

8 The Post Hole Guide to Bolton

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Bolton, or Bolton-le-Moors to give it its official name, is a former mill town 10 miles from Manchester. It played a role in the English Civil War when it was stormed in 1644 by 3000 Royalist troops, resulting in the Bolton Massacre where 1600 residents were murdered and 700 taken prisoner. The execution of a Royal at this time is rumoured to be the reason why Bolton hasn't been made a city, although the absence of a cathedral tends to be overlooked.

Its appeal largely centres on its close proximity to Manchester and it also boasts good transport links to Liverpool and the Lake District, although there are some attractions to the town and surrounding area.

Getting to Bolton (from York)

It's easy to get to Bolton from York, it's a short hop across the Pennines: the A64 from York, the M1 south bound, then the M62 from Leeds to Kearsley, taking the A666 (yes, really) to the town centre.

Alternatively, take the TransPennine Express service from York to Bolton, usually changing at Manchester Piccadilly, although sometimes you might have to change at Manchester Oxford Road and its worth checking this in advance. Tickets with a railcard are around £15 with a Young Person's Railcard in advance, although many student offers from www.tpexpress.co.uk means they can be as cheap as £4 each way.

Accommodation

Accommodation in Bolton is quite limited; however it is only a half an hour train journey from Manchester city centre where a wider range is available, from youth hostels to the Hilton. Bolton hosts a Holiday Inn in the centre or for a more elaborate budget (and for football fans!) the De Vere Whites hotel at the Reebok Stadium, home of Bolton Wanderers. Alternatively many guest houses are scattered through the town.

Places To Visit

- **Museums**

- Bolton Museum (free entry) boasts an impressive Egyptian collection that has been featured in British Archaeology magazine. Surprising really as the rest of the collections are geared towards local history or stuffed animals. Worth a look if your interested in Egyptian or Industrial archaeology. Also contains an aquarium and the town's main library
- Bolton Steam Museum is quite often overlooked as it is housed in what appears to be a derelict mill. In fact this is a hidden gem (if you're into trains and machinery that is!) holding the largest collection of mill steam engines in the UK, which periodically opens for events and free weekend visits.

- **Historic attractions**

- Smithills Hall is a grade I listed Tudor house on the outskirts of York close to some lovely views up on the moorland, Moss Bank Park boasting its animal park and rose garden and the quaint settlement of Barrow Bridge which does exactly what it says on the tin: cottages accessible by bridge over streams. Rumour has it that a footprint was burnt into a paving stone after George Marsh stamped his foot having been accused of false preaching in 1554. Also the scene of many other ghostly goings on, you'll need to visit to find them all out! Boasts the ability to dress kids up as Tudor citizens and put them to work in the dairy (yes I was the milk maid on my unfortunate school trip).
- Hall I'th Wood (read, but not say, Hall in the Wood for those unfamiliar with Lancashire twang) is another Tudor house only open to the public for special events. These include Medieval Activities Weekend (24th-25th May). For more information see www.boltonmuseums.org.uk/whatson

- **Places near by** The main attraction close by is Manchester city centre with its vast expanses of shopping, entertainment and attractions, including:

- The Urbis Centre: an exhibition of city life featuring explorations of design, architecture, graffiti and music.
- Museum of Transport: currently offering a celebration of Bolton buses (really).
- Museum of Science and Industry: a jolly good day out full of hands on exhibitions for all the ages.
- Manchester Museum: a larger version of Bolton museum, featuring an exquisite Egyptian collection, botany and the largest collection of tree frogs in the north (I'd imagine, seriously the tank is huge!), 4000 archery related artefacts, an impressive human remains collection including the Lindow Man and a host of other collections.

More Information

- The Northern Mill Engine Society (Bolton Steam Museum) (<http://www.nmes.org/>)
- Bolton Museum and Archive Service (<http://tinyurl.com/jx648>)
- The Urbis Centre (<http://www.urbis.org.uk/>)