

Picking garden produce
at The Black Swan

North Star

Dizzying countryside, high-flying chefs, soaring skies and a popping party culture – you won't look down up North

Exploring a Northern beauty spot, even for a weekend, could ignite a creative spark or two. There's a reason why Wordsworth, the Brontë sisters, Lewis Carroll and Ted Hughes all wrote their literary masterpieces here. Beatrix Potter was a born and bred Londoner and moved to Lake Windermere aged 39. Take note, townies.

Northern cities are proud of their industrial heritage and rival London in international culture and music – it's not just Greggs and gravy that students flock to Manchester, Leeds and Newcastle for. A strong sense of regional identity permeates both town and country; chefs are putting new restaurants on the map and the lakes and fells landscape is unforgettable.

Hikers should head to Cumbria and the Lake District for adrenaline spikes caused by needle-pin turns and stray herds of cattle. More easy-going amblers should visit Cheshire or Yorkshire, both of which have the glorious Peaks. Travel west, where Lancashire's beaches range from jolly Blackpool to quaint Lytham St Annes and Morecambe. Crucially, both have a Booths – the North's answer to Waitrose.



St Anne's Pier, Lancashire

The Treehouse
at Alnwick Garden

SEE The Treehouse at Alnwick Garden in Northumberland is one of the largest in the world. Sustainably built and surrounded by leafy lime trees, it's home to a unique 80-seat restaurant. alnwickgarden.com

Also in Northumberland, high up on Black Fell, in a location chosen because it's England's first and Europe's largest International Dark Sky Park, is the Kielder Observatory, where – on rare but breathtaking occasions – it's possible to see the Northern Lights. Don't forget to book Aurora Nights in advance. kielderobservatory.org

Sticking to the dark side, visit Pendle Hill in Lancashire, famous for its burial site, where the brutally executed Pendle Witches were laid to rest in the 17th century.

Woodruff toast with rhubarb
and Oldstead honey at Roots

EAT Tommy Banks, Yorkshire's chef prodigy and director of new restaurant Roots in York, tempts palates according to three seasonal categories: the 'preservation season', 'hunger gap' and 'time of abundance'. Owned as a family business, along with its acclaimed sister venue, the Michelin-starred Black Swan at Olstead, Banks remains chef director of both. rootsyork.com; blackswanoldstead.co.uk

If you're visiting the Toon (aka Newcastle), the best place to eat is House of Tides, another family-run restaurant, where head chef Kenny Atkinson, a born and bred Geordie, boasts the city's only Michelin star. Though perfect for casual, the restaurant's interiors are as grand as its Grade I-listed, 16th-century heritage – it was formerly a quayside merchant house. houseoftides.co.uk

If you're not in a Michelin-starred mood, Manchester's GRUB market satisfies many a sweet or salty craving. It's the city's biggest and best street food fair, and pops up every Friday and Saturday. grubmer.com

Pray for the Northern Lights
at Kielder Observatory

BUY Cumbria has hands down the best service station in the country. Tebay Services was set-up in 1972 when the M6 was built through the Dunning family's hill farm. Now they work with 70 local Cumbrian producers. Much more exciting than an M&S sarnie. tebaysservices.com

With a claim to be the most undiscovered and beautiful dale in the Dales (aren't they all?), Pately Bridge is where you'll also find The Oldest Sweet Shop in the World. Stock up on Acid Drops, Black Jacks, Pineapple Cubes and Snowies for long hikes. oldestsweetshop.co.uk

The Courtyard Dairy won Cheesemonger of the Year in 2013 and it's still churning. Bestsellers include Kirkham's Lancashire with its characteristic fluffy, light texture and Hebden Goat, which is made by Gillian and her herd of ten goats – they graced our screens as part of Tom Kerridge's BBC TV series, *Top of the Shops*. thecourtyrddairy.co.uk

Cooper King Distillery is self-built and also operates sustainably. Take home a bottle to support its good work. cooperkingdistillery.co.uk

Tebay: so much more than
your average service stationThe best way to see
Windermere is by boatThe Oldest Sweet
Shop in the World

DO When it comes to boating on Windermere, the sky – or lake, rather – is the limit. Boats, ranging from rowing to sailing to self-drive motorboats, can be hired from Waterhead, Low Wood Bay, Bowness and Fell Foot. For those lacking sea legs, a good wet weather activity is the newly-opened Windermere Jetty Museum, where you can see renowned vessels such as 'Margaret' – believed to be the oldest sailing boat in Britain – and Beatrix Potter's tarn boat.

The Cleveland Way is a 109-mile trail beginning at Filey, hugging the coast through Scarborough up to Saltburn-by-the-Sea before heading inland to Helmsley. Castles, ancient stones and fishing villages (and some of the best fish and chips around) are regular and ravishing treats strewn along the way.

The iconic building of the Bowes Museum in Teesdale displays particularly striking examples of women's dresses from the 1860s–70s, plus 20th-century haute couture and a comprehensive series of wedding dresses. thebowesmuseum.org.uk

WHEN TO GO



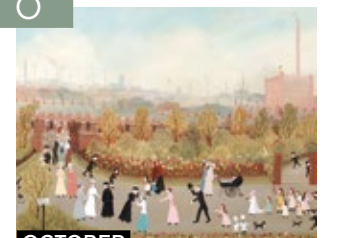
MAY

Manchester becomes a hub for the best national and international jazz and blues artists for the month of May. Music seeps down the street from St Ann's Square, with additional paid gigs taking place in venues throughout the city. manchesterjazz.com



JULY

The brilliant Deer Shed Festival was devised for families and this year's tenth anniversary celebration offers yet more arts, science and music for all in Baldersby Park, North Yorkshire. deershedfestival.com



OCTOBER

Dating back to 1951, The Northern Antiques Fair in Harrogate Convention Centre is a must for fine art, design and interiors fans, with over 40 specialist art and antique dealers. northernfair.com