the celebrations marking famous authors lives and the events capturing the very best in British literature.

Literary Locations

Ramble over the moors that inspired the Brontë sisters, have a coffee at the same café where J.K. Rowling penned *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, have a pint of beer at one of Dylan Thomas' favourite pubs and marvel at hosts of golden daffodils that became synonymous with William Wordsworth's poetry. Here's how to step into the shoes of Britain's authors.

Jane Austen's south of England

2015 is the year *Emma* turns 200 and is the ideal time to visit Jane Austen's house, Chawton, near Alton in Hampshire, south England – around an hour by train from London. The charming house was where she spent the last eight years of her life and it's where she did the majority of her mature writing. Here, she wrote *Emma*, *Mansfield Park* and

Persuasion and was also where she revised *Pride and Prejudice*, *Sense and Sensibility* and *Northanger Abbey*. The house is now aptly named the **Jane Austen's House Museum**.

Austen fans can also pay their respects at her grave in **Winchester Cathedral**.

Around an hour's train journey from London, Winchester was also home to Austen in her final few weeks, from where she penned the short poem *Winchester at the Races*. She also resided in the south-west England spa city of **Bath** - a 90-minute train journey from London - and set *Northanger Abbey* and *Persuasion* in the city, which has the **Jane Austen Centre** dedicated to her life and society in the early 19th century.

Edinburgh, Scotland

In October 2004, UNESCO gave Edinburgh the status of the world's first City of Literature. This accolade recognises the city's impressive links with some of the world's best-known writers. Drink at the same bars as Robert Burns or sip coffee in the café where J.K. Rowling wrote *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. Visit the **Writer's Museum** in Edinburgh that houses Burns' writing desk and the printing press on which Walter Scott's *Waverley* novels were produced. Find out more about the city's literary links over a pint on the **Edinburgh Literary Pub Tour**. On this tour you'll visit - among others - The Conan Doyle, which, across the road from a statue marking the birthplace of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle sits the pub of the same name, as well as **Milne's Bar**, one of the most famous literary pubs in Edinburgh. www.edinburghliterarypubtour.co.uk, www.edinburghmuseums.org.uk

Shakespeare's Stratford-upon-Avon, west England

Soak up the literary atmosphere in the birthplace of the Bard - **Stratford-upon-Avon**, a 45-minute drive from Birmingham or just over two hours' drive from London. Not only can visitors step into the house where Shakespeare himself was born, but also that of his wife Anne Hathaway, **Hall Place**, in addition to his mother Mary Arden's farm. **Nash's House & New Place** (part of the five homes that are looked after by Shakespeare's Birthplace Trust and Shakespeare's final home) are currently closed for a major restoration project. They will reopen as a new visitor attraction in spring 2016 to commemorate the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death but, in the meantime, head to the Elizabethan home **Harvard House**, which will be open to the public during this time. You can also see the Bard's great works performed at the **Royal Shakespeare Theatre**, and visit his grave at **Holy Trinity Church**. If you're tying in a trip to London, don't miss the **Globe Theatre**; it's a faithful recreation of the 16th-century venue, just steps away from its original location on the south bank of the Thames. www.shakespeare.org.uk, www.rsc.org.uk www.shakespearesglobe.com

William Wordsworth's Dove Cottage, Lake District, north-east England

It was from this simple, yet atmospheric, cottage in the charming Lake District village of **Grasmere** - less than two hours' drive north of Manchester - where the renowned poet William Wordsworth composed some of his greatest works. *I Wandered Lonely As A Cloud*, *Ode to Duty* and parts of his autobiographical epic *The Prelude* were inspired by the serene natural beauty of the high



William Wordsworth wrote some of the greatest poetry of the 18th century

mountains, the deep lakes and the spectacular wildlife of the Lake District, all of which remains today. Next to **Dove Cottage** is the **Wordsworth Museum**, with a collection of around 32,000 items, also relating to Wordsworth's friend and fellow poet Coleridge.

www.visitcumbria.com/william-wordsworth.htm www.wordsworth.org.uk

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's Cottage, Somerset, west England

Another leading light of the Romantic Movement of the late 18th century and a good friend of William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote his masterpieces *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and *Kubla Khan* at this cottage in **Nether Stowey**, near Bridgwater in Somerset - it is less than an hour's drive from Bristol. Now a National Trust property, visitors can explore rooms that have been recreated as they might have looked when Coleridge called it his home. You too can draw inspiration from the breathtaking scenery on the nearby Quantock Hills and makes sure you take the opportunity to explore the **Coleridge Way**, a 36-mile footpath that follows the walks the poet once took.

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/coleridge-cottage www.coleridgeway.co.uk

Brontë Parsonage Museum, Yorkshire, north England

Where would British literary heroes be without hot-blooded Heathcliff or passionate Mr Rochester? These creations of Charlotte and Emily Brontë and their respective works of *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* are commemorated, along with their sister Anne - author of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* - at **The Brontë Parsonage Museum**. The three talented sisters crafted their classics at this very Parsonage in Haworth, north Yorkshire - a 90-minute drive from York - and were influenced by the dramatic, rugged Yorkshire moors close by. www.bronte.info/index.php

Thomas Hardy's Birthplace & Max Gate, Dorset, south-west England

Tess of the D'Urbervilles author Thomas Hardy was born in the small cottage, wrote his early novels there, and later lived in Max Gate in nearby **Dorchester** (just over an hour's drive from the coastal city of Southampton and its international airport). While his body is buried in Poets' Corner, **Westminster Abbey**, his heart is buried at nearby **Stinsford** church. You can read more about Hardy locations on the West Dorset website.

www.westdorset.com/site/about-the-area/thomas-hardy, www.nationaltrust.org.uk/hardy-country/things-to-see-and-do

Robert Burns Birthplace Museum, Edinburgh, Scotland

Burns' fans can visit the famous **Burns Cottage** where the poet was born, the historic landmarks where he set his greatest works, the elegant monument and gardens created in his honour and the modern museum housing the world's most important collection of his life and works. A fitting tribute to one of Scotland's favourite sons, the man who created many works recognised the world over, including *Auld Land Syne*, *A Red, Red Rose* and *Ode to a Haggis*.



Take a trip to the cottage where renowned Scottish poet Robert Burns' was born. Credit VisitBritain/Britain on View

www.burnsmuseum.org.uk, www.edinburghmuseums.org.uk/Venues/The-Writers--Museum

Dylan Thomas Centre and the City of Swansea, south Wales

Revered as an eminent poet and playwright, remembered for his tempestuous relationships, his addiction to alcohol and his intoxicating broadcast performances Dylan Thomas is often regarded as Wales' greatest writer and one of its most famous sons. *Under Milk Wood*, *Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night* and *Death That Shall Have No Dominion* are arguably the best known of his plays and poems, which are admired for his clever use of words and imagery that remained accessible and understandable to all.

2014 marked the centenary of the birth of the man regarded as 'the Bard of Swansea', his birthplace in south Wales, around an hour's drive from the capital, Cardiff, and was celebrated through DT100, a year-long celebration of his life in the places where he lived and wrote.

The **Dylan Thomas Centre** in Swansea is the international focal point for Dylan fans and scholars, where visitors will find a permanent exhibition on Dylan Thomas and his life, as well as a shop with books, posters and memorabilia. Check out the many literary events held throughout the year, including the annual **Dylan Thomas Festival** during October and November. www.dylanthomas.com

The Carmarthenshire town of Laugharne - around a 90-minute drive from Cardiff and once home to Thomas - hosts an annual arts festival, the Laugharne Weekends, each with a different focus; poetry and biography, music and film, and radio and comedy.

John Keats's House, London

John Keats lived in the smart north London neighbourhood of Hampstead from 1818 to 1820, and the area is the setting that inspired some of Keats's most memorable poetry. It was here Keats wrote *Ode to a Nightingale*, and where he fell in love with Fanny Brawne, the girl next door. www.keatshouse.cityoflondon.gov.uk

Bateman's, Sussex, south-east England

Close to London Gatwick airport in the Sussex village of **Burwash** lies Bateman's, the home of Rudyard Kipling, author of *The Jungle Book* and *Just So* stories, as well as the world-famous poem, *If*. Now a beautiful National Trust property, visitors can also stroll around the lovely gardens and view the rooms that remain much as he left them; the oriental rugs and artefacts reveal his strong connection with the East, so often captured in his stories. www.nationaltrust.org.uk/batemans

Agatha Christie's house, Devon, south-west England

Standing above the River Dart between **Torquay** and **Dartmouth** in Devon on England's south coast, Greenway offers an extraordinary glimpse into the private holiday home of author Agatha Christie. It was here she came to relax after creating best-selling detective novels such as *Murder on the Orient Express* and *And Then There Were None*. The house is now decorated as it would have been in the 1950s, and contains many of the family's collections, including Tunbridgeware, silver, botanical china and books. Outside you can explore the large and romantic woodland garden. 2015 is the ideal time to visit as the year marks the 125th anniversary of her birth. www.nationaltrust.org.uk/greenway

Children's Literary and Film Locations

Take the kids to the places that inspired your favourite childhood novels, and the literary and onscreen creations that capture their imaginations too, from Hogwarts to Wonderland, Narnia to Pooh Corner.

J.K. Rowling

Hogwarts, butter beer, Muggles and Quidditch are all familiar terms thanks to J.K. Rowling's phenomenally successful *Harry Potter* series. You can be transported from fantasy to reality as the locations used in the equally successful film franchise were shot in some of Britain's most inspirational destinations.

Harry's first journey aboard the Hogwarts Express, departing from 'Platform 9 ^{3/4}' at **King's Cross Station**, is marked by a trolley disappearing into the magical realm through a wall at the station marked 'Platform 9 ^{3/4}'. The station also has a dedicated shop selling wands and other Hogwarts paraphernalia.

Oxford University's famous **Bodleian Library** starred in three of the Harry Potter films. The medieval Duke Humfrey's Library was used as the Hogwarts library and the elaborately vaulted Divinity School became Hogwarts, which you can also visit. Enhance the visit further with a stroll around the stunning cloisters and quadrangles of the university's **Christ Church College**; many of the films' scenes were shot here, while its Great Hall was the inspiration behind Hogwarts School's Great Hall. www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk

Imagine you're part of Madame Hooch's flying lesson in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* on a trip to Northumberland's **Alnwick Castle**, less than an hour from the north-east England city of Newcastle, where you can take part in a broomstick lesson on the very spot where Harry had his first flying lesson (between March and October). www.alnwickcastle.com



Thousands of wands at Ollivanders - featured at the Warner Bros. Studio Tour. Credit Warner Bros. Studio Tour

Over the border into **Glencoe**, Scotland, Potter-fans will see where the dramatic landscapes around Hogwarts were filmed. You'll recognise the **Steall Falls** at Glen Nevis from the Tri-Wizard Tournament in the *Goblet of Fire* (2005). The rugged beauty and natural drama of the Scottish Highlands were the perfect background for the first two Harry Potter films, where the Quidditch matches were filmed against the backdrop of Glen Nevis. www.glencoescotland.com, www.visitscotland.com

The final two films - *The Deathly Hallows Part 1* and *2* - were shot back-to-back, using the stunning coast of **Freshwater West** in **Pembrokeshire, south-west Wales** as the location for Shell Cottage, the home of Bill Weasley and his wife Fleur Delacour. It is also the setting for Dobby's demise and burial after he is killed by the evil Bellatrix Lestrange, played by Helena Bonham Carter, who was also on set in Wales.

Roald Dahl

Whether you're a fan of musicals, countryside or storytelling, Roald Dahl and his fantabulous books come to life in many ways.

Born at Villa Marie, Fairwater Road in Llandaff, **Cardiff**, in 1916, to Norwegian parents, Roald Dahl spent his early childhood and school days in Cardiff where his family worshipped at the **Norwegian church** in its original location in the Cardiff Docks. Both Dahl and his sisters were christened at the church.

In later life Dahl lived and wrote in the town of **Great Missenden, Buckinghamshire**, which is less than an hour by train from London, and it is here his work has been commemorated at the **Roald Dahl Museum and Story Centre**. Two interactive biographical galleries tell his story and you can also take a look around his Writing Hut with all its original contents and furnishings. Elsewhere, the Boy Gallery allows visitors to discover how his boyhood - with his love of chocolate and schoolboy pranks - shaped him as a writer.

www.roalddahlmuseum.org

Take a stroll around Great Missenden, exploring the Georgian shops and traditional pubs in this charming town and explore the countryside that inspired tales such as *Fantastic Mr Fox* and *Danny Champion of the World*. Meanwhile, a 20-minute drive will take you to Aylesbury, where the **Roald Dahl Children's Gallery** also keeps the great storyteller's memory alive with fascinating exhibitions.

www.buckscc.gov.uk/bcc/museum/dahl_gallery/dahl_childrens_gallery.page

Two of Dahl's best-known novels, *Matilda* and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, have become the subject of West End musicals. *Matilda the Musical* created by comedian Tim Minchin and the Royal Shakespeare Company is showing at London's Cambridge Theatre while *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* is showing at London's Theatre Royal Drury Lane. www.matildathemusical.com, www.charlieandthechocolatefactory.com



Beatrix Potter

Peter Rabbit, Mrs Tiggy-winkle and Jemima Puddleduck were brought to life through the vivid imagination of Beatrix Potter, who drew inspiration from the magnificent beauty and plentiful wildlife of the **Lake District** in Cumbria, north-west England.

Fans of her enduring tales will be delighted with the **World of Beatrix Potter** in Bowness-on-Windermere, 90 minutes from Manchester by car. The attraction showcases Peter Rabbit's Garden, Jemima Puddleduck's woodland glade and Mr Tod's underground

home, plus you can visit Mrs Tiggy-winkle's kitchen. Top it off with a trip to the tea room where children can enjoy a Peter Rabbit picnic basket. www.hop-skip-jump.com)

Tie a visit in with a trip to the scenic town of **Bowness-on-Windermere** and, from here, other beautiful parts of the Lake District. Sailing and watersports are, of course, popular activities, and the mountains and lakes provide the perfect opportunity for nature walks. www.visitcumbria.com

*Visit Mrs Tiggy-winkle at the World of Beatrix Potter.
Credit VisitBritain/Rod Edwards*

Down in London at the **V&A Museum** admirers of Beatrix Potter can visit the world's largest collection of her drawings, literary manuscripts and correspondence, plus there is a changing display on varying aspects of her work in the Beatrix Potter Showcase. The museum was also a source of inspiration for Potter in her lifetime, particularly the costumes on display; the 18th-century clothes in the collections were the inspiration behind the mayor's wedding outfit in *The Tailor of Gloucester*. www.vam.ac.uk

C.S. Lewis

Author of *The Chronicles of Narnia* author C.S. Lewis was Belfast-born and, although he moved to England in his adult life, **Belfast and Northern Ireland** was a huge source of inspiration for him in his stories. The magical land of Narnia may well have been inspired by the striking, rugged landscapes of **County Down**, while Belfast's **Linen Hall Library** is home to a unique collection of books both by and about C.S. Lewis. The author is also honoured by **The Searcher**, a statue depicting the author stepping into a wardrobe as in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, outside **Holywood Arches Library** in Belfast. There are tours available to visit his birthplace, school and the places that inspired some of his most famous work. www.discovernorthernireland.com

His time in England was spent as a professor at both **Magdalen College at Oxford University** and **Magdalene College at Cambridge University**. Soak up the literary atmosphere with a tour around the historic architecture of the colleges, while in Oxford there are walking tours available that visit his former home 'The Kilns', his final resting place at **Holy Trinity Church** and the **Eagle and Child pub**, where Lewis and his circle of literary friends were regulars.

Lewis Carroll

Fascinating stories of surreal worlds are at the very core of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and, even as a boy, he enjoyed creating stories for children. He was born in Daresbury, **Cheshire** - half an hour from Liverpool, in the north west of England - where a visit to **Daresbury All Saints' Church** will reveal the stained glass window dedicated to Carroll's work. It is now also home to the **Lewis Carroll Centre**, which tells the tale of his childhood in Daresbury and how it influenced his writings.

www.lewiscarrollcentre.org.uk

The story was also immortalised in the 2010 Tim Burton film *Alice in Wonderland* and the south-west coastal county of **Cornwall** played host to a number of the film's scenes. The garden of the charming National Trust property **Antony House** and the picturesque **Charlestown Harbour** in the bustling market town of **St Austell** - from where Alice sets sail from China - both feature in the film.

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/antony

The university city of **Oxford** is also forever linked with the original story of Alice in Wonderland. Lewis Carroll would take the young Alice Liddell - the inspiration of his story - punting, all the while telling her tales of Alice and the white rabbit. Visitors can find their own inspiration too with one of the many punting companies available on the river. Following a punt, check out **The Alice's Shop** located opposite **Christ Church College**, for



The wonderful world of Alice. Credit Story Museum

Alice-related gifts; it was once the sweet shop Alice Liddell visited 150 years ago and was written into *Alice Through the Looking Glass*. www.visitoxfordandoxfordshire.com
www.aliceinwonderlandshop.co.uk

J.R.R. Tolkien

While his tomes have recently been transformed to the silver screen, with much made of the New Zealand location used to portray Middle Earth, the author of *Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* was Birmingham-raised and Oxford-educated who found inspiration for his fantasy adventures around Britain.

Tolkien admitted that his writings had been greatly influenced by some of the places he grew up around in **Birmingham**. Just a short walk from the Tolkiens' family house on Wake Green Road is **Sarehole Mill** where Ronald (J.R.R) played with his sister Hilary as a child and is thought to be the inspiration behind The Shire. Each May, a Middle Earth Weekend is held alongside the mill, in the **Shire Country Park**, to celebrate Tolkien and the area.
www.birmingham.gov.uk/sarehole

In 1900 the family moved to **Edgbaston**; Tolkien fans will be familiar with the Two Towers, and it is believed that they were inspired by two buildings local to this area - **Perrott's Folly** and **Edgbaston Waterworks Tower**.

Tolkien later studied at Oxford University's **Exeter College**. There, he enjoyed the company of a group of like-minded men including C S Lewis, and they formed a group called the Inklings. They met regularly in Oxford pubs such as the **Eagle and Child**. Tolkien became professor of Anglo-Saxon at **Pembroke College**, a post he held for 20 years until elected professor of English. During his time here, Tolkien wrote *The Hobbit* (1937) and *The Lord of the Rings* (1954). At this time, Tolkien lived with his wife at **20 Northmoor Road**, where a blue plaque was erected in 2002. After his death in September 1973, J.R.R. Tolkien was buried next to his wife in **Wolvercote Cemetery** in Oxford.
www.nicholsonspubs.co.uk/theeagleandchildoxford.

Also worth checking out:

J.M. Barrie, the creator of Peter Pan, the boy who never grew up, based the beginning of his story in London, and you can visit the bronze Peter Pan statue in the **Royal Park of Kensington Gardens**. Elsewhere, his birthplace in **Kirriemuir, Scotland** - less than a two-hour drive from Edinburgh - is now looked after by the National Trust of Scotland and open to visitors. www.royalparks.org.uk/parks/kensington-gardens,
www.nts.org.uk/property/j-m-barries-birthplace/about

A.A. Milne is best known for his stories of Winnie the Pooh and fans can visit story locations, such as Poohsticks Bridge and The Heffalump Trap, in the gorgeous countryside of **Hartfield, East Sussex**, less than 90 minutes from London. Check out Pooh Country where you can also buy Pooh merchandise and take tea in Piglets Tea Room. www.pooh-country.co.uk

Literary Festivals

Immerse yourself in all things literary at dedicated book festivals where eminent contemporary authors and hotly tipped new writers come together to discuss, dissect and honour the written word.

Oxford Literary Festival, Oxford, south central England 21 - 29 March

Iconic Oxford locations, including the famous Sheldonian Theatre, will host more than 500 world-class authors and speakers at the university city's literary festival. Expect to see interviews with leading authors; 2014's festival welcomed two-time Booker Prize winner Hilary Mantel and stories and songs with Children's Laureate Julia Donaldson, who created bestselling children's book *The Gruffalo*. www.oxfordliteraryfestival.org

Hay on Wye Festival, Powys, Wales 21 - 31 May

The world's most famous literary festival is based in a small Welsh town just over an hour from Cardiff, a town also known as the second-hand bookshop capital of the world. The festival's guest speakers have varied from leading writers to former presidents; top names in the past have included actors and writers Dawn French and Rupert Everett, as well as writer and journalist John McCarthy, one of the hostages in the Lebanese hostage crisis www.hayfestival.com/portal/index.aspx?skinid=1&localesetting=en-GB

Edinburgh International Book Festival, Edinburgh, Scotland 15 - 31 August

Edinburgh International Book Festival, which takes place during Edinburgh's festival season, claims to be the largest public celebration of the written word in the world, and it's clear to see why; every year it features more than 800 authors - including Nobel and Booker prize-winners, novelists, poets, philosophers, sportsmen, historians, musicians, environmentalists and more - to more than 750 events. www.edbookfest.co.uk

Wigtown Book Festival, south-west Scotland 25 September - 4 October

South-west Scotland is home to the country's National Book Town, Wigtown; with its multitude of second-hand bookshops it's a haven for book lovers. Every year the town, around a two-hour drive south of Glasgow, celebrates the power of the word with a Book Festival. This year's will celebrate 'the power of those unspoilt heavens and the countryside below'. www.wigtownbookfestival.com

Samuel Beckett Festival, Enniskillen, Northern Ireland Dates TBC

Following the success of the last three years of the festival celebrating the work and influence of Nobel Prize writer Samuel Beckett it's likely there will be a fourth festival in 2015 in Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh, (a 90-minute drive west of Belfast) where Beckett spent his formative years. www.happy-days-enniskillen.com

DIRECTORY

Museums & Galleries

A directory of free museums and galleries around Britain.

London

The British Museum

The British Museum holds world-class collections including the Rosetta Stone, the Parthenon sculptures and Egyptian mummies. The building itself is stunning; the core was designed in the 19th century and the Great Court, designed by world-famous British architect Norman Foster, is an iconic London feature.

www.britishmuseum.org

National Gallery

Home to Van Gogh's Sunflowers and stunning works by Leonardo da Vinci and the French Impressionists, the National Gallery is one of London's unmissable sights.

www.nationalgallery.org.uk

Natural History Museum

Situated on the pedestrianised Exhibition Road in South Kensington, the Natural History Museum is home to an extensive dinosaur gallery, a giant sequoia tree dating back 1,300 years and the chance to see how it feels to be in a volcano or earthquake.

www.nhm.ac.uk

Science Museum

A great museum for all ages, the Science Museum boasts interactive exhibits, fascinating objects and an IMAX 3D Cinema. It also offers an adults-only "Lates" programme on the last Wednesday of the month, offering strange and wonderful experiences - past hits have included a silent disco among exhibits with a group of strangers.

www.sciencemuseum.org.uk

Tate Modern

Rothko, Pollock, Warhol and Hockney grace the walls of the Tate Modern, a free-to-visit contemporary art gallery; it is particularly renowned for the installations in the vast Turbine Hall. The vast oil tanks at the building's base have been turned into a new space; 'The Tanks' will open definitively in 2016, with periodic events in-between.

www.tate.org.uk

Tate Britain

Boasting an outstanding collection of paintings by Turner, Tate Britain also features a permanent collection of historic and contemporary British art, with rooms dedicated to

Tracey Emin, John Latham and Sam Taylor-Wood. Each first Friday of the month the gallery opens until late for a themed night.

www.tate.org.uk

Victoria and Albert Museum

A fantastic museum dedicated to both British and international art and design. Special themed events are held every Friday of the month, with DJs, dancing, food and unique experiences; one past event saw the museum floor covered in icing sugar and professional dancers twirl the tango over it.

www.vam.ac.uk

The William Morris Gallery, Walthamstow, north-east London

Following a £5million refurbishment the gallery - the only public gallery devoted to Walthamstow-born designer, craftsman, writer, socialist and conservationist William Morris - reopened last summer with innovative new displays, a dedicated learning space and a programme of temporary exhibitions.

www.walthamforest.gov.uk/william-morris

England

The Ashmolean, Oxford, east England

Founded in 1683, the Ashmolean was Britain's first public museum and is home to Oxford University's world-class collection of art and archaeology. The rooftop terrace is one of the city's hidden treasures. Located in the city centre, it is a ten-minute walk from Oxford's train station.

www.ashmolean.org

Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, central England

The Birmingham museum and art gallery, located in the city centre, boasts "one of the world's finest collections of Pre-Raphaelite art", as well as extensive collections of fine and applied art, social history, archaeology and ethnography.

www.bmag.org.uk

The Hepworth, Wakefield, Yorkshire, north England

The Hepworth in Wakefield - less than an hour's drive from the historic city of York - opened in 2011 and was winner of the British Design Awards that same year, celebrating the area's unique artistic legacy and exploring the work of major contemporary artists. It is one of Britain's largest purpose-built galleries outside London.

www.hepworthwakefield.org www.ysp.co.uk

The Manchester Art Gallery, north-west England

The Manchester Art Gallery opened in 1882 and houses many of the city's most important fine and decorative art works, but is especially renowned for its collection of 19th century

British paintings. Highlights include a collection of major Pre-Raphaelite works and the impressionist paintings of Adolphe Valette. The gallery is an easy walk from Manchester Piccadilly train station.

www.manchestergalleries.org

National Museums of Liverpool, north-west England

National Museums of Liverpool comprises several museums and galleries, including the Museum of Liverpool, located in a stunning purpose-built landmark building on Liverpool's famous waterfront. It features a Beatles show and also explores the city's links with Shanghai in its East Meets West exhibition. The Walker Gallery displays works by Rembrandt, Hockney and Monet and, across the River Mersey, is fine art gallery the Lady Lever.

www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk

The Great North Museum, Newcastle/Gateshead, north-east England

The popular Great North Museum - which welcomed one million visitors in its first six months of reopening in 2009 - showcases the region's fascinating Roman Heritage, with sections of Hadrian's Wall, mummies and even a Tyrannosaurus Rex. Close to Newcastle city centre, the museum is just a five-minute taxi journey from Newcastle Central station.

www.twmuseums.org.uk/greatnorthmuseum

BALTIC, Newcastle/Gateshead, north-east England

A major international centre for contemporary art housed in a landmark industrial building by the River Tyne in Gateshead, which hosted the Turner Prize awards ceremony 2012. BALTIC has no permanent collection and runs an ever-changing calendar of exhibitions and events to give a unique and compelling insight into contemporary artistic practice.

www.balticmill.com

Tate Liverpool, north-west England

Situated on Liverpool's Albert Dock, this is a brilliant outpost of the Tate collection of galleries and is home to Picasso's *Weeping Woman*. It also hosts many international artists' exhibitions.

www.tate.org.uk/visit/tate-liverpool

Tate St Ives and Barbara Hepworth Museum & Sculpture Garden, Cornwall, south-west England

Featuring the work of artists who lived and worked in St Ives, Cornwall on the south-west coast of England, as well as that of international artists. Visitors can also see Barbara Hepworth's bronze, stone and wood sculptures in the nearby museum named after one of the 20th century's most important artists. St Ives is a five-and-a-half-hour drive from London.

www.tate.org.uk/visit/tate-st-ives

Turner Contemporary Gallery, Margate, Kent, south-east England

Located on the Kent coast, just under two hours by train from London, is the Turner Contemporary Gallery in Margate. The brilliant painter “loved Margate for the sea, the skies, and his landlady Mrs Booth” and more than 100 of Turner’s works, including some of his most famous seascapes, were inspired by the east Kent coast.

www.turnercontemporary.org/press-centre www.turnercontemporary.org

Scotland

Kelvingrove Art Gallery & Museum, Glasgow

Offering 22 themed art galleries displaying more than 8,000 objects, the Kelvingrove Art Gallery & Museum features collections from natural history and arms and armour to art from a range of art movements and periods of history. Its displays have been designed with children in mind and include plenty of interaction that will appeal to all ages.

www.glasgowlife.org.uk

The Riverside Museum, Glasgow

Glasgow’s much-loved Museum of Transport relocated to this spectacular waterfront landmark in 2011 and sits by a Tall Ship, berthed alongside the museum to create a fantastic experience in a stunning setting. The building itself is a work of art; the museum was designed by architect Zaha Hadid, who also designed the Aquatic Centre at the Olympic Park.

www.glasgowlife.org.uk

The National Museums of Scotland

There are a number of other National Museums across Scotland including the National War Museum (exploring Scotland’s military past at Edinburgh Castle in the capital), The National Museum of Costume (a century of style at Shambellie House near Dumfries, around a 90-minute drive south west of Glasgow), the National Museum of Rural Life (about farming in the 1950s in East Kilbride, a 30-minute drive south of Glasgow), the National Museum of Flight (everything from bi-planes to Concorde in East Lothian, half an hour from Edinburgh city centre) and the National Museum of Collections Centre in Edinburgh (home to 1.2million insects among many other things).

www.nms.ac.uk/our_museums.aspx

The National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh

The National Galleries of Scotland host a collection of Scottish and international art housed in three sites across Edinburgh; the Scottish National Gallery, the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art and the Scottish National Portrait Gallery. There are 27 exhibitions to visit, 55 events to attend and 3,239 artworks online to explore.

www.nationalgalleries.org

Wales

The following form part of the National Museum Wales, which also includes the National Roman Legion Museum in Caerleon, south Wales, National Wool Museum in Llandysul, west Wales and the National Waterfront Museum in Swansea, south Wales.

www.museumwales.ac.uk

The National Museum, Cardiff

The National Museum is home to the largest collection of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist paintings outside Paris and includes Renoir's *Blue Lady* and *La Parisienne*, Rodin's *The Kiss* and Monet's *Water Lilies*. The museum also has features large-scale displays of natural history, science and archaeology.

www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/cardiff

The St Fagans: National History Museum, Cardiff

The St Fagans: National History Museum is one of Europe's biggest open-air museums. Among the 40 re-erected historical buildings you can see craftsman demonstrating traditional skills, farming of native breeds of livestock and celebrations of Welsh music and dance.

www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/stfagans

Big Pit: National Coal Museum, Blaenafon, south Wales

This is more than just a museum; it is a real coal mine run by real miners. A 45-minute drive north of Cardiff, visitors can venture 300 feet underground and see what life was like down the pits as well as enjoying a multi-media tour of a modern coal mine with a virtual miner in the Mining Galleries and exhibitions in the Pithead Baths and historic colliery buildings.

www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/bigpit

Northern Ireland

MAC

A thriving new multi-arts centre in Belfast's bustling Cathedral Quarter, MAC "selects, creates and mixes up music, theatre, dance and art", with local and international names featuring on its programme of contemporary events. The venue also hosts a rich variety of exhibitions and experimental works and is located in a trendy square with lots of happening restaurants and cafés.

<http://themaclive.com>

Titanic Belfast

Titanic Belfast extends over nine galleries, drawing together special effects, rides, full-scale reconstructions and innovative interactive features to explore the Titanic story in a fresh way; from her conception in Belfast, construction and launch, her infamous maiden voyage and catastrophic demise and aftermath. www.titanicbelfast.com

Ulster Museum, Belfast

The recently restored, award-winning Ulster Museum is a gem in Northern Ireland's cultural experiences. Home to a rich collection of art, history and natural sciences in Belfast city centre, visitors can come face-to-face with dinosaurs, meet an Egyptian mummy, see modern masterpieces and ancient relics and enjoy interactive displays.

www.discovernorthernireland.com/Ulster-Museum-Belfast-P2781