



POCKET ROUGH GUIDE **YORK**

written and researched by
AUSTIN CLARK

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York

Encircled by medieval walls, York's historic centre is home to narrow cobbled streets, stunning Gothic architecture and world-class attractions. With a rich Viking and Roman past, the city's heritage is woven into its modern-day appeal, from the grand York Minster to the immersive JORVIK Viking Centre. The city is also famous for its festivals, hosting events year-round that celebrate food, history and the arts. Whether you're exploring historic landmarks, indulging in the city's renowned chocolate-making tradition, or experiencing its famous ghost walks, York is a city of contrasts that blends tradition with contemporary flair. York is a city where ancient history and vibrant modern culture combine to create an unforgettable destination, easily reached by train thanks to regular TransPennine Express services into the city from Newcastle and the Northeast, Manchester and Liverpool. Find out more about travelling to York by **TransPennine Express**.

York Minster

Deangate, York, YO1 7HH

yorkminster.org. Charge

One of the most magnificent Gothic cathedrals in Europe, York Minster dominates the city skyline with its awe-inspiring towers and intricate stained-glass windows. Visitors can explore its vast nave, medieval chapter house and the Undercroft Museum, which reveals 2,000 years of York's history. Climbing the central tower is a must-do, and rewards visitors with panoramic views over the city. The cathedral also hosts concerts, special services and exhibitions, making it both a cultural and spiritual landmark. The Great East Window, the largest expanse of medieval stained glass in the country, is a breathtaking highlight.

York's City Walls

Various locations visityork.org. Free

Encircling the city for over 2,000 years, York's city walls offer a unique way to explore the historic

centre. Stretching for nearly three miles, they provide stunning views of York Minster and beyond.

Visitors can walk along the medieval stone pathways, passing through ancient gatehouses, known as 'bars', which once controlled access to the city. Informational plaques along the route tell the fascinating story of York's defensive past, making this an absorbing and scenic way to experience the city's history. Exploring the well-preserved walls is a great way to appreciate York's blend of medieval and modern charm.

York Castle Museum

Tower St, York, YO1 9RY


yorkcastlemuseum.org.uk. Charge

York has a lot of past to bring to life, and that's where York Castle Museum comes in. Here, you can take an immersive look at history through detailed period recreations and fascinating, evocative exhibits. Visitors can wander through a reconstructed Victorian street,

experience the eerie atmosphere of the city's original prison cells, and learn about life in wartime Britain. The museum regularly hosts interactive displays, seasonal exhibitions and living history events, making it a favourite with families and history enthusiasts alike. Its collection includes centuries-old clothing, furniture and everyday objects, allowing visitors to fully step into different eras of York's past.

Yorkshire Museum and Museum Gardens

Museum St, York, YO1 7FR

 yorkshireremuseum.org.uk. Charge

Set within beautiful botanical gardens, the Yorkshire Museum is home to an impressive collection of Roman, Viking and medieval artefacts. Highlights include the famous York Helmet, a 1,000-year-old Anglian relic, and the stunning Middleham Jewel. Outside, the tranquil Museum Gardens offer a picturesque escape, featuring the ruins of St Mary's Abbey, exotic

plants and a variety of wildlife. The museum regularly hosts archeology and natural history exhibitions, showcasing York's important role in England's past. The gardens are also a popular venue for outdoor theatre, music performances and family-friendly events.

JORVIK Viking Centre

19 Coppergate, York, YO1 9WT

 jorvikvikingcentre.co.uk. Charge

Excavations of Coppergate in 1976 uncovered York's original Viking settlement, now largely buried beneath a shopping centre. But at adjacent JORVIK, visitors are propelled in "time capsules" on a ride through a reconstructed version of the tenth-century Viking city, immersing you in the sights, sounds and even the smells of the times. You also get to see how artefacts unearthed from the original site were used, and watch live-action domestic scenes on actual Viking-age streets, with constipated villagers, axe-fighting and other singular attractions.

York Minster

Visit York



The National Railway Museum

Leeman Rd, YO26 4XJ 📍 nrm.org.uk. **Free**
The National Railway Museum is a must if you have even the slightest interest in railways, history, engineering or Victoriana. The Great Hall alone features some fifty restored locomotives dating from 1829 onwards, among them *Mallard*, at 126mph the fastest steam engine ever built. After a lengthy on-site £4.2 million restoration, the *Flying Scotsman* is back on the tracks as a working exhibit (📍 flyingscotsman.org.uk); it returns to the museum in winter. Engines aside, you can't help but love the sheer Britishness of the Station Hall with its Royal carriages, railway memorabilia and real-life stories.

The Shambles

York, YO1 7LX 📍 visityork.org. **Free**
One of the best-preserved medieval streets in Europe, The Shambles is a must-visit for those looking to step into York's past. Originally a street of butchers' shops, its overhanging timber-framed buildings now house charming boutiques, sweet shops and cafés. Its beautifully-preserved cobbled lanes and atmospheric charm have inspired locations in popular culture, such as its resemblance to Diagon Alley in *Harry Potter*. The Shambles Market nearby is a great place to browse local produce, crafts and street food stalls, amplifying the area's USP as a lively shopping destination steeped in history.

York's Chocolate Story

King's Square, York, YO1 7LD
📍 yorkschocholatestory.com. **Charge**
York's long history of chocolate-making is explored at this interactive attraction, where visitors can discover the secrets behind storied brands like Terry's and Rowntree's. Guided tours showcase the chocolate-making process from bean to bar – and luckily, there's



The Shambles
Visit York

plenty of opportunities to sample sweet treats. Hands-on workshops allow guests to craft their own chocolate creations, making this a deliciously fun experience for visitors of all ages. The experience also explores York's role in the development of the UK's chocolate industry, highlighting its legacy as the country's "chocolate city".

York Maze and York Festival of Food & Drink

Elvington Ln, York, YO19 5LT

📍 yorkmaze.com. **Charge**

A seasonal favourite and a good bit of fun, York Maze is one of the largest mazes in Europe, featuring elaborate cornfield designs that change each year. Beyond the maze, visitors can enjoy adventure playgrounds, live entertainment and interactive farm experiences. Meanwhile, food lovers will relish the York Festival of Food & Drink, held in September each year. The festival showcases the best of Yorkshire's culinary scene, with tastings, demonstrations and markets celebrating the best of local produce.

Shops

The Imaginarium

7 Blake St, YO1 8QJ

🌐 imaginariumpyork.co.uk

Stepping into *The Imaginarium* feels like entering a whimsical world of curiosities. This beautifully designed boutique is packed with unique homeware, quirky gifts and handcrafted decorations, all with a touch of magic. Every corner is filled with treasures you won't find anywhere else. This shop is a York favourite for those who love the extraordinary.

The Yorkshire Soap Company

10 Blake St, YO1 8QG

🌐 theyorkshiresoap.co.uk

A delight for the senses, The Yorkshire Soap Company is known for its beautifully crafted handmade soaps, bath bombs and luxury skincare. The shop's displays resemble a high-end patisserie, with colourful soaps shaped like cupcakes and delicately wrapped gift boxes. Everything is made

A Yorkshire fat rascal at Bettys
Diana Jarvis/Rough Guides

in Yorkshire using traditional techniques and natural ingredients.

Restaurants

Bettys

6–8 St Helen's Square, YO1 8QP

🌐 bettys.co.uk

Famous across Yorkshire, *Bettys* specialises in cakes and pastries like granny used to make, apparently. Try a hot buttered pikelet or a Yorkshire fat rascal. In the basement there's a mirror with the signatures of the hundreds of Allied airmen who used *Bettys* as an unofficial mess during World War II. ££

Brew & Brownie

5 Museum St, YO1 7DT

🌐 brewandbrownie.co.uk

This buzzing café is usually busy with students and thirty-somethings enjoying strong coffee and stupendous homemade cakes. Brunch and light lunches not to be missed either – a stack of American pancakes or the Eeh Bah Gum sharing plate. Yorkshire-sourced produce where possible. ££

Café Concerto

21 High Petergate, YO1 7EN

🌐 cafeconcerto.biz

This relaxed, belle époque-style bistro is as much about the location as the food and drink. Situated facing the minster, with sheet-music-papered walls and waiting staff in robust aprons, it provides a touristy but enjoyable experience. Food is modern European; and there are papers to browse and encourage you to stay a little longer. ££

Partisan

112 Micklegate, YO1 6JX 🌐 partisanuk.com

This independent café and restaurant is a firm favourite for brunch, with an eclectic menu that spans shakshuka, fluffy pancakes and locally sourced full English breakfasts. In the evening, the cosy setting transforms into an intimate



dining space serving seasonal small plates and a fantastic selection of wines. With excellent coffee, house-made cakes, and a warm, artsy atmosphere, *Partisan* is the kind of place where visitors linger for hours, and often return the next day for more. ££

Roots York

68 Marygate, YO30 7BH www.rootsyork.com

Those lucky enough to get a reservation at this Michelin-starred delight in the heart of York can enjoy innovative tasting menus and Sunday feasts curated by top-rated chef, Tommy Banks. The menus change constantly to take advantage of the best seasonal produce, and while it's not cheap, the waiting list to grab a table says it all. ££££

Skosh

98 Micklegate, YO1 6JX www.skoshyork.com

A must-visit for food lovers, this highly recommended small-plate dining spot delivers big on flavour. *Skosh's* ever-changing menu blends British ingredients with global inspiration, from delicate dumplings to rich, flavour-packed curries. The stylish open kitchen means diners can watch the chefs at work, while the relaxed atmosphere makes it the perfect spot for everything from date night to a special treat. Book ahead as its reputation means tables get snapped up fast. £££

Pubs and bars

The Basement

13–17 Coney St, below City Screen cinema, YO1 9QL www.thebasementyork.co.uk

An intimate venue with a variety of nights – from music to comedy to arts events. The first Wed of every month is “Café Scientifique” – a free evening of discussion surrounding current issues in science. Live music events are scattered through the week, along with cabaret, burlesque and club nights.



The Blue Bell

Andy Sutherland/Shutterstock

Blue Bell

Fossgate, YO1 9TF [01904 654904](tel:01904654904)

Built in 1798, the *Blue Bell* is a tiny, friendly local with two rooms, oak-panelling and good real ales. When landlord John took over in 2015, he upheld the traditional pub values: no mobile phones or swearing, just good beer, wine and spirits.

House of the Trembling Madness

48 Stonegate, YO1 8AS

[facebook.com/TremblingMad](https://www.facebook.com/TremblingMad)

A wonderfully atmospheric attic pub (it's above their shop) with exposed beams and a medieval hall feel. Bar snacks are exceptional and so is the range of craft ales, lagers and ciders. Arrive early to avoid the queue.

Three-Legged Mare

15 High Petergate, YO1 7EN

[facebook.com/threeleggedmareyork](https://www.facebook.com/threeleggedmareyork)

A converted shop provides an airy outlet for York Brewery's own quality beer. No kids, no jukebox, no video games. It's named after a three-legged gallows – it's there on the pub sign, with a replica in the beer garden.