

# CHIC to peak

With Manchester – the self-styled capital of cool – just a short drive away, the beautiful Peak District is the ideal destination for a varied caravanning break, says Mark Sutcliffe

Outdoor adventure playground: Dovedale



**T**he Peak District is Britain's most visited National Park, as a drive along the A6 between Derbyshire towns Buxton and Matlock on a sunny summer Sunday will confirm. The principal reasons for this are twofold: this beautiful upland plateau, riven with steep-sided valleys scoured by fast-flowing rivers, is utterly gorgeous and is surrounded by seething industrial cities whose populaces can't wait to escape to the countryside come Friday night.

Sheffield, Derby, Stoke-on-Trent and Manchester all back onto the huge communal outdoor playground of the Peak District – little wonder then that it gets a bit busy during peak times.

The very essence of 'cool', Manchester has positioned itself right at the cutting edge of contemporary culture in Britain. Music, modern art, fashion, architecture, cuisine and performing arts are all to the fore in this vibrant metropolis, which is increasingly seen as England's second city (Birmingham included).

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**DON'T FORGET**  
You can book your pitch online at [caravanclub.co.uk/searchandbook](http://caravanclub.co.uk/searchandbook) or by calling our Advance Booking Service on **01342 327490**. Please call Affiliated Sites directly.

## THIS MONTH'S FEATURED SITES

**BUXTON**  
See p143 of the *Sites Directory & Handbook 2013/14*

**ROYAL VALE AS**  
See p168 of the *Directory*

**BLACKSHAW MOOR**  
See p142 of the *Directory*

**BURRS COUNTRY PARK**  
See p160 of the *Directory*



Photo: Karen Frenkel/visitpeakdistrict.com

## FOR THE FAMILY



### Get active

Canoeing and kayaking are the main activities at **Burrs Activity Centre** but rafting, archery, climbing and abseiling are also on the agenda at busier times of year. Over eights only.

**T** 0161 764 9649 **W** [burrs.org.uk](http://burrs.org.uk)  
**Nearest featured site** Burrs Country Park



### Zoo's who?

Animal welfare is top of the agenda at **Chester Zoo**, so the enclosures attempt to mimic the 11,000 residents' natural habitats as accurately as possible. So on a typical visit, you might find yourself on the plains of Africa, in the tropical rainforest and on the Indian subcontinent.

**T** 01244 380280  
**W** [chesterzoo.org](http://chesterzoo.org)  
**Nearest featured site** Royal Vale

### BRANCH OUT



### Tree-mendous!

**Go Ape Treetop Adventure Buxton** is a forest assault course where children can swing from tree to tree or charge along vertiginous walkways.

**T** 0845 094 8634 **W** [goape.co.uk](http://goape.co.uk)  
**Nearest featured site** Buxton

### Science lesson

Embark on scientific journey at **Jodrell Bank Discovery Centre** – discover how the 89m-high Lovell Radio Telescope has shaped our understanding of the universe and learn more about the history of space exploration.

**T** 01477 571766  
**W** [jodrellbank.net](http://jodrellbank.net)  
**Nearest featured site** Royal Vale

Photo: Anthony Holloway/Jodrell Bank



## FOOD + DRINK



### Market value

With nearly 400 stalls, **Bury Market** has whole sections dedicated to meat, fish and regional specialities. It's open five-and-a-half days a week (closed Sundays and Tuesday afternoons).

T 0161 253 6520 W [burymarket.com](http://burymarket.com)  
Nearest featured site **Burrs Country Park**

### Chop, chop

**Mr Thomas's Chop House** is an outstanding example of a proper English city centre pub with fantastic period décor, a fine selection of ales and a traditional menu of robust British classics.



T 0161 832 2245 W [wtomschophouse.com](http://wtomschophouse.com)  
Nearest featured site **Burrs Country Park**

### Chinese treat

Manchester is home to one of the largest Chinese communities in Europe and this is reflected in a thriving restaurant hub in the city centre that rivals London's West End. **Yang Sing** on Princess Street is recommended.

T 0161 236 2200 W [yang-sing.com](http://yang-sing.com)  
Nearest featured site **Burrs Country Park**

### Hearty fayre

Tucked away in an elegant Georgian townhouse near Buxton's Opera House is **Columbine** – a little gem of a restaurant that serves hearty, locally-produced food at reasonable prices. Booking is essential.



T 01298 78752 W [columbinerestaurant.co.uk](http://columbinerestaurant.co.uk)  
Nearest featured site **Buxton**



Manchester city centre by night

“Manchester is blessed with a profusion of museums and galleries”

After London, it's the UK's second or third most popular destination with foreign tourists, yet the contrasts between the edgy, sophistication of Manchester and the wild uplands, beautiful valleys and bustling market towns of the Peak District less than 20 miles away are stark.

Manchester became the world's first industrial city and global exports over the years include cotton, socialism, the cooperative movement and modern dance music. The locals also take their football very seriously and a pilgrimage to the Old Trafford home of Manchester United is high on the priority list of many visitors.

Despite its international profile and popularity, Manchester city centre is actually very compact, with most of the leading shops, cultural life and attractions crammed into just a couple of square miles.

### SHOP TIL YOU DROP

The city is blessed with a profusion of museums and galleries, including the

acclaimed Whitworth Art Gallery, the Museum of Transport, Imperial War Museum North and the impressive Lowry centre in nearby Salford.

Manchester is also widely acknowledged as one of the best shopping experiences in Europe. The rebuilt Arndale Centre is the largest city centre shopping complex anywhere in Britain and new developments like Salford Quays and the Trafford Centre rival the best out-of-town developments anywhere in England.

The city's nightlife is legendary and while dancing at a sweaty all-nighter may



Blackshaw Moor Club site

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

no longer appeal, there's ample opportunity to take in a show at one of Manchester's half-dozen theatres, enjoy a few drinks in some of Britain's trendiest bars or tuck into some world-class cuisine in one of its many restaurants.

Campsites within walking distance of the city centre are non-existent, but public transport is cheap and reliable with trams, trains and buses connecting the suburbs and outlying areas with the centre.

Our journey starts north of the city in Bury, where the straight-talking locals call a spade a spade and are more than likely to strike up a conversation as if you've known them all their lives while queuing at the black pudding stall on the town's world-famous market.

From here, it's a short drive – or tram ride – into Manchester's vibrant city centre, and thence onwards to the south of the city and the leafy prosperity of Cheshire. This is footballers' wives country, where 4x4s and Ferraris are more numerous than in the wealthy commuter belt of Surrey in the South East.



Royal Vale AS

## OUTDOOR FUN



TUDOR TREAT

### Park life

**Tatton Park**, a spectacular Tudor stately home, sits among 50 acres of landscaped gardens and 1,000 acres of rolling parkland. It has a rare-breed farm, adventure playground, speciality shops, restaurants and hosts more than 100 events a year – including the RHS Flower Show, car shows and antiques fairs.

T 01625 374400 W [tattonpark.org.uk](http://tattonpark.org.uk)  
Nearest featured site **Royal Vale**

### Cycling

There are some fantastic cycle routes in the North West, including **National Cycle Network Route 55** which runs from Stoke-on-Trent to Manchester, largely in traffic-free sections. The **Pennine Cycleway (South Pennines)** is a very popular route that runs from Holmfirth to Appleby.

W [sustrans.org.uk](http://sustrans.org.uk)



### Wild card

**Tittesworth Reservoir Nature Reserve**, on the edge of the Staffordshire Moors on the south-western fringes of the Peak District, is an oasis for wildlife.

### Going underground

**Poole's Cavern & Country Park** is an exciting and sometimes spooky subterranean experience. Discover how stalactites and stalagmites are formed and marvel at the other weird formations that have been shaped by the relentless ebb and flow of water through these spectacular chambers beneath the Peak District.

T 01298 26978 W [poolescavern.co.uk](http://poolescavern.co.uk)  
Nearest featured site **Buxton**



T 01538 300188  
Nearest featured site **Blackshaw Moor**



Chic little towns like Wilmslow, Alderley Edge and Knutsford feel like outposts of the prosperous South, sporting designer shops and cosmopolitan cafés where it's more important to be seen than actually eat anything. Beyond lies the verdant pastureland of the Cheshire plain, a gorgeous pastoral symphony of farmland and parkland dotted with dozens of shallow ponds, lakes and meres.

We then swing east, through Macclesfield and into the Peak District proper and its cultural capital Buxton, whose prosperity was built on the Victorian fashion for taking the waters in the spa town's heyday and whose legacy is still leveraged by the purveyor of one of Britain's best-selling brands of bottled water.

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# CULTURE

## Art warming

The **Lowry** is Salford's answer to the Sydney Opera House and the Guggenheim Museum rolled into one. See LS Lowry's works and other outstanding exhibitions or take in a performance from a dynamic and ever-changing calendar of contemporary arts and shows.

T 0843 208 6000 W [thelowry.com](http://thelowry.com)  
Nearest featured site **Burrs Country Park**

## Classic entertainment

Acknowledged as one of Europe's top symphony ensembles, **The Hallé Orchestra** plays a selection of crowd-pleasing popular classics as well as more highbrow pieces at its base in Manchester city centre.

T 0161 237 7000  
W [halle.co.uk](http://halle.co.uk)  
Nearest featured site **Burrs Country Park**



## Potter about

**Wedgwood Potteries'** spectacular new purpose-built museum houses a fascinating collection of this distinctive brand of beautiful English pottery and porcelain. View priceless exhibits and take a tour of the factory.

T 01782 371902  
W [wedgwoodmuseum.org.uk](http://wedgwoodmuseum.org.uk)  
Nearest featured site **Blackshaw Moor**

## Variety show

**Buxton Opera House** hosts an eclectic range of concerts, drama, comedy, films and talks – and opera, of course.

T 0845 127 2190  
W [buxtonoperahouse.org.uk](http://buxtonoperahouse.org.uk)  
Nearest featured site **Buxton**

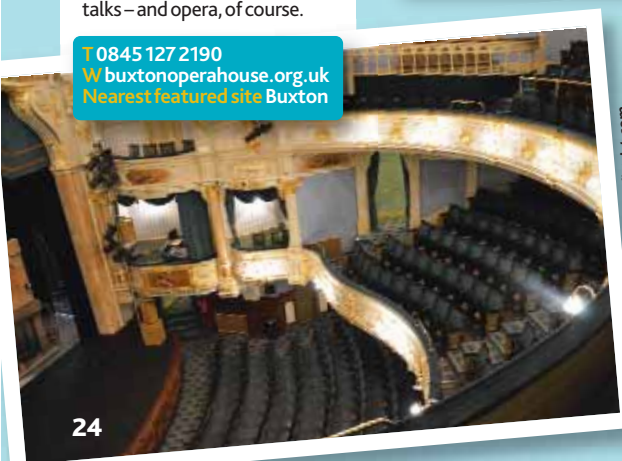


Photo: Anne-Elise Quary/vistapeakdistrict.com



Walking heaven: glorious Mam Tor

## KEEP MAM

From here, it's easy to reach the spectacular walking country around iconic mountains like Kinder Scout or the visually more impressive Mam Tor, explore the dramatic expanse of Edale or take a leisurely drive along the gentler valley of the Derbyshire Wye through Miller's Dale to Bakewell. Here, you could pick up one of this delightful little town's eponymous puddings – don't, whatever you do, call it a tart!

From Buxton, it's just a short hop to the quieter southern fringe of the Peak District, where the moorland assumes a more modest character and the less-clearly defined summits attract fewer walkers and the shallower valleys, fewer tourists.

The elegant town of Ashbourne sits at the southern edge of the National Park and excursions into the utterly-delightful Manifold Valley and exquisite Dovedale are not to be missed, not forgetting to pick up a slab of cheese from Hartington – one of only five villages allowed to make genuine blue-veined cheese we know as Stilton.

We're near the border with Staffordshire here and the Potteries of Stoke are a brief drive away, with the attractive waterside environments of Tittesworth Reservoir and Rudyard Lake a short hop from your pitch.

## PITCH PERFECT

There's a diverse selection of Caravan Club sites hereabouts – ranging from Burrs Country Park, from where you can reach Manchester city centre in under half an hour, to the away-from-it-all peace and quiet of Royal Vale, squirrelled away in the pretty Cheshire countryside.

Redeveloped from a brownfield site with an historic mill as its centrepiece, Burrs Country Park has state-of-the-art facilities that have been designed to cause minimum environmental impact. The East Lancashire Railway passes right by the site, which is within walking distance of Bury town centre where the trams run direct into Manchester city centre.

Despite its idyllic location amid the lakes of rural Cheshire, the purpose-built Affiliated site at Royal Vale is just a short drive from the M6 and A50 and perfectly placed for exploring Knutsford, Macclesfield and the western fringes of the Peak District National Park.

Further east, Buxton Club site is set in a peaceful valley on the south-western edge of this famous old spa town at the heart of the Peak District – within striking distance of the cultural capital of this glorious region, which has inspired craftsmen, musicians and artists for centuries.

To the south, Blackshaw Moor sits on the quieter southern border of the Peak District, where visitors will find some of the best walking country in England right on the doorstep. ■

To read members' site reviews, see our fantastic online forum at [caravanclub.co.uk/together](http://caravanclub.co.uk/together)



## Burrs Country Park Club site

