# Explore West Yorkshire

Media Pack 2026/27

Bradford
Calderdale
Kirklees
Leeds
Wakefield
























West Yorkshire sits on the Pennines, where upland moorland drops into steep textile valleys and major cities. Leeds, Bradford and Wakefield lie within 40 miles of UNESCO World Heritage at Saltaire and the South Pennines National Landscape. West Yorkshire's well-known neighbours are the North York Moors, Lake District and the rolling Yorkshire Dales.

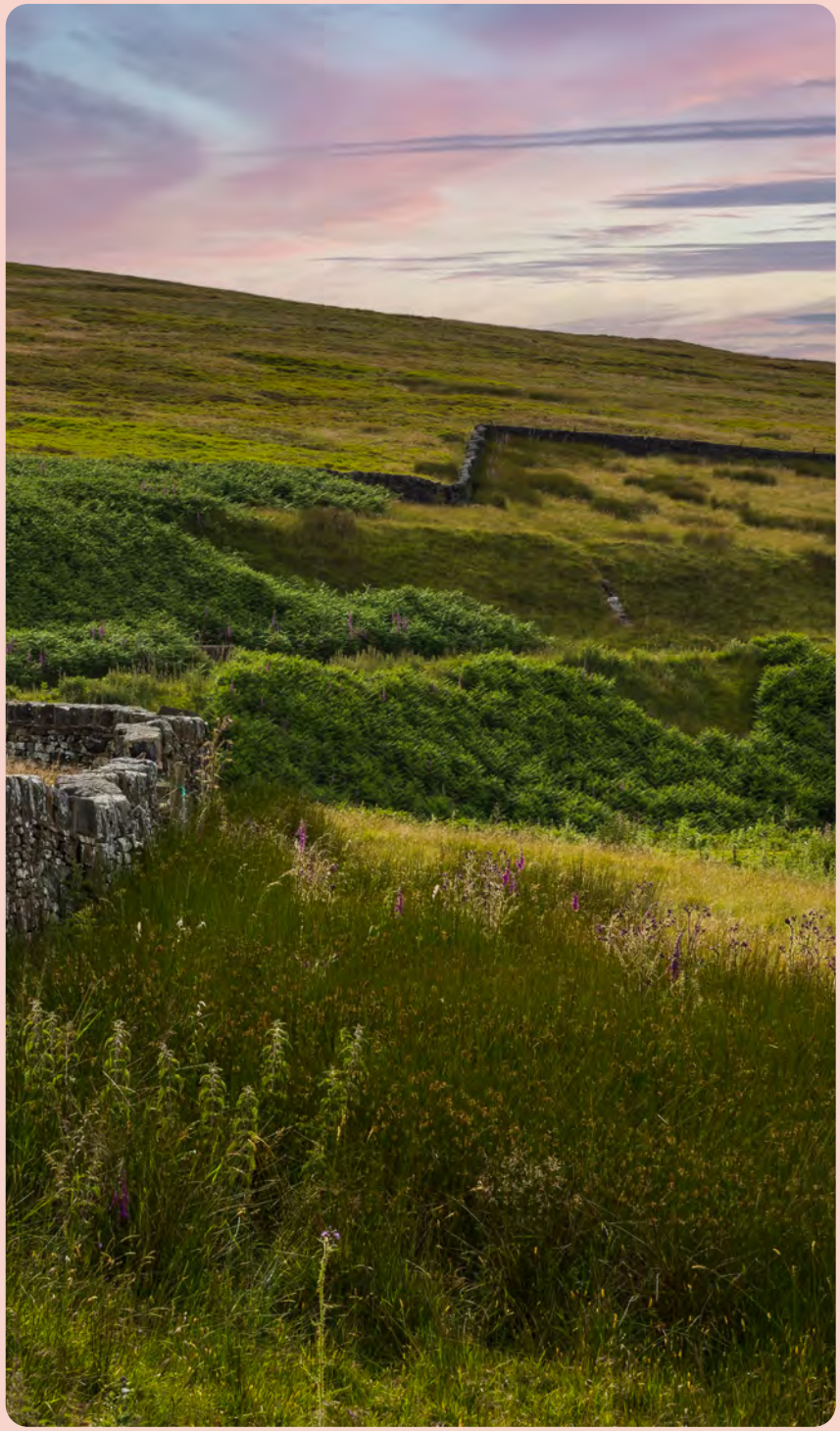
In West Yorkshire, a county made up of Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield, the Pennines shape not only the view, but the experience: moorland walks in the morning, live music in a former textile mill by evening, with industrial and Victorian architecture repurposed for contemporary culture, cafes and venues.

Image credits from left to right: JMA, Yorkshire Frontiers, Lizzie Coombes, James Mulkeen, Carl Milner, English Cricket Board, Opera North – Tristram Kenton, Visit Bradford, Tom Martin, Tom Arber, Run for All, Yorkshire Sculpture Park







Calderdale c. James Mulkeen

# Setting the Scene

The geography is immediately visible. Towns like Halifax, Hebden Bridge, Todmorden and Huddersfield; Ilkley, Otley and Wetherby – that powered the textiles industry, developed along narrow river valleys shaped respectively by the Rivers Calder and Wharfe. Streets climb sharply from valleys; Pennine reservoirs sit above towns and villages. Alongside this epic landscape sit distinctly different cities – Leeds, home to Opera North and Northern Ballet; Bradford, the world's first UNESCO City of Film; and Wakefield, an international centre for contemporary sculpture.

Despite its rugged topography, West Yorkshire is highly accessible.

From Manchester, Todmorden can be reached in around 25 minutes by train, Huddersfield in under 30 and Halifax in around 45. Leeds, Bradford and Wakefield are around two hours from London and Edinburgh.

**West Yorkshire - where you'll find the world's first UNESCO City of Film, the largest sculpture park in Europe and the home of the 'first modern lesbian'**




Royal Armouries c. Abner Pereria

# Only in West Yorkshire

West Yorkshire welcomes the world to visit the only Peace Museum in the UK; heritage trailblazers to take a trip on Shipley Glen Cable Tramway, Britain's oldest working cable-hauled funicular; serious contemporary music connoisseurs to Huddersfield for the UK's largest international festival of new and experimental music and history buffs to the national museum of arms and armour, the Royal Armouries.

Wakefield is recognised as the only location outside London to host two winners of the prestigious Art Fund Museum of the Year award: The Hepworth Wakefield (winner in 2017) and Yorkshire Sculpture Park (winner in 2014).

West Yorkshire is the only place in the world where you can watch – or take part in – the World Coal Carrying Championship (Wakefield). Television's Gladiator 'Fury' (AKA Dewsbury's own Jodie Ounsley) is a previous competitor. It's the only place you can see the largest permanent collection of local lad David Hockney's art up close (Saltaire); explore the first nature reserve in the world to be recognised (Wakefield) and experience Europe's oldest Caribbean Carnival and parade (Leeds).

It's a county that is proud to celebrate the people (including the Brontës, Anne Lister, David Hockney) and places that have shaped its past, revelling in the distinctive attractions that continue to turn heads of new generations of travellers towards West Yorkshire.



Leeds Corn Exchange c. Cindy Williams

# City Pulse, Rural Soul

West Yorkshire's industrial heritage buzzes with a renewed energy from creative reinvention: **Leeds' Kirkgate Market** — birthplace of Marks & Spencer and one of Europe's largest covered markets, blend independent traditional traders with modern street food; Michelin-recognised and nationally acclaimed restaurants sit alongside emerging culinary talents; **Leeds West Indian Carnival** – Europe's oldest Caribbean carnival – fills the streets each summer; Huddersfield **Contemporary Music Festival** attracts international audiences and **Tileyard North** in Wakefield has become a major hub for music production and creative enterprise.

In 2025, Bradford's year as UK City of Culture placed the region firmly in the national spotlight, building on its status as the world's first **UNESCO City of Film** and the home of the **National Science and Media Museum.** International attention around new adaptations of *Wuthering Heights,* alongside the continuing appeal of *Gentleman Jack,* has returned focus to the place that shaped those stories.

**Base yourself in one of the region's cities and the Pennine moorland, valley towns and reservoir walks are within easy reach.**

# City Pulse, Rural Soul

Wool built West Yorkshire, at epic scale. Mills rose along valley floors, cloth halls were constructed for international trade, wealth was on display in the Victorian shopping arcades and entire settlements were shaped by production. That scale is the backdrop to the experience today.

**The Piece Hall** in Halifax – the only remaining Georgian cloth hall of its kind – now stages major live performances within its 18th-century courtyard. **Salts Mill** (galleries, restaurant & independent shopping all under one roof) operates inside a vast former textile mill at Saltaire, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. In Wakefield, **The Hepworth** stands on the River Calder, contemporary architecture set against historic waterways. Nearby, **Yorkshire Sculpture Park** brings large-scale contemporary sculpture into open Pennine landscape.

Alongside the monumental sit the unmistakably local: forced rhubarb grown in the Wakefield Rhubarb Triangle; the **World Coal Carrying Championship** in Gawthorpe; **rushbearing** traditions in Pennine towns; and **vineyards** climbing the hills above Holmfirth.

The Pennine backbone that once gave way to industry today supports a spine-tingling cultural scene that is big, bold and could only be West Yorkshire.



The Piece Hall c. Paul White Photography



c. Holmfirth Vineyards



Screen Yorkshire – not for use without permission

# Screen Star

From 1888 and the first ever moving pictures by Louis Le Prince in Leeds, to 2026 blockbuster *"Wuthering Heights"*, the world's FIRST UNESCO City of Film (Bradford – also home to Europe's first IMAX screen) and the location of the longest-running live action comedy series in the world (*Last of the Summer Wine*), this county has consistently played a starring role in TV programmes and films seen all over the world.

Film fans to West Yorkshire have their pick of locations to choose from. They can revisit old and new classic TV series including *Emmerdale* for a pint in the Woolpack; explore PS Catherine Cawood 's *Happy Valley* of Hebden Bridge; time travel to 1830s Halifax with Anne Lister in *Gentleman Jack* or rock out like the *Riot Women* ahead of series 2 coming soon!

The epic, sweeping and industrial West Yorkshire landscape is a major character in films too. Emerald Fennell's *"Wuthering Heights"* heightened emotions in the 'wild and windy moors' inspired by the hills around Haworth while *Brassed Off* starring Ewan McGregor – celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2026 – showed off the iconic Piece Hall and Wakefield's **National Coal Mining Museum** and last year, Stephen Graham's *The Goody Boy* shot in Leeds city centre and in the Yorkshire landscape. Locations such as Little Germany, Bradford and Saltaire regularly pop up as duplicates for historic locations in, for example, *The Crown, Peaky Blinders, The Railway Children* – and more recently, *The Choral.*

# Screen Star

There's plenty more in the trailers... 'Coming Soon' in 2026 will be the culmination of Netflix's *Heartstopper* series – filmed extensively in Leeds over July 2025; the first of the much anticipated new Narnia series, directed by Greta Gerwig (*Barbie, Little Women*), due for release in November and filmed in Bradford; Netflix's *Pride and Prejudice* starring Emma Corrin (*Deadpool & Wolverine, The Crown*) and Jack Lowden (*Slow Horses, Dunkirk*) which rumour has it will see Harewood House as Pemberley; and director Danny Boyle's (*28 Years Later, Slumdog Millionaire, Trainspotting*) upcoming *Ink* which was shot across Calderdale last year.

If set-jetting is the aim, then West Yorkshire is the go-to location in 2026.

**If West Yorkshire were a film star, its list of credits would surely make it one of the legends of the box office or small screen.**



Screen Yorkshire – not for use without permission.




The Hepworth c. JMA Photography

# Arts & Sculpture

**The Hepworth** Wakefield opened 15 years ago and cemented the region's reputation as a hotspot for sculpture. It holds the largest collection of Dame Barbara Hepworth's work and anchors a regional sculpture story that includes **Yorkshire Sculpture Park** [YSP], the **Henry Moore Institute** and Leeds Art Gallery – the Yorkshire Sculpture Triangle.

At YSP –the only place in the world to see Barbara Hepworth's *The Family of Man* in its entirety – visitors can explore around 100 permanent sculptures at this leading international centre for modern and contemporary sculpture. Set in 500 acres of glorious Yorkshire landscape (it's the largest sculpture park/outdoor gallery in Europe), the park features work from artists including Elisabeth Frink, Andy Goldsworthy, Antony Gormley, Damien Hirst and Jaume Plensa. The indoor galleries and temporary exhibitions programme (and excellent café) mean that a visit is worthwhile year-round, rain or shine. Both YSP and The Hepworth Wakefield also have exceptional gallery shops, where visitors can find original mementoes, including artists' editions, that can only be found here.

The acclaimed **Henry Moore Institute** in Leeds presents *Phantasmagoria: Folkloric Sculpture for the Digital Age* from May 2026 while next door at **Leeds Art Gallery** visitors can explore *The Anti-virus Sculptures*, an exhibition from artist Garth Evans, a central figure in the British sculpture scene for over 50 years.

# Arts & Sculpture

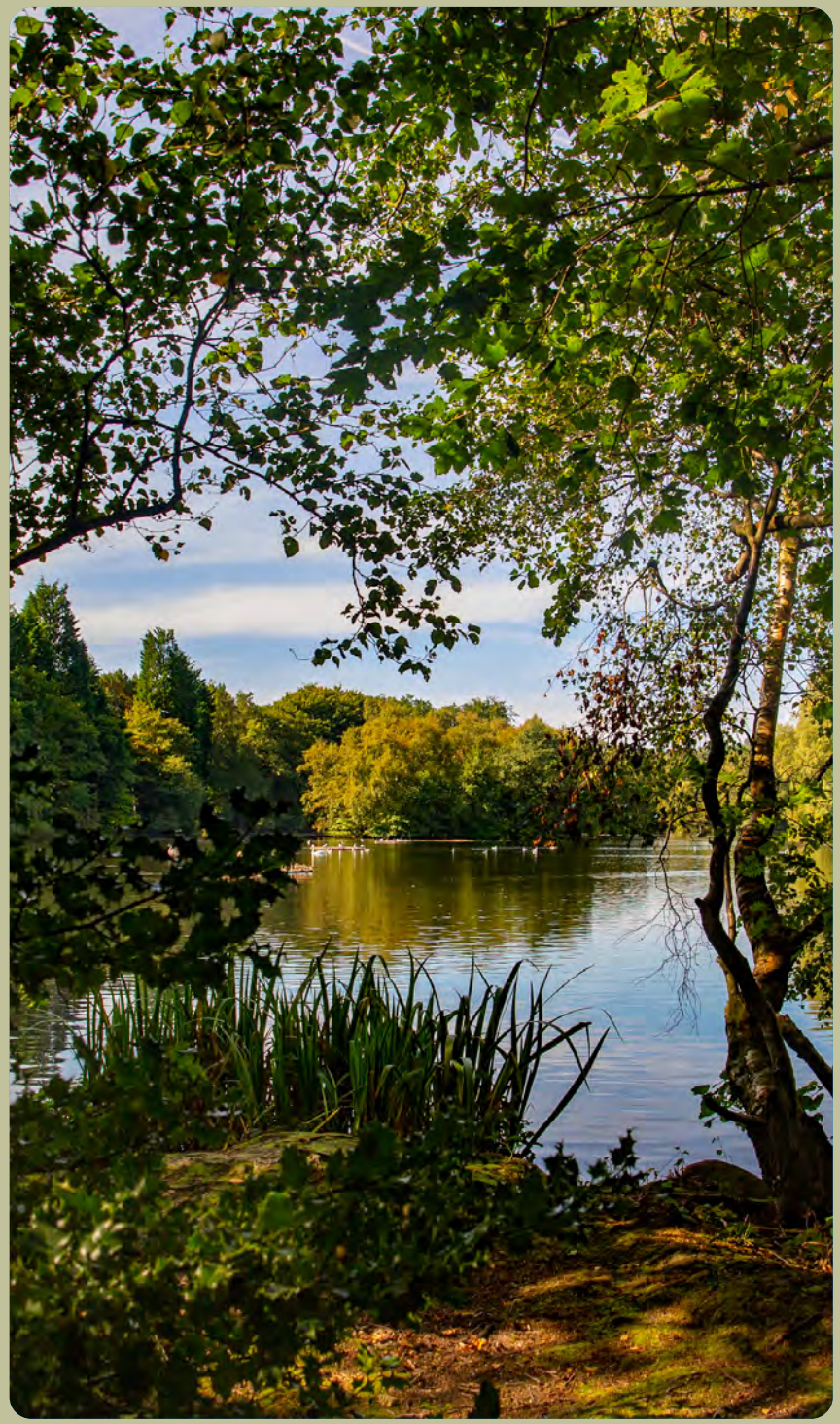
Across West Yorkshire, around 70 galleries and museums offer a treasure trove for the culturally curious through the county's collections of art, textiles, print and sculpture. **Cartwright Hall** in Bradford, fresh from welcoming over 79,000 visitors to the Turner Prize exhibition in 2025 is admired for its grandeur which extends to the grounds where visitors can enjoy a Mughal water garden and boating lake. Dedicated followers of fashion need to add Calderdale's **Bankfield Museum** to their bucket list for its textile and costume exhibitions – appropriately housed in a building previously owned by a local worsted fabric mill owner, and in Wakefield city centre, **The Art House** adds to this rich cultural landscape as a vibrant studio and exhibition hub that nurtures emerging and established artists, fostering grassroots creativity and strengthening West Yorkshire's contemporary arts scene.

Art turns heads in the streets too: murals in Wakefield, sculpture trails in Bradford and public art installations draw visitors down ginnels, under bridges, across University campuses (Leeds) and into unexpected corners of West Yorkshire's towns and cities. There's even a **street art app** in Leeds for self exploration!

Looking ahead to 2027, the UK's largest dedicated sculpture festival, Yorkshire Sculpture International (YSI), will take over the streets and galleries of Leeds and Wakefield in its much-anticipated second edition.




Cartwright Lister Park Bradford c. Visit Brandford



Penine Gateway National Nature Reserve c. St Ives Estate Bingley

# Outdoors

Handily, it's pretty easy to get to and from the towns and cities whether by steam train – or more conventional regular local bus and train services – offering the best of both worlds in one handy visit.

The landscapes here are epic, from the 5,000-acre **Marsden Moor** in the South Pennines – a Site of Special Scientific Interest to Ilkley and a moor made famous through its own song (possibly the actual anthem for Yorkshire) On **Ilkley Moor** bar t'at. Ilkley Moor is also just one part of the **Bradford Pennine Gateway National Nature Reserve,** recently named one of the seven wonders of the world for 2026 by CN Traveller. **Waterton Park** near Wakefield, thought to be the world's first nature reserve, is listed on Historic England's protected register of parks and gardens so another must visit.

**Stanza Stones,** a poetry trail created in 2012, has connected these two vast moors through a 47 mile trail, punctuated with atmospheric poems written by UK Poet Laureate (and Yorkshireman) Simon Armitage about mist, dew, puddles and snow, carved carefully into weatherbeaten stone. The route is equally enjoyable as individual short, family walks or as a whole over a long weekend.

**The soul of West Yorkshire can almost certainly be found in the moors and dales, trails and paths, canals and rivers that have shaped the county over thousands of years.**

# Outdoors

Industrial heritage cuts through the scenery. **The Spen Valley Greenway** follows a former railway line between Dewsbury and Bradford, now a gentle path for walkers and cyclists. Canals that once powered mills still thread across the county, from the Calder & Hebble Navigation to the Leeds & Liverpool Canal – complete with **Bingley Five Rise Locks** – where you can admire this feat of engineering by watching boats climb the steepest staircase locks on the longest canal in England.

The National Trust's **Hardcastle Crags** in Hebden Bridge is a spectacular wooded valley with 19th-century **Gibson Mill** at its heart; having no link to the national grid, the mill is unique in the UK and is the Trust's flagship sustainable building.

These landscapes have long been characters in their own right throughout literature and on screen — wild and "wuthering" on **Haworth Moor** for the Brontës, or atmospheric and cinematic, as recently seen in Sally Wainwright's BBC series Riot Women at community-owned nature reserve **Bridestones Moor.**

Those looking for their landscapes to be a bit more curated and with a café close by can't miss the **Yorkshire Sculpture Park,** found in the 500-acre, 18th-century **Bretton Hall** estate outside Wakefield.

**The 47-mile Stanza Stones poetry trail links moorland landscapes with poems by Poet Laureate Simon Armitage.**



Top Withens Haworth - Wuthering Heights



Whitelocks c. Proud Fox

# Food & Drink

Perhaps most well-known for the Rhubarb Triangle - an area between Wakefield, Leeds and Morley where forced rhubarb is grown by candlelight, Bradford's outstanding collection of curry restaurants and Leeds' growing reputation as an award-winning independent foodie hotspot, there's much more to get your teeth into.

The region has a distinctive food history, shaped by climate and agriculture, which continues to influence menus and recipes today. The traditionally soft water from the moors has historically lent itself to brewing – ales in particular – with one of the highest concentrations of independent breweries in the UK including **Ossett** (Wakefield); **Saltaire** (Bradford) and **Northern Monk, Kirkstall** (Leeds); each offering their own blends and brews, alongside tours and visitor experiences.

Not into beer? No problem. West Yorkshire is also home to the **highest vineyard in the UK** – Holmfirth – producing spectacular sparkling and white wines while **Forged Spirits** (Wakefield), **Speight's Gin** (Northowram) and **AB Gold** (Holmfirth) have plenty for gin and rum enthusiasts.

**Home to the famous Rhubarb Triangle and Bradford's acclaimed curry scene.**

**One of the UK's leading regions for independent breweries, plus vineyard and distillery experiences.**

# Food & Drink

In West Yorkshire, Michelin quality restaurants (Forde, Ox Club, Shibden Mill Inn, Norman's Neighbourhood Kitchen, Prashad, Engine Sowerby Bridge, Chef Jono at V&V, The Highland Laddie, The Box Tree) sit alongside street food markets (Darley Street, Kirkgate and Halifax to name just a few) and locally loved independents (Swine Bistro, Headingley; Coin, Hebden Bridge; Empire Café, Leeds; Iris, Wakefield; The International, Bradford; Bavette, Horsforth; The Hawthorn, Haworth) each regularly using quality Yorkshire produce to ensure dishes that are seasonal and sensationally tasty while also showing the outstanding diversity of the region.

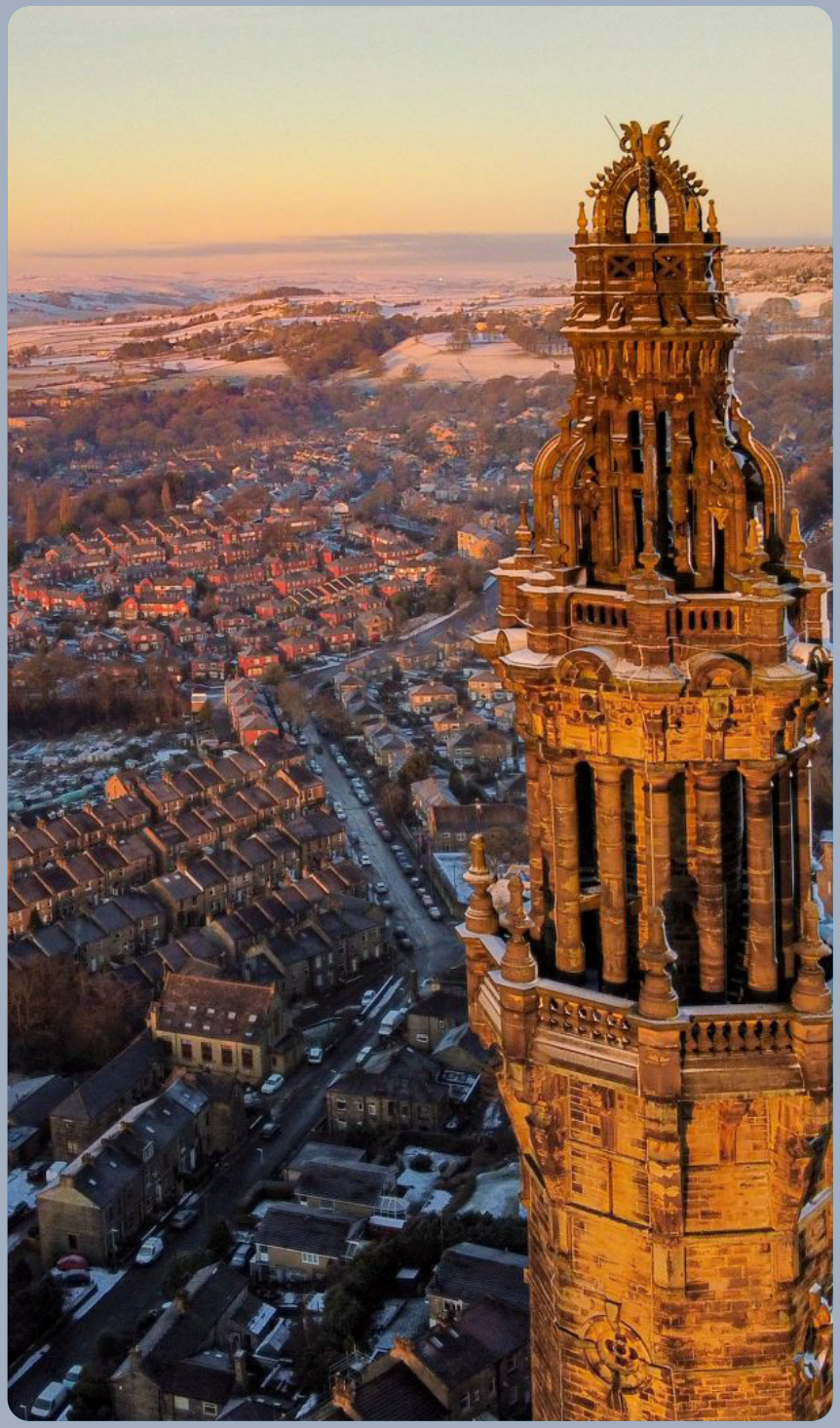
Satisfy that sweet tooth and top off any trip by popping into one of the growing number of independent and artisan bakeries across the region. From Doh'hut (award winning donuts – miso caramel flavour anyone?) and BAKE (a modern twist on nostalgic baked classics) from Tom Stafford and his team in Leeds to The Handmade Bakery nestled next to the canal in Slaithwaite and Polish bakery House of Bread (Shipley), there's always something worth stopping off for.

**Leeds crowned the best city in the UK for foodies outside of London. Darley Street Market named Best Food Market in the UK at the 2026 Great British Market Awards.**

**The international community growing movement started in Todmorden, Incredible Edible Todmorden.**



c. Tom Martin



Wainhouse Tower c. Yokrshire Fronteirs

# Industrial past, culturally kicking

When visitors walk through the gates of Halifax's **Piece Hall** – the only remaining Georgian cloth hall in the world – the scale still surprises. The vast, neo-classical square is now bordered by independent shops, with regular markets and exhibitions taking place, and was named Inspirational Venue of the Year for the headline summer concerts held in its courtyard. Newest kid on the venue block, **Tileyard North** (Wakefield), also welcomes big music names to its Grade II listed square in August for its first summer concert series.

In 2026, UNESCO World Heritage Site Saltaire marks 25 years since recognition for its remarkably intact 19th-century industrial village. Built 175 years ago for the workers of Sir Titus **Salt's mill,** it remains a major destination in its own right. The vast mill now houses galleries, cafés and one of the largest collections of David Hockney's work — the artist born just up the road in Bradford — alongside the UK's only **Peace Museum.**

Haworth village, known of course as the former home and resting place of (some of) the Brontës, is also possibly one of the most Instagrammed spots in the region, with views down the cobbles of Main Street captured by tourists year-round. For further literary pilgrimage – the historic hilltop village of Heptonstall is where visitors will find Sylvia Plath's grave.

# Industrial past, culturally kicking

Halifax doesn't stop at The Piece Hall. Nearby, **Dean Clough** – one of the UK's most significant mill complexes at 22 acres – has been reborn as a cluster of galleries, studios and cafés inside its Victorian brickwork.

Over in Farsley (West Leeds) **Sunnybank Mills** houses independent makers and workshops and now provides the backdrop for BBC's Great British Sewing Bee – a fitting afterlife for a former textile mill while **Leeds Corn Exchange,** the former grain merchants building with its iconic domed glass roof – possibly one of Leeds' most Instaworthy spots - has been THE place for independent shopping, food & drink since 1864.

**Standedge Tunnel** at Marsden remains the longest, highest and deepest canal tunnel in the UK, carrying the Huddersfield Narrow Canal beneath the Pennines and offering boat trips into the tunnel for visitors. In Halifax, **Wainhouse Tower** – considered the tallest folly in the world – reopened to climbers in March 2026, its 369 steps leading to sweeping views across Calderdale.



Calderdale Live c. Danny Payne

# 2026/2027
# Event Highlights

## October 2026

**Farmer Copleys Pumpkin Festival**
Until 1 November | Pontefract

**Leeds International Festival of Ideas**
6–10 October | Leeds City Centre

**Light Night Leeds**
28–29 October | Leeds City Centre

**Clay at the Cut Pottery and Ceramics Festival**
Date TBC | Kirklees

**Yorkshire Scare Grounds Halloween**
9 October – 1 November | Wakefield

**Ilkley Literature Festival**
2–18 October | Ilkley, Leeds

**Hold to this Earth**
Until 18 April 2027 | Yorkshire Sculpture Park

## November 2026

**Marc Chagall: The Circus / Ida Ekblad: WORLD'S LARGEST METAPHOR**
21 November 2026 – April 2027 | The Hepworth

**Leeds International Film Festival**
29 October-15 November | Leeds City Centre

**Celebrating Diwali**
1–13 November | East Riddlesden Hall

**Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival**
20–29 November | Huddersfield Town Centre

**Leeds Christmas Markets**
19 November-23 December | Leeds City Centre

**Light Up Festival**
21 November | National Coal Mining Museum

**Northern Lights Leeds**
20 November - 31 December | Temple Newsam

**Hold to this Earth**
Until 18 April 2027 | Yorkshire Sculpture Park

## December 2026

**25th Anniversary of Saltaire's UNESCO World Heritage Site Inscription**
13 December | Saltaire

**The BIG End of Year RETRO PARTY**
27 December | Tileyard North, Wakefield

**Northern Lights Leeds**
20 November - 31 December | Temple Newsam

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## January 2027

**How to Train Your Dragon in Concert**
23 January | Bradford Live

**Dirty Dancing**
26 January | The Alhambra Theatre, Bradford

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**Marc Chagall: The Circus / Ida Ekblad: WORLD'S LARGEST METAPHOR**
21 November 2026 – April 2027 | The Hepworth

## February 2027

**Rhubarb Festival**
19-21 February | Wakefield City Centre & WX Wakefield

**Hold to this Earth**
Until 18 April 2027 | Yorkshire Sculpture Park

**Marc Chagall: The Circus / Ida Ekblad: WORLD'S LARGEST METAPHOR**
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## March 2027

**World Coal Carrying Championships**
Easter Monday, 29 March | Gawthorpe

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## May 2027

**Metro Bank Men's One Day International: England V Pakistan**
21 May | Headingley Stadium, Leeds

**Rob Burrow Leeds Marathon, Relay & MND Mile**
9 May | Starts at Headingley Stadium, Leeds

**Sharing the West Yorkshire story starts here.**
For press enquiries, media requests or further information, please contact:
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