

# The West Midlands

One dramatic destination, many twists to discover





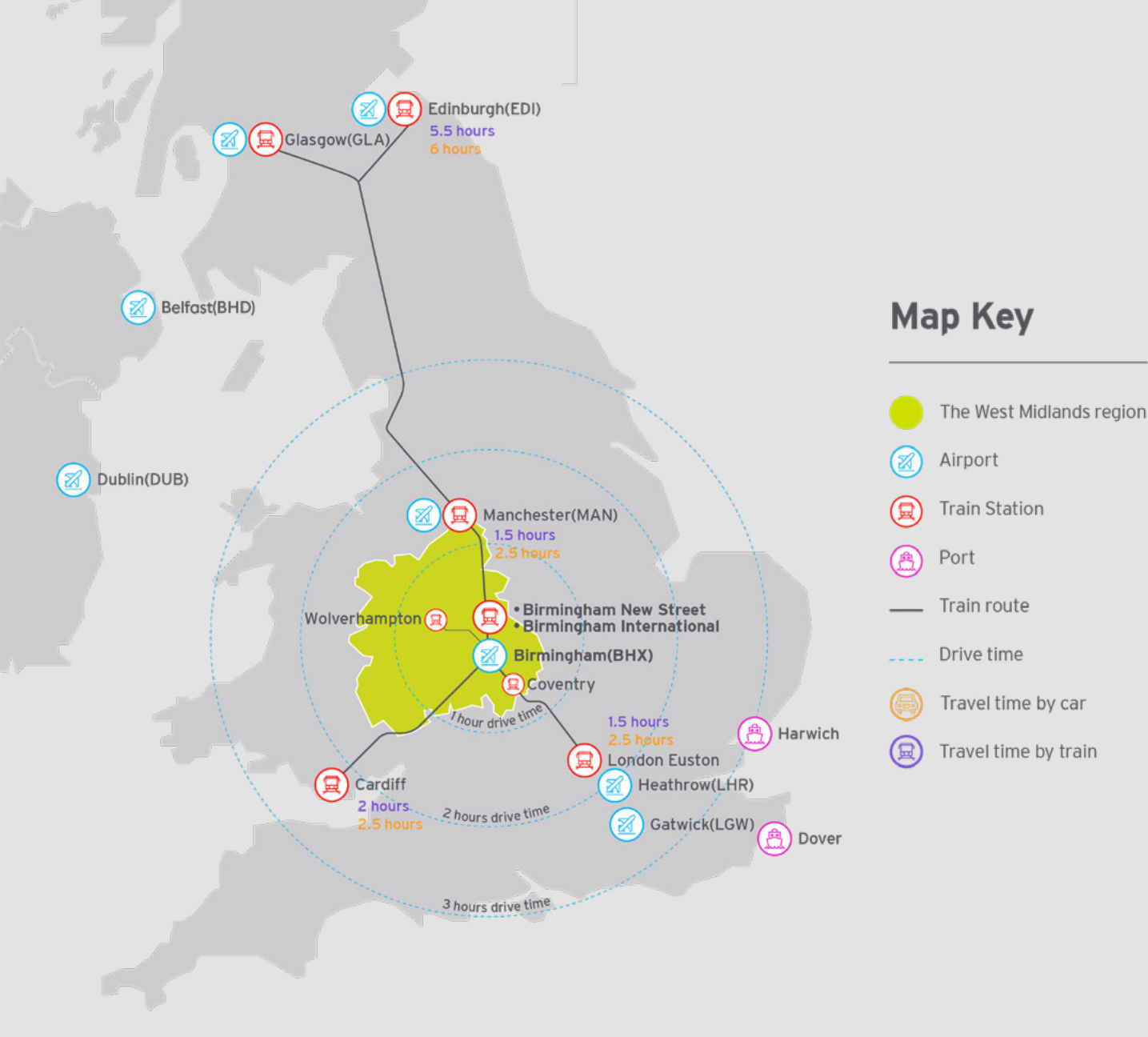
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## Welcome to the West Midlands – the heart of England

Birmingham and the West Midlands have something to offer every visitor, from history buffs exploring its rich heritage, to culture vultures keen to discover the region's theatrical past and vibrant street art scene, and foodies that'll fall in love with the diverse flavours of the region.

From Coventry being named the nation's City of Culture (2021) to Birmingham hosting the 2022 Commonwealth Games - the region is bursting with colourful celebrations and events. From Black Sabbath to Shakespeare, soaring peaks to idyllic waterways, world-class curries to haute cuisine, urban art to opera, discover why the West Midlands is gold-medal standard.

This guide gives a detailed directory of Birmingham and the West Midlands, covering everything visitors need to know, from key destination information, experiences and must-dos, to practical tips on getting there and around.



## Getting there:

With a rich industrial history where urban meets the great outdoors, the West Midlands presents an exciting mix of backdrops and unique experiences. Best of all, getting there is easy.

## By air:

Serving almost 400 one-stop and direct global destinations, [Birmingham Airport](#) is one of the UK's fastest-growing international gateways and is at the centre of England's road and rail network, making it one of the most accessible, too.

## By rail:

The West Midlands boasts an excellent [rail network](#), with trains to Birmingham taking just 1 hr 30 mins from both London and Manchester.

# Birmingham

This dramatic destination has many twists to discover. Fun-loving [Birmingham](#) is packed with things to do for visitors, from its legendary stadiums offering everything from West End shows to rock concerts, to its Michelin-starred restaurants and world-class curries, great coffee, bustling bars and sparkling canals. You can also discover an industrial hub with a vibrant, creative heart, packed with designer shops and jewellery makers, state-of-the-art museums and winding waterways.

## Getting there:

Birmingham Airport is the main international gateway and the city is 1 hr 30 mins by train from London, Manchester and Liverpool.

## Getting around:

It's easy to walk around the city centre, or rent a bike or e-scooter from docking stations. Birmingham is also served by an extensive tram, bus and rail network.



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# Key experiences

## History and heritage:

Take a walking tour and discover Birmingham's journey from the centre of the Industrial Revolution to thriving modern-day cultural hub, through its museums, canals and architecture.

## Arts and culture:

From the Everything to Everybody: Your Shakespeare, Your Culture exhibition at Birmingham Library, to the landmark that is Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery and guided tours of [University of Birmingham](#) the city's rich cultural heritage comes alive in its art galleries and renowned Jewellery Quarter.

## Festivals and events:

As well as the [Birmingham 2022 Festival](#), the city is home to a host of events all year round, from [Birmingham Pride](#) to Flatpack Festival, [MADE Festival](#) and Moseley Folk & Arts Festival.

## Food and drink:

From its five Michelin-starred restaurants, to the curries of the Balti Triangle and world-class coffee shops, you are spoilt for choice in Birmingham.

## Shopping:

Birmingham enjoys some of the best shopping in the country, from designer emporiums Selfridge's and Harvey Nichols, to the Bullring's fashion favourites, [designer outlets](#) and the world's biggest Primark!

## Nature in the city:

One of the greenest cities in the UK, Birmingham has nearly 600 parks and 3,500 hectares of public open spaces.

## Family adventures:

Birmingham is brilliant for families, from [LEGOLAND Discovery Centre](#), [National SEA LIFE Centre](#) and [Cadbury World](#) to getting hands-on at Thinktank Birmingham Science Museum.



## Did you know?

Birmingham has more Michelin-starred restaurants than any UK city outside of London.

## Must dos

- Go on a foodie journey: From indulging at one of the city's Michelin restaurants, to having a curry in the [Balti Triangle](#), or a coffee and cake in one of the many independent cafes, take a culinary trip round the world.
- Golf with a difference: At Birmingham's [Treetop Adventure Golf](#) or [Ghetto Golf](#) – a mini-golf course in an old, graffitied factory with beer, BBQ, cocktails, street food and DJs.
- Shop 'til you drop: Stock up on this season's styles in [The Bullring](#) and surrounds.
- Immerse yourself in art: Enjoy the [Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery's](#) fascinating collections, not least its Pre-Raphaelite gallery, the largest collection in the world, or the modern art of Digbeth.
- Walk the Jewellery Quarter: Enjoy the historic surrounds of the [Jewellery Quarter](#) and maybe even treat yourself to a sparkler.
- Explore the city by [canal boat](#) – Birmingham has more miles of canal than Venice and there's plenty of beautiful scenery to take in.
- See some sporting action: Don't miss modern-day sporting titans battle it out at the [Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games](#), then pull up stumps at Edgbaston Village and cricket ground.

## Fun fact!



Roald Dahl took inspiration from Cadbury for his book *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*.

# Birmingham surrounds (Solihull)

Located just 10 mins from Birmingham Airport, [Solihull](#) has been named as one of the best places to live in the UK. Surrounded by lovely countryside, it's a thriving mix of old and new – idyllic rural villages with bustling urban centres. From fine-dining to charming rustic pubs, magnificent hotels to quaint B&Bs, events and top-notch shopping, Solihull makes a great base when visiting the West Midlands.

## Getting there:

Birmingham International train station is 1 hr 30 mins by train from London. Solihull is 20 mins by train from Birmingham CBD and 10 mins by car from Birmingham Airport.

## Must dos

- Explore [Castle Bromwich Historic Gardens](#): Discover the enchanting gardens and be transported back to the Dutch and French-influenced formal designs of the late 17th century.
- Have an adventure with Bear Grylls: You can try everything from indoor skydiving to shark-diving and axe-throwing at [The Bear Grylls Adventure](#) activity centre.
- Head off-roading: Have a full-throttle day out at the [Jaguar Land Rover Experience](#), Solihull, where production of the world-famous vehicles began in 1948.
- Enjoy some fine-dining: Head to the beautiful [Hampton Manor](#), the 19th-century country manor hotel that's also home to Michelin-starred Peel's Restaurant.
- Go shopping: Grab some bargains at the enormous outlet and entertainment centre [Resorts World](#).

## Did you know?

Jaguar Land Rover is the UK's largest automotive manufacturing business, built around two iconic British car brands.



# Coventry

From game-changing music and cutting-edge theatre, to the birthplace of the British motoring industry, [Coventry](#) - the UK's City of Culture 2021 (with its programme extended into 2022) - is a thriving hub of entertainment.

## Getting there:

Coventry is 1 hr by train from London or 20 mins by train from Birmingham.

## Must dos

- Wander through the [Canal Basin](#): Explore the city's industrial past along its canals and step back in time by visiting the medieval buildings of Spon Street and Bayley Lane.
- Tour the [Coventry Transport Museum](#): You'll find two of the world's fastest cars here, including British-built ThrustSSC, which holds the current world land speed record of 763mph/1228kmph.
- Climb [Coventry Cathedral](#): For 360 degree views of the city, climb the Cathedral Tower, or keep your feet on solid ground within its modernistic interior.
- Explore [Kenilworth Castle](#): Walk in the footsteps of Elizabeth I in the restored Elizabethan Garden of one of the country's biggest historical sites.
- Get creative at [FarGo Village](#): Coventry's cool arts hub is home to independent shops, artisan food, a brewery and museum. And don't miss one of its many events in the City of Culture's festival.

## Fun fact!



Legend has it that the city was the birthplace of St. George, dragon slayer and patron saint of England.



## Did you know?

Coventry Cathedral was voted as Britain's favourite 20th century building in a poll marking the turn of the century.



# Shakespeare's England

[Stratford-upon-Avon](#) is famous around the world as the birthplace of the Bard, but wider Warwickshire is crammed with historic sites, castles and the green rolling fields and forests of the English countryside.

## Getting there:

Stratford-upon-Avon is 2 hrs by train from London, or 45 mins by train from Birmingham.

## Must dos

- Visit Stratford-Upon-Avon: No-one can come to the region without seeing [Shakespeare's Birthplace](#) and family homes, finished off with a boat trip down the river.
- Watch a play: Where better to see some Shakespeare than in his home town? The [Royal Shakespeare Company](#) puts on plays all year round in its three theatres.
- Explore the [British Motor Museum](#): Visit the home of the world's largest collection of historic British cars, including the very first Land Rover.
- Go wild at [Warwick Castle](#): This 1,000-year-old castle is one of Britain's finest medieval fortresses and its immersive experiences make a great day out for all the family.
- Relax in [Royal Leamington Spa](#): Victorians used to flock to Royal Leamington Spa to "take the waters" of its famous springs, but now you can enjoy one of many hair and beauty salons and day spas in this Regency town.

## Fun fact!



Warwick Castle is home to the world's most powerful catapult, The Trebuchet.



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## Did you know?

According to the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations, William Shakespeare wrote nearly one-tenth of the most quoted lines in the English language.



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# Black Country – Wolverhampton and Walsall

Just 30 minutes from Birmingham, the Black Country is the area outside of the city, referred to as the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution and home to the Black Country UNESCO Global Geopark – an area of geological and historical heritage.

## Getting there:

Wolverhampton is around 2 hrs by train from London and 20 mins by train or tram from Birmingham. Walsall is 20 mins by train from Birmingham.

## Wolverhampton:

Steeped in history, [Wolverhampton](#) is known for its vibrancy and rich cultural diversity, from its grand 18th-century architecture to its famous football team and thriving music scene.

## Walsall:

The market town north of Birmingham is famous for its leather-making, often referred to as the leather capital of the world. [Walsall](#) is also rich in green spaces and cultural attractions.

## Must dos

- Catch a show: Take in a West End performance on tour, dance, music or comedy show at the [Wolverhampton Grand Theatre](#).
- Watch the Wanderers: Soak up the atmosphere at Molineux Stadium for a home game for Wolverhampton Wanderers, or visit the museum and take a tour.

- Admire the views: Look out over 11 counties at [Barr Beacon Local Nature Reserve](#) – just under 5 km from Walsall.
- Take a walk in the park: Walsall Arboretum is a pretty park minutes from the town centre.
- Visit the leather factory: [Walsall Leather Museum](#), a restored Victorian factory, brings to life the history of the region.

## Did you know?

The Black Country got its name in Victorian times because of the thick smoke from the foundries and mines.

## Fun fact!

Wolverhampton is home to one of the world's oldest professional football teams, Wolverhampton Wanderers, founded in 1877.



# Black Country – Dudley and Sandwell

Also in the Black Country is the district of [Sandwell](#) and market town of [Dudley](#), which are full of family-friendly attractions, from Sandwell Valley Country Park and Dudley Zoo, to the popular Black Country Living Museum.

## Getting there:

Dudley is 1 hr 40 mins by train from London and about 10 mins by train from Birmingham.

## Must dos

- Turn back time: Experience the Industrial Revolution first-hand at the award-winning [Black Country Living Museum](#), a key filming location for Peaky Blinders.
- Have fun at the farm: Explore [Sandwell Valley Country Park](#), also home to two working farms.
- Go to the zoo: The lovely [Dudley Zoo and Castle](#) is full of exotic animals, set around an 11th-century motte and bailey castle.
- Take a trip underground: For an unforgettable journey, take an underground boat trip through the Dudley Canal Tunnel and caverns, with the [Dudley Canal Trust](#).
- Have a go at glass blowing: [Stourbridge's Glass Quarter](#) has been home to glass makers for 400 years and you can try your hand at it in a workshop.

## Fun fact!

Dudley is often referred to as the capital of the Black Country because of the town's strong links to industry.



## Did you know?

The anchor for the Titanic was made in Dudley in 1911 and towed from Netherton to Dudley railway station by 20 shire horses.



# More on the West Midlands – Essential Resources

## Consumer Websites

For more inspiration, myth busting articles and help planning your trip to the West Midlands and Britain, visit [makeitwm.com](http://makeitwm.com) and [visitbritain.com](http://visitbritain.com).

## Trade Website

For trade resources including: maps, itineraries, images and practical information on getting to-and-around the West Midlands, visit [makeitwm.com/trade](http://makeitwm.com/trade) or download the Travel Trade Guide [here](#).

## VisitBritain Trade Newsletter

Sign up to our monthly newsletter - your key resource for what's new in Britain including updates, events and selling tools. Subscribe [here](#).

## VisitBritain Image Library

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## VisitBritain Shop

Be sure to check out the VisitBritain Shop, where you can book everything from BritRail Passes to commissionable tickets and sightseeing passes for attractions and tours throughout the UK. Go to [visitbritainshop.com](http://visitbritainshop.com)

## Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games

Birmingham 2022 will be a West Midlands celebration with Birmingham at its heart. Discover more at [birmingham2022.com](http://birmingham2022.com)

## Know Before You Go

Find the latest information and resources on travelling to and around the UK including: how to travel responsibly; UK Government websites / useful links; and what to do in an emergency [here](#).

