

England's north

A historical and pastoral region with modern and vibrant cities, the north of England has it all, as PAUL EVANS discovers.

The north of England has seen some revolutionary changes in the last decade to rival those of the industrial upheaval of the 19th century. The archaic image of cotton mills, wool factories and steelworks piping out smoke across a concrete horizon is long gone. The area has been undergoing a metamorphosis, making many of its cities as bright, vibrant and culturally exciting as London itself. As the region undergoes its urban face-lift, there has perhaps never been a better time for the international student to visit the north of England and experience the heritage and dynamism that so characterises the region.

Manchester, in the northwest of England, was once the archetypal northern industrial city. Today, the city typifies the culture of "cool Britannia", and it has seen more development in the last 10 years than anywhere else in Britain.

"Manchester is known as the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution, [but] the smoking factories and heavy industry have gone," says Bill Godfrey, from



Hadrian's Wall
Hadrian's Wall was built by the Romans in an attempt to separate the north and south. Designated a World Heritage Site, it represents the biggest single project undertaken by the Roman Empire

Manchester Language School. "Today the city's main industry is education. With four universities, Manchester is a city for young people, as well as having cultural attractions that appeal to adults."

Manchester boasts the largest student population in the country – and it has that same population to

thank for much of its cool profile. The Manchester music scene in the early 1990s thrust alternative music into the mainstream, creating a new genre of music, now referred to simply as "Britpop", and it continues its innovative vibrancy to this day.

Leeds in Yorkshire holds claim to a similarly impressive *renaissance*, and it is now known for its nightlife and modern culture. "Leeds is a very lively city with a huge student population and a great nightlife," confirms Mark Goodrham, Curriculum Coordinator at



Leeds College of Technology. "[It] is very cosmopolitan and there is a youthful vibrancy to Leeds' nightlife, which has a wide range of bars and clubs to suit all tastes."

The former glory of Leeds' Victorian centre is still evident, with its impressive town hall and magnificent civic buildings. The City Art Gallery offers the best selection of 20th-century British art outside of London, and the city's history lives on in various public and privately run museums.

To capture a more consistent view of historical northern England, however, the nearby city of York is ideal. The county town can feel like a living museum with the city walls and ramparts almost always in view, yet there is still a fresh feel to the city. "I think part of the appeal of York is that it is a contained city," explains Lorraine Fothergill, Marketing Officer of Functional



Agent viewpoint



"Our clients are looking for other options outside of the typical places for studying English in England, such as London or the south. [Students like]

the hospitality of the people [in the north], the wonderful landscapes, the fewer Spanish students and the lower cost of living. The lakes, historic buildings, medieval churches, Scotland, and beautiful countryside make the biggest impression on them. Schools [in this region] are

more like family schools, with a high academic level and many options for specialised courses and very attractive social programmes."

Fany Terol, Class, Spain



"The number of language students [in northern England] is smaller in relative and absolute terms compared with the south. Students enjoy the warm welcome and meeting locals; the landscape is different,

[and] there is a large variety of sights and attractions. It is sometimes seen as an alternative after having seen the south of England before. With the language schools we have chosen to work with there is no general difference in quality between north and south. Quality is very good, in all respects. The only problem we are faced with, because of the profile of our clients, is that there are no regular year round small-group business English courses available at a more reasonable



Manchester is a bustling city with modern and old architecture (left); the Yorkshire Dales are a popular beauty spot (below)



Victoria Quarter, Leeds
The Victoria Quarter shopping centre boasts exclusive shops, a stained-glass roof and three mosaic floor panels. The famous London store, Harvey Nichols, set up its Leeds branch here

English in York. “The city centre is small enough that students feel comfortable and independent within a few days of being here.”

Although York may not be able to rival Leeds or Manchester in terms of its nightlife, there is no shortage of beautiful pubs and some appealing cafés. “York has a growing café culture, with a great amount of redevelopment of the riverfront in the last few years,” says Fothergill. “There’s a new cinema and plenty of bars and cafés with live performances of music and poetry.”

Leeds and York both offer great access to the North York Moors, one of England’s most impressive National Parks. The magnificent and seemingly endless views, running to the cliff-edged coastline to the east, are interrupted only by the huge forests

and historical memorials, from stone-age barrows, through Roman ruins at Wades Causeway, to the abbeys of the Middle Ages and beyond. There are also a number of traditional seaside resorts, such as Whitby.

price. We would be very happy if a school would be able to offer these in the future.”

Volker Döhler, Sprachenservice Trialog, Germany



“Most students ask for courses in cities they have heard of [usually in southern England] but some are open to [the idea of] other destinations [in] the north of England. We refer students to schools in Chester

and Manchester. Students enjoy the possibility of total immersion [in English in their] course and the way of life. They like the idea of being halfway [between] London and Edinburgh for tourism purposes. Schools in the north of England are excellent. Their best assets are their very good facilities, the quality of the teaching and social programmes as well as the good nationality mix.”

Elizabeth de Berti, Castleways Educational Consultancy, Argentina

“[Whitby] is a town of around 14,000 people and is situated at the heart of the North York Moors National Park, which provides many opportunities for outdoor activities,” says Neil McKelvie from the Functional English Christian Language School in Whitby. “It has a three-kilometre stretch of sandy beach, which is a popular attraction during the summer months, and there is an attractive harbour, which is used by both fishing boats and sailing craft.”

The town has also inspired a number of writers including Bram Stoker and Lewis Carroll, whose works include *Alice in Won*

Did you know?

- *The Chester Mystery Plays are the oldest and most complete cycle of medieval dramas in Britain.*
- *Manchester will host the Commonwealth games in 2002.*
- *The Romans developed the postcard. Several examples were found in excavations near Hadrian's Wall in England. One was an invitation to a birthday party, another was a request for someone in Rome to send a soldier in England more socks and underwear!*
- *The largest National Park in England and Wales is the Lake District which covers 885 square miles.*
- *A traditional wedding custom in Yorkshire, England, involved a plate holding wedding cake. It was thrown out of the window as the bride returned to her parental home after the wedding celebrations. If the plate broke, she would enjoy a happy future with her husband. If the plate remained intact, her future was bleak.*
- *When England was a province of Rome, the city of Cheshire was noted for its fine cheese. The Romans built a wall around the town to protect it. Cheshire cheese was made in a mold shaped like a cat, later made famous as the smiling feline in Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland.*
- *In 1830, the world's first passenger train line opened between Liverpool and Manchester.*
- *The "new castle" in Newcastle Upon Tyne was built as long ago as 1080.*

derland. McKelvie adds, "The historic atmosphere of the town has also been used for the filming of many recent movies, including *Harry Potter* and *Possession*."

Northern England is also home to the Lake District, a beautiful area of rolling green hills, rugged mountains and valleys dotted with lakes and villages. Although the area attracts millions of visitors each year, it remains an undiscovered gem to many language travel students. Tim Melling, from English Language in the Lakes in Ambleside, says this fact "allows our students to integrate into the [local] community very easily".

He continues, "The area is definitely for students who want to explore the countryside. There are plenty of opportunities for outdoor pursuits such as rock climbing and canoeing, but the beautiful scenery makes walking one of the most popular activities."

If the Lake District is representative of the pastoral heritage that is so integral to England's character, then Liverpool, on the northwest coast, represents its vibrancy. The city is one of the most multi-ethnic and modern that Britain has to offer.

"Liverpool is now a twinned city with Shanghai [in China]," explains Julie Derham

from the European Languages Centre, "and we have one of the oldest Chinese communities in Europe here in Liverpool." Like Manchester, Liverpool still maintains the great Victorian municipal buildings that speak of the past fortune of the city. It also has two magnificent and famous cathedrals, and



York Minster
The largest medieval cathedral in Europe, York Minister attracts two million visitors each year. It was constructed between 1220 and 1480, while the foundations display Norman and Roman ruins

a great many museums that testify to its nautical and mercantile past.

The late closing bars on Matthew Street – which is also the site and name-sake of an annual festival, attracting half a million visitors each year – offer a taste of vibrant English culture. But perhaps Liverpool's most internationally celebrated feature is that it was the birthplace of The Beatles. At the Albert Dock, rejuvenated warehouses support a shrine to

Liverpool's culture and, although this is the site of the Tate Gallery, the most popular venue is the Beatles Experience museum.

To the southeast of Liverpool, lies Ches-

ter, the county town of one Britain's wealthiest rural counties. Cheshire itself offers some wonderfully typical images of rural England, with traditional villages set in open green countryside, while the city has wonderfully preserved architecture. "Chester is an ideal size for students," says Richard Day from English in

Chester, "being large enough to have a variety of attractions but not too big so that students feel lost." He adds, "Chester is a unique city with a very 'English' feel."

Two miles of Roman and Medieval walls circuit the city centre, with magnificent gateways leading out to greater Chester, and the modern shops in the centre are built in and around authentic Tudor "rows".

The city plays host to many festivals throughout the year, which offer a mixture of history and culture, as Day explains. "There are a number of events in Chester that have their origins in the Middle Ages. These include the Mystery Plays, performed every five years, and the annual Midsummer Watch Parade. There are also annual film, literature and music events with a summer fringe [alternative] festival." □



The Lake District
With dramatic mountains and beautiful lakes, the Lake District is a delight for tourists. Conistone (pictured) is particularly famous for its lake and the craggy hills that overlook the town