



UK

NUMBER CRUNCHER

1.26 The percentage of the English population with the surname Smith



Let your hair down

Let your friends down

Say this...

not this.



BIRMINGHAM

EAT: LASAN EATERY

A faster, more casual alternative to sister restaurant Lasan. Chef/owner Aktar Islam's doesn't use clarified butter or artificial flavours in his cooking and his Indian food is in a class of its own. Gordon Ramsay is a big fan.

1355 STRATFORD ROAD, HALL GREEN, TEL: +44 (0)121 777 9090, WWW.LASANEATERY.CO.UK

DRINK: CHI

If you're not a fan of understatement, party like an 80s rock star at Chi, a three-storey club where you can not only drink bubbly but also leap into the Jacuzzi.

61 NEWHALL STREET, TEL: +44 (0)121 233 3150

STAY: HOTEL DU VIN

The former Birmingham Eye Hospital is these days an outpost of the small-but-mighty Hotel Du Vin group (pictured). The lively in-house restaurant has more soul than most, as do the suites. Soak up the atmosphere in your room's big Victorian-style bathtub. Doubles from £160 (€180).

25 CHURCH STREET, TEL: +44 (0)121 200 0600, WWW.HOTELDUVIN.COM

LISTEN: THE RAINBOW

The NEC may be the local enormo-dome, to borrow a phrase from *Spinal Tap*, but if you want to see bands in a more intimate setting, head to The Rainbow pub for credible indie bands and quirky DJs.

160 HIGH STREET, DERITEND, TEL: +44 (0)121 236 3188, WWW.MYSPACE.COM/RAINBOWEVENTS

✘ FLY TO BIRMINGHAM FROM 16 DESTINATIONS, INCLUDING BRATISLAVA (VIENNA) AND DUSSELDORF (WEEZE)



LIVERPOOL

EAT: THE LONDON CARRIAGE WORKS

One of Liverpool's best restaurants (pictured) is found inside the Hope Street Hotel. Top chef Paul Askew serves up local, seasonal produce (the sea bass is from Liverpool Bay), which arrives at your table artfully presented on a slab of slate.

40 HOPE STREET, TEL: +44 (0)151 705 2222, WWW.THELONDONCARRIAGEWORKS.CO.UK

DRINK: THE DISPENSARY

This family-run ale house is eccentrically decorated with old chemists' equipment and dusty drug jars, and is always packed. With a wide choice of draught ale from small UK breweries, drop in for some medicine that really works.

87 RENSHAW STREET, TEL: +44 (0)151 709 2160

STAY: BASE2STAY

The new boutique hotel on the block boasts over 100 serviced apartments (with kitchens, bathrooms, HD TVs etc) concealed behind a red brick 19th-century facade. Doubles from a surprisingly competitive £75 (€85).

29 SEEL STREET, TEL: +44 (0)151 705 2626, WWW.BASE2STAYLIVERPOOL.COM

SEE: LIVERPOOL CATHEDRAL

As well as some serious stained glass, you'll find a permanent artwork by Brit Art royalty Tracy Emin here. Her work "For You" is a pink neon sign that reads "I felt you and I knew you loved me" and was created for the 2008 Liverpool Biennial.

ST JAMES' MOUNT, TEL: +44 (0)151 709 6271, WWW.LIVERPOOLCATHEDRAL.ORG.UK

✘ FLY TO LIVERPOOL FROM 27 DESTINATIONS, INCLUDING BARCELONA (GIRONA) AND STOCKHOLM (SKAVSTA)



LONDON

EAT: UKAI

The fourth, and latest, branch of this inventive sushi place is slick and intimate, with most tables being laid out just for two. Enjoy an abundance of expertly crafted little mouthfuls, including some unexpected ones like the chilli beef nigiri.

58 POLAND STREET, WWW.UKAI.CO.UK

DRINK: THE NEST

Formerly the trendy and underground Barden's Boudoir, this venue has been refurbished and is now the equally trendy and underground The Nest (pictured). Neon signs and posters create an atmosphere of faded decadence, while the little nooks are perfect for couples and small groups.

36 STOKE NEWINGTON ROAD, TEL: +44 (0)20 7354 9993, WWW.ILOVETHENEST.COM

STAY: SOHO HOTEL

Despite being right in the thick of it between Dean Street and Wardour Street, this lovely hotel is cushioned from the hubbub on Richmond Mews. From stylish rooms to funky apartments, this is a taste of the high life. Rooms from £290 (€325).

4 RICHMOND MEWS, TEL: +44 (0)20 7559 3000, WWW.FIRMDALE.COM

SAVOUR: PORTAL RESTAURANT

The recent addition of Portuguese wizard head chef Victor Felisberto has beefed up an already impressive menu at Portal. Of particular note is the braised bisaro, a pig/boar hybrid which melts in the mouth.

88 ST JOHN STREET, TEL: +44 (0)20 7253 6950, WWW.PORTALRESTAURANT.CO.UK

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