

# SPORT IS

# GREAT

## BRITAIN

A guide  
for international media  
**Edition 5 – May 2017**

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VisitBritain™

*A Southampton FC Fan,  
Southampton, Southern England*

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Edition 5: May 2017

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## Sport is GREAT - *why?*

Sport is woven into the fabric of British life. Children kick a football around in the park on Saturday mornings. 60,000 fans scream support in a stadium while millions watch around the world. A genteel game of village cricket unfolds on a Sunday afternoon. The national anthem is sung in Welsh before a game of rugby in Cardiff. Glamorous ladies totter in high heels at Ascot as racehorses thunder by. A breeze stirs the flags as golfers tee off on the Old Course at St Andrews. Strawberries and cream slip down nicely amid the thwack-grunt-thwack of tennis at Wimbledon. To understand the British and Britain you need to understand its sports.

Britain invented or codified a number of sports including football, rugby, cricket and golf. Venues such as Wembley, Lord's, Old Trafford, Brands Hatch and the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park are synonymous around the world with top-class action. It's thrilling to watch Premier League football teams on TV if you're in Shanghai, Sydney or Seattle but imagine actually being there! It's all about passion, drama and courage - nothing beats seeing a great sporting event in Britain for yourself.

### Did you know...?

- The Premier League footballing season runs for 10 months each year, with 380 matches being played in that time (see page two)
- A camping and glamping site is being created in Cardiff for football fans travelling to the Welsh city for the UEFA Champions League final (see page five)
- Twickenham, the home of the England rugby team, was built on top of a cabbage patch - have a pre-match drink in the nearby Cabbage Patch pub (see page 11)
- Scotland's rugged west coast is considered to be the birthplace of The Open, golf's oldest championship. The first tournament was played in 1860 (see page 18)
- Visitors will consume a staggering 28 tonnes (28,000kg) of strawberries over the course of a typical tennis championship played at Wimbledon (see page 28)
- The ArcelorMittal Orbit, a large outdoor sculpture originally designed for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, is now the world's longest and tallest tunnel slide (see page 32)
- There are more than 200 shipwrecks off the isle of Lundy, south-west England, making it a great spot for scuba diving (see page 43)
- Sporting options in Britain include bog snorkelling, egg throwing, snail racing and gravy wrestling (see page 46)

## Five of the best: Premier League footballing towns and cities

Football, and all its long-standing traditions, are deeply entrenched in British culture. With the [English Premier League](#) running from August right through to May (that's 380 matches in a season - phew), there's pretty much always some football action to catch up on. Here are five cities and towns where you can experience some of the very best the beautiful game has to offer - buy match tickets on the [Premier League website](#).



*The bright lights of Manchester's Old Trafford Stadium  
©VisitBritain/Pawel Libera*

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

With two top clubs in Manchester, football is interwoven into the fabric of the city. Manchester United (the reds) train at [Old Trafford](#) - the largest club stadium in Britain. And across town, Manchester City (the blues) occupy the [Etihad Stadium](#). Manchester is also home to the free [National Football Museum](#), which offers a comprehensive history of the sport, with interactive displays to suit all ages. To take a break from the football, hop on the city's easy-to-use tram system. Stops could include the

likes of [Port Street Beer House](#) in the Northern Quarter, which offers more than 100 different types of craft beer, or the famous [Trafford Centre](#) for shopping. Check in at Manchester's [Hotel Football](#), so close to Old Trafford that you can see the stadium out of the window. It offers everything from evenings with former Manchester United heroes to stadium suite packages.

**Getting there:** Manchester is in north-west England - a two hour train journey from London.

### **London**

In north London, [Arsenal](#) (nicknamed the 'Gunners') call the 60,000 seat Emirates Stadium home. Further south on Fulham Road, [Stamford Bridge](#) is Chelsea's ground, while West Ham has moved from its famous Upton Park ground to the [London Stadium](#) (formerly the Olympic Stadium) in Stratford, east London. [Tottenham Hotspur](#) can be found playing at White Hart Lane, which is currently being redeveloped and massively expanded. Go behind the scenes with the family on the Arsenal team's home turf and walk down the players' tunnel or head for Stamford Bridge, where a [stadium tour ticket includes entry to the club's museum](#). Pre- or-post match, get out exploring London's sights, from



*Sun's shining over Wembley Stadium in London ©  
VisitEngland/Diana Jarvis*

[boat trips](#) down the Thames from Westminster to Greenwich to catching a film at the [BFI Southbank](#).

Craft beer and football go hand in hand, so sip your way around the [Bermondsey Microbrewery](#) craft beer tasting experience or at London's favourite [Brewdog](#) bars, which are dotted across the capital. Chelsea fans should book a night's stay at the [Millennium & Cophthorne Hotel](#), just a five-minute walk from the stadium.

**Getting there:** There are underground tube stations close to all the football grounds.



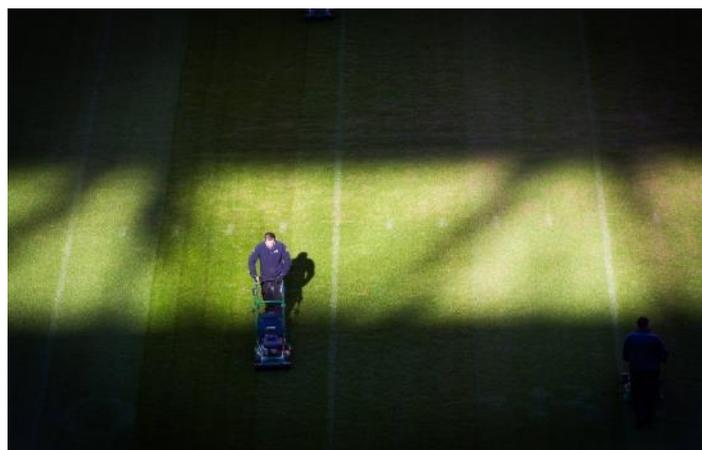
*Anfield is the home of Liverpool FC © VisitBritain/Rod Edwards*

**Liverpool, north-west England**  
[Liverpool FC](#) at Anfield and [Everton](#) at Goodison Park are almost neighbours - they're just a 20-minute walk apart across the leafy Stanley Park. You can score tickets at either of the grounds, via the [Premier League website](#) or with [Thomas Cook](#), where Match Breaks packages include accommodation and exclusive access to the Anfield Beat Lounge. Liverpool and Everton fans head for the trendy [Camp & Furnace](#) to watch the matches and dig into their famous Hardy's Kitchen burgers.

Away from the games, Liverpool is buzzing with things to do, from the vibrant [Albert Docks](#) and the [Merseyside Maritime Museum](#) to the [Tate Liverpool](#). The [Cavern Club](#) tour is another must-do, offering insight into the city's most-famous one-time residents: The Beatles. In homage to renowned former football manager Bill Shankly, the swanky [Shankly Hotel](#) is *the* place to stay if you're in town for a match.

**Getting there:** Liverpool is in north-west England - a two hour 40 minute train journey from London.

**Bournemouth, southern England**  
[AFC Bournemouth](#) have been playing at their current club ground since 1910. The site was previously next to a cherry orchard, garnering the team the nickname 'the Cherries'. However, it's since had a major refurbishment and is now called the Vitality Stadium, although the team still wear their iconic cherry red striped shirts. Tickets can be bought from AFC Bournemouth's website or from the [Premier League website](#). Don't leave the area



*Keeping the pitch in top condition at AFC Bournemouth © VisitEngland/Diana Jarvis*

straight after a match - get out exploring Bournemouth on the newly refurbished [Boscombe Pier](#), lined with musical instruments to try along the way. Just along the beach on [Bournemouth Pier](#) is the 'world's first pier-to-shore zip line' and the duel zips mean you can race a friend to the beach. Cycle the miles of promenade with [beach cruiser bikes](#) or catch a concert at the popular [O2 Academy](#). Get into the seaside spirit and book your

overnight accommodation at the [Ocean Beach Hotel & Spa](#), located right on the seafront.  
**Getting there:** Bournemouth is on England's south coast - a two-hour train journey from London.



*Watch Stoke City play at their home ground, the bet365 Stadium © Stoke City Football Club*

unique Trentham Monkey Forest has more than 140 monkeys roaming free. For thrill seekers [Alton Towers](#) is only a half an hour bus ride away. If you've got the family with you, book in at the quirky [Alton Towers Hotel](#).

**Getting there:** Stoke-on-Trent is in the West Midlands - a one hour 30 minute train journey from London.

**Stoke-on-Trent, central England**  
[Stoke City Football Club](#) is the oldest football club in the Premier League. The club has been playing at its bet365 Stadium for over a decade, and you can buy tickets from the [stadium](#) or through the [Premier League website](#). Stoke-on-Trent is famed for its potteries (hence the Stoke City team being named the Potteries) and you can go on factory tours, ceramics trails and see the old traditions of [how pottery is made](#).

Nearby, the [Trentham Estate](#) has 725 acres of rolling grounds and the

# The UEFA Champions League finals come to Cardiff

History will be made in Cardiff, Wales, in June 2017 as the city hosts its very first UEFA Champions League finals.

The women's match will be played at Cardiff City Stadium on June 1, and the men's at the [National Stadium of Wales](#) (also called the Principality Stadium), on June 3.

Fans from across the globe are expected to travel to the Welsh capital to see the top teams battling it out on the pitch - here are some top tips for those making the journey.



*A bird's eye view of Cardiff's famous Principality Stadium  
©VisitBritain/Visit Wales*

## How do I get to Cardiff?

Cardiff is around two hours by train from London - it also has its own airport.

## What's happening in Cardiff?

The city will be hosting a four-day celebration - the UEFA Champions Festival - in Cardiff Bay between June 1 and 4. Although it won't be screening the matches, it will have plenty going on, including live music, a five-a-side pitch for community groups, and a UEFA Champions Gallery football museum. If you have tickets to the men's final, there will be several fan zones within the stadium: the Guinness Fanzone on level four (its live entertainment includes the Guinness Male Voice Choir), the Heineken Fanzone on level six, and the SA Brains Cask Ale Bars on level three.

## Where can I stay?

Hotels in the city are very busy, so book in at [Camp Cardiff](#) - a camping and glamping site that is being specially set up in Pontcanna Fields, which run alongside the River Taff. The site is just a 20-minute walk from all the action at the National Stadium of Wales and a 25-minute walk from Cardiff Central train station. All the tents are provided and set-up in advance, and are fully kitted out with beds, pillows and linen. You don't need stadium tickets to book a pitch, and the site will be open from May 31 to June 5.

## What else can I do in Cardiff?

**Take a walking food tour:** With its varied geography that ranges from mountains and coastline to lush hillsides with a healthy dose of rain thrown in, Cardiff yields plenty of fresh produce. Hop on a walking food tour with [Loving Welsh Food](#), (you get the added bonus of seeing the city's best landmarks by foot) and tuck into the likes of tasty local Welsh beef, lamb, lobster, white crab and cockles. Don't miss the Welsh rarebit, traditional cawl (a heart-warming Welsh stew) and Welsh cakes.

**Try a local tippie:** For a true football experience in Cardiff, [O'Neills](#) (a five-minute walk from the National Stadium of Wales - close enough to hear the roar of the crowd) is it. There are draughts such as Ireland's oldest ale, Smithwicks, on tap, or craft beers to toast your team with. For local cask beers, [Tiny Rebel](#) (a seven-minute walk from the stadium)

pours dark mid ales such as the Dark Beacons, made by Brecon Brewing at its site near the Brecon Beacons National Park, an hour from Cardiff.

**Get active out on the water:** Sports fans who don't just want to watch the action can get involved at the [Cardiff Bay Water Activity Centre](#). Two miles from the centre of town you can get out on the water for the day, with windsurfing, sailing and fishing all on offer.

## What else can I do in Wales?

### Things to do within an hour's travel of Cardiff:

#### **Explore a historic castle or abbey.**

There are more than 600 castles in Wales, and no visit would be complete without exploring at least one! Just 30 minutes by road or train from Cardiff is the country's largest - [Caerphilly](#). Built from stone and surrounded by moats and islands, the castle dates from the 13th century. Also under an hour by road from the capital is the atmospheric, ruined [Tintern Abbey](#), parts of which date back to 1136. The site, once home to Cistercian monks, was immortalised in poetry by William Wordsworth, and in paint by JMW Turner.



*Caerphilly Castle is the largest in Wales © VisitWales /VisitBritain*

**Go underground in the Brecon Beacons National Park:** The beautiful Brecon Beacons National Park features picturesque villages nestling amid green valleys, rushing waterfalls, and grassy, heather-clad mountains. There are also sights to be seen underground - take a visit to the [National Showcaves Centre for Wales](#), just an hour by road from Cardiff, and see the awe-inspiring Cathedral Cave with its rushing waterfalls.



*The beautiful Clifton Suspension Bridge in Bristol ©VisitBritain/Charlie Waite*

**Walk over a piece of iconic architecture in Bristol:** Just a 45-minute train journey east from Cardiff will bring you to the buzzing city of Bristol. Step on-board the ss Great Britain - a vast iron ship designed by famous Victorian engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel. Another of his designs is the Clifton Suspension Bridge, which spans the dramatic Avon Gorge. Walk across and admire the fantastic views.

#### **Try local whisky at the Penderyn**

**Distillery visitor centre:** The only whisky distillery in Wales (and one of the smallest distilleries in the world), [Penderyn](#) produces award-winning single malt whiskies. Take a tour around the distillery, find out how single malt whiskey is made, and try Penderyn's

products while looking out over the nearby Brecon Beacons National Park. The distillery is around 45 minutes by road from Cardiff.

### Things to do within two hours of Cardiff:



*Watch the vibrant sunset over the Mumbles lighthouse  
©VisitBritain/Visit Wales*

**Visit The Mumbles:** Given that Wales' rugged coastal path stretches over 870 miles, getting out on a Welsh beach is a must. Just over an hour from Cardiff is [The Mumbles](#) - a headland close to Swansea, the second largest city in Wales. Run across the golden sands to the surf, stroll the Mumbles Pier (ice cream in hand, of course) or swim at the award-winning [Bracelet Bay](#).

### **Explore Hay-on-Wye's bookshops:**

Hay-on-Wye is a small market town near to the Wales-England border,

and is best known for its bookshops. Around one hour 30 minutes by road from Cardiff, the town will be hosting its [famous literary festival](#) between May 25 and June 4 this year. Book a ticket for a talk, or just explore one of the town's many book stores.

### **Take a dip in Bath's warm waters:**

The world-famous city of Bath is best known for its unique thermal springs, and is around one hour 20 minutes on the train from Cardiff. Explore the historic Roman Baths, constructed during the Roman occupation of Britain, or relax in the warm waters of the [Thermae Bath Spa](#), which has a rooftop pool offering great views of the surrounding city.



*The rooftop pool at Thermae Bath Spa*

## Eight of the best: football stadium tours

Fancy walking in the footsteps of famous players, and seeing parts of Britain's most-famous football stadia not normally shown on TV? Take a tour of one of these iconic grounds and get a fresh perspective on what happens behind-the-scenes at your favourite club.

### London

#### **Wembley Stadium Tours, Brent, north-west London**

Follow in the footsteps of football legends including Wayne Rooney, Ashley Cole and David Beckham as you explore the home of the England national team. The largest stadium in Britain, [Wembley Stadium](#) grants access to behind-the-scenes locations such as the England dressing room, players' tunnel and royal box during the 75-minute tour. Visitors have plenty of photo opportunities, such as posing in the England manager's press room hot-seat and alongside a replica of the famous Emirates FA Cup.



*Wembley Stadium is the largest in Britain © VisitBritain*

**Getting there:** Wembley Stadium is a ten minute walk from the Wembley Park London underground station, or from the Wembley Stadium mainline station.

#### **Chelsea Stadium Tours and Museum, Hammersmith and Fulham, south-west London**

Take a 60-minute guided tour of the Chelsea Football Club's home ground, known fondly as [Stamford Bridge](#). Visitors are granted access to private areas normally off-limits including the press room, Chelsea's home and away dressing rooms, and the tunnel and dug-out, as well as the club's famous stands and a museum. A range of tour packages are available, including the chance to take the tour with a former Chelsea player - find out about team life first-hand, and collect an autograph.

**Getting there:** The nearest tube station to Chelsea Stadium is Fulham Broadway, a two-minute walk away.

#### **Arsenal Stadium Tours and Museum, Holloway, north London**

Arsenal Football Club's three-tiered [Emirates Stadium](#) is one of the most technologically advanced in the world, and the third largest in England. There are a number of ways to explore - go at your own pace with an audio-visual handset, or choose the VIP Legends Tour, giving the chance to have lunch with a former Arsenal player, and get access to private areas not included on the standard tour.

**Getting there:** Emirates Stadium is three-minute walk from Arsenal tube station.

### England

#### **Manchester City Stadium and Club Tour, Manchester, north-west England**

Visit Manchester City Football Club's iconic [Etihad Stadium](#) and discover the team's greatest moments since its 1894 inception in a new interactive exhibition area. Tour private spaces including the players' lounge and that inner sanctum - the dressing room.

See the pitch from the directors' seating area and imagine the big match excitement as you sit beside the pitch in the dugout. Tours last for 70 minutes and include a club lanyard to take away.

**Getting there:** Manchester Piccadilly station is around two hours ten minutes from London Euston station by train, then it's a ten minute tram or bus ride to Etihad Stadium.

### **Manchester United Stadium Tour and Museum**

Go behind the scenes of Manchester United's [Old Trafford](#) ground and visit the Old Trafford Museum. See the panoramic view of the pitch and stadium from the Sir Alex Ferguson stand, and imagine the big match tension as you visit the players' dressing room and tunnel. A variety of tours are available, including the Legends Tour guided by an iconic player, and the Leisure Cruise Tours, which start off with a canal barge trip from Manchester city centre around Salford Quays.



*Old Trafford is home to Manchester United © VisitBritain*

**Getting there:** Manchester Piccadilly station is around two hours ten minutes from London Euston station by train, then it's a 30-minute train, tram or bus to Old Trafford.

## **Scotland**

### **Hampden Park Stadium, Glasgow, south-east Scotland**

Scotland's national football stadium, [Hampden Park](#), is the home of the amateur Queen's Park Football Club as well as Scotland's national football team. Holding up to 52,000 people, it regularly hosts big matches such as the Scottish Cup and Scottish League Cup competitions. The stadium tour gives visitors a chance to experience Hampden Park just as the players do on a match day, with visits to the underground roadway, team changing rooms, a walk down the tunnel to the sounds of the crowds' famous "Hampden Roar" and more. Tour visitors also get the chance to score a goal, have its speed electronically measured, and receive a special certificate.

**Getting there:** Trains from London Euston station to Glasgow Central station take four hours 30 minutes, then it's a ten minute train ride to Mount Florida station or King's Park station.

## **Northern Ireland**

### **Windsor Park Stadium Tour and Heritage Centre, Belfast, Northern Ireland**

The home ground of the Northern Ireland national football team and the semi-professional players of Belfast's Linfield Football Club, [Windsor Park](#) is where the thrilling Irish Cup and Irish League Cup final are played. Tour visitors get a one-hour guided tour of the stadium, plus an hour exploring the exhibits of the self-guided displays at the Irish Football Association Education and Heritage Centre, which details the club's history since 1880. Its historic artefacts and interactive displays help you relive the big match dramas, including its famous win over England in 2005.

**Getting there:** Belfast International Airport is a one-hour flight from London.

## Wales

### Cardiff City Stadium Tours, Cardiff, south Wales

Situated in Cardiff's Leckwith district, the [stadium](#) is home to Cardiff City Football Club and the Welsh national football team. An independent charity organises regular tours of the stadium led by knowledgeable guides. See the where the club made history as it entered the Premier League and explore spaces not normally open to the public, such as the dugout, the changing rooms where your football heroes have sat, and impressive views of the pitch from the hospitality levels. **Getting there:** Cardiff is just over two hours west of London by train.



*Take a tour of Cardiff City Stadium*

## When and where to watch Six Nations rugby

With its roots firmly planted in British soil, the Six Nations rugby union championships dates back to 1871, making it the oldest rugby championship in the world. Contested between England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, France and Italy, matches are played between mid-February and early March. Here's where to see Britain's home teams in action.



*The view looking out over Edinburgh's Murrayfield Stadium  
©VisitBritain/Andrew Orchard*

### Murrayfield, Scotland

Hailed as the 'home of Scottish rugby' the [BT Murrayfield Stadium](#) is located in Edinburgh's West End on Roseburn Street. It opened its doors in 1925 with a match against England. The grounds have seen many renovations over the years (the latest to the tune of £50 million), including the addition of under-soil heating! Tickets to the Six Nations matches will be available through the [RFU's \(Rugby Football Union\) e-ticketing website](#) or [Ticketmaster](#). During non-major

match weeks Murrayfield Stadium offers free walking tours every day of the week. Join the locals by heading to [The Three Sisters](#) in Cowgate, a pub on the official fanzone route. It gets busy on match days, but you can watch all the action on a giant screen.

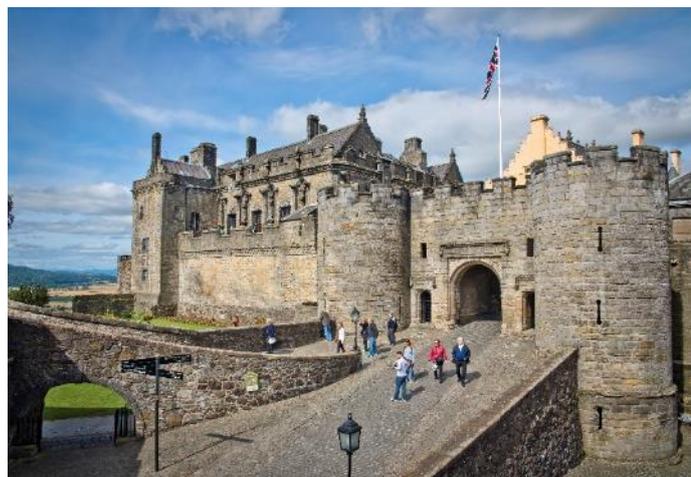
See Edinburgh from a different vantage point by climbing to the top of [Arthur's Seat in Holyrood Park](#) or walking up Castle Rock to historic [Edinburgh Castle](#). Stay in one of the 44 swanky bedrooms at the nearby [Murrayfield Hotel and House](#), or try the homely, family-run [The Beverley](#), which is just a drop-kick from the stadium.

**Getting there:** Edinburgh is a four hour 20 minute train journey from London. Murrayfield has its own dedicated tram stop that connects with Edinburgh Park Station and Haymarket Station.

### Things to do within an hour of Murrayfield:

#### *Take a tour of Stirling Castle*

[Stirling Castle](#) has been a one-time home of Stewart kings and queens. Its illustrious past has included everything from the crowning of Mary Queen of Scots, to the likes of Bob Dylan playing open-air concerts. Walk in the footsteps of former royals and explore the castle's Great Hall, Tapestry Studio and colourful, landscaped gardens.



*Step back in time at Stirling Castle © VisitBritain/Visit Scotland*



*Hit the shops on Glasgow's Buchanan Street  
©VisitBritain/Visit Scotland*

### ***Take a tour of Glasgow***

Glasgow is just 50 minutes by train from Edinburgh. Edgy, creative, and cool are all words which sum up the city, particularly at the [Modern Institute](#), which has more than 40 established and emerging artists to discover, or at the [Tramway](#), which hosts a varied programme of contemporary art projects. Check out Zaha Hadid's angular [Riverside Museum](#), take a brewery tour of [Tennents Wellpark Brewery](#), or stroll the vast [Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum](#).

### ***Enjoy a trip to the seaside in East Lothian***

Edinburgh and beaches are not normally two things you'd put together, but the East Lothian beaches are an untapped gem, with golden sands stretching for over 40 miles. [Gullane Bents](#) (which has views of the [Firth of Forth](#)) and [Milsey Bay](#) in North Berwick are just a 50-minute train ride from Edinburgh. Once out on Scotland's wild shores, you can dip your toes in the surf, kayak or kite surf, or go hunting for fresh crab.

### **Twickenham, south-east England**

Built in 1909 on a former cabbage patch, [Twickenham](#) has cemented its credentials as the 'home of England rugby' with the World Rugby Museum in Twickenham Stadium's East Stand. Tickets to the Six Nations matches will be available through the [RFU's \(Rugby Football Union\) e-ticketing website](#) or [Ticketmaster](#). If you can't get tickets for the match you can always head to the nearby [Cabbage Patch](#) pub, which bills itself as the 'most famous rugby pub in the world' and will screen all the matches through the tournament.



*Get in on the action and watch a scrum at Twickenham Stadium ©VisitBritain/Steve Bardens*

Pre-or-post match, leafy Twickenham counts a number of beautiful historic country houses within a three mile radius, including [Marble Hill House](#), the 1610-built [Ham House and Garden](#), [Syon Park](#) and [Chiswick House and Gardens](#). Across the Thames from Twickenham Stadium you can bed down at chic Victorian boutique townhouse [The Bingham](#) or at the [Rose of York](#), a pub with rooms.

**Getting there:** Twickenham, in south-west London is a 20-minute train journey from London Waterloo.

## Things to do within an hour of Twickenham:

### *Walk in royal footsteps at Hampton Court Palace*

One of the six Historic Royal Palaces (others include the [Tower of London](#) and [Kensington Palace](#)), [Hampton Court Palace](#) was a former stomping ground of Henry VIII, and reportedly his favourite palace. The king himself was hot on entertainment and to this day, there's plenty going on, from *Encounters with the Tudors* plays, to open air summer concerts, to family trails for tiny explorers. It also has an epic art collection in its Cumberland Art Gallery, displaying everyone from Rembrandt to Thomas Gainsborough.



*The grand Hampton Court Palace ©VisitEngland/Historic Royal Palaces*



*The Golden Jubilee Palm House at Kew Gardens ©VisitBritain*

### *Enjoy the greenery at Kew Gardens*

Adding to the abundance of historic houses in the area is the famous [Kew Palace](#), and its legendary grounds [Kew Gardens](#) - the largest UNESCO World Heritage site in Britain. Kew is not just about beautiful floral displays (although there are some rather lovely themed daily walking tours), it also hosts summer picnic concerts, has an 18-metre high treetop walkway and a collection of 200 botanical artworks in the [Sherwood Gallery](#).

## Richmond Park

Created by King Charles I as a deer park in 1637, London counts [Richmond Park](#) as its green lungs - after all, it's the biggest park in the capital. You can take free guided tours around the colourful [Isabella Plantation](#), go horse riding through the park, or keep your eyes peeled for the 300 red deer among the park's 100,000 trees.



*Catch a match at Cardiff's iconic Principality Stadium  
© VisitBritain/Visit Wales*

haven't got tickets to the game then head for the [Old Arcade on Church Street](#) or [The City Arms on Quay Street](#) - they're so close to the stadium you'll be able to hear the roar of the crowds.

You can see the Victorian Gothic [Cardiff Castle](#) from the stadium or explore it up close and climb to the top of the medieval keep. Sporty types can make the most of Cardiff having more green space than any other European city by walking its towpaths and cycling the [Taff Trail](#), or windsurfing on [Cardiff Bay](#). On the upper end of the accommodation scale is [St. David's Bay Hotel and Spa](#), or opt for the comfortable [Angel Hotel](#), which is just a five-minute walk from the stadium.

**Getting there:** Cardiff, in south Wales, is a two-hour train journey from London

### Things to do within an hour of Cardiff:

#### Barry Island

Nine miles outside of buzzing Cardiff will take you to [Barry Island](#) - get your bucket and spade at the ready! For adventure lovers there's surfing, swimming or sea kayaking. It's also home to the [Barry Island Pleasure Park](#). Opened in 1929, it makes for a nostalgic day out. Enjoy rides such as the Pirate River and the Freak Out.

#### Llanerch Vineyard

In the Vale of Glamorgan, [Llanerch Vineyard](#), an hour's train ride from Cardiff, produces more than 10,000 bottles of Cariad wine. Spend the day there learning about the grape harvest and of course, trying out all the different varieties. Vineyard tours and tastings are seasonal and run from April to October (Tuesday to Saturday). If you're visiting out of season, there's still plenty to enjoy, from a class at [Angela Gray's Cookery School](#), to an afternoon tea.



*The Golden Fly kites on the sands of Barry Island  
© VisitBritain/VisitWales*

## Caerphilly Castle

Just half an hour from Cardiff by train, the medieval [Caerphilly Castle](#) stretches over 30 acres, measuring up to be the second largest castle in Britain. The architectural phenomenon (it's basically a castle within a castle) has two huge lakes and has been the setting for plenty of *Doctor Who* episodes. It has some cracking views over Wales and is the perfect spot for a sunset picnic.



*Spectacular Caerphilly Castle © VisitBritain/Britain on View*

## Warriors, tigers and rhinos: rugby league in Britain

In terms of global profile and stadium attendances, football may be Britain's national sport, but in the north of England rugby league comes a close second. Here are just some of the places to catch a game, giving the chance to see warriors, tigers and even rhinos on the pitch.

### **What is rugby league?**

Rugby league was created in 1895 following a split from rugby union over the payment of players. The basic rule set is similar with both involving two competing teams who kick, carry and pass an oval ball with the aim of placing it behind their opponent's goal line to score a try.

Additional points are also awarded by kicking the ball over the crossbar of an opponent's goal, which looks similar to a giant tuning fork.

At first the main differences were administrative, with rugby league created as the professional counterpart to rugby union, which did not professionalise until 1995.

But, over time, there have been a number of distinct, spectator-friendly rule changes aimed at making rugby league faster and more exciting. The most notable of these is that rugby league has 13 players to rugby union's 15, which creates more space for attacking play.

The north of England has the highest concentration of rugby league clubs and is a comparatively minor sport in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the rest of England.

A [National Rugby League Museum](#) in Bradford, Yorkshire, in the north of England, is set to open in 2020 to coincide with the sport's 125-year anniversary.

### **When do the main competitions take place?**

Across Britain there are a raft of rugby league competitions to follow, with the [Super League](#) the most prestigious. This contest, which attracts average match day crowds of around 10,000 also involves European sides, although in its 2017 season, 11 of the 12 taking part are from England, with the 12<sup>th</sup> being French side The Catalan Dragons.

Each team plays 23 games between February and July, before the top eight play each other again in a 'Super 8' stage. A play-off series for the top four is then staged ahead of the grand final each October.

There is also a lower, two-tier competition, running from February to July, involving a 12-club Championship and League 1, which has 15 sides. The majority of clubs are from England, although League 1 in 2017 also admitted Canadian team Toronto Wolfpack.

The [Challenge Cup](#) is another contest to look out for. This pan-European knockout tournament also includes amateur rugby league clubs and runs from January to August, when the final takes place.

### **Where can you watch it?**

With 16 rugby league clubs playing in the top three tiers of the game, Yorkshire, in the north of England, is a great place to see a match. Among the biggest clubs is Super League side [Leeds Rhinos](#), which regularly attracts crowds in excess of 15,000 at its Headingley Carnegie Stadium.



*The Castleford Tigers have won the Challenge Cup four times*

Around half an hour's drive or train journey to the west of Leeds is The Jungle Ground, in Castleford, home to another successful Super League side, [Castleford Tigers](#), who have won the Challenge Cup four times.

Lancashire is another north of England rugby league hotspot, with ten sides across the Super League, the Championship and League 1.

Located 26 miles to the east of Manchester is the 24,000-capacity DW Stadium in Wigan, which is home to Super League's [Wigan Warriors](#),

one of the best and most popular teams to see while visiting the area.

Each year in the Super League calendar the [Dacia Magic Weekend](#) takes place, involving six matches between 12 sides. In 2017 this festival of rugby league is being held at St James's Park, Newcastle, in the north-east of England, on May 20 - 21.

The Championship and League 1 also stage a similar festival, showcasing their best sides. Called the [Summer Bash](#) it takes place in 2017 on May 27-28 at Bloomfield Park, in Blackpool, which is one of Britain's most famous seaside towns and is located on England's north-west coast.

The 2017 [Challenge Cup Final](#) takes place on August 26 at Wembley Stadium, which is located just to the north west of London's city centre and is accessible by London Underground, bus and rail. Known as the home ground of England's national football team, this impressive 90,000 capacity stadium, complete with giant arch, is a must-see venue when visiting the capital.



*Old Trafford hosts the Super League Grand Final © swpix*

Old Trafford, in Manchester, north-west England, is another key venue in the rugby league calendar (as well as being home to popular football club Manchester United). Each October it hosts the [Super League Grand Final](#), with 2017's match taking place on October 7. The event also involves live music performances, with bands such as James and The Charlatans playing in previous years.

## Tee off at The Open



*The Open offers the chance to watch top players such as Sergio Garcia*

Golf's oldest championship, [The Open](#) sees the world's best players compete to be named 'Champion Golfer of the Year' and to lift the iconic Claret Jug - a career high attained by past winners such as Seve Ballesteros, Jack Nicklaus and Tom Watson. Since the inaugural championship at Prestwick in 1860, 14 courses in Scotland, England and Northern Ireland have hosted The Open. These include **Royal Birkdale** in north-west England, the venue for the 146th Open in 2017, followed in 2018 by **Carnoustie** in Scotland,

**Royal Portrush** in Northern Ireland in 2019, and **Royal St George's** in south-west England in 2020. Come and witness golfing history being made on hallowed golfing ground.

### 2017: The 146th Open Championship Royal Birkdale, 16 - 23 July 2017

[Royal Birkdale](#) will host The Open for the tenth time in July 2017, welcoming the world's greatest golfers to one of the sport's most renowned and challenging courses. Sitting on a stretch of beautiful linksland at Southport on England's north-west coast, Royal Birkdale has been voted the number one golf club in England, and is counted amongst the best in the world.

#### How to get tickets? General

admission daily tickets cost from £10 for practice days, and from £65 for championship days, with discounted youth tickets for 16 to 24 year olds, and free tickets for under 16s. The general admission weekly ticket costs from £240. There are also VIP packages and extras such as passes for the iconic 18th Green Grandstand, all of which sell out fast, so it's advisable to buy these well in advance. All tickets may be purchased [online](#).

**Where to stay?** The [Open Camping Village](#) provides free campsite accommodation for all youth ticket holders, while adult ticket holders may camp here for a nightly fee. There's also a range of accommodation listed on the [Open Accommodation Bureau](#) website, from the comfortable and functional three-star [Premier Inn](#) in Southport, to more luxurious options in the nearby city of Liverpool such as [The Richmond](#), a four-star landmark hotel dating back to 1906.

**What else to do in the area?** Popular seaside town, [Southport](#) boasts Britain's second-longest pier, splendid Botanic Gardens, and a high street with grand Victorian canopied buildings. Farther along the coast is majestic [Crosby Beach](#), home to the artwork Another Place - 100 life-size cast iron figures by sculptor Antony Gormley. Vibrant and



*The 18th hole at Royal Birkdale © the Royal Birkdale Golf Club*

cosmopolitan, the nearby city of [Liverpool](#) was European Capital of Culture 2008 and has a wealth of history and heritage including connections to the Titanic and The Beatles. A new attraction, [The British Music Experience](#), took permanent residence in Liverpool's iconic Cunard Building in March 2017.

**Where is it?** Royal Birkdale is in Southport, north-west England, three hours north-west of London by train.



*Beautiful but tough: the course at Carnoustie*

### **2018: The 147th Open Championship Carnoustie, 15 - 22 July 2018**

With its thick rough and devilish bunkers, the Championship Course at [Carnoustie](#) is considered one of the world's toughest links courses. Long and narrow, it occupies a windy and exposed stretch of the Angus coast in eastern Scotland. Voted Best Course in Scotland 2016 by the country's residents, Carnoustie is the longest of all The Open courses, and has previously hosted the championship seven times.

**How to get tickets?** For priority access to tickets when they become available, register for alerts [online](#).

**Where to stay?** [The Open Accommodation Bureau website](#) is yet to publish its list of suggested accommodation, but options include the [Carnoustie Golf Hotel](#) overlooking the course, with facilities including a spa, gym and heated swimming pool. The nearby city of Dundee has a wider choice including the contemporary four-star [Apex City Quay Hotel & Spa](#) and the modern [Holiday Inn Express Dundee](#).

**What else to do in the area?** Recently named a UNESCO City of Design, nearby Dundee has excellent visitor attractions including the historic [RRS Discovery](#), Captain Scott's famous polar exploration ship, now anchored at Discovery Point. 2018 sees the opening of the bold and new [V&A Museum of Design](#), in a landmark waterfront building by Japanese architect Kengo Kuma. Dating from the 15th century, [Broughty Castle Museum](#) is an impressive coastal fort standing between Carnoustie and Dundee.

**Where is it?** Carnoustie is on Scotland's east coast, one hour 45 minutes north-east of Edinburgh by train.

### **2019: The 148th Open Championship Royal Portrush, 14 - 21 July 2019**

On the north coast of Northern Ireland, [Royal Portrush](#) is the only course outside Scotland and England to have hosted The Open. The championship was held here in 1951, and will return for a second time in 2019. Designed by renowned course architect Harry Colt, the challenging Dunluce course consists of a single loop that meanders through beautiful duneland and along rugged cliff tops, providing excellent views of the sea.

**How to get tickets?** For priority access to tickets when they become available, register for alerts [online](#).

**Where to stay?** The seaside town of Portrush has a good range of bed and breakfast accommodation. For something more luxurious, nearby is the award-winning [Bushmills Inn](#),

a four-star boutique hotel with roaring fires, a secret library, and a bar still lit by atmospheric gas light.

**What else to do in the area?** Explore the stunning Causeway Coast including the [Giant's Causeway World Heritage Site](#), a natural wonder steeped in myth and legend. Its other attractions include the [Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge](#) and the dramatic medieval ruins of [Dunluce Castle](#). Ireland's oldest working distillery, [Bushmills Distillery](#), is open for tours and Irish whiskey tastings.

**Where is it?** Portrush is on Northern Ireland's north coast, approximately two hours north of Belfast by train.

### 2020: The 149th Open Championship

Royal St George's, 12 - 19 July 2020

Founded in 1887, [Royal St George's](#) is set in a vast area of natural linksland on the Kent coast in south-east England, near the ancient town of Sandwich. This classic links course was the first outside Scotland to host The Open - the championship was first played here in 1894, and is set to return for the 15th time in 2020.



*Royal St George's will host The Open for the 15th time in 2020*

**How to get tickets?** For priority access to tickets when they become available, register for alerts [online](#).

**Where to stay?** Accommodation in Sandwich includes [The Bell Hotel](#), a chic boutique hotel in a grand Edwardian building. Another renowned golf club on Sandwich Bay, [Prince's Golf Club](#), has smart on-site accommodation.

**What else to do in the area?** One of England's historic Cinque Ports, [Sandwich](#) retains many original medieval buildings. The town is also associated with sandwiches - the 4th Earl of Sandwich is reputed to have invented them. Besides two golf courses, Sandwich Bay has beautiful nature reserves. Further afield is the historic town of Deal, the English seaside towns Broadstairs and Margate, and Canterbury with its famous [cathedral](#).

**Where is it?** Sandwich is in south-east England, 90 minutes south east of London by train.

## Eight of the best: British golfing destinations

Britain is a haven for golfers - *Golf Today*, Europe's premier online golf magazine, lists more than 3,000 golf courses in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in its comprehensive directory. Among that number are many of the world's best golf courses.

Several regions have a range of phenomenal courses in close proximity, enabling serious golfers to come and face the challenge of more than one championship course. Various specialist tour operators offer tailor-made golf packages - for example, [Golf Tourism England](#) lists a range of packages offered in Britain, each built around golf courses in almost every corner of England, from Northumberland and Yorkshire in the north, to Devon and Cornwall in the south-west, to Kent in the south-east. Whether you want a package deal, or prefer to be an independent traveller and golfer, here are eight of the best golfing destinations in Britain.



*The picturesque Ailsa Course © Trump Turnberry*

### **Scotland's west coast**

The rugged west coast of Scotland is a place of golfing history and is considered the birthplace of The Open, golf's oldest championship - the inaugural competition was held at [Prestwick](#) in 1860. Another golf club steeped in history is [Trump Turnberry](#), whose elegant Edwardian hotel first opened in 1906, making it the world's first golf resort. With its breathtaking coastal vistas, the picturesque Ailsa Course at Turnberry has hosted The Open on

four occasions. The Old Course at nearby [Royal Troon Golf Club](#) is another Open Championship course that skirts along the rugged coastline of western Scotland. These and other excellent courses are all around an hour's drive south-west of the city of Glasgow.

### **Around Belfast, Northern Ireland**

The countryside around the city of Belfast has more of Northern Ireland's world-class golf courses. Just 20 minutes north-east of the city by car is [Royal Belfast Golf Club](#) - founded in 1881, it's the oldest golf club in Northern Ireland. An hour's drive south of Belfast is another club with a royal pedigree, the [Royal County Down](#). Set amid a stunning nature reserve, the course is considered one of the best in Britain and has hosted many prestigious tournaments. Another stunningly situated coastal course, nearby [Ardglass Golf Club](#), combines links holes with more windswept and challenging cliff-top holes. On the outskirts of Belfast itself is the [Malone Golf Club](#), set in parkland with a lake and a handsome Tudor Revival style clubhouse built in 1843, and the [Belvoir Park Golf Club](#), which meanders through 136 acres of mature woodland and is another classic course designed by Harry Colt in the 1920s.

### **Kent, south-east England**

The coast of Kent in south-east England is home to three renowned golf clubs - and all three are among just 14 venues to have hosted the prestigious Open Championship since it

was founded in 1860. Two even share the same lovely stretch of coastline near the medieval town of Sandwich. Considered one of the world's best links golf courses, in 1894 [Royal St George's](#) became the first course outside Scotland to host The Open, and the championship is set to return here for the 15th time in 2020. Adjacent to this is [Prince's Golf Club](#), a classic seaside links course that was redesigned and rebuilt in 1950 after being damaged during World War II. A few miles along the coast is [Royal Cinque Ports](#), a traditional links course with undulating fairways and large sand dunes. Sandwich and other nearby historic towns including Deal and Broadstairs make excellent bases, and London is just 90 minutes away by train.

### Scotland's east coast around Edinburgh

The area around Edinburgh is another of Scotland's premier golfing destinations. To the east of Edinburgh, on what's known as Scotland's golf coast, is [Muirfield Golf Course](#). Founded in 1744, it's recognised as being the oldest in the world, and has hosted many championships including The Open on 16 occasions. Muirfield made headlines in March 2017 when the club voted to admit women as members for the first time in its history.



*Muirfield - the world's oldest golf course © VisitScotland/  
Paul Tomkins*

Positioned along the edge of a peninsula with breathtaking views, the West Links course of the [North Berwick Golf Club](#) is another magnificent golfing destination. Heading north of Edinburgh are more illustrious golf courses including the world famous Old Course at [St Andrews](#), the contemporary [Kingsbarns Golf Links](#) designed in 2000, and [Carnoustie](#), whose challenging Championship course was voted Best Course in Scotland 2016 by the Scottish public, and is set to welcome The Open for the eighth time in 2018.



*Royal Lytham & St Annes has hosted The Open 11 times ©  
VisitBritain/ Britain on View*

### England's golf coast

The coastline that stretches north of the city of Liverpool is often referred to as England's golf coast. This north-west corner of England features many outstanding championship links courses, including three with a royal pedigree. [Royal Liverpool Golf Club](#) is a striking championship course that was granted royal designation in 1871. Although it didn't earn its royal title until 1951, many consider [Royal Birkdale](#) to be the best in England. This iconic course will host The Open for the 10th time in 2017. Three

renowned course architects, Harry Colt, Herbert Fowler and Tom Simpson together developed [Royal Lytham & St Annes Golf Club](#), resulting in a prestigious and challenging

links course. True courses for champions, altogether these three royal clubs have hosted The Open Championship 32 times.



*The Giant's Causeway - just one of the attractions found on the Causeway coast*

### Northern Ireland's Causeway Coast

The north coast of Northern Ireland is blessed with an abundance of natural beauty, including the famous Giant's Causeway World Heritage Site. It also boasts some excellent golfing. [Royal Portrush Golf Club](#) is home to renowned links course the Dunluce. Designed by famed course architect Harry Colt, it's the only golf course in Northern Ireland to have hosted The Open, and the championship is set to return here for a second time in 2019. Other excellent and challenging links courses in the region include

[Castlerock Golf Club](#) with its undulating fairways, and [Portstewart Golf Club](#), whose well-regarded Strand Course is set amid towering sand dunes with views of the Atlantic Ocean. These and the regions other courses are just over an hour's drive north of Belfast.

### South Wales

The spectacular coastal region of south Wales has some of the best golfing in the country. World-renowned [Royal Porthcawl](#) is the highest-ranked course in Wales - the Senior Open Championship was hosted here in 2014, the first time a major championship had been staged in Wales. The coastline is dotted with excellent links golf courses such as [Ashburnham](#) and [Pennard](#). Further inland is the impressive [Celtic Manor Resort](#),



*Royal Porthcawl is the highest-ranked course in Wales © VisitBritain/ Harry Williams*

with luxury five-star hotel and lodge accommodation, gym, spa, indoor swimming pool, golf driving range and practice putting greens, as well as three championship golf courses. These include the world-renowned Twenty Ten course built to stage the 2010 Ryder Cup - the first course to be built specifically for golf's greatest team tournament. These and other courses are easily reached from the Welsh capital, Cardiff, with its numerous hotels, restaurants and attractions.

### England's golf heartland

The best-known golf course in England's West Midlands region, [The Belfry](#), near the town of Sutton Coldfield, is one of the biggest courses in the world. Its three golf courses include the PGA National Course and the Brabazon Course, the latter having hosted the Ryder Cup four times - more than any other course in the world. The 500-acre site also boasts a

luxury resort hotel with spa and health club. Other lesser-known but recommended courses in the region include lovely heathland courses at [South Staffordshire Golf Club](#), [Beau Desert Golf Club](#), and [Little Aston Golf Club](#), set in the mature grounds of a former country estate. All are located less than 30 minutes by car from the city of Birmingham, and close to other major cities including Coventry.

## Golf: a beginner's guide

A game for all ages and abilities, it's never too early or too late to give golf a go. A combination of leisurely walking dispersed with periods of intense concentration and club-swinging, golf helps keep both body and brain agile. Many of Britain's golf courses offer taster sessions as well as beginner and improver courses. The majority of these courses will provide the necessary equipment, and most golf courses also rent golf clubs. To help hone those skills, visit one of Britain's numerous golf driving ranges. So are you ready to tee off?

### **Find the nearest golf course**

There are thousands of golf courses throughout Britain, and to ensure you swoosh down the fairway avoiding those bunkers, the official websites of [Scottish Golf](#), [England Golf](#) and [Golf Development Wales](#) have 'club finder' tabs to help locate the golf clubs nearest to you. For golf courses in Northern Ireland, the official visitor website [Discover Northern Ireland](#) lists the region's golf courses.

### **Taster sessions and beginner courses**

There are hundreds of golf taster sessions and beginner courses on offer from the England County Golf Partnerships via the website [Get Into Golf](#). The site allows you to find and book a range of activities for beginners at golf courses throughout England. Take an hour-long mini-coaching session for a quick taster. Or enrol in a step-by-step beginner course and learn the basics including grip, posture and golf etiquette - or opt to learn these skills dovetailed into a five-hour 'learn golf in a day' course. There are some women-only courses, as well as courses designed for junior players and people with disabilities, all overseen by PGA professionals. A similar range of beginner sessions are offered throughout Scotland with [Get Into Golf Scotland](#) and, in Wales, with [Golf Development Wales](#).



*Smiling for the birdie at the PGA National Golf Academy*

### **Learn the fundamentals at a prestigious golf academy**

The [PGA National Golf Academy](#) based at world-famous Gleneagles in Scotland offers individually tailored golf lessons for players of all abilities. Beginners can benefit from a two-hour tuition session with a PGA professional focusing on the fundamental aspects of the game, from equipment choices to putting. Young golfers will enjoy the action-packed two-day Junior Golf Camps which incorporate lots of fun golf activities and competitions. The

Academy also has extensive practice facilities to help all players improve their technique - these include a double-ended golf driving range, undercover pitching bays, a short game pitching area, and practice greens with bunkers and putting greens. The 850-acre Gleneagles estate also has a five-star luxury hotel, an award-winning spa, and a range of country pursuits and activities including archery, fishing, and off-road driving.



*The view over the seventh hole at Trump Turnberry © VisitBritain*

Situated on Scotland's rugged west coast, the Turnberry hotel first opened in 1906 as the world's first golf resort. This elegant Edwardian property is now luxury resort [Trump Turnberry](#). Its Golf Academy offers a range of tuition packages, including introductory lessons with a PGA professional, designed to build confidence and develop initial techniques.

### **Improve your game with one-on-one tuition and state-of-the-art facilities**

Located near the seaside town of

Southport on England's north-west coast, Formby Hall Golf Resort is home to Britain's first [PGA National Residential Golf Academy](#) - a status it attained in 2008. The dedicated team of PGA qualified professionals has developed residential tuition packages that cover every aspect of the game. They're also designed for all abilities, from newcomers to established players. Academy facilities include an indoor/outdoor teaching room with golf-swing video analysis, floodlit weatherproof driving range, and indoor and outdoor putting greens. You can book on to a residential coaching session, or an introductory group class. The resort is also home to the Harold Swash Putting School - develop your putting skills with coaches who've worked with world-renowned golfers including Pádraig Harrington, Henrik Stenson and Nick Faldo.

A world-class golf destination with three championship courses, self-catering lodges and a five-star hotel, [Celtic Manor Resort](#) is also home to Wales' leading golf academy. Located close to Cardiff in south Wales, facilities include practice greens, two-tier driving range, a GolfZon 3D golf simulator, indoor putting laboratory, and state-of-the-art swing studios. So, whether you're picking up a club for the first time, or want full analysis of your swing using the latest digital technology, the academy's PGA-qualified professionals will provide the guidance you need.



*Getting some coaching at Celtic Manor © VisitBritain / Rod Edwards*

### **Hone your skills at a school for golf**

A training facility based at Greenmouth College in County Antrim, just 20 minutes from Belfast, the [Darren Clarke Golf School](#) is the only school of its kind in Northern Ireland, with full-time students studying one and two-year academic golf programmes. Facilities

include a training course, putting and chipping green, covered driving range, and indoor video studio golf-swing video analysis. These world-class facilities are also open for individual lessons. There are also frequent golf camps for junior golfers.

## Tennis and tradition at The Championships, Wimbledon

The iconic two-week south London Wimbledon tennis championship is synonymous with summer, strawberries, and set points. Here's how, when and where to watch the world's oldest tennis tournament, which attracts the finest players from across the globe. Whether you're a seasoned tennis fan, or just in it for the atmosphere and Pimms, it's guaranteed to be a memorable day out.



*Serena Williams in action on court © VisitBritain*

### When to watch it:

The championships usually start at the end of June or the beginning of July, and run for two weeks. The 2017 championships will take place between July 3 and 16.



*A view over the famous Centre Court at Wimbledon © VisitBritain*

### Where to watch it:

[Wimbledon's](#) prestigious tennis championship takes place at the [All England Lawn Tennis Club](#). The club's sizeable 42 acres of grounds boast 18 championships grass courts, 22 grass practice courts, eight American clay courts and five indoor courts. If you don't quite make it to Wimbledon, you can still get involved in the action by watching on a big screen. In London, enjoy the annual [Strawberries and Screen](#) event in Lewis Cubitt Square in King's Cross; or watch the finals at [Big Screen on the Green](#) in Parsons

Green. In Brighton, south-east England, you can enjoy tennis with a sea view with a screen at the [city's marina](#) - a similar event will take place in [Plymouth](#), south-west England.

### How to get there:

Wimbledon has both an underground and an overground station (regular direct trains run from central London's Waterloo and take around 15 minutes). Direct trains run from across the country to London's main stations, and from there you can get the tube to either Southfields or Wimbledon tube (on the District line). It's a 15-minute walk from either station to the Wimbledon ground, or there are regular shuttle buses that run from both Wimbledon and Southfields stations straight to the grounds.

### How to get tickets:

Advance tickets for Wimbledon are allocated through a [ballot system](#), usually open between September and December. If you've missed the ballot and want to guarantee entry, then you can buy tickets from [Wimbledon Debenture Holders](#). Otherwise, you can head down to the grounds and queue for on-the-day tickets. There are a limited number

available for Centre Court, No.1 Court and No.2 Court every day, apart from on the last four days of the championship. There are also thousands of grounds passes available, which offer unreserved seating or standing at courts three to 18. Payment for day tickets can only be made in cash.

### Unique traditions:

Wimbledon's championships date back to 1877, and a number of unique traditions have become associated with the event through its long history. If you're buying on-the-day tickets for Wimbledon you will have to join The Queue. Being in [The Queue](#) is such a unique experience that there's a whole guide devoted to it! The traditional Wimbledon snack is strawberries and cream - a combination first served in Britain in the 1500s, and associated with the championships since the very start.



*Strawberries are a must at Wimbledon ©VisitBritain*

Over the course of a typical championship, visitors will consume a staggering 28 tonnes (28,000kg) of strawberries and 7,000 litres of cream. And speaking of cream, it's banned - on players anyway. They must wear tennis gear that is almost entirely white - outfits that are off-white or cream are not allowed.

### Exploring the local area:

No trip to Wimbledon would be complete without taking a tour of the [Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum](#), where you can check out the champions' trophies, tennis outfits and equipment donated by players over the years. Immerse yourself in its virtual reality experience, and see how you match up against the fastest serve ever recorded at Wimbledon (2010's 148 mile an hour effort by US player Taylor Dent). The museum is only open to ticket holders during the championship, but during the rest of the year you can book advance tickets and a 90-minute tour of the grounds.



*See the deer in Richmond Park © VisitBritain*

Post-serve, make a beeline for the nature filled Wimbledon Common - there are 16 miles of track to explore, and a [museum in a windmill](#). Neighbouring Richmond Park is known for its population of red and fallow deer, and also has the [Isabella Plantation](#), a 40 acre woodland garden planted in the 1830s.

Wimbledon and its trendy village boast a number of fine British pubs. The [Crooked Billet](#) pours local brews including Meantime and Camden (and

shows all the Wimbledon matches on big screens). A five-minute walk from the Wimbledon grounds will take you to the 19th century [Hand in Hand](#) in Wimbledon Common or the cosy [Alexandra](#), which has a rooftop terrace.

## Game, set, match! Britain's top tennis championships

When you think of British tennis, Wimbledon is probably the first thing that springs to mind, but dig a little deeper and there's actually far more to the 'sport of kings' across the country than you might have imagined. From the historic courts at The Queen's Club in Kensington to Andy Murray's own annual tennis event in Glasgow via some nail biting serves at the O2 Arena in London, here are some alternative tennis tournaments across the country...

### Aegon Championships - The Queen's Club, 19 - 25th June 2017

To say [Queen's Club](#) in London's Kensington has a rich history would be an understatement. Built in 1886, it now has 27 of the most beautifully-manicured outdoor courts in the country. The club hosts the coveted pre- Wimbledon Aegon Championship for men in June, the [Rackets World Championships](#) and the Real Tennis World Championships. Aegon Championship tickets can be bought on the [Lawn Tennis Association \(LTA\) website](#). Post-match,

Kensington's best sights are right on your doorstep: [The Royal Albert Hall](#), the [Natural History Museum](#), the [Victoria and Albert Museum](#) and the brand new [Design Museum](#) are around a 20-minute tube journey away. For more culture, the [Serpentine Gallery](#) in Hyde Park is around 30-minutes away by tube, as is [Harrods](#) for a spot of shopping, If you fancy playing a game of tennis yourself then the [Royal Tennis Court](#), built in 1526, is open for action. The club offers an introduction lesson to the game of real tennis - once played by Henry VIII, it resembles a mixture of tennis and squash.



*The iconic Queen's Club has been running since 1886 © Visit Britain/ Britain on View*



*Many a tennis star has played on Devonshire Park's courts © Visit Britain/ Craig Easton*

### Aegon International Eastbourne - Devonshire Park, 23 June to 1 July 2017)

Pre-Wimbledon, alongside Queen's Club, [Devonshire Park in Eastbourne, East Sussex](#) (a one hour and 30 minute train journey from London), is one of Britain's most iconic tennis hotspots. Over the years it's seen many a Grand Slam champion thwacking balls on its grass courts as part of its Aegon International women's competition. Devonshire Park had an illustrious tennis past, with its first (notably woman only)

match in August 1881. Again, tickets can be bought on the [LTA website](#). Eastbourne is a classic Victorian bucket and spade destination and has the beaches to prove it. Its most iconic coastal spot is [Beachy Head](#), which measures up as the tallest chalk sea cliff in

Britain. Another famous attraction is [Birling Gap and the Seven Sisters](#) - great for long walks and rock pooling. To soak up Eastbourne's history you can discover the Georgian [Redoubt Fortress and the Pavilion](#) (it's stood looking out to sea for over 200 years), the 1865 built [Eastbourne Pier](#) or [The Royal Hippodrome Theatre](#), which has been entertaining the crowds for over a century.



*Andy Murray has set up his own tennis event in Glasgow  
© Visit Britain/ Visit Scotland*

on [Ticketmaster](#). The event will mean you'll get to see the man himself, alongside other players including brother Jamie, and Swiss superstar Roger Federer. While in the city, why not put [Glasgow Cathedral](#), built in 1136, on your sight-seeing list? There's also the award-winning Zaha Hadid-designed [Riverside Museum](#), the [Kelvingrove Art Gallery](#), the 146-acre [Pollok Country Park](#) (complete with its own fold of Highland cattle) and [Pot Still](#), a Glaswegian institution that has more than 700 malt whiskies.

### **The ATP World Tour Finals - O2 Arena, 12 - 19 November 2017**

Hosted every November at the famous O2 Arena in Greenwich, south-east London, the Barclays ATP World Tour Finals mark the end of the year's tennis season. The tournament sees the eight highest-ranked male players battling it out for the title. Buy tickets through the [ATP website](#).

The O2 Arena is certainly not the only draw in the area. Stand on the Meridian Line at the [Royal](#)

[Observatory](#) and explore the [Queen's House](#), the [National Maritime Museum](#) and [Cutty Sark](#). If you want to play tennis, not just watch it, then the Lee Valley Hockey and Tennis Centre at the [Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park](#) is your place. Here you can book one of the four indoor or six outdoor tennis courts for your own match (and hire racquets).



*Catch the likes of Roger Federer and Andy Murray at the O2 Arena ©Visit Britain/ Craig Easton*

## World's best track and field stars return to London

London hosted the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2012 and, five years on, the world's best track and field stars are set to return to England's capital. The biennial [IAAF World Championships](#) will take place at the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in Stratford, east London, between August 4 and 13. The park will also host the World Para Athletics Championships between July 14 and 23.



*An aerial view of the sprawling Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park  
©Visit Britain/ Jason Hawkes*

More than 2,000 athletes from over 200 nations will be taking to the track to compete, including athletic greats such as four-time Olympic gold medalist Mo Farah and Jamaican sprinting legend Usain Bolt.

### What events can I watch?

The sport categories are split into timed sessions every day and amongst the huge array of events are the 100 metres, 800 metres, 1500 metres, discus throw, hammer throw, long jump, javelin and pole vault.

Among the more unusual events is the 3000 metre steeplechase, which dates back to the 19th century, where traditionally men would run from steeple to steeple across villages jumping walls and streams (on the track they jump barriers and water troughs). A full schedule can be viewed on the [IAAF website](#). Tickets can be bought through the [ticketing website](#).

### How do I get to Stratford?

Stratford has its own tube station, which is a short walk away from the park.



*Are you brave enough for the world's tallest slide? © Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park*

### What else can I do?

The [Queen Elizabeth Park](#) is a destination in itself, so make sure you take some time to explore it before and after the games. Covering 560 acres, 15 acres of the park are filled with woodland and riverbanks, home to a myriad of wildlife.

First up on the list of things you should do is the ArcelorMittal Orbit. The huge structure designed by Sir Anish Kapoor is Britain's largest piece of public art. Standing at 376 feet tall, it's also got the world's longest and

tallest tunnel slide, which thrillseekers can whizz down.

Given there are so many waterways, a great way to see the whole park is by a boat tour. Trips run past the stadium, the ArcelorMittal Orbit, the London Aquatics Centre and the

[Lee Valley VeloPark](#), and a tour guide will give you plenty of great facts about the park along the way. Each tour takes around 45 minutes and runs between 12pm and 5pm from April to October. If you prefer to be on land, then there's guided walks around the landscaped parklands. There's also eight kilometres of bike tracks to explore.

### What else is in the area?

After you've exhausted all there is to do in the park, there's plenty left to explore in the area. The Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park neighbours shopping mecca, [Westfield Stratford City](#), which has around 280 shops and 70 restaurants. Westfield is also home to the [All Star Lanes Bowling Alley](#), which has 14 bowling lanes and its own restaurant. In nearby Hackney Wick (a 15-minute walk away), [Crate Brewery](#) runs hour-long tours, which take you right through their brewing process from start to finish. There are of course, plenty of beer tastings to indulge in along the way. Action lovers looking for an adrenalin rush should book a slot and go [Up at The O2](#). Pick between a daylight or twilight tour, and climb over the iconic O2 Arena, enjoying incredible views along the way.



*You can admire the O2 Arena from the water or walk its roof  
© Visit Britain/Craig Easton*

## London's Olympic legacy

It was a thrilling, golden summer - a once-in-a-lifetime spectacular. Even five years on from the London Olympics and Paralympics, memories remain fresh of the theatre and drama that unfolded in 2012 in the British capital's sporting venues. The world's eyes were on the city, lit up by the feats of more than 14,000 athletes from all corners of the planet: dreams were realised, names were made, and legends were written. London, in characteristic style, outdid itself.

Leaving a lasting legacy was integral to the Games, and the good news for visitors to the city is that the majority of the iconic venues from 2012 remain open to the public. The focal point is undoubtedly [Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park](#), a vast sporting complex in Stratford, east London, less than 40 minutes by public transport from all the capital's major rail stations. It was purpose-built in the run-up to the Games and remains free to visit seven days a week. It plays home to many of the venues that made history over the Olympics.

Chief among them, of course, is the [London Stadium](#) itself. Having witnessed headline-grabbing performances from the likes of Usain Bolt and Mo Farah - as well as those extraordinary opening and closing ceremonies - the 80,000-seat arena has gone on to become the home stadium of Premier League football team West Ham United FC. Big-name teams such as Manchester United FC, Liverpool FC and Chelsea FC are annual visitors.

But the venue is used for more than just football. Athletics continues to be a big draw, with the [IAAF World Championships](#) and the [World Para Athletics Championships](#) both taking place in the stadium this summer. It also hosts major concerts, staging shows this year from acts such as Robbie Williams, Depeche Mode and Guns N' Roses. On non-event days, behind-the-scenes stadium tours [can also be booked](#).

Just a few minutes' walk away is the stunning [London Aquatics Centre](#), designed by architect Zaha Hadid. Having produced various world and Olympic records in 2012, as well as Michael Phelps's record-breaking 18<sup>th</sup> gold medal, it reopened in 2014 as a state-of-the-art public swimming complex.



*The distinctive ArcelorMittal Orbit*

All abilities are welcome - the venue has already helped more than 14,000 people learn to swim or dive through lessons - and it's possible to book ahead for anything from lane swimming to "Dive for All" diving sessions. The centre also sits almost adjacent to the eye-catching [ArcelorMittal Orbit Tower](#), created as a 114-metre-high landmark sculpture for the Olympics and now reinvented as an observation tower and - rather brilliantly - the world's largest tunnel slide.

Another key attraction in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park is the [Copper Box Arena](#), which hosted handball, fencing, modern pentathlon and Paralympic goalball during the Games. It became known as "The Box That Rocks" thanks to the volume and intensity of its

event-day atmosphere, and it remains a very active sporting venue, serving as the home of the [London Lions Basketball Club](#).

Handball and boxing are among the other sports that still take place here, and when there's no event being held you can come along and hire a badminton court or make use of the on-site gym - short-term passes are available for those visitors only in London for a brief time.



*Take a turn around the track at Lee Valley VeloPark*

If there was one Olympic venue that outperformed even the Copper Box in terms of atmosphere, however, it was the [Lee Valley VeloPark](#). Situated at the northern end of the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, the velodrome was the scene of jubilant drama when Team GB racked up gold after gold.

Today, visitors can ride the very same boards by booking onto a taster track session, with more experienced riders having the option of trying

coached skills sessions. And outside the velodrome itself, the BMX track remains in place for those in search of further adrenaline thrills - introductory and beginners' sessions are again available.

The other major venue in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park is the [Lee Valley Hockey & Tennis Centre](#). It occupies the site of what was once Eton Manor - used in 2012 as a base for wheelchair tennis - and today has two hockey pitches and ten tennis courts, available year-round for public use.



*The Lee Valley Hockey & Tennis Centre is a legacy of the 2012 games*

To revisit the main Olympic tennis venue, of course, you'll need to head to the legendary grass courts of the [All England Lawn Tennis & Croquet Club](#), Wimbledon, south-

west London, where Andy Murray claimed gold in 2012. Located around 45 minutes from central London by public transport, the venue is open for tours and museum visits when its annual summer championships are not taking place.

Other notable venues from the Games include Wembley (north-west London, 30 minutes from the city centre), where both the [stadium](#) and the [arena](#) hosted Olympic action, and the North Greenwich Arena, better known as [The O2](#) (east London, 30 minutes from the city centre), which staged basketball and gymnastics. All still hold major sporting and musical events.

## Olympic Britain

London might have been the host city of the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics, but the action was by no means restricted to the capital. The whole country was swept up in what became an unforgettable summer of sport, aided by the fact that numerous events took place outside of London itself. It helped to broaden the Games' overall legacy, aimed at inspiring the nation and encouraging greater sporting participation.



*Splash around at the Lee Valley White Water Centre*

The Olympics and Paralympics made use of a range of outlying venues, some of them long-established, others purpose-built for the occasion. Falling into the latter category was the [Lee Valley White Water Centre](#). Located in the town of Waltham Cross, Hertfordshire, less than hour north of London by train, the expertly designed complex hosted the canoe slalom events in 2012.

Unsurprisingly, its popularity since the Olympics has been huge. The centre is open to visitors of all ages - there are various child-friendly packages - and it offers a variety of white-water rafting, canoeing and kayaking activities.

The experience can be as wild or as tame as you'd like it to be: on the one extreme you can brave the rapids of the Olympic course in a two-man kayak, on the other you can content yourself with a family paddle on an adjacent lake. Other activities now include tubing, open-water swimming and even hydrospeeding - best described as white-water bodyboarding. Be sure to book ahead in all cases.

Another venue which has evolved since 2012 is [Hadleigh Park](#), Essex, located 90 minutes east of London by public transport. It was used for mountain biking in the Olympics, and since last year has made more than 18km of bike trails available for visitor use. The tracks vary in suitability from beginner to expert, and there are bikes to hire from an on-site shop.



*Hadleigh Park was used for Olympic mountain biking*

One of the most impressive elements of the Games was its ability to incorporate a variety of iconic British sporting venues. Among them was the historic motor racing circuit of [Brands Hatch](#), Kent, an hour south-west of London by public transport. The venue has previously hosted the British Formula One Grand Prix on more than a dozen occasions, and it returned to the spotlight in 2012 when it welcomed the Paralympics road cycling event.

Cycling is no longer an option here, but visitors can try speeding around the circuit themselves by booking one of the driving experiences on offer - the choice of vehicles includes single-seater F4 racers, BMW M4 models and Toyota GT86 rally cars. The venue also has a 'Mudmaster' obstacle course that can be tackled in a Land Rover Defender.

Those who prefer pedal power, meanwhile, can still enjoy parts of the road cycling course from the Olympics. The most famous stretch of the route is the zig-zagging climb up Box Hill, Surrey, located 50 minutes south of London by train - handily, you'll find bikes for hire at [Pilgrim Cycles](#) at Box Hill & Westhumble Station.

West of London, meanwhile, there's another famous Olympic venue in the form of [Dorney Lake](#). Located two miles from Windsor & Eton, Buckinghamshire, which is around 35 minutes by rail from the capital, the lake was used for rowing and sprint canoeing events in 2012. Team GB hauled in nine medals in the rowing alone, so the venue is now etched into British sporting history.

It's owned and operated by the prestigious nearby school of Eton College - where Prince William and Prince Harry are among former pupils - and takes outside bookings for rowing and canoeing sessions, although you'll need to be a member. Summer rowing courses are a further option. Public access to the site is available virtually year-round, meanwhile, and the waterside is popular with walkers, joggers and cyclists.



*Get out on the water with Andrew Simpson Sailing*

Down on England's south coast, Olympic and Paralympic sailing action took place in the waters off Weymouth, Dorset, three hours by train from London. The locally situated [Andrew Simpson Sailing Centre](#) gives a chance for visitors to take to the waves, with private tuition and various two-day courses available to the public.

Mention also has to go to the five British stadia which hosted the early stages of the Olympic men's and women's football tournaments. Among them were [Hampden Park](#) in Glasgow, southern Scotland, and the [Principality Stadium](#) in Cardiff, southern Wales, which both have real pedigree when it comes to staging international

events. Hampden Park is Scotland's national football stadium and has hosted three European Cup and Champions' League finals, while the Principality Stadium - also known as the Millennium Stadium - is best known as a world-class rugby venue. Both offer stadium tours.

The other football stadia to be used were the [Ricoch Arena](#) in Coventry, central England, [Old Trafford](#) in Manchester, north-west England, and [St James' Park](#) in Newcastle, north-east England. Today, all three hold frequent club matches; Old Trafford and St James' Park can also be visited on stadium tours.

## Follow in the footsteps of Britain's Olympic heroes

The past two Olympic and Paralympic Games have seen extraordinary successes for Team GB. On home soil in London 2012 the team won 65 Olympic medals, a feat quickly followed by a further 120 at the Paralympics. The haul smashed all national records. And as if to prove it were no fluke, the team pulled off an even better performance four years later in Rio, with 67 Olympic and 147 Paralympic medals.

On the winners' podium, the strains of 'God Save the Queen' became commonplace - the total number of gold medals accrued over both Games reached an astounding 154. The achievement helped turn previously little-known athletes into household names, while also cementing the hero status of some of the country's more famous stars.



*Follow in the footsteps of Jessica Ennis-Hill at the English Institute of Sport*

Among them was Jessica Ennis-Hill, the heptathlete who became the poster-girl of the 2012 Olympics. Having won gold in London, then silver four years later in Rio, she remains one of the best known sporting personalities in Britain. She retired last year, but fans can still experience her one-time training venue by visiting the [English Institute of Sport](#) in Sheffield, northern England.

As the country's largest multi-sports training centre, its specialist facilities include an indoor athletics arena, badminton halls and an extensive gym, all of which can be used by paying visitors. The venue has also been the training base of exuberant flyweight boxer Nicola Adams, who won Olympic gold at both London and Rio.

Ennis-Hill might no longer be competing, but fellow British medallists such as Mo Farah and long jumper Greg Rutherford are set to be performing at the [London Stadium](#) (formerly the Olympic Stadium), east London, later in 2017. The [IAAF World Championships](#), which are also due to welcome Usain Bolt, will be taking place between August 4 and 13 2017.

You'll find the training venue of another British hero in a very different part of London. [Richmond Park](#), south-west London, is the largest of the capital's eight royal parks and remains a magnet for walkers, joggers and cyclists. It's also where wheelchair athlete David Weir, a six-time Paralympic champion, put in the training sessions to become the world's best.

One of the most memorable British victories of the 2016 Olympics came when the Team GB women's hockey team claimed a first-ever gold, beating the Netherlands in a dramatic penalty shootout. Star



*The Team GB hockey team were stars of London 2012*

players such as goalkeeper Maddie Hinch and forward Alex Danson are almost certain to be among those on show when the [Women's Hockey World Cup](#) takes place between July 7 and 21 2018 at the [Lee Valley Hockey and Tennis Centre](#), east London. It will mark the first time the event has taken place in Britain.



*Where champions are made: the National Cycling Centre*

Up in Manchester, north-west England, meanwhile, there's near-peerless Olympic heritage at the [National Cycling Centre](#). The venue is home to the track where all-conquering Team GB cyclists such as Chris Hoy, Laura Kenny (née Trott), Bradley Wiggins and Jason Kenny trained for the Games. Novice riders can book to do on-track taster sessions, with further options for intermediate and accredited riders.

Andy Murray is another of Britain's Olympic heroes, becoming the first player to win two men's singles gold medals by triumphing in both London and Rio. The schedule of the ATP World Tour means that his appearances in Britain are relatively infrequent, but November will see him playing in his home country of Scotland. [Andy Murray Live](#) is a one-day event taking place on 7 November 2017 at the SSE Hydro, Glasgow, southern Scotland. It will also feature his brother Jamie, as well as Roger Federer.

Andy Murray wasn't the only one to win gold at both London and Rio. Welsh taekwondo athlete Jade Jones did exactly the same, taking top honours twice in the women's 57kg category. She comes from the town of Flint, north Wales, which is less than 90 minutes by public transport from Liverpool, north-west England. From the age of eight to 15, she was a member of the [Flint Taekwondo Club](#), which still runs beginners' classes for all ages on Thursday evenings.

Across in Northern Ireland, meanwhile, headlines were made in 2012 when no less than three rowers from the same town reached the medal podium. Brothers Richard and Peter Chambers, who won silver in the lightweight men's four, and Alan Campbell, who won bronze in the men's single sculls, are all from Coleraine, in the north of Northern Ireland, 75 minutes from Belfast by car.

They all learned their trade on the River Bann, which runs through the town, and all three were members of [Bann Rowing Club](#), whose rowers can still regularly be seen on the water. If you want to take to the river yourself, Coleraine also has a boat hire facility: [Bann Boat Hire](#) rents out small pleasure craft with outboard motors for day-trips.

## Experience the summer season

Britain's 'summer season' was traditionally when the aristocracy embarked on several months of the most important 'see and be seen' social events, including flamboyant parties and debutante balls. Today, it revolves around summer's top sporting and arts events, typically between April and August. It's a fantastic opportunity for guests to dress up and indulge in some typical British high society living.

### Royal Ascot - Berkshire, south-east England

20 - 24 June 2017

Horse racing has been engrained in British society since the 1660s, and is fittingly referred to as the 'sport of kings'. [Royal Ascot](#) is a glamorous annual horse racing event held in Ascot, near Windsor, and is a notable social hot spot for royalty. The Queen is a passionate equestrian and attends with various members of the royal family, arriving in a horse-drawn procession from nearby Windsor Castle. The event is as well-known for stylish sartorial displays as it is for horse racing, particularly on Ladies Day, when spectacular hats are the order of the day. To enter the Royal Enclosure (where the most luxurious, stylish dressing is expected), you must be nominated by someone who has attended the enclosure for at least the last four years. Royal Ascot is very popular, so book [tickets](#) well in advance.



*The hats are almost as impressive as the racing at Ascot!*



*Game, set and match at Wimbledon*

### The Championships, Wimbledon, London, south-east England

3- 16 July 2017

The tennis Championships at [Wimbledon](#) are a major event in both the sporting and social calendar. The young royals are big tennis fans and the event attracts many an A-list celebrity. Only a 20-minute train journey from central London, the tournament - which is now arguably the most coveted of the Grand Slam prizes - was created back in 1877 and

attracts the very best international tennis stars. Book a [Wimbledon VIP experience](#) for the best seats on Centre Court, No.1 Court and No.2 Court, along with luxury accommodation, match day hospitality just a few steps from the course and, of course, a traditional Wimbledon afternoon tea with strawberries and cream.

## Henley Royal Regatta, Oxfordshire, south-east England

28 June - 2 July 2017

Another quintessentially British summer event marrying sport and society is [Henley Royal Regatta](#). Watching the best international rowers race down the River Thames while you sip Pimm's and picnic with friends is a summer's day well spent. Attracting thousands of visitors over a five-day period, spectators cheer on rowers in more than 200 races that include every standard - from rookie crews to Olympians. The regatta has taken place since 1839 and is a fun social event, with post-race parties going on late into the night. So pop on your straw boater hat, pack up a picnic and sit riverside to witness some of the world's finest rowing, just over an hour away by train from London.



*Join the party and watch rowing stars battle it out at Henley*

## Cartier Queen's Cup Polo, Windsor Great Park, Berkshire, south-east England

23 May - 18 June 2017

Polo is also a firm fixture on the summer season calendar - a sport that became popular in Britain in the mid-19th century when army officers first saw it being played in India. One of the most prestigious polo tournaments today is the [Cartier Queen's Cup](#) at the Guards Polo Club in Windsor Great Park. Champagne and caviar are plentiful and you may spot a prince or princess, while the Queen always attends finals day. If you fancy learning to play polo, saddle up at [Cirencester Polo Academy](#) in Gloucestershire, south-west England, where professional coaches offer training days, lessons, and the chance to play mini tournaments.



*Last Night of the BBC Proms at the Royal Albert Hall*

## The BBC Proms, London, south-east England

14 July - 9 September 2017

The crowning glory of classical music in Britain during the summer is the [BBC Proms](#), which take place in the Victorian splendour of the Royal Albert Hall in London. For over two months, orchestras and soloists from around the globe perform nightly. The Last Night of the Proms is a huge crescendo and a sell-out event, so [book tickets](#) as early as you can.

## Glyndebourne Festival, Sussex, south-east England

20 May - 27 August 2017

Enjoy a wealth of operatic performances at the annual [Glyndebourne Festival](#) in the county of Sussex, just over an hour by train from London. As well as a programme of six operas in a state-of-the-art auditorium, part of the fun, social element is the chance to relax, socialise, picnic and drink champagne in Glyndebourne's beautiful grounds during the long 80-minute interval half way through each performance. You'll see festival goers of all ages dressed in their finest here - elegant evening dress is a must. 2017's festival bill includes Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito* and two runs of Verdi's *La traviata*.



*Pimm's and strawberries - quintessential summer picnic accompaniments*



*Top hats at the ready, gents!*

### What to wear?

Many of the summer season events still have traditional sartorial expectations, giving visitors the perfect opportunity to dress up in their finest clothes and purchase an elegant hat created by one of Britain's acclaimed milliners, such as Philip Treacy, whose hats have been sported by the royal family.

At Royal Ascot in particular, hats must be worn, especially if you're admitted to the Royal Enclosure. Gentlemen are expected to wear

black or grey morning suits, including a waistcoat and top hat.

Henley Royal Regatta encourages the wearing of hats for ladies, while boaters - a formal summer straw hat - are a classic accompaniment to gentlemen's jackets and ties. Dressing for the polo is equally elegant; gentlemen tend to opt for white trousers and blazers while ladies should bring flat shoes to wear with their dresses if they want to take part in the tradition of 'treading in the divots' (the grass kicked up by the horses during play).

### Learn the art of English etiquette

Fancy brushing up on traditional British etiquette? Book a bespoke coaching course with [Debrett's](#), the recognised authority in British etiquette. It has 250 years' of experience delivering bespoke coaching on topics from how to behave at the Polo, to greeting British royalty.

## Get your adrenaline pumping with Britain's adventure sports

Prefer your sport to be more of the extreme variety? Thrillseekers visiting Britain are in luck, with wreck-diving, off-roading and caving found at every corner. Here's a taster of what's on offer.

### **Via Ferrata, Lake District, north-west England**

Deep in the lovely Lake District await two via ferrata courses. These series of steel ladders and rope bridges see climbers clamber up through the disused, Victorian-era Honister Slate Mine, eventually emerging onto the 648m (2,126-foot) summit of Fleetwith Pike. The newer [Xtreme course](#) factors in vertical climbs, scrambling, cliff-edge ladders and cargo-net crossings between cliff faces - meaning you'll have to sweat for the magnificent vistas on offer from atop the Pike: a well-worth-it sweep of fells, villages and ferry-dotted water. Decent fitness is required, and it'll help if you don't suffer from vertigo.

**Getting there:** Found in north-west England, Honister Slate Mine is a three-hour drive north of Manchester. The nearest train station is at Penrith, 20 miles east.



*You'll need a head for heights to tackle Via Ferrata*

### **Off-roading, Perthshire, Scotland**

Fancy undertaking challenging hill climbs, steep descents and deep-water crossings while driving a power-steered Land Rover? [Perthshire Off Road](#) offers guided individual sessions, plus multi-discipline challenges and races in a bumpy, boggy Scottish Highlands estate of peat hills and waterways. Each mud-streaked tutorial is tailored to ability, with tickets including a free space for a guest or additional driver. The best bit? You're excused from all the cleaning afterwards.

**Getting there:** The centre is based about 20 miles north of Edinburgh.

### **Scuba diving, Lundy, south-west England**

Britain's best dive sites abound with shipwrecks. Scapa Flow in Scotland's northerly Orkney Islands provides a watery grave for 11 sunken First World War vessels, but it can't rival the tiny isle of Lundy, 12 miles off the coast of Devon. More than 200 wrecks lurk beneath the waves around this Bristol Channel speck, as do seals and all five types of British cup coral. Because Lundy's seas are protected and suffer strong currents, diving trips must be arranged in advance. The Landmark Trust's [Dive Lundy](#) guide has extensive information.

**Getting there:** Between May-October, [ferries to Lundy](#) depart daily from Bideford and Ilfracombe in north Devon, south-west England; in winter, a daily flight runs from nearby Hartland Point. All are close to Barnstaple, from which trains - using the scenic Tarka Line - link to Exeter St Davids, and onto London Paddington.



*Try coasteering in Wales with Preseli Venture*

### Coasteering, Pembrokeshire, Wales

Coasteering is a madcap combination of bouldering, scrambling, cliff-jumping, swimming and splashing: essentially, it involves traversing sea caves, rock arches and cliffs however you can. The pursuit's spiritual home is the county of Pembrokeshire, south-west Wales, where local outdoor-activity companies such as [Preseli Venture](#) organise guided coasteers, and cater to all levels and ages. Adorned in wetsuits, helmets and buoyancy aids, adventurers can take on the likes of The Toilet and The Washing Machine.

**Getting there:** The hub is St David's, a small cathedral city. It's a three-hour drive west from Cardiff, or you can get the train to Haverfordwest and then a bus onwards to St David's.

### Surfing, Co. Antrim, Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland has one of the world's premier surf scenes, centred around its north coast and the resort town of Portrush. There's a palpable surfing community, plus lots of shops and schools such as [Troggs](#) and the [Portrush Surf School](#). Modern wetsuits enable enjoyment year-round, but travel in winter for the biggest breaks. In terms of beaches, The Slab and East Strand are for veteran boarders only, while Whiterocks suits beginners. Other British surfing hubs include Fistral Beach in Cornwall, south-west England - look out for the [Boardmasters](#) festival every summer - and south Wales' beautiful Gower Peninsula.

**Getting there:** Trains take about one hour, 45 minutes from Belfast to Portrush, changing at Coleraine.

### Caving, Derbyshire, central England

Central England's Peak District is dotted with otherworldly underground formations, including Britain's highest natural cavern - the 142m (464-foot) Titan Cave. Many of these are safe 'show caverns' for potholers to explore with an expert. Local operators including [Dolomite Training](#) offer instructor-led caving days, and provide all necessary equipment. You'll get to abseil down three-storey drops, pass waterfalls, cross abandoned mines and inspect a rare gemstone called Blue John.



*Explore the caves of Derbyshire with Dolomite Training*

There's much more information on the [British Caving](#) website.

**Getting there:** The main caves are close to the town of Castleton, 20 miles east of Manchester. Get the train from Manchester Piccadilly to Hope, just to the east.

### **Mountain biking, southern Scotland**

Scotland has previously been voted as the world's number one destination by the International Mountain Biking Association, such is its cycling prowess. The award-winning [7Stanes](#) network unites seven mountain-biking centres, with special skill areas and variously-graded challenges. Among the septet, Innerleithen is best for daredevils thanks to four downhill trails, while Kirroughtree is the all-rounder with courses to satisfy families and professionals alike.

**Getting there:** Innerleithen is just 20 miles south of Edinburgh, and reachable by bus #62. Kirroughtree is further south-west, and about a 90-minute drive.

## Britain's quirkiest sporting events

Fancy your chances at bog snorkelling, egg throwing, or gravy wrestling? Britain is home to a whole variety of bizarre sporting competitions, many of which are actually based on customs that date back centuries. Here are some of the quirkiest sporting events that take place annually across Britain.

### Olney Pancake Race - Buckinghamshire, south-east England

**When?** February (2018 date TBC)

The [Olney Pancake Race](#) literally stops traffic as local ladies in traditional attire - including an apron, of course - run through the streets of Olney along a 380-metre course, tossing pancakes from start and finish. The pancake tossing tradition is said to date back to 1445, when a local housewife heard the ringing of the bell summoning the congregation to church while she was making her Shrove Tuesday pancakes. In a rush, she raced to the service carrying her frying pan.



*Flipping marvellous: young pancake race competitors in Olney. © VisitEngland / Andy Handley / Olney Pancake Race*

### Wife Carrying Race - Dorking, Surrey, south England

**When?** March (2018 date TBC)

Wife carrying originated in Britain more than 12 centuries ago, and was re-introduced with the annual [UK Wife Carrying Race](#) in 2008, featuring obstacles and water hazards. The race has attracted contestants from Germany, South Africa, Australia, Lithuania and Belgium - as well as Britain. Competitors don't need to be married, but the race requires getting pretty up close and personal, so it helps if you know each other!



*What a smasher! Would you be brave enough to take part in Russian Egg Roulette?*

### World Egg Throwing Championships - Lincolnshire, central England

**When?** 25 June 2017 (TBC)

The earliest recorded egg-throwing in Swaton took place in 1322. Centuries later, 2017 will be the 12<sup>th</sup> year that the village of Swaton in Lincolnshire has hosted teams from around the globe at the [World Egg Throwing Championships](#). The egg throwing involves pairs of contestants chucking and catching the fragile missiles, or teams constructing gravity-powered devices to launch eggs towards one

of their members. There's also Russian Egg Roulette, which sees participants select from

five hard-boiled and one raw egg - before smashing them against their own foreheads to find out what they got!

### World Snail Racing Championship - Norfolk, east England

When? 15 July 2017

Ready, steady, slow! For 26 years, the [World Snail Racing Championships](#) have been held at Congham, near King's Lynn, in Norfolk, where 300 specimens slug it out for the title of fastest snail in the world. Anyone can enter, with a number of heats held before the grand finale. The winner receives a silver tankard stuffed with lettuce. The world record is held by Archie, who in 1995 completed the 33cm (13-inch) table-top course in two minutes.



*Will you take on the World Bog Snorkelling Championships?  
© VisitBritain / Andy Sewell*

### World Bog Snorkelling Championships - Powys, mid Wales

When? 27 August 2017

Waen Rhydd peat bog on the outskirts of the smallest town in Britain, Llanwrtyd Wells, has been home to the now internationally-renowned [World Bog Snorkelling Championships](#) for 32 years. The aim is to race through two consecutive lengths of a water-filled muddy trench cut through a peat bog in the shortest time possible. The snorkeller with the fastest time wins a small cash prize and competitors

have come from Australia, Sweden, the US and Germany, as well as Britain, to take part. Online entries close seven days before the event, but if you don't fancy taking the plunge it's still a great day out, with local food stalls, crafts, a bouncy castle, live music and a real ale and cider bar.

### River Football - Gloucestershire, south-west England

When? 28 August 2017

Once a year, the peaceful waters of the Windrush River in Gloucestershire get very choppy! Two competitive teams from the pretty Cotswolds village of Bourton-on-the-Water challenge each other to a game of [River Football](#), playing in the shallow river water rather than on grass. Attracting crowds of spectators, the game that has been played for 100 years gets global coverage, and various celebrities have taken part.



*Scoring watery goals in Bourton-on-the-Water at the River Football match.*

## Britain's sporting museums

Gain a deeper understanding of the evolution of your favourite games, teams and players at some of Britain's best sporting museums.

### Cricket

#### The Lord's Museum and Tour, St John's Wood, north-west London

One of the most famous cricket grounds in the world, Lord's is also home to Marylebone Cricket Club and one of the planet's oldest sporting museums. Located close to Regent's Park in west London, the [MCC Museum](#) houses a collection of memorabilia and artefacts started in 1864 and opened to the public by HRH the Duke of Edinburgh in 1953. Among the highlights charting the history of the club and legacy of the sport, visitors can see the original Ashes urn dating from the 1880s, portraits of one of Britain's

greatest-ever players - Victorian WG Grace, and kit worn by Australian-born international legend Shane Warne. A Lord's ground tour ticket is required to access the museum.

**Getting there:** Lord's cricket ground is five minutes' walk from St John's Wood station.



*The Lord's Museum is one of the oldest sporting museums in the world © MCC/Clare Skinner*

### Cycling



*Trace the development of cycling at the National Cycling Collection in Wales*

#### National Cycling Collection, Llandrindod Wells, Powys, mid Wales

Trace the history of cycling back to its invention in Germany in 1817 at the [National Cycling Collection](#) devoted to the sport. Located close to a network of great cycling and mountain biking trails in the Welsh town of Llandrindod Wells, the museum's collection ranges from state-of-the-art racing and stunts bikes, to whimsical historic models such as the Penny Farthing and tandems. With more 260 models to explore, the exhibition charts the development of cycling, including its Olympic and World Record-breaking successes, including the

revolutionary carbon composite Lotus 108 which helped Briton Chris Boardman scoop a gold medal in the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona.

**Getting there:** Llandrindod Wells is one hour 35 minutes by road from Cardiff.

## Football



*Learn the history of the beautiful game at the National Football Museum © VisitBritain*

**National Football Museum, Manchester, north-west England**  
Toys and games, films, artworks, kits, medals, and trophies feature among sixth floors filled with world-class collection of football artefacts. At the [National Football Museum](#) find out about early football games played around the world, the growing importance of women in football and how kits have changed since the first official international match in 1872 which saw England pitted against Scotland. Meet 152 of England's greatest players, managers and

teams in the new Hall Of Fame, shop for souvenirs, and get your penalty-taking and goal-stopping skills certified with state-of-the-art interactive games.

**Getting there:** The museum is located in Manchester city centre - just over two hours by train from London Euston station.

### **Scottish Football Museum, Hampden Park, Glasgow, Scotland**

Explore the history of Scottish football from its 19th century origins to the present day at this 14-gallery museum located at Scotland's National Stadium in Glasgow. Among the [Scottish Football Museum](#)'s extensive permanent collection and changing temporary exhibitions, visitors can see the original Scottish Cup - the world's oldest national trophy, watch historic TV clips such as Archie Gemmill pivotal World Cup 1978 goal against Holland - lauded as one of the top ten World Cup goals of all time, and visit the Scottish Football Hall of Fame which pays homage to legendary players including Denis Law, Jim Baxter, Kenny Dalglish and Henrik Larsson.

**Getting there:** Trains from London Euston station to Glasgow Central station take four hours 30 minutes.

## Horseracing

### **National Heritage Centre for Horseracing & Sporting Art, Newmarket, Suffolk, south-east England**

Discover why horseracing is a national obsession known as the "sport of kings" in the new [National Heritage Centre for Horseracing & Sporting Art](#) at Newmarket Racecourse, the global headquarters of flat racing. Situated in Charles II's 17<sup>th</sup>-century palace, the Heritage Centre is an



*Explore 350 years of racing history in Newmarket*

opportunity to trace 350 years of racing heritage. Borrow one of the interactive multimedia guides to help you explore the collection, taking in artefacts such as silks worn by famous jockeys Lester Piggott and Frankie Dettori, uncovering the genetic secrets of thoroughbred champions, and watching a cinematic survey of past and present racing legends. The Horseracing Museum is complemented by a collection of British sporting art, and a chance to meet former racehorses.

**Getting there:** Newmarket is 40 minutes by road from Cambridge.

## Golf

### **British Golf Museum, St Andrews, Fife, south-east Scotland**

Survey the biggest collection of golf memorabilia in Europe as it charts 600 years of British golfing history, from the Middle Ages to the present day. The collection features 17,000 artefacts such as early golfing costume, historic balls and clubs, artworks, medals, ceramics and archive film including a Tiger Woods masterstroke from the turn of the millennium. Among the [British Golf Museum](#)'s treasures you can see Seve Ballesteros' shoes, the coveted Claret Jug trophy and a life-size bronze statue of 19<sup>th</sup>-century golfing legend Tom Morris. The museum facilities include a cafe and an exclusive shop and is located at the famous St Andrews Links, the largest public golf complex in Europe.

**Getting there:** St Andrews is one hour 30 minutes by rail from Edinburgh.

## Rugby

### **World Rugby Museum and Stadium Tours, Twickenham, south-west London**

[Twickenham Stadium](#), the home of the national England rugby team, is currently undergoing building work and the museum will be temporarily closed while it's relocated to another area of the stadium. During the building work, you can still book a tour of the largest rugby stadium on the planet to visit key public and private spaces including the royal box, players' tunnel, England dressing room and much more. Expected to reopen later this year, the museum helps visitors explore the history of rugby through more than 25,000 objects - the world's largest collection of rugby football memorabilia. Museum highlights will include an original England jersey from the very first international game in 1871, and iconic trophies such as the Calcutta Cup - made from 270 silver rupees.

**Getting there:** It's 30 minutes by train from London Waterloo station to Twickenham station, and then a short walk to the stadium.

## Tennis

### **Wimbledon Lawn Tennis Museum and Tours, Wimbledon, south-west London**

The largest tennis museum in the world boasts 20,000 objects chronicling the history of lawn tennis from a popular pastime to the world-class sport, most famous for its annual Wimbledon Championships. Among the collection, you can see players' memorabilia, sports kits, medals and trophies and racket designs dating back to the 1870s. Using state-of-the-art technology and interactive touch screen consoles, visitors to [Wimbledon](#) can explore the collection and even experience the big match atmosphere with its CentreCourt360 exhibit. Museum ticket holders are entitled to 10-minute Centre Court visit but may choose to book a full guided tour of the grounds led by a knowledgeable Blue Badge guide.

**Getting there:** The museum is less than 20 minute walk from Wimbledon and Southfields stations.

## Sports for the unsporty

Britain is a brilliant destination for sport lovers of all kinds. There are countless energetic activities across the land and beautiful backdrops to do them in - even skiing and surfing! If you're after some fun competition or activity but don't fancy working up a sweat or forgot to pack your sportswear, try one of these 'unsporty' sports instead. They promise maximum fun for minimum effort - and no Lycra necessary!

### Zorbing on Loch Ness, Inverness, Scotland

Want to enjoy the waters of famous Loch Ness without the effort of kayaking? Give water zorbing a go, which involves getting into a huge transparent ball and literally walking on water! Zorbing is usually on flat ground or a slope, but for a truly memorable experience, [In Your Element](#) will take you to Loch Ness with their Walk on Water Balls. If the loch's legendary monster Nessie decides to make an appearance, you'll get a front row seat! In Your Element runs scheduled sessions in the summer on Loch Ness and at other venues, from June to August, two or three days a week.



*Have a ball on Loch Ness - no wetsuit needed! ©VisitBritain / Andrew Pickett*



*Take a punt in Cambridge for a relaxing river trip. © Iain Lewis*

[Punting](#). Take a picnic of strawberries and champagne to enjoy on the river for the full experience. Cambridge is in the east of England, around an hour from London via train.

**Punting in Cambridge, east England**  
Punting, which means 'to push', is a quintessentially British way to enjoy the River Cam, which runs through the heart of the university city of Cambridge. Enjoy fantastic views of the world-famous Cambridge College 'Backs', the Bridge of Sighs, and King's College Chapel, while meandering along the river in a traditional Cambridge punt. There are lots of punting companies you can hire from, including [Cambridge Blue](#)

### Monkeying around in the tree tops, Perthshire, Scotland

Britain's first tree-top adventure ropes course was opened in 2002 by [Go Ape](#) in Thetford Forest in Suffolk, eastern England. The company now has 30 breathtaking woodland sites throughout England, Scotland and Wales. Each course is unique, and is made up of rope ladders, bridges, and challenging treetop obstacles including Tarzan swings and zip wires. Located within Queen Elizabeth Forest Park in Perthshire, Scotland, the [Aberfoyle course](#) is a big draw for Go Ape devotees - it boasts two of Britain's longest zip-lines. Then just one hour from Edinburgh, near Peebles, is [Glentress Forest Go Ape](#), with magnificent views of the beautiful Tweed Valley. Aberfoyle is located one hour north of Glasgow by car, while Glentress Forest is one hour from Edinburgh.



*Playing among the trees at Go Ape Glentress Forest in Tweed Valley © VisitBritain / Simon Jarratt*



*Bounce and slide your way through an underground cavern in north Wales*

### Bounce Below, Blaenau Ffestiniog, north Wales

Set within a former slate mine, [Bounce Below](#) in north Wales is the only underground playground of its kind. Thrill seekers aged seven and up can enter this network of enormous caverns hidden underground, filled with vast trampolines, steep slides, and bouncy cargo nets (the largest underground nets in the world). After a massive refurbishment, Bounce Below reopened in May 2016 and is now bigger, better and bouncier, with four new industrial slides the height of two double decker buses and six new levels. Slide, roll, jump and bounce from net to net in this cavern the size of a cathedral. It's pure fun in a spectacular setting! Blaenau Ffestiniog is around two hours by road from the city of Liverpool.

### Game of Thrones archery at Old Castle Ward, Northern Ireland

Discover the award-winning 45-minute [Winterfell Archery 'Movie Set' Experience](#) and stand where Jon Snow, Rob Stark and Bran shot medieval arrows at Old Castle Ward, just 40 minutes from Belfast. You'll be kitted out in Stark family costumes and head to an exact replica of the Winterfell Archery Range, recreated in the castle's



*Aim and fire like a Game of Thrones hero at Old Castle Ward*

courtyard in the very same spot that filming for *Game of Thrones* took place, transporting you into the world of Westeros. Receive instruction from Jon Snow-costumed archery instructors and shoot medieval arrows using ancient 'long bows'. If you're lucky, the instructors might share some gossip about what went on behind the scenes during filming.

**Play golf with massive dinosaurs, Surrey, south-east England**

If thinking about walking around an entire golf course makes you feel tired, head for one of Britain's many mini golf courses! These themed, landscaped mini courses have obstacles such as tunnels, ramps, and moving windmills, with most holes requiring putting only within ten yards from tee to cup. Designed and built by one of the world's best adventure golf designers, [Jurassic Encounter Adventure Golf](#) has 18 holes of mini golf in a prehistoric-themed landscape. Golfers will putt through cascading waterfalls, caves and tropical plants - all overlooked by nine roaring mechanical dinosaurs! A fun experience for all the family, the course can be reached in just 45 minutes from central London using public transport.

## Eight of the best: hotels with great sporting facilities

Sporty holidaymakers are in luck when visiting Britain. Many of the country's hotels boast high-quality leisure offerings, from multi-facility all-rounders to single-discipline specialists.



*Jumping for joy at Lucknam Park Hotel & Spa*

### Lucknam Park Hotel & Spa, Wiltshire, south-west England

Whereas most hotel stables offer only gentle trots, luxurious [Lucknam Park](#)'s Equestrian Centre is far more comprehensive. Some of its 35 horses cater to proficient riders hoping to improve their jumping or dressage amid a full-size arena, while specialist clinics are led by world-leading showjumpers. The Palladian mansion is just as venerable, boasting a Michelin-starred restaurant and gloriously landscaped gardens. Bath's famously restorative

waters are within day-trip reach.

**Getting there:** Taxis are readily available at Bath and Chippenham's rail stations, both of which welcome regular, 90-minute services from London Paddington.

### Carden Park Hotel, Cheshire, western England

Two professional golf courses stretch away from this 196-room country hotel in western England, with PGA professionals including Garry Houston among the tutors. [Carden Park](#)'s 405 beautiful hectares (1,000 acres) also contain an archery area, full-sized football pitch, aerial ropes course and two tennis courts. The award-winning Carden Spa soothes any overused muscles. If you can tear yourself away, nearby Chester has a magnificent cathedral and one of Britain's best zoos.

**Getting there:** Manchester's international airport - to the north - is a 50-minute drive away.

### The Vale Resort, Glamorgan, Wales

If it's good enough for Gareth Bale... Wales' national footballers trained at [The Vale](#) before their semi-final run at 2016's European Championships, and Bale's Real Madrid have also used the seven DESSO, 3G indoor and outdoor pitches - just as guests of the on-site four-star hotel can. The same goes for Wales' largest spa, a gigantic gym geared for professional athletes and two 18-hole championship golf courses, plus academy and pro shop.



*In training at the Vale Resort*

Cardiff's castle and filming locations for popular TV drama *Sherlock* are less than ten miles away.

**Getting there:** The Vale's a 20-minute drive from Cardiff, and 25 minutes from Cardiff

Airport.

### **Hilton at St George's Park, Staffordshire, central England**

England's footballers, meanwhile, train at the National Football Centre in central England before international home games - and stay, just like you can, at the accompanying [Hilton at St George's Park](#). As state-of-the-art as you'd imagine, facilities include a FIFA-standard pitch and a dedicated area for goalkeepers. The hotel's Health Club and Spa features a 17-metre (56-foot) pool. Rather less athletically-minded, this part of Britain is famous for its centuries-old beer-brewing.



*Fantastic for football: Hilton at St George's Park*

**Getting there:** London is a two-hour drive, while Birmingham Airport is just 25 miles south.

### **Crowne Plaza Belfast, Co. Antrim, Northern Ireland**

As the only Northern Irish hotel to promise 'sporting excellence', no wonder the [Crowne Plaza](#) receives so many visiting sports teams. Its on-site health centre stars a large pool and can rent out bikes, while local partners include rugby, cricket, Gaelic football and hockey clubs, with all those sports possible to arrange. Ditto sea-kayaking. Some guests work up an perfectly-adequate sweat merely exploring Belfast, and especially its Titanic Experience.

**Getting there:** The George Best Belfast City Airport has daily services from London.



*Play polo at Coworth Park*

### **Coworth Park, Berkshire, south-east England**

Polo is a quintessentially English game, played on horseback. In grounds managed by the prestigious Guards Polo Club, southern England's [Coworth Park](#) can promise two international polo fields, a devoted teaching paddock and a Polo Academy overseen by professional player Ebe Sievwright, open to guests of all levels. Part of the Dorchester Collection, Coworth Park is close to the famous Ascot racecourse.

**Getting there:** Coworth Park is located just east of London, with regular trains from Waterloo to Sunningdale, five minutes away.

### **Old Course Hotel, Fife, Scotland**

Scotland's St Andrews is considered the home of golf - and homestays are possible. Situated beside its namesake's 17th hole, the [Old Course Hotel](#) splendidly gazes across the links to West Sands Beach and the North Sea. Awarded five red AA stars, it includes

classical suites designed by French maestro Jacques Garcia. As St Andrews is publically-owned land, anyone can play the iconic courses - but reserve ahead, as demand is understandably high. Known for its castle and independent stores, the university town of St Andrews is within strolling distance.

**Getting there:** From Edinburgh, it's an hour's drive north or 55 minutes by train to Leuchars - four miles away.

### **The Manor House & Ashbury Hotels, Devon, south-west England**

Neighbouring properties, the [Manor House and Ashbury Hotels](#) combine into a sports behemoth. Seven golf courses, 99 holes and over 400 buggies are the chief brag, but extensive tennis, squash, badminton, bowls and snooker facilities make for excellent support acts, as does a synthetic curling rink. Lessons are possible in all. Leave time to explore your surrounds, though: mysterious Dartmoor begins less than a mile to the west.

**Getting there:** Devon is in south-west England. Both hotels are a four-hour drive from London.

## Eight of the best: sporty restaurants and bars

Can't get enough sport in your life? Then rejoice: these British restaurants, cafes and drinking spots allow you eat and drink while surrounded by sporting action.



*Farmer, Butcher, Chef is housed at glorious Goodwood*

### **Farmer, Butcher, Chef, West Sussex, southern England**

Though the southern England estate of [Goodwood](#) is chiefly known for horse-riding, and particularly August's Glorious Goodwood festival, there are also vintage car races, two 18-hole golf courses and a flying school. The parkland's latest attraction isn't sporty, however; it's an ethical restaurant. All of [Farmer, Butcher, Chef's](#) meat comes courtesy of animals organically reared at Goodwood, with dishes designed in

accordance with available cuts in order to avoid wastage.

**Getting there:** Goodwood is just outside Chichester, from which trains to London Victoria take one hour, 40 minutes.

### **The Original Oak, West Yorkshire, northern England**

A suburb of the northern England city Leeds, Headingley is home to three sporting institutions: Yorkshire County Cricket Club, Leeds Carnegie's rugby-union side and the rugby-league-playing Leeds Rhinos. The attractive area is also popular with University of Leeds students, leading to a great atmosphere. Its focal point is [The Original Oak](#) pub, home to real ales galore and one of Britain's biggest beer gardens. Sporting events such as the Ryder Cup are sometimes shown on large screens.

**Getting there:** Trains take just over two hours between London Kings Cross and Leeds. Various buses serve Headingley from the station.

### **Famous Three Kings, London**

It's easy to see why the annual Great British Pub Awards crowned west London's [Famous Three Kings](#) as the country's Best Sports Pub for 2016. Making use of subscriptions to some 71,000 channels, multiple big-screen TVs chiefly show live football - expect a raucous atmosphere if local Chelsea are playing - rugby, boxing and Formula 1, along with ice hockey and handball in reaction to recent customer feedback. The food offering is comprehensive, including tapas and sharing platters.



*Sports pub the Famous Three Kings*

**Getting there:** The pub is next to West Kensington underground station, on the District Line.

### **Murlough Room at Royal County Down, Co. Down, Northern Ireland**

In 2016, *Golf Digest* magazine's biennial ranking of the World's 100 Greatest Golf Courses had Northern Ireland's [Royal County Down](#) in first place. The club's challenging pair of 18-hole links courses, help, as do magnificent views across Dundrum Bay to the Mourne Mountains. Yet these aren't all that impress. Inside a red-roofed clubhouse awaits the relaxing [Murlough Room](#), where golfers can feast on warming stews and well-earned whiskies after rounds.

**Getting there:** Royal County Down is 30 miles south of Belfast along the A24.

### **Etihad Stadium, Manchester, north-west England**

Half-time pies are a staple of the football-watching experience at every British stadium. To rank them, online resource Pierate - which aspires to be the world's leading authority - keeps a [league table of pies](#) sampled at football grounds around Britain. The long-term leader is Morecambe FC's Globe Arena. But if you'd prefer Premier League football, consider the second-place venue: Manchester City's [Etihad Stadium](#), 50 miles south. If you don't go for Pep Guardiola, go for the pies.



*Premier League pies are served at Manchester City's Etihad Stadium*

**Getting there:** Located in western England, Manchester has an international airport. Trains from London Euston take two hours, ten minutes.

### **Emirates Arena Cafe, Glasgow, Scotland**

At first glance, the [Emirates Arena's Cafe](#) looks fairly perfunctory: a pleasant-looking space with sandwiches, salads and smoothies. But the award of a Gold Catering Mark - the UK's first leisure-facility venue to gain this accolade - from the Soil Association organic certification body in 2014 better illustrates this venue's quality. The surrounding facilities are no less praiseworthy. Named after Scotland's premier cyclist, the 2,000-seat [Sir Chris Hoy Velodrome](#) has a 250-metre track; visitors may use it, but must book ahead.

**Getting there:** Glasgow is 50 minutes by train heading west from Edinburgh, and 4.5 hours direct from London Euston.

### **Elevens Bar & Grill, Cardiff, Wales**

Wales' most famous footballer, Gareth Bale, is to open a new modern sports bar in central Cardiff in late spring or early summer this year. [Elevens Bar & Grill](#) will run in partnership with the city's beer-brewer, Brains, and occupy a prime site on Castle Street. As the road name suggests, Cardiff Castle looms above, with the national Principality (aka Millennium) Stadium almost as close. Back at Elevens, lots of screens are promised, while Bale has said he aims to serve the city's best burgers.

**Getting there:** Trains between London Paddington and Cardiff take a little over two hours.



*The Champions Gallery over looks Newmarket's Rowley Mile*

### **Champion's Gallery restaurant, Suffolk, eastern England**

Known as Britain's horse-racing headquarters, the 45,000-capacity [Newmarket Racecourse](#) hosts meetings from spring to autumn, as well as the National Horseracing Museum. The main course is its famous Rowley Mile, over which faces Newmarket's panoramic [Champions Gallery](#) restaurant. Fine dining and popped champagne corks go perfectly

with the sound of thundering horses and roaring crowds, especially during May's annual Guineas Festival. Packages begin from £132.

**Getting there:** Trains link London Kings Cross and Liverpool Street to Newmarket via Cambridge and Ipswich, with complimentary shuttles onto the course on race days.