

GILLBERT'S



BIG

GUIDE

TO SUMMER

IN MCR

# HEY UP

Term time at university is too often all work and no play. This summer break, we want to help you make the most of the city with our whistle-stop MCR Summer Guide '26.

From top pubs and parks to budget friendly galleries, whether you're partying the night away or rambling through sun-warmed hillsides, there's a place for everyone here!

**EVENTS** **GET TO** **14** **KNOW**  
**JUNE** **3** **MANCHESTER**  
**5** **JULY** **18** **CREATE**  
**AUGUST** **7** **GREEN CITY** **20**  
**EAT, DRINK** **C** **22** **CUNTRYSIDE**  
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# JUNE EVENTS

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Huge events to catch in Manchester this month...

## FESTIVAL OF LIBRARIES

**10th - 14th June**

**Libraries of Greater Manchester**

Performances, exhibitions, and workshops celebrating Manchester's literary heritage. Free entry to most events at all 133 libraries.

## MOOVIN FESTIVAL

**12th - 14th June**

**Etherow Country Park, Stockport**

Stockport's hidden gem playing reggae, funk, house and soul music in a beautiful rural setting, grown from humble beginnings as a cow-barn party.

Last-minute tickets may be available.



## WORLD CUP 2026

**11th June - 17th July**

**532 Bar + Kitchen**

Catch the 2026 World Cup live, with England's first match kicking off on the 17th June at 9pm. Enjoy the atmosphere in the heart of campus with multiple screen coverage, plus matchday food and drink offers including:

**2.00 off 2-pint cups during every England match**

**Burgers from 6.00** (Served until 10pm during England games)

## GOBEFEST

**19th - 21st June**

**Cathedral Gardens**

Pan-European folk music, dance, storytelling and food from independent traders. Automatic free entry before 1pm all days and a new Pay What You Feel ticket option.

## PARKLIFE

**20th - 21st June**

**Heaton Park**

Manchester's biggest music festival brings top artists across hip hop, grime, pop, and electronic music. Limited tickets for both days still available.



# JULY EVENTS

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Top festivals and events you won't want to miss...

## SOUNDS OF THE CITY

**2nd - 12th July**

**Castlefield Bowl**

A Manchester music scene staple featuring acclaimed artists in an open-air, amphitheater-style venue, including The K's, Hacienda Classical, Wet Leg, The Streets and more.

## MCR INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

**3rd - 20th July**

**Aviva Studios**

The city's biennial cutting-edge arts festival returns with spectacular installations, performances, and music from artists worldwide. Various free events throughout the city.

## BEERS IN THE GARDEN

**17th – 19th July**

**Platt Fields Park**

Platt Fields Market Garden is celebrating their 6th festival of food, drink, live DJ sets and activities for all ages.



## OPEN CALL FESTIVAL

**18th - 19th July**

**Alexandra Park, Oldham**

Live performances, funfair rides, market stalls and plenty of food to go around for a suggested entry price of £1, with all proceeds going back to local charities.

## MCR CRAFT BREW FESTIVAL

**25th July**

**Manchester Academy**

Five hours of bottomless drinks and party madness, with breweries, street food and plenty of seating when you have tired out your dancing feet. All inclusive tickets, 18+ event.

## SPARKLE WEEKEND

**26th - 28th July**

**Sackville Gardens**

The world's largest free celebration of gender diversity, featuring live music, entertainment, wellness activities, talks and workshops. Open to all and family-friendly.



# AUGUST EVENTS

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Don't delay for these summer highlights...

## MANCHESTER MEGA MELA

**1st - 2nd August**  
**Platt Fields Park**

Celebrate South Asian culture with live music, dance, food, crafts and fairground rides from midday until 9pm this weekend at the free annual community festival.

## FOOD & DRINK FESTIVAL

**1st - 2nd August**  
**Heaton Park**

A feast in the park with food, drink, live music, roaming comedy acts, market stalls, and cooking demonstrations.

## MCR CARIBBEAN CARNIVAL

**8th - 9th August**  
**Alexandra Park**

The vibrant and Manchester Caribbean Carnival is a family friendly two-day event that celebrates community heritage and supports local income. Music, dancing, and brilliant food.



## MANCHESTER VILLAGE PRIDE

**28th - 31st August**  
**The Gay Village**

Newly reclaimed and run by LGBTQ+ community volunteers. This year's pride has taken a village to organise, intending to bring the celebration back to its roots. Take the bank holiday weekend to tour the village and find out what Manchester's queer scene is all about.

## BRITISH BMX CHAMPIONSHIPS

**28th - 30th August**  
**Platt Fields Park**

The culmination Britain's cycle racing calendar, right on the doorstep of Fallowfield campus and entirely free, this event will showcase top BMX talent from across the country.



# EAT, DRINK, CONNECT...

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From casual hangouts to special occasion spots, here are our top picks for summer 2026...

## 532 BAR + KITCHEN

Home base! Our SU venue, maybe drop in around graduation and watch your friends walk on the big screens with a great value drink in hand. The outdoor seating area is perfect for those sunny afternoons.

## MACKIE MAYOR

Choose the Northern Quarter food hall or the original venue in Altrincham and get the same vibrant local experience. The historic NQ market hall boasts a gorgeous glass ceiling to let in that summer sunlight, with seating on both floors. Here you can satisfy any craving with sweet or savoury, hot drinks and cocktails from a range of cuisines.



## SOCIAL REFUGE

A queer Ancoats gem, this joint bookshop-cafe-bar-event venue is the LGBTQ+ go-to for any time of day. Serving brunch until 4pm, and any drink any time of day, you can slide in for a friendly catch up with mates or head over for one of their quiz nights, book launches, theatrical performances or open mic evenings.

## MALA

This iconic eat and drink venue lends a sense of surreal escapism, offering a rustic, pop-up style structure amidst a forest of modernist concrete architecture. Each space has a different whimsical style, so choose your vibe then choose your visiting kitchen(s) of the day and order a selection to share. Pair that with an exquisitely cold cocktail and it can't get any better.

## MUGHLI CHARCOAL PIT

Tucked away on Curry Mile is the best street food and grill restaurant for Indian and Pakistani soul food in Manchester. Rustic and hearty dishes with some contemporary Manchester twists, and now almost 30 years going strong, this place never misses.



## FOUNDATION COFFEE HOUSE

Find this independent specialty coffee spot in various locations across Manchester city centre. Great for a quick coffee, a social brunch or somewhere vibrant to sit and study - but time it right, or you'll have to fight the crowds!

## RAMONA & THE FIREHOUSE

Detroit-style pizza, cocktails, and campfires - you will smell the pizza ovens and fire pits before you see this massive venue, converted from an old MOT garage. Stay late on a Friday evening and let Ginger Hunter entertain you with a night of drag, cabaret, comedy and burlesque at Lip Service.

## CHEF DIAO

Authentic, fresh, delicious, with new specials all the time, this Chinese Restaurants in the Northern Quarter has a scrumptious dim sum menu, understated but delicious mains and all the classic dishes you could want alongside. Humble and homemade, their specialty is flavour.



# DANCE THE NIGHT AWAY

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For something to get your heart pumping and hips swaying late at night, check out these great music venues around Manchester...

## THE BLUES KITCHEN

Filled with the sound of blues, soul and everything New Orleans, this music bar offers a fabulous atmosphere for drinks with friends. Food served in the afternoon, Happy Hour 5 - 7pm and free Friday night live sessions boasting RnB, afrobeats and hip hop, this spot offers a classy night out experience.

## SATAN'S HOLLOW

This venue is dedicated to lovers of rock, metal and alternative music, offering cheap drinks and a friendly crowd. Satan's Hollow offers a distinct atmosphere compared to other clubs in Gay Village, made for dancing the night away on the circular dancefloor surrounded by the music you love best, overlooked by a giant Satan statue.



## HIDDEN

Infamous for its summer courtyard parties and its warehouse-style basement club, this award-winning venue in Cheetham Hill boasts four whole rooms just for dancing, making it perfect for serious music heads and ravers. Too hot in there? It also has a spacious outdoor area which will make for just as good of a night out, but slightly less sweaty.

## XLR

An intimate venue with a unique BYOB model, this club encourages a new wave of club-goers to engage with grassroots talent without the financial burden associated with going out for the night. Found down in Withington on Wimslow Road, its the perfect accessible spot for a night out, skipping over the journey all the way into the city centre.

## VIA MANCHESTER

In the heart of Gay Village, this vibey cocktail spot is a must visit for students who want to get to know Canal Street a little bit better. Every weekend you can find new DJ sets, dancing and live music, with indoor and outdoor tables and bookable areas, perfect for a summer evening drink.



# GET TO KNOW MANCHESTER

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**Connect with the city you're living in and learn from the communities around you...**

## PEOPLE'S HISTORY MUSEUM

Learn the history of the city and country at the national museum of democracy. Tour the galleries to better understand key events in Manchester's past, from the Peterloo Massacre of 1819 to the present day political climate. Book to explore their incredible archive collection of political materials and learn how it continues to grow today.

## RACE ACROSS THE WORLD

Bringing the hit TV show to our front door, this team foot race makes the city your playground. Navigate landmarks, crack puzzles and discover hidden gems you'd never think to look for by exploring Manchester from a whole new gamified perspective.



## NQ WALKING TOUR

Get to know the iconic street art, independent local stores and historic landmarks in Manchester's most creative neighbourhood every Friday and Saturday at 2pm. Starting in Stevenson Square, this walking tour is a great introduction to this part of the city. Maybe next time you want to go even further afield?

Sign up for the Manchester City tour or a private tour.

## COMMUNITY GARDENS

Find your community at Platt Fields Market Garden, Forever Fields, Fallowfield Secret Garden, or one of the many community gardens dotted around the city. Connect with your neighbours, food, and nature by dirtying your hands out in the fresh air. Make a difference by supporting their farmers markets and food security programmes.



# FILL YOUR CULTURE QUOTA

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Entertain and delight your senses at Manchester's most beloved cultural venues - wonder at a performance, wander a gallery, or get hands-on with community projects...

## AVIVA STUDIOS

This landmark cultural venue presents Button Up! for summer 2026 - an immersive environment by Ai Weiwei, deconstructing Chinese and British relations in the last 200 years through art. The programme includes a 24-hour performance on July 3rd-4th. Students get 25% off tickets.

## HOME MANCHESTER

A vibrant hub for film, theatre, and visual art. This summer's programme includes international cinema showcases, open-air theatre on the terrace, and a new exhibition exploring climate futures through digital art.



## WHITWORTH ART GALLERY

Standing proud and beautiful in Whitworth Park, this award-winning gallery combines historic collections with cutting-edge contemporary art. Exhibitions cycle seasonally, so there's always something new to explore, completely for free.

## THE LOWRY

Salford's most well-known theatre destination offers a range of performances, including comedy, drama, dance, circus, and musical classics. Drop in to watch Gentleman Jack the Ballet, Six the Musical, or Swamplesque with friends and family over the break.

## MANCHESTER MUSEUM

This summer our favourite European Museum of the Year offers us a glimpse into Human Natures— how the complex balance between plants, animals and landscapes has evolved through history and how we may take action for the future. Open until 9pm every Wednesday and holding frequent student events, it is a flexible fit for busy schedules.



# CREATE SOMETHING

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**No better time than the present to contribute to the city's culture by getting creative and developing yourself...**

## CONTACT THEATRE

Contact puts on a range of hilarious, radical, satirical shows and community-led projects as a charity arts and theatre venue centering young creatives. Students are given the opportunity to pursue disciplines such as stage performance, music production, arts facilitation and more through their free training workshops.

## GRAYSTONE ACTION SPORTS

The best indoor skatepark Manchester has to offer with a lesson for every kind of action sport you could imagine starting from £10, you'll get cosy with the Salford skate community. If you feel a bit too protective of your health to launch yourself down the 9ft drop ramp, there is also a viewing gallery where you can order a glass of wine or delicious vegan milkshake.



## CULTUREWORD

Cultureword is a creative writing development organization that provides opportunities for new and aspiring writers to create, learn from one another and push their own limits. Based out of Bridge 5 Mill on the canal but with events around the city and workshops on every week, they are a great community to get involved with. Check out their podcast, zines, and independent publications archive!

## ODD TUNES

Folk music sessions usually every other Monday evening in the Salutation, but also found down at Platt Fields Market Garden, jamming at folk festivals and travelling around the Manchester folk scene. You can also follow UoM Folk & Ceilidh Society, Quailidh, Chimera, Queer as Folk, and Queer Roots Collective to find the space right for you.

## HACKSPACE

Looking for a community workshop? Into woodworking, metalworking, 3D printing, electronics, textiles and more? This volunteer run making studio in the city centre is cosy, supportive, and has a huge range of equipment for you to get trained on. Get a membership and get involved for less than £15 a month.



# GREEN CITY SPACES

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**Manchester's parks and green spaces come alive in summer. Here are some perfect spots to soak up the sun...**

## PLATT FIELDS PARK

This green oasis boasts a lake, sports facilities, and a community garden with volunteering, crafts, brilliant vegan treats, and the occasional market weekend. Wander far enough and stumble across the hidden Shakespearean garden, the Bike Hub in the old boathouse, and the Queen Elizabeth Coronation fountain.

## ALEXANDRA PARK

Perfect for picnicking, skating or a morning bite to eat, this 60-acre park offers rolling hills, community sports facilities and a massive geese-filled lake. Restored in 2014 by the council since being first opened to the public over 150 years ago, so much has taken place here, and so much is yet to come.



## FLETCHER MOSS BOTANICAL

A tranquil escape to admire wildlife in their natural habitat. The recently restored Alpine tea garden is open for summer, offering homemade cakes and drinks surrounded by beautiful, landscaped gardens and rockeries.

## HEATON PARK

Manchester's largest park boasts a boating lake, animal farm, woodlands, and the highest point in Greater Manchester. Pet goats, pigs and donkeys for free, and later in the year catch sight of the highland cows which roam the park seasonally.

## PEEL PARK

Recently revitalized with new walking trails and art installations, this historic park offers beautiful riverside views and quiet picnic spots away from the city bustle, filled to the brim with gorgeous seasonal flowers. Look out for the summer bandstand performances on Sunday afternoons and the medieval reenactors training across the water in The Meadow.



# COUNTRYSIDE SIGHTS TO SEE

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**A selection of beautiful destinations outside the city that are accessible by public transport and begging to be visited over summer...**

## BUXTON

The highest market town in England, some 1000 feet above sea level, this sweet little place is nestled in the Peak District, surrounded by the UK's oldest National Park. Only an hour on a direct train with plenty of walks to seek out and places like Pool Caverns, Solomon's Temple and Betty's Tea Room to check out, this is an easy win for anyone wanting a day in the countryside.

## MARPLE LOCKS

A spectacularly steep flight of sixteen canal locks on the Peak Forest Canal in Marple, down near Stockport. Nearby there is also the aqueduct, parks, museums, Chadkirk Chapel and the train station, not a stone's throw away. For this one you'll need a bus and a train, but it's still only an hour away from the university, and well worth the travel.



## LYME PARK

This magnificent National Trust house and estate can be found on the edge of the Peak District. If you have a membership for only £4 a month, entry to this location and all other sites is completely free, and well worth it. One of the few National Trust sites accessible by bus from Manchester, but be sure to time it right with the Skyline 199 so you don't get stranded.

## HEBDEN BRIDGE

A quaint little town has claimed the unlikely title of lesbian capital of Europe and has curated a community to match. Overflowing with thrifts, cute antique shops, and cafes, and holding markets Thursday - Sunday for various types of goods, this destination is a mere thirty minutes away on the train.

## QUARRY BANK MILL

Get the train down to Styal and find this gem nestled into the countryside. This National Trust site features a living, working cotton mill set in picturesque gardens with running water as their pleasing backing track. You can go for a tour, engage with the HistoryScope app to discover the history of the place, or follow the Pokemon TCG Mega Evolution Trail up until 6th September.



# WHERE TO GO ON A BUDGET

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**Find ways to enjoy Manchester without  
breaking the bank...**

## MANCHESTER ART GALLERY

Free public tours run every Thursday, Saturday and Sunday at 2-3pm from the info desk in the atrium, curated and led by volunteer guides. No two tours are the same, no booking needed.

## VICTORIA BATHS

Visit Victoria Baths every Tuesday between 11am-3pm for a nosy around this beautiful building, or visit the monthly Vintage Home Show. Catch the next one on 7 June for all your vintage furniture and knick-knack needs.



## CASTLEFIELD SKY GARDEN

National Trust's elevated urban park offers spectacular views, a lovely walk, and pop-up exhibitions throughout summer. Free entry, no need to book.

## VADA VADA

An independent, 100% accessible queer venue just opened on New Wakefield Street and is immediately blowing up. With DJ nights, open mics, craft markets and zine events, the calendar so far is chockablock!

Get yourself down in the daytime for a bite to eat or later on to check out the evening scene, all completely for free.

## WE MOVE

### Throughout June

A new series of free wellness sessions by INNSiDE x First Street designed to fit a range of moods and levels - pick an energising HIIT session or a grounding yoga flow.



# SUMMER HELP & SUPPORT

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We're here throughout the summer to make sure you're safe, supported, and feel at home...

## ESSENTIALS

Essentials is here to meet your basic needs. Covering everything from food, cleaning, personal hygiene and childcare items, we aim to support students facing financial difficulties and food insecurity.

**Our services:**

**The Pantry:** for hardship emergencies and urgent needs.

**The Wardrobe:** seasonally-appropriate, good-quality clothing.

**JobClub:** job searching advice and support.

**Cost of Living Support Fund:** application support and guidance.

**Community Space:** seating for study and spending quiet time.

**Kitchen:** complete with tea and coffee.

**Activities and Wellbeing Sessions:** to support your mental and physical health.

[manchesterstudentsunion.com/essentials](http://manchesterstudentsunion.com/essentials)



## ADVICE SERVICE

We're open for all your academic, financial and personal queries this summer: 10am - 4pm Monday - Friday on the first floor of the SU Building. Online drop-in sessions available, contact us at [advice.su@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:advice.su@manchester.ac.uk) or reach out via the form on the SU website.

[manchesterstudentsunion.com/advice](https://manchesterstudentsunion.com/advice)

## DRUG TESTING KITS

Stay safe this summer! Free drug testing kits are available from the Advice Service. We also provide information on harm reduction methods.

## ACCOMMODATION SUPPORT

Dedicated advisors to help with summer housing issues, contract reviews, deposit disputes, and emergency housing. Book appointments through the SU website.

## INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Special summer sessions including visa advice workshops, cultural exchange events, and social meetups. Check the SU calendar for weekly activities.



# STUDENTS' UNION

University of  
Manchester

**2026 - [MANCHESTERSTUDENTSUNION.COM](https://manchesterstudentsunion.com)**

