

REBECCA RECOMMENDS

Inspirational destinations & properties of excellence



Chester catapulted into the international spotlight when HRH The Queen of England and Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, made their first official visit together to open the new Storyhouse Theatre. It was a triumph for the city. Photo: Storyhouse Theatre.

The Undiscovered Pleasures of Northern England & Wales

Dear Friends,

I love to find that perfect, unexpected gift for a friend – that very item they never even knew they wanted, but immediately fell in love with. This same sentiment rings true when I can suggest a new and out-of-way destination for traveling acquaintances. Opening up one’s eyes to a region they may never have considered and then listening to them wax poetic about its wonders upon their return ... it’s so gratifying.

For me, The North of England and Wales are just such regions. Your clients may not inquire for them on their own, but they are rich in activities and natural beauty. They offer great value, and they are easily accessible through Manchester Airport. Travelers can bypass the crowds at Heathrow and may even find it easier to redeem those frequent flyer miles.

I grew up visiting [Bodysgallen Hall](#) for Sunday lunch with my family when we lived in Chester, and later when we moved to North Wales. Many of my richest childhood memories were formed in this countryside. We explored Conwy Castle (the first castle I ever visited), hiked in Snowdonia National Park, wandered through quaint Welsh villages, dined in sleepy pubs and shopped for local pottery. I still have an obsession with locally made bowls and mugs from the region.

We would love to put you in touch with the teams at [Oddfellows](#), [Historic House Hotels](#) and [Original Travel UK](#) to assist you in curating the perfect Wales and North of England trips for your clients. Then, you, too, will be able to sit back and enjoy their surprised joy when they return and share their stories with you.

Fondly,

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Oddfellows Chester hosted members of the press during the Royal visit, which was a big boost for Chester.

Chester (and Oddfellows) Welcome The Queen and Meghan, Duchess of Sussex

On June 14th, the beautiful medieval rows of Chester were lined with crowds, waving Union Jacks, in hopes of catching a glimpse of The Queen and Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, in their first official engagement together. It was no surprise that the monarch and her new granddaughter-in-law chose Cheshire to visit. It's one of Britain's most affluent counties, boasting beautiful rolling countryside, picturesque villages and its crown jewel, the historic city of Chester. [Oddfellows Chester](#) enjoyed being part of the celebrations, with a cohort from Buckingham Palace and many in the press choosing the hotel's quirky, eccentric British interiors as the perfect place to stay whilst in the city.

The gorgeous Georgian boutique hotel itself has aristocratic connections as its original owner, Lady Mary Calverley, had it built in 1676 to keep up with her fashionable neighbors in the city. Nowadays guests can choose to sleep in the Lady Mary's Loft, with its two rooftop bathtubs and a bedroom the hotel likes to suppose she may have laid her head.

Local and seasonal Cheshire produce abounds in this hotel, including such British and royal favorites as Chef Elliot Hill's take on the classic celebratory dessert, jelly and ice cream, served with elderflower, strawberry, gin and tonic.



The Roman city of Chester sits on the borders of Wales and offers access to the stunning [Snowdonia National Park](#), home to Mount Snowdon and myriad adventure sports. Wales' castles are amazing to see, in particular, Chirk Castle, which is the only one of Edward I's Marcher fortresses still inhabited today. The area of the castle with the most visually original features is the West Range, where visitors can still explore the Adam Tower, complete with its two-level dungeons, medieval garderobes (toilets) and murder holes.



Oddfellows on the Park is a luxury hotel in a Victorian mansion, a short distance from Manchester.

Oddfellows On The Park: Victorian Charm Meets English Countryside

Sister property [Oddfellows On The Park](#) is set in 120 acres of public parkland just close enough to Manchester for sightseeing, yet pleasingly bucolic. Just as quirky and eccentric as its Chester counterpart, this hotel is designed to reflect its Victorian Gothic history. From The Galloping Major restaurant, which sits in the Hall's ballroom (one of the first sprung ballrooms in the UK) to [Tower Suite](#), a split-level bedroom and sitting room that sits in the Hall's tower, every setting in Oddfellows gives you a sense of history and English grandeur.

The rolling greens of parkland offer a lovely chance to enjoy the British greenery – play croquet on the lawn, explore on one of the hotel’s complimentary vintage-style bicycles or book a picnic hamper and blanket packed with afternoon tea and while away the hours cloud-gazing. Further relaxation can be found in the hotel’s petite salon, [The Pigsty](#), where massages, facials, manicures and pedicures can be topped off with a trip to the rasul mudroom.

Take the short trip into central Manchester where art galleries, theaters and museums are plenty and excellent. Enjoy the city’s historic Chinatown and shop ‘til you drop at one of the UK’s best shopping destinations. Explore the famed football rounds of Manchester United and Manchester City, perhaps taking in a match. (Premier League matches get underway August 10th.)

Use Manchester as a gateway to explore the countryside, with easy access (90 miles) to the [Lake District National Park](#), where lakes and mountains offer amazing outdoor experiences. Even closer is the [Peak District](#), a beautiful part of central England with dramatic gritstone ridges, limestone valleys and moorland. A day out in the Peak District could include Chatsworth House, a stately home that has been home to the Cavendish family since 1549 and is the seat of the Duke of Devonshire.



Marking the eastern entrance to Chester's Roman fortress, Eastgate Clock is among the most famous timepieces in the country.

Original Travel UK: Top-Rated Activities & Special Itineraries

The North of England and Wales are seriously underrated regions of the UK, according to our friends at [Original Travel UK](#), and any clients looking for a trip with a difference should look no further. The North of England boasts some of the most historic areas of Britain. George VI famously called York “the history of England” and whilst this may be taking things slightly too far, the city is steeped in 2,000 years of rich history. York Minster and the medieval snickleways (small streets to you and me) are well worth a visit. Further North is Hadrian’s Wall. With Roman forts, barracks and belongings, it is a fascinating look into the Roman Empire as well as the border between England and Scotland.

The Lake District’s spectacular scenery has been crystallized in poetry and paintings, not to mention children’s books. Original Travel UK’s local guides can show you the best of Beatrix Potter, Wordsworth and take you on family-friendly walks to the home of Gingerbread Grasmere.

The country of Wales is smaller than Massachusetts, but is filled with history and castles galore. It’s also an up-and-coming destination for activities, and Original Travel UK can assist with everything from surfing lessons and hiking guides to trampolining in an old underground quarry. Northern Wales boasts some beautifully rugged scenery, mainly in Snowdonia National Park. For more details, we suggest that you take the time to check out Original Travel UK’s [North Wales & Chester Itinerary](#).



Bodysgallen Hall's long and interesting past dates to the 13th century, when it is believed to have begun as a watchtower to Conwy Castle.

Bodysgallen Hall & Spa: Historic Comfort in the Heart of Wales

Historic House Hotels consists of three magnificent properties – [Bodysgallen Hall](#) in Wales, [Middlethorpe Hall](#) near York, and [Hartwell House & Spa](#) in Buckinghamshire – all gifted to the National Trust ten years ago. To celebrate, Bodysgallen Hall is offering intimate tours (limited to eight) of the house and grounds which are followed by a luncheon on four Wednesdays: October 31st as well as November 7th, 14th and 21st.

Bodysgallen Hall is the perfect place to spend time and restore energy, whether exploring the gardens on its 200 acres, enjoying the comforts of this historic house, or venturing out along the coast and into the heart of North Wales. How can one resist so many places designated “areas of outstanding beauty” and the view from atop Snowdon taking in magical Llyn Llydaw lake, named as the UK’s best sight.

Snowdon is, in fact, one of the legendary locations reputedly linked to King Arthur, his sword Excalibur and the Lady of the Lake. There are a number of ways to get to the top, from vigorous hikes to the [Snowdon Mountain Railway](#), delivering travelers to the summit since 1896. Your clients’ interest may also be sparked by the Conwy Food Festival in October, the Welsh National Opera at Venue Cymru or the Llandudno Christmas Fayre.



Middlethorpe Hall is a country house hotel near York featuring a spa, fine dining and elegant rooms and suites.

Middlethorpe Hall & Spa: The Perfect Base for Exploring York

Another great addition to any trip to Wales and Northern England would be a few days at [Middlethorpe Hall](#) to explore the medieval city of York and the surrounding countryside. Just ten minutes from York, Middlethorpe Hall is a bit younger than Bodysgallen, but equally proud of its history. The home was built for Thomas Barlow, a prosperous master cutler who bought the estate in 1698 as a bid to establish himself as a country gentleman, a familiar pattern in English life.

The country house interiors look like the set of Downton Abbey, with huge roaring fires and drawing rooms where you can enjoy afternoon tea or a pre-dinner tippie. Guests love to walk around the walled garden and sheltered woodland area of parkland, and admire Middlethorpe’s collection of historic trees.

Even though the property is set on 20 acres of country land, it's just two miles from York's city center and the fabulous McArthur Glenn outlet shopping. [Other things to do near Middlethorpe Hall](#) include a visit to the JORVIK Viking Center, The York Castle Museum (which includes a reconstructed Victorian street), York Railway Museum (with a collection of more than 100 locomotives) and many historic homes and gardens, including Castle Howard, where *Brideshead, Revisited* was filmed.

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