VisitYork MEDIA KIT

Book of Ideas 2021
Introduction

The communications team at Visit York have put together this press pack to provide inspiration for journalists, travel writers and influencers who are looking for fresh ideas and reasons to visit and write about York. You may already know that over 20 visitor attractions in York are located within the historic city walls including the world famous JORVIK Viking Centre, the iconic York Minster and the National Railway Museum.

York is a well-known historical gem, with the history of the city spanning over 2000 years from its establishment by Romans, to then being invaded by the Vikings, as well as its position as the medieval Capital of the North. York also has an extensive chocolate history with Terry and Rowntree beginning their sweet journeys here with Chocolate Orange and Kit Kat. It is a small city with so much packed in, much of which has already been written about, but with a huge amount more remaining to be discovered. We hope this pack will help you inspire your readers and viewers to choose York for their next adventure.

2020 has been a challenging year for the tourism industry and all destinations across the globe. Following the impact of COVID-19 and the national lockdowns, we are now working on a tourism recovery plan for the city. Our #LoveYork campaign celebrates the great tourism businesses in York, their creativity, resilience and superb world-class offer.

We hope you will be inspired to visit York and that you have a wonderful stay in the city. We’d be delighted to assist you with your accommodation arrangements and provide you with York Passes for you to explore the city’s attractions. We look forward to welcoming you soon!

With best wishes,

Amy and Ana in the Visit York communications team.
comms@makeityork.com
SANDBURN HALL HOTEL
OPENING 24 MAY 2021
The 24th May has been set for the public opening of Sandburn Hall Hotel, one of the most eagerly awaited hotel openings in the UK this year according to national tourist board VisitBritain. As announced late last year, Sandburn Hall Hotel, which lies on a 1,000 acre estate just seven miles east of York, will have forty country-style bedrooms, including two luxurious suites. It will open to the public on 24th May – just 7 days after the UK’s lockdown restrictions are further eased – and it already has bookings for every weekend through the late Spring and Summer on its books. A design-led approach by award-winning designer Rachel McLane, crafted country style, natural light, sustainability and an active lifestyle (including walking and cycling trails on the estate) are at the heart of the hotel’s ethos, and a wide range of leisure packages for guests, championing York and the wider North Yorkshire area, will be on offer to capitalise on this year’s expected staycation trend.

MALMAISON HOTEL AND TERRACE
FUSION RESTAURANT AND BAR
OPENING 10 JUNE 2021
Malmaison is breathing new life into a converted landmark in York, the Aviva insurance building. The hotel is due to open on the 17th May 2021 and will offer stylish bedrooms and modern interior design alongside a separate Sky Bar named Sora, in addition to the iconic Chez Mal Brasserie & Bar. The hotel has 150 guest bedrooms, event space for up to 150, a spa, a fully equipped gym an on-site Starbucks. Situated on the corner of Rougier Street, the hotel is a stone’s throw away from some of the city’s most famous attractions, including York Minster and the historic York City walls. York train station is a few minutes walk away. Designers have taken inspiration from the city’s industrial heritage and brutalist architecture, mixing concrete and moody elements with softer textures and confectionery touch points, drawing on York’s famous alumni including the Rowntree and the Terry families.

THE HOLE IN WAND
OPENING 17 MAY 2021
The Hole In Wand Wizard Golf is York’s new immersive experience in the Coppergate Shopping Centre. Inside the old Wizard pub you will be taken on a 9 hole mini golf adventure to search for the missing Gargoyle Grobblenook, and includes a trip through a magical portal, take on bubbling cauldrons and avoiding the flying golf clubs! At the end of your magical journey you will find out whether you are a Basilisk, Serpent, Unicorn or Wizard and everyone who completes the course will get a potion to enjoy. There is also a chance to try Butterscotch Beer, a pint of Wizard brew or mix a slush phial in our café along with Wizard Dogs and Uni-pop-corn. To start your magical journey visit www.theholeinwand.com and @HoleInWand on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook. Book media visits with ben@thepotionscauldron.com

News and New Openings
A modern cosmopolitan city with deep historic roots, York is not static and every year brings new openings and developments. See below information for all of York’s additions in 2021 -from new restaurants and hotels, to rejuvenation projects and activities.
IMPOSSIBLE WONDERBAR AND TEA ROOMS YORK

Impossible Wonderbar and Tea Rooms York is the latest modern addition to iconic St Helen’s square, with the heart of York’s buzzing shopping and hospitality scene. This Grade II listed building is a hidden gem within the stunning twists and turns of ye olde cobbled streets. Situated within the famously beautiful Terry’s chocolate orange building, the new incarnation paying homage to the historic building, notably the “Terry’s” inscription still prominent the stunning front windows, showcasing Corinthian columns and ballroom style dining and drinking areas. The historic building has had a face lift to include a tea room, restaurant and bar, offering a beautifully crafted central island where classic cocktails have been rejuvenated with added flair and theatre to tantalise the senses. Cocktails include a sumptuously rich Terry’s chocolate orange cocktail, an eye catching colour changing gin cocktail and a refreshing lychee and hibiscus concoction complete with a rubber duck!

THE GRAND ORGAN RETURNS TO YORK MINSTER

Hear York Minster’s Grand Organ fill the cathedral’s awe inspiring spaces for the first time since 2018 as the £2m, once-in-a-century project to refurbish the instrument is completed. In autumn 2020 the scaffolding which has surrounded the organ for nearly three years was removed, revealing the newly restored ornate organ case and its decorative pipes and the 15th century stone Pulpitum – known as the Kings’ Screen – which sits below it. The organ, which dates from the 1830s, returned to use during worship in March 2021 following a period of voicing to make sure its 5,000+ pipes all play the correct note, volume and pitch.

Experience its unique sound during the cathedral’s regular services and marvel at the craftsmanship which has gone into the once-a-century refurbishment. A programme of events to celebrate the organ’s return will be announced later this year. See www.yorkminster.org for full details.

FISH&FOREST RESTAURANT

Fish&Forest offers the quality of a fine dining restaurant in a space of a relaxed, casual bistro. It is run by a Yorkshireman and a Frenchman, friends and foodies Stephen Andrews (Restaurantier and Chef patron) and Yohan Barthelemy (Restaurant Manager) who pride themselves on using local produce from sustainable sources. The restaurant offers a constantly changing menu which takes inspirations from the sea, forest and countryside.

A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON CLIFFORD’S TOWER

The fascinating story of Clifford’s Tower will finally be told thanks to a major investment by English Heritage at one of York’s most important heritage sites. The project at Clifford’s Tower will do justice to both the history and the experience of visiting this national and local landmark, conserving and repairing the tower to protect it for generations to come. Clifford’s Tower is perched atop the mighty castle mound raised by William the Conqueror in 1068. It was the keep and chief stronghold of York Castle, one of the greatest fortresses in medieval England. The castle served as the backdrop for events of national and international significance. The tower is a stunning historic building, and this project will make it easier to move around the tower and will provide new interpretation to tell the tower’s fascinating story. Exposed to the elements for more than 300 years, the historic fabric of the tower needs specialist care. The tower’s historic stonework will be repaired, including the walls, arrow slits and fireplaces, and works will take place to allow visitors to climb two spiral staircases which have been inaccessible for centuries. Specialists will also conserve the chapel roof and interior to allow the public to access it again, cleaning the stonework, replacing structural joints to support the roof and replacing tiles to make it water-tight. The intricate plaques above the entrance door, which show the coats of arms of Charles I and Henry Clifford, will also be repaired and conserved. Though the tower is now likely to have to remain closed to visitors until the project is completed in summer 2021 – to protect the public and the English Heritage specialist team on site - regular updates on the project will be provided on the Clifford’s Tower website and Facebook page.
Exhibitions and Events 2021

York is a vibrant, exciting city full of things to do on your visit. See below information for all of York’s additions in 2021 – from new and returning events, to new exhibitions and extensions to the public’s favourite displays.

THE GUARDIANS OF YORK – PUBLIC STREET ART INSTALLATION
9 APRIL – 9 JULY 2021

The York BID have collaborated with Art of Protest Projects to create a Street Art Exhibition celebrating keyworkers from York. The aim of this project is to celebrate the ‘guardians’ of the city, who helped keep York moving during a time when the city (and the world) came to a standstill during Covid-19. Eleven essential workers, all of them York residents, told their story of working through the upheaval created by the pandemic and had their photographs taken. These ‘guardians’ range from NHS workers to the River Boat Rescue team. The images have been transformed into art by internationally acclaimed street artist collective ‘The Postman’. The collective chooses ‘paste-ups’ as their medium of urban art and express themselves in the form of brightly coloured, edgy, urban portraits. The ‘Guardians of York’ is the city’s first urban art project which elevates and honours pandemic key workers. They are displayed on walls around the city centre for a temporary three month installation that invites the public to celebrate the efforts of our key workers during the pandemic.

RAILWAY HEROES AT NATIONAL RAILWAY MUSEUM

The National Railway Museum has launched a new exhibition that celebrates the vital role played by railway key workers during the Covid-19 pandemic. Named Railway Heroes, the exhibition recognises the selfless achievements of 16 people from across the rail industry who have played an essential part in the country’s Covid-19 response. From transporting vital medical supplies to setting up Nightingale hospitals and even sewing PPE, many rail workers have gone the extra mile during the pandemic as well as working to keep passengers and freight moving around the clock in their day jobs. The exhibition will feature 16 portrait photographs from renowned photographer Charlotte Graham. The first six ‘Railway Heroes’ have starred in a special online exhibition hosted on the National Railway Museum website from Monday 15 February, with new profiles added each week. Once national lockdown restrictions are lifted, a physical exhibition featuring all 16 people will open simultaneously at the National Railway Museum in York and Locomotion in Shildon, County Durham.

‘REUNITED: LIFTING LOCKDOWN WITH GEORGIAN’S’ AT FAIRFAX HOUSE
17 MAY – 14 NOVEMBER 2021

This brand-new exhibition, installed throughout Fairfax House’s stunning historic rooms, plans to celebrate the end of lockdown Georgian style. Each room in the house explores a different longing for post-lockdown activity, whether that is being reunited with friends and family, having the opportunity to travel, to rekindle a romance placed on pause, to celebrate and dance, or simply to ditch the pyjamas and get all dressed up. Told from the perspective of the eighteenth century this exhibition draws on the house’s rich and varied history, as well as utilising its magnificent collections. During your visit you will learn more about life in the Georgian period, from the peculiar rituals of the marriage bed, to their outlandish sense of fashion and their surprisingly similar experiences of travelling. Along the way you will get the chance to try out some classic eighteenth century chat-up lines, learn the steps to popular country dances of the day and how the Georgian’s would have shifted their lockdown love handles. Throughout your journey you will encounter the one time residents of the Fairfax House, Lady Anne and Viscount Fairfax, and learn more about their experiences of living through an epidemic – the often very dubious medical treatments available to them and the parallels their experiences share with our own.
A celebration of York's creativity, solo shows featuring Ralph Fiennes and Julie Hesmondhalgh, a new drama about writer Graham Greene and spy Kim Philby, and Strindberg's Miss Julie transposed to 1940s Hong Kong are among highlights in York Theatre Royal's reopening season, The Love Season. The theatre will reopen their doors on May 17 with Love Bites, celebrating local artists – poets, performers, singers, dancers, digital artists – who have been commissioned to write love letters celebrating the return to live performances following the easing of government restrictions. Former Look North presenter Harry Graton will host the evening which has a “Pay What You Feel” ticket policy. The Love Season will continue with The HandBards recouping in their own inimitable way the tragic tale of Romeo and Juliet (25 & 26 May). Following sell-out performances in the UK and Australia York’s very own drag superstar Valma Cali will bring Love Is Love: A Brief History of Drag (29 May) to the stage. Multi award-winning, BAFTA-nominated actress Julie Hesmondhalgh will star in The Greatest Play in the World (1-5 June), while In This Time (8-9 June) will be presented by the award-winning circus theatre company Ockham's Razor. Favourite characters from the hit TV show will take to the stage in Twirlywoos Livell (11-13 June). Also, The Snail and the Whale (2 & 3 July) will come to the stage, inspired by Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler’s much-loved picture book. Red Ladder Theatre will stage The Damned United (16 June), adapted from David Peace’s novel by Anders Lustgarten, while Strindberg’s classic Miss Julie (22-26 June), adapted by British-Hong Kong writer Amy Ng, will show a politically-charged story set in 1940s Hong Kong. Direct from the West End, Showstopper! The Improvised Musical (30 June) will deliver spontaneous musical comedy. Oliver Ford-Davies and Stephen Boxer will star in Ben Brown’s new political drama A Splinter of Ice (6-10 July), where Olivier Award winning Ford Davies will play the writer Graham Greene who travels into the heart of the Soviet Union to meet his old MI6 boss Kim Philby. Ralph Fiennes will direct and star in the world premiere of T S Eliot’s Four Quartets (26-31 July).

Sarah Gillespie: Moth at Castle Howard
29 May - 5 September 2021
British artist, Sarah Gillespie will present Moth at Castle Howard, North Yorkshire, an ongoing project that, for the past two years, has seen Gillespie research, draw and engrave common English moths by way of highlighting their dramatic and devastating decline and celebrating their overwhelming importance. The exhibition will feature all 22 of the resulting mezzotints as well as a new work, Gillespie’s largest mezzotint to date. Measuring a monumental 2’ x 3’, it features a Peppercorn Moth, and marks a stark change to a process that is normally measured in inches and not feet. Gillespie will also live on site in the grounds of Castle Howard itself as part of a month-long artist’s residency where she will study its moth population and produce new works in response, including one created publicly during visiting hours. The creation of the Peppercorn Moth mezzotint, Gillespie’s largest to date, is of particular relevance to Castle Howard, whose landscaped gardens is of particular relevance to Castle Howard, whose landscaped gardens and park are among the finest remaining examples of the art and techniques of medieval gardeners and stonemasons. Free with general admission. See www.yorkminster.org for full details.

New Exhibition at York Minster
28 May - 5 September 2021
A major new exhibition featuring the earliest works and “lost pots” of one of Britain’s most well-known artists is coming to York next summer. The touring exhibition, developed by the Holburne Museum in Bath, is the first to celebrate Grayson Perry’s earliest forays into the art world and will re-introduce the explosive and creative works he made between 1982 and 1994. The remarkable 70 works included in the exhibition have been crowd sourced following a national public appeal. These ‘lost’ pots will be

The Science Museum Group is set to launch a major new exhibition which charts the global impact of the world’s longest and most famous rail journey – the Trans-Siberian Railway. Announced to mark the 100th anniversary of the railway’s completion in 1916, a major new exhibition will be unveiled at the National Railway Museum in York with a smaller display opening at the Science Museum in London. Produced in partnership with JSC Russian Railways, the exhibition will showcase priceless artefacts from Russia and the UK, brought together for the first time. These include the famous Faberge Easter Egg ‘The Great Siberian Railway’ to be displayed in York and a section of an almost 1000-metre long panorama painting by Pavel Pavlyaski which appeared at the Paris Exposition of 1900, going on display in London. Other highlights will include model carriages of a luxurious Siberian Express, a model of the newcastle-built ‘Baikal’ icebreaker and unique archival documents and drawings to bring the railway’s story to life. Called Trans-Siberian: The World’s Longest Railway, the exhibition will tell the engineering, social and cultural stories of the world’s longest railway line which at 5,772 miles, runs from Moscow to Vladivostok, crossing continents and connecting East to West. Began in 1891 and fully completed in 1916, a journey along the length of the Trans-Siberian would cross seven time zones, lasting up to seven days.

Trans-Siberian: The World’s Longest Railway at National Railway Museum
SUMMER 2021
Explore the medieval St Cuthbert’s Window through a new exhibition which tells the story of the life and miracles of one of Northern England’s most significant saints. Learn about the cathedral’s five-year project starting in 2021 to conserve the 600-year-old window, which is one of the largest surviving narrative windows in Europe and among the finest remaining examples of the art and techniques of medieval glaziers and stonemasons. Free with general admission. See www.yorkminster.org for full details.
on display together for the first time since they were made.

**VAN GOGH: THE IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE**

EXTENDED UNTIL 6 JUNE 2021

Van Gogh: The Immersive Experience opened for the first time in the UK in July 2019 in York St Mary’s, a former church turned arts centre in the Coppergate Centre, next to JORVIK Viking Centre. Visitors enjoy a 35-minute show, projected onto the pillared walls and floor of the building’s nave, featuring over 200 of Van Gogh’s most famous works, animated and set to music. From swaying wheat fields to falling cherry petals, a gallery of portraits and still life paintings and even a remarkable rain storm, visitors are immersed in the life paintings of Van Gogh’s most famous works, his later life, and which inspired a host of his artworks, including the stunning Starry Night on the Rhone.

**YORK FESTIVAL OF IDEAS**

8 – 20 JUNE 2021

York Festival of Ideas returns with a packed programme of events from 8-20 June 2021 as it celebrates an important milestone – a decade of educating, entertaining and inspiring. From just 26 events in 2011, it now offers a programme of over 200 mostly-free events each year, covering topics as diverse as climate change, artificial intelligence, archaeology, health and space. A move into the digital world in 2020 saw a global audience of over 40,000 from 137 countries. Led by the University of York, the Festival’s aim - now as it was in 2011 - is to celebrate human ingenuity and imagination, and the incredible power of education and ideas to change lives for the better. This year’s programme, delivered under the banner of Infinite Horizons, will feature online talks and discussions by world-class speakers, as well as films, in-person family activities and walking trails. Past headline speakers have included writers Michael Morpurgo and Jung Chang, human rights campaigner Shami Chakrabarti, physicist Jim Al-Khalili, journalist Emily Maitlis, Nobel prize-winning economist and philosopher Amartya Sen, and poet Seamus Heaney.

A decade from its inception, York Festival of Ideas is now both local and global: this year’s programme includes a special 10th anniversary ‘Trailblazing York’ walking trail that introduces the city’s residents and visitors to 10 amazing York pioneers. On the world stage, the Festival is linking up with the French Embassy in the UK, the Jaipur Literature Festival (India) and the Dhaka Literature Festival (Bangladesh) to present a range of inspiring international events.

**AESTHETICA FUTURE NOW SYMPOSIUM**

28 APRIL - 31 MAY 2021

The Aesthetica Future Now Symposium is a key UK arts event, and plays a pivotal role in discussing the future of the art sector, as well as the most pressing topics of our times, from digitisation and urbanisation to sustainability and representation. This four-day virtual event brings together key institutions, galleries, publications and artists for discussion surrounding the most pressing issues from today’s creative industries, including The Future of the Art Market, Decolonising the Art World, Curating During a Time of Change, and How Can Photography Save Us? Through imaginative debates, career advice and cultural engagement, Future Now is a platform for idea generation. The symposium will then be available On Demand until 31 May, with a film programme and additional content. The platform is responsive and will work on tablets, phones, computers and Smart TVs. Participants in the 2021 edition include representatives from The Museum of Modern Art, New York; High Museum, Atlanta; Fondazione Prada, Milan; The Armory Show, New York; Serpentine Galleries, London; The British Council; MASS MoCA, Los Angeles; ICA Boston; and Magnum Photos. The symposium will also coincide with the launch of Aesthetica’s 100th issue – marking 20 years of independent publishing.

**YORKSHIRE BALLOON FIESTA**

27 – 30 AUGUST 2021

The North’s largest Balloon Fiesta will welcome over 35,000 people and will transform the skies above York with over 50 giant colourful Hot Air Balloons. The festival will take place from 27 - 30 August 2021 on the Knavesmire. New for the 2021 Fiesta will be a dazzling giant Firework, Laser and Drone Show finale which visitors can enjoy as part of the entry wristband on the Sunday evening. This will be created to celebrate the wonderful work of our key Workers during the Covid-19 pandemic. The popular and stunningly beautiful hot air balloon night glows will also return on both Friday and Saturday evenings (weather permitting). Included in the entry fee there will be entertainment on the main stage all weekend hosted by York Mix Radio’s Breakfast Show presenters Ben Fry and Laura Castle along with Ryan Swain from the Saturday Party Mix. Performing live is CBeebies’ Andy & the Oddsocks, along with live music from the main stage with headliners Phats and Small, Abba Arrival, The
The Aesthetica Art Prize was launched in 2007, five years after the launch of Aesthetica Magazine, as a way to support the next generation of talent across new visual media. The prize thousands of entries each year from across the globe, from countries including Australia, Belgium, China, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Norway, Singapore, the UK and the USA, and has welcomed both emerging and established practitioners, including Magnum photographers, Turner Prize-nominees, RSA Film directors, World Press Photo winners and Prix Pictet nominees. The 2021 edition of the prize includes 20 shortlisted artists working across a variety of media, from painting and sculpture to digital art, artists’ film and photography. These cutting-edge practitioners explore key themes from a rapidly changing world, including plastic-use in relation to the climate emergency and the dissolution of fact and fiction in a post-truth era.

**AESTHETICA ART PRIZE EXHIBITION**
28 MAY - 30 SEPTEMBER

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**AESTHETICA SHORT FILM FESTIVAL**
2 - 30 NOVEMBER 2021

The 11th edition of the BAFTA-Qualifying Aesthetica Film Festival will run 2-30 November 2021 in York, UK. The festival will be delivered as a new hybrid experience, with live events from 2-7 November and the On Demand digital platform running from 2-30 November to complement the festival’s live experience. A dynamic Official Selection includes 300 shorts, features, VR and immersive works across 15 competitive categories, as well as non-competitive showcase screenings, presented by the UK’s leading film schools. Alongside innovative film programmes, Aesthetica works with global partners to curate guest programmes with impact. Recent organisations include Short of the Week, Directors Notes, Guardian Docs, BFI Doc Society amongst others. Industry activity includes masterclasses, spotlights, panels, networking and pitching sessions with distributors such as Film4, BBC Films and Lionsgate.

**YORK ICE TRAIL**
5 & 6 FEBRUARY 2022

The UK’s biggest outdoor Ice Trail will be returning for two days on 5th and 6th Feb 2022 with a range of magnificent ice sculptures set to transform York’s city centre. The free trail will offer a fun family-friendly experience for residents and visitors to enjoy - with businesses across the city getting involved to sponsor and select the stunning sculptures.

**YORK OPEN STUDIOS**
10 - 11 AND 17 - 18 JULY 2021

Celebrating a special anniversary in 2021, York Open Studios features over 140 artists and makers showing and selling their work within their homes and workspaces in York. This is an opportunity for art lovers and the curious to enjoy fresh air, meet artists, view and buy unique arts and crafts from York’s very best artisans. 2021’s York Open Studios will continue to celebrate originality and variety, with visitors welcomed by artists who will continue to adhere to Government guidelines, keeping themselves and visitors safe throughout. Many of the artists booked for the previous year remain on the list, plus new artists and makers have also been selected by the external panel of art professionals, to give regular visitors a chance to enjoy new work as well as meet their favourite creatives.

**SUMMER CONCERTS AT CASTLE HOWARD**
20 – 22 AUGUST 2021

The government’s roadmap to recovery has given hope that audiences can return to three of Yorkshire’s largest al fresco events. Castle Howard’s live music weekend – featuring the chilled sounds of Ibiza, flag-waving proms and an orchestral performance of Queen’s greatest hits – is set to take place from 20 – 22 August 2021.

Castle Howard Proms: Tenor Wynne Evans – who now appears as himself alongside Gio Compario in the famous car insurance TV advertisements - and soprano Victoria Joyce will headline an orchestral performance of Queen's greatest hits – is set to take place from 20 – 22 August 2021.

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#LoveWalking – Love Walking in York

Compact and beautiful, York provides numerous interesting, sometimes hidden, sites that are easily reached and seen by walking.

As part of the celebratory #LoveYork campaign launched earlier this year, a new #LoveWalking hub has been created to help inspire local residents and visitors to explore the city on foot. The hub includes a variety of themed trails, walking inspiration and tips for exploring York – showcasing the unique offer of the city.
NEW LITTLE VIKINGS ‘I SPY’ TRAIL

A brand new Little Vikings ‘I Spy’ Walking Trail has been launched to inspire families to explore the city and spot iconic sights. This permanent free walking trail is the perfect way for families to explore York, with 22 weird, wonderful, iconic and interesting things to spot along the circular route. The ‘I Spy’ trail will get little legs exploring and little eyes spotting things they would otherwise never have noticed, and it will be available all year round. From famous street names to iconic statues and plaques – the trail offers a fun way for families to explore the city and spot some of York’s unique sights. Maps are available for download and physical copies are available in York Visitor Information Centre*.

YORK CHOCOLATE TRAIL

Modern York was built on the chocolate industry, home to famous names like Rowntree and Terry, and this rich, chocolaty heritage has left its mark all around the city. Visit York Chocolate Trail showcases the landmarks and businesses who have a strong link to the confectionery industry, and the families which built it, covering hundreds of years of York’s history. On top of the indoors attractions, there’s plenty to see outside too, from the birth place of Joseph Rowntree to a stunning Terry’s shopfront. Download the map here.

YORK CITY WALLS

One of York’s defining features, the city walls make for a brilliant walk. At 3.4 kilometres long, these beautifully preserved structures are the longest medieval town walls in England. A walk around the entirety of the remaining walls takes about two hours, and there is a great deal to see along the way, including the four main bars, two lesser bars, the postern, other towers including the Roman Multangular Tower, and fascinating details like arrow slits, musket loops, sculptures and masons’ marks. The city walls provide stunning cityscape views of York, as well as sight of the city’s wondrous and varied architecture. This includes both the current and former railway stations, York Art Gallery, King’s Manor, a glimpse of Holgate’s five sailed windmill, and a distant Terry’s factory.

YORK GHOST TOURS

York is well known as being the most haunted city in Europe, so there are many ghost walks and tours to guide visitors through thousands of years of history, mystery, folklore and legends that smoulder beneath the city’s ancient streets. Here is just a glimpse of some of the tours to embark on when exploring York’s dark history:

THE BLOODY TOUR OF YORK

Winner of the York Culture Award for Performing Artist and a Visit York Tourism Award winner, Mad Alice takes visitors on a 90 minute walking tour of the city. Down snickelways and side streets recounting the gruesome and grisly past of the city. Stories of invasions, executions and heads on spikes are rife on every corner, as are tales of some famous historical characters. Visitors can discover the true history of the city on this fun and fascinating tour for all the family to enjoy.

THE DEATHLY DARK TOUR

One of the latest great additions to the city’s ghost walks scene. The Deathly Dark Tour offers a blend of entertainment and education in the style ‘horrible histories’ - making the tours fun for the whole family. Dorian Deathly takes visitors on a different kind of tour to experience the darker side of York with a grim sense of humour.

THE ORIGINAL GHOST WALK OF YORK

Believed to be the world’s first ghost walk. The Original Ghost Walk of York offers professional, artistic production without silly tricks or gimmicks. An evocative evening of intrigue and passion for the more discerning visitor. The tour explores the history and mystery, the folklore and legends beneath York’s ancient streets.

YORK WALKING TOURS

Visitors to York wanting to explore the city and learn more about its history, heritage, architecture, gastronomic scene and more, have plenty of guided tours to choose from. Here is just a couple of tours that might be of interest:

YORK CAT TRAIL

Free fun for young and old, this trail guides visitors around York, exploring highlights including the Clifford’s Tower, Shambles and York Minster, plus lots of cats along the way. Visitors can pick up a trail leaflet in the Cat Gallery store and embark on a self-guided tour to see the sights and find the cat statues all around the city.

ANNE LISTER IN YORK WALKING TOUR

Anne Lister, the main character of the popular BBC drama Gentleman Jack (also filmed in York), has lived in York. The tour explores Anne’s life and what York was like for her 200 years ago. Visitors follow Anne’s footsteps, where she walked, where she shopped and where she got married, as outlined in her personal diary.

YORKSHIRE APPETITE FOOD TOURS

The York Food Tour is a walking tour that takes visitors around the cultural centre of the city, starting at the impressive York Minster. The tour winds its way through the streets and visitors get to try some delicious Yorkshire fare and learn about our Yorkshire fare and learn about our history and culture along the way. There are five stops along the route for food and/or drink tasting.

WHITE ROSE YORK TOURS

A free two-hour tour that is like stepping back through all of England’s history. For two thousand years, York has been at the centre of the nation’s affairs, and the tour guides will bring that history to life in an entertaining and very informative way as they lead visitors through lush parks and narrow lanes, past grand churches and palaces, by ruined castles and abbeys and along the historic city walls.

Find out more about #LoveWalkinginYork here.
York: UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts

A meeting point for ideas and creativity for two millennia, York is a city where outstanding, renowned heritage meets a cutting-edge and contemporary approach to creativity. York’s rich history combines with our status as a UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts to act as a powerful catalyst to attract, encourage and help grow York’s cultural and creative sectors.

As a UNESCO Creative City, we seek to embed creativity in every aspect of making and living in our city - in the economy, in wellbeing and in placemaking. In 2020, York launched a new Culture Strategy - York’s Creative Future - which has inclusion and participation at its core; showcasing the city’s commitment to ensuring culture is relevant and accessible to everybody in York regardless of age, background or postcode. It places culture at the core of activities from major capital developments to residents’ wellbeing and will work to ensure cultural entitlement for every child.

York is one of only 12 UNESCO Creative Cities in the UK and we are unique in being the UK’s first and only UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts.

To us, media arts encompass all contemporary creativity: it is the nexus of the creative economy, art and technology - and York is home to many vibrant, leading media arts organisations, events and initiatives.

York Mediale is an international media arts charity, which delivers an international media arts festival every two years; the Guild of Media Arts consists of around 200 creative practitioners across the sector, and represents York as the Focal Point for the UNESCO designation; the Aesthetica Short Film Festival is a leading annual international festival in York; and XR Stories provides research and development for the future of immersive and interactive storytelling.

York’s Creative Future has inclusion and participation at its core, and the commitment to ensure that culture is relevant and accessible to everybody in York - regardless of age, background or postcode. It places culture at the heart of activities from major capital developments, to residents’ wellbeing – and will work to ensure cultural entitlement for every child.

The Culture Strategy has the ambition to transform York – and by 2025 we believe York will be known as a city where outstanding, renowned heritage comes together with a cutting-edge and contemporary approach to creativity – reflecting the city’s rich history and its status as the UK’s first UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts.

Read more about the York Culture Strategy.
North York Moors National Park

The North York Moors National Park is one of the UK’s most extraordinary places, established in 1952. The 554 square miles of fabulous countryside, open heather moorland and rugged coast are worth exploring. From rolling panoramas and big skies to enchanting forests and idyllic dales, there’s a sense of peace and tranquillity here that’s hard to beat – and all this just 20 miles or so north of York.

INTERNATIONAL DARK SKIES RESERVE DESIGNATION

The Yorkshire Dales and North York Moors National Parks have been designated International Dark Sky Reserves, joining an exclusive global family of Dark Sky Places. The Yorkshire Dales and North York Moors are home to some of the darkest skies in the country, with large areas of unpolluted night sky where it’s possible to see thousands of stars, the Milky Way, meteors and even the Northern Lights. As part of a coordinated approach by the two National Parks, the International Dark-Sky Association (IDA), has granted Reserve status to both areas, which combined cover over 3500 km² of northern England. This is by far the biggest such announcement in the UK and represents one of the largest areas in Europe to be simultaneously designated. Both National Parks have worked hard over several years to achieve this award, gaining support from councils, parishes, landowners, businesses and renowned astronomical experts.

In addition to global recognition of the National Parks’ exceptional starscapes, designation also provides an opportunity to promote locations, events and businesses which provide outstanding opportunities to look up into the night sky. As well as enhancing habitats for wildlife, improving health and wellbeing and bringing increased economic benefit to the local tourist industry. The ambition is to enhance the areas dark skies still further by promoting the importance of dark sky-friendly lighting, therefore reducing unnecessary consumption of electricity and minimising carbon footprints and energy costs for households.

CLEVELAND WAY NATIONAL TRAIL

The Cleveland Way National Trail is a great way to take in the beauty of North Yorkshire’s wide-open spaces and soak up the culture of the splendid towns and villages of the North York Moors and Yorkshire Coast. The 109-mile trail has been delighting walkers for over 50 years and can be enjoyed in shorter segments or as a satisfying, nine-day adventure. The trail’s horseshoe shape can be undertaken in either direction, but working your way around clockwise, from Helmsley to Filey, will likely keep the wind at your back.

The trail starts in the splendid market town of Helmsley, complete with tea shops, a castle and wondrous walled gardens. Heading west, you’ll reach Sutton Bank, home to some of the finest views in England, before meandering north through stunning heather moorland. You’ll meet the coast at Saltburn-by-the-Sea and follow a dramatic coastline south, visiting the seaside treasures of Staithes, Runswick Bay, Sandsend, Whitby, Robin Hood’s Bay, Ravenscar, Scarborough and Filey along the way. On your coastal ramble, the incredible landscapes will be accompanied by the UK’s best fish and chips, Whitby’s towering abbey ruins, and the whispered tales of smuggling in days gone by.

NORTH YORKSHIRE MOORS RAILWAY

The North Yorkshire Moor Railway is one of the world’s greatest heritage railway experiences with thrills and family fun at its heart. Visitors are invited to climb on-board a steam or heritage diesel train and experience 24 miles of Yorkshire’s amazing scenery at this must-see visitor attraction. Visitors can begin their journey at Pickering Station - a must-see 1930’s themed station that will transport them back in time to the steam era. A must-see for the Harry Potter fans is the celebrity station, Goathland, which became Hogsmeade Station in the first Harry Potter film. The steam train journey is a great way to discover the beauty of the North York Moors National Park and visitors can travel all the way to Whitby – a bustling harbour town with Whitby Abbey overlooking it.
Taste of York

Home to an abundance of cafes, bars and restaurants, York has a diverse food scene with tastes from across the world contained in one compact city. If fine dining is your thing then you’re spoilt for choice, book a table at Roots restaurant, home to Michelin Chef Tommy Banks. For food on the go check out the very best in street food, the Shambles Food Court and Spark: York have it all covered whether you’re vegan or a meat lover. In more relaxed surroundings, set down for afternoon tea in the iconic Bettys Café Tea Rooms.

The Gin and Craft Beer scene is thriving in the city with local breweries and distilleries producing unique local flavours such as the award-winning York Gin and Brew York.

Treat yourself

- Roots York – opened in 2018, Roots York embraces the farming ethos and techniques of the Banks family and offers a sharing plate dining experience with its seasonal menu. Roots York is an expression of the people behind it, including the Michelin Star Chef Tommy Banks. Redefining the traditional four seasons, Tommy has created three growing groups inspired by Oldstead’s ingredients: ‘The Hunger Gap’, ‘Time of Abundance’ and ‘The Preserving Season’. These groups inspire the menu at the restaurant.

- Le Cochon Aveugle – located in the heart of York, Le Cochon Aveugle is a critically acclaimed and award-winning restaurant run by husband and wife Josh and Victoria Overington. Serving an ever-changing, seasonal menu, this intimate dining experience is rooted in the Parisian bistronomy concept of stripping back fine-dining to a more relaxed and informal setting, making the experience more fun and approachable. Diners get to eat a ‘blind’ tasting menu – a reflection of the restaurant’s name which means the blind pig, which inspires many people to visit the restaurant.

- Arras – First opening in Sydney, Australia, Arras restaurant moved to York in 2011. The menu, specially prepared by a husband-wife duo Lovaine and Adam, will quickly capture the imagination of the dining public with its tongue in cheek take on a modern British style of food. They use only fresh ingredients in preparing the food and rely on sound technique to offer great food and a unique experience for all diners.

- Melton’s Restaurant – opened over two decades ago in 1991, Melton’s restaurant is run by Michael and Lucy Hjort and has been featured in the Good Food Guide multiple times since then. The restaurant has a strong commitment to the promotion of local produce, which feature in many of its dishes.
Street food

- Shambles Market Food Court – Located in the historic Shambles Market, the Food Court offers a plethora of local and world cuisine inspired street food. Here you will find TripAdvisor’s No. 1 favourite place to eat in York – Los Moros offering northern African cuisine, the smoked-meat sandwich heaven Shambles Kitchen and a public’s favourite crepe stall KREP.

- Spark York CIC – Opened as a community project, Spark York combines street food with art and craft shops, pop-up barbers, vintage clothes store and local gin producers. Cuisines found here include Columbian, Thai, American and more.

- Brew York – Brew York is a showpiece ten barrel Thai, American and more.

Independent & quirky

- Skosh – Skosh is a small plate restaurant offering contemporary British cooking with an international influence. Here you will dine in a bespoke room with an open concept kitchen designed to create a unique experience for every visitor to enjoy uncomplicated, yet refined dishes in comfortable and informal manner. The diverse menu showcases a precise yet playful style of cookery.

- Love Cheese – Love Cheese is a small cosy café with a secluded garden at the back, offering specialised cheese boards paired with wines, beers and teas. You can also pick up one or more of the 100 cheeses available in the shop, or get one of the cheese making kits to make your own batches of cheese at home.

- Fancy Hank’s - Tucked away in the laid-back streets of the historic Minster Quarter, Fancy Hank’s offers good mood food inspired by two brothers travels through the 11 states of America’s Deep South. Here you can find the region’s classic gumbo, jambalaya and classic fried chicken and waffles.

- Partisan – The lunch menu at Partisan changes almost daily, producing meals with the finest quality fresh ingredients. Partisan offers a rustic modern British menu that takes its inspiration from the seasons and the richness of the produce. The café also serves as an antique shop and art gallery, so you can enjoy food for both the body and soul here.

- Spring Espresso – At Spring Espresso you can discover artisan roasted coffee produced by award winning baristas, as well as a selection of speciality teas, homemade cakes and warm sandwiches and paninis. All this in the surrounding of York's 17th century reclaimed timber and furniture.

- Dark Horse – Dark Horse combine their love of coffee with a passion for quality, bringing to York the homemade wholesome menu, all tied together with an Australian twist. You can grab a cappuccino to go or enjoy your cup of coffee in the surroundings of the historic Shambles Market. The owner's home-baked banana bread is not to be missed - ask for it toasted and buttered for a delicious treat.

Cafés

- Café No.8 Bistro – This small but incredibly lively bistro can be found on Gillygate in York. Café No.8’s rooms evoke the image of the brasseries of Paris and connect to a secret garden adjoining to the ancient city walls. Offering a selection of dishes including vegetarian and vegan options, Café No.8 Bistro is a light and charming place to enjoy an afternoon meal.

- Brew & Brownie – This café is inspired by the seasons, the owners’ countryside upbringing, their urban adulthood, the food they craved as children and the tastes they developed while growing up. Pop into this café on the way to York Minster for a cup of rich coffee, sourced from a fantastic artisan Lake District roastery Carveti Coffee, and a piece of brownie that will melt in your mouth.

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Craft beer & drinks

- House of Trembling Madness – Apart from an impressive collection of craft beers and ales, this medieval ale house boasts a quirky display of taxidermy animal collection. The house itself was built in the 12th century – the oldest Norman house in York today. Here you can enjoy a drink under the candlelight surrounded with furs and wooden furniture, while sharing a table with some fellow-travellers.

- Evil Eye – This bar is a true home to the bizarre, weird and wonderful. Evil Eye specialises in tasty cocktail prepared with fresh ingredients and using gin as a base for most drinks. The adjacent shop actually holds a Guinness World Record for the number of gins commercially available at one place – you can find over 1000 gins here.

- Pairings Wine Bar – This independent wine bar in the centre of York is run by two sisters and offers fine wines by the glass, local ales, cocktails and great coffee alongside cheese, charcuterie, deli foods and desserts. At Pairings you can experience the informal approach to food and drink pairing that is inclusive and comfortable for everyone.

- Chapter House – Located in the Principal York Hotel, Chapter House serves cocktails and local craft ales, wines and spirits and bar snacks. Whether you are a local looking for a relaxing break, or a traveller spending a couple of days in York, this cozy bar offers a comfortable relaxing space for all to enjoy locally sourced and crafted drinks.

- Valhalla – Right in the heart of historic York, Valhalla is a nod to the city’s Viking past. Here you can find beer, hot drinks, cold meat platters and mead you can drink straight from the horn like a real Viking. Rock music that plays at the pub is a suitable accompaniment to the warrior atmosphere and will guide you on your way to Viking Heaven.
Story Ideas

With the best racecourse in the country, a thriving cultural scene winning the city UNESCO City of Media Arts status and the titles of Britain’s Home of Chocolate and The Most Haunted City in Europe, York has many faces and an infinite number of stories to tell. We hope that the below story ideas will inspire you to visit our city and share your York experiences with your readers.
Magic York

With a history spanning 2,000 years York if full of myths and magic. Throughout the centuries characters from alchemists to witches are said to have passed through the city. Below is the round-up of magical locations and experiences visitors can sample in York.

Starting from Shambles - city’s most famous street which dates back to the fourteenth century and is said to be an inspiration for the film depiction of Diagon Alley, the magical shopping location from the wizarding world of Harry Potter. The street is now home to different mystical outlets including the World of Wizardry and The Boy Wizard selling everything a wizard fan could possibly need and want and is proving popular with the fans of the magical franchise from around the world.

Shambles is also a host of The Shop That Must Not Be Named - the original and premier shop specialising in officially licensed Harry Potter merchandise. There’s magical wares, an amazing selection of wands and friendly wizarding staff, who know everything you could ever want to know about the Boy Who Lived and his world.

Another magical gem is The Potions Cauldron, an old-fashioned apothecary shop, which offers specially-concocted drinks including Serpents Venom Poison, Basilisk Blood and Elixir of Love (the first person to sniff it will fall in love with the nearest wizard). The store also features a 6,000 piece Lego Hogwarts castle and a bubbling cauldron. Visitors can also mix their own magical potions.

The ‘Magic and Mystery’ exhibition at Barley Hall explores the often fine line between science, religion and magic in medieval society. Visitors can find out about those who were outcast as witches and wizards, explore the ‘science’ of magic and alchemy and how such individuals used protective charms and forecasting to foresee the future through prophecies and dreams. Using both archaeological and documentary evidence from the period, Magic and Mystery showcases a thought-provoking and often misinterpreted feature of medieval culture.

Those visitors who prefer to explore on foot, can embark on the Wizard Quest-fun and interactive walking tour for all ages. With potions, magical creatures and an important mission, quest participants will discover magic in the streets of York. Tours run from March - September on Thursday and Friday evenings. Each tour lasts around 45 minutes, starting at King’s Square (at the end of Shambles).

To complete a mystical trip to the city, visitors can stay at the award-winning self-catering accommodation - the Enchantment Chamber. This unique home away from home includes a bed chamber complete with an unconventional four poster bed, realistic open fire, real wood flooring and is furnished with an eclectic collection of magical artefacts from the wizarding world. The apartment is located within the walls of the historical city with ease of access to other magical locations.

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Book Lovers York

The saying goes, you can't judge a book by its cover, but a novel way of learning about York is through its rich literary connections. Visitors are invited to explore York—the birthplace of Daniel Defoe's world-famous character Robinson Crusoe.

While walking the over 2000 years old medieval city walls visitors can hear the bells of the iconic York Minster, just as Grace Trewe did in 'Times Echo' by Pamela Hartshorne. York Minster’s library is also one of the oldest in the country, it includes the York Gospels—over a thousand years old and still used today. Stained-glass windows were also the medieval equivalent of a book, making stories from the Bible accessible for their congregations; York Minster’s Great East Window is the largest expanse of medieval stained glass in the country, a masterpiece in glass and stone depicting the beginning and end of all things.

From York Minster, visitors can take a stroll down Stonegate, one of York’s prettiest streets, where the first two volumes of Sterne’s landmark ‘Tristram Shandy’ were printed, and look out for the printer’s Red Devil which sits on number 33, a former printers, and serves as a lasting reminder of when Stonegate was famous as a centre of books and publishing in the 16th century.

In York visitors can follow in the footsteps of the Henry VIII royal progress to York, and see the sights that remain a reminder of the turbulent history at what is left of St Mary’s Abbey in York Museum Gardens, as depicted in C J Sansom’s historical mystery ‘Sovereign’, the third novel in his ‘Matthew Shardlake Series’. The riverside view of the city that opens up to the eyes of all from the Skeldergate bridge was described in great detail by Wilkie Collins, a friend of Charles Dickens, in his novel ‘No Name’.

In the city that is home of Kit Kat and Chocolate Oranges visitors can immerse themselves in the stories of ‘The Sweethearts, York’s Chocolate Girls’ by Lynn Russell and Neil Hanson by joining the tasty guided tour at York’s Chocolate Story.

Famous English author Kate Atkinson was born in York and many of her characters have a connection to the city. Ruby Lennox from ‘Behind the Scenes at the Museum’ was inspired from one of York’s most visited museums—York Castle Museum, while the fictional detective Jackson Brodie from ‘Started Early, Took My Dog’ was rather fond of Betty’s Tea Rooms, where visitors can still enjoy a traditional English afternoon tea with a side of a delicious fat rascal.

Two major literary events take place in York every year: the National Book Fair (11 - 12 September 2020) and the York Literature Festival (19-28 March 2020) attracting local, national and international crowds.

For many years York has inspired and attracted many authors, including Charles Dickens, Virginia Woolf and Bronte sisters, and it continues to do so even now. Matt Haig—a bestselling author of ‘Reasons to Stay Alive’ and ‘Notes on a Nervous Planet’ currently resides in York and many had luck meeting him in person at Waterstones book launches.
Culture York

York has been the cultural heart of England for over 2000 years. Complete with a year round programme of world-class festivals and events, there is something for every visitor at every corner of York.

The streets surrounding York Minster, King’s Manor and St William’s College are steeped in an unmistakable intellectual, academic atmosphere. This has been a place of historians, of archaeological and religious study, of choristers, of book publishing, of scholarly endeavour - for hundreds of years. Yorkshire Museum takes visitors on an explorative adventure of York’s past and present, and new for 2021 - it will host a famous portrait or Richard III on loan from the National Portrait Gallery.

At York Art Gallery visitors can enjoy the remarkable collection of important European paintings spanning seven centuries, with works by Bellotto, Reynolds, Lowry, Yorkborn William Etty. The Centre of Ceramic Arts (CoCA) located at the gallery is home to a collection of more than 5,000 examples of British Studio Ceramics from throughout the twentieth century right up to the present day.

In York cultural offerings range from medieval music in the Minster to challenging drama, world music and innovative venues and showcases for new artists of all kinds. The packed programmes at the Grand Opera House and York Theatre Royal range from grand opera and classical ballet to Stomp and Soul Explosion. Concerts at the National Centre for Early Music feature folk, jazz, 20th century and world music. York Minster services and concerts, the annual York Early Music Festival and even the many buskers, including the winners of 2019 York Culture Awards-Hyde Family Jam, on York’s streets, all make York a perfect place for music lovers.

Events and festivals reflect the cultural nature of any city and York is no exception. The York Festival of Ideas features a diverse range of talks and discussions on various topics from science and human nature to literature and history. This year’s theme of ‘Infinite Horizons’ celebrates the decade of the festival. Annual BAFTA accredited Aesthetica Short Film Festival (ASFF) also takes place in York attracting local, national and international creators and film-enthusiasts.

Visitors are invited to spend their evening at City Screen York, one of Britain’s Picture House cinemas. As well as screening arthouse, independent and quality mainstream films, The Basement Bar at the cinema hosts diverse music, poetry and comedy events plus a regular film quiz night (Friends, Harry Potter, etc.).

For those interested in modern avant-garde art pieces, Art of Protest Gallery is a place where the cultural production born of this reality break through to everyday conversations outside of the established art arenas. It pushes these conversations beyond the borders of country, religion, class and social media groups, and illuminates the common ground that we all stand on through the prism of visual culture.

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Haunted York

York is a city with a dark past, its history is rife with tales of guts, gore, torture and ghosts. The International Ghost Research Foundation even declared York as the most haunted city in Europe due to its blood-stained history and over 500 hauntings within the ancient city walls.

Founded by Romans in 71AD the city’s violent and volatile history-including Viking invasions, the Norman Conquest and the Civil War-makes its sinister legacy easy to understand. Sometimes it seems as though a ghostly figure with a score to settle is in residence in just about every street or ginnel.

The tale goes, in 1953 an apprentice plumber was installing a new central heating system in the cellars of the Treasurer’s House when he suddenly heard a distant sound of a horn soon followed by a great carthorse emerging through the brick wall, ridden by a dishevelled Roman soldier. The ghostly battalion moved into a recently excavated area showing that they were walking on an old Roman road - the Via Decumana - buried 15 inches below the surface. Now all visitors are invited to explore the haunted cellars of the house.

More of an urban legend than a confirmed fact, Mad Alice Lane (now known as Lund’s Court linking Swinegate and Low Petergate) was named after Alice Smith who lived in the lane until 1825. That same year she was hanged at York Castle for the perceived crime of insanity, after murdering her husband for beating her remorselessly numerous times. Some say you can sometimes spot her face in one of the windows looking down over the lane. Now visitors can follow the modern day Mad Alice on The Bloody Tour of York to learn more about the gruesome history of the city.

Almost every historic theatre has a ghost story, and the Georgian York Theatre Royal is no different. It is said that a room behind the dress circle is haunted by the ghost of the Grey Lady - young nun who fell in love with a nobleman, but when soon found out was thrown into a windowless room that was bricked up with no escape. A gruesome tale, but apparently if the nun in her grey habit is spotted in the dress circle, it’s a good omen for that night’s production at the theatre.

It is believed that no less than 15 spirits haunt the unsuspecting Golden Fleece pub. The most notorious of them is the ghost of Lady Anne Peckett-once the wife of the Lord Mayor of York John Peckett.

Micklegate Bar and Bootham Bar are on many tourists’ photographs of York’s medieval city walls, but they wouldn’t have been a popular photo opportunity in mid-14th and 15th centuries. Micklegate Bar, and Bootham Bar is on many tourists’ photographs of York’s medieval city walls-it wouldn’t have been a popular photo opportunity in mid-14th and 15th centuries. These were the places where heads were impaled on spikes after hanging, drawing and quartering, which was the punishment for traitors and rebels. With the practice beginning in the late 13th century, it was the prime punishment for treason then regarded as the worst and most unnatural of crimes (in Dante’s Divine Comedy, traitors are in the very lowest level of Hell).

November 5th marks the anniversary of the Gunpowder Plot, a conspiracy to blow up the English Parliament and King James I in 1605. One of the notorious plotters was Guy Fawkes-born and raised in York. Today, the 5th November is known as ‘Firework Night’, ‘Bonfire Night’ or ‘Guy Fawkes Day’ and is still celebrated in England with fireworks and bonfires, on which effigies of the conspirator are burned.
Historic York

York has connection to many famous historical characters. The city was founded by Romans and for a long time was known as Eboracum. Here is where Septimius Severus—the African-born Roman Emperor died in 211AD. Septimius was an intimate friend of Marcus Aurelius and Commodus.

Some say he may have even had a part in Commodus’ murder. Years later, in 306AD Constantine the Great—the first Christian Emperor was declared emperor in York, his statue stands near the York Minster.

After the Romans came Anglo-Saxons and the start of the ‘Dark Ages’. The major figure of that period—famous scholar Alcuin was educated in York. 9th century started with Vikings overtaking the rule in York. Eric Bloodaxe, the Viking warrior and the King of York, ruled over Jorvik (Viking name for York) for 14 years until being expelled in 954 and later murdered. He was most certainly representative of the bloodiest characters in York’s bloody history.

Middle Ages saw many famous characters to come out of York. Gunpowder Plotter Guy Fawkes was born and baptised in York. He was baptised at St Michael le Belfrey church in 1570, which still stands there, across the road from York Minster. Later, in 1958, Margaret Clitherow—wife of a Shambles butcher, was crushed to death for harbouring Catholic priests. Today her house is a shrine (located in the Shambles) and Margaret is revered as a martyr. Her hand, which was cut off after her death, is kept in the Bar Convent Museum. The famous dashing highwayman, Dick Turpin, was imprisoned and stayed at the Castle Museum until being hanged at York Racecourse in 1739. And George Hudson, the Railway King was born near York in 1800 and was a Councillor, Alderman, Member of Parliament and Lord Mayor of York.

York’s collection of curious objects demonstrates that little things say a lot. The fascinating facts they reveal speak volumes about the ancient city, which is home to many of the country’s rarest treasures. A tin of cocoa found beside the frozen remains of Captain Scott of the Antarctic’s survived one the world’s most famed and daring expeditions. It is now back in the city it was made in and visitors can see it at York’s Chocolate Story.

Yorkshire Museum is host to many historical objects including the most outstanding object of the Anglo-Saxon period to survive in Europe—The York Helmet. Dated to approximately 750 to 775AD, this iron and brass helmet was discovered when struck by the claw of a mechanical digger—luckily the operator stopped to check what had been hit. Another treasure of the museum is the Middleham jewel and ring—one of the finest pieces of Gothic jewellery found in Britain. It once belonged to the powerful Neville family of the Middleham Castle. A Roman hairpiece from the late 3rd to early 4th century can also be found here.

Another great artefact—The Horn of Ulf can be found in the Undercroft of York Minster. It was once given to the Chapter of York by a Viking nobleman called Ulf as a symbolic deed of trust. The large and ornate ivory horn together with the lands on which the Minster stands today. Another Viking artefact—the only known surviving example of a Viking-age knitted sock is on display at JORVIK Viking Centre, alongside a host of everyday items and relics that provide an unrivalled insight into Viking life.

The National Railway Museum houses the world’s finest collection of royal carriages including Queen Victoria’s last surviving saloon car. Built in 1869 this carriage is lavishly furnished and included luxuries such as an on-board toilet (which she never used).
Film Lovers York

From beautiful countryside to medieval cobbled streets, York is a perfect backdrop to many movies and series. Starting from action-animated feature film ‘Water Babies’ (1978) filmed in York, the city continues to be a prime filming location even now.

One of the most beautiful stately homes-Castle Howard-can be spotted in ‘Brideshead Revisited’ (1981, 2008) as well as ‘Death Comes to Pemberley’ (2013) that also featured iconic York Minster, St William’s College, Treasurer’s House, York Castle Museum and Harewood Castle.

British biographical drama film ‘Elizabeth’ (1998) also had some scenes filmed at York Minster, while another royal drama film ‘Victoria’ (2013) once again went to Castle Howard and Harewood Castle.

Visitor’s to York who arrive by train will most likely follow the footsteps of the famous boy wizard Harry Potter. Not many know that the scene at King’s Cross from ‘Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone’ (2001) where Harry is left alone on the pedestrian bridge was filmed in York Railway Station. Another interesting fact is that the film depiction of the Diagon Alley was inspired by the Shambles-one of oldest medieval streets in the whole of Europe.

Another film based on the fantastic novel by Susanna Clarke-‘Jonathan Strange and Mr Norrell’ (2015) had some scenes filmed in York Minster and St William’s College.


Many famous actors were born or spent a great time of their lives in York, including Dame Judi Dench - one of the finest, best-known and best-loved English actresses. She was born in York in 1934 and attended the Mount School. Another familiar face is David Bradley, who most will know as the cadaverous caretaker Argus Filch in the Harry Potter films. David was born in York and had a glittering theatre career, he also played God in the 1976 York Mystery Plays.

The King of the Iron Throne Robert Baratheon-played by Mark Addy-was also born and bred in York. He is also known for his roles of the insecure security guard Dave in ‘The Full Monty’ and Fred Flintstone in ‘Flinstones in Las Vegas’.

‘Emmerdale’ - the popular English soap television programme’s star Dave Glover was also born in York in 1972. He also played the role of Dr Patrick Spiller in ‘Casualty’.

Visitors can not only learn the history of films and movie stars in York, but also enjoy a screening of recent and older movies in one of York’s best movie theatres. City Screen York is one of Britain’s Picture House cinemas. While the Brandy Brown’s Cinema at 1331 is a luxurious attic cinema full of atmosphere with all of the mod-cons. Everyman Cinema provides a comfortable cinema experience with frequent re-runs of older pictures as well as newest big screen releases.
Shopaholics York

A centre of trade since Roman times, York still excels at providing retail therapy for shopaholics of every type. The range of unique independent and designer shops are intertwined with world-class attractions, pedestrianised streets and peaceful havens, so shopping and sightseeing are easily combined. Shops in the city centre boast an array of unique items from heraldic art to handcrafted souvenirs, unusual books, antiques and designer clothes.

One of the most beautiful stately homes - Castle Howard - can be spotted in ‘Brideshead Revisited’ (1981, 2008) as well as ‘Death Comes to Pemberley’ (2013) that also featured iconic York Minster, St William’s College, Treasurer’s House, York Castle Museum and Harewood Castle. British biographical drama film ‘Elizabeth’ (1998) also had some scenes filmed at York Minster, while another royal drama film ‘Victoria’ (2013) once again went to Castle Howard and Harewood Castle.

Visitor’s to York who arrive by train will most likely follow the footsteps of the famous boy wizard Harry Potter. Not many know that the scene at King’s Cross from ‘Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone’ (2001) where Harry is left alone on the pedestrian bridge was filmed in York Railway Station. Another interesting fact is that the film depiction of the Diagon Alley was inspired by the Shambles - one of oldest medieval streets in the whole of Europe.

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Romantic York

York, with its cobbled streets and the smell of chocolate making in the air is the ultimate city of romance. W.H. Auden, who was born in York on 21 February 1907 wrote "O’ Tell Me the Truth about Love" and here is where one can hear all about it.

Novelists, past and present, have taken York and its evocative surroundings as inspiration for their work. Within a short drive of the city lie the romantic Yorkshire Moors where Emily Bronte penned her novel ‘Wuthering Heights’, the story of unrivalled love between Cathy and Heathcliff.

Majestic and imposing, York Minster is the largest Gothic cathedral north of the Alps. Did any building in Britain ever inspire such feelings from the heart as this architectural masterpiece? The Duke of Kent married Miss Katherine Worsley here in June 1961; this was the first Royal wedding in York Minster since King Edward III married Philippa of Hainault there in 1328. In 2019 the famous UK singer Ellie Goulding married Caspar Jopling in the halls of the Minster.

Almost half of all wedding ceremonies that take place in York are for couples who do not live here. This could be due to the fact that York has previously appeared in The Independent newspaper’s 50 Best Places in the World to be Married. Civil weddings and partnerships in York take place in arguably some of the most romantic venues in the country—medieval guildhalls, unique attractions and stately homes. Nearly 1,000 civil weddings take place in York every year.

Railways are an important part of York’s heritage. The city boasts a beautiful, Victorian railway station—could there be a more slushy setting for farewells or reunions? York is also home to the world’s greatest Railway Museum. Here one can marry on the platform alongside beautifully restored royal carriages.

Two Love Lanes can be found in York, double the quota in most cities. One is behind The Mount, the other alongside the Ouse in Fulford. While idyllic gardens not only provide the perfect setting for one’s wedding pictures but be a perfect first date romantic walk location.

York is the home of chocolate, and what is a better way to say ‘I love you’ than with a handmade box of chocolates? One of the biggest collections of Valentine cards in the UK can also be found in the York Castle Museum. A thousand or more messages of love are in the archives—including possibly the oldest printed Valentine’s card in the world. This was published on 12 January 1797 by John Fairburn of 146 Minories, London.

Finally, according to the local superstition, kissing your partner below the West Window of York Minster will make you stay together forever. Beloved can look up at the window to see the heart-shape worked into the tracery, known as the ‘Heart of Yorkshire’.

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Tasty York

Yorkshire folk take their food and drink seriously which is probably why Yorkshire now boasts the largest number of Michelin-starred restaurants than any other county in England outside of London. So it’s no surprise that as Yorkshire’s ancient capital, York flies the flag for good food and drink in the region.

One of York’s ‘Foodie Streets’ is Fossgate-visitors will find a plethora of independent restaurants there. York is also home to one of the region’s best food festivals. York Food and Drink Festival is an annual event taking place in September and is a massive showcase for the restaurants, hotels, shops and food manufacturing companies.

One of the iconic foods-Yorkshire pudding has previously been name Yorkshire icon (above York Minster and the Yorkshire Dales: Dalesman Survey 2014). The York Road Company in York city centre offers a special internet sensation ‘Yorkypud wrap’ that is essentially the Sunday dinner wrapped in a Yorkshire pudding! Visitors can also join the cooking classes in York and learn to make their own Yorkshire puddings.

York’s world-renowned tea rooms Bettys Café Tea Rooms-are simply the place to sample a Yorkshire Fat Rascal and a ‘proper’ cup of tea. Another afternoon tea experience not to be missed is Countess of York - officially the UK’s best afternoon tea (Visit England, 2017) inside a beautifully restored carriage at the National Railway Museum.

York’s award-winning chefs include Roux-trained Michael Hjort at Melton’s (also the person behind the Food and Drink Festival), Andrew Pern at Star Inn The City and Tommy Banks at Roots.

Anyone who fancies a true gourmet pint should visit one of the many beer houses including the House of Trembling Madness (a medieval drinking hall). Visitors can also take a tour of the local craft breweries with Brew York. While the wine enthusiasts can join wine tasting evenings at the Pairings Wine Bar. You can often breathe in the scent of chocolate as you walk through the street, when it comes to chocolate, there really is no place like York. York’s reputation as the city of chocolate dates back to the 20th century when two of the most famous names in chocolate set up shop: Joseph Rowntree went on to create Kit Kat, Smarties and Aero, and Joseph Terry the Chocolate Orange and All Gold collection. Today York’s love of chocolate is as strong as ever and can be experienced in numerous attractions, restaurants and shops around the city. For real chocolate enthusiasts, there is an annual spring Chocolate Festival complete with a ‘chocolate market’ showcasing local chocolate makers’ creations, and also chocolate tastings and workshops.

York’s Chocolate Story is one of York’s biggest visitor attractions celebrating the mouth-watering story of chocolate and confectionery in York. There visitors can discover chocolate’s origins, how to make it and how to taste it like an expert. The new exhibition, opened in 2019, tells the history of world’s most famous chocolate bars-Kit Kat. While in York, visitors can also embark on a Chocolate Trail-a sweet adventure with treats at every turn from chocolate-making workshop at York Cocoa House to Goddard’s House and Gardens home of Terry family. Leaflet can be picked up from the Visitor Information Centre. To complete the trail visitors can stay in York’s only chocolate-themed hotel-Hotel Indigo York.
Example two
day itineraries

Let us help you organise your press trip so you have more time to write. Each year Visit York hosts hundreds of journalists, travel writers and influencers in the city, from both the UK and overseas, and across print, online and broadcast media. These two-day itineraries are examples of how you can spend your time in the city. To organise your press visit, please get in touch with our team.
Foodie itinerary:

Day One

Morning: Visit York’s Chocolate Story to learn about the history of chocolate in the confectionary capital of the UK. From the creation of Terry’s Chocolate Orange to the Kit Kat Chocolatory, the 90 minute tour will take you on a sweet journey across decades to see where it all began.

Lunch: Try out one of the street food stalls at Shambles Market Food Court offering a range of cuisines from across the world. Choose from the in-house Smoked Pork Bun from Shambles Kitchen, Persian Chicken Wrap from Los Moros or a delicious Crepe from KREP.

Afternoon/Evening: Follow the guided tour around the only craft brewery within York’s ancient city walls—Brew York. See how the beer is made right in the heart of the city and sample some of the best craft beers North of England has to offer.

Dinner: Roots York is a sharing plate restaurant embracing the Banks family’s farming ethos. Redefining the traditional four seasons, Tommy Banks has created three growing groups inspired by Oldstead’s ingredients: ‘The Hunger Gap’, ‘Time of Abundance’ and ‘The Preserving Season’.

Overnight: Stay at Hotel Indigo York—a boutique hotel in the heart of York with stylish bedrooms reflecting the history and chocolate heritage of the city.

Day Two

Morning: Become a chef yourself—book a course at The Grand Cookery School to learn to cook one of your favourite dishes. Classes range from short 2-hour sessions to half and full days. You will also get to enjoy your cooking masterpiece with a glass of local wine at the end of the class.

Lunch: Indulge in cheese tasting at Love Cheese by trying locally produced as well as world-known cheeses in Cheese & Tea or Cheese & Beer pairings.

Afternoon/Evening: Indulge in a Champagne Afternoon Tea in the grand setting of Countess of York located in a restored Victorian rail carriage.

Dinner: Located in the corner of the historic city centre, is Mr P’s Curious Tavern—Andrew Pern’s quirky venture re-defines the modern Hostelry with imaginatively created dishes cooked by Michelin-trained Chefs, often drawing on Pub Grub traditions. Book ahead for the ‘full experience’ with our six-course Tasting Menu at £39.50 per person.

Historic itinerary:

Day One

Morning: Climb atop the Clifford’s Tower—the last remaining part of York Castle. Originally built by William the Conqueror, it was twice burned to the ground, before being rebuilt by Henry III in the 13th century. The tower offers sweeping panoramic views of York and the surrounding countryside.

Lunch: Grab a bite in the halls of Valhalla, where the Brave shall live forever. Treat yourself to a horn of mead like a real Viking warrior.

Afternoon/Evening: Visit the National Railway Museum—home to iconic locomotives and an unrivalled collection of engineering firsts, the museum celebrates the past, present and future of innovation on the railways.

Dinner: Enjoy a hearty meal at the Guy Fawkes Inn—birthplace of the most famous gunpowder plotter Guido Fawkes.

Overnight: Stay at the Elmbank Hotel designed by architects J. B. & W. Atkinson and built around 1870. It is a city hotel in a grade II listed building with a country house atmosphere. Murals, frescoes and a magnificent oak staircase leading to a gallery with stained glass windows are just a few of the fine examples of art nouveau.

Day Two

Morning: Travel back in time at JORVIK Viking Centre, while exploring the sights, sounds and smells of a Viking settlement in York.

Lunch: Enjoy a 2 course lunch from the ‘Conspirators Menu’ at Guy Fawkes Inn—birthplace of the notorious plotter, Guido Fawkes. The food is served in a setting befitting of the time of the famous plotter, lit by candlelight and gas lamps.

Afternoon/Evening: Explore the Yorkshire Museum from the Jurassic period to modern times. See how York has changed from the point of its establishment by Romans, throughout the Viking and Anglo-Saxon rule.

Dinner: Enjoy some Nordic inspired tapas at Hilt, while learning the art of traditional axe-throwing.
## Culture & art itinerary:

### Day One

**Morning:** Visit one of the world’s most magnificent cathedrals - York Minster. The cathedral’s East window is the largest expanse of stained glass in Europe. You can also climb the Central Tower for the breath-taking views of the city.

**Lunch:** Marvel at one of the largest collections of ceramics in the country as well as a range of art installations and paintings at York Art Gallery and the CoCA (Centre of Ceramic Arts). Enjoy a light lunch at the gallery’s café.

**Afternoon/Evening:** Walk down Shambles after the city empties in the evening. This cobbled street is one of the oldest streets in Europe and is mentioned in Domesday book. Shambles is also believed to be inspiration behind the film depiction of Harry Potter’s Diagon Alley.

**Dinner:** Enjoy locally sourced Steak and Ale dinner at The Whippet Inn.

**Overnight:** Stay at The Principal York steps away from the train station. The hotel exquisitely combines the grandeur of late-Victorian architecture with the comforts of modern travel.

### Day Two

**Morning:** Explore Merchant Adventurer’s Hall - the inspirational home to The Company of Merchant Adventurers of the City of York and delve into York’s entrepreneurial history. Grab a coffee at the Merchant’s coffee house.

**Lunch:** Partake in the traditional English Afternoon Tea at Betty’s Café Tea Rooms.

**Afternoon/Evening:** See and purchase work by emerging local and UK artists at According to McGee. Also visit Azendi for the one-of-a-kind Heart of Yorkshire jewellery.

**Dinner:** Set in a charming 17th century building in the centre of York, the Chopping Block at Walmgate Ale House uses Yorkshire produce to create diverse modern food like Aubergine stuffed with Lamb and Pomegranate. On Sunday treat yourself to a traditional Roast.

## Outdoors itinerary:

### Day One

**Morning:** Explore the ancient city of York on an award winning bike tour with an entertaining, knowledgeable guide. York Cycling Tours will take you off the beaten track to fascinating historic places you won’t see on a typical bus or walking tour.

**Lunch:** Grab a bite from one of York’s independent cafes such as Brew & Brownie or Mannions and head to the York Museum Gardens, where you can have a picnic in the shade of the ruins of St Mary’s Abbey.

**Afternoon/Evening:** Walk the full expanse of the ancient York City Walls established over 2000 years ago and providing great views of the city’s hidden corners.

**Dinner:** Dine at York’s most vibrant restaurant Star Inn the City located on the bank of the river Ouse and part of York Museum Gardens. Enjoy a great view as well as delicious food offer from top chef Andrew Pern.

**Overnight:** Stay at Jollydays—a unique tented camp close to nature and the rhythms of the season. Take a journey back to simpler times, a place to talk, laugh, relax and reflect.

### Day Two

**Morning:** Head to the North York Moors National Park to experience the vast swaths of heather moorland. Exploring the National Park’s 26-mile Jurassic-age coastline—from historic, picture-postcard fishing villages like Robin Hood’s Bay to hideaway coves and soaring cliffs with breath-taking views, is an absolute must.

**Lunch:** Escape the crowds and experience the serene beauty of this impressive monastic site - Rievaulx Abbey, founded by St Bernard of Clairvaux in 1132. Enjoy lunch in the stunning backdrop of the Abbey.

**Afternoon/Evening:** Towering over the attractive market town of Helmsley, and surrounded by spectacular banks and ditches, Helmsley Castle is an imposing sight with a wealth of history. Stroll through beautiful displays of flowers, fruit and vegetables in the nearby Helmsley Walled Gardens.

**Dinner:** A concept like no other The Botanist is a secret garden for food and drink. Offering a wide selection of curious botanical cocktails, craft beers and ales as well as an extensive menu of marvellous delights.
Family itinerary:

Day One

Morning: Cruise along the river Ouse with City Cruises York, while learning more about the historic city. For a more ‘hands-on’ experience rent one of the self-drive Red Boats.

Lunch: If you have a trusty York Pass, you can enjoy a free pizza or pasta at ASK Italian where outstanding Italian cooking is combined with the setting of the magnificent historic building.

Afternoon/Evening: Let your kids become archaeologists for the day at DIG: The Archaeological Adventure. Four excavation pits are filled with Roman, Viking, medieval and Victorian finds, so kids can grab a trowel and dig up the clues that show how people lived in these times.

Dinner: Fancy Hank’s is an independent restaurant tucked away in the laid-back streets of the historic Minster Quarter and offers good mood food inspired by two brothers travels through the 11 states of America’s Deep South.

Overnight: Book a family cottage room at Middletons York for the perfect home away from home on your city break to York. Ideal for large families of up to 6 people.

Day Two

Morning: Operating over summer - York Maze is a seasonal attraction that will give the whole family an “a-mazing” day out to explore the giant maize maze and enjoy over 20 exciting rides, shows and attractions.

Lunch: Treat your family to a cup of tea and cake at Teddy Bear tea Rooms above the shop where you can find the finest Teddy Bears available from Winnie the Pooh to old fashioned timeless Teddy Bears.

Afternoon/Evening: Step onto the cobbles of the York Castle Museum’s Victorian street to meet the local characters, visit the authentic shops and discover the weird and wonderful collections from this bygone era.

Dinner: Dine at ZAAP Thai and feel like you’ve been transported into a Bangkok street food market, with all its magical hustle and bustle, neon lighting, funky tuk tuks and, of course, the most amazing Thai street food.

Luxury itinerary:

Day One

Morning: Start your day by marvelling at the dramatic architecture & interiors of Castle Howard - one of Britain’s finest historic houses.

Lunch: Have an Afternoon Tea at Castle Howard - indulge in an award winning selection of exquisite savoury treats and an array of sweet delights.

Afternoon/Evening: Enjoy a luxurious spa experience at The Grand York - a secluded and tranquil escape in the centre of York. Book a relaxing treatment to unwind from the city’s hustle and bustle.

Dinner: Dine at the critically-acclaimed Le Cochon Aveugle. Serving an ever-changing, seasonal menu, this intimate dining experience is rooted in the Parisian bistronomy concept of stripping back fine-dining to a more relaxed and informal setting, making the experience more fun and approachable.

Overnight: Stay at The Grand York-the only five-star hotel in the city. Originally the headquarters of the North Eastern Railway, the Grand retains its original splendour with intricate stonework, marble detailing and sweeping stone staircase.

Day Two

Morning: Go on a designer shopping-spree at York Designer Outlet-host to 120 stores including high-street and designer brands.

Lunch: Enjoy lunch at The Bow Room Restaurant at Grays Court, where good food plays a central role with seasonal ingredients and innovative team of talented chefs.

Afternoon/Evening: Watch a local production play at York Theatre Royal-one of the UK’s leading producing theatres.

Dinner: Experience the tongue in cheek approach to British food from a husband and wife chef duo at Arras. An independent restaurant offers a unique luxury dining experience in the heart of the city.
Ways to stay in touch:

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Valid for one or two days, York City Pass gives visitors free entry to top attractions, museums, experiences and monuments in York. Once purchased, you can simply download the digital pass directly to your mobile device and show at the attraction to gain entry.

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