

# MUSIC IS

# GREAT

## BRITAIN



A guide  
for international media  
Edition 4 - October 2015

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*Festival No 6  
Portmeirion, Wales*

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## Quick facts about Music in Britain

- Britain has a musical venue to suit all varieties of musical passions and we've got the lowdown on the best spots to give your ears - and feet - a work-out. From world-renowned clubbing venues to homes of heavy metal, indie, hip hop or reggae, your next musical odyssey is just a ticket stub away. *Find out more on page 13.*
- Did you know you can do far more than simply watch a band or orchestra on a stage in Britain - how about monitoring their pulses, too? Sampling whisky in between shows? Or attending a concert in someone's living room? Britain presents immersive music experiences that mean being in the audience has never been so intriguing. *Turn to page 27 for how to get involved.*
- British pop royalty The Spice Girls celebrate their 20th anniversary in 2016, while girl groups Bananarama and Little Mix also face significant anniversaries. *Find out where to celebrate British musical milestones on page 29.*
- Britain is a breeding ground for musical talent. Scottish electro-house DJ Calvin Harris tops Forbes' list of highest earning DJs in the world in 2015 and he has musically collaborated with everyone from Ellie Goulding to Rihanna. There is plenty more musical talent in Britain and we look at the venues, festivals and secret clubs you can find British DJs playing their sets. *Turn to page 47 to find the hottest DJs in town.*
- From the prestigious Edinburgh International Festival in Scotland to the small chamber music festival in St Endellion on the Cornish coast in south-west England, or the operatic powerhouse of Welsh National Opera in Cardiff, Britain can proudly boast a vibrant and varied classical music scene that caters for all tastes. *Discover more about classical music in Britain on page 53.*
- Welsh capital Cardiff is home to Spiller's Records; established in 1894, it is the world's oldest record shop. The Manic Street Preachers busked outside and the band led a campaign to keep it open when the shop was threatened with closure in 2006. *See page 89 for more on good old-fashioned record shops.*
- Bagpipes are synonymous with Scotland and pipe music is part of many and varied traditions. Popular band the Red Hot Chilli Pipers even offer a rock 'n' roll take on the traditional instrument. *See page 64 for information on Traditional Music all over Britain.*
- Discover The Beatles' early history at your own pace with the Beatles Story Liverpool app. *Find out more about music tours and apps on page 92.*
- Rock, pop, punk and rave your way through 70 years of Britain's popular music history through images, video and music memorabilia ranging from John Lennon's iconic glasses to Geri Halliwell's Union Jack dress at the British Music Experience, which will reopen at Liverpool's Cunard Building in 2016. *See page 72 for more information on music museums and halls of fame.*
- Sam Smith may now be headlining the biggest music festivals but it all started for him at the Stortford Music Festival, a small but significant festival held less than an hour's train journey from London. *Discover your own pop pilgrimage on page 31.*

## Music is Great - *why?*

The Beatles, David Bowie, Queen, Led Zeppelin, Blur, Oasis, The Stone Roses, Arctic Monkeys, Sam Smith, Ed Sheeran, Ellie Goulding...just a few famous names from a list of British music heroes and legends that goes on and on. Every corner of Britain is either dancing, swaying, absorbing or simply listening to the sound of music; pop, classical, folk, jazz, swing, blues, Americana, indie, heavy metal, reggae, hip hop, house - you name it, you'll find it playing out loud in Britain.



*Glastonbury - Britain's music festivals are just one reason why music is GREAT across the destination.  
Credit Joe Lepper*

Discover the places that inspired British musicians, whether it's John Lennon's

Strawberry Fields in Liverpool, north-west England, or Benjamin Britten's beloved Aldeburgh in Suffolk, east England. In Britain, you can experience the soaring sound of a cathedral choir at Evensong, then head to a tiny pub venue and see an unknown band - hopefully on its first step to international fame - and afterwards go clubbing until dawn. Music can give you a constant soundtrack in Britain - whether it's a grand opera house, a busker on a street corner, a late-night event in a museum or a Cambridge choir singing as the sun rises on the first day of May. You'll find silent discos, lunchtime discos - even baby discos!

Head to Brook Street in London's Mayfair and you'll find two of the blue plaques that denote somebody famous once lived there. George Frideric Handel and rock musician Jimi Hendrix lived next door to each other - separated by a few hundred years of course. (The houses are now interconnected, but Jimi was in No.23 and Handel No.25 on Brook Street.)

Visitors can also immerse themselves in a variety of venues and musical experiences; it's in Britain where you'll find quirky examples such as experimental chamber-music group Ensemble Perpetuo holding their 'The Secret Garden' pop-up concert next summer inside a wildlife sanctuary. As visitors walk around the green space, they will happen upon surprise performances in different corners, each inspired by the landscape or nature.

A visit to Britain is also the perfect opportunity to let your hair down - party in our bars and dance till dawn in our nightclubs. If you're interested in the roots of reggae in Britain, head to Birmingham; if house music is more your thing, head to Leeds. And what about G-Town?! If you don't know what it is you need to find out...

Do you want to see some fantastic live music in Britain but don't want to spend too much on tickets? Across the country music fans will find interesting, purse-friendly venues where you can see everything from classical music to up-and-coming rock and pop acts.

Britain's vibrant festival scene is another way visitors can save money, by cramming in dozens of gigs within a few days. From muddy boots in Glastonbury to black-tie at Glyndebourne, Britain has a festival to suit every taste and budget. It's one of the ultimate ways to experience Britain, from DJs on the Isle of Wight or blues on the Warrehpoin Bay in Northern Ireland to classical concerts in the beautiful countryside of the Welsh borders. Just don't forget your wellies!

## 10 must-do music activities in Britain



*Rule Britannia is a classic song performed at the Last Night of the Proms. Credit VisitBritain/Jasmine Teer*

1) **The Proms.** Every summer the Royal Albert Hall thrums with the sound of orchestras and ensembles from all over the world, and the beauty of the event is that the whole nation gets excited about classical music for two months. Tickets go from £5 (standing) up to under £100, so it's one for classical music novices and experts, or anyone wanting a flavour of the British summertime! *See page 53 for a full feature on enjoying classical music in Britain.*

2) **Dance a ceilidh in Scotland.** Traditional music and dance is alive and - literally - kicking in Scotland. Find a Scottish reels night (it won't be hard, they happen all over the country and all the time!) and then throw yourself in. Most reels are easy for beginners to pick up, with a 'caller' shouting instructions for which foot needs to go where, and since the bands are always live there's a guaranteed high octane party atmosphere. Watch out - ceilidh dancing becomes very addictive. *See page 64 for more on traditional music in Britain.*

3) **Catch festival fever.** Throughout the year there are music festivals lighting up Britain, more often than not bringing idyllic parts of the countryside to life for a long weekend full of fantastic music, crazy entertainment, wild outfits and memorable experiences. Whatever your taste in music, there will be a festival in the calendar to suit you - from big name rock and pop acts at Glastonbury and V, through to jazz in Derry~Londonderry, Newcastle Gateshead and Cheltenham, and then the quirky ones - like Festival No 6, in Wales's majestic Italianate village of Portmeirion. *See page 79 for information on major festivals in 2016, and page 82 for more unusual and smaller festivals, which are much easier to book onto.*

4) **Go back to vinyl.** In today's digital era, there's something romantic about trawling a record shop for old-school vinyl. The oldest record shop in the world is Cardiff's Spillers, founding in 1894 and still going today, while Berwick Street in London is the West End's 'golden mile of vinyl'. For a truly immersive musical experience, look up a gig at Rough Trade East in London, where you can hear music surrounded by records. *See page 89 for more on great record stores.*

5) **Get recording.** You might have more than one musical bone in your body and wish to exercise it on holiday - if that's the case, you can! Turn up at Green Note in Camden for open mic night or learn song-writing at Belfast's veritable music mecca, the Oh Yeah Centre. Of course, there are plenty of places for karaoke or even 'rockaoke' too, for when you want to give your vocal chords a workout. *See page 37 for places to play in Britain.*

6) **Opera.** Opera has undergone something of a renaissance in Britain in recent years, opening out from a handful of opera houses to include festivals in country houses, gardens, and live relays of performances on big screens in town and city centres. Summer is one of the best times to enjoy opera; pack a picnic, dress up a little and enjoy the finest classical music under starlit British skies. *Read more about it on page 62.*

7) **Go out to play at night.** There's nothing better than going on holiday and finding your best bar, frequenting it throughout your stay to pretend you live there, or dancing the night away and meeting the locals at play. For party people, there's a wide range of choice

in Britain, whether you have a leaning towards live music, or a taste for reggae. Each city has its own unique character come nightfall, and it's definitely not all about London when it comes to going out and having a good time. *See page 41 for more about British nightlife.*

**8) Abbey Road. King Tut's Wah Wah Hut. Brook Street.** There are countless musical memories scattered around Britain. The above three - the Beatles' most famous album cover; the Glasgow venue where Oasis got signed; the road both George Frideric Handel and Jimi Hendrix lived on. There's a musical story to be told at many a corner in Britain, and you can follow in the footsteps of your favourite stars, both of yesteryear and today's hit fame. *Find out about legendary music heroes and where to find their traces on page 16 and about today's pop heroes on page 31.*



*Find a musical memory at Glasgow's famous King Tut's Wah Wah Hut*

**9) Well up to a Welsh male voice choir.** Wales is famed for its male voice choirs, whose rousing singing before a rugby match has been known to move grown men to tears. Experience it for yourself at iconic venue the Wales Millennium Centre, or look out for the North Wales Choral Festival. *See page 64 for traditional music, and page 82 for information on small and unusual music festivals in Britain.*

**10) Give your journey a British soundtrack.** Over the decades Britain's countryside, eclectic culture and iconic cityscapes have sparked the creativity of composers and musicians from all over the world - from Lennon and McCartney to Simon and Garfunkel. Here we take you on a Britain-wide tour of the places and spaces that feature in the titles or lyrics of 16 famous songs, and what to do when you're there. *See page 20 for the places and spaces that feature in famous song lyrics and titles.*

## Music venues in Britain - a guide

Whether your desire is to catch an upcoming band at a small venue or the most talented orchestras in sumptuous surroundings, we have the perfect place in mind. From pubs with rock history ingrained in the walls to concert halls with enriching acoustics, Britain's comprehensive network of live venues is second to none - and here are the highlights.

You can find comprehensive gig listings at the NME.com website, but do pop in to some of the record shops we also recommend to get some hot tips.

### Iconic

#### **Barbican, London**

Europe's largest multi-disciplinary arts venue boasts an impressive programme of classical, jazz and rock talent, as well as theatre, dance and film, with the London Symphony Orchestra as its resident ensemble. [www.barbican.org.uk](http://www.barbican.org.uk)

*Getting there: The nearest tube station is Barbican.*



*The O2 Arena, built for the millennium, is a London landmark and attracts top acts in entertainment*

## O2 Arena, London

This unique construction was originally built for the millennial celebrations as an exhibition space and now hosts the biggest global stars, with Jason DeRulo, Muse and Little Mix set to perform in 2016. Under the dome you also find the more intimate Indigo at the O2 venue.

[www.theo2.co.uk](http://www.theo2.co.uk)

*Getting there: The nearest tube station is North Greenwich. You can also get to the O2 on the Emirates Air Line, a cable car that takes you over the River Thames from Royal Docks.*

## Southbank Centre, London *\*Good for families\**

This cultural complex beside the River Thames includes three world-class music venues: the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall and Purcell Room. Each has played host to its fair share of big names over the years, from orchestras to pop stars. The Southbank is known for multi-disciplinary events that include free performances and activities for kids, especially in summer when its open spaces come into their own. This unique concrete building also hosts the annual cutting-edge Meltdown Festival.

[www.southbankcentre.co.uk](http://www.southbankcentre.co.uk)

*Getting there: The nearest tube/rail station is Waterloo.*

## Royal Albert Hall, London

One of Britain's most recognisable venues, the Albert Hall opened in 1871 to fulfil the vision of Queen Victoria's consort, after whom it is named. The circular auditorium is most famous for the annual Proms series of good-value concerts that attract the cream of classical talent. However, pop groups too are attracted by this elegant building.



*The Royal Albert Hall - an iconic London music venue since 1871*

[www.royalalberthall.com](http://www.royalalberthall.com)

*Getting there: The nearest tube station is South Kensington.*

## Roundhouse, London

What first opened as a steam engine shed in 1846 is now one of London's most jaw-dropping venues. After the locomotives left, the vast structure hosted gigs by the likes of Pink Floyd, Jimi Hendrix and Talking Heads until its closure in 1983. Used intermittently for a while, the venue was refurbished in 2006 and has since added to Camden's importance to the rock scene.

[www.roundhouse.org.uk](http://www.roundhouse.org.uk)

*Getting there: The nearest tube station is Chalk Farm.*

**Sage, Gateshead, north-east England** *\*Good for modern architecture\**

This stunning glazed venue on the south bank of the River Tyne is a unique structure with impressive views across to Newcastle and an eclectic range of events that includes performances by its resident orchestra, the Northern Sinfonia.

[www.sagegateshead.com](http://www.sagegateshead.com)

*Getting there: Newcastle is just under three hours by train from London.*



*The Sage is one of the principal music venues in the north of England - and only three hours by train from London*

**Hydro, Glasgow, Scotland**

Since it opened in September 2013, this spectacular arena has brought a contemporary feel to the banks of the River Clyde and an impressive array of stellar acts, with the likes of The Vamps and Ellie Goulding on the bill for its first full year in operation.

[www.thehydro.com](http://www.thehydro.com)

*Getting there: It takes four and a half hours to reach Glasgow by train from London, with flights also available.*



*The Wales Millennium Centre is amazing both outside and in*

**Wales Millennium Centre, Cardiff, Wales** *\*Good for families\**

A million people a year visit Wales' largest and most prestigious arts centre. Home to an orchestra, dance company and Welsh National Opera, this stunning building with six performance spaces also attracts West End tours. Look out for free shows and family-friendly activities. [www.wmc.org.uk](http://www.wmc.org.uk)

*Getting there: Cardiff is two hours by train from London.*

**Ulster Hall, Belfast, Northern Ireland**

Built in 1862 and recently refurbished, this grand music hall is home to the Ulster Orchestra, though it has also been instrumental in bringing great rock and roll to Northern Ireland. It played a key role in the 2012 film *Good Vibrations* about the impact of punk on the region.

[www.belfastcity.gov.uk/tourism-venues/ulsterhall/ulsterhall.aspx](http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk/tourism-venues/ulsterhall/ulsterhall.aspx)

*Getting there: There are flights to Belfast from various British airports, including London.*

## Rock/pop

### **Academy, Birmingham, central England**

Not one venue, but three, all in one busy complex, makes this the place to find music from hot new bands to established stars.

[www.o2academybirmingham.co.uk](http://www.o2academybirmingham.co.uk)

*Getting there: Birmingham is 90 minutes by train from London.*



### **Echo Arena, Liverpool, north-west England**

Situated on the banks of the Mersey, this arena and its smaller sister venue EchoTwo stand out as key attractions based in Liverpool's former docks. The Echo has the likes of The Corrs, Wet Wet Wet and Ellie Goulding set to play in 2016.

[www.echoarena.com](http://www.echoarena.com)

*The Echo Arena in Liverpool has seen many a top star grace its stage - next year it will welcome artists such as Ellie Goulding*

*Getting there: Liverpool is a two-and-a-half hour train journey from London Euston.*

### **Leadmill, Sheffield, north England**

Since it opened in 1980, the south Yorkshire city's longest running independent venue and club has seen many acts play here and go on to bigger success, among them Pulp, Coldplay and The Strokes. Regularly voted best live music venue by *NME* readers, the Leadmill generally has a fantastic atmosphere.

[www.leadmill.co.uk](http://www.leadmill.co.uk)

*Getting there: It takes just over two hours to reach Sheffield by train from London.*

### **Manchester Arena, north-west England**

For mainstream rock, indie and pop acts check out the biggest indoor arena in Europe - the Manchester Arena, which will welcome acts such as The Libertines, 5 Seconds of Summer and Janet Jackson to the stage in 2016.

[www.manchester-arena.com](http://www.manchester-arena.com)

### **Ironworks, Inverness, Scotland**

This purpose-built venue brings live music to the heart of the Highlands, with an emphasis on entertainment and good times for all. Expect plenty of established rock names and tribute acts on the nostalgia circuit.

[www.ironworksvenue.com](http://www.ironworksvenue.com)

*Getting there: It takes about eight hours to reach Inverness by train from London or around three and a half hours from Edinburgh.*

### **Hobos, Bridgend, Wales *\*Good for value\****

Established in 2009, this independent venue in a town an hour away from Cardiff by car pursues an eclectic booking policy, with a mix of club and live music nights, specialising in the heavier end of rock. Some bands play for free with an after party to follow.

[www.hobosmusicvenue.co.uk](http://www.hobosmusicvenue.co.uk)

*Getting there: Trains from London to Bridgend take around two and a half hours.*

### **Central Station, Wrexham, north Wales**

Found right at the heart of this pleasant market town close to the border with England, this venue caters for all tastes, with familiar names and up-and-coming acts playing its 550-capacity room.

[www.centralstationvenue.com](http://www.centralstationvenue.com)

*Getting there: It takes about two and a half hours to reach Wrexham by train from London, changing at Chester.*

### **Oh Yeah, Belfast, Northern Ireland *\*Good for teenagers\****

This former whisky warehouse in Belfast's cultural quarter is open to all-comers, with a regular 14+ age policy to attract a wide audience. Formed as a charity with input from local heroes Snow Patrol, the Oh Yeah music centre attracts big names as well as supporting Northern Irish talent.

[www.ohyeahbelfast.com](http://www.ohyeahbelfast.com)

*Getting there: There are flights to Belfast from various British airports, including London.*

## **Classical**

### **Bridgewater Hall, Manchester, north-west England *\*Good for acoustics\****

Since it opened in the mid-1990s, this purpose-built concert hall has met the highest acoustic standards as home to the city's Hallé Orchestra. Take a guided tour to learn about its ingenious design.

[www.bridgewater-hall.co.uk](http://www.bridgewater-hall.co.uk)

*Getting there: Manchester is two hours from London by train.*

### **Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Liverpool, north-west England**

An art-deco, Grade II-listed building, the Philharmonic offers a year-round programme that features everything from pop to comedy, though predominantly this is a classical venue, specialising in performances from its own orchestra, the longest surviving in Britain.

[www.liverpoolphil.com](http://www.liverpoolphil.com)

*Getting there: Liverpool is a two-and-a-half hour train journey from London.*

### **St George's, Bristol, south-west England *\*Good for young children\****

One of the country's leading concert halls, St George's has superb acoustics and a unique atmosphere that attracts leading musicians from around the world. Its vibrant programme includes folk, jazz and world music, with many events suitable for babies and young children.

[www.stgeorgesbristol.co.uk](http://www.stgeorgesbristol.co.uk)

*Getting there: Trains from London to Bristol take just over 90 minutes.*

### **Usher Hall, Edinburgh, Scotland**

This is one of Scotland's most prestigious venues. More than 100 years old, the stately construction continues to play an important role in the annual Edinburgh Festival, one of the world's largest cultural events, while widening its remit to include pop and rock.

[www.usherhall.co.uk](http://www.usherhall.co.uk)

*Getting there: It takes just over four hours to reach Edinburgh by train from London, with flights also available.*

### **Music Hall, Aberdeen, Scotland**

This fine building, built in 1822, was where Emeli Sandé played her triumphant homecoming concert in 2013. The hall brings some brilliant classical musicians to north-east Scotland, while its ceilidhs are a perfect way to learn Scottish dancing and meet the locals.

[www.boxofficeaberdeen.com](http://www.boxofficeaberdeen.com)

*Getting there: Trains to Aberdeen from Edinburgh take around two and a half hours, around seven and a half hours from London. with flights also available.*



### **Aberystwyth Arts Centre, Aberystwyth, Wales**

This impressive arts centre offers stunning views over Cardigan Bay as well as a varied programme. Part of the town's university, the venue accommodates musicals and choirs, plus folk and world music.

[www.aberystwythartscentre.co.uk](http://www.aberystwythartscentre.co.uk)

*Getting there: Aberystwyth is around five hours from London by train.*

*Aberystwyth Arts Centre has stunning views over Cardigan Bay*

### **Venue Cymru, Llandudno, Wales**

Situated right on the shoreline of a popular north Wales resort, this conference centre and hall brings popular singers, opera, classical concerts and everything in between.

[www.venuecymru.co.uk](http://www.venuecymru.co.uk)

*Getting there: Llandudno is a 90-minute drive from Manchester.*

## **Millennium Forum, Derry~Londonderry, Northern Ireland**

Derry~Londonderry's main venue brings a wide variety of events and shows the area's enduring love for country music.

[www.millenniumforum.co.uk](http://www.millenniumforum.co.uk)

*Getting there: Buses from Belfast to Derry~Londonderry take about 90 minutes.*

## **Jazz/world/folk**

### **Kings Place, London**

As it is located by Regent's Canal in central London's revitalised Kings Cross district, Kings Place is part of an area great for exploring on foot and escaping the hustle and bustle. The venue describes itself as 'a hub for music, art, dialogue and food'. As well as a fine café, Kings Place supports London's vibrant jazz scene.

[www.kingsplace.co.uk](http://www.kingsplace.co.uk)

*Getting there: The nearest tube is Kings Cross St Pancras.*

### **Matt and Phreds, Manchester, north-west England *\*Good for food\****

This popular venue in the city's trendy Northern Quarter is renowned almost as much for the quality of its pizzas as the cool jazz groups that play there.

[www.mattandphreds.com](http://www.mattandphreds.com)

*Getting there: Manchester is two hours from London by train.*

### **Royal Concert Hall, Glasgow, Scotland**

The city's much-loved music venue plays host to many acts that have made it, with a bias towards world music. Its winter highlight is the Celtic Connections festival held every January that attracts traditional musicians from across the globe.

[www.glasgowconcerthalls.com](http://www.glasgowconcerthalls.com)

*Getting there: It takes four and a half hours to reach Glasgow by train from London, with flights also available.*

### **Hootananny, Inverness, Scotland**

This down-to-earth pub is regularly awarded the title of the best in this welcoming Highlands town. Hootananny has music on every day of the week, with an emphasis on traditional music. The Scottish dishes on its menu are also worth tasting.

[www.hootanannyinverness.co.uk](http://www.hootanannyinverness.co.uk)

### **Market Bar, Inverness, Scotland *\*Good for value\****

This tiny pub offers mainly traditional music most nights of the week - without a cover charge. Most notably, The Proclaimers of *Letter from America* fame got an early break here.

<http://miinverness.co.uk/business/the-market-bar>

*Getting there: It takes about eight hours to reach Inverness by train from London or around three and a half hours from Edinburgh.*

### **Mareel, Shetland, Scotland**

Britain's most northerly arts centre occupies a stunning quayside location in remote Lerwick, yet still manages to put on a year-round programme in which music features heavily. Not just local talent, but major names from around the world come to be inspired by its land and sea views.

[www.mareel.org](http://www.mareel.org)

*Getting there: A lovely way to reach the Shetland Islands is an overnight ferry from Aberdeen.*

### **Underground**

#### **Café Oto, London**

Arguably one of the coolest venues the capital, this independent hangout is a magnet for Hackney hipsters in trendy Dalston, east London. Oto means both 'noise' and 'music' in Japanese, a clue as to where some of its carefully curated avant-garde acts originate.

[www.cafeoto.co.uk](http://www.cafeoto.co.uk)

*Getting there: The nearest station is Dalston Junction.*



*Hipster hangout Café Oto is the place to discover something new and unexpected*

#### **Brudenell Social Club, Leeds, north-east England**

One of West Yorkshire's hippest venues, the Brudenell originally offered cabaret and bingo. Now it provides a showcase for leftfield indie groups in an area with a huge student population. It is also much loved by the local scene, playing host to Kaiser Chiefs and The Cribs.

[www.brudenellsocialclub.co.uk](http://www.brudenellsocialclub.co.uk)

*Getting there: Leeds is just over two hours from London by train.*



#### **Kazimier, Liverpool, north-west England**

Cool venue with loads going on, including its own garden with wood-fired heating. The line-up is also hot, featuring anything from solo singer/songwriters to indie acts.

[www.thekazimier.co.uk/home](http://www.thekazimier.co.uk/home)

*Kazimier in Liverpool is a guaranteed good night out - with a bonus garden to boot*

*Getting there: Liverpool is a two-and-a-half hour train journey from London.*

### **The Cluny, Newcastle, north-east England**

Down a side street in the Ouseburn district, The Cluny attracts high-quality indie and Americana acts from all over the world to a city that certainly knows how to have a good time. This is a venue where you can guarantee a decent pint (local real ale a speciality) as well as fantastic music.

[www.thecluny.com](http://www.thecluny.com)

*Getting there: Newcastle takes just under three hours by train from London.*

### **Cabaret Voltaire, Edinburgh, Scotland**

An atmospheric bar set back into the city's rocky foundations, Cabaret Voltaire is a pizza restaurant by day, while the evenings see the basement morph into a lively venue with some intriguing club nights and live acts.

[www.thecabaretvoltaire.com](http://www.thecabaretvoltaire.com)

*Getting there: It takes around five hours to reach Edinburgh by train from London, with flights also available.*

## **Music venues by music genre**

We've also narrowed down the top music venues in Britain to suit a variety of other musical passions. Indie, house or hip hop: we've got the lowdown on the best spots to give your ears - and feet - a work-out. From world-renowned clubbing venues to homes of heavy metal, your next musical odyssey is just a ticket stub away.

### **Indie**

#### **Electric Ballroom, Camden, London**

Other than the occasional club night, the **Electric Ballroom** is unashamedly rock and indie to the core. With a downbeat feel and a reputation for rowdy crowds, it's played a key role in Camden's creative community for more than 70 years. Evolving from a busy Irish club hosting the likes of Sid Vicious and Madness, more recent performers include The Vaccines, Strypes and Future Islands. This is a venue that feels like it was built for bands and their armies of fans! Live acts from around £15.

[www.electricballroom.co.uk](http://www.electricballroom.co.uk)

*Getting there: Camden Town underground station (Northern Line) is right next door. Camden Road overland station is five minutes' walk away.*

#### **King Tut's Wah Wah Hut, Glasgow, Scotland**

With multi-act gigs almost every night of the week, it's easy to see why **King Tut's Wah Wah Hut** has built a reputation as a hothouse for new talent. But big names get a look-in, too. The likes of Florence and the Machine, The Killers and Pulp have all graced its stage.

Even after 25 years, Tut's still has the feel of a secret rock and roll lair. Live gigs from about £7.

[www.kingtuts.co.uk](http://www.kingtuts.co.uk)

*Getting there: It's around five hours by train from London or an hour from Edinburgh.*

## House

Warehouse Project, Manchester, north-west England

Reviving the spirit of Manchester's halcyon days as the northern hub of British dance music, WHP celebrated its tenth year in 2015. But catch it if you can; the club runs for a fleeting twelve weeks annually, from the end of September through to its spectacular New Year's Eve closing party. Expect some of the biggest names in house and techno (this year's bill includes New Order, Leftfield, Hudson Mohawke and Jamie XX) but grab tickets early. Tickets, via the website, cost around £25.

[www.thewarehouseproject.com](http://www.thewarehouseproject.com)

*Getting there: The club is located right under Manchester's Piccadilly train station, a two hour journey from London.*

Sub Club, Glasgow, Scotland

Where can you find the longest-running underground dance club in the world? New York? London? Berlin? No - it's Glasgow! From humble beginnings in 1987, Sub Club has flourished into an internationally-renowned haven for club connoisseurs - while still staying faithful to its music-driven roots. The club's legendary Subculture nights are still going strong, with the relentlessly hedonistic crowd drawn by the likes of house music's elder statesman Andy Weatherall. Besides the enviable music policy, Sub Club's friendly door staff, a relaxed dress code and a top class sound system conspire to it one of the most important clubs in the UK. Entry is around £10. For Subculture nights, buy in advance via the website.

[www.subclub.co.uk](http://www.subclub.co.uk)

*Getting there: Five hours by train from London or an hour from Edinburgh.*

## Garage

Lightbox, Vauxhall, London

Lightbox describes its music policy as, quite simply: BASS! Diverse booking spans the whole range of big room electronica - you'll find DJs playing garage, D&B, grime, house and techno. If the bass is big, it has a home at Lightbox. The club is part of the sprawling Fire gay club, tucked away in the arches beneath Vauxhall's railway lines. Alongside some achingly hot DJ talent, the big draw is the club's powerful lighting system, which surrounds revellers with a kaleidoscopic



*Big on bass: some of the hottest garage DJs in town play at London's Lightbox*

matrix of 20,000 pulsating LEDs. Buy super early-bird tickets for some events via the website for as little as £5, otherwise expect to pay £10-£20.

[www.lightboxlondon.net](http://www.lightboxlondon.net)

*Getting there: Vauxhall's underground, railway and 24-hour bus station are 20 metres away.*

#### Witness at Sneaky Pete's, Edinburgh, Scotland

This weekly club night (Wednesdays) has carved itself an enviable reputation for bass music, playing garage, house, funk and grime. That's thanks in no small part to residents Ross Blackwell and Fault Lines - but also to Witness' monthly big-name guest nights. Daniel Avery, Joy Orbison and Skepta are a few of the bigger names to have thrilled Witness' devoted following of late. Best of all, entry is 100% free.

[www.sneakypetes.co.uk](http://www.sneakypetes.co.uk)

*Getting there: By train - an hour from Glasgow or four-and-a-half hours from London.*

#### **Heavy Metal**

##### Scruffy Murphy's, Birmingham, central England

Scruffy's crowds have been moshing for almost 15 years, and the venue is one of the few remaining bastions of guitar rock and metal left in central England. A metal-focused music policy means Scruffy's draws fans from all over Europe, as well as the US, Australia and New Zealand. Napalm Death and Benediction have graced Scruffy's stage, and touring bands often drop by for a drink between performances - you might just find yourself moshing with Municipal Waste! Tickets from around £4.

*Getting there: Birmingham is 90 minutes by train from London.*

[www.scruffymurphys.co.uk](http://www.scruffymurphys.co.uk)

##### Diamond Rock Club, Ahogill, County Antrim, Northern Ireland

Metal fans rate the Diamond as one of the best venues in Northern Ireland, and well worth the effort it takes to reach its remote location, deep in the County Antrim countryside, four miles from Ballymena. A small venue with a big heart and a devoted fanbase, it draws names like all-female metal outfit the Amorettes, alongside local talent such as Belfast's Maverick. Tribute acts and album launch parties complete the line-up.

[www.facebook.com/DiamondRockClub](http://www.facebook.com/DiamondRockClub)

*Getting there: Train or bus to Ballymena from Belfast (around an hour) then taxi to Ahogill (about four miles away).*

#### **Hip Hop**

##### The Doctor's Orders, London

London listings magazine *Time Out* rates Doctor's Orders as 'the kings of the capital's hip hop scene', and with names like Big Daddy Kane, Jazzy B, Kenny Dope and Talib Kweli on the bill it's no wonder why - they are quite simply the first port of call for the biggest

names in hip hop and beyond. Celebrating a decade of partying in 2015, Doctor's Orders are roving hip-hop promoters who take their events to various venues in London, including Hoxton Square and the Jazz Café. Visit the website to find out what they're up to, and where, and watch out for their daytime block party 'Fun DMC' events - hip-hop parties for kids and parents alike! Tickets vary from free to around £20 depending on the event.

[www.thedoctorsorders.com](http://www.thedoctorsorders.com)

*Getting there: All venues are based in central London, check the website for details.*

### Clwb Ifor Bach

The king-pin in Cardiff's alternative music scene, Clwb Ifor Bach's eclectic booking policy ensures hip-hop and rap feature regularly on the bill. The Jungle Brothers, DJ sets from Mr Scruff and Mobo-winning Akala have all featured, and Ifor Bach was an early supporter of Welsh rap collective Goldie Lookin' Chain. Live acts from £6.

[www.clwb.net](http://www.clwb.net)

*Getting there: Cardiff is two hours from London by train.*

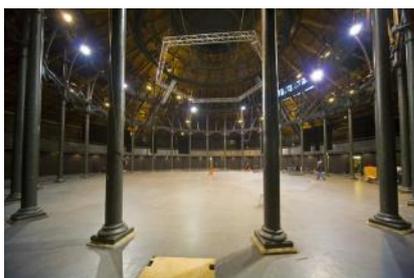
## British music through the decades

Did pop music start in a Liverpool cellar on February 9th, 1961? That's when the Beatles - John, Paul, George and Ringo - played their very first concert at the Cavern Club before going on to conquer the world. More than fifty years on, performances by British bands continue to fill arenas around the world. Us Brits just love to entertain an audience!

Those five decades have been packed full of music. Shortly after The Beatles, The Rolling Stones strutted on stage, and they've never really left it - they're still touring and filling stadiums today. At the same time, Tom Jones was belting it out from Wales and Van Morrison was defining his own sound in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

Supergroups such as Queen and Pink Floyd followed, as did solo performers like Elton John and David Bowie - flamboyant, fabulous and more than a little outrageous. Costumes were elaborate, albums sometimes veered into the highly conceptual, but the best always knew how to put on a great show. Some of the London venues they played, including the Shepherds Bush Empire or the Hammersmith Apollo, are still going strong.

Then there's Glastonbury. The Somerset hills surrounding Michael Eavis' dairy farm have been filled with music since the first festival in 1970; performers have included David Bowie, Jay-Z, Bob Dylan, Robbie Williams, Kanye and a roll call of the musical great and good. The festival has never been in better shape.



*London's Roundhouse was famed as one of the capital's venues where the punk music movement exploded. Credit VisitBritain/Pawel Libera*

Nor has the Roundhouse in London. In 1976, when the punk music movement exploded in Britain, this was one of the main venues - a former train shed in Camden - that saw performances by the Clash and the Stranglers. Much more grimy back then, it's now one of London's key performance spaces that stays true to its musical roots, regularly hosting free iTunes concerts. And, to be honest,

it's a lot nicer now - with toilets that work properly and a decent bar to name just two pleasing improvements.

Out of punk came more mainstream bands, including The Police and Birmingham-based UB40 who roared up the charts, in part because they incorporated reggae elements in their music, reflecting a more multi-cultural Britain. Womad, the world music festival, started life in the Wiltshire countryside in west England, near Shepton Mallet, thanks to singer-songwriter Peter Gabriel. Over in central England's Birmingham, Ozzy Osbourne started Black Sabbath and gave birth to heavy metal. Later on, fellow Brummies (Birmingham-born) Duran Duran took a different approach. In pastel suits and just a touch of eye shadow, Simon Le Bon and his bandmates were part of the New Romantic movement, joining London-based bands such as Spandau Ballet and Culture Club.

If the New Romantics gravitated to London, the late 1980s were when Manchester came into its own. The Stone Roses, New Order and the Happy Mondays headed the line up at the Hacienda, a nightclub that also quickly became the headquarters of the Rave culture.

Oasis, the Manchester-based group formed by Noel Gallagher and his brother Liam came to define the 1990s, along with their on-off feud with London-based rivals Blur. These two groups were the backbone of Britpop, but it was also the decade of the Spice Girls - Sporty, Posh, Baby, Ginger and Scary - who took on and won over the world with their catchy pop hits. Take That were the boyband equivalent, filling stadiums then breaking up, before reuniting in the last few years.

As for the Noughties, anything went. Snow Patrol, hailing from Northern Ireland, has been hugely influential, while Scottish KT Tunstall brought a folk sensitivity that helped establish later comers, including Noah & the Whale and Mumford & Sons. With rap, at the other end of the music spectrum, the Welsh group Goldie Lookin' Chain put Newport, south Wales, on the map. Other key British rap artists include three Londoners: Chipmunk, Dizzee Rascal and Tinie Tempah. Amy Winehouse, a north London Camden girl through and through, mixed RnB, soul and jazz to create an utterly distinctive sound.

As the decade ended a new generation of singers have graduated, like Amy Winehouse did, from the Brit School, a state secondary school in the London suburb of Croydon. Adele, who won an Oscar for her song *Skyfall*, is one of the alumni, so is Leona Lewis, winner of the *X Factor*, as is popstar Jessie J. Meanwhile, in Scotland, Emeli Sandé gave up her studies as a doctor at the University of Glasgow, reached number one three times, and sung at both the opening and closing ceremonies of the Olympics.

Bringing us bang up to the last five years, Adele's success continued with her single *Someone Like You* becoming the third best-selling single of the decade in 2011 and British-born musician, DJ, singer, and record producer Mark Ronson returned to the top of the charts for seven weeks in 2014 with *Uptown Funk*. Ed Sheeran, George Ezra and Sam Smith all topped the charts in 2014, while 2015 has propelled Sam Smith further into stardom. Not only was he selected to sing the latest Bond film theme tune for *Spectre*, but his resulting single - *Writing's on the Wall* - has become the first-ever Bond theme to reach number one in Britain.

## You saw them here first

They might be selling-out multi-stadium tours today, but every guitar hero and pop diva had to start somewhere. These music venues have a reputation for showcasing underground artists and nurturing music newcomers and, as well as hosting some of the greatest acts around, they might just be the spots to catch the next big thing on their rise to stardom.

### London

England's capital is a melting pot of musical genres, with myriad venues catering for every taste.

The **Roundhouse** has stood the test of time, playing a pivotal role in a series of musical and cultural revolutions. From early appearances by **Pink Floyd** and **Jimi Hendrix** to the punk rock glory days of **The Stranglers**, **Sex Pistols** and **The Clash**, the Roundhouse has been a restless innovator. Today is no different, with an eclectic booking policy ensuring the calendar is shared between talented newcomers, big acts like **Maximo Park** and breakthrough performers such as **Jess Glynne**.

[www.roundhouse.org.uk](http://www.roundhouse.org.uk)



*Performers such as Femi Tomowo, appearing at Ronnie Scott's, are in good company - the venue was one of the first to host Ella Fitzgerald and Chet Baker*

Another enduring venue is **Ronnie Scott's**, the Soho-based jazz club. Since opening its doors in 1959, it has become a true driving force in London's world-class jazz scene, bringing the likes of **Ella Fitzgerald** and **Chet Baker** to our shores. A capacity of just 250 and a relaxed, 'speak-easy' atmosphere makes for intimate performances by contemporary jazz greats and hotly-tipped rising stars.

[www.ronniescotts.co.uk](http://www.ronniescotts.co.uk)

### Manchester

Manchester's acid house and indie hey-days may be little more than hazy memories for a generation of music lovers, but the city remains a crucible of new musical talent - and a top destination for some of the world's biggest acts.

The legendary **Hacienda** was the hottest ticket in town for a decade from the mid-1980s, with Madonna's first British appearance at the club propelling her on the road to global stardom. Over the years it hosted early appearances by **The Happy Mondays**, **The Smiths** **Oasis** and **Blur**.

The spirit of the Hacienda lives on at venues such as **The Ritz**, which hosts underground rock, electronica and club nights, hosting bands and artists to watch, such as **The Weeknd** and **Johnny Marr** ([www.theritzmanchester.com](http://www.theritzmanchester.com)). Or for a music experience bordering on the spiritual, head to **The Albert Hall** - a stunning converted chapel that welcomes a host of upcoming bands.

[www.alberthallmanchester.com](http://www.alberthallmanchester.com)

## Sheffield

Just under an hour by train from Manchester, Sheffield's award-winning **Leadmill** has been breaking some of the UK's biggest indie acts since 1980. It hosted early career gigs by the **Stereophonics**, **Pulp** and the **Arctic Monkeys**, and was described as 'right of passage' venue by **Franz Ferdinand**. These days the calendar is shared between unsigned hopefuls (for as little as £5), tribute bands and some bigger names from UK rock and indie.

[www.leadmill.co.uk](http://www.leadmill.co.uk)



*Arctic Monkeys played early career gigs at The Leadmill in Sheffield*

## Wales

**Clwb Ifor Bach** is the top dog in Cardiff's underground music scene, and rightly so. Originally a members' club for Welsh speakers, it now welcomes anyone with a taste for raw and inventive rock, indie and punk. The **Super Furry Animals** and a pre-megastardom **Coldplay** graced the Ifor Bach stage, and the club's after-show parties are the stuff of legend, with DJs tearing it up across three floors. Catch new acts in midweek performances for as little as £10.

[www.clwb.net](http://www.clwb.net)

## Scotland

**King Tut's Wah Wah Hut** opened in 1990 and quickly established a reputation for showcasing new talent, breaking one of Britain's biggest acts in the last 25 years: **Oasis** were signed on the spot by Creation boss Alan McGee when they played here in 1993. **Radiohead** and **The Verve** also had slots in the same week two-week period before launching into the music stratosphere!

Tut's hosts multi-band gigs almost every night of the week. New music nights nurture up-and-coming talent and cult international acts complete the eclectic calendar of events, with the focus firmly on rock, indie and guitar bands.

Just over an hour's train ride away in Edinburgh, **Bannermans'** tireless devotion to all things rock is evident in everything from the framed pictures of tattoo designs to the wall-mounted guitars. Folk sensation **Laura Marling** played here before she made it big. Besides six nights a week of live music from new and established acts, Bannermans boasts a bar menu with more than 100 malt whiskys.

[www.bannermanslive.co.uk](http://www.bannermanslive.co.uk)

## Belfast

Long before **Snow Patrol's** number one albums and sell-out stadium tours, Belfast's biggest musical export in recent years could be found honing their talent at the **Duke of York** pub, hidden away down a cobbled lane, one of the city's oldest streets. The pub promises a traditional, big-hearted Belfast welcome of good times, Guinness and a massive selection of Irish whiskey. With traditional, acoustic and rock artists performing there Thursdays to Sundays, you might just discover the next Snow Patrol.

[www.dukeofyorkbelfast.com](http://www.dukeofyorkbelfast.com)

For a more 21st century experience in a sprawling entertainment complex featuring a real ale bar and two live music venues, head to Belfast's **The Limelight**, with regular performances from big names and breaking acts alike.

[www.limelightbelfast.com](http://www.limelightbelfast.com)

## Lyrical Britain: let the music be your guide

Over the decades Britain's countryside, eclectic culture and iconic cityscapes have sparked the creativity of composers and musicians from all over the world - from Lennon and McCartney to Simon and Garfunkel.

Here we take you on a Britain-wide tour of the places and spaces that feature in the titles or lyrics of 16 famous songs, and what to do when you're there.

### London

No song list about Britain would be complete without a mention of *London Calling* by The Clash of course, but we'll take a closer look at some of the specific areas of the capital immortalised in four hit songs from the last few decades.

#### ***Waterloo Sunset* by The Kinks - central London**

The lyrics of this famous song describe two lovers passing over a bridge, reflecting on the Thames and Waterloo Station. Recreate your own Waterloo Sunset and get a great view of the Thames as the sun goes down over London Town, either from up high at The Shard or London Eye, over dinner at The Oxo Tower Restaurant, or beside the river anywhere from Greenwich to the South Bank.



*The view from Waterloo Bridge at sunset - just like in the song! Credit David Angel*

[www.oxotower.com](http://www.oxotower.com), [www.viewfromtheshard.com](http://www.viewfromtheshard.com)

#### ***Electric Avenue* by Eddy Grant - Brixton, south-west London**

This colourful, multicultural outdoor market street is full of stalls and shops selling food, clothes and household goods. Adjacent are Brixton Village and Market Row - the places to go for a huge array of independent cafés and restaurants dishing up flavours from all around the world, at great prices.

If you're feeling active, head to nearby Brockwell Park, complete with tennis courts, BMX track, a miniature railway and Brockwell Lido - an Olympic size 50-metre outdoor pool open during the summer months.

[www.fusion-lifestyle.com/centres/Brockwell\\_Lido](http://www.fusion-lifestyle.com/centres/Brockwell_Lido)

[www.brixtonmarket.net/brixton-village](http://www.brixtonmarket.net/brixton-village)

### ***West End Girls* by The Pet Shop Boys - Soho, central London**

This 1980s smash hit is an ode to London nightlife, in particular the ever-buzzing area of Soho, with its eclectic restaurants, exuberant nightlife, vibrant LGBT scene and quirky shops.

A true West End experience should always include a theatre show. Why not head to *Kinky Boots* at The Adelphi Theatre on The Strand for a fabulous evening of glamour, laughs, sequins and impressive choreography? The show is all set to an original soundtrack by Cyndi Lauper.

[www.kinkyboots.com](http://www.kinkyboots.com)

### ***Up the Junction* by The Squeeze - Clapham, south-west London**

*"I never thought it would happen / With me and the girl from Clapham"*

Take a morning stroll around leafy Clapham Common and build up your appetite for a traditional British roast lunch at pub and hotel The Windmill on the Common, followed by a wander around pretty Clapham Old Town, home to a selection of boutiques, Nardulli's Italian gelateria and traditional butcher M.Moen & Sons Ltd.

Clapham Common is also home to SW4 - a hugely popular annual music festival held during the August Bank Holiday weekend, featuring some of the world's best dance, house, electro and drum 'n' bass artists. The line-up for 2015 included Fat Boy Slim, Faithless and Eric Prydz, so expect similar big names in 2016.

[www.windmillclapham.co.uk](http://www.windmillclapham.co.uk), [www.moen.co.uk](http://www.moen.co.uk), [www.nardulli.co.uk](http://www.nardulli.co.uk), [www.southwestfour.com](http://www.southwestfour.com)

## **Rest of England**

### ***Scarborough Fair* by Simon and Garfunkel - Yorkshire**

During the late Middle Ages the seaside town of Scarborough in Yorkshire hosted the internationally famous 45-day Scarborough Fayre. While the original fair no longer exists, Scarborough is the birthplace of traditional English seaside holidays. Live the legacy and spend a day on the beach, or even try your hand at catching some waves! At Cayton Bay, four miles south of the town, you'll find Scarborough Surf School offering full-day lessons for £45 per person and surfboard hire for £18 per day.

[www.scarboroughsurfschool.co.uk](http://www.scarboroughsurfschool.co.uk)

### ***Brighton Rock* by Queen - Brighton, south-east England**

With its vibrant LGBT scene, Brighton is the perfect place to pay homage to Queen's frontman Freddie Mercury. The title of this song is something of a pun: Brighton rock is a cylindrical sugar candy traditional to this seaside resort, just under an hour on the train from London. Head to Brighton Pier to try some Brighton rock for yourself, or sit on the beach with some fish and



*Listen to Brighton Rock while eating Brighton rock! Credit VisitBritain/Jasmine Teer*

chips or fresh crayfish.

[www.visitbrighton.com](http://www.visitbrighton.com)



*A walk along the clifftops will have you singing the Vera Lynn classic! Credit Jason Hawkes*

### ***The White Cliffs of Dover* - popular World War II song sung by Vera Lynn**

Whether you marvel at the spectacular view as you arrive by ferry from France or take a day trip from elsewhere in England, it'll become instantly clear why Vera Lynn chose to sing about this remarkable natural wonder. Take the 40-minute walk along the cliffs to South Foreland Lighthouse - on a clear day the views to France are spectacular - and reward your exertions with some delicious scones at the lighthouse tea rooms.

[www.nationaltrust.org.uk/south-foreland-lighthouse](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/south-foreland-lighthouse)

### ***I Predict A Riot* by Kaiser Chiefs - Leeds, Yorkshire**

*'It would never have happened to Smeaton, an old Leodiensian!'*

One of the Kaiser Chief's best-known songs is about a night out in their native Leeds, north England. This is a city that likes to party, with a huge variety of nightlife on offer. Head to the bars on Call Lane for a great party vibe and if you want to dance until dawn, you can't go wrong with Mission or Mint Club.

[www.clubmission.com](http://www.clubmission.com)



*An iconic part of Liverpool's music heritage - Strawberry Field. Credit VisitEngland/Mark McNulty*

### ***Strawberry Fields Forever* by The Beatles - Liverpool, north-west England**

Take a selfie in front of the famous red painted gates of Strawberry Field, the Salvation Army children's home near where John Lennon grew up in Liverpool that inspired this hit song.

A great place to start your musical pilgrimage of Liverpool is at The Beatles Story, an award-winning museum that takes you on a journey through the lives, times, culture and music of the Fab Four.

[www.beatlesstory.com](http://www.beatlesstory.com)

## **Scotland**

### ***Mull of Kintyre* by Wings and Paul McCartney - Kintyre Peninsula, south-west Scotland**

Take a boat trip around this beautiful peninsula immortalised in Paul McCartney's song to spot local wildlife, such as eagles, puffins and seals. Sampling the world-renowned local food is a must, especially the locally caught seafood and Campbeltown cheeses.

[www.mull-of-kintyre.co.uk](http://www.mull-of-kintyre.co.uk)

### ***The Skye Boat Song* - The Isle of Skye, north-west coast of Scotland**

Listen to this legendary Scottish folk song as you take your own boat trip from Elgol to Loch Coruisk in the heart of the rugged Cuillin Mountains for a bracing hike. You may even spot some whales and dolphins along the way!

[www.skye.co.uk/boat-trips-tours.php](http://www.skye.co.uk/boat-trips-tours.php)



*The simply stunning scenery of Skye inspired the folk tune *The Skye Boat Song*. Credit Adam Burton*

## **Wales**

### ***Cardiff Afterlife* by Manic Street Preachers - Cardiff, south Wales**

Follow in the footsteps of Welsh music heroes Manic Street Preachers and visit medieval Cardiff Castle, where the band played an epic homecoming show as the final night of their Holy Bible anniversary tour in June earlier this year.

[www.cardiffcastle.com](http://www.cardiffcastle.com)



*Harlech Beach and views to the castle inspired the traditional song *Men of Harlech**

### **Men of Harlech - Harlech, north Wales**

Take a step back in time as you stroll along the golden sands of Harlech Beach and listen to this traditional song that describes the siege of Harlech Castle in the 1400s. The castle now lies on a cliff face within the Snowdonia National Park in north Wales and is the majestic backdrop to one of Wales' premier golf courses at the Royal Saint David's Golf Club.

[www.visitsnowdonia.info/harlech\\_beach](http://www.visitsnowdonia.info/harlech_beach),  
[www.royalstdavids.co.uk](http://www.royalstdavids.co.uk)

## **Northern Ireland**

### ***Star of the County Down* by Van Morrison and The Chieftains - County Down**

Murlough National Nature Reserve is an extraordinarily beautiful dune landscape owned by the National Trust, perfect for walking and bird watching. There is a network of paths and boardwalks through the dunes, woodland and heath, and access to one of the finest beaches in County Down.

[www.nationaltrust.org.uk/murlough](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/murlough)

### **'Londonderry Air' Danny Boy - Traditional**

This call to return to Ireland is also known as *Danny Boy* and is a great track to listen to on the way to one of the region's premier sites of mythological and geological interest, the Giant's Causeway.

[www.nationaltrust.org.uk/giants-causeway](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/giants-causeway)

## Step into British album covers

Britain's countryside, towns and cities have long provided the inspiration for the destination's best-known musicians, in particular when it comes to designing their iconic album covers. Visiting Britain means you can step right into its rock and pop heritage by visiting the attractions that helped shape some of the country's most memorable album designs.

### The Proclaimers - Let's Hear It For the Dogs (2015)

#### Edinburgh Castle

Twins Craig and Charlie Red, aka The Proclaimers, came to global attention in the 1980s through their two biggest hits to date, *Letter to America* and *I'm Gonna Be (500 Miles)*. Born in Leith, near Edinburgh in Scotland, they have always been passionate about their local area and proudly include Edinburgh Castle on the cover of this 2015 album release. Edinburgh Castle is a historic fortress that was first the home of Scottish royalty before becoming a military barracks, and is one of the Scottish capital's architectural highlights.



*Fans of The Proclaimers can step into one of their album covers with a visit to Edinburgh Castle. Credit Murdo Macleod*

[www.edinburghcastle.gov.uk](http://www.edinburghcastle.gov.uk)

*How to get there? The castle is accessible by foot from Waverley Station, Edinburgh's main railway station. The nearest airport is BAA Edinburgh.*

### The Beatles - Abbey Road (1969)

#### Abbey Road, London

A pedestrian crossing on an average London road has become one of Britain's unlikeliest tourist attractions thanks to this album cover, featuring the Fab Four walking across the zebra crossing just outside the Abbey Road studios where they recorded most of their albums. Thousands of visitors flock to it each year to take their very own 'crossing the road like the Beatles' photo.

[www.abbeyroad.com/crossing](http://www.abbeyroad.com/crossing)

While in London Beatles fans can also visit the British Library, which has a display of letters and lyrics from the band.

[www.bl.uk](http://www.bl.uk)

*How do I get there? The nearest London Underground station to the crossing is St John's Wood. The British Library is near St Pancras International and Kings Cross train and London Underground stations.*

### The Clash - The Clash (1977)

#### Camden Market, London

While the Beatles made a road crossing famous, one of Britain's most famous punk acts The Clash made a stairwell a visitor attraction. Located next to their rehearsal space in

1977 in north London's Camden Lock, the stairwell was the scene of photographer Kate Simon's picture of the band posing with attitude for the cover of their self-titled debut album. The stairwell is still there for you to recreate their pose and now forms part of Stables market, part of the bustling Camden Market, one of the best shopping experiences for fashionistas, food lovers and music fans alike.

[www.camdenlock.net/stables](http://www.camdenlock.net/stables)

*How do I get there? Camden Market's nearest London Underground stations are Camden Town and Chalk Farm, both on the Northern Line and around ten minutes from central London*



*Northern Ireland's fantastical rocky landscape at Giant's Causeway gave inspiration to one of Led Zeppelin's classic albums*

### **Led Zeppelin - Houses of the Holy (1973)**

#### **Giant's Causeway, Northern Ireland**

This fifth album from this classic rock group was musically their most ambitious to date. Inspired by the writing of science fiction writer Arthur C Clarke the album cover was no less ambitious, showing primitive children crawling up a fantastical rocky landscape. While it may look like an alien planet the location is in fact the natural wonder that is the Giant's Causeway in Northern Ireland. Located on the spectacular County Antrim coast, it is a breathtaking World Heritage site, with its basalt rock columns interlocking to create an enormous

natural staircase from cliff top to sea.

[www.nationaltrust.org.uk/giants-causeway](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/giants-causeway)

*How to get there? There are regular bus services from the nearest town Coleraine, which can be reached by train from Belfast or Londonderry. By road it is around an hour's drive from Belfast airport.*

### **Pink Floyd - The Division Bell (1994)**

#### **Ely Cathedral, Cambridgeshire, east England**

This cover of the band's 14th album saw their long-time artistic collaborator Storm Thorgerson erect two large metal heads in a field near Ely, Cambridgeshire, in east England. Between them in the distance lies Ely Cathedral, a familiar site to the band's original members David Gilmour, Roger Waters and Syd Barrett, who grew up 25 miles away in Cambridge. The cathedral dates back to 1083 and its unusual octagonal tower dominates the flat landscape.

[www.elycathedral.org](http://www.elycathedral.org)

*How to get there? From London Ely is 90 minutes away by road and around an hour away by train.*

## Manic Street Preachers - National Treasures (2011)

### Big Pit National Coal Museum, south Wales

It seems fitting that one of Wales's biggest musical exports, Manic Street Preachers, decided to pay tribute to their country's industrial past by featuring the Big Pit National Coal Museum on the cover of this 2011 collection of their singles. A working mine from 1860 to 1980, the south Wales site was opened to the public in 1983 and offers a rare chance to take an underground tour to experience what life was like for Welsh miners.

[www.museumwales.ac.uk/bigpit](http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/bigpit)

*How to get there: The nearest train station, Big Pit Halt, is on the heritage steam railway Pontypool and Blaenavon line. By road it is a three-hour drive from London.*



*For a taste of Wales' heritage, visit the Big Pit National Coal Museum, immortalised on the Manic Street Preachers album cover 'National Treasures'*

## Keane - Strangeland (2012)

### Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex

Between 1995 and their hiatus in 2013 Keane became one of Britain's biggest rock and pop acts around the world. Despite this global popularity they never strayed too far from their home in East Sussex, in south-east England. Among the band's regular haunts was Bexhill-on-Sea, which features on the cover of their final album *Strangeland*.

On this cover a beachfront scene is captured early one morning and provides a striking image of one of the Sussex coast's seaside gems, which is also home to the Art Deco concert and exhibition venue the De La Warr Pavilion.

[www.dlwp.com](http://www.dlwp.com)

*How to get there? Bexhill-on-Sea is 60 miles from London by road and around two hours by train.*

## The Verve - A Storm in Heaven (1993)

### Thor's Cave, Staffordshire

Britpop act The Verve's debut album, released under their original name of Verve, was a dramatic slice of rock both musically and literally on the album cover, which features Thor's Cave, a stunning natural cavern in the Staffordshire Peak District, situated south of Manchester. As well as the interior that features on *A Storm in Heaven*, this natural wonder also looks dramatic from afar as it is located within a giant fang-like rock emerging from the lush green landscape.

*How to get there? Wetton, the nearest village, is a short bus journey from Derby, which is 90 minutes by train from London.*

## Immersive music experiences

Watching a band or orchestra on a stage is a great experience - but how about monitoring their pulses, too? Sampling whisky in between shows? Or attending a concert in someone's living room? Britain presents immersive music experiences that mean being in the audience has never been so intriguing.

Audience participation is a key ingredient at some of the uproarious music festivals held around Scotland. Take the **Arran Malt & Music Festival**, held in June on the Isle of Arran, a pretty island forty miles south west of Glasgow. It sees the Isle of Arran Distillery hosting Gaelic folk-music sessions and ceilidh (line dancing) sessions within its walls, alongside whisky-tasting masterclasses to loosen up those limbs! Up in the far-flung Orkney Islands - 80 minutes' flight from Edinburgh or Glasgow - a key component of May's Orkney Folk Festival are Pub Sessions. Running throughout the weekend, these see bands occupy cosy inns, with locals gathered closely around, singing along and suggesting tunes.



*Singalong with the musical locals at the Orkney Folk Festival. Credit Sean Purser*

[www.arranwhisky.com](http://www.arranwhisky.com), [www.orkneyfolkfestival.com](http://www.orkneyfolkfestival.com)

If your music tastes veer more towards classical, **Aurora Orchestra** specialises in interactive experiences. In October, a family-focused **Britten Weekend** takes place at Aldeburgh music campus on the picturesque Suffolk coast, a two-hour train-ride from London. Devoted to the English composer Benjamin Britten, a House of Secret Sounds will enable children to waltz, meet a mischievous bathtub and play odd-looking instruments. On 16 January 2016 guests will be invited to move around as they perform Mozart piano pieces at The Lock-In, a speakeasy-style bar in London's Kings Place. And at London's Southbank Centre, The Musical Memory Palace (7 February 2016) sees specialist Ed Cooke teach attendees how to remember entire sections of Mozart's 40th symphony, with the help from Aurora musicians. It's a whole new way of engaging with music.

[www.auroraorchestra.com](http://www.auroraorchestra.com)

The summertime **Bristol Proms** also specialise in immersive shows. In 2015, for instance, audience members could feel close to the string-playing Sacconi Quartet thanks to handheld devices that revealed the musicians' heartbeats. And, ahead of cellist Peter Gregson and choreographer Jane Gibson's performance, a digital installation in Bristol Old Vic's foyer invited the public to interact with a silhouette of a dancer, herself moving to a recording of a Bach cello suite. Each interaction was filmed and then used to inspire Gibson's eventual display. Initial dates and details for 2016's Bristol Proms should be unveiled in Spring 2016. Bristol is under two hours' train journey from London.

[www.bristolproms.com](http://www.bristolproms.com)



*Manchester's cool Gorilla Bar will welcome Camerata's UpClose series in early 2016*

Head up to the north west of England where you'll find that the **Manchester Camerata** strives to redefine what orchestras can do. Its forthcoming shows include December's 'Festive Happening' at the city's atmospheric Albert Hall, a beautiful and recently restored chapel with stained-glass windows and soaring acoustics. While

performing traditional and classical Christmas carols, musicians will occupy all corners of the ancient room, enveloping the venue in sound. On 23 February 2016, the Camerata's UpClose series - involving experimental gigs at informal venues - sees trumpet, jazz and DJ sounds collide at Manchester's hip Gorilla Bar, and an entirely new piece of music be created with the audience's help. Book quickly as only a certain number of tickets are available.

[www.manchestercamerata.co.uk](http://www.manchestercamerata.co.uk)

If you want a musical experience somewhere even more avant garde than green open spaces then consider **Sofar Sounds**. Now found in 180 cities worldwide, Sofar Sounds began in Britain in 2009 when its founders invited three musicians to perform inside their tiny flat. Today the brand continues to stage concerts in intimate, memorable spots: private homes and reconstituted public spaces. Venues are only revealed the day before an event to ensure seclusion. Many British cities are now involved, but Leeds and Sheffield, in northern England, central England's Birmingham and the south-coast seaside town of Brighton are particular hotspots.



*Secret musical location? Check. Intimate venue? Check. Great music? Check out Sofar Sounds! Credit Hayley Connaughton*

[www.sofarsounds.com](http://www.sofarsounds.com)

Travel to Northern Ireland to discover **Sonorities**, an annual April festival spanning digital music, sound art, video and installation pieces. Held at Queen's University's Sonic Arts Research Centre, plus various venues around the city of Belfast - and almost exclusively free - it specialises in imaginative, contemporary-minded stagings of true musical virtuosity. In recent years, Denis Smalley's work, marking the 250th anniversary of Rameau's death, was performed via 40 loudspeakers in the Centre's Sonic Lab, while composer Trevor Wishart's sound-surround pieces together surreal songs from excerpts of distinct 'Geordie'-accented speech he recorded while living in Newcastle (north-east England). 2016's details will be released in spring. [www.sonorities.org.uk](http://www.sonorities.org.uk)

Visitors can immerse themselves in a variety of venues; typifying the quirky output of experimental chamber-music group **Ensemble Perpetuo**, The Secret Garden is a pop-up concert being held in summer 2016 inside a wildlife sanctuary. As they walk around the green space, visitors will happen upon surprise performances in different corners, each inspired by the landscape or nature. It will premier in London (dates to be confirmed) before touring the rest of Britain.



*Summer 2016 will see experimental chamber-music group Ensemble Perpetuo pop up playing music in a wildlife sanctuary*

<http://ensembleperpetuo.com>

Have you ever attended a 'karaoke' show? If not, it should be on your list of music must-dos! They involve large ukelele bands covering famous tracks from the 1960s to today - everything from Frank Sinatra to will.i.am via Abba, Bon Jovi and Boyzone - and

encouraging boisterous audiences to sing along, often on stage, always loudly. One of South Wales' premier troupes are **The Ukoholix**: they appear regularly at festivals and pubs like the raucous' Kinsale Irish Tavern in beautiful Mumbles, a town just west of Swansea, which is 55 minutes by train from Cardiff and two hours from London Paddington.

[www.theukoholix.com](http://www.theukoholix.com)

## Anniversaries: British Stars Celebrate Musical Milestones

British pop royalty The Spice Girls celebrate their 20th anniversary in 2016, while girl groups Bananarama and Little Mix also face significant anniversaries. As do British music legends Tom Jones, Van Morrison, The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Donovan, The Kinks, Lulu, The Who and Englebert Humperdinck. And you can celebrate their anniversaries by visiting important locations to the bands in Britain!



*The Spice Girls returned to the site of their pop video for Wannabe, the St Pancras Renaissance hotel, when the West End Musical Viva Forever was launched*

2016 marks 20 years since British girl group **The Spice Girls** spiced things up in the music world with debut single *Wannabe*. This dance-pop anthem of female empowerment went to Number One in 31 countries, topped the UK Singles Chart for seven weeks, spent four weeks at the top of the U.S. Billboard Hot 100, and altogether sold more than seven million copies worldwide. Its iconic video was a one-take shot of Sporty, Scary, Baby, Posh and Ginger performing in a grand but dilapidated old hotel. Now restored to its former glory and neo-gothic grandeur, the hotel reopened in 2011 as **St Pancras Renaissance London**. Operated by Marriott, this luxury five-star hotel is adjacent to St Pancras International station's Eurostar terminal.

[www.marriott.co.uk/hotels/travel/lonpr-st-pancras-renaissance-london-hotel](http://www.marriott.co.uk/hotels/travel/lonpr-st-pancras-renaissance-london-hotel)

The girls went on to have ten massive hit singles, becoming global pop icons before they split in 2000.

They most recently reformed in 2012 for a one-off performance at the London Olympics Closing Ceremony. Now a successful and respected fashion designer, Victoria Beckham's (aka Posh Spice) flagship boutique on Dover Street in London's posh Mayfair district is a highlight for fans searching for some high-end shopping therapy.

[www.victoriabeckham.com](http://www.victoriabeckham.com)

The Spice Girls aren't the only British girl band with a milestone anniversary in 2016. It also marks the **30th anniversary of Venus** by 1980s trio **Bananarama**. Released in 1986, it was their biggest worldwide hit, reaching Number One in numerous countries including the US, Canada, Australia and South Africa.

Childhood friends from Bristol in south-west England, founding members Sarah and Keren befriended journalism student Siobhan after moving to London. While living above the old

rehearsal studio of punk band the Sex Pistols at No. 6 Denmark Street in central London, ex-Pistol Paul Cook suggested the three girls form a group - and Bananarama was born. Famous as Britain's 'Tin Pan Alley', parts of **Denmark Street** are a protected conservation area, with English Heritage blue plaques identifying buildings of significant musical heritage. Elton John wrote his first hit single *Your Song* here, and other artists associated with Denmark Street include The Rolling Stones and David Bowie. No. 6 Denmark Street is currently home to vintage guitar specialists **No.Tom Guitars**.

[www.notomguitars.com](http://www.notomguitars.com)

2016 is also the fifth anniversary of girl group **Little Mix**, who won the British version of TV talent show *The X Factor*. Victors in 2011, Perrie, Jade, Jesy and Leigh-Anne were the first group to win the competition (boy band One Direction finished third in 2010). Their debut album *DNA* reached Number Four on the US Billboard 200, making it the highest US album chart debut by a British girl group, breaking a record previously held by the Spice Girls. An arena tour to promote their third album *Get Weird* takes place in March 2016, with dates including London O2 Arena, Belfast Odyssey Arena, SSE Hydro Glasgow Arena, plus arenas in Cardiff, Brighton, Newcastle, Liverpool, Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds.

[www.little-mix.com/gb/tour](http://www.little-mix.com/gb/tour)

British girl groups aren't alone in celebrating significant anniversaries. 2016 marks 50 years since Welsh singer and veteran sex bomb **Tom Jones** was awarded Best New Artist for 1966 at the Eighth Annual Grammy Awards. Later that year he scored a Number One hit in Britain, Ireland, Norway and Australia (and Number 11 in the US Billboard charts) with his iconic version of *Green, Green Grass of Home*. The son of a coal miner, Tom Jones grew up in the village of Treforest, half an hour by train from Cardiff in south Wales. Visitors to this region can experience for themselves the lush green hills of the Rhondda Valley, including a visit to award-winning **Rhondda Heritage Park**, where admission includes a guided tour of old coal mine tunnels. The Rhondda Valley region is also synonymous with Male Voice Choirs, whose unmistakable vocals have put this part of Britain onto the music map. Formed in Treorchy in 1883, the **Treorchy Male Choir** is one of the most famous.

[www.tourism.rctcbc.gov.uk](http://www.tourism.rctcbc.gov.uk) [www.treorchymalechoir.com](http://www.treorchymalechoir.com)

Northern Irish singer, songwriter and musician **Van Morrison** celebrates his 50th anniversary in 2017. Born in Belfast, Northern Ireland, in 1945, he enjoyed moderate success in the mid-1960s with the band Them. It was, however, his self-penned debut solo single *Brown Eyed Girl*, released in 1967, that brought Van Morrison international fame and acclaim. Considered one of the best rock and roll songs of all time, it's since been recorded and performed by numerous artists including Adele, Bruce Springsteen, U2 and Bob Dylan, while former US president Bill Clinton included it as one of ten favourite tracks on a signed iPod he donated to a charity auction for victims of Hurricane Katrina. Van Morrison was presented with the honorary title Freedom of Belfast in 2013. A **self-guided 'Van Morrison Trail' of East Belfast** has also been established with his support, recognising that many of Van Morrison's songs pay homage to locations from his childhood in Belfast, including *On Hyndford Street*, *Orangefield* and *Cyprus Avenue*. In June 2015 he received a knighthood in the Queen's Birthday Honours list, granted for 'services to the music industry and to tourism in Northern Ireland'.

[www.communitygreenway.co.uk/vanmorrisontrail](http://www.communitygreenway.co.uk/vanmorrisontrail)



*Take a trip down musical memory lane at Liverpool's The Beatles Story*

Unforgettable British songs celebrating their 50th anniversaries in 2016 include *We Can Work It Out*, *Day Tripper*, *Nowhere Man*, *Paperback Writer*, *Yellow Submarine* and *Eleanor Rigby* - all massive worldwide hits for **The Beatles** in 1966. In their hometown of Liverpool in north-west England (two hours 20 minutes by train from London by train), award-winning museum **The Beatles Story** is a fascinating journey through their lives and music.

[www.beatlesstory.com](http://www.beatlesstory.com)

For an overview of these and other British artists, visit the **British Music Experience**. After a five-year run at The O2 in London, this museum of popular music moves to Liverpool in from Easter 2016.

[www.britishmusicexperience.com](http://www.britishmusicexperience.com)

## Pop Pilgrimage: where the big stars go out to play

You listen to their music, love their style and dance like nobody's watching at their gigs! Now immerse yourself in the destinations that played an integral part in your music heroes' lives. Visit the places that were likely to have influenced them or places they love - and upgrade your status to 'superfan'.

### Sam Smith

Years before headlining massive British music events such as Glastonbury and V Festival, multi Grammy award-winner Sam Smith entertained the crowds at **Stortford Music Festival**. Held annually in May, this small but significant festival features well-known headline acts like Bob Geldof's band The Boomtown Rats and alternative rockers Toploader, plus local and unsigned artists. It's held in Bishop's Stortford in Hertfordshire (50 minutes by train from London), in the grounds of St Mary's Catholic School. Sam Smith played on the festival's main stage in 2010 and, as a teenager he was also involved locally



*Audley End House is a visitor attraction close to Saffron Walden, a town where Sam Smith once sang with the Amateur Operatic Society*

with Bishop's Stortford Musical Theatre Company and Saffron Walden Amateur Operatic Society. Visitor attractions hereabouts include **Audley End House**. This stunning Jacobean country house near Saffron Walden (around 90 minutes' drive north of London) often hosts summer picnic concerts in its grounds, featuring musicians such as Paul Weller, Jools Holland, and opera singer Katherine Jenkins.

[www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/audley-end-house-and-gardens](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/audley-end-house-and-gardens)

[www.stortfordmusicfestival.org.uk](http://www.stortfordmusicfestival.org.uk)

His debut album *In The Lonely Hour* has broken a record previously held by Emili Sandé (and prior to that, by The Beatles) for spending more than 66 consecutive weeks in the

Official UK Albums chart's Top Ten. It also entered the US charts at Number Two - the highest-ever entry for a debut by a British singer. And with *Writing's on the Wall*, his theme song for the James Bond film *Spectre*, he's the first British male chosen to sing a Bond theme since 1965.

## George Ezra

His breakthrough single in December 2013 may have been called *Budapest*, but his music style influenced by American folk and blues artists such as Bob Dylan and Woody Guthrie - but this talented singer and songwriter in fact hails from **Hertfordshire** in south-east England.

George Ezra studied music at Hertford Regional College, performing at the official opening of the college's new Broxbourne Campus in May 2011. With his then-band Anything In Mind, he was also one of several local and unsigned acts to perform on the main stage of the **Stortford Music Festival** in 2010 - as was a young Sam Smith (see above).

[www.stortfordmusicfestival.org.uk](http://www.stortfordmusicfestival.org.uk)

In 2011 George went to study at Bristol's British and Irish Modern Music Institute, a group of six independent colleges (others in cities including London, Manchester and Brighton) that specialise in modern music education. He's since described **Bristol** as a place that feels like home. This historic city in south-west England (a 90-minute train journey from London) is known for its thriving underground arts and music scene. Home to graffiti artists including Banksy, Bristol is also associated with the emergence of music genres including drum & bass, trip hop and acid jazz during the 1990s, and local bands such as Massive Attack, Portishead and Tricky. Legendary live music venues include **The Fleece**, **The Louisiana**, **The Old Duke**, **Mr Wolf's** and graffiti-emblazoned **Lakota**.



*George Ezra studied in Bristol, home to a thriving underground arts and music scene*

[www.visitbristol.co.uk](http://www.visitbristol.co.uk)

These and similar venues hold regular open mic nights - and it was here that George Ezra would come to try out new material in front of a live audience. A local radio station spotted him at one such night, ultimately leading to him playing the BBC Introducing Stage at world-famous **Glastonbury Festival** in June 2013.

[www.glastonburyfestivals.co.uk](http://www.glastonburyfestivals.co.uk)

This has led to four Brit Award nominations in 2015, as well as him being named "Artist To Watch" at the MTV Music Awards and YouTube Music Awards - so keep an eye on George Ezra.

## Ellie Goulding

British singer-songwriter Ellie Goulding is the pop sensation that got the heir to the British throne up on to the dance floor in 2011, when she was invited to play at the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge's wedding reception. Ellie serenaded the newlyweds at **Buckingham Palace** and, while fans of Goulding might not get such privileged access to the royal home,

they can explore the stunning State Rooms of the palace on an exclusive guided tour.

[www.royalcollection.org.uk/visit/the-state-rooms-buckingham-palace](http://www.royalcollection.org.uk/visit/the-state-rooms-buckingham-palace)

Released in 2015, her third studio album *Delirium* includes the sweeping power ballad and worldwide Number One hit *Love Me Like You Do*, as featured on the soundtrack to the film *Fifty Shades of Grey*. Ellie has herself made dramatic, albeit more romantic gestures: in a magazine interview she said she once hired London's **Natural History Museum** at midnight, just for her and boyfriend Dougie Poynter of British band McBusted. Visitors may not be able to secure such exclusive after-hours access, but as one of London's most impressive museums it remains a must-see attraction.

[www.nhm.ac.uk](http://www.nhm.ac.uk)

Ellie, a vegetarian, has cited in a magazine interview that she enjoys vegetarian restaurant **Mildreds**, in Soho, for its internationally inspired food. When it comes to partying, Ellie heads to hip east London, highlighting the Library Bar at **Shoreditch House** as a hotspot.



*The pretty town of Malvern, Herefordshire, is the perfect antidote to busy city life. Credit VisitBritain/Howard Sayer*

[www.wholefoodsmarket.com](http://www.wholefoodsmarket.com) [www.mildreds.co.uk](http://www.mildreds.co.uk)  
[www.shoreditchhouse.com](http://www.shoreditchhouse.com)

But as Ellie hails from Herefordshire in west England (around a three-hour drive from London), her fans can take a break from the hustle and bustle of city life and head to her home county for a little R&R. From the genteel cathedral city of **Hereford** to a trek on the cider route, or visiting picturesque towns like **Malvern**, castles and stately homes - not to mention a wide spectrum of

outdoor pursuits against a picturesque natural backdrop - this is a great place to unwind.

[www.visitherefordshire.co.uk](http://www.visitherefordshire.co.uk)

## Calvin Harris

Scottish DJ, record producer, remixer and singer-songwriter Calvin Harris has collaborated with many famous recording artists including Kylie Minogue, Ne-Yo and Rihanna (on global hit and US number one single *We Found Love*). He also became the face of Giorgio Armani's men's underwear, eyewear and watch lines from Spring/Summer 2015.



*Hop on a City Cruise for a sightseeing trip down the River Thames*

His personal life is equally star-studded. Calvin Harris began dating Taylor Swift in 2015, having previously dated British singer Rita Ora. The superstar couple have been spotted enjoying a romantic cruise on London's River Thames, on private charter **Thames Limo** - a luxury boat with a Union Jack emblazoned hull. **City Cruises** is a great alternative for those to cruise the Thames if they don't quite have a celebrity budget.

[www.thameslimo.co.uk](http://www.thameslimo.co.uk) [www.citycruises.com](http://www.citycruises.com)

Calvin Harris was raised in **Dumfries**, south-west Scotland, a destination which has plenty to offer visitors. Around a 90-minute drive south of Glasgow, it's the hometown of renowned poet Robert Burns. This historic Scottish town has associations with many other well-known people including musician Ray Wilson of Genesis and Stiltskin fame, *Peter Pan* author James Matthew Barrie, and Henry Duncan, founder of the world's first commercial savings bank.

[www.visitscotland.com/destinations-maps/dumfries-galloway](http://www.visitscotland.com/destinations-maps/dumfries-galloway)

## Emeli Sandé

British recording artist and songwriter Emeli Sandé skyrocketed to success when her debut album *Our Version Of Events* spent seven weeks at number one in Britain and Ireland, becoming the UK's best selling album of 2012. Spawning three number one singles, the album eventually spent 66 weeks in the Official UK Albums Top Ten - breaking a longstanding record set by the Beatles that had stood for almost 50 years. To top it off, she performed for an audience of billions in both the Opening and Closing ceremonies of the 2012 London Olympics and success continued when the following year she won two Brit Awards: Best British Female Artist and British Album of the Year.

Born in Sunderland in north-east England, she moved to Alford in Aberdeenshire in rural north-east Scotland when she was a young child. Three hours north of Edinburgh by car, this picturesque region is home to the renowned Aberdeen Angus breed of cattle. Enjoy award-winning Scottish cuisine, including sublime Aberdeen Angus sirloin, at nearby **Kildrummy Inn**. Recommended by the *Michelin Guide 2016*, this country inn has four guestrooms.

[www.kildrummyinn.co.uk](http://www.kildrummyinn.co.uk)

Emeli Sandé went to study medicine at the **University of Glasgow**. The fourth-oldest university in the English-speaking world, its architecture is quite breathtaking. Visitors may join a scheduled tour of the historic campus, or view anything from dinosaur bones to the work of architect and designer Charles Rennie Mackintosh at the university's **Hunterian Museum and Art Gallery**, Scotland's oldest public museum.



*Glasgow University: a fine example of Glasgow's beautiful architecture.  
Credit VisitBritain/Britain on View*

[www.gla.ac.uk/about/visit/attractions](http://www.gla.ac.uk/about/visit/attractions)

With a degree in neuroscience as a back-up, she came to London, living on Brick Lane in London's hip and multi-cultural East End. Achieving phenomenal success in 2012, she moved to the fashionable London Fields area of Hackney, east London, and admits to being a regular visitor to the **Hackney Picturehouse** cinema.

[www.picturehouses.com/cinema/Hackney\\_Picturehouse](http://www.picturehouses.com/cinema/Hackney_Picturehouse)

## Paolo Nutini

Scottish singer, songwriter and musician Paolo Nutini was born in Paisley, Scotland, which is less than half an hour's drive west of Glasgow. It is here that his great-grandfather founded the **Castelvecchi fish 'n' chip shop** in New Street in 1914 - a family business that

Paolo's father Alfredo Nutini has run for the past 40 years. Before releasing three albums and selling millions of records, a young Paolo found a job as a studio hand at Glasgow's legendary **Park Lane Studio** on Pollokshaws Road, a place where many young bands came to cut their first demo while seeking a record deal. Some of these, including Texas, Primal Scream, The Bluebells, Deacon Blue and Altered Images, went on to achieve massive success. A UNESCO City of Music, explore Glasgow's vibrant music scene by taking a guided walking tour with **Glasgow Music City Tours**.

[www.glasgowmusiccitytours.com](http://www.glasgowmusiccitytours.com)

Moving to London, Paolo would gig at various pubs including **The Bedford** in Balham, south London - a venue for live music and comedy. Home to the renowned **Banana Cabaret** comedy club for more than 30 years, famous stand-up comedians who've performed here include Eddie Izzard, Catherine Tate, Frank Skinner, Stephen K Amos and Omid Djalili.

[www.banacabaret.co.uk](http://www.banacabaret.co.uk)

He's now accustomed to playing massive venues: in 2007 he played Glastonbury's famous Pyramid Stage for the first time, as well as London's Wembley Stadium for Live Earth, and at Scotland's own massive annual music festival **T In The Park**.

[www.tinthepark.com](http://www.tinthepark.com)

## Arctic Monkeys

Indie rock outfit Arctic Monkeys may be headlining festivals all over the world these days, but it all began for these four musicians in the city of **Sheffield**, south Yorkshire, north England (two hours train journey north of London). They played their first gig at The Grapes pub in the city centre. Sheffield is in fact full of great places to catch live bands. Check out the potential 'next big thing' at musical institution **The Harley Hotel**, in addition to **The Leadmill** - as well as the Arctic Monkeys, top British indie bands such as Pulp, Muse, Oasis and Coldplay cut their teeth on the live music scene with early career gigs at this legendary venue.

[www.theharley.co.uk](http://www.theharley.co.uk) [www.leadmill.co.uk](http://www.leadmill.co.uk)

Lead singer Alex Turner may now live a rock star life but he nevertheless remains true to his Sheffield roots - a keen football fan, he supports his local team Sheffield Wednesday F.C. and is occasionally seen cheering them on from the stands of **Hillsborough Stadium**, the team's home ground.

[www.swfc.co.uk](http://www.swfc.co.uk)

## Olly Murs

Another alumni from the British *X Factor*, singer-songwriter Olly Murs is also riding the wave of international success. He was runner-up in 2009, and has since released four studio albums, a slew of hit singles, and found further success as a TV presenter on the *X Factor*, after previously presenting spin-off series *The Xtra Factor*. Various stages of the show, including auditions and the live final, are recorded at **SSE Arena, Wembley**. Popularly known as Wembley Arena, this famous venue has concerts and events

throughout the year, including the X Factor Live Tour.

[www.ssearena.co.uk](http://www.ssearena.co.uk)

Growing up in Essex, east England, it must be a special moment for Olly when he takes to the stage of **V Festival**. One of Britain's biggest music festivals, it's held annually in August just outside of the city of Chelmsford, a half-hour train journey from central London. Olly has played several homecoming gigs there - in 2015 he headlined the festival's MTV stage.

[www.vfestival.com](http://www.vfestival.com)

When he's not wowing the crowds, Olly enjoys playing and watching football and is an avid Manchester United supporter. Manchester United fans can make the trip to the team's ground of **Old Trafford** in Manchester, north-west England, to cheer on their football heroes. Even if you can't get tickets to the game you can see where the team train and play with a stadium tour of Manchester United's ground and visit the city's **National Football Museum**. Explore its Hall of Fame, hold your nerve as you take a penalty and feel the glory when you lift the FA Cup.



*If you're a Manchester United fan like Olly Murs, book onto a stadium tour at the team's ground, Old Trafford*

[www.visitbritainshop.com](http://www.visitbritainshop.com) [www.nationalfootballmuseum.com](http://www.nationalfootballmuseum.com)



*Framlingham Castle in Suffolk, east England*

## Ed Sheeran

While he was born in Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire, in the north of England, English singer-songwriter Ed Sheeran was raised in **Framlingham**, Suffolk in the east of England (two and half hours' drive from London). At the heart of this historic market town is **Framlingham Castle**, a magnificent 12th-century fortress with a long and colourful past.

[www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/framlingham-castle](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/framlingham-castle)

Sheeran is also an alumni of London's **National Youth Theatre**. Founded in 1956 as the world's first youth theatre, renowned British actors including Daniel Craig, Daniel Day-Lewis, Orlando Bloom, Helen Mirren, Colin Firth and Rosamund Pike are also alumni. Based in Holloway, north London, its young members are eligible to audition for the company's productions, staged in London's West End theatre district as well as around the UK and internationally. Visit the website for details of current productions.

[www.nyt.org.uk](http://www.nyt.org.uk)

Ultimately, Ed chose to pursue a career in music rather than acting. Although he now sells out huge concert venues, and can name the likes of Taylor Swift and Elton John as friends, in 2015 - ahead of a weekend of sell-out concerts at massive Wembley Stadium - Ed Sheeran made a surprise appearance at **The Barfly**, a tiny live music venue in Camden, north London - proving that Britain's live music venues are great for seeing new and

unsigned music talent, spotting stars of the future, and maybe even spying a superstar!

[www.thebarflylondon.com](http://www.thebarflylondon.com)

## A star is born: Make your own music in Britain

Britain is the perfect destination for aspiring musicians who want to follow in the footsteps of famous Brits like The Beatles, Sam Smith and Ellie Goulding. Whether you want to belt out a tune at an open-mic night or karaoke bar, or even record your own hit single, there's something for every singer, strummer and soprano in Britain.

### Take to the stage at an open mic night

London has no shortage of open-mic nights and one of the best venues is **Green Note**, an award-winning intimate live music venue and vegetarian café-bar in Camden Town, north London. Known for its friendly atmosphere, Green Note's open mic night is held on the last Tuesday of the month, but check the events listings page on the website for more details.

[www.greennote.co.uk](http://www.greennote.co.uk)

In the north east of England, Newcastle is home to the **Cumberland Arms**, famous for its open-mic nights and for local musician, Sting, who has been known to pop in for a pint and a singalong. Newcastle is just over three hours by train from London.

[www.thecumberlandarms.co.uk](http://www.thecumberlandarms.co.uk)

While at first glance a tea shop may not be the obvious venue for great live music, the **Leaf Tea Shop and Bar** is actually one of Liverpool's coolest music venues. A "punk" tea room that morphs from being a place to breakfast on organic porridge, into a fully-licensed bar and gig venue at night, stylish musicians will be right at home here. Open mic nights are every Tuesday. Liverpool is in north west England - just over two hours by train from London - and, of course, was home to The Beatles.

[www.thisisleaf.co.uk](http://www.thisisleaf.co.uk)



*Leaf - the "punk" tea room you can both play music at and get a latte and cake*

### Become a festival star

If you really want to get your music noticed, there's no better place than **The Edinburgh Festival Fringe**, the largest arts festival in the world that takes place every August in Scotland's capital. From big names in the world of entertainment to unknown artists looking to build their careers, the festival takes over the whole city and musicians looking for a break can get in on the action by organising their own fringe event.

[www.edfringe.com](http://www.edfringe.com)

Staying in Scotland, **Perthshire Amber Acoustic Festival**, under an hour away by train from Glasgow and Edinburgh, offers a gorgeous setting in which to strum your acoustic guitar on stage. A warmly encouraging audience and relaxed vibe make this an ideal open-

mic opportunity for singer-songwriters eager to share their music.

[www.perthshireamber.com](http://www.perthshireamber.com)

Central England is the place to go for folk-loving musicians with the **Worcester Music Festival**. For three whole days in September each year, live, original music from hundreds of up and coming bands and artists play - and it's all completely free! An impressive 300 performances take place in the city's pubs, clubs, cafes and historic buildings as well as on outdoor stages, and the festival also offers the chance for everyone to have a go at making music with free workshops - from world drumming to the four elements of hip hop - available. Worcester is just over two hours away from London by train.

[www.worcestermusicfestival.co.uk](http://www.worcestermusicfestival.co.uk)

**Galtres Parklands Festival**, in north Yorkshire, north England, is not only one of the best family festivals in the country - combining eight stages of music and cabaret, fantastic local beers and food in a spectacular rural setting overlooking the North Yorkshire Moors - it is also the place to be for buskers and open-mic fans who can bring their guitar, banjo, spoons or didgeridoo and join in the fun! The festival, which took a break in 2015, is hoping to return in 2016, where it looks like it will once again take place in the grounds of Duncombe Park near York, two hours by train from London.

[www.galtresfestival.org.uk](http://www.galtresfestival.org.uk)

In south Wales, the **Monmouth Festival** is one of the biggest free festivals in Europe. Best of all though, it presents a stepping stone for newcomers interested in performing during the nine-day festival that spreads across venues around town, in genres ranging from rock and ska to classical, indie, folk and blues. The festival will take place in the market town of Monmouth on the border between England and Wales once again between 22 - 30 July.

[www.monmouthfestival.co.uk](http://www.monmouthfestival.co.uk)

### **Five of the Best Karaoke Bars**

#### **Electric Circus, Edinburgh, Scotland**

Part club, part gig venue, part karaoke bar (with seven private rooms specifically for it) Electric Circus is truly one of a kind. Conveniently located seconds from Waverley train station in the centre of Edinburgh, its rough exterior belies a slick and comfortable interior.

[www.theelectriccircus.biz](http://www.theelectriccircus.biz)

#### **Hanahana, Newcastle, north-east England**

This Japanese and Teppanyaki restaurant is a hit with locals in the north east of England for the delicious food and the downstairs karaoke room that seats up to 50. You need to book in advance for the karaoke on weekdays but weekends are when it really comes alive with enthusiastic warblers for whom an after-dinner coffee just won't hit the spot.

[www.hanahananewcastle.com](http://www.hanahananewcastle.com)

## Rockaoke, London

At Rockaoke, wannabe lead singers get a taste of the limelight with their own backing band made up of a guitarist, bassist and drummer - so crack out your best head banging and own that stage! Hopping from venue to venue around central London, it can also be booked for private events. See the website for gig dates and locations, and sign up to sing online.

[www.rockaoke.co.uk](http://www.rockaoke.co.uk)

## Kobe, Bristol, west England

Situated on Bristol's Nelson Street, internationally famous for its street art, Kobe houses five private luxury karaoke rooms for music lovers to sing their hearts out. All rooms are individually designed, sound proofed and feature the best karaoke systems available, with a call button for instant service from friendly staff - pop star treatment guaranteed! Bristol is just under two hours from London by train.

[www.bristolkaraoke.co.uk](http://www.bristolkaraoke.co.uk)

## Record a hit!

Probably the most famous recording studio in the world, **Abbey Road Studios** in London is notable for being the venue in the 1960s where The Beatles and Pink Floyd adopted their most innovative recording techniques. Still working studios, professional musicians seeking to replicate their idol's success can hire the spaces and equipment, although prices can be high depending on your needs. Music fans with less lofty ambitions can head to Abbey Road zebra crossing to recreate The Beatles' famous album pose for free!

[www.abbeyroad.com](http://www.abbeyroad.com)

In the north west of England, **Cotyso Recording Studios** in Manchester, just over two hours by train from London, is where New Order, Blur and One Direction have all recorded their hits. Budding singers can use the same recording equipment and get a professional cover shot done in the same photographic studios that have played host to their favourite stars. There are thousands of tracks to choose from and professional sound engineers will mix your vocals to make you sound like a star! Singing packages start from £99 and include a CD of your track to take home too.

[www.singingexperience.co.uk/singer](http://www.singingexperience.co.uk/singer)



*Hone - or even just learn - your craft at The Cluny Studios in Newcastle, where you can be a star for an hour!*

Over in the north east of England, **The Cluny Studios**, in Newcastle's trendy Ouseburn valley, is both a professional recording studio loved by local bands, and the perfect place for a party with friends who want to walk away with a CD of them singing over their favourite track. Professionals can follow stars such as Maximo Park and Beverley Knight's success by renting the studio to record demos or even a whole album. Or you can get the 'Pop Taster' session for only £50.

[www.clunystudios.co.uk](http://www.clunystudios.co.uk)

**The Nerve Centre** in Derry~Londonderry, Northern Ireland, is one of the most dynamic and innovative multi-media centres in the British Isles. The Oscar-nominated centre houses edit suites, rehearsal and recording studios as well as a bar and coffee house to chill out in. There's always something happening at the centre, from musical performances to film festivals and they also offer 'Studio Booth', an affordable studio facility where future rock stars can record a song for just £50 using the latest digital recording equipment.

[www.nervecentre.org](http://www.nervecentre.org)

### Perfect your craft...

If you've ever wanted to learn to strum violin strings or polish up your piping, **Cherry Pie Music** independent music schools in London provide instrument and singing lessons in all styles. With a range of instruments that include piano, violin, woodwind, electric guitar, and drums, find something to suit your musical tastes and walk away with a new skill to boot! One-off lessons cost from £23 for 30 minutes.

[www.cherrypiemusic.co.uk](http://www.cherrypiemusic.co.uk)

Belfast's **Oh Yeah Music Centre** is a converted warehouse in the heart of the city's Cathedral Quarter. A music-making mecca in Northern Ireland, it houses a performance space, rehearsal rooms and even a song writing room to get your creative juices flowing. Book in a session with for around £20 an hour to work on your guitar solo before learning more about the story of Irish music.

[www.ohyeahbelfast.com](http://www.ohyeahbelfast.com)



*Fancy folk singing? Tuesdays at the Sage Gateshead give visitors the chance to give their lungs a workout!*

Up in the north east of England, **The Sage Gateshead** is a stunning world-class music venue on the banks of the River Tyne that offers vocal training and 'Folkworks Tuesday' where you can perfect your pitch in a venue like no other. Offering weekly classes and courses on everything from the steel drum to the ukulele, the venue also hosts one-off events where music fans can attend a workshop or even join in a sing-your-opera favourites.

[www.sagegateshead.com](http://www.sagegateshead.com)

## Nightlife In Britain

Come to Britain and let your hair down - party in our bars and dance till dawn in our nightclubs. If you're interested in the roots of reggae in Britain, head to Birmingham; if house music is more your thing, head to Leeds. And what about G-Town?! If you don't know what it is you need to find out... read our guide to Britain's fun and fabulous nightlife scene.

## London

### Hit the hedonistic Soho circuit

The streets off main shopping strip Oxford Street have crept gradually upmarket but retain a certain seedy glamour and bustle with pleasure-seekers most nights. Start with cocktails at **Experimental Cocktail Club**, a smart, Parisian-style joint occupying three floors of a townhouse in Chinatown. Cocktail bar and members club **Milk & Honey** is another smooth, three-storey cocktail concoction.

[www.experimentalcocktailclublondon.com](http://www.experimentalcocktailclublondon.com) [www.mlkhny.com](http://www.mlkhny.com)

The **St Moritz Club** has been packing in fans of ska, R&B, soul and sleazy glam rock for decades - this timeless basement club retains much of the same décor it's had since the 1960s. Another informal basement bar and club, **The Roxy**, attracts a more student crowd. Although iconic cabaret and burlesque venue Madame JoJo's has closed, the same creative team now presents **The Electric Carousel**: glamorous, alternative club events at the Rah Rah Room on the cusp of Soho and posh Mayfair.

[www.stmoritzclub.co.uk](http://www.stmoritzclub.co.uk) [www.theroxy.co.uk](http://www.theroxy.co.uk) [www.theelectriccarousel.com](http://www.theelectriccarousel.com)

The heart of London's gay scene is Old Compton Street, crammed with bars and cafés. Popular gay venues include brash and poppy video bar **G-A-Y**, and its even later-night sister bar around the corner, **The Shadow Lounge** - a swish party venue with table-service, a smattering of celebrities and a pole on the dancefloor. Known as the 'Old Dame of Queer Street', traditional Victorian-style gay pub **Comptons of Soho** is the street's oldest gay venue, celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2016.

[www.g-a-y.co.uk](http://www.g-a-y.co.uk) [www.theshadowlounge.co.uk](http://www.theshadowlounge.co.uk) [www.faucetinn.com/comptons](http://www.faucetinn.com/comptons)

### Party with East London hipsters

The capital's east side has become the mecca for all things fashionable and arty, with a hedonistic social scene to match. Scruffy music-soundtracked pubs include **The Bricklayers Arms** (63 Charlotte Road) and **The Old Blue Last**, run by hip *Vice* magazine and host to secret gigs by big names. Uber trendy **Queen of Hoxton** has a fantastic roof terrace upstairs and a shadowy basement below. A warehouse space containing disused train carriages and shipping containers, **Village Underground** is home to local hipsters and hosts regular live gigs, while **Red Gallery** has gigs, art exhibitions, film screenings and comedy nights.

[www.bricklayersarms.com](http://www.bricklayersarms.com) [www.theoldbluelast.com](http://www.theoldbluelast.com) [www.queenofhoxton.com](http://www.queenofhoxton.com)  
[www.villageunderground.co.uk](http://www.villageunderground.co.uk) [www.redgallerylondon.com](http://www.redgallerylondon.com)

Refuel at famous 24-hour pitstop **Brick Lane Beigel Bake** (159 Brick Lane), before going dancing at coolly eclectic venue **Cargo**, housed under disused railway arches, the raucously arty and gay-friendly **Dalston Superstore**, or **XOYO**, a credible club with cutting-edge DJs, live acts and a killer sound system.



*Stock up on energy giving bagels at Brick Lane Beigel Bake before dancing at cool nearby clubs. Credit Joanna Henderson*

[www.cargo-london.com](http://www.cargo-london.com) [www.dalstonsuperstore.com](http://www.dalstonsuperstore.com) [www.xoyo.co.uk](http://www.xoyo.co.uk)

It's also a short hop to Clerkenwell for one of the planet's premier superclubs, the mighty **Fabric**.

[www.fabriclondon.com](http://www.fabriclondon.com)

### Dine, drink and dance in Brixton Village

The gastro hub around Brixton Village Market has, by stealth, become London's most vibrant restaurant scene, packed with small, cheap independent eateries and a buzzy crowd - bands and buskers often play in the covered arcade too. Highlights include **Okan** for Japanese street food, **Mama Lan** for handmade Chinese dumplings and street snacks, gourmet fast food at **Honest Burgers**, fried chicken at **CHICKENliquor**, or sourdough pizza at **Franco Manca**.

[www.okanbrixtonvillage.com](http://www.okanbrixtonvillage.com) [www.mamalan.co.uk](http://www.mamalan.co.uk) [www.honestburgers.co.uk](http://www.honestburgers.co.uk)  
[www.chickenliquor.co.uk](http://www.chickenliquor.co.uk) [www.francomanca.co.uk](http://www.francomanca.co.uk)

Suitably fed, enjoy a drink and possibly some live music or DJs at nearby **Market House**, **The White Horse** or **Lounge** before hitting the dancefloor at the creatively eclectic **Jamm** or London's original DJ bar, the three-floor **Dogstar**.

[www.market-house.co.uk](http://www.market-house.co.uk) [www.whitehorsebrixton.com](http://www.whitehorsebrixton.com) [www.loungebrixton.com](http://www.loungebrixton.com)  
[www.brixtonjamm.org](http://www.brixtonjamm.org) [www.dogstarbrixton.com](http://www.dogstarbrixton.com)

## England

### Reggae in Birmingham, central England

England's multi-cultural second city has a rich reggae tradition, thanks to local bands such as Steel Pulse, UB40, Beshara, Musical Youth, The Beat and Swami. Annual festival **Reggae City** sees music pumping from multiple venues, plus plenty of Jamaican food and drink to enjoy. Reggae clubs include **PST** (short for People Standing Together) in the Digbeth area, which boasts an underground dub dancefloor and rooftop terrace for outdoor raves.

[www.reggaecity.co.uk](http://www.reggaecity.co.uk) [www.pst-club.co.uk](http://www.pst-club.co.uk)

### Glamorous clubbing in Leeds, north England

House music had a huge impact in Leeds and it's long been one of Britain's clubbing capitals, with an emphasis on the dressed-up glam side. **Mint Club** is intimate and always raucous, the home of house **Mission** sprawls under six railway arches, **The Warehouse** is a hands-in-the-air favourite and **Space** is a throbbing basement. Legendary house rave **Back To Basics**, voted Britain's best club in the 1990s, remains a champion of proper house music.



*Glam up for a night under six arches at legendary Leeds club Mission*

[www.themintclub.com](http://www.themintclub.com) [www.clubmission.com](http://www.clubmission.com) [www.theleedswarehouse.com](http://www.theleedswarehouse.com)  
[www.nocurfeweevents.co.uk](http://www.nocurfeweevents.co.uk) [www.facebook.com/Back-To-Basics-Leeds](https://www.facebook.com/Back-To-Basics-Leeds)



*For a tropical night out in north-west England, check out Manchester's The Liars Club, which boasts a cool Hula Tiki lounge*

### Late night dance bars in Manchester, north-west England

Renowned for its music heritage, Manchester was home to what was once one of the world's most famous nightclubs, The Hacienda. The clubbing scene has taken a detour from those hedonistic days, with the city now dominated by stylish late night bars with dance floors. These include basement Tiki dive bar **The Liars Club**, 1950s inspired **Hula Tiki Lounge**, huge rum bar **Revolucion De Cuba**, and high-tech Tokyo-style lounge **Sakura**. A more dedicated dance venue, **Suede** is Manchester's biggest VIP superclub.

[www.theliarsclub.co.uk](http://www.theliarsclub.co.uk) [www.hulabar.co.uk](http://www.hulabar.co.uk) [www.revoluciondecuba.com](http://www.revoluciondecuba.com)  
[www.sakuramanchester.com](http://www.sakuramanchester.com) [www.suedenightclub.co.uk](http://www.suedenightclub.co.uk)

### Club-hopping in Newcastle, north-east England

Newcastle is one of the best places in Britain for nightlife. Its diverse, bustling scene is home to countless bars and clubs with something for everyone. **World Headquarters** throws the friendliest raves in town. **Digital** is a house-style, 2,200 capacity superclub with a booming sound system and top-name DJs. With a pop-lead soundtrack and free entry even on weekends, a young, stylish, student crowd favour **Perdu**. Boutique nightclub **Tup Tup Palace** may be one of Newcastle's smaller venues, but it attracts big names including Kayne West and Snoop Dogg with its private booths and VIP ambience. Finally come two interconnected hotspots: enjoy cocktails in slick surroundings or the tropical outdoor garden at **Florita's Miami Bar**, before popping next door to the opulent, Gatsby-style lounge at **House Of Smith**.

[www.welovewhq.com](http://www.welovewhq.com) [www.yourfutureisdigital.com](http://www.yourfutureisdigital.com) [www.perdubar.com](http://www.perdubar.com)  
[www.tuptuppalace.com](http://www.tuptuppalace.com) [www.floritasbar.com](http://www.floritasbar.com) [www.house-of-smith.com](http://www.house-of-smith.com)

### Alternative scenes in Brighton, south-east England

The south-east coast city of Brighton is sometimes considered London-by-the-sea, due to its proximity to the capital. It's certainly a place to enjoy a hedonistic weekend. One of its trailblazing live music and club venues is **Concorde 2**, which was home to top British DJ Fatboy Slim in the mid-90s and remains a music scene stalwart. Alternative live music venue **The Prince Albert** is unmistakable: its exterior features a huge mural of music legends including Freddie Mercury, Dusty Springfield and Amy Winehouse, plus famous Banksy graffiti of two kissing policemen. Theatre and comedy club **Komedia** is also an excellent live music venue, while big-name acts perform at the **Brighton Dome** - and was where, in 1974, pop legends Abba won the Eurovision Song Contest.

[www.concorde2.co.uk](http://www.concorde2.co.uk) [www.facebook.com/ThePrinceAlbert](https://www.facebook.com/ThePrinceAlbert) [www.komedia.co.uk](http://www.komedia.co.uk)  
[www.brightondome.org](http://www.brightondome.org)

### Home-grown sounds in Bristol, south-west England

Home to numerous graffiti artists including Banksy, Bristol is a city where urban sounds and street art go hand-in-hand. Recently named one of the best nightclubs on Planet Earth, **Motion** retains its street cred by occupying a converted skate park in central Bristol. Numerous local and international artists have graced the stage of **Lakota**, another venue at the core of Bristol's brilliant music scene. The action at **The Full Moon Backpacker Hotel and Attic Bar** is even more eclectic, with anything from gigs by home-grown talent to drum'n'bass nights. It even provides eco-friendly backpacker accommodation.

[www.motionbristol.com](http://www.motionbristol.com) [www.lakota.co.uk](http://www.lakota.co.uk) [www.fmbristol.co.uk](http://www.fmbristol.co.uk)

### Beyond The Beatles in Liverpool, north-west England

Birthplace of The Beatles, there's no denying the music pedigree of Liverpool - but the city's music scene is refreshingly eclectic rather than being purely nostalgic. Warehouse-style **Camp And Furnace** is a blank canvas that can be transformed to fulfil all sorts of roles: hosting anything from large-scale multi-day festivals, intimate live gigs or televised big-screen sports events. Street food traders join the mix for weekend food-slams. A former recording studio, **Studio 2** is a unique bar, nightclub and live music venue - it's part of the Parr Street Studios complex, a Grammy Award-winning studio used by the likes of Coldplay and Elbow. On Penny Lane, the street immortalised in the famous Beatles song, local pub **The Dovedale Towers** aka "The Dovey" has laid-back gigs by local bands. Freddie Mercury lived in the flat above the pub for a short period in 1969.

[www.campandfurnace.com](http://www.campandfurnace.com) [www.studio2liverpool.com](http://www.studio2liverpool.com)

## Wales

### Comedy in Cardiff

The Welsh capital has a thriving stand-up comedy scene, spearheaded by the award-winning **Glee Club** on Cardiff Bay waterfront. Other mirth-making hotspots include newly re-opened **Jongleurs** and the buzzy **Chapter Arts Centre**, while bigger acts play at **St David's Hall**.

[www.glee.co.uk](http://www.glee.co.uk) [www.jongleurs.com/venue/cardiff](http://www.jongleurs.com/venue/cardiff) [www.chapter.org](http://www.chapter.org)  
[www.stdavidshallcardiff.co.uk](http://www.stdavidshallcardiff.co.uk)

New comedy nights have recently launched at the **Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama** and **The Buffalo Bar**, both blending big-name acts with rising local stars and open-mic slots.

[www.rwcmd.ac.uk](http://www.rwcmd.ac.uk) [www.buffalocardiff.co.uk](http://www.buffalocardiff.co.uk)

Laughter muscles suitably exercised, move your feet at nightclubs such as 1990s nostalgia spot **Retro**, alternative rocky basement **Metros** or award-winning gay club **Pulse**.

[www.retrocardiff.co.uk](http://www.retrocardiff.co.uk) [www.facebook.com/metrowales](https://www.facebook.com/metrowales) [www.pulse.me.uk](http://www.pulse.me.uk)

## Scotland

## Glasgow - Urban Rules 'GTown'

UNESCO City of Music **Glasgow** is renowned for its diverse scene and musical talent - recent exports include Franz Ferdinand and Paolo Nutini. With an average of 130 music events each week, you'll be spoilt for choice.



*Glasgow's legendary Barrowland Ballroom is a popular nightlife venue*

Discover the next big thing at **King Tut's Wah Wah Hut**, consistently voted Britain's top live music venue, or rock out at the legendary **Barrowland Ballroom**, instantly recognisable by its neon signage. Another landmark live music venue, **The Clutha**, made headlines in November 2013 when a police helicopter tragically crashed onto its roof. Reopen since July 2015, Prince Charles and Scotland's first minister Nicola Sturgeon were among the first to visit the refurbished bar.

[www.kingtuts.co.uk](http://www.kingtuts.co.uk) [www.glasgow-barrowland.com/ballroom.htm](http://www.glasgow-barrowland.com/ballroom.htm),  
[www.theclutha.com](http://www.theclutha.com)

In 'GTown' - local slang for Glasgow - urban music is a thriving part of the club scene. Basement venue **Sub Club** has been a passionate champion of house music since 1987. Popular city centre club **Bamboo** hosts regular urban nights or enjoy live music at quirky four-floor converted townhouse **Hummingbird**.

[www.subclub.co.uk](http://www.subclub.co.uk) [www.bamboonightclub.co.uk](http://www.bamboonightclub.co.uk) [www.hummingbirdglasgow.co.uk](http://www.hummingbirdglasgow.co.uk)

Mediterranean restaurant, club and music venue **Arta** in the fashionable Merchant City has a cosy, laidback atmosphere.

[www.arta.co.uk](http://www.arta.co.uk)

Confirming GTown's urban credentials, in 2006 Glasgow became the first city outside London to host the **MOBO Awards**, returning in 2011, then again in 2013 to the hi-tech **SSE Hydro**. The **MTV Europe Music Awards** also took place at this venue in 2014.

[www.thehydro.com](http://www.thehydro.com)

For an overview of Glasgow's music scenes, the **Walking Heads Glasgow Music Tour** app covers 200 years of music history and is a great way to discover some of the city's hidden gems.

[www.walkingheads.net](http://www.walkingheads.net)

## Edinburgh's Hidden Nightlife Haunts

UNESCO City of Literature, Edinburgh isn't just a bookish destination, because this historic city also has a wealth of music venues to uncover. Hip basement bar **Bramble** is almost as well known for its music as its delectable drinks, with a roster of Edinburgh's finest DJs playing every Friday and Saturday. Nearby, stylish new speakeasy **Panda & Sons** has a laidback vibe and the coolest beats in town; look out for the barber's pole and enter the prohibition-inspired bar down the stairs and through a secret



*Cool drinks and cooler music at Edinburgh's Bramble bar*

bookcase. After closing time, award-winning bar, club and restaurant **The Voodoo Rooms** (near Princes Street) offers an eclectic range of live music, including soul, folk, hip-hop and indie. The **Edinburgh Jazz Bar** on Chambers Street hosts up to four gigs a day, seven nights a week all year round; with an ever-changing menu of multi-genre music, visitors will be spoilt for choice.

[www.bramblebar.co.uk](http://www.bramblebar.co.uk) [www.pandaandsons.com](http://www.pandaandsons.com) [www.thevoodooorooms.com](http://www.thevoodooorooms.com)  
[www.thejazzbar.co.uk](http://www.thejazzbar.co.uk)

Underground labyrinth **Cabaret Voltaire** in the Cowgate offers something for everyone with regular spots for Scotland's premier DJs. Rock and whisky bar **Bannerman's** - also in the Cowgate - boasts a vibrant live music programme six nights a week and choice of more than 100 malt whiskies in a charming historical venue. You might even hear a future rock band play at the intimate, regularly packed **Sneaky Pete's** nearby - check out cross-genre club night 'This is Music'.

[www.thecabaretvoltaire.com](http://www.thecabaretvoltaire.com) [www.bannermanslive.co.uk](http://www.bannermanslive.co.uk) [www.sneakypetes.co.uk](http://www.sneakypetes.co.uk)

## Northern Ireland

### Historic pubs in Belfast

Belfast is one of the last UK cities with untouched Victorian pubs. The most famous is **The Crown Liquor Saloon**, where the interior of ornate tiling, stained glass and carved woodwork is listed by the National Trust. Settle into a snug to sip Guinness and eat oysters. Lovingly restored **McHugh's** dates back to 1711 and has a homely ground floor bar - look out for the wittily sculpted chess pieces in the shape of political figures. There's also the gas-lit **Garrick**, a favourite of *Vanity Fair* author William Makepeace Thackeray, and the award-winning, back-alley **Morning Star**.



*Order a pint of Guinness and a plate of oysters and enjoy the ornate interiors of Belfast's The Crown Liquor Saloon*

[www.nationaltrust.org.uk/crown-bar/](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/crown-bar/) [www.mchughsbar.com](http://www.mchughsbar.com) [www.thegarrickbar.com](http://www.thegarrickbar.com)  
[www.themorningstarbar.com](http://www.themorningstarbar.com)

Take a **guided tour** before deciding on your favourite. [www.belfastpubtours.com](http://www.belfastpubtours.com)

After closing time, hit **Apartment** for cocktails and stunning views or **The Empire** for comedy, live bands and club nights. Dance the night away at **Limelight** or the opulent **Ollie's** in the 5-star Merchant Hotel.

[www.apartmentbelfast.com](http://www.apartmentbelfast.com) [www.thebelfastempire.com](http://www.thebelfastempire.com) [www.limelightbelfast.com](http://www.limelightbelfast.com)  
[www.olliesbelfast.com](http://www.olliesbelfast.com)

## Where to find the hottest British DJs play

The UK is a breeding ground for musical talent. Scottish electro-house DJ Calvin Harris tops Forbes' list of highest earning DJs in the world in 2015 and he has musically collaborated with everyone from Ellie Goulding to Rihanna. There's plenty of musical talent in Britain, here we look at venues, festivals and clubs you can find British DJs play sets.

Some of the world's biggest DJs have their favourite clubs right in the heart of London. **fabric** nightclub in Farringdon is a clubbing institution and loved by techno DJ Carl Cox, who plays in huge venues around the world. Three separate rooms, a vibrating "bodysonic" dancefloor, and the sounds of fabric's weekly residents, Craig Richards and Terry Francis, who play almost every Saturday, keep clubbers happy.

[www.fabriclondon.com](http://www.fabriclondon.com)

**Ministry of Sound** dance and house club in south London is where Paul Oakenfold, the man credited with bringing dance music to the US, reportedly loves to play. Its huge dance floor and roster of homegrown resident DJs means it's part of Britain's clubbing folklore.

[www.ministryofsound.com](http://www.ministryofsound.com)

Radio 1 DJ Annie Mac was born and bred in Dublin, Ireland and now plays in clubs all over Britain with her annual 'Annie Mac Presents' tour. One of the club nights she's said to enjoy is Deviation by Benji B, a fellow BBC Radio 1 DJ at **XOYO**, a dark and dingy club popular with the cool crowd of east London.

[www.xoyo.co.uk](http://www.xoyo.co.uk)

Also in east London is disco tag team Horse Meat Disco's favourite venue, the tiny **Dalston Superstore**. Popular with the LGBT crowd, the mostly local and many well-known DJs keep everyone dancing all week long in this supercool part of London.

[www.dalstonsuperstore.com](http://www.dalstonsuperstore.com)

*All clubs are in central London and easily reachable by tube or bus. Check the websites for entry fees.*

Trendy east London's Victoria Park is also home to two brilliant outdoor summer festivals where the cool crowd go to hear the hottest British DJs as well as discover up and coming talent.

**Lovebox** famously grew out of a club night put on in 2002 by British dance music heavyweights Groove Armada and is now a two-day festival that attracts the biggest DJs. Previous year's acts have included English electronic music production duo Chase & Status, eclectic record collector Giles Peterson and drum and bass DJ Roni Size.

[www.loveboxfestival.com](http://www.loveboxfestival.com)

**Field Day** is a party that has made a name for itself as somewhere you can catch the next big thing before they break into the mainstream cool (think London electro-duo Simian Mobile Disco). With everything from the most cutting-edge names in dance and disco through to the New Wave Folk, expect to rub shoulders with the hip and happening crowd at Field Day.

[www.fielldayfestivals.com](http://www.fielldayfestivals.com)



*Catch DJ Annie Mac at British clubs during her annual 'Annie Mac Presents' tour*

*Both held in east London's Victoria Park, Lovebox is usually in July and Field Day in June.*

Outside of London, the north west of England is a mecca for clubbing fans into dancing to the best DJs the world has to offer. **Creamfields** festival is one of the longest-running Electronic Dance festivals in Britain and its eight separate sound stages play host to some of the top names in the dance music industry.

[www.creamfields.com](http://www.creamfields.com)

*Creamfields Festival will take place during the last weekend of August 2016 in Daresbury near Liverpool in north-west England, under three hours by train from London.*

**Sub Club** in Scotland is more than 25 years old and has been at the centre of dance music in Glasgow for the lifetime of house music in Britain. The basement space with a low ceiling and a top-notch sound system is where the musically savvy go to dance to Optima - a local duo who are the club's founders and resident DJs. Having appeared on BBC Radio 1's Essential Mix and toured the world, it's at Sub Club where you'll find the creating an unbeatable atmosphere to party the night away (well, between the club's rather sensible opening hours of 23.00-03.00!).

[www.subclub.co.uk](http://www.subclub.co.uk)

*Sub Club is in Glasgow in Scotland, only an hour by train from Edinburgh.*

Stokes Croft, the "arty bit" of Bristol, is home to a slightly different nightlife experience at the **Full Moon Pub and Attic Bar**. Creating a festival vibe nearly every weekend, it has an eclectic music policy and showcases a variety of homegrown talent with d'n'b maestros such as Jinx and Saxxon on the bill. Low door prices, a brilliant food menu, great sound system and spacious courtyard outside makes it a quirky venue where you might just discover the best British up and coming DJ talent.

[www.fmbristol.co.uk](http://www.fmbristol.co.uk)

*Bristol is in south-west England, a 90-minute train journey from London.*



*North Wales' Gottwood Festival is a hotbed of DJ talent*

Wales, meanwhile, is home to the **Gottwood Festival**. Shaped around the electronic end of the audio spectrum, Gootwood has hosted everyone from British tech house DJ Craig Richards, to Bristol's ace disco crew Futureboogie and north Wales born Tom Demac. Usually taking place on the second week of June in a secluded dell in Anglesey, north Wales, this party has a reputation with the cool crowd, describing itself as an 'adult playground'.

[www.gottwood.co.uk](http://www.gottwood.co.uk)

*The Gottwood Festival will take place between 9 - 12 June 2016 (TBC) in Anglesey, north Wales. Anglesey is just over a two-hour drive from Manchester in north-west England.*

In **Northern Ireland**, Belfast has a thriving nightclubbing scene, with **Box** the biggest of them all. Spread over two floors, 2,000 clubbers can get lost in a wall of fog, hang out in modified VW Camper Vans and have a pumping clubbing experience thanks to brilliant light and sound systems. For a more edgy, underground feel, **Shine** is home for serious

clubbers who congregate at this basement club every Saturday night to dance to local and international hard house and techno DJs, such as Scotsman Jackmaster.

[www.boxnightclub.com](http://www.boxnightclub.com); [www.shine.net](http://www.shine.net)

*Belfast is reachable via its two airports, or by sea crossing from Scotland and England.*

## Music in unusual places

Britain offers plenty more places to hear music than elegant city centre concert halls or pubs around town. In fact, you can find musicians performing in the most unexpected places, from historic galleries to isolated band rooms in far-flung parts of the country. Here is a selection of the nation's most unusual venues.

### On the moors...

#### **The Band Room, Low Mill, north England**



*The Band Room proves size doesn't matter; the small but perfectly formed venue regularly attracts top acts*

One of Britain's most isolated venues, this former brass-band rehearsal room lies in a hamlet at the heart of the North Yorkshire Moors, yet the Band Room has attracted well-known Americana and folk names, among them Cerys Matthews, Laura Veirs and The Handsome Family, who describe it as 'the greatest smallest venue in the world'. Bring your own drink and torch because remember: with no street lighting, Low Mill will be pitch black when you leave!

[www.thebandroom.co.uk](http://www.thebandroom.co.uk)

*Getting there: The Band Room is 35 miles drive from York. Accommodation is also available within the North Yorkshire Moors National Park.*

### In the Highlands...

#### **The Ceilidh Place, Ullapool, Scotland**

In its early days, this café in a remote corner of the Scottish Highlands invited musicians to sing or play for their supper. Nowadays, the Ceilidh Place books talented artists maintaining the traditions of fine Gaelic music. The venue still serves food in the former boatshed using fresh, local ingredients, but has also expanded to provide accommodation.

[www.theceilidhplace.com](http://www.theceilidhplace.com)

*Getting there: Ullapool is an hour's drive from Inverness, which is around three hours' drive from Edinburgh.*

### In a museum...

#### **National Portrait Gallery, London**

Not only home to one of London's finest art collections, the historic National Portrait Gallery (NPG) is one of several institutions that offer live music. It stays open late on Thursday and Friday evenings until 21.00 to host Late Shift events when DJs often play

eclectic, gallery-friendly selections. Its curators have also shown a particular interest in classically trained musicians willing to push the boundaries of their genre.

[www.npg.org.uk](http://www.npg.org.uk)

*Getting there: The NPG is near Leicester Square and Charing Cross underground stations.*

### **At Britain's highest pub...**

#### **Tan Hill Inn, North Yorkshire, north-east England**

Standing at 520m above the impressive Swaledale valley, this remote, traditional pub has played host to some big names, including Arctic Monkeys and British Sea Power, though usually puts on local bands, folk acts and singer/songwriters.

[www.tanhillinn.com](http://www.tanhillinn.com)

*Getting there: Richmond is just over three hours train journey from London, then it is a 45-minute drive to the inn. However, in winter, you had better check the weather forecast first!*

### **In a former cinema...**

#### **Tivoli, Buckley, north Wales**

Many gig venues have taken over former theatres or cinemas, but this venue deserves respect for continuing to bring live music to a small town in a region normally overlooked on the touring circuit. After its 1970s to 1990s heyday, the Tivoli became a nightclub, but in 2010 went back to doing what it does best.

[www.tivolivenue.com](http://www.tivolivenue.com)

*Getting there: Buckley is three hours and 20 minutes from London by train.*

### **In a church...**

#### **Albert Hall, Manchester, north-west England**

No, not London's grand Victorian concert hall, but a long-hidden former Methodist chapel. Many places of worship around the country have found new life as music venues and this one was closed for 40 years before reopening for the Manchester International Festival in 2013 and has been continuing life since as a venue has hosted performances from Anna Calvi and Bombay Bicycle Club.

[www.alberthallmanchester.com](http://www.alberthallmanchester.com)

*Getting there: Manchester is two hours from London by train.*

### **In a former toilet...**

#### **Forum, Tunbridge Wells, south-east England**

Britain's smaller rock venues, where bands play their first gigs, are often known collectively as the "toilet circuit". Few, though, can actually claim to have previously been public conveniences, as with this much-loved and proudly independent mainstay of Kent's

music scene. Expect anyone from Royal Blood to veteran performers The Wedding Present.

[www.twforum.co.uk](http://www.twforum.co.uk)

*Getting there: Tunbridge Wells is just under an hour from London by train.*

### On a boat...

#### **Thekla, Bristol, south-west England**

In the Mud Dock section of this historic port's floating harbour, the former cargo ship Thekla has been given a new lease of life. Although permanently docked, watching bands on board does make for a different vibe.

[www.theklabristol.co.uk](http://www.theklabristol.co.uk)

*Getting there: Bristol Temple Meads is just under two hours from London by train.*

### In a music hall...

#### **Wilton's Music Hall, London**

Before cinema and television, music halls were where the British public got their entertainment fix in the form of variety shows. Some nowadays are continuing to thrive, including this architectural gem. Wilton's dates back to the mid-19th century and has more of the feel of a stately church than raucous stage, making it perfect for quieter singer/songwriters.

<http://wiltons.org.uk>

*Getting there: Wilton's is within walking distance of Tower Gateway Docklands Light Railway and Aldgate East underground stations.*

### At a bowling club...

#### **Bloomsbury Lanes, London**

Underneath the Tavistock Hotel you will find no ordinary bowling club. Bloomsbury Lanes has all you need for an evening's ten-pin bowling, with a bar, late licence and American diner-style food served in cosy booths, but also karaoke rooms that accommodate six to 35 wannabe singers plus themed music nights. The Funk & Bowl Club features Britain's hip-hop talent, although guitar groups also feature.

[www.bloomsburylive.com](http://www.bloomsburylive.com)



*Otterton Mill in Devon, where wheat-grinding goes hand in hand with music-making*

*Getting there: Bloomsbury Lanes is between Russell Square and Euston underground stations.*

### At a water mill...

#### **Otterton Mill, Devon, south-west England**

Little is more redolent of England's agricultural past than a working water mill grinding wheat for bread flour. As a music venue, though, this one in the

lovely village of Otterton is rather unexpected. Its owners book anything from jazz to folk acts, usually performing in the mill's upstairs restaurant, although in the summer concerts can be held outside by the stream. There is also a food shop and arts centre for this heart of a thriving community.

[www.ottertonmill.com](http://www.ottertonmill.com)

*Getting there: It takes around three hours by train from London to Exmouth, with bus connections to Otterton.*

## Classical music in Britain

Once labelled 'the land without music' in the 19th century, nowadays classical music in Britain has a worldwide reputation for the sheer volume and variety on offer.

From the prestigious Edinburgh International Festival in Scotland to the small chamber music festival in St Endellion on the Cornish coast in south-west England and to the operatic powerhouse of Welsh National Opera in Cardiff, Britain can proudly boast a vibrant and varied classical music scene that caters for all tastes.



*London's Royal Albert Hall: wonderful acoustics make it the ideal venue in which to enjoy classical music.*

At its heart is **London**. With five full-time symphony orchestras, two world-class opera companies and a wide-ranging array of smaller ensembles, it can easily claim to be the music capital of the world.

The crowning glory of classical music in Britain is the **BBC Proms**, which take place every summer in the Victorian splendour of the Royal Albert Hall in London. For over two months orchestras and soloists from around the globe perform nightly to classical music's most appreciative audience.

The cost of a seat ranges from £7.50 to just under £100 and can be booked online.

Alternatively, for only £5 you can enjoy the

experience of standing with the 'prommers' in the arena, as long as you're happy to queue outside the venue on the day.

For information see [www.bbc.co.uk/proms](http://www.bbc.co.uk/proms) or buy tickets from [www.royalalberthall.com](http://www.royalalberthall.com)

For the rest of the year, classical music of every description takes place at the **Southbank Centre**, London's vibrant arts hub next to the River Thames, and at the **Barbican** in the City of London. Meanwhile opera lovers have the chance to hear some of the best opera singers in the world in the ornate surroundings of the **Royal Opera House** in London's Covent Garden, with tickets ranging from £10 to just over £100.



*Head to the architecturally stunning Royal Opera House in London's Covent Garden for first-rate opera*

[www.southbankcentre.co.uk](http://www.southbankcentre.co.uk), [www.barbican.org.uk](http://www.barbican.org.uk), [www.roh.org.uk](http://www.roh.org.uk)

The classical music scene outside London is packed with interesting events and performers, with many historic or contemporary music venues boasting their own world-class city orchestras.

**Birmingham** in central England takes pride in its Symphony Hall, one of the best in the world and home of the renowned City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. Birmingham is around 90 minutes by train from London.

[www.cbso.co.uk](http://www.cbso.co.uk)

Another 90 minutes on the train northwards from there and you will reach **Manchester** (or two hours directly from London), home to the Hallé Orchestra and the BBC Philharmonic, both whom reside at the modern Bridgewater Hall. **Free** lunch time concerts are given by students at the world-famous Chetham's School of Music during term time.

[www.bridgewater-hall.co.uk](http://www.bridgewater-hall.co.uk), [www.chethams.com/whats-on/lunchtime-concerts](http://www.chethams.com/whats-on/lunchtime-concerts)



*The glorious Liverpool Philharmonic, home to the oldest symphony orchestra in Britain*

From Manchester it's only a half-hour ride on the train to **Liverpool** and the art-deco glory of Philharmonic Hall where the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra is based, reputedly the oldest symphony orchestra in Britain. You can also visit the magnificent **Liverpool Cathedral** to hear choral evensong, a sung service that takes place every evening; a uniquely English tradition that is practised in every cathedral throughout Britain.

[www.liverpoolphil.com](http://www.liverpoolphil.com)

[www.liverpoolcathedral.org.uk](http://www.liverpoolcathedral.org.uk)

By way of contrast, the ultra-modern **Sage Gateshead** sits on the banks of the River Tyne overlooking the city of Newcastle, in north-east England. This spectacular Norman Foster building hosts a varied mix of music of all descriptions.

[www.sagegateshead.com](http://www.sagegateshead.com)

For a more traditionally picturesque setting, the historic Buxton Opera House in Derbyshire, north of England, is the focus of the **Buxton Festival** every summer (8 - 24 July 2016). The lively mix of operas performed in this most enchanting venue has made it an important part of Britain's operatic calendar. The journey from London is about three hours by train.

[www.buxtonoperahouse.org.uk](http://www.buxtonoperahouse.org.uk)

If you're travelling to Britain in August then a trip to **Edinburgh**, the Scottish capital, is a must. Every year an impressive roster of classical musicians descend on the city for the renowned Edinburgh International Festival. Not to be outdone, **Glasgow**, Edinburgh's neighbour one hour away on the train, has a vibrant classical and opera scene, with its main focus at the Royal Glasgow Concert Hall and at the Theatre Royal, the home of Scottish Opera.

[www.eif.co.uk](http://www.eif.co.uk), [www.glasgowconcerthalls.com](http://www.glasgowconcerthalls.com), [www.scottishopera.org.uk](http://www.scottishopera.org.uk)

**Wales** impresses too, with its own opera company, the Welsh National Opera, which resides at the Millennium Centre on Cardiff Bay. The centre also presents a lively mixture of concerts that embrace everything from symphonic music to male voice choirs - the quintessential sound of Wales.

[www.wmc.org.uk](http://www.wmc.org.uk)

Three airports and numerous ferry crossings from England and Scotland make Northern Ireland very easy to reach. The capital **Belfast** is home to Ulster Hall, the traditional base for the city's classical music, and the more contemporary Waterfront, which features concerts at the more popular end of the classical spectrum.

[www.ulsterhall.co.uk](http://www.ulsterhall.co.uk), [www.waterfront.co.uk](http://www.waterfront.co.uk)

Away from Britain's main cities there is an abundance of small festivals in some beautiful locations. From Belfast it is one hour in the car to the stunning 17th-century castle at Glenarm. Each summer it plays host to Northern Ireland Opera's **Festival of Song** that showcases the very best up-and-coming singers from the island of Ireland.

[www.niopera.com/productions/festival-of-voice](http://www.niopera.com/productions/festival-of-voice)

Britain's smallest city, **St David's**, on the Pembrokeshire coast in south-west Wales, has its own festival that centres on its cathedral. Choral music and organ recitals figure strongly. The journey from London takes around four-and-a-half hours.

<http://stdavidscathedralfestival.co.uk>

In the south-western English county of Devon, amateur and professional musicians create music together in the idyllic surroundings of the **Dartington International Summer School**, so if you're a musician interested in playing while visiting Britain, it's well worth looking into. Situated near Totnes, the journey from London will take you just under four hours on the train.

[www.dartington.org/summer-school](http://www.dartington.org/summer-school)

Continue westwards and you'll discover the dramatic landscape of the north Cornish coast, the backdrop to the **St Endellion Festival**. Based in its charming parish church, chamber music, choral singing and opera are all featured in its annual Easter (26 March - 3 April 2016) and summer festivals (26 July - 7 August 2016).

[www.endellionfestivals.org.uk](http://www.endellionfestivals.org.uk)

You'll find open-air opera in **London's Holland Park**, while the glorious **Minack Theatre**, uniquely set into the rocks near Land's End in Cornwall in south-west England, includes both theatre and music in its programme. Listening to the seagulls is free!

[www.minack.com](http://www.minack.com)

Situated in the Sussex countryside, Glyndebourne attracts opera enthusiasts between May and August each year (21 May - 28 August 2016), who come to picnic in the stunning grounds and take in world-class opera in the state-of-the-art auditorium.

[www.glyndebourne.com](http://www.glyndebourne.com)



*Snape Maltings: the picturesque setting of the Aldeburgh Festival. Copyright Philip Vile*

Amid the bulrushes off the Suffolk coast in the east of England stands the Snape Maltings Concert Hall. Home to the famed **Aldeburgh Festival** (10 - 26 June 2016), founded by the composer Benjamin Britten, it presents over two weeks of classical music and opera each June, with a particular emphasis on the work of contemporary composers. Most visitors choose to stay in Aldeburgh five miles away, a lovely unspoilt fishing town that overlooks the North Sea. Aldeburgh can be reached by train from London in around two hours.

[www.aldeburgh.co.uk](http://www.aldeburgh.co.uk)

## Classical music locations in Britain

### Britten's Aldeburgh

The music of one of the 20th century's leading composers, Benjamin Britten, is closely associated with the Suffolk coastal town of Aldeburgh, east England, and the nearby Snape Maltings Concert Hall, home of the annual Aldeburgh Festival, one of the leading classical music festivals.

[www.aldeburgh.co.uk](http://www.aldeburgh.co.uk)

*Getting there: The nearest train station to Aldeburgh is Saxmundham, which takes two hours from London Liverpool Street, and there are buses and taxis to Aldeburgh.*

### Sir Peter Maxwell Davies

One of the foremost composers of our time, Sir Peter lives in the Orkney Islands off the north coast of Scotland, where he writes most of his music. In 1977, he founded the annual St Magnus Festival, Orkney's annual celebration of the arts, which has grown from small beginnings into one of Britain's most highly regarded and adventurous arts events.

[www.stmagnusfestival.com](http://www.stmagnusfestival.com)

*Getting there: There are flights from most Scottish airports to the Kirkwall in the Orkney Islands.*



*The rugged Orkney Islands, Scotland, where the annual St Magnus Festival takes place*

### Mendelssohn's Hebrides

Felix Mendelssohn was one of Queen Victoria's favourite composers and he was inspired by a visit to Scotland and the Fingal's Cave on the island of Staffa, to compose the Hebrides Overture.

[www.visithebrides.com](http://www.visithebrides.com)

*Getting there: There are flights to Stornoway from Glasgow, Edinburgh and Inverness as well as other islands in the Hebrides.*



*Stroll through charming Cotswold villages as Gustav Holst once did*

### Gustav Holst's Cheltenham

Although his name reveals his Swedish ancestry, the composer of the famous Planets suite was born in Cheltenham and taught in public schools in London and south east England, and spent some time living in the pretty Essex village of Thaxted. His birthplace in the elegant town of Cheltenham is now a museum, and you can explore his life more with special walks along the Gustav Holst Way through some of the prettiest scenery in the Cotswolds.

[www.holstmuseum.org.uk](http://www.holstmuseum.org.uk)

*Getting there: trains from London take two-and-a-half hours, changing at Bristol.*

### Elgar's Worcestershire

The composer of the music of *Land of Hope and Glory* (Pomp and Circumstance March No 1) was born just outside Worcester in the English Midlands, and The Elgar Birthplace Museum and Visitor Centre offers a fascinating insight into the life, music, family, friends, and musical inspirations of Sir Edward Elgar.

[www.elgarmuseum.org](http://www.elgarmuseum.org)

*Getting there: Getting to Worcester takes two hours 20 minutes by train from London Paddington.*

### Handel's House

Situated in London's Mayfair, the German-born composer lived here for 36 years until his death, and composed *The Messiah*, *Music for the Royal Fireworks* and *Zadok the Priest*. Later it was also home to a very different musician...Jimi Hendrix!

[www.handelhouse.org](http://www.handelhouse.org)

*Getting there: The nearest tube station is Bond Street underground.*

## Jazz in Britain

Jazz fans can take their pick of festivals dedicated to their favourite music genre, as well as specialist bars where they can sit back and listen to some smooth sounds.

### Jazz Festivals

Hundreds of jazz festivals take place annually across Britain, ranging from big-name events and busy urban weekends to smaller affairs in lovely locations.

## The bigger bashes

Held in mid-Wales every August, **Brecon Jazz** welcomes an international roster of musicians, while packing in masterclasses, special church services and an excellent Fringe festival. <http://breconjazz.com>

An upmarket July jamboree run by radio station Jazz FM, **Love Supreme** takes place in the grounds of south east England's Glynde Place country house, and also offers soul and funk. Most visitors camp. [www.lovesupremefestival.com](http://www.lovesupremefestival.com)



*Five days of soulful jazz at the Cheltenham Jazz Festival. Credit [mcpersonstevens.com](http://mcpersonstevens.com)*

Town-hall concerts compliment garden-marquee sessions during spring's five-day **Cheltenham Jazz Festival**. The west England spa town's Regency architecture makes for a classy, cultured vibe. [www.cheltenhamfestivals.com/jazz](http://www.cheltenhamfestivals.com/jazz)

Held for ten days over November, **London Jazz Festival** is the capital's largest annual music extravaganza. A clump of venues stage around 300 shows.

[www.efglondonjazzfestival.org.uk](http://www.efglondonjazzfestival.org.uk)

A-list superstars and the best young Scottish talent collide at June's five-day **Glasgow International Jazz Festival**, famous for its late-night jams. The Family Stone headlined this year. [www.jazzfest.co.uk](http://www.jazzfest.co.uk)

## Mid-Size festivals

Once notorious as a smugglers' haunt and one of south England's prettiest towns, Rye is now making waves for hosting jazz stars every August. Intimate ballrooms and National Trust properties are utilised for the **Rye International Jazz & Blues Festival**. <http://ryejazz.com>

Taking place in one of northern England's seaside resort towns, **Scarborough Jazz Festival** is a classy, September three-day event. Expect big bands, funky flautists and expressive vocalists. <http://jazz.scarboroughspa.co.uk>

Inventive venues used for September's **Lancaster Jazz**, in the historic north-east England town of Lancaster, include a local brewery and a castle-facing hotel whose afternoon teas accompany concerts. [www.lancasterjazz.com](http://www.lancasterjazz.com)

Jamie Cullum headlined May's **Derry Jazz & Big Band Festival** in 2015, held in Northern Ireland's handsome 'walled city' of Derry~Londonderry, two hours' drive from Belfast. Elsewhere, atmospheric speakeasy sets follow boisterous outdoor parades. [www.cityofderryjazzfestival.com](http://www.cityofderryjazzfestival.com)

## Bijou jazz festivals

A laid-back seaside affair held in May, the **Lyme Regis Jazz, Blues & Real Ale Weekend** sees performances at the chic south-west England town's Marine Theatre accompany brunch concerts and harbourfront busks. [www.lymeregisjazzfestival.co.uk](http://www.lymeregisjazzfestival.co.uk)

Held on a western Scottish isle 70 miles from Glasgow, September's quirky **Islay Jazz Festival** gets gumbo groups and brass bands playing at whisky distilleries (tastings available), birdwatching centres and pier bandstands. [www.islayjazzfestival.co.uk](http://www.islayjazzfestival.co.uk)

Every June in south-east Scotland - amid a riverside town where colourful houses encircle an imposing castle - the **Kirkcudbright Jazz Festival** occurs: 1920s and 1930s-style music delivered in restaurants, parades, chapels and a town hall.

[www.kirkcudbrightjazzfestival.co.uk](http://www.kirkcudbrightjazzfestival.co.uk)

Deep in north-west England's Lake District, May's longstanding **Keswick Jazz Festival** pairs four days of gigs with dance tutorials and talks. [www.keswickjazzfestival.com](http://www.keswickjazzfestival.com)

### Classic Jazz Venues

As well as devoted festivals, Britain also boasts a pack of world-leading, often legendary jazz bars - places which any jazz aficionado must visit.

Most famous of all is **Ronnie Scott's**, in Soho, central London. Named after, and founded by, the pioneering British saxophonist, the club has maintained the same low-lit



*Improv sets at South London's JAZZLIVE At The Crypt*

atmosphere and red lampshades since 1959. Two concerts are held nightly, with fine food served. All the greats have played here, and they still do. Advance booking is essential. [www.ronniescotts.co.uk](http://www.ronniescotts.co.uk)

For a completely different type of London adventure, head to the south of the capital and try **JAZZLIVE At The Crypt**. Established by a bop-loving minister, the Camberwell church basement is an authentic space in which to hear improv sets. [www.jazzlive.co.uk](http://www.jazzlive.co.uk)

In Cornwall in the far south west of England, **St Ives Jazz Club** was 2015's Jazz Venue of the Year in the hugely-respected Parliamentary Jazz Awards. Adjoining the Western Hotel - close to the beautiful town's Tate gallery - this Cornish, cabaret-style room hosts Tuesday-night shows, describing itself as "the last jazz club before New York." [www.stivesjazzclub.com](http://www.stivesjazzclub.com)

Opposite the main entrance to Cardiff Castle sits **Dempsey's**, long a focal point for the south Wales jazz scene, and a home to bebop, hard-bop, and fusion gigs on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings. Upstairs, Four Bars also puts on occasional jazz shows.

[www.jazzatdempseys.org.uk](http://www.jazzatdempseys.org.uk)

A dose of 1930's art-deco glamour is offered by **Berts' Jazz Bar** in Belfast, occupying a cosy corner of the luxurious The Merchant Hotel. Shows take place nightly and on weekend afternoons, with cocktails and dinners available. [www.themerchanthotel.com](http://www.themerchanthotel.com)



*Northern Ireland's Merchant Hotel goes big on jazz style*

Masterclasses, book launches and photography exhibitions complement concerts at Edinburgh's **Jazz Bar**, a lively basement venue in the Old Town. Soul and funk shows are also held, but jazz is the chief focus. [www.thejazzbar.co.uk](http://www.thejazzbar.co.uk)

A regular award-winner and popular with touring jazz musicians, Oxford's **The Spin** is set along one of the college town's echoey alleyways, an hour by train from London. Candlelit tables and excellent acoustics make for an intimate vibe, and an array of jazz cognoscenti tend to turn up. <http://spinjazz.net>

## Music on a budget

Do you want to see some fantastic live music in Britain but don't want to spend too much on tickets? Across the destination music fans will find a wealth of interesting, purse-friendly venues where you can see everything from classical music to up-and-coming rock and pop acts. Britain's vibrant festival scene is another way visitors can save money by cramming in dozens of gigs within a few days.

Seeing great live music in Britain that won't cost the earth is easy, if you are in the right place at the right time.



### The right place.....

One of the most budget friendly and eye catching music venues in central London is **St Martin in the Fields** church in Trafalgar Square. Throughout the week it hosts free lunchtime classical music recitals to offer a welcome break from the hustle and bustle of sightseeing.

*A musical lunchtime; head to the free weekday recitals at London's St Martin in the Fields church. Credit Marc Gascoigne*

[www.stmartin-in-the-fields.org](http://www.stmartin-in-the-fields.org).

If you prefer to see more contemporary music in the capital, **The Lexington**, on Pentonville Road, east London, runs its free Hangover Lounge event on Sundays from 11.00 - 20.00, featuring often established alternative rock, indie pop, country and soul bands playing soothing sounds for those in need of musical recovery from a busy Saturday night.

[www.thelexington.co.uk](http://www.thelexington.co.uk)

One of the west of England's most unusual budget venues is the **Thekla**, a cargo ship moored by the Bristol quayside. Refurbished during the 1980s as a floating venue it is now permanently moored and showcases up-and-coming and well-known rock and pop acts at budget friendly prices. Tickets often range from under £10 to £20.

[www.theklabristol.co.uk](http://www.theklabristol.co.uk)

Music fans and history enthusiasts get a double hit at Northern Ireland's **Bronte Music Club**. The club's venue is a stunning 18th-century deconsecrated church and old school house in Drumballyroney, County Down, south of Belfast. It now plays host to country and Americana acts at an affordable price but used to be where novelists the Bronte sisters' father Patrick taught.

[www.brontemusicclub.com](http://www.brontemusicclub.com)

In Scotland, Edinburgh's vintage music and bookshop **Elvis Shakespeare** is the place to be for those looking for free live music, as it plays host to regular in-store gigs. While in Glasgow, the **Mono Cafebar** offers a range of cut-price and unusual music events, including a baby disco for families, as well as local acts for free or at a low price.

[www.elvisshakespeare.com](http://www.elvisshakespeare.com), [www.monocafebar.com](http://www.monocafebar.com).



*Gentle on the purse, big on great music: the Thekla in Bristol. Credit Theo Cottle*

## ...and the right time

May to September is the best time to visit Britain's incredible range of music festivals, each offering a unique experience and often the chance to see top name acts.

**Glastonbury Festival** at Worthy Farm, Pilton, in central Somerset, west England, is perhaps the most well-known British festival. It offers visitors the chance to see hundreds of acts, from the biggest stars to the newest bands, across more than 100 stages over five days every June. Be warned though: tickets, which go on sale in October, sell out fast. But even if you don't get your hands on one, there are other ways to attend; there are a raft of volunteering opportunities to work a handful of shifts at the event in exchange for a free ticket. The vInspired charity is a good place to find out about such opportunities.



*Volunteering at Glastonbury can be an inspired way of seeing the music acts for free! Credit Joe Lepper*

[www.glastonburyfestivals.co.uk](http://www.glastonburyfestivals.co.uk), [www.vinspired.com](http://www.vinspired.com)

Oxfam also offers volunteering opportunities for its annual **Oxjam** series of events. Taking place each October this involves a raft of purse-friendly gigs across the country to raise money for the charity.

[www.oxfam.org.uk/oxjam](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/oxjam)

The Welsh town of Portmeirion, built in the style of an Italian village on the North Wales coast in the 1920s and famous as the setting for 1960s British TV show *The Prisoner*, hosts a music festival each September called **Festival No. 6** (1 - 4 September 2016). The event is arguably one of the Britain's most scenic festivals and features well-known rock and pop acts, classical music, choirs and book readings. Grab the chance at first-tier ticket sales via their website, where a Friday arrival adult ticket (no camping) is from £160.

[www.festivalnumber6.com](http://www.festivalnumber6.com)

**Indietracks** is another of Britain's most interesting music festivals (29 - 31 July 2016). Taking place at the Midland Railway Museum, near Ripley, Derbyshire, in central England, this purse-friendly festival features emerging and established alternative and indie music bands across three days playing aboard steam trains, the railway's chapel and engine shed as well as a large outdoor stage. Look out for early bird tickets on its website, released nearer the festival dates.

[www.indietracks.co.uk](http://www.indietracks.co.uk)

If bigger name acts appeal there are cost-friendly ways to get into the major concerts. Timing is key to ensuring you get tickets before they sell out; access early discounts through email alerts from the major ticket sellers such as **Ticketmaster**.

[www.ticketmaster.co.uk](http://www.ticketmaster.co.uk)

## In fine voice: Opera in Britain

Opera has undergone something of a renaissance in Britain in recent years, opening out from a handful of opera houses to include festivals in country houses, gardens, and live relays of performances on big screens in town and city centres. Summer is one of the best times to enjoy opera; pack a picnic, dress up a little and enjoy the finest classical music under starlit British skies.



*La Traviata will run at London's Royal Opera House in early 2016. Credit Catherine Ashmore*

### Opera in the City

Probably one of the best known locations for opera in the world, the Royal Opera House (ROH) in London's Covent Garden first opened its doors in 1858 and has welcomed the most famous names in opera, from Maria Callas to Luciano Pavarotti. Each season, the programme combines mainstream opera with new or more unusual works; the 2016 season kicks off with *La Traviata* (January - March 2016), while summer sees the ROH debut of renowned director David Bosch, with a new production of *Il Trovatore* (July).

[www.roh.org](http://www.roh.org)

*Getting there: The nearest underground station is Covent Garden (Piccadilly line).*

For those who prefer opera sung in English, the English National Opera is a good choice. The big draw for 2016 will be Glenn Close's reprisal of her Broadway success as Norma Desmond in *Sunset Boulevard*, which will run from 1 April 2016 for five weeks.

[www.eno.org](http://www.eno.org)

*Getting there: The nearest underground stations are Leicester Square/Charing Cross (Northern & Bakerloo lines)*

In Wales, the capital city of Cardiff (around three hours drive west of London) is home to the renowned Welsh National Opera (WNO), which specialises in making opera accessible to everyone. Its programme always includes classics such as *Tosca* or *Sweeney Todd*, but each season they also present new productions, such as *Figaro Gets a Divorce* (February - April 2016) which carries on the tale of the Almaviva household, depicted in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*. Based at the Millennium Centre in Cardiff, WNO also performs at Venue Cymru in Llandudno (around two hours west of Manchester) and in Bristol, Bath, Plymouth and Southampton, all in south England.

[www.wno.org.uk](http://www.wno.org.uk)

Although Scottish Opera has its base in Glasgow, and holds many performances at the city's elegant Royal Concert Hall, the company also tours constantly, ensuring that opera reaches every corner of Scotland, from city centres to village community halls. Highlights for 2016 include *The Mikado* (May - June) and *HMS Pinafore* (August) as well as the world premiere of *The Devil Inside*, a new opera by Louise Welch.

[www.scottishopera.org.uk](http://www.scottishopera.org.uk)

## Alfresco Opera

The chance to see opera in a stately home, or on a country estate, makes for an unforgettable experience. West Green House & Gardens is a traditional English manor house, dating back to 1720, with gardens that host opera performances in late July and early August. The dress code is black tie and guests can picnic on the lawns, or opt for a more formal 'interval' dinner, with menus created by celebrated chef Anton Mosimann. Operas tend to be well-known works by composers such as Mozart or Toscanini.

[www.westgreenhouseopera.co.uk](http://www.westgreenhouseopera.co.uk)

*Getting there: West Green is a short taxi ride from Winchfield Station, which is just under an hour's train journey from London Waterloo.*

In the rolling Chiltern Hills, an hour west of London, Garsington Opera is a six-week programme of alfresco performances in the beautiful Wormsley Estate, home of the Getty family. The Opera Pavilion has been built next to the lake, but guests arriving early can also explore the gorgeous walled garden and cricket ground. The 2016 programme includes *Eugene Onegin* and Mozart's *Idomeneo*, as well as a rare chance to see Haydn's *The Creation*.

[www.garsingtonopera.org](http://www.garsingtonopera.org)

From July to September, occasional performances from the Royal Opera House are relayed to BP Big Screens in towns and cities around Britain. There is no charge to watch the opera, but it's worth arriving early to grab a good space (and don't forget to bring a rug and a picnic).

[www.roh.org.uk/about/bp-big-screens](http://www.roh.org.uk/about/bp-big-screens)

## Opera Festivals

Surrounded by the spectacular natural landscapes of the Peak District, central England, the former spa town of Buxton hosts an arts festival each July that has grown to become one of the premier opera festivals in the country. The town's Edwardian opera house was restored to its former glory in 2001 and, during the festival, hosts performances of well-known operas as well as more innovative works by touring companies. Dates for 2016 are 8 - 24 July, and the programme will include *Tamerlano* by Handel and *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* by Bellini.

[www.buxtonfestival.co.uk](http://www.buxtonfestival.co.uk)

*Getting there: Buxton is around three hours from London by train, changing at Stockport.*

Opera festivals aren't reserved just for the countryside; in the centre of London, Opera Holland Park is an annual event that takes place against the atmospheric backdrop of the ruined Holland Park House, which dates back to the 17th century, located in one of the capital's most peaceful green spaces. In 2016, visitors will have the chance to see *La*



*Arrive early and explore the grounds of the Wormsley Estate, home to the alfresco Garsington Opera. Credit Clive-Barda*

*Boheme* and *Die Fliedermaus*, while families will enjoy *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* - specially commissioned by Opera Holland Park.

[www.operahollandpark.com](http://www.operahollandpark.com)

*Getting there: The nearest underground is Holland Park, on the Central line.*

Perhaps one of the most famous places for opera in Britain is Glyndebourne, a stunning country estate tucked away in the Sussex hills, around an hour's drive south of London. Glyndebourne first began in 1934 and has become one of the most celebrated opera houses in the world, with a state-of-the-art auditorium combined with beautiful gardens, where many guests picnic in black tie and elegant evening gowns. A visit to Glyndebourne is about more than just the opera; in the summer there is a pop-up White Cube - an outpost of one of London's most famous modern art galleries - and there are several dining options, from full meals to afternoon tea.



*Elegant picnics, black tie, evening gowns...and a spot of opera at Glyndebourne! Credit Sam Stephenson*

The 2016 season runs from 23 May - 28 August and the programme includes *Le Nozze di Figaro* by Mozart and Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*. For visitors in the autumn months, the Glyndebourne company goes on tour, visiting theatres around the destination for one-night performances.

[www.glyndebourne.com](http://www.glyndebourne.com)

## Traditional British music

Britain's musical traditions are rich and varied and there is still plenty to enjoy and get involved with today across the land, from ceilidh dancing in Scotland to fiddle music sessions in Northern Ireland.

### Scotland

Scotland's folk scene is world-renowned; many local pubs host live music nights - the **Royal Oak** bar, near Edinburgh's Royal Mile, is famed for its nightly traditional live music.

[www.royal-oak-folk.com](http://www.royal-oak-folk.com)

The highlight of Scotland's folk calendar is annual winter festival **Celtic Connections** in Glasgow, welcoming local and international musicians and attracting fans from around the world.

[www.celticconnections.com](http://www.celticconnections.com)

Festivals in the north of Scotland, including the **Bias Festival** and **Royal National Mòd** in the Highlands, celebrate Scotland's Gaelic heritage through music and dance.

[www.blas-festival.com](http://www.blas-festival.com), [www.acgmod.org/nationalmod](http://www.acgmod.org/nationalmod)

Bagpipes are synonymous with Scotland and pipe music is part of many and varied traditions. Popular band the **Red Hot Chilli Pipers** even offer a rock 'n' roll take on the traditional instrument.

[www.redhotchillipipers.co.uk](http://www.redhotchillipipers.co.uk)

Every year the **World Pipe Band Championships** take place at Glasgow Green in the city centre.

Try your hand at piping at Castle Bagpipes'

annual **Edinburgh Piping and Drumming Summer School** with its classes and workshops for all ages and abilities.

[www.theworlds.co.uk/Pages/home.aspx](http://www.theworlds.co.uk/Pages/home.aspx), [www.castlebagpipes.co.uk](http://www.castlebagpipes.co.uk)

Traditional ceilidhs, reels and jigs are key to Scotland's musical heritage. Beginners needn't be nervous about getting involved - ceilidh bands have a 'caller' to take everyone through the steps before each dance. The **Edinburgh Ceilidh Club** host weekly dances at Summerhall, a short walk from the city centre. Get kitted out by family-run kilt specialists **Kinloch Anderson** in Leith while you're at it.

[www.edinburghceilidhs.com](http://www.edinburghceilidhs.com), [www.kinlochanderson.com](http://www.kinlochanderson.com)

The **Scottish Storytelling Centre** in Edinburgh is keeping this historic custom alive; its annual 'BurnsFest', dedicated to Scotland's Bard, includes storytelling, music and traditional Burns Suppers.

[www.tracscotland.org](http://www.tracscotland.org)

## Wales

Wales is famed for its tradition of choral singing, which has thrived in the valleys since the 19th century. Its male voice choirs, such as the **Treorchy Male Choir**, have been recognised as the world's greatest choir ensembles for 130 years.

[www.treorchymalechoir.com](http://www.treorchymalechoir.com)

Choir music was popularised through sporting events, especially Wales' national sport of **rugby**: in 1905, Wales was the first country to sing a national anthem at the start of an international match - a great way to soak up patriotic music.

[www.wru.co.uk](http://www.wru.co.uk)

The annual three-day **North Wales Choral Festival** in seaside resort Llandudno celebrates choir music with competitions and performances by the country's most talented singers.

[www.northwaleschoralfestival.com](http://www.northwaleschoralfestival.com)



*The Red Hot Chilli Pipers fuse traditional with modern - and the results are hot!*



*The Treorchy Welsh Male Voice choir assemble outside the Wales Millennium Centre - it you think they look impressive, wait 'till you hear them!*

The annual **Eisteddfod** festival celebrates Welsh language, music and culture - a tradition dating back to the 12th century - alternating between north and south Wales each year.

[www.eisteddfod.org.uk/english](http://www.eisteddfod.org.uk/english)

### Northern Ireland

Northern Irish traditional music dates back to medieval times and is still popular today; traditional 'sessions' - where musicians gather to play rousing reels and jigs - take place all over the country. **McHughs** bar is the oldest building in the city of Belfast, famed for its sessions, which visitors and locals can enjoy every Wednesday night and Saturday afternoon.

[www.mchughsbar.com](http://www.mchughsbar.com)

Further afield in Toomebridge, a 30-minute drive from Belfast, is the **Crosskeys Inn**. The oldest thatched pub in Northern Ireland, it is one of the country's most famous traditional music pubs, attracting musicians from all over Ireland and beyond to its weekly Saturday music sessions.

[www.loughbeg-cce.com/main.htm](http://www.loughbeg-cce.com/main.htm)

Northern Ireland hosts a diverse range of annual festivals in spectacular venues. **International Uilleann Piping Festival** in Derry~Londonderry (a 90-minute drive from Belfast) celebrates the distinctive Irish instrument similar to Scottish bagpipes.

[www.culturlann-doire.ie](http://www.culturlann-doire.ie)

Derry~Londonderry is known as the City of Song. The **Feis** is the largest celebration of Irish musical culture, language, verse and drama in north-west Ireland, while the **Pan Celtic Festival** comes to Derry~Londonderry every Easter, attracting visitors from around the world.

[www.derryfeis.com/home](http://www.derryfeis.com/home), [www.panceltic.ie](http://www.panceltic.ie)

There are plenty of hands-on opportunities to learn about Northern Ireland's musical history too, including the **Belfast Music Exhibition and Tour**, or why not learn to play a traditional instrument at Derry~Londonderry cultural hub **Cultúrlann Uí Chanáin**?

[www.belfastmusic.org/exhibition.aspx](http://www.belfastmusic.org/exhibition.aspx), [www.culturlann-doire.ie](http://www.culturlann-doire.ie)

### England

Traditional English folk music has many regional and local variations. The **English Folk Dance and Song society** runs a vibrant calendar of events - from English country dancing classes to opulent balls inspired by Jane Austen - at award-winning folk arts centre Cecil Sharp House in central London. **Folkworks** in Newcastle, north-east England, has weekly classes and summer schools for all ages.

[www.cecilsharpouse.org](http://www.cecilsharpouse.org), [www.sagegateshead.com/about-us/folkworks](http://www.sagegateshead.com/about-us/folkworks)

Traditional Morris dancing has been part of English life for more than 600 years. There are six main regional variations on the dance; most involve traditional pipe or fiddle music and the wearing of bellpads on the shins. The **Morris Organisations** hold an annual joint day of dance, this year hosted by Cambridge Morris Men.

[www.themorrisring.org](http://www.themorrisring.org)

The 50-year-old **Cambridge Folk Festival** is one of the longest-running international folk festivals and will be running from 20 July - 2 August in 2016.

[www.cambridgefolkfestival.co.uk](http://www.cambridgefolkfestival.co.uk)

## Where to experience world music in Britain

Britain is a melting pot of different nationalities and cultures, which is just one of the elements that make it such a unique destination. With a variety of cultures comes a variety of music; from WOMAD in Wiltshire, south-west England, and Indian melas in Edinburgh to salsa in London, we bring you a rundown of where to find world music festivals and venues in Britain.

### World music festivals and events

#### **WOMAD Festival - Charlton Park, Malmesbury, Wiltshire, south-west England**

**2016 dates:** 28 - 31 July

The ultimate in world-music celebrations, this international culture feast brings together many forms of music, arts and dance. The main arena holds at least five main stages, with a further one in the Arboretum.

**How do I get tickets?** Tickets for next year will be available online from the website [www.womad.co.uk/tickets](http://www.womad.co.uk/tickets).

**How do I get there?** There is a special coach service offered from London Victoria directly to WOMAD for the festival weekend. The closest train station to the festival is Chippenham - less than an hour and a half from London - and a frequent bus service runs between the station and the festival site.

[www.womad.org](http://www.womad.org)

#### **Bath International Music Festival - Somerset, south-west England**

**2016 dates:** 20 - 30 May

A diverse mix of classical, jazz, world, folk, roots and electronica performed by some of the world's finest musicians across various venues in the World Heritage City of Bath, including the Assembly Rooms, the Pavilion and Bath Abbey. Highlights from 2015's event included Hugh Masekela, Willard White, John Butt, Thomas Trotter and Stile Antico.

**How do I get tickets?** Email [info@bathfestivals.org.uk](mailto:info@bathfestivals.org.uk)

**How do I get there?** There are regular train services direct from London Paddington and London Waterloo to Bath Spa, with an average journey time of around 90 minutes.

[www.bathfestivals.org.uk/music](http://www.bathfestivals.org.uk/music)



*The world of music at your fingertips; WOMAD is the ultimate celebration of world music*

## **African: Africa Oye - Sefton Park, Liverpool, north-west England**

**2016 dates:** 18 - 19 June

The largest celebration of live African music in Britain, Africa Oyé attracts more than 50,000 people. Previous headliners include Omar, Gordon Masiala and BKO Quintet. The festival has also programmed music from South America, including Salsa, Soca and Reggae.

**How do I get tickets?** The event is free - just turn up!

**How do I get there?** Liverpool has two international airports on its doorstep and is only two and a quarter hours Central London by train, or 45 minutes from Manchester.

[www.africaoye.com](http://www.africaoye.com)



*Carnival, colour and Calypso! Enjoy the party atmosphere of London's Notting Hill Carnival. Credit VisitBritain / Jon Spaul*

## **Caribbean: Notting Hill Carnival, London**

**2016 dates:** 28 - 29 August

One of the world's largest street festivals, Notting Hill Carnival is led by members of the British West Indian community and attracts around one million people annually. Come to enjoy the carnival atmosphere with brightly bedecked floats and costumed performers, Calypso music, steel bands and mouth-watering Caribbean food stalls. Don't leave without trying some authentic jerk chicken!

**How do I get tickets?** The event is free to attend.

**How do I get there?** Travelling to the carnival within London is busy so it's best to plan ahead. The closest tube stations are usually closed to avoid overcrowding, so check Transport for London website ([www.tfl.gov.uk](http://www.tfl.gov.uk)) for live updates before you travel.

[www.thenottinghillcarnival.com](http://www.thenottinghillcarnival.com)

## **Country and Western / Americana:**

**C2C: Country to Country - The O2, Greenwich, London**

**2016 Dates:** 11 - 13 March

Yee-ha! Nashville comes to London with this multi-day country music festival in association with the Country Music Association. After just two years it has become Europe's largest country music festival.

**How do I get tickets?** Visit [www.c2c-countrytocountry.com/tickets/tickets-the-o2](http://www.c2c-countrytocountry.com/tickets/tickets-the-o2)

**How do I get there?** The closest tube station is North Greenwich on the Jubilee Line and it takes 20 minutes from central London. An alternative is to catch the MBNA Thames Clippers river bus express; boats go direct from London Eye pier to The O2, leaving every 30 minutes with a journey time of 35 minutes.

[www.theo2.co.uk/visit-us/getting-to-the-o2](http://www.theo2.co.uk/visit-us/getting-to-the-o2), [www.c2c-countrytocountry.com](http://www.c2c-countrytocountry.com)

## **SummerTyne Americana Festival - Gateshead, north-east England**

**2016 dates:** 22 - 24 July

This jam-packed weekend brings the finest American roots music from both sides of the Atlantic to the bank of the river Tyne. Bring your banjo and cowboy hat!

The programme includes southern soul, blues and gospel alongside country, rock and Americana stars. 2015 headliners included Emmylou Harris & Rodney Crowell, Rosanne Cash, John Leventhal and The Shires.

**How do I get tickets?** Email [TicketOffice@sagegateshead.com](mailto:TicketOffice@sagegateshead.com)

**How do I get there?** The venue is located on Gateshead Quays between the Tyne and Gateshead Millennium Bridges. The nearest train station is Newcastle Central, around three hours from London King's Cross, or 90 minutes from Edinburgh. The venue is a 25-minute drive from Newcastle International Airport.

[www.sagegateshead.com/tour-dates/summertyne-americana-festival-2015](http://www.sagegateshead.com/tour-dates/summertyne-americana-festival-2015)

### **Folk:**

## **The Cambridge Folk Festival - Cherry Hinton Hall Grounds, Cambridge, east England**

**2016 dates:** August (Dates TBC)

One of the longest running and most famous folk festivals in the world, 2016 will be the 52nd year of this sell-out event. Previous headliners include Passenger and The Proclaimers.

**How do I get tickets?** Book online at [www.cambridgelivetrust.co.uk/folk-festival/tickets](http://www.cambridgelivetrust.co.uk/folk-festival/tickets)

**How do I get there?** Cambridge is less than 90 minutes from London by train. The nearest airport is London Stansted and there is a direct train from London Stansted to Cambridge train station.

[www.cambridgelivetrust.co.uk/folk-festival](http://www.cambridgelivetrust.co.uk/folk-festival)

### **Indian:**

## **Edinburgh Mela Festival - Leith Links, Edinburgh, Scotland**

**2016 dates:** August (Dates TBC)

The Edinburgh Mela is an annual two-day festival celebrating the best in world music and dance, showcasing the talents of Edinburgh's ethnic minorities and attracting colourful Bollywood-inspired acts and bhangra beats from southern Asia.

**How do I get there?** If you're travelling from outside Edinburgh city, hop on a train to Edinburgh Waverley where you can catch a direct bus from the city centre to Leith Links.

**How do I get tickets?** Visit [www.edinburgh-mela.co.uk](http://www.edinburgh-mela.co.uk) for more information.

## Jazz:

### **The Brecon Jazz Festival - Brecon Beacons, south Wales**

**2016 dates:** August (Dates TBC)

Complete with stunning backdrop, this acclaimed jazz festival has played host to a range of legendary jazz musicians from across the world, including Courtney Pine, Dr John and Ray Davies.

**How do I get tickets?** Visit [www.breconjazz.com/tickets](http://www.breconjazz.com/tickets)

**How do I get there?** The nearest train stations are Abergavenny and Merthyr Tydfil if you change from the Paddington / South Wales line at either Newport or Cardiff. Check Traveline Cymru for more information: [www.traveline-cymru.info](http://www.traveline-cymru.info)

[www.breconjazz.com](http://www.breconjazz.com)

## Latin:

### **London Latin Jazz Fest - Soho, central London**

**2016 dates:** Late September / early October (Dates TBC)

Pianist and band leader Alex Wilson brings his London Latin Jazz Festival to Jazz Club Soho at Pizza Express in Dean Street. Watch this space for more information about next year's event.

**How do I get tickets?** Book online.

**How do I get there?** The closest tube station is Tottenham Court Road. For more information about the venue, visit [www.pizzaexpresslive.com/jazzVenue.aspx](http://www.pizzaexpresslive.com/jazzVenue.aspx).

[www.londonlatinjazzfest.com](http://www.londonlatinjazzfest.com)

## **7 of London's best world music venues!**

Here we highlight some of the best concert venues programming world music across the capital, as well as the hottest bars and clubs for cocktails served with ethnic beats!

### **Barbican**

Celebrated for pushing boundaries across music, dance, film, music, theatre and visual arts, Europe's largest multi-arts and conference venue welcomes big names in jazz, folk, world, roots, soul, country and contemporary classical. World-famous artists who have graced the stage include Cecilia Bartoli, Evgeny Kissin, Renée Fleming, Andreas Scholl and Yo-Yo Ma.

[www.barbican.org.uk](http://www.barbican.org.uk)



*Jazz favourites at South Wales' Brecon Jazz Festival. Credit VisitBritain/Britain on View*



*World music is always on the programme at London's Barbican. Credit Visit Britain/Britain on View*

## Southbank Centre

This group of artistic venues on the South Bank of the River Thames between Hungerford Bridge and Waterloo Bridge boasts an impressive programme of music from all over the world. Check out upcoming performances on the website.

[www.southbankcentre.co.uk](http://www.southbankcentre.co.uk)

## St Ethelburga's

The unique 'music of the world' programme at this intimate live venue in a former medieval church spans everything from Middle Eastern jazz to Latin American roots.

[www.stethelburgas.org](http://www.stethelburgas.org)

## Bar Salsa!

This lively South American restaurant, bar and dance club is one of the capital's best destinations to salsa the night away. The venue also runs daily salsa classes if you need to brush up on your moves.

[www.bar-salsa.com](http://www.bar-salsa.com)

## Guanabara

One of the capital's premier Brazilian bar and samba clubs comes complete with live samba shows, costumed carnival dancers and moreish caipirinhas!

[www.guanabara.co.uk](http://www.guanabara.co.uk)

## Rich Mix

The bar at this Shoreditch arts centre features contemporary world music, from live dhol drumming troupes to Afri-kokoa club nights.

[www.rickmix.org.uk](http://www.rickmix.org.uk)

## Momo's

The basement den of this award-winning Moroccan restaurant oozes Middle Eastern opulence and transforms into a global party with its weekly line-up of world music performers and DJ sets, such as São Paulo rapper Criolo.

[www.momoresto.com](http://www.momoresto.com)

## Music museums and halls of fame

Britain has a rich musical legacy, both popular and classical. Take a trip down musical memory lane at some of the country's dedicated museums and music experiences.

### Royal Academy of Music Museum - London

See Gilbert and Sullivan's original score for *The Mikado*, explore unique instruments such as a tiny piccolo violin and a Renaissance lute, and study rare archive material from great musicians across the three galleries of exhibits in Britain's oldest conservatoire. World-

renowned school the Royal Academy of Music is *the* place to visit for a deep understanding of how musical history was shaped. Wander through the Strings Gallery for views of priceless violins or head through the Piano Gallery, which showcases valuable keyboard instruments from the 17th to the 20th century. You'll get an in-depth insight into the exhibits as the tours are led by current Academy students.

[www.ram.ac.uk/museum](http://www.ram.ac.uk/museum)

### **British Music Experience - Liverpool**

After five years at London's O2 Arena, this prominent British music attraction is currently making the permanent move to Liverpool's Cunard Building and is due to open in mid-2016. Rock, pop, punk and rave your way through 70 years of Britain's popular music history through images, video and music memorabilia ranging from John Lennon's iconic glasses to Geri Halliwell's Union Jack dress. Find out about the childhoods, the early careers and the successes of bands such as The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Sex Pistols, Spice Girls and more. This is an interactive experience - twist, rave or disco in the Dance the Decades booth, explore how music's been played and stored over the decades, and record a well-known song in the Interactive Studio. It's your time to shine!

[www.britishmusicexperience.com](http://www.britishmusicexperience.com)

*How to get there: Liverpool is just over two hours by train from London Euston and an hour by train from Manchester.*



*The Beatles Story in Liverpool - find out all about the Fab Four*

### **Beatles Story - Liverpool**

Revel in a journey through the childhoods, early days, world domination and solo careers of Liverpool's most famous sons - John, Paul, George and Ringo - at the world's largest permanent exhibition about the Fab Four. Audio guides narrated by John Lennon's sister Julia, a behind-the-scenes look at Abbey Road Studios and a replica of the Cavern Club are all enhanced further by the museum's special exhibitions programme. View never-seen-before images of the band and take a

trip through the Fab 4D experience where you'll meet a unique set of characters relating the story of The Beatles' music.

[www.beatlesstory.com](http://www.beatlesstory.com)

*How to get there: Liverpool is just over two hours by train from London Euston and an hour by train from Manchester.*

### **Oh Yeah Centre - Belfast**

As well as its daytime job as a performance space, Belfast's Oh Yeah Centre documents the history of Northern Ireland's music, from its folk origins to the global superstardom of Snow Patrol. Fans of The Undertones, Stiff Little Fingers and Gary Moore will be treated to audio-visual displays of these artists, while the exhibition features one-of-a-kind rock memorabilia that influenced the likes of Van Morrison. And, if you're a Snow Patrol fan,

you'll love the Fender guitar on display that lead singer Gary Lightbody used to write *Chasing Cars*.

[www.ohyeahbelfast.com](http://www.ohyeahbelfast.com)

*How to get there: The Oh Yeah Centre is located in central Belfast, itself around an hour's flight from London.*

### **Hard Rock Cafes - London, Manchester, Edinburgh, Glasgow**

Not technically museums, but the Hard Rock Cafes have such a brilliant mix of rock and pop memorabilia you can happily browse the displays while waiting for your meal to arrive. Hit the London location and you could be sitting by Eric Clapton's Fender Lead II guitar, Madonna's iconic pink bustier or John Lennon's glasses and military jacket. Or you could head down into 'The Vault', located in the old Coutts Bank, now the café shop - it's here you'll find the most valuable memorabilia in Hard Rock's collection, such as the harpsichord used by The Beatles to record *All You Need Is Love* and *Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds*.



*The famed Vault at the Hard Rock Cafe in London, where you can see memorabilia galore*

If you're in the Manchester Hard Rock you'll see an Elton John suit, a 1955 Gibson J-45 guitar owned by Oasis' Liam Gallagher and a letter sent by George Harrison to Stuart Sutcliffe in 1960. Edinburgh's venue boasts a tuxedo worn and signed by Mick Jagger and memorabilia from Guns 'n' Roses guitarist Slash, while the latest Hard Rock Cafe opened in Glasgow.

[www.hardrock.com](http://www.hardrock.com)

### **Royal College of Music Museum - London**

If you're keen on seeing the earliest surviving stringed keyboard instrument or more unusual instruments such as the serpent, division viol and the fascinatingly named contrabassophon, head to the museum at the famous Royal College of Music. It's full of treasures dating back to the 15th century; as well as a collection of more than 1,000 instruments there are manuscripts, letters, paintings and photographs of some of the world's most famous classical musicians.

[www.rcm.ac.uk/events/museum](http://www.rcm.ac.uk/events/museum)

*How to get there: The nearest underground station is South Kensington.*

### **Handel & Hendrix in London at the Handel House Museum, Mayfair**

The 18th-century house at 25 Brook Street, London, was home to the renowned baroque composer George Frideric Handel, who composed some of the most memorable pieces of music in history here, including perhaps one of his greatest works, *Messiah*.



*The Rehearsal and Performance Room in the Handel House Museum by James Mortimer © The Handel House Trust Ltd*

The top floor flat, 23 Brook Street, was home to Jimi Hendrix during a pivotal period of his life - some 240 years after Handel - and will open permanently to the public on **10 February 2016**. Following a £2.4 million, two-year period of restoration, building and development, the upper floor rooms will be a genuinely unique new heritage site, celebrating the lives of two great musical figures. The Hendrix Flat exhibition will make 23 Brook Street the only Hendrix home in the world open to the public.

[www.handelhouse.org](http://www.handelhouse.org)

*How to get there: The nearest underground station to the museum is Bond Street.*

### The Musical Museum at Kew Bridge - London

Definitely one of the capital's quirkiest music museums, especially if you're looking for a fascinating collection of self-playing instruments! The museum aims to showcase how music was played and listened to in the days before electronics. From the tiniest of clockwork musical boxes to the 'Mighty Wurlitzer' jukebox, visitors can browse the diverse collection of reproducing pianos, orchestrions, orchestrelles, residence organs and self-playing violins. Check out the museum's range of dances, concerts and films in its Concert Hall too.

[www.musicalmuseum.co.uk](http://www.musicalmuseum.co.uk)

*How to get there: The nearest station to the museum is Kew Bridge.*



*The Musical Museum at Kew Bridge - one of the quirkiest museums of London*

### The Museum of Piping - Glasgow

Housed in the National Piping Centre, visitors can experience 300 years of piping heritage. Artefacts hail from the collections from the National Museums of Scotland and includes the oldest surviving chanter of the Highland bagpipe anywhere in the world - that of Iain Dall (Blind John) MacKay (1650-1740). Bagpipes on display feature those from lowland Scotland and other parts of Britain, as well as from Europe. The exhibition also covers bagpipe manufacturing and pipe music.

[www.thepipingcentre.co.uk/museum-heritage](http://www.thepipingcentre.co.uk/museum-heritage)

*How to get there: The museum is located in central Glasgow.*

## Swing back in time



*The British swing dance scene is booming! Grab your dancing shoes and head to one of the many swing dance classes held in Britain. Credit Hayley Madden*

Originating in the 1920s in Harlem, New York, swing is the name for a group of dances with Afro-American Roots that over the next few decades grew into a dance craze! Brought to village halls across Britain by African-American GIs who arrived during World War II, the style, energy and fun of swing dancing to big band jazz music was the precursor to jive, rock-and-roll and hip hop. Today, swing is back in fashion and the British scene is thriving. So grab a retro panama hat or a 1940s prom dress, lace up your dancing shoes and swing into action at one of Britain's courses, drop-in classes, club nights or socials.

In London, **Swing Dance UK** hold classes throughout the week all over the capital, from Sunday Swing in Covent Garden where beginners and improvers learn Lindy Hop; to Speakeasy Blues, a weekly event packed with an eclectic mix of great vintage and contemporary swing, Jazz and Blues, from Duke Ellington and Billie Holiday to Muddy Waters and Diana Krall. They also host popular socials such as the Black and White Christmas Ball, an old-fashioned night full of live music, dance and retro costumes.

*Beginners are welcome at classes and can usually show up without prior booking. Socials are preticketed and sometimes have an era-appropriate dress-code.*

[www.swingdanceuk.com](http://www.swingdanceuk.com)

Elsewhere in the south east of England, **Jive Swing**, dubbed Britain's friendliest Swing Dance club, holds weekly classes and workshops. Their world-class team of teachers, choreographers and dancers are experts in Savoy-style Lindy Hop, Blues, 20s Charleston, Cake Walk, Black Bottom, Balboa and Authentic Jazz. For those seeking to immerse themselves in the 1940s swing scene, every year Jive Swing host **Goodnight Sweetheart** (GNSH), one of Britain's longest running international Swing Dance camps, which attracts dancers from all over the world, many of them keen to meet the 'Queen of Swing' Norma Miller. A three-day affair, after plenty of performance, dance and socialising, GNSH comes to a glamorous end at the 1940s ball, when people dress up in their finest vintage attire and swing out with their sweethearts on the dance floor to the sounds from world-class swing DJs.

*Jive Swing classes are held most weeknights throughout Hertfordshire, Essex, Middlesex and Kent in south-east England, all easily accessible via train from central London.*

[www.jiveswing.com](http://www.jiveswing.com)

*GNSH 2016 will be held between 19 - 21 February in Watford, just 20 minutes by train from central London.*

[www.gnsh.co.uk](http://www.gnsh.co.uk)

The swing revolution has spread to the north of England too and **Swing Tyne** in Newcastle, north-east England, is all about encouraging people to give swing a try; even if you have two left feet and no partner to bring along! Their Sunday Night Stomp has free entry and is 'a swingin' Sunday night social playing the hottest dance music of the 1920s, '30s, '40s and '50s including big band swing, gypsy jazz, jumpin' jive, rockin' rhythm 'n' blues.

*Newcastle is three hours by train from London. All abilities welcome, some events are free.*

[www.swingtyne.com](http://www.swingtyne.com)

In Scotland, the **Edinburgh Swing Dance Society** run regular courses for beginners, improvers and intermediate dancers. Extra fun is to be had at its annual Winter Swing Weekend, which includes classes, performance from international swing dancers and lots of smooth, swinging sounds from live bands.

[www.hopscotch-swing.co.uk](http://www.hopscotch-swing.co.uk)

For those who just love to listen to big bands play, **Jon Ritchie's Swing Sensation dance band** brings back the golden age of big band by the likes of Duke Ellington, Glenn Miller, Benny Goodman, Frank Sinatra, and the Rat Pack. They perform all over Scotland and have a regular 'Swing Sunday Big Band Dance Night' at the Glasgow University Union.

[www.swingsensation.co.uk/index.html](http://www.swingsensation.co.uk/index.html)

People are getting into swing all over Scotland though so check the **Swing Dance Scotland** website for details of where to practice the intriguingly named 'Glasgow Jive' - a dance similar to ballroom jive but without the formalism, which visitors from the US are said to find similar to East Coast Swing.

[www.golgi.ana.ed.ac.uk/Swing](http://www.golgi.ana.ed.ac.uk/Swing)

In Wales, the Cardiff lindy-hop scene is also in full swing! **The Preservation Jazz Society** present good-time jazz and swing in the traditional styles of the 1920s and 1930s at its regular late night blues sessions every Friday night at **Café Jazz**, Cardiff's jazz and blues venue. For those keen to learn some moves the accompany all that music, **Lindy Hop Cardiff** teaches courses and drop-in social events where beginners can learn in a relaxed atmosphere and dance the night away to vintage swing tunes. They even host Swing in the Park during the warmer months - bring a picnic and they'll bring the tunes.

[www.cafejazzcardiff.com](http://www.cafejazzcardiff.com), [www.lindyhopcardiff.com](http://www.lindyhopcardiff.com)

*Cardiff is two hours by train from London.*

**Swing Belfast** in Northern Ireland's capital teaches Lindy Hop, Charleston, East Coast Swing and West Coast Swing. Most classes start with a Solo Jazz warm up before launching into the famous Shim Sham. For even more fun, they also host The Mess Around, Swing Belfast's monthly social dance.

[www.swingbelfast.com](http://www.swingbelfast.com)

*Belfast is reachable via its two airports, by sea crossing from Scotland and England, or by direct rail link from Dublin.*

## **Musicals**

Fans of musicals are in for a real treat in 2016, with a range of new productions and some *very* famous names making the transition from screen to stage. London's West End may be the heart of British Theatreland, but with touring companies taking musicals to theatres around the country, it's possible to see a fantastic show wherever you're staying.

## New for 2016

London's West End will welcome Disney's Tony® Award-winning new musical *Aladdin* next summer, premiering on 9 June at the Prince Edward Theatre, with previews from 27 May. From Disney Theatrical Productions, the producer of *The Lion King*, *Aladdin* features songs from the 1992 animated film as well as new music written by Tony, Olivier and eight-time Academy Award® winner Alan Menken (*Beauty and the Beast*, *Newsies*, *Little Shop Of Horrors*). With lyrics from Olivier Award and two-time Oscar® winner Howard Ashman (*Beauty and the Beast*, *The Little Mermaid*), three-time Tony and Olivier Award, three-time Oscar winner Tim Rice (*Evita*, *Aida*), and four-time Tony Award nominee Chad Beguelin (*The Wedding Singer*), and a book by Beguelin, *Aladdin* is directed and choreographed by Tony and Olivier Award winner Casey Nicholaw (*The Book of Mormon*). Tickets will go on sale to the general public on 23 November 2015. Tickets for the initial booking period are available for performances up to, and including, 1 October 2016.



*James Monroe Iglehart, Adam Jacobs and Company - Aladdin is coming to the West End! Credit Deen van Meer*

[www.aladdinthemusical.co.uk](http://www.aladdinthemusical.co.uk)

Fans of classic soul music will find much to love in *Motown: The Musical*, which opens at the Shaftesbury Theatre in London in February (nearest underground station Piccadilly Circus). The show features 50 hit tracks by artists such as Michael Jackson, Diana Ross and Marvin Gaye with plenty of opportunity for the audience to sing along to classics such as *Stop! In the Name of Love* and *I Heard It Through The Grapevine*.

[www.motownthemusical.com](http://www.motownthemusical.com)

The elegant Theatre Royal Haymarket in London (nearest underground station Piccadilly Circus) will get a taste of 1960s glamour when *Breakfast at Tiffany's* opens in June, after previewing at the Theatre Royal Glasgow (23 - 28 May). Best known for the 1961 film adaptation of Truman Capote's book, the show includes famous numbers such as *Moon River* and will star pop singer Pixie Lott in the role that has become synonymous with Audrey Hepburn.

[www.breakfastattifyanys.co.uk](http://www.breakfastattifyanys.co.uk)

The story of the Calendar Girls - a group of middle-aged women who raised millions for charity by modelling for a clothes-free calendar - has been a successful film and play, and opens as a musical in December. Written by Take That's Gary Barlow, the *The Girls* premieres at the Leeds Grand in December, before playing at the Lowry in Salford (around three hours by train from London Euston) from 8 - 30 January, and then transferring to London's West End. Gary Barlow may have not one, but *two* musicals in the West End in 2016; rumour has it that *Finding Neverland*, his musical version of the film about *Peter Pan* author JM Barrie, will transfer from Broadway later in the year.

[www.thegirlsmusical.com](http://www.thegirlsmusical.com), [www.findingneverlandthemusical.com](http://www.findingneverlandthemusical.com)

## Classic Revivals

Some of the best-loved musicals are returning to the London stage in the next few months; December sees the return of *Funny Girl*, which opens at the Menier Chocolate Factory in south London (nearest underground station London Bridge), starring renowned TV and stage actress Sheridan Smith. Currently booking until March 2016.

[www.menierchocolatefactory.com](http://www.menierchocolatefactory.com)

*Guys and Dolls* opens in December for a limited run until March 2016 in a new production choreographed by the Cuban ballet icon, Carlos Acosta. The show will be on at the Savoy Court Theatre (nearest underground station Charing Cross).

[www.savoytheatre.org](http://www.savoytheatre.org)

## Firm Favourites

Many of London's most famous musicals are booking into 2016; *Matilda the Musical* - an adaptation of a Roald Dahl novel by comedian Tim Minchin and performed by the Royal Shakespeare Company - will stay at the Cambridge Theatre (nearest underground station Leicester Square) throughout the year. Disney's *The Lion King* has been running for 15 years in the West End and will continue at the Lyceum Theatre (nearest underground station Covent Garden) through the year. Another film adaptation, *Bend it like Beckham*, which opened in 2015, will continue booking through 2016, along with *Charlie & The Chocolate Factory* - a fantastic choice for all the family.

## Musicals beyond London

Many of London's most famous musicals have touring companies that visit theatres around the country. At the Palace Theatre in Manchester (three hours by train from London), the Spring 2016 programme includes *Chicago* (21 March - 2 April), and *Mamma Mia* (10 May - 4 June), which can also be seen at the Birmingham Hippodrome (28 June - 3 September) and the Southampton Mayflower Theatre on England's south coast (13 September - 8 October). A new production of *The Sound of Music* sets off on tour in January, with Scottish stops at the Edinburgh Playhouse (5 - 9 January) and the Aberdeen Her Majesty's (12 - 16 January), and stops at English theatres throughout the Spring months. Fans of *The Muppets* can catch *Avenue Q* everywhere from the Belfast Opera House in Northern Ireland to the Cardiff New Theatre in Wales throughout the first months of 2016. For specific dates and locations visit [www.musicaltheatrenews.co.uk](http://www.musicaltheatrenews.co.uk)

Fans of the Welsh singer Tom Jones can see the story of his early life in *Tom: A Story of Tom Jones*, which tours regional theatres in Spring 2016, after a world premiere in his home town of Pontypridd, Wales. The musical opens at the Wales Millennium Centre in Cardiff on 7 March (two hours by train from London Paddington) before playing at Edinburgh in Scotland, Leicester, Sheffield, Bradford and Birmingham.

<https://www.facebook.com/tomthemusical>

## Major music festivals

Britain hosts hundreds of music festivals all year round, with several to choose from every weekend of the summer. Some of the best known are listed below, with the 2016 dates

given where available. Other dates will be confirmed later in the year - check the websites for details.

### **International Blues on the Bay, Warrenpoint, Northern Ireland: 2016 dates TBC (May)**

This five-day international blues and jazz music festival in Warrenpoint, Northern Ireland, is one of Europe's leading blues festivals with jam sessions and workshops. Van Morrison headlined 2015's festival and 2016 will be the event's 18th anniversary.

[www.bluesonthebay.co.uk](http://www.bluesonthebay.co.uk)

*Getting there: Warrenpoint, a lovely seaside town close to the border with the rest of Ireland, is best reached by car from Belfast; it takes about an hour.*

### **Isle of Wight Festival, south-east England: 9 - 12 June 2016**

The Isle of Wight has great musical heritage stretching back to Bob Dylan (1969) and Jimi Hendrix (1970). This year saw Fleetwood Mac, Blur, The Prodigy, Pharrell Williams and Paolo Nutini hit the stage.

[www.isleofwightfestival.com](http://www.isleofwightfestival.com)

*Getting there: a train from London Waterloo to Portsmouth or Southampton takes around 90 minutes. From either port there are regular ferries to the Isle of Wight.*

### **T in the Park, Perthshire, Scotland: 2016 dates and venue TBC (usually July)**

Scotland's biggest music festival consists of over three days of fun, music and dancing. This year Kasabian, Avicii and Stereophonics took on the main stages in Scotland. The festival organisers are currently confirming the venue and dates for 2016.

[www.tinthepark.com](http://www.tinthepark.com)

### **The Hebridean Celtic Festival, Isle of Lewis, Scotland: 13 - 16 July 2016**

Live Celtic music, held in the grounds of Lewis Castle overlooking Stornoway harbour on the Isle of Lewis in Scotland, ensures that visitors are enthralled by both the wild scenery and vibrant music the Outer Hebrides have to offer.

[www.hebceltfest.com](http://www.hebceltfest.com)

*Getting there: You can fly to Stornoway from Glasgow, Edinburgh and Inverness; there are also ferries from Ullapool.*



*Heritage, scenery and great music all make an appearance at the Hebridean Celtic Festival*

### **Latitude, Suffolk, east England: 14 - 17 July 2016**

A family friendly festival in the east of England that has established itself as one of the classic festivals of the summer, with music, comedy and an excellent children's arena. It's also a very green festival, and is based in idyllic Suffolk surroundings, famously containing

sheep specially dyed all the colours of the rainbow. 2015's line-up saw Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds rock the stage.

[www.latituefestival.co.uk](http://www.latituefestival.co.uk)

*Getting there: Halesworth is the nearest train station. Trains take around two hours from London and there are festival buses to take you to the site.*

### **Rebellion, Blackpool, north-west England: 4 - 7 August 2016**

Punk lives on at this festival, held in the Lancashire seaside resort of Blackpool. West Coast US punk legends Fear have been confirmed to perform in 2016. Safety pins and ready-ripped trousers are on sale in the market for those who want to look the part!

[www.rebellionfestivals.com](http://www.rebellionfestivals.com)

*Getting there: trains from London take just under three hours, changing at Preston, while it takes one hour by direct train from Manchester.*

### **Wilderness, Oxfordshire, England: 4 - 7 August 2016**

A fantastical festival with a difference set in ancient parkland in the Oxfordshire countryside (sister festival to the sold-out Secret Garden Party in Cambridgeshire, east England). It's for those who want more than music: you can catch theatre, debates, horse riding, a spa and gourmet food. The 2016 line up has yet to be announced; Nils Frahm, Bombino and Ben Howard were last year's highlights.

[www.wildernessfestival.com](http://www.wildernessfestival.com)

*Getting there: 70 miles from London, there's a direct train to the village of Charlbury from Oxford; it takes around 16 minutes.*

### **V Festival, Essex and Staffordshire, England: 20 & 21 August 2016**

One of the year's most popular events and always attracting big commercial names to two different sites over one weekend, Hylands Park in Chelmsford, Essex, south-east England and Weston Park in south Staffordshire, in central England. 2016's line-up has yet to be announced but should attract big names like previous years, which have included Beyoncé, Kings of Leon, Stereophonics, Calvin Harris, Clean Bandit.



*One weekend, two sites and many top acts at V Festival*

[www.vfestival.com](http://www.vfestival.com)

*Getting there: Chelmsford is a half-hour train ride from London. Weston Park is just under two hours by train from London.*

### **Belsonic, Belfast, Northern Ireland: dates TBC (August)**

This outdoor music festival has taken place in August at the Custom House Square in Belfast, Northern Ireland, since 2008. Stereophonics, Rudimental, Bastille and Duke Dumont all headlined last year, so expect acts of the same calibre in 2016 - dates TBC.

[www.belsonic.com](http://www.belsonic.com)

*Getting there: There are regular flights to Belfast from London and other British cities.*

### **Reading & Leeds Festival, England: 26 - 28 August 2016**

Britain's premier rock music festival, featuring global acts uniquely performing at both locations over three days. The event allows 100,000 revellers at Reading and more than 80,000 at Leeds to experience global rock superstars such as Blink-182, while 2015 saw Mumford & Sons and Bastille on the line-up.

[www.leedsfestival.com](http://www.leedsfestival.com), [www.readingfestival.com](http://www.readingfestival.com)

*Getting there: Reading is 25 minutes from London by train and it takes just over two hours to reach Leeds by train.*

### **Victorious Festival, Portsmouth, south England: 27 & 28 August 2016**

Tinie Tempah, Basement Jaxx, Ella Eyre and Ray Davies all headlined the Victorious Festival in the Portsmouth Historic Dockyard on the south coast of England last year so expect as big acts as these for this year's event (line up still to be announced for 2016). This urban festival will be relaxed, with deckchairs, Astroturf and street entertainers.

[www.victoriousfestival.co.uk](http://www.victoriousfestival.co.uk)

*Getting there: it takes just over 90 minutes to reach Portsmouth by train from London.*

### **End of the Road Festival, Dorset, south-west England: 2 - 4 September**

Beautiful surroundings for mainly a folk, Americana and psych/alternative rock line-up; 2015's event welcomed acts including Sufjan Stevens, Tame Impala, Laura Marling and Django Django. The festival takes place at Larmer Tree Gardens in north Dorset.

([www.endoftheroadfestival.com](http://www.endoftheroadfestival.com)).

*Getting there: The nearest train station is the cathedral city of Salisbury; trains from London take around 90 minutes.*

### **Bestival, Isle of Wight, south-east England: 8 - 11 September 2016**

Four days of live music and premier league DJs, Bestival is one of Britain's most colourful festivals, with dressing up encouraged. From the most original boutique campsite experience to the Bollywood Cocktail Bar, fancy dress en masse and even a Roller Disco, it's this kind of uniqueness that makes Bestival a world of discovery on the Isle of Wight.

2016's line-up is yet to be announced, but 2015 saw Duran Duran, The Chemical Brothers and The Jacksons take the stage.



*Unique and colourful, the Isle of Wight's Bestival festival is one of the most creative in Britain*

[www.bestival.net](http://www.bestival.net)

*Getting there: a train from London Waterloo to Portsmouth or Southampton takes around 90 minutes. From either port there are regular ferries to the Isle of Wight.*

## Get booking! Year-round festival fun

Didn't get a ticket to the festival summer heavyweights of Glastonbury, Isle of Wight or V this year? Don't worry! Britain is packed with diverse music festivals throughout the year where you'll find big names and new acts across jazz, blues, soul, hip hop, metal, big band, folk, pop and rock...and even an Elvis or two!

### **Gateshead International Jazz Festival, north-east England**

**2016 dates:** 15 - 17 April

Entering its 12th year, Britain's largest jazz festival under one roof returns to arts venue Sage Gateshead, bringing jazz artists from across the globe. Filling every corner of the venue over three days, 2015's highlights included American saxophonist David Sanborn and guitar legend John Scofield. The first headliner confirmed for 2016 is Gregory Porter.



*The iconic Sage Gateshead plays host to a fantastic Jazz Festival and Americana festival on the banks of the River Tyne*

#### **How do I get tickets?**

You can email [ticket.office@sagegateshead.com](mailto:ticket.office@sagegateshead.com) but there is also the option to book multi-buy tickets and save money off each ticket by ringing the Ticket Office on +44 (0)191 443 4661.

**How do I get there?** Newcastle is around three hours by train from London, or 90 minutes from Edinburgh.

[www.sagegateshead.com](http://www.sagegateshead.com)

### **Cheltenham Jazz Festival, Gloucestershire, west England**

**2016 dates:** 27 April - 2 May

See some of the jazz scene's biggest names and emerging talent in the festival's Big Top and Jazz Arena. Previous guests include Jamie Cullum, Eartha Kitt and Stephane Grappelli. Bring the kids too - there are plenty of dedicated family activities.

**How do I get tickets?** Email [boxoffice@cheltenhamfestivals.com](mailto:boxoffice@cheltenhamfestivals.com).

**How do I get there?** Cheltenham is around two-and-a-half hours train journey from London.

[www.cheltenhamfestivals.com/jazz](http://www.cheltenhamfestivals.com/jazz)

### **Sound City, Liverpool, north-west England**

**2016 dates:** 28- 29 May

This three-day festival held at various venues across Liverpool aims to bring the best new bands to its line-up, including those from Britain and overseas. 2015 headliners included The Vaccines, The Flaming Lips and Belle and Sebastian.

**How do I get there?** Liverpool is a two-and-a-half hour train journey from London, one hour from Manchester.

**How do I get tickets?** Sound City runs entirely on a wristband model. Pre-sale wristband sales open in early November 2015, along with the first 2016 line up announcement: [www.seetickets.com/register/sound-city](http://www.seetickets.com/register/sound-city), [www.liverpoolsoundcity.co.uk](http://www.liverpoolsoundcity.co.uk)

### **City of Derry Jazz and Big Band Festival, Northern Ireland**

**2016 dates:** TBC (May)

More than 70 venues and 200 musicians have taken part in previous years at Derry~Londonderry's festival dedicated to jazz and big band sound. Acts have previously included folk singer Kate Rusby and appearances by the Jive Aces, Carmen Ghia and the Hotrods, and Gregg G. More details are due to be confirmed for the 2016 event.

**How do I get tickets?** Via the website (see below).

**How do I get there?** Derry~Londonderry is around a 90-minute drive from Belfast.

[www.cityofderryjazzfestival.com](http://www.cityofderryjazzfestival.com)

### **Trinity Folk Festival, Guildford, south-east England**

**2016 dates:** 7 May

Fan of folk music? Then head to the one-day Trinity Folk Festival in the city of Guildford, Surrey. Previous performers have included award-winning Greg Russell and Ciaran Algar, as well as stalwarts of the folk music scene and natives of Nashville, Tennessee: Harpeth Rising.

**How do I get tickets?** Early bird tickets will be available later this year via the festival website (see below).

**How do I get there?** Guildford can be reached directly from London by train in around 45 minutes.

[www.trinityfolkfestival.co.uk](http://www.trinityfolkfestival.co.uk)

### **The Great Escape, Brighton, south-east England**

**2016 dates:** 19 - 21 May

This annual three-night festival in May showcases hundreds of new local, national and international bands. This has become known as the place to catch the next big thing - Adele, Gotye and Vampire Weekend have all played at this festival.

**How do I get tickets?** Grab early bird tickets from: <http://greatescape.seetickets.com/event/the-great-escape-2016/various-brighton-venues/879819/>

**How do I get there?** Brighton is a 45-minute train journey from London.

[www.escapegreat.com](http://www.escapegreat.com)

### **Park Life, Manchester, north-west England**

**2016 dates:** TBC (June)

This relatively new city centre summer festival is already rivalling some of the more well-established festivals in terms of popularity and line-up. Expect to see world-famous bands and DJs, creative installations and up-and-coming acts; in 2015 Disclosure, Rudimental and Fatboy Slim got the crowds up on their feet.

**How do I get tickets?** 2016 tickets are due to be available from [www.parklife.uk.com/tickets.php](http://www.parklife.uk.com/tickets.php).

**How do I get there?:** The festival takes place in Heaton Park, four miles from Manchester city centre, which is two hours by train from London.

[www.parklife.uk.com](http://www.parklife.uk.com)

### **SummerTyne Americana Festival, Gateshead, north-east England**

**2016 dates:** 22 - 24 July

Celebrating the sounds of American roots music, the Sage Gateshead will welcome back stars from the world of classic country and blues, tex-mex, southern soul and Americana, plus cajun and bluegrass. The 2016 line up has yet to be announced but if it's anything like that of the 2015 event - when the likes of Emmylou Harris and The Shires performed - audiences are in for a treat.

**How do I get tickets?** Call the ticket office on +44 191 443 4661 or email [TicketOffice@sagegateshead.com](mailto:TicketOffice@sagegateshead.com)

**How do I get there?** Newcastle is around three hours by train from London, or 90 minutes from Edinburgh.

[www.sagegateshead.com](http://www.sagegateshead.com)

### **Wakestock Music Festival, Cardigan Bay, north Wales**

**2016 dates:** TBC

Wakestock is Europe's largest wakeboarding music festival, attracting big name acts and thousands of festival goers to picturesque Cardigan Bay in north Wales. There's wakeboarding to watch by day and an array of top bands and DJs by night.

**How do I get tickets?** Details for 2016 are coming soon so keep an eye on the website.

**How do I get there?** Cardigan is less than 80 miles from the Welsh capital of Cardiff (a couple of hours drive) or you can take the train to Fishguard Harbour (three hours from Cardiff) and it's a 40-minute drive from there.

[www.wakestock.co.uk](http://www.wakestock.co.uk)

## Kendall Calling, Lake District, north-west England

**2016 dates:** 28 - 31 July

Running since 2006, Kendal Calling has previously won the award of Britain's best medium-sized festival, a telling sign it's going from strength to strength. The stunning surroundings of the Lake District are equalled by an impressive line-up of acts...past performers have included Blondie, Dizzee Rascal, Public Enemy, Primal Scream and The Charlatans.



*The colourful Kendal Calling: top music acts in beautiful surroundings*

**How do I get tickets?** Head to the website to book tickets.

**How do I get there?** There will be a shuttle bus to the site from the closest train station in Penrith, which can be reached by train from Manchester in two hours, and from London in four hours.

[www.kendalcalling.co.uk](http://www.kendalcalling.co.uk)

## Ventnor Fringe Festival, Isle of Wight, south England

**2016 dates:** To be announced soon

This boutique festival was created as a unique alternative to Edinburgh's Fringe Festival and, although it exists on a much smaller scale, runs in a similar format as an open-access arts festival. Shows are put on in every creative discipline in spaces as unusual as old buses, old churches, empty shops, cliff tops and pier bandstands, as well as theatre spaces and bars. 2016's line-up is not yet confirmed; keep an eye on the website.

**How do I get tickets?** Visit the website or, for general enquiries, email [hello@vfringe.co.uk](mailto:hello@vfringe.co.uk).

**How do I get there?** There are many ferries from Portsmouth, on England's south coast, to the Isle of Wight. Portsmouth can be reached from London by train in around two hours.

[www.vfringe.co.uk](http://www.vfringe.co.uk)

## Green Man Festival, Brecon Beacons, south Wales

**2016 dates:** 18 - 21 August

This independent music festival held on the Glanusk Estate in the Brecon Beacons boasts ten entertainment areas. Bop to the music set against the backdrop of the beautiful Brecon Beacons National Park and enjoy local beer, cider and food. The 2016 line up is yet to be announced but previous acts include big names such as Ben Howard, Kings of Convenience, John Cale and Patti Smith.

**How do I get tickets?** Check online for when 2016 tickets are available: [www.greenman.net/tickets](http://www.greenman.net/tickets)

**How do I get there?** A free shuttle bus will take you from Abergavenny station to the festival site, with train journey times from both London and Manchester to Abergavenny at around two-and-half hours.

[www.greenman.net](http://www.greenman.net)

### **Tribfest, Driffield, Yorkshire, north England**

**2016 dates:** 18 - 21 August

Love a tribute band? Then head to Sledmere House in Yorkshire, where you'll find top tribute bands congregating over one summer weekend. Almost as good as the real thing!

**How do I get tickets?** Head online to [www.tribfest.co.uk/tickets](http://www.tribfest.co.uk/tickets).

**How do I get there?** The nearest station, Driffield, is around three hours train journey from London, or two hours from York.

[www.tribfest.co.uk](http://www.tribfest.co.uk)

### **Liverpool International Music Festival, north-west England**

**2016 dates:** TBC (August)



*Join the crowds at the Liverpool International Music Festival, in a city that boasts more than its fair share of musical history*

This popular festival is designed to showcase Liverpool as a global music city - performances in 2015 included Basement Jaxx, Rae Morris and Laura Mvula.

**How do I get tickets?** Keep an eye on the website as it releases ticket information later this year.

**How do I get there?** Liverpool is a two-and-a-half hour train journey from London, one hour from Manchester.

[www.limfestival.com](http://www.limfestival.com)

### **Brecon Jazz, Brecon Beacons, south Wales**

**2016 dates:** TBC (August)

Complete with stunning backdrop, this acclaimed jazz festival has played host to a range of legendary jazz musicians from across the world, including Courtney Pine, Dr John and Ray Davies.

**How do I get tickets?** Visit [www.breconjazz.com/tickets](http://www.breconjazz.com/tickets)

**How do I get there?** The nearest train stations are Abergavenny and Merthyr Tydfil, around three hours from London and around one hour from Cardiff.

[www.breconjazz.com](http://www.breconjazz.com)

## **Festival No 6, Portmeirion, north Wales**

**2016 dates:** 1 - 4 September

This is much more than a music festival. The fantasy Italian-esque village of Portmeirion in Wales comes alive with intimate readings and talks, exclusive film screenings with live soundtracks, stand-up comedy, art trails through the woods, storytelling in the clearings, master classes and art installations.

**How do I get tickets?** Visit the website's ticket page [here](#).

**How do I get there?** The festival runs a coach service from the nearest train station, Bangor. Trains take three-and-a-half hours from London, two-and-a-half hours from Manchester and two hours from Liverpool.

[www.festivalnumber6.com](http://www.festivalnumber6.com)

## **Loopallu, Scottish Highlands**

**2016 dates:** 30 September - 1 October

International acts such as Franz Ferdinand, Mumford & Sons, Paolo Nutini and Scouting for Girls have all played at this music festival, held in a remote village on the west coast of Scotland. Go for the music and stay for the scenery.

**How do I get tickets?** Book online at [www.loopallu.co.uk/tickets.asp](http://www.loopallu.co.uk/tickets.asp).

**How do I get there?** Travel up to Inverness train station (it's a three-and-a-half train journey from Edinburgh or take the overnight sleeper train from London) or fly to its airport - it's probably easiest to hire a car from there as the festival is around 60 miles away, however there are public transport links.

[www.loopallu.co.uk](http://www.loopallu.co.uk)

## **The Porthcawl Elvis Festival, south Wales**

**2016 dates:** TBC (September/October)

Every year thousands of Elvis fans descend on the south Wales seaside town of Porthcawl for a unique celebration of The King. One of the largest Elvis events in Europe, it includes a leading show for Elvis tribute artists, as well as more than 100 shows and more than 20 venues around the town of Porthcawl host its Fringe Festival.

**How do I get tickets?** Tickets go on sale in February and you can register in advance by emailing [tickets@elvies.co.uk](mailto:tickets@elvies.co.uk).

**How do I get there?** The nearest train station is Bridgend, which is a two-and-a-half train journey from London, 20 minutes from Cardiff.

[www.elvies.co.uk](http://www.elvies.co.uk)

## **Sŵn Festival, Cardiff, south Wales**

**2016 dates:** TBC (November)

BBC Radio 1 DJ Huw Stephens is the co-founder and curator of this hip four-day urban music festival, with cutting-edge bands playing in venues across Cardiff.

**How do I get tickets?** Tickets have yet to go on sale, but check the website for updates <http://swnfest.com/tickets>

**How do I get there?** Cardiff is two hours by train from London.

<http://swnfest.com>

## Oxjam - Britain wide

**2016 dates:** TBC

Designed to be a music festival with a difference, hundreds of gigs take place across Britain - forming the destination's biggest festival line up - to raise money for Oxfam GB. Celebrating Britain's thriving local music scenes, there's a gig to suit every taste, from indie to metal, from folk to grime and is organised by volunteers.

**How do I get tickets?** Check the website for listings. However, if you sign up as an Oxfam volunteer steward, it's a great way to see some of Britain's biggest music festivals and events. See [www.oxfam.org.uk/stewarding](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/stewarding) for more details.

**How do I get there?** Oxjam is held across Britain so access will vary.

[www.oxfam.org.uk/oxjam](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/oxjam)

## North Wales Choral Festival, Llandudno

**2016 dates:** TBC (November)

This festival began as a one-day competition back in 1988 but has grown into a three-day celebration of choral music with competitions, concerts and community performances.

**How do I get tickets?** Check the website for updates.

**How do I get there?** Llandudno is just over two hours by train from Manchester, and around three-and-a-half hours from London.

[www.northwaleschoralfestival.com](http://www.northwaleschoralfestival.com)

## London Jazz Festival, London

**2016 dates:** TBC (mid-November)

A host of world-class artists and emerging stars feature in concerts, workshops, talks, masterclasses and free events across London. A number of key events will take place at Southbank Centre, following in the footsteps of Herbie Hancock, Esperanza Spalding, Kurt Elling and Mara Carlyle who have all performed during previous London Jazz Festivals.

**How do I get tickets?** Some of the events are free; check the website for more information.

**How do I get there?** The nearest underground station to Southbank Centre is Waterloo.

[www.londonjazzfestival.org.uk](http://www.londonjazzfestival.org.uk)

## Record shops

Vinyl sales are booming in Britain. According to the British Phonographic Industry (BPI), they're at their highest level for 15 years, with sales doubling in the past year alone. This is great news for Britain's independent record shops. As well as selling new and second-hand vinyl, these cultural institutions often host in-store events such as gigs by local bands, so they're an excellent way to access Britain's vibrant music scene.

### Sister Ray, Berwick Street, London

Soho's Berwick Street has long been the West End's golden mile of vinyl, thanks in part to this indie mainstay. The thoroughfare celebrates its role during the annual Record Store Day (held on the third Saturday of April) with exclusive releases and live acts.

[www.sisterray.co.uk](http://www.sisterray.co.uk)

*Getting there: Sister Ray is close to Tottenham Court Road tube station, though within walking distance of plenty more.*



*Sister Ray on Berwick Street - the 'golden mile of vinyl'*

### Rough Trade East, London

With its legendary original store still thriving in west London's Notting Hill, Rough Trade has now expanded to New York and this massive East End branch off Brick Lane that, since 2007, has proved people still need record shops. It is now one of Britain's biggest independent record shops. Excellent coffee, in-store gigs, film screenings and a stage for in-store appearances and talks sweeten the deal.

[www.roughtrade.com](http://www.roughtrade.com)

*Getting there: The nearest tube station to Rough Trade East is Liverpool Street.*

### Spillers, Cardiff, Wales

Many of Britain's record shops claim some history, but none come close to beating **Spillers Records** in Cardiff, Wales - established in 1894, it's reputedly the oldest record shop in the

world. Spillers covers a wide range of genres from jazz to hip hop, metal to soul, though it is definitely the place to find the latest Welsh bands and maybe catch an in-store set.

[www.spillersrecords.co.uk](http://www.spillersrecords.co.uk)

### Kelly's Records, Cardiff, Wales

Nearby in Cardiff Central Market is Wales' largest record dealer, **Kelly's Records**, which has been a prime source of second-hand vinyl since 1969.

[www.kellysrecords.com](http://www.kellysrecords.com)

*Getting there: Cardiff is two hours by train from London.*

### Beatin' Rhythm, Manchester, north-west England

Manchester was the birthplace of northern soul, a retro dance scene that refuses to die and here is the place to get those dance-floor fillers. With plenty of rarities and their own releases, this institution in the city's trendy Northern Quarter is run by fans for fans.

[www.beatnrhythm.com](http://www.beatnrhythm.com)

*Getting there: Manchester is two hours from London by train.*

### **Jumbo Records, Leeds, west Yorkshire**

Jumbo Records opened in 1972 and has grown ever since, with in-store gigs have featured pop star Lily Allen and electronic band Hot Chip.

[www.jumborecords.co.uk](http://www.jumborecords.co.uk)

*Getting there: Leeds is just over two hours from London by train.*

### **The Music Exchange, Nottingham, east Midlands**

Opened in 2009, The Music Exchange has evolved from a tiny second-hand music shop to a bustling store and social enterprise that works with the homeless.

[www.themusicexchange.org.uk](http://www.themusicexchange.org.uk)

*Getting there: It takes less than two hours to reach Nottingham by train from either Birmingham or London.*

### **Love Music, Glasgow, Scotland**

A near legendary shop that specialises in new and used indie and alternative vinyl and CDs, with a wide range of rock, punk and metal and a particular focus on Scottish artists. Look out for in-store appearances too; everyone from Moby to Laura Marling has played there.

[www.lovemusicglasgow.com](http://www.lovemusicglasgow.com)

*Getting there: It takes four and a half hours to reach Glasgow by train from London. Flights are also available.*

### **Cool Discs, Derry~Londonderry, Northern Ireland**

One of the longest running record stores in Northern Ireland, Cool Discs is a hub for music lovers in the north west. Extremely knowledgeable and friendly staff will help you explore an extensive vinyl and CD collection.

[www.cooldiscsmusic.com](http://www.cooldiscsmusic.com)

*Getting there: Derry~Londonderry is around a 90-minute drive from Belfast.*

### **Record fairs**

Record fairs are another great source of vintage vinyl. Held in town halls, hotels and other venues throughout Britain, these fairs bring together specialist record traders, knowledgeable in a wide range of music genres. They're ideal for picking up rare 45s or LPs, as well as inexpensive second-hand vinyl.

### **Reading Fair, Berkshire, south-east England**

Founded in 1978, Reading Fair is Britain's longest-running record fair. Organised by USR fairs, they now host fairs in other British cities besides Reading, including Bristol, Bath, Oxford and Southampton.

[www.usrfairs.co.uk](http://www.usrfairs.co.uk)

*Getting there: The train journey to Reading from London Paddington takes under 30 minutes.*

### **Old Spitalfields Market, east London**

On the second Saturday and first and third Friday of every month, Old Spitalfields Market comes alive with music playing from a small collection of specialist record traders, knowledgeable in a wide variety of music genres. With vinyls from Rock to Pop, Hip Hop to Country, the market transforms into a hub buzzing with music enthusiasts and collectors.

[www.oldspitalfieldsmarket.com/events/record-fair-2](http://www.oldspitalfieldsmarket.com/events/record-fair-2)

*Getting there: The nearest tube stations to Spitalfields are Liverpool Street and Shoreditch High Street.*

### **Premier Music Fairs, various locations across the north of England and north Midlands**

Premier Music Fairs hold record and CD fairs every weekend throughout the north of England and north Midlands, in places including Liverpool, Leeds, Manchester, Buxton, Sheffield, Skipton and York. For more details check out the website.

[www.premierfairs.co.uk](http://www.premierfairs.co.uk)

## **Music tours and apps**

One way to gain a deeper understanding of Britain's musical heritage is by taking tours of the places that have nurtured so many artists. Join a dedicated bus or walking tour, follow a map at your own pace or, to be really cutting-edge, download a smartphone app.

### **Manchester, north-west England**

When not playing drums for the reformed Inspiral Carpets, Craig Gill gives the inside track on Manchester music with specialist tours on top names such as The Smiths and Oasis. Alternatively, his city centre walks take in the former Hacienda nightclub and Factory Records' headquarters.

£10 - £25, dates TBC.

[www.manchestermusictours.com](http://www.manchestermusictours.com)

*Getting there: It takes just over two hours to reach Manchester by train from London.*

### **Glasgow, Scotland**

Scotland's premier music city has long been a major influence on Britain's indie scene.

Join a Glasgow Music City Tour, running on Fridays and Saturdays, or book a bespoke tour, and discover the UNESCO City of Music's famous music venues, and stories of well-known Glaswegian musicians, past and present.

Adult ticket prices start at £15.

<http://glasgowmusiccitytours.com>

Want to do it yourself? The city's Walking Heads app shows you key sites in the development of such names as Franz Ferdinand, Mogwai and Belle and Sebastian, dividing Glasgow into four manageable sections, so you won't get footsore.

£0.49 - £0.59 per route.

[www.walkingheads.net](http://www.walkingheads.net)

*Getting there: It takes four-and-a-half hours to reach Glasgow by train from London.*

### **Birmingham, central England**

Discover the roots of the Midlands rock and heavy metal scenes, taking in such luminaries as Black Sabbath (see where Ozzy Osbourne lived and worked!), The Move and Led Zeppelin, on a bespoke tour of this hard-rocking city. Hire a covered double-decker or the Big Brum Open Top Buz for added atmosphere.

Tickets from £5.

[www.birmingham-tours.co.uk](http://www.birmingham-tours.co.uk)

*Getting there: Trains to Birmingham from London take around 90 minutes.*

### **Belfast Music Exhibition and Tour, Northern Ireland**

From Van Morrison to Snow Patrol, the Belfast Music Bus Tour shows you a city with a fabulous rock and roll tradition. Stories are told with bags of enthusiasm and knowledge and the tour finishes up at the Belfast Music exhibition at the Oh Yeah Music Centre. The tour departs monthly on Saturdays, starting at 14.00 at the Ulster Hall, Bedford Street.

Tickets are available from the Visit Belfast Welcome Centre: Adults £8, Concession/Child £6, tours fortnightly on Saturdays.

[www.visit-belfast.com/things-to-do/member/oh-yeah-music-centre](http://www.visit-belfast.com/things-to-do/member/oh-yeah-music-centre)

### **Britten's Aldeburgh, east England**

A self-guided stroll around the coastline of Suffolk will help you appreciate the area most closely associated with one of Britain's most celebrated 20th-century composers. Walk the beaches where Benjamin Britten gained inspiration and the sites around the town associated with him.

[www.brittenpears.org/page.php?pageid=793](http://www.brittenpears.org/page.php?pageid=793)

*Getting there: The train from London to Saxmundham takes two hours, from where you can catch buses or taxis to Aldeburgh.*

### **Beatles Story App, Liverpool, north-west England**

There are plenty of ways to discover The Beatles' early history in Liverpool, including, of course, a Magical Mystery Tour, but if you want to explore the city at your own pace you can download the Beatles Story Liverpool app.

£3.99: [The Beatles Story Liverpool](#)

£16.95: [www.cavernclub.org/the-magical-mystery-tour](http://www.cavernclub.org/the-magical-mystery-tour)

*Getting there: Liverpool is just over two hours by train from London.*