



England personified

The Shambles in York (main picture)

England's Midlands and north offers students a truly English experience, with friendly, welcoming people and lively cities. It can also be much cheaper than studying in the south of the UK. **GILLIAN EVANS** finds out more.

For many years, visitors to the UK and particularly its language schools looked only to London and the southeast of England," recounts John Leighton, Director of Summer Courses at Concord College in Shrewsbury, set in the heart of England. But as Leighton and many others in the region note, all that has changed now, with many more students travelling to England's Midlands and north for an unforgettable experience.

"The north [of England] is particularly appealing because there are no major concentrations of overseas students so the students' experience is more English," comments Richard Day of English in Chester. He adds. "Northern people are friendly and welcoming, and students are attracted by the diversity of the region with so many opportunities for students."

The friendliness of the people is a big plus point of studying further afield in England. Helen Richardson at City College in Manchester says, "Mancunians are well

known for their friendly manner so staying with a host family can really help integrate students into UK life."

Duncan Baker at Lydbury English Centre in Lydbury North observes, "We often find our students have been invited into a local home for tea. Our students visit the bell-ringers in the church tower and drink with them in the local pub afterwards."

Richardson also highlights the cost benefits of studying in this area. "To live outside the south of the UK means that [students] will, on average, have around 33 per cent more money in their pockets," she says. With all these advantages, coupled with the fact that the area has well-preserved historic cities, lively cultural centres, famous universities, and varied and open landscapes, it is clear why students are now taking England's Midlands and north seriously.

The initial attraction for students choosing to study at Leeds University is, according to Julie Lewis, the fact that the university enjoys a good reputation. But once there, students discover the city's many other attractions. Its large student population means that the city is a lively place to study with plenty of part-time job



- Carlisle
- Scarborough
- York
- Leeds
- Manchester
- Liverpool
- Sheffield
- Chester
- Nottingham
- Shrewsbury
- Birmingham
- London

Mersey River Festival, Liverpool

Liverpool is host to the UK's biggest free maritime celebration, which features tall ships, racing yachts, street theatre, an international shanty festival and military displays



Agent viewpoint

opportunities. According to Lewis, Leeds is “a major shopping destination and centre for entertainment, nightlife, the arts and leisure”.

Another city famous for its nightlife and cultural activities is Manchester. With 80,000 students, it is also one of the north’s academic hubs.

According to Richardson, Manchester has a cosmopolitan atmosphere, with pavement cafés and modern and old architecture blending together. She continues, “There are also plenty of museums, galleries and theatres, our most famous home-grown artist being Lowry, with his paintings of Manchester’s industrial past and its ‘match stick’ inhabitants.” Internationally, the city is well known because of its football team. “Wherever I travel across the world, when I say, ‘Manchester United’, everyone immediately knows where I am from,” Richardson adds.

Not far from the footballing cities of Manchester and Liverpool is Chester. “Chester is simply an international heritage



Ye Olde Trip to Jerusalem

Claiming to be the oldest pub in the UK, this Nottingham pub reputedly dates from 1189. Legend has it that crusaders stopped here on their way to battle in the 12th century

city of immeasurable charm and vitality,” enthuses Richard Day of English in Chester. “[It] is Britain’s only completely walled city and we have the unique ‘Rows’ [double-storey buildings in the town centre dating from the 13th century].” As well as discovering the city’s history, there are plenty of other attractions. “The city has a picturesque river, a beautiful park, a Cathedral, cinemas, a theatre, several museums and many shops

and department stores.”

For students looking for alternatives to big cities, northern England has much to offer. Set on the North Yorkshire coast is Scarborough, a popular tourist and student destination. According to Sarah Wall, Business Development Manager at Anglolang Academy of English in Scarborough, the town is especially suitable for “those who do not want to live in a large city and prefer a smaller town where they can walk to school every day and visit larger cities such as London, Manchester, York and Edinburgh at the weekend”.

Scarborough also hosts some unique events. “Students can experience the ‘Pancake Races’ on the beach in February or ‘Raft



“The lowest costs are found in the Midlands and northern England as far as living expenses are concerned. [In addition], the Midlands and north are very easy to reach from London. Students are usually amazed by the hospitality and the attentiveness of the schools [there]. Students expect a very strong accent in the north because that is usually what is told in Turkey. But on their return, they say that it was not that hard to understand the accent.”

Evin Sungun, HIT International Education, Turkey

“A class had been studying idioms/colloquialisms and the term ‘bottoms up’ had been discussed with reference to having a drink. The next day a student from this class lifted up his glass of orange juice and said, ‘Up your bottom!’”
John Leighton, Concord College, Shrewsbury





"I think that the biggest advantage of studying in the northern region of the UK is the cost factor. The living costs in the north are considerably cheaper than in the south and many Korean students like the fact that people are generally friendlier and open-minded. We mostly send our students to Leeds, Sheffield, Newcastle and Manchester. They are big student cities and offer a lively environment for the students. Our students are quite surprised about the lively nightlife [they encounter]!"

Jinah Park, UK Education Network, Korea



"We send students to Coventry, Harrogate, Leeds and York. Leeds and York are the most popular cities because there is a lot for our students to do. The friendliness of the people and variety of national parks in the Midlands and northern England also attract Taiwanese students. In York, our students are attracted by the wide range of cultural activities, wonderful architecture, fascinating old streets, lively street markets and street entertainers."

Lancelo Gao, UK Star Education Consultancy, Taiwan



"Universities in the Midlands and north provide a creative atmosphere [with] highly professional and enthusiastic teachers and numerous student societies and organisations. The main destinations for Russian students going to UK for higher education are Manchester and Birmingham, world education centres with famous universities and well established and developed social life. The main surprise in Midlands and north is the friendly people and the atmosphere of hospitality."

Mikhail Gerchikov, Anglo-Russian School, Russia

Races' in the sea [in December]," says Wall, adding, "For the more energetic, Scarborough is the perfect place to try surfing, playing golf at one of our many courses or walking in the scenic countryside surrounding the town." After such activities there are, of course, the traditional Yorkshire pubs offering real ale and live music.

Further south, into the middle of England, students are also

treated to a typical English experience.

Baker at Lydbury English Centre, which belongs to the marketing group the Heart of England Language Schools Association – whose 12

members span from Cheltenham to Nottingham – goes as far as to say, "This [area] is England personified – from medieval castles and hill forts to small shops and museums where people have time to talk

and care." He also highlights the advantages of studying at one of the schools in the heart of England. "It is a very friendly part of the country, not over-occupied by language schools. Here students can be guaranteed quality, of course, plus friendly and generous accommodation and genuine contact with local people."

Concord College, just outside Shrewsbury in Shropshire, actually has, according to Leighton, "a castle at the edge of its grounds and what is recognised as the site of the first ever Parliament actually in our grounds". The college is well placed for taking up the challenge of local outdoor activities. "Local hills [such as] the Stretton Hills, including the Long Mynd, are wonderful for walking and wildlife. They also provide safe areas for rock climbing and camping," says Leighton. ●

Church Stretton, Shropshire

An 18th century market town, Church Stretton is now a popular base for hikers, nature enthusiasts, historians and sports people wanting to explore the surrounding countryside

