



The ultimate city break: 48 hours in Leeds

Leeds is a vibrant city full of culture and creativity including new music venues, contemporary art galleries, great shopping, street art and innovative and award-winning foodie treats.

Adventure and sport

Arts and culture

Food and drink

Shopping

England

Northeast England

December 2024

We have curated the ultimate city-break guide to Leeds, including suggestions on where to stay, where to dine, and most importantly, all the best experiences and adventures for a great value break.

How to get there

Leeds is a great city break destination with all the main attractions in the city centre within easy walking distance. The city has easy access by train, car, coach and air to national and international hubs. London is 2.5 hours, Manchester 50 minutes and York 30 minutes by train to the centre of the city. Leeds Bradford Airport (European Destinations) is 30 Minutes by train, Manchester airport is 1 hour by road and 1.5 hours by train and London City airport 3 hours by train.

[Instagrammable spots and shots](#): Victorian Quarter, Thorntons Arcade, Whitelocks, Headrow House rooftop, Corn Exchange, Kirkgate Market (near M&S), Belgrave, Leeds Art Gallery and Henry Moore Institute next door, Town Hall, Tiled Hall Café, Dark Arches and Granary Wharf, [Yellow Water Taxis](#), the Waterfront. The unique bright yellow water taxis take visitors down the

River Aire to [Leeds Dock](#) and see the city from a different angle.

Where to stay

Leeds offers a diverse range of options that cater to various budgets including upmarket contemporary city centre hotels, funky artist designed hostels, boutique hotels, Airbnbs, spa and country house hotels. [The Queens Hotel](#) is the flagship Art Deco hotel of Leeds situated in the heart of the city overlooking City Square with contemporary design and features throughout. The Grand Pacific bar welcomes visitors with opulent interiors which are redolent of the golden age of high society and features cocktails and dishes inspired by travels with a unique British twist all its own. [The Art Hostel](#) is a unique hospitality experience and the first of its kind in the UK, providing affordable and original accommodation created by artists, with proceeds benefiting the neighbouring East Street Arts organisation. Each room is designed by a different artist on a different theme using predominantly recycled materials. The hostel has individually decorated private rooms in addition to creatively decorated dormitories. The boutique and lavish [Malmaison](#) has an urban loft vibe and is situated in a grand building which was once the Leeds tramways office. The Chez Mal brasserie and bar provides an elegant setting for cocktails and contemporary, stylish dining. The city also features the Country House [Oulton Hall Spa](#) and Golf resort with pampering packages, treatments and spa facilities including a pool. The city also has hotels by [Hilton](#) and [Marriott](#) and a full range of [self-catering](#) accommodation for a home away from home including penthouse apartments, cottages, serviced apartments and houses.

Where to eat

The city is known as the foodie capital of the North celebrated for its diversity, energy, welcome and innovation. [The Leeds Food Tour](#) with engaging guide and owner Ellen visits some of the gastronomic hot spots tasting food and drink across the city in iconic locations, at food markets, pubs, cafes and restaurants and meeting some of the welcoming and engaging characterful suppliers along the way. [Kirkgate Market](#) is a must on any city visit as major social destination and a shopper's paradise and one of the largest indoor markets in Europe. It's the perfect place to try new cuisine, meet friends and watch live entertainment. The Market has an impressive fresh food hall and street food stalls serving cuisine from around the globe with outstanding food outlets that include: [Manjit's Kitchen](#) for delicious and renowned Indian street food, [Hayes Seafood](#) (specialising in oysters), colourful, fresh Tunisian Meze plates at [Sweet Saeeda](#), vegan Burgers at [Fat Annies](#) and the [Yorkshire Wrap Company](#) that combines a Yorkshire speciality with a range juicy fillings. Kirkgate also has local stalls selling fresh food, fashion and haberdashery, and it is the birthplace of Marks & Spencer. Kirkgate Market is steeped in the history of Leeds while representing the diversity of Leeds today. For an alternative dining experience [Iberica](#) offers delicious sophisticated Spanish tapas in elegant, vaulted ceiling dining room in a converted auction house. [Eat your Greens](#) offers Farm to Fork dining, using seasonal local organic produce where possible, with a strong sustainable ethos supporting local farmers. The café serves up delicious food set in a light and bright contemporary interior, sells products from local designers and hosts fun music, tasting, chess and pop-up events throughout the year. Tables are hard to come by at the small but mighty [Empire Café](#) which serves up Yorkshire hospitality and the best of produce from Kirkgate market, and are well worth booking in advance to secure a spot. Other top food recommendations include: [Tharavadu](#) a high-end Keralan Indian restaurant; [Ox Club](#) an award-winning contemporary British restaurant showcasing the best of Yorkshire produce at Headrow House in Leeds, a multi-use venue housed within an imposing textile mill; [Vice & Virtue](#) with fine dining tasting menus paired with wines in a stylish setting. Brewery tours are available also at the [Kirkstall](#) and [Northern Monk](#) run by engaging and knowledgeable guides.

What to do

Follow the [Street Art Trail](#) to experience the decorative backdrop of the city including specially curated murals and an ever-growing web of distinctive pieces that tell the story of Leeds. Take a scenic walk along the river, making sure to catch some of our most famous street art on the [waterfront art trail](#). Located in the stunning art deco headquarters of the former brewery, [Yorkshire Contemporary](#) is an art gallery centred around creativity, innovation and experimentation. [Leeds Art Gallery](#) has a colourful new wall painting and houses an impressive collection of 20th century British art. [The Henry Moore](#) Institute is dedicated to celebrating sculpture and is housed in an iconic building hosting a year-round changing programme of modern, contemporary and historical exhibitions. [Leeds City Museum](#) offers exciting, fun and interactive displays across six galleries. Alternatively explore the [Royal Armouries](#) which has one of the largest collections of historic arms and armour in the world. Visitors can take a [Hidden Gems of Leeds Self-Guided Tour](#) to explore the city further. The city hosts fantastic and diverse [events](#) including the vibrant [carnival](#), [music](#) and [ideas festivals](#) and international [sporting events](#).

Shopping

[The Leeds Corn Exchange](#) is one of the city's most iconic and striking buildings housing a wide range of independent and quirky retailers and tasty eateries. The impressive and photogenic [Victoria Leeds](#) arcades are packed with hidden gems and boutiques selling arts, crafts and fashions and have a rich history dating back over 100 years. [The Victoria Gate](#), is the city's newest retail addition, an elegant arcade with upmarket brands and a breath-taking stained-glass roof that runs the full length of Queen Victoria Street making it the largest in Britain.

Entertainment

When the night falls over the city, then it's time to experience the legendary [nightlife](#) on Call Lane, catch a show at one of the amazing theatrical or music venues. [The Belgrave Music Hall](#) has a great street art decorated interior, roof terrace overlooking the city, live music, DJs, drinks, cocktails, pizza and burger bar with a lively vibe and big sharing tables. [The Brudenell Social Club](#) is a lively and fun venue that hosts events covering a wide spectrum of music, spoken word and performance genres. The Brudenell has hosted secret gigs for bands like Franz Ferdinand and the Kaiser Chiefs in the past, has put on sets by Yard Act and Chumbawumba and continues to feature up and coming and established acts. [Project House](#) is a brand new (opened in July 2023) multi-use events space, that hosts concerts, markets, exhibitions and parties. [The Pixel Bar](#) is a gaming Cocktail Bar named as best games bar in Leeds with buzzing Neon and street art décor, retro games consoles and signature themed cocktails.