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Brighton & Hove guide

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Arty, quirky and inclusive, Brighton & Hove is often dubbed London-On-Sea (a friend has called it 'Camden before the crowds') yet it's within easy reach of the South Downs. Visitor or local, there's so much going on you'll always find new places to discover.



Brighton's foodie scene has exploded over the last few years and there's never been a better time to eat out here. Fine dining restaurants with creative tasting menus include [Etch](#) in Hove (from *MasterChef the Professionals* winner Stephen Edwards) and fairly central [Isaac@](#). For fish classier than the battered kind try [The Salt Room](#) or [Riddle & Finns](#) on the seafront.

Among many great small plates-style eateries are French-slanted [Plateau](#), [The Set](#) on historic Regency Square, [64°](#) in the Lanes (run by *Great British Menu* winner Michael Bremner), modern Italian [Cin Cin](#), and wine bar-style [Market](#) and [Fourth & Church](#) in Hove.



Fourth & Church

For casual dining, check out contemporary Indian [Curry Leaf Cafe](#) (which even has a kiosk at the station), pizza restaurants [Fatto A Mano](#) and (vegan) [Purezza](#) and busy Mexican [La Chozza](#). Veggies are very well catered for, with [Terre A Terre](#) and [Food for Friends](#) the best known meat-free restaurants.

Look out for [OctoberBest](#) when many of the city's top restaurants run discounted set menus, and get a great steer on the whole scene through [Brighton Food Tours](#) (see WALKS below). Note the city's smaller food heroes pop-up at weekly street food market [Street Diner](#) every Friday just off Queens Road (the main drag from the station) and on Wednesdays in Hove.



Street Diner favourite Baby Bao, now also available at The Pond pub

Want a cafe? Walk a few paces. There must be over a hundred independent coffee shops in Brighton, the majority excellent. North Laine has many but my current faves are probably Seventies-tastic pancake cafe [Nowhere Man](#), urban and arty [Cafe Plenty](#) and quirky [The Marwood](#) which has *Star Wars* models strung from the ceiling, Rick Astley lyrics chalked up the stairs and all manner of other kitsch props and visual gags. For afternoon teas in vintage surrounds it has to be [Metro Deco](#) in Kemptown, which also does a mean brunch.

DRINK



English sparkling wine is really coming into its own, winning awards and beating French tipplers in blind tastings. Sussex has more vineyards than any other county and many are surprisingly close to Brighton. [Great British Wine Tours](#) will whisk you from the city to tutored tastings and lunch in leafy surrounds under the South Downs. The handy pick-up point is Jurys Inn Hotel directly behind Brighton Station. They even have versions incorporating cheese or breweries.

In the city itself, notable cocktail bars are [The Fix](#) cocktail bar (part of Artists' Residence hotel on Regency Square), the [HarBar](#) at Brighton Harbour Hotel and speakeasy-themed [L'Atelier du Vin](#).



L'Atelier du Vin

Gin specialists include [The Colonnade Bar](#) next to the Theatre Royal and the recently revamped [Old Albion](#) pub in Hove. Look out for homegrown Brighton Gin, served with orange slices. Among heaps of good pubs those for craft/local beer-lovers include Brighton [BierHaus](#) (home of Brighton Bier), [North Laine](#), [BrewDog](#), [The Cow](#) and [The Evening Star](#) (owned by Sussex brewery Dark Star) near the station.

Straddling the pub/bar divide and with eccentric decor and retro DJ sets, one of my favourites is [Black Dove](#) in Kemptown while in Hove new [Cafe Malbec](#) serves up great South American wine with authentic empanadas.

STAY



Hotel Pelirocco

The most fun place to lay your head is surely Brighton's Rock 'N' Roll [Hotel Pelirocco](#) where the 19 rooms are individually themed from Punk to Mods to Darth Vader. Also check out its frequent events and catch some live music or comedy in the bar. Or, if you're in town to party, book with your friends for karaoke, cocktail classes, a retro makeover or a photoshoot. You can even learn how to stitch your own vintage-style frilly knickers!



Hot tubs in Brighton Harbour Hotel basement spa

[Brighton Harbour Hotel](#) right opposite the seafront has fresh and stylish seaside-slanted rooms and a fabulously quirky spa set in the brick arches of its historic basement. When you're done pampering, surface for a meal or afternoon tea in its

More traditionally minded? [The Grand](#) is the old dame of the seafront.

WALK



Tuck in! Brighton Food Tours

There are plenty of walking tours that take in the city's heritage, among them the Blue Badge-guided [Only in Brighton](#) tour and [History Women Brighton](#).

An exciting new one to try – and getting rave reviews – is [Brighton Food Tours](#) which delves into the city's booming indie food scene. The VIB (Very Independent Brighton) tour runs Fridays and Saturdays year-round and over three hours expert scoffers Cat and Angela will take you to meet revolutionary restaurateurs, passionate producers and sassy street food stallholders with tastings along the way. There are also drink versions and you can have a private tour if there are six or more of you.

For a quick countryside fix, drive about ten minutes north of the city, or take the bus, to Devil's Dyke for lofty Downs views and hang-gliders doing their scary thing.

SHOP



McCready Bag, Upper North Street

If you're not local, the first thing you need to know is the difference between The Lanes and North Laine. The Lanes is an historic higgeldy-piggeldy area near the sea, chocful of antique and contemporary jewellers.



North Laine

North Laine runs for several blocks between Trafalgar Street (just under the station) and Church Street near Brighton Dome and is where you'll find hundreds of independent boutiques – quite unprecedented in most cities. Browse designer-makers, indie galleries, quirky interior stores like [DIGS](#), gorgeous children's toys at

much more.

There are also a clutch of newer shops in the King's Road arches beside the BAi360. [Brighton Photography](#) gallery here is always worth a pitstop.

TOURIST

Naturally the beach is the big draw in warmer months. Most day-trippers hang out round the Palace Pier but anywhere West of the skeletal West Pier will be quieter and you can even [barbecue](#) on several beaches in Hove after 6pm. In the summer look out for alfresco films on a big screen near the Palace Pier.



[Brighton Pavilion](#) – the famous onion domed palace built by King George IV is Indian on the outside, Chinese on the inside, with swoon-worthy decor. There's a pretty ice rink here in winter. The newer landmark is, of course, the [BA i360](#), the giant doughnut up a stick that's Brighton's answer to the London Eye. There's a bar inside and you can even dine at the top on selected dates.



BAi360

You should definitely also browse the indie boutiques and perhaps take a caffeine-fuelled cafe-crawl of North Laine (see SHOPS above).

There are heaps of diverting [London to Brighton](#) rallies throughout the year from the famous vintage car run in November to the Vepsa and fashion-centred [Mod Weekender](#) in August, all ending on the seafront at Madeira Drive.

[Brighton & Hove Albion](#) is new to the Premier League this year meaning you can now watch some top teams play at the Amex Stadium.

CULTURE

This is where the city really comes into its own. In May, [Brighton Fringe](#) alongside the main [Brighton Festival](#) is the biggest in England and you can catch many acts here warming up for summer's colossal Edinburgh Fringe. May also sees [The Great Escape](#) weekend festival showcasing new music and usually supported by BBC 6 Music.



Brighton Fringe venue The Warren

[Brighton Dome](#) (in George IV's ostentatious former stables) is the major venue for big name music and comedy acts and it was on this very stage that ABBA shot to fame by winning the Eurovision Song Contest. The historic [Theatre Royal](#) has many strong touring productions and relative newbie [Brighton Open Air Theatre](#) is a lovely spot to picnic and catch drama in summer. For good bands not big enough to fill the Dome keep an eye on [Concorde 2](#) on the seafront. [The Brunswick](#) pub in Hove also has a busy live music line-up plus some spoken word events like interactive storytelling gathering [Rattle Tales](#).

[Komedia](#) in North Laine (which sometimes feels like my second home) is part cinema, part award-winning comedy club with regular multi-act weekend shows plus a series of decent stand-up and fringe one-offs. For more comedy venues see my feature [here](#).



Numerous independent galleries include large [Pheonix](#), tiny [Brush](#) (part of a hair salon near the station) and Muddy Award-winning [Cameron Contemporary Art](#) in Hove. Don't miss the chance to pop-in on local creatives during [Artists' Open Houses](#) in May and again before Christmas.

Of course Brighton is famous for its LGBT+ scene, in fact the city's [Pride](#) celebrations in August are the biggest in Europe! Kemptown, to the east of the Palace Pier, is the area with the highest concentration of gay bars. Check out too the monthly [Bent Double](#) comedy nights at Komedia and busy LGBT+ arts programme at [The Malborough](#) pub and theatre.



Pride

KIDS

Hove is the hotspot for young families and it's here beside the beach you'll find [Hove Lagoon](#) – a small watersports and boating lake where (with your own kit) you can fish for crabs for free. There's also a popular skate park and playground here either side of Fatboy Slim's family-centred [Big Beach Cafe](#).



Public hire bikes

helmets). There's a nice cafe, a kids' sandpit and diverting action at the [Yellow Wave](#) volleyball courts east of the Palace Pier and a playground and crazy golf next door. Further out, Art Deco [Saltdean Lido](#) has recently part reopened following major restoration.



Yellowwave

Take a walk through the shark tunnel at the ever-popular [Sea Life](#) centre set in Victorian arches near the pier, or see the skeletons at [Booth Museum](#) of natural history which has an interactive gallery and events for pre-schoolers. More centrally [Brighton Museum](#) near the Pavilion includes Ancient Egyptian exhibits. There's also a tiny [Toy & Model Museum](#) with vintage train sets near the station.

Get circling the family shows in the programmes for [Brighton Open Air Theatre](#) and May's Brighton Fringe (see CULTURE above). Head to the regular [Sundae Club](#) for 2-8s at Komedia and look out for visits from children's authors at Muddy Award-winning [The Book Nook](#) in Hove. Foodwise, it's worth knowing that at authentic pizzeria [Fatto A Mano](#) a child eats free per paying adult and at Thai [Cafe Chilli](#) in Hove there's the same deal for under 7s before 7pm.

If you must have your well-worn favourites, [Brighton Marina](#) is overrun with family-focused chain eateries. You can also take kids out on a boat trip mackerel fishing from here (my young nephew once landed three on one hook!) or to see the new offshore windfarm. At high tide you'll find great rock pools at the beach just beyond as you walk or cycle towards Rottingdean.

QUIRKY



Famous music memorial wall at the Prince Albert

Brighton had the UK's first official nudist beach so naturally it also has a [Naked Bike Ride](#) every summer. There's some top [graffiti](#) about the city and you can take a [Street Art Tour](#) to find out more about the scene. Also check out the free and very silly [Bad Book Project](#) with comics reading from terrible tomes once a month.

HIPSTERS

Brighton's detractors would most commonly cite its hipster side as their irritation but if you embrace that beardy vibe you'll love Brighton's craft beer scene (see DRINK above) and it's numerous tattoo parlours. The Mod culture of the Sixties still lingers in the city with retro men's boutiques like [Jump the Gun](#).

Fancy a soy latte? You're in the right place – the city is super veggie/vegan-friendly. For all your quinoa needs you'll find long-running [Infinity Foods](#) in North Laine the Mecca. The most prominent among the vinyl shops is [Resident](#) in North Laine, where you'll also find [Magazine](#) – a shop devoted entirely to niche titles (no, not the rude kind!)

by Debbie Ward

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2 comments on "Brighton & Hove guide"

Alison Willard April 12, 2018

That's a pretty good rundown, thank you – good one to share with my visitors so they can decide what they want to do rather than me guessing!



Reply

debbieward April 12, 2018

Thanks Alison, glad to be of help, do pass it on!



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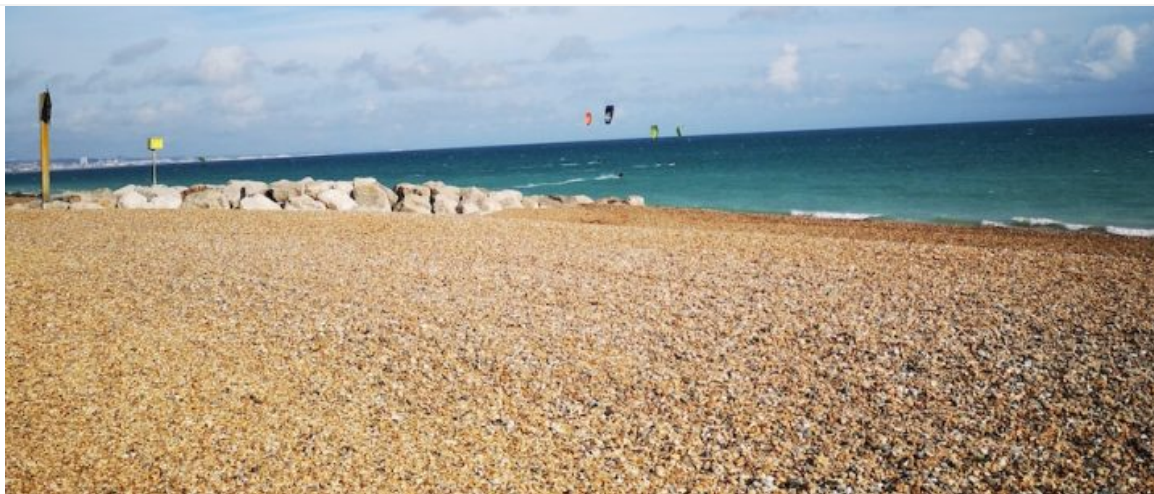


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