



POCKET ROUGH GUIDE

LEEDS

written and researched by
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Carl Milner Photography/Visit Leeds



Leeds

Often considered the unofficial capital of Yorkshire, Leeds is a city bursting with life, culture and creativity. Known for its skilfully revamped Victorian arcades, world-class theatres and a thriving independent food scene, it's a city at the heart of the action.

Whether you're catching a show at Leeds Grand Theatre, exploring the impressive Royal Armouries Museum or strolling along the waterfront at Leeds Dock, there's something to discover at every turn. Vibrant festivals such as Leeds West Indian Carnival and Light Night keep the city's energy high, alongside a packed calendar of live music and performance events, so whenever you visit, entertainment is never far away. Leeds is easy to reach by train thanks to the regular TransPennine Express services into the city from the north of England and from Liverpool and Manchester. Once there, the city is compact enough to explore on foot, with historic architecture, lively street art and hidden gems around every corner. Find out more about travelling to Leeds by **TransPennine Express**.

Leeds Corn Exchange

Call Ln, Leeds, LS1 7BR

📍 leedscornexchange.co.uk. Free

A true masterpiece of Victorian architecture, Leeds Corn Exchange is one of the most beautiful shopping destinations in the country. The striking domed roof and intricate ironwork provide a stunning backdrop for a range of independent boutiques, vintage shops and artisanal cafés. If you're looking for handmade jewellery, unique fashion or quirky gifts, you've come to the right place. Regular markets, craft fairs and live performances add to its vibrant atmosphere. As a hub for independent businesses, it fosters creativity and is a must-visit for anyone wanting an alternative shopping experience in Leeds.

Leeds Art Gallery

The Headrow, Leeds, LS1 3AA

📍 leeds.gov.uk/museumsandgalleries. Free
Sharing a recently restored Victorian building with the Central

Library, Leeds Art Gallery has an important collection of largely nineteenth- and twentieth-century paintings, prints, drawings and sculptures, some on permanent display, others rotated. There's an understandable bias towards pieces by Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth, both former students at the Leeds School of Art; Moore's *Reclining Woman* lounges at the top of the steps at the gallery entrance – near where you'll also find the ornate Art Nouveau café with its grand marble columns.

Leeds Grand Theatre and Opera North

46 New Briggate, Leeds, LS1 6NU

📍 leedsgrandtheatre.com. Charge

One of the UK's leading theatre venues, Leeds Grand Theatre is home to Opera North and regularly stages West End productions, ballet and live music performances. Opened in 1878, this grand Victorian theatre is a



masterpiece of design, with an opulent auditorium and stunning decorative details. Behind-the-scenes tours offer a fascinating insight into its history, architecture and resident productions. The theatre's proximity to lively bars and restaurants makes it the perfect spot for an unforgettable night out in Leeds.

Royal Armouries Museum

Armouries Dr, Leeds, LS10 1LT

📍 royalarmouries.org. Free

On the south side of the riverbank, the spectacular glass turret and gunmetal grey bulk of the Royal Armouries beckons, purpose-built to house the arms and armour collection from the Tower of London. One of the best museums of its type in the world, its five galleries hold beautifully displayed weapons and armour dating from Roman times onwards. Particularly spectacular are the reconstruction of a tiger hunt; the Indian elephant armour (the heaviest armour in the world) consisting of 8,500 iron plates; Samurai, Mongol and Indian armour and weapons; and many

ornate guns, from a reconstruction of an enormously long Essex punt gun to an exquisite Tiffany-decorated Magnum hand gun.

Roundhay Park and Tropical World

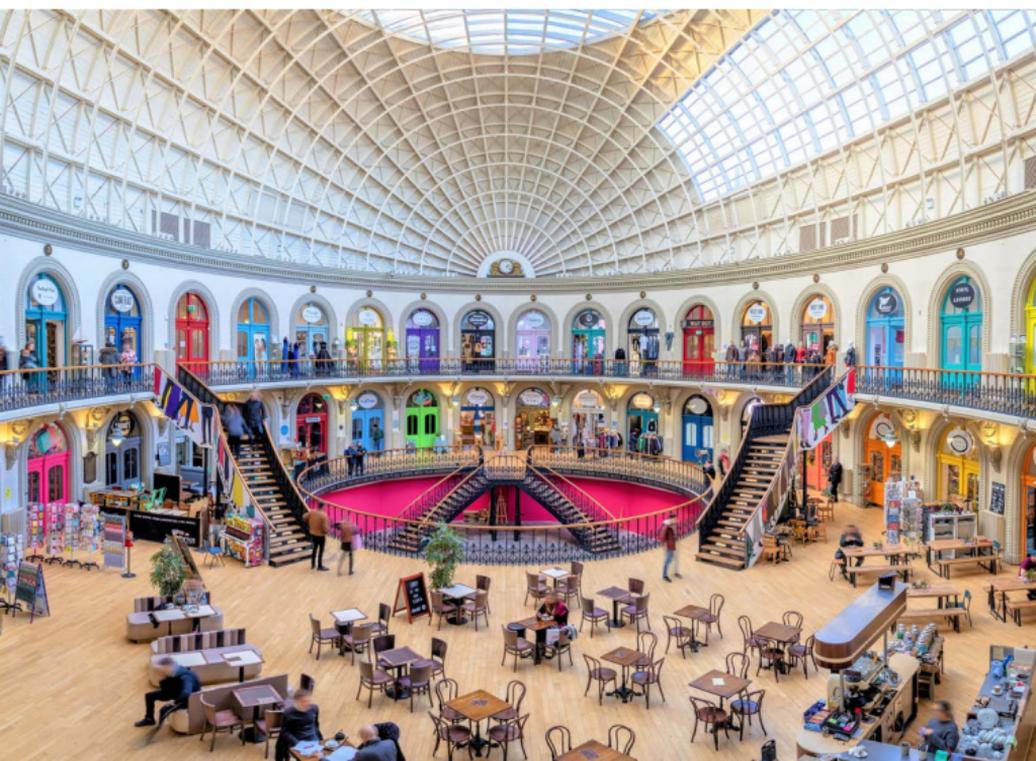
Mansion Ln, Leeds, LS8 2HH

📍 visitleeds.co.uk. Free (Tropical World charge)

One of the largest urban parks in Europe, Roundhay Park boasts 700 acres of beautifully landscaped gardens, lakes and woodland. Visitors can set off on scenic walking trails, hire a boat for a spin on Waterloo Lake, or explore the stunning Canal Gardens. Within the park, Tropical World is home to exotic animals, free-flying butterflies and rare plants, and the indoor rainforest and desert zones offer an immersive experience for all ages. Frequent outdoor concerts and food festivals, plus seasonal light displays, make the park a year-round attraction. And with its multiple playgrounds, a lakeside café and dedicated events programme, Roundhay Park makes for a perfect day out for families.

Leeds Corn Exchange

Carl Milner Photography/Visit Leeds



Kirkstall Abbey

Abbey Rd, Leeds, LS5 3EH

📍 leeds.gov.uk/museumsandgalleries. Free

Nestled in scenic parkland along the River Aire, Kirkstall Abbey is one of the best-preserved Cistercian monasteries in the UK. Founded in 1152, its grand ruins provide a striking glimpse into medieval monastic life.

Visitors can wander through the atmospheric stone remains, learn about the abbey's history at the visitor centre, and enjoy riverside walks in the surrounding gardens. The abbey often puts on historical reenactments, outdoor theatre performances and craft fairs, keeping it a lively destination for history lovers. Photography enthusiasts will find endless inspiration in the abbey's Gothic arches and scenic setting.

Victoria Arcades and Trinity Leeds

Albion St, Leeds, LS1 5AT

📍 trinityleeds.com. Free

Leeds is a shopper's paradise, blending tantalising modern stores with stunning historic architecture. Trinity Leeds is the city's largest shopping centre, with a mix of high-street brands and independent boutiques, as well as a diverse food

court. Just a short walk away, the Victoria Quarter and Victoria Gate house designer brands in beautifully restored arcades with mosaic floors and elegant glass ceilings. These shopping destinations also host seasonal pop-up shops, luxury personal shopping services and gourmet dining options, making them more lifestyle destinations than mere retail spaces.

Leeds Festival

Bramham Park, Leeds, LS23 6ND

📍 leedsfestival.com. Charge

One of the UK's biggest and most anticipated music festivals, Leeds Festival attracts over 100,000 music lovers each year to experience performances from global superstars and rising talent. Spanning three days, the festival features multiple stages hosting a diverse mix of rock, indie, hip-hop and electronic acts. Beyond the music, attendees can enjoy comedy performances and immersive experiences, while soaking up the vibrant festival atmosphere. Held at Bramham Park, the festival is easily accessible from Leeds city centre, making it a must-visit for music fans seeking an unforgettable summer weekend.

Kirkstall Abbey

Zagni Photography



Shops

Colours May Vary

Leeds Corn Exchange, Call Ln, LS1 7BR

📍 colours-may-vary.com

This independent design store is a haven for creatives, packed with beautifully curated books, stationery, prints and homeware. Specialising in contemporary graphic design and photography, it's the go-to spot for unique gifts and inspiration. Regular collaborations with local artists and limited-edition stock mean there's always something new to discover.

Leeds Kirkgate Market

Vicar Lane, LS2 7HY 📍 leeds.gov.uk

Home to the original Marks & Spencer's stall, this elegant, historic market (built in 1875) is one of the largest and oldest in Europe. It has everything from haberdashery to fishmongers, as well as an amazing street food market with cuisines from all over the world.

Restaurants

Bundobust

6 Mill Hill, LS1 5DQ 📍 bundobust.com

Bundobust serves up bold flavours in a lively, canteen-style setting. The entirely vegetarian menu is packed with dishes like okra fries, paneer tikka and iconic vada pav, all paired perfectly with craft beers from their in-house brewery. The informal, communal dining space makes it an ideal spot for groups or a laid-back meal with friends. ££

Ox Club

Headrow House, 19a The Headrow, LS1 6PU

📍 oxclub.co.uk

Housed in the stylish Headrow House, *Ox Club* is known for its wood-fired cooking and locally sourced ingredients. The menu changes with the seasons, but signature dishes like coal-roasted meats, inventive vegetarian plates



Leeds Kirkgate Market

Henrykc/Shutterstock

and fresh seafood keep diners coming back. *Ox Club* is a standout on the Leeds dining scene. £££

Salvo's

115 Otley Rd, Headingley, LS6 3PX

📍 salvos.co.uk

Mention pizza to Leeds locals and they'll think of *Salvo's* in Headingley. This place is about more than just pizza though. There's a classy Italian menu as well, supported by a choice list of daily specials. It really is worth the trek out from the centre. ££

Sociable Folk

10 Wellington Place, LS1 4JP

📍 sociablefolk.co.uk

Think bare concrete walls, plenty of foliage and no end of filament light bulbs at this cool café-restaurant. Unlike some venues that can be more style over substance, expect to enjoy great salads, bagels and sandwiches here. ££

Wapentake

92 Kirkgate, LS2 7DJ

📍 wapentakeleeds.co.uk

Arrive early to bag a table for the best breakfast in town or, if visiting Leeds on a Sunday, enjoy a



Côte de boeuf at Ox Club
Kluens.Media/Ox Club

delicious roast at this unpretentious place. All ingredients are sourced daily from Leeds Kirkgate Market next door. ££

Bars

Bar Fibre

168 Lower Briggate, LS1 6LY

📍 barfibre.com

One of Leeds's finest gay-friendly bars comes with plenty of attitude. There's food during the day at *Café Mafiosa*, regular alfresco parties in the courtyard outside (summer) and roaring fires inside (winter). For a fun and friendly vibe, look no further.

Flight Club

1-2 S Parade, LS1 5QL

📍 flightclubdarts.com/leeds

The first rule of *Flight Club*? You don't talk about *Flight Club*. But we don't gatekeep here: this classic saloon-style watering hole is one of the most fun hangouts in Leeds. Pair a pint with a game of darts with your pals – it's not cheap, but it's worth it for a special occasion.

Mojo

18 Merrion St, LS1 6PQ 📍 mojobar.co.uk

A great bar with classic tunes ("music for the people" – an eclectic mix with a swerve towards soul), American food, and a classy drinks menu with lots of cocktails. Just 10 minutes from Leeds Railway Station, it's a great choice for meeting friends or grabbing a quick one before heading home.

North Bar

24 New Briggate, LS1 6NU 📍 northbar.com

The city's beer specialist has a massive selection of guest beers (more Belgian than bitter), plus cold meats and cheeses to nibble on. This place is part of the hugely successful North Bar group, with great pubs across the city.

Whitelocks

Turk's Head Yard, off Briggate, LS1 6HB

📍 whitelocksleeds.com

Leeds's oldest and most atmospheric pub retains its traditional Victorian decor and a good choice of beers. To step back in time at a pub where it feels like time has stood still, get yourself here.