

# Bohemian Brighton & Hove



The new city status of Brighton & Hove is testament to this bustling seaside city with a reputation for exuberance and fun. **AMY BAKER** reports.

Over the last 20 years, Brighton has come of age for international students and they are now very much part of the Brighton community," said David Balmer of Brains Corporate Services, a Brighton-based agency that places clients in local language schools. He adds, "The business community now also works with educational institutions and has grown to understand the needs and demands of a multicultural student community."

## The Lanes

The maze of streets that house many interesting and independent shops are called both the Lanes and the North Lanes. From clothing and homeware to cafés and jewellery, there is plenty to interest shoppers



with international students from all over the world, particularly in the summer months, to create a lively, fun-loving city. Jeremy Histon at City College Brighton & Hove testifies, "Brighton has a multicultural population and a large student population, thanks to its two universities and many language schools." There are 29 such schools listed on the local tourism board website.

Brighton is certainly one of the traditional and popular destinations for language learners in the UK, with its own multicultural population merging

Balmer claims, "Brighton would not be the same without the input from international students, and we are now seeing second and third generations coming through, making Brighton one of the most vibrant cities in the UK."

One of the attractions of Brighton for students is, of course, its location by the sea, with a long pebbled beach and famous pier. Brighton also has a "cool" status and a number of British music and entertainment celebrities live in the city and can be spotted around town and on the beach. Given the city's location within easy reach of London, Brighton is also a popular weekend destination for many Londoners.

As Ingmar Albig of EC Brighton observes, Brighton & Hove – which is the official title for one city comprising two previously distinct towns – is a "young and urban area that is cosy and small enough to make it feel like home". It is easy to get to know the geography of Brighton. Shopping

in the city is a popular pastime and Histon notes, "For shoppers, there is the historic Lanes and North Laines area with hundreds of little local shops."

In the summertime, the pebbled beach is undoubtedly Brighton's best attraction. Beachside art shops, restaurants and cafés are popular with locals and students meeting friends, and surf hire shops enable students to get a taste for the surf lifestyle. Seamus Murphy at Regency College observes, "Students who come in the summer spend [their] free time shopping and on the beach [with friends]. They often



#### **Fish and Chips**

Fish and chips are a traditional dish in the UK but are most commonly associated with the seaside. Brighton's promenade does not disappoint, with many outlets offering the original British fast food

prefer cheap activities such as barbecues on the beach."

For those who like sports, Histon says students are "spoilt for choice" in terms of the range of outdoor activities on offer.

"When they are not studying, those that like sports can go mountain biking, windsurfing, running along the beach, etc," he says. "The student's union at City College organises sporting activities such as football matches."

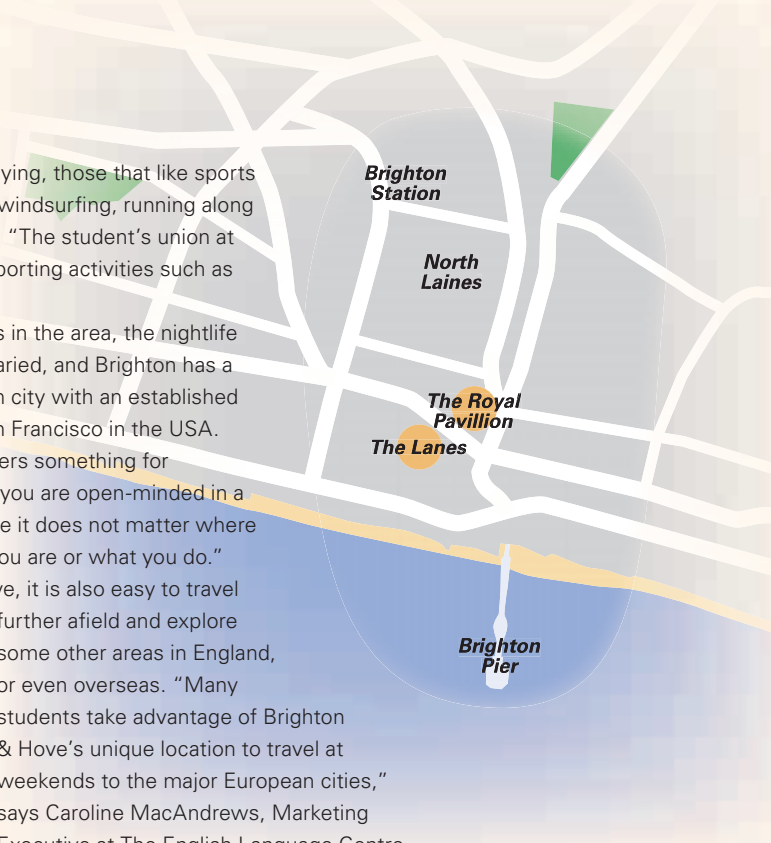
With two universities in the area, the nightlife scene is also busy and varied, and Brighton has a reputation as a bohemian city with an established gay scene, much like San Francisco in the USA. Albig says, "Brighton offers something for everybody but it helps if you are open-minded in a place like Brighton, where it does not matter where you come from or who you are or what you do."

From Brighton & Hove, it is also easy to travel

further afield and explore some other areas in England, or even overseas. "Many students take advantage of Brighton & Hove's unique location to travel at weekends to the major European cities," says Caroline MacAndrews, Marketing Executive at The English Language Centre, adding, "We offer a weekend excursion programme to different locations in the

south of England – London, Stonehenge, Oxford, Canterbury and Leeds Castle to name a few."

Heaney mentions another advantage of studying in Brighton: many students are able to work part-time and in a busy tourist city such as Brighton, jobs are fairly easy to come by. Those who work



have less free time, he observes, but says their school offers local activities such as pub nights or “ghost” walks. At EC Brighton, other local activities organised for their junior students include disco nights, salsa dancing, bowling and sports, relates Albig.

Balmer notes that aside from entertainment options, Brighton has significant historical and cultural appeal too, not least for its famous Brighton Pavilion, commissioned by the Prince Regent, who later became King George IV. His former seaside residence – an exotic palace with onion domes and minarets – was built



#### **Brighton Marina**

From the marina, boats run diving trips for trained divers to war-time wrecks. For those who like to stay on the shore, there are many facilities for visitors and those who live at the marina, which opened in 1978

by architect, John Nash, when the Prince Regent fell in love with Brighton in 1783, then known as Brighthelmstone. Considered avant-garde when it was built, the Royal Pavilion is still an unusual spectacle and as unexpected inside, with opulent furnishings and oriental decoration themes.

“Students are very keen to learn about the historical past, the buildings, the museums, art galleries, the parks and gardens and Brighton Marina,” underlines Balmer. “Not all are keen on just the nightlife.” One of the city’s newest developments, the Brighton Marina, is said to be the largest marina in the UK, serving as a berthing station for many yachts and offering a lively yacht club and brand new waterfront development with shops, restaurants, a cinema, casino and bowling alley.

Balmer sums up, “There is a real mix of age groups that can find their own real niche of things to do and our international students have even said that they feel they are very lucky to be here!” ●

## **Agent viewpoint**

“Half of our UK-bound students wish to study in Brighton, especially the language students. This is because Brighton is located in southern England, where there is no strong accent, and students find it easier to learn proper English. The weather here is suitable. In their spare time, students like to meet friends and join in with the English culture.”

**Angela Ning, UK China Student Union, UK**

“Brighton is a great combination of a lively city and a beautiful seaside town. [It has great opportunities] for shopping, watersports or cultural visits and all this just 1.5 hours away from London. About 18 per cent of all UK-bound students choose Brighton. Besides London, Oxford and Cambridge, Brighton is one of the most requested study destinations in the UK.”

**Julia Richter, Studiosus Sprachreisen, Germany**

“Brighton has many advantages. It is like a small London – dynamic and lively. It is a medium-sized city with students from all over the world. And students can enjoy many different activities such as going to nice restaurants, museums, the beach etc. The city also has good a communication network and is close to London. It is a safe city and during the last few years, the city has expanded so much.”

**Ignacio Mas de Xaxas, British Summer, Spain**

“Students going to Brighton choose [to study there] for several reasons. First of all it is a lovely city close to the sea and it also offers a good variety of shopping, restaurants, etc. Moreover, the city lies within easy reach of London.”

**Maria Waldén, SI Language Travel, Sweden**