



# Liverpool

With a little help from its friends, Liverpool has hit the big time to become Capital of Culture 2008. Here's what the revamped city has to offer

**A visit to Liverpool could never be dull. The Mersey riverfront, ever associated with the iconic Royal Liver building, has been augmented by smart high-rise blocks, marinas, bars and popular museums.**

**Within the city, overlooking spruced up streets crammed with decorative pubs and swish restaurants, the great neo-gothic Anglican cathedral dominates the Liverpool skyline. While a short train ride out of town will take you to dune-backed beaches and scented pinewoods that are still home to red squirrels.**

## GETTING THERE

Leave the car at home and take the train or coach. The centre of Liverpool, where most of the attractions and hotels are to be found, is easily covered by foot and the few that are beyond the city's heart can be reached cheaply by the frequent train, bus and ferry services.

## THINGS TO SEE AND DO

### A harmonious treat

The Philharmonic Hall

Tel 0151 709 3789, [www.liverpoolphil.com](http://www.liverpoolphil.com)

A concert in the superb Art Deco building is a real treat. So good is the acoustic effect that a seat anywhere in the auditorium will reward you with a purity of sound often found lacking in many of the UK's larger concert halls.

### Tea for two

Sefton Park Palm House

[www.palmhouse.org.uk](http://www.palmhouse.org.uk)

After a stroll around leafy Sefton Park take

in a tea dance, or just admire the architecture and soaring palms over a pot of tea in the glorious glass-domed Victorian palm house. Admission free (some events are charged)

### Food for the soul

The Anglican Cathedral Tower

[www.liverpoolcathedral.org.uk](http://www.liverpoolcathedral.org.uk)

Take a lift and then climb the final 108 steps to the top of the soaring cathedral tower for dramatic views of the city. Once you have done the tower, enjoy the incredible space of the neo-gothic cathedral. The stone bridge that elegantly spans the nave, and the highest gothic-style arches in the world, look as if they belong to a hall of giants rather than a place of worship.

Tower £4.25, Cathedral free

### Learn about Liverpool's maritime past and the city's link to slavery

Merseyside Maritime and International Slavery Museums

[www.liverpoolmuseums.org](http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org)

Half a day can be happily lost in the adjoining Maritime and Slavery museums that map out Liverpool's seafaring tradition and thought-provoking history of British slavery.

Admission free

### Tour the Mersey by boat and get spaced out

The Big Mersey Adventure

and the Spaceport

[www.merseyferries.co.uk](http://www.merseyferries.co.uk),

[www.spaceport.org.uk](http://www.spaceport.org.uk)

Take a boat trip around the River Mersey and visit the space museum en route. The Spaceport is the first stop where two museum favourites are the simulated space ride and

the cinema – an animated film on space travel is projected on the dome overhead. Family tickets (two adults, three children) for the ferry tour and Spaceport costs £31.

### Coastal pursuits

'Sefton's natural coast'

[www.visitliverpool.com](http://www.visitliverpool.com)

Between Liverpool and Southport is a windswept stretch of unspoilt shoreline. You will have to pay for the train, but the beach is free. A 30-minute train ride from Liverpool's Central station to Freshfield, followed by a 15-minute walk, takes you to the red squirrel reserve. After an amble through the reserve's pinewoods, you will reach the dramatic high dunes and sea beyond. Return train fare £3.20 adults, £1.60 children. Admission to squirrel reserve free (cars £3.50)

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**For the full magazine report on Liverpool, see p34 of the May 2008 issue of Which? Holiday**



## GOOD PLACES TO STAY

### Hard Days Night

Tel 0151 236 1954

[www.harddaysnighthotel.com](http://www.harddaysnighthotel.com)

Liverpool's Beatles-theme hotel, a few yards from the famous Cavern club, is plush and modern, with a corporate feel. The Beatles however are present through harmoniously placed photographs and paintings. That's where the theme ends however. The swish, spacious restaurant and bar are overtly contemporary and bedrooms in soft muted colours are formal and comfortable. **£170**

### Holiday Inn

Tel 0151 709 1133, [www.hiexpress.co.uk](http://www.hiexpress.co.uk)

This informal chain hotel is in a strategically good place at Albert Dock (home to the major museums, a plethora of cafes and close to the Mersey ferry quay). Once a Victorian warehouse, the hotel has a large open-plan public space – lobby-lounge, bar and restaurant. Family rooms come with sofa beds. **Rooms from £70 B&B**

### Hope Street Hotel

Tel 0151 709 3000

[www.hopestreethotel.co.uk](http://www.hopestreethotel.co.uk)

Leave your clutter at home and enjoy a sense of freedom in the hotel's simple classy rooms of sparkling white walls and crisp white bed linen. The chic minimalist hotel, a short stroll from the concert hall and cathedral, was originally a 19th-century carriage factory built (loosely) to resemble a Venetian palace. **Standard rooms £140, suites from £225**

### The Liner

Tel 0151 709 7050, [www.theliner.co.uk](http://www.theliner.co.uk)

Conveniently close to Lime Street Station and the central shopping areas, this hotel is themed to resemble a cruise liner. The blue coloured bars and lounges – all sweeping curved contours – are spacious and in this popular hotel have a real buzz. Bedrooms are formulaic but attractive enough. **£69 with breakfast**

## PLACES TO EAT AND DRINK

### The Carriage Works

Tel 0151 705 2222

[www.hopestreethotel.co.uk](http://www.hopestreethotel.co.uk)

The Carriage Works restaurant, fronting the Hope Street Hotel, enjoys a following that comes from far and wide to experience Chef Paul Askew's excellent cuisine in a thoroughly modern setting. Askew uses local and organic produce for his international dishes and portions are perfectly balanced. A three-course meal costs around £30.

### Circo, Tel 0151 709 7097

[www.circoliverpool.com](http://www.circoliverpool.com)

Down at Albert Dock, Circo has been decked out in the style of a circus-come-freak show. Entering, you walk between two life-sized horse statues only to find yourself staring at the menacing depiction of a boggle-eyed clown in the depths of the converted warehouse. Be that as it may, the service is professional and discrete, and the tasty dishes are fashionably presented. A starter of grilled asparagus, followed by sea bass and then chocolate pudding, comes to £25.

### The Monro, Tel 0871 811 4783

Gourmet taste on a ginger beer budget? Fear not, you can eat rather well at Liverpool's first gastro-pub without breaking the bank. This unpretentious pub is slightly down at heel but the food is first-rate and the service friendly. A two-course early evening meal (between 5-7pm), such as Loch Fyne mussels and braised lamb chops costs £11. The Monro is a 10-minute walk from the Philharmonic Hall making it perfect for a pre-theatre meal.

### Olive Press, Tel 0151 227 2242

[www.olivepresspizzeria.co.uk](http://www.olivepresspizzeria.co.uk)

A quarter of a mile from Albert Dock, the trendy Olive Press has tasty dishes for adults and children. There are no turkey twizzlers here, the children's menu offers a two-course meal, such as chargrilled chicken with vegetables followed by banana split, for £7.50. Mains for adults start at £7.

### Magical mystery tour

The Beatles Story, [www.beatlesstory.com](http://www.beatlesstory.com)

A visit to Liverpool would be incomplete without some Beatles nostalgia. This museum will take you through the highs and lows of the fab-four's roller coaster history.

Admission £10

### Modern art in a great space

Tate Liverpool, [www.tate.org.uk](http://www.tate.org.uk)

For a dash of high culture, Tate Liverpool has a diverse collection of modern art.

Admission free

### Prop up the bar at the Phil

The Philharmonic Dining Rooms

Tel 0151 707 2837

An unmissable Liverpool treat is the Philharmonic pub. Diagonally opposite the Philharmonic hall, this grand Victorian pub has to be one of the most spectacularly ornate in the country. Be sure to visit the legendary gent's toilet where the glazed mottled urinal and intricate plaster work can't fail to impress – women wanting a peek are escorted in by bar staff when the toilet is not in use.

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## GUIDEBOOK AND WEBSITE

■ 08: Liverpool European Capital of Culture '08, £5

(ISBN 9781905266401)

■ [www.visitliverpool.com](http://www.visitliverpool.com)