

# England's Midlands and North

Schools in England's Midlands and North agree that there are many advantages awaiting language students who venture away from London and the south coast. AMY BAKER finds out what these are.

Selling the Midlands and North has never been easy, yet paradoxically this makes it the ideal destination for serious language learners," says Neil Harris at Anglolang Academy of English in Scarborough. He echoes what many providers say about language learning opportunities in this area: there are real opportunities for progress while studying in friendly and often unknown destinations with significant cultural appeal.

"Aside from the friendly welcome from local families, hotels and guest houses, students are in the cultural heart of Britain," exclaims Harris, who explains that award-winning destinations in the region include the "seaside resort of Scarborough, the historical city of York, the avant-garde town of Leeds and the countryside of the Yorkshire Moors and Dales".

Lower down the country in Stamford, Lincolnshire, Georgina Steele, Director of Castle Hill International Language Centre, also points out the charms awaiting students who visit this region. "Most people don't know about our area or that Stamford exists at all," she says,

"[but] it has over 600 buildings of historic importance in it. Stamford is one of the finest stone towns in the UK and its general appearance has not changed much in 400 years."

Steele also underlines the friendliness of her region, which is off the tourist trail. "We hear every year [from students] that they never realised the English were so friendly, welcoming and ready to have fun. Much of our business has relied on repeat business or word-of-mouth."

Apart from a friendly reception and real discovery of the UK, Clare Happs at Leeds Metropolitan University points out other logistical advantages to studying in the north. "In Leeds, we are lucky because there are few other schools using host families," she says, "so we find the best!"

Students may be concerned about the fact that there are few of their compatriots in a less well known destination, but most schools assert that students soon feel at



**The Beatles Story, Liverpool**  
Visitors to this museum relive the rise to fame of the Beatles and chart their successes over the years. Highlights include a recreation of early performances and a tribute to John Lennon

home, adding that they make efforts to ensure students fit into local life. At Lydbury English Centre, for example, in rural Shropshire, Duncan Baker says, "We have local guests in to dinner with our students as we are a residential centre, and students are often invited into the homes of local people for tea."

In Newcastle, in the far north of the country,

the locals, known as "Geordies", are famed for their hospitality and the city has a renowned energetic nightlife and famous football team. The biggest city between York and Scotland, Newcastle lays claim to being the northern city of culture.

An impressive steel sculpture by Antony Gormley, called the Angel of the North, welcomes anyone approaching the city from the south, and in the city itself, the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art is the largest visual arts space outside London.

According to Gill Mitchell at International House Newcastle, students like going to the city's Theatre Royal in their free time to see performances by the Royal Shake-

*"One of our Hungarian students was a pigeon fancier and we helped him pursue his interest – we put him in touch with the North of England Homing Union and he ended up judging a pigeon parade!"*

*Gill Mitchell, International House Newcastle, Newcastle*

## Agent viewpoint



"We have a good and long-standing working relationship with Leeds Metropolitan University. The location of Leeds is ideal as it is in the centre of England, only a few hours from London and a few hours to Scotland. In their free time, our clients like shopping and walking around in the town, meeting and drinking at the pub with friends, going to the theatre, cinema and playing football. We also refer clients to the city of York,

Yorkshire and the Bronte country. This area offers high quality education, a wide range of courses with great learning and recreational facilities."  
**Kay Keiyama, Britain Reservation Centre, Japan**



"We recommend schools in York, Scarborough, Manchester, Newcastle and the Lake District. As I am originally from the North of England, I'm well aware of the wealth of beauty in these often unknown



areas. Moreover, the locals often take more interest in foreign students and make them feel extremely welcome, because the north isn't swamped by foreign students and tourists."  
**Shirley Beck, Castle's Language Institute, Liechtenstein**



Whitby's scenic harbour (main picture)

speare Company. "They also like visiting art galleries, museums and the International Centre for Life," she says. If students tire of life in Newcastle, the school organises day trips and weekend excursions to Edinburgh, York, Durham and the Lake District.

For students looking for a slightly different study experience, Whitby, on the North Yorkshire coast, is a good option. "Whitby is an attraction for people from all over the world," says Neil McKelvie of Functional English Christian Language School, which accepts students of all faiths or none. "It is a picturesque fishing town with centuries of sea-going tradition, and connections with Captain Cook."

In nearby Scarborough, Harris points out, there are

excellent sandy beaches and all the facilities associated with a premier seaside resort – cinemas, bars and nightclubs. Scarborough is also home to the famous British playwright, Sir Alan Ayckbourn, who previews all his plays in the town before they transfer to London's West End.

For a lively city with good connections to the rest of England, Leeds is a popular choice among British university students. At Leeds Metropolitan University's Centre for Language Study, international students can take advantage of the university facilities, such as computing laboratories and extensive sports facilities including tennis courts, swimming pool and climb-



**Tyne Bridge, Newcastle**  
When it opened in 1928, the Tyne Bridge was the largest single span bridge in the world. It is one of several bridges that span the River Tyne, connecting Newcastle with nearby Gateshead

beautiful countryside. I tend to refer students to one other school in the same region, Shrewsbury. There tend to be fewer language schools in these areas and so clients are less likely to meet other students with the same mother tongue."

**Daniel Baruch, Consultant, Germany**

"I recommend Stamford because it is a very peaceful town, with very friendly people, and after 13 years of searching, I found the best language



school in Britain [there]. Students like to see the historic buildings in the town and visit the sports facilities and the library. Here, they can learn peacefully and

[enjoy] the cultural events, besides the courses."  
**Ottó László Nagy, International Holiday House, Hungary**

"We recommend Lydbury English Centre to a small number of clients. The school makes available two



cars for students to use at the weekends. This enables them to travel to neighbouring towns and places of interest in the region, and gives them the opportunity to see the English countryside.

Based on our experience, the cost of living in the Midlands and the north is more reasonable, and people are much more friendly."  
**Ture Ozer, Edcon Education Consultancy, Turkey**

ing wall. "Many of our students find that by using these facilities, or by joining one of the many student union clubs, they get really good opportunities to meet British students," says Happs.

Leeds itself is the fastest growing commercial city in Europe. It has a sizeable student population, a good reputation for nightlife and culture, and it achieved notoriety for being the first place outside of London to have a branch of Harvey Nichols, the London store popular with Diana, Princess of Wales. "Leeds has something for everyone," sums up Happs.

Two other renowned cities in the north of England are, of course, Manchester and Liverpool. Liverpool is probably still most famous for its musical progeny, the Beatles, and at the Liverpool School of English, students can enrol on the English and the Beatles Experience programme. "It is extremely popular with Japanese and Russian students," says Maria McDonnell at the school, who adds, "Our

English and the Everton Experience programme has worldwide appeal. The Thai Youth Olympic Football Team even visited in March."

McDonnell feels that Liverpool is often overlooked by the language traveller. "The city has more listed buildings than any other city outside London and all of its museums are of national status," she says. "In a recent poll, Liverpool was recently voted Britain's friendliest city, and in *Tatler* magazine, No.1 City for Fashion."

Manchester has similar credentials, attracting many students from the UK and beyond, although it remains slightly off the beaten track for language students. "Many are not aware of the fact that Manchester has the biggest student population of any city in Europe," says Brita Backlund of City College Manchester. □

