



Nottingham

Nottingham is a busy city situated in the East Midlands that originally became famous for its lace, tobacco and bicycle production industries and remains a popular tourist destination today, with its ties to Robin Hood in particular pulling in the 6th highest number of tourists in the UK. It is a diverse and vibrant location to live in.

| Housing

Thanks to the sizeable student and young professional population, as well as a slower market than some of the larger cities, renting can be very affordable in Nottingham. A well-maintained, shared house in one of the nearby suburbs of Beeston, Lenton, Mapperley or Sherwood will generally cost around £350 including bills. Alternatively, £500-£600 pcm will get you a very nice one person flat in either the desirable city centre location of Hockley (where most of the art attractions, vintage stores and cocktail bars are), or the nearby luxurious Park Estate, a centrally located haven from the rest of the city.

As with most city locations, more centrally located properties will set you back more, but still at a fraction of the cost of a flat in other cities. Transport links in Nottingham are award-winning, so commuting in from the outskirts or from further afield to save costs on rent is also a viable option. For those with families, three bedroom houses in the popular suburb of Beeston typically cost around £650 pcm.

Another good recommendation for young professionals would be the Canning Circus area of the city, which has lots of new apartments at affordable prices, is a five minute walk from the centre and is surrounded by good restaurants and pubs. Linking up with other Fast Streamers is a good idea - a large two person flat in Canning Circus will typically set you back £650 pcm.

| Things to do

The Victoria Centre offers most high street stores under one roof and other areas of the city are famous for their excellent vintage and art shops, which are always worth a browse.

Nottingham is famous for the arts and there are a number of galleries that are free to the public- the Nottingham Contemporary is of particular note. The

Theatre Royal and Royal Concert Hall provide plays, comedy and musical entertainment and the Broadway cinema shows alternative films if the IMAX at the Cornerhouse isn't to your taste.

There is also the Capital FM Arena in the Lace Market, which, as well as hosting most major musical guests, also doubles as the National Ice Centre. Ice hockey is popular in Nottingham, with huge crowds turning up to the University Varsity competitions and the Nottingham Panthers team games. There are both men's and women's recreational Ice Hockey teams that welcome beginner players.



In terms of tourist attractions, a visit to Nottingham Castle, Wollaton Hall (Wayne Manor in The Dark Night Rises, and also has lots of friendly deer) and Sherwood Forest are highly recommended. The Nottingham Caves are a must see, and for a fun afternoon the Galleries of Justice tour is highly recommended! The Peak District is also nearby for some scenic exploration. An all-day zigzag ticket on [Trent Barton](#) buses will allow you to travel to scenic villages and towns such as Matlock, Bakewell and Belper.

In addition, the Alton Towers themepark is accessible by coach from the Broadmarsh bus station in Nottingham city centre.

| Food and Drink

Nottingham has an abundance of good restaurants and cafes, from every chain imaginable to boutique coffee shops and independent high end restaurants in the beautiful Lace Market area of the city centre.



Civil Service HR Fast Stream

Lee Rosy in the vintage district of Broad Street is the best place to enjoy tea or coffee (and of course wifi).

Some great independent restaurants in the city centre include Kerala, a locally famous South Indian restaurant; Red Hot, a buffet style restaurant that serves food from a range of countries, and which also has onsite minigolf; and The Larder in Hockley, probably the most exclusive restaurant in Nottingham, famous for its excellent steaks.

There's an excellent range of nightlife available, and prices are kept down by the student presence. There's the famous Rock City which frequently hosts major bands, the likes of Oceana and Rescue Rooms for decent nights out and the Bodega for a more indie crowd. There are normally free gigs at the new Rough Trade record store to check out too. There are countless bars and pubs can be found in the city centre- from quirky cocktail bars such as Boilermaker in the Hockley area, to Pitcher&Piano set inside a beautiful converted church, to the Ye Olde Trip to Jerusalem Inn, the oldest pub in the UK, which is a must-visit!



Ye Olde Trip to Jerusalem

| Transport

Rail: As a well-connected 'hub' for transport, National Rail connections to the rest of the UK are accessible from the centrally located Nottingham train station. Both London and Manchester can be reached in under two hours, direct, which is useful for both business and leisure.. Sheffield is also around an hour away.

In addition, East Midlands Airport is a 10 minute train journey from Nottingham train station.

Nottingham

Buses/taxis: Nottingham City Transport (NCT) provides award-winning public transport services. Buses are regular and extremely reliable and there are also trams that run from the train station to most corners of the city and beyond. Weekly and monthly passes are available for those who use their services to commute into work - monthly passes are around £45. More information can be found on the [NCT website](#).

Driving: The excellent public transport links mean that a car is not necessary, although you may prefer to drive if you wish to venture further afield. A word of caution, parking in the city centre and surrounding areas is fairly scarce and can be expensive. For these reasons, many also choose to cycle to work. If this is an option you'd like to consider it is worth checking whether your Department supports any schemes that might get you a discount on a new bike.

| Civil Service Community

HMRC has the large Castle Meadow campus, located near Nottingham train station and this is home to thousands of civil servants. There are also DWP offices located in Nottingham.

In terms of Fast Stream networking, there will be several Fast Streamers in post in Nottingham at any one time, as well as wider Midlands meets that tend to occur bi-monthly in Birmingham, to give the opportunity to meet more people. As well as other Fast Streamers, graduates on HMRC's Tax Professional Development Programme are often based in Nottingham too, if you wish to meet others who are on a different development scheme.

| Useful Links

<http://www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/> - Contains lots of practical information.

<http://www.experiencenottinghamshire.com/> - Use this to find suggestions on weekend and leisure activities.



Birmingham

The second largest city in the UK, Birmingham is known and loved for its fantastic shopping, food festivals and culture. With six universities and a thriving population of professionals, Birmingham is an exciting and vibrant place to live and work.

Housing

With a healthy mix of families, students and young professionals, there's a lot of choice in Birmingham and the rental market moves pretty quickly. Most places remain advertised for 3-4 weeks, although properties handled by agencies tend to close a little faster.

Rental prices are reasonable, with £350pcm being the average price for a room in a shared house in a nice part of town, rising to around £700 pcm for a 1 bedroom flat in the city centre. Popular areas include Harborne, Moseley, Edgbaston, the Jewellery Quarter and the city centre. The first three have large, shared houses whilst JQ and city centre contain mainly flats. For those looking for a bargain, areas such as King's Heath, Bearwood and Ladywood can throw up some good deals. For those wanting to get away from it all, outlying districts such as Sutton Coldfield, Solihull, and Kings Norton are popular and enjoy good train links into the centre.

In addition to the usual flat hunting websites (spareroom is very active in Birmingham), local agents such as Robert Oulsnam and Belvoir can help you widen the search. There is also a housing group called GradCom in the city - highly recommended for young professionals looking to create an instant network of people in the same boat. Find them on facebook, spareroom or their [website](#).

Things to do

Cadbury World in Bourneville offers a self-guided tour of the story of Cadbury in Birmingham, there's also the world's biggest Cadbury shop and the Cadbury café on site if you don't fancy visiting the attraction in its entirety. Alton Towers is a short car journey from Birmingham and there are often promotional discount vouchers for the theme park.

There's a fantastic range of museums and art galleries in the city; the main one is on Victoria Square at the top of New Street and admission is free

apart from some specific exhibitions. For theatre, try the New Alexandra, the Hippodrome, or the Birmingham Royal Ballet. For comedy- head to the Glee Club in town, or the Midlands Arts Centre in Cannon Hill Park.

There are plenty of gyms around the city- including easygym, Pure Gym and The Gym, offering rolling contracts under £20 a month and 24 hour access. There are also some more niche activities, like hot yoga (try yoga haven near Snow Hill) and Hula Hooping classes, along with the more traditional amateur football, rugby and netball clubs.



The Bullring

The Bullring offers the best shopping in Birmingham with an impressive Selfridges and the usual high street brands. An hour's train travel from Birmingham is Bicester Outlet Mall, which has a range of designer stores at a reduced price – perfect for a spot of retail therapy!

Laid over the top of New Street station is the new Gradn Cetnral shopping centre, here you'll find shops from the higher end of the high street as well as the huge John Lewis. It connects to the Bullring through a elevated corrdior.

During Christmas the largest outdoor Christmas Market in Britain comes to Birmingham. It's lovely in the evening as they have live bands, mulled wine and hot food to warm you up.

There are a range of music venues, from little bars right up to the NEC and NIA arenas. They bring in a range of acts, and there's always an exhibition or big music name on at the NEC.



Birmingham

expensive and as large parts of the city are pedestrianized, driving can actually be more difficult.

Cycling/Walking: Whilst Birmingham is a relative flat city equipped with good quality roads, cycling hasn't taken off here in the way it has in places like Bristol or London. Due to this, there aren't many cycle lanes and most people tend to stick to public transport. However, there is a local initiative to get more people cycling, read more [here](#).

Air: Birmingham International is a 10 minute train journey from New Street and can take you to many domestic and international destinations.

| Civil Service Community

There are plenty of public sector grads in the area ranging across different schemes (NHS, HR Fast Stream and a selection of other Civil Service Fast Streams) and departments, we tend to meet once a month for dinner and drinks, so come and say hello! You can also attend social events run by the West Midlands Fast Stream group; the most up to date contact information can be found on One HR.

| Useful Links

For information about the independent shops, bars and cafes (as well as a discount card for them all) <http://independent-birmingham.co.uk/>

Gives lots of ideas on where to visit and what to do while living in Birmingham <http://visitbirmingham.com/>

Gives lots of practical information on living in Birmingham, from council tax bands to leisure centre facilities available <http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/>

Grad Com: <http://gradcommunity.com/household/vacancies>

| Food and Drink

Birmingham is brilliant for food and drink, a few favourites are: Lost and Found, Jekyll and Hyde, Marco Pierre White in The Cube, Lassan, The Mail Box and China Town. There's also an abundance of the regular chain restaurants like Pizza Express, Ask, Wagamama and Carluccio's.

Broad Street and Brindley Place are the main nightlife areas for Birmingham but they can get very busy at the weekend with tourists though, so it's nice to head to the Arcadian, Harborne or the Jewellery Quarter for a more authentically Birmingham night out.

'New' Snobs (now more than 2 years old) is almost on top of New Street station, a great night for all types of music but head to the ground floor to relive angst teenage music.

| Transport

Rail: There are three main train stations in Birmingham: Birmingham New Street, Birmingham Moor Street and Birmingham Snow Hill. New Street is the larger station which most national services link with. Moor Street and Snow Hill offer good value but the trains are often slower than their New Street counterparts. All three stations are situated close to each other and offer easy access to the city centre. There are other small stations around the city which offer local connections such as Five Ways, University, Solihull and Erdington. A train to London Euston can take as little as 75 minutes, with surprisingly cheap tickets available, particularly at weekends.

Bus: Most buses for the City Centre terminate at the Moor Street Interchange or Colmore Row. They are reliable and frequent, with lots of people in Birmingham using them to get around. Tickets can be purchased on the bus with a flat rate all-day ticket costing £4.40. Beware though that the buses do not give change! Monthly passes can be purchased online for around £52.00.

Driving/taxis: Generally, private cars in Birmingham are a luxury. The public transport is excellent, and with Uber recently branching out to Birmingham the taxi service has vastly improved. Furthermore, if you work in the city centre parking can be challenging and



Telford

Telford is a town in the Telford & Wrekin district, and is one of the UK's fastest growing and most successful new towns, particularly with its numerous high tech businesses. It's surrounded by beautiful countryside and is just a stone's throw away from Shrewsbury and Birmingham.

| Housing

Telford has a range of housing available for rent. There are studios, flats and houses, as well as shared professional housing. Telford has many lovely areas to live in depending on what you are looking for. Priorslee is possibly the most sought after area in central Telford, surrounding a beautiful lake. Alternatively, there is the nearby village of St George's which is just down the road and provides a range of accommodation at lower prices.

The prices for housing are dependent on the area. Approximate prices for renting in Telford rarely exceed £700 for a 3 bedroom town house in the most sought after areas but you can get a room for as low as £300 in shared accommodation.

There are always new properties appearing for rent and sale in the Telford area so don't feel you need to settle for the first property you see. Furthermore, be it the new Asda multi-store in Telford Central or the local Co-ops, Aldi and corner shops in Priorslee and St George's wherever you chose to live you are never more than a 5 minute walk from a convenience store.



Ironbridge

If you have access to a car you may also want to consider the nearby historic village of Ironbridge. This is only a short drive from Telford, but does not have a train station or regular (commutable) public transport, so driving really is a must.

| Things to do

Following a large scale redevelopment of Telford, it now offers a range of activities with a large shopping centre, 2 cinemas (1 IMAX), an ice skating rink, Telford Ski centre and the indoor conference centre which hosts an annual comic-con.



There are several gyms, swimming pools and golf courses in and around Telford. If walking is more your thing, then the Wrekin is a great walk and on a clear day provides a beautiful view of the vast Shropshire countryside. There is also a beautiful town park.

The Ironbridge museums provide a great day out for anyone with an interest in history and culture and also promote numerous national walking trails. There are ten museums you can visit including the Ironbridge and Blists Hill Victorian village, and a ticket to access all ten museums for an entire year will only cost you £25.16. One of the ten is the Ironbridge Gorge which is one of only a handful of places across the UK to be awarded UNESCO World Heritage status.

Just a short drive or 10 minute train drive away is the Cosford RAF Air Museum, one of only two in the UK, which provides a great day out for all ages. RAF Cosford also hosts an annual air show which includes air displays from aircraft across the world and the Red Arrows air display team.

As well as all this, you are only a train journey away from the bustling city of Birmingham with plenty of attractions including Cadbury World in nearby Bourneville!



| Food and Drink

There are lots of good pubs in Telford, including several real ale options. For those who prefer clubs to pubs, Birmingham and its bustling nightlife is not too far away. Although travelling back in the early hours is not that easy, there are plenty of cheap hotels in the Birmingham area.

Telford offers various eateries ranging from your quintessentially British pub, to chains such as Nando's, Bella Italia and Pizza Express to independent restaurants, there really is something to satisfy even the fussiest of eaters.

| Transport

Rail: Telford is served by three train stations: Oakengates, Telford Central and Wellington. The main station is Telford Central and a direct train can get you into Birmingham in just 38 minutes. Virgin Trains have recently opened a direct line from Telford to London Euston, which means it only takes 2 hours 15 minutes to get from Telford to Central London. This train link also gives you easy access to Birmingham International Airport, Shrewsbury and the west coast of England and Wales.

Bus: Telford has a bus station with a variety of connections to the local area and close-by cities including Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury. Arriva Midlands runs the main services, and the Saver ticket range allows you to travel round the Telford area for £4.20 a day or £17 per week.

Driving: For drivers there are many car parks available in the town centre (at a cost) and there are also park and ride options. The motorway network is also easy to access via the M54.

Cycling/Walking: Due to the recent redevelopment of Telford, the town centre and surrounding areas are supported by numerous cycle and foot paths. This redevelopment is due to expand across the surrounding areas of Telford providing more cycle and foot paths. It is already possible to reach the town centre and rail station from Priorslee and St George's using cycle and foot paths. There are various secure places to safely lock your bike with many offering free tyre pumps.



Shrewsbury Flower Show

| Civil Service Community

There is a large CS community in Telford with VOA offices based here along with offices for HMRC, DWP and Ministry of Justice, which consists of the large law courts connected to the police station.

Furthermore, Telford is in easy commutable distance to a larger community of Fast Streamers and Civil Servants in Birmingham. The local Fast Streamer group is the West Midlands Fast Streamers, who meet regularly for social events. One HR will have the most recent contact information to find out more.

| Useful Links

Practical information on living in Telford:
<http://www.telford.gov.uk/>

Visiting Telford:
<http://visitironbridge.co.uk/telford-town>

Ironbridge Website:
<http://www.ironbridge.org.uk/>

About the RAF Museum:
<http://www.rafmuseum.org.uk/cosford/>