

Publication: 7Days

Country: UAE

Date: 11 October 2009

Page: 20-21

Circulation: 65,011

Article: It's Happening in Manchester

Travel

It's happening in Manchester

England's 'second city' boasts of some of the best food, football and fun to be had in the UK, Adam Jankiewicz looks at what's on offer



STYLISH: The luxurious Lowry Hotel

Despite spending more than 35 years living and working in the UK, I don't really know my own country very well. I would happily travel overseas to the furthest regions of the planet and spend my annual holiday in search of foreign adventure, but it never really crossed my mind to stay in England and explore. Now living in Dubai for a number of years, the thought of returning to my homeland as a weekend tourist was a strange concept. Why would I now travel 5,600km miles to explore a city I once lived two hours from on the

train and had never bothered to visit? A good friend of mine has been trying to lure me to Manchester for years. He adopted the city 15 years ago and says he will never live anywhere else. "Why would I want to?" he asks me. "This city has everything. It's happening here." But being a firm believer in the country's unmapped north/south divide I was always convinced that London was the epicentre of England and had the best restaurants, nightlife, museums and sports. That's where my weekends were spent.

There should have been a few clues for me along my life journey that there is so much more than London, such as Manchester spawning some of the best British bands of all time. My obsession with Joy Division and New Order has never disappeared and Oasis, The Smiths and the Stone Roses all take up a few gigabytes on my iPod. The music's good. The people are friendly and the football isn't bad either. I doubt that any boy old enough to kick a ball anywhere in the world has not heard of Manchester United.

It's a fair bet that a youngster somewhere in the depths of the Congo or a remote archipelago in Indonesia is still wearing his favourite, but now faded, David Beckham shirt. You can take a guided tour inside Manchester United's legendary Old Trafford ground - The Theatre of Dreams - and pay homage to some of the club's greatest stars while imagining scoring at the famous Stretford End. It's the closest you'll get to living your boyhood football dreams. However, there's also now the small matter of United's neighbour

Publication: 7Days

Country: UAE

Date: 11 October 2009

Page: 20-21

Circulation: 65,011

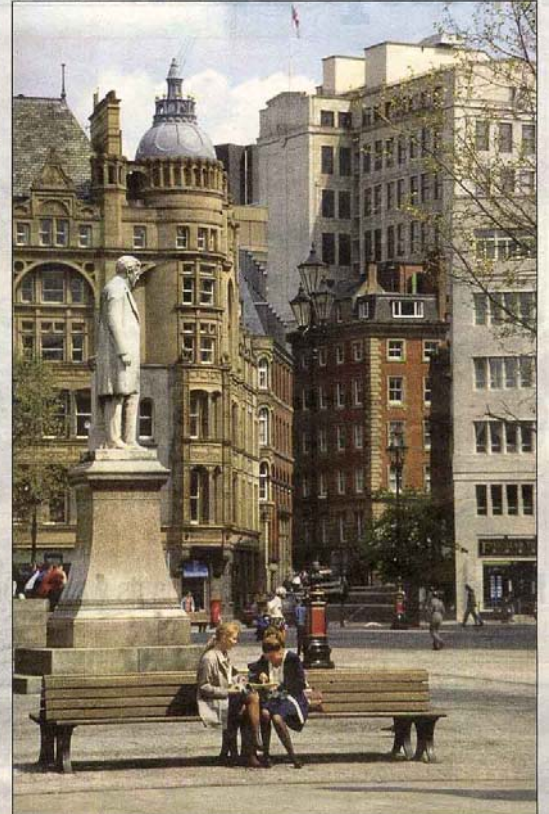
Article: Cont. It's Happening in Manchester



The museum is highly interactive - kids and adults will love it - and where else can you treat your senses to the delights of the smell of foot-rot from soldiers stuck for months in flooded trenches, the musty smell of damp uniforms or get a whiff of mustard gas. The 'Living through the Blitz' show gives first-hand accounts from people forced to endure the nightly bombing raids during the Second World War as 360-degree images are projected across the walls and ceilings. The museum has been designed to disorientate and leave you with a lasting impression of the chaos of war.

It certainly leaves you thinking about life and humanity. The museum was recently named one of the top ten buildings of the last century by The Rough Guide to England, 2008 and one of the top three Large Visitor Attractions in England. Other major museums in the city include The Lowry, the Manchester Art Gallery, Urbis and the Museum of Science and Industry. Entrance to all museums in the city is free.

With all that walking, it's easy to build up a big appetite and you're not going to go hungry for long. There are hundreds of restaurants, takeaways, cafes and pubs to choose from. Fancy a traditional Lancashire hot-pot - a dish of lamb or mutton, onion and potatoes cooked slowly for a few hours? Or maybe venture to the city's Chinatown - the second largest in the country - for some Asian delicacies. Competing with some excellent restaurants dotted around the city, what could be better after a night out than finding yourself hungry in the Rusholme area? It's known locally as 'Curry Mile' and home to more than 70 Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi restaurants offering a vast selection of incredibly cheap and tasty



HISTORIC: Albert Square in Manchester is a designated conservation area

dishes to choose from. The city is famous for its nightlife and how else would Manchester's numerous bands have found their inspiration and chance to play live? Many of the traditional 'spit and sawdust' pubs, where many a pint of Boddingtons beer - known as the Cream of Manchester - were sunk, may now have given way to the chic wine and cocktail bars in the trendy Deansgate Locks and the Northern Quarter, but there's still plenty of traditional English pubs to be found to enjoy a quiet pint of bitter in the beer garden and watch the world go by. If you need some fresh air, just a few kilometres out of the city you can find the beautiful hills of the Pennines and some of the most picturesque countryside in the UK. This really is 'England's green and pleasant land'. Back in the sumptuous surroundings of the Rocco Forte hotel The Lowry, situated on the banks of the River Irwell, I passed a newly married bride still in her wed-

ding dress posing for photographs with the Arsenal football team manager Arsene Wenger while his multi-millionaire star players loitered around the foyer in their expensive, matching suits. Upstairs the American singers Beyonce and Jay-Z were having a drink on the outdoor terrace after supporting the latest Coldplay gig. Well if the city's happening enough for them...

Manchester City arising from its 30-year slumber. The world's richest football team - now Abu Dhabi owned - is firmly on the trophy hunt and looking to topple its more prestigious neighbour and sworn rival from the accolade of the best team in the country. Manchester is a city that can be easily walked around. It's compact and pedestrian friendly. Free buses criss-cross the city and compete with the city's tram network to encourage people to leave their cars at home. An IRA bomb devastated the city centre in 1996 and led to a massive

regeneration project that contributed enormously to helping Manchester develop into the thriving and buzzing city it is today. I took myself on a walking tour around the city, weaving my way through the pedestrianised roads, over canals and through parks while admiring the old industrial mills and beautifully-built Victorian buildings. I found myself at The Imperial War Museum North, which is an historic treasure trove of machines, weapons, videos, commentaries and moving letters home from soldiers posted to war zones across the world.

FACT BOX

Ethihad Airways offers direct daily flights from Abu Dhabi to Manchester - for details see www.ethihadairways.com

Ethihad also offers two night packages with breakfast at the five star Lowry Hotel in Manchester starting from dhs5,060 per person including a match-day ticket for Manchester City, return economy flights from Abu Dhabi, and all applicable taxes and surcharges



INTERACTIVE: Museums for all ages