

BIRMINGHAM

Birmingham is famous for having more miles of canals than Venice and in the middle of the 18th century there were 174 miles of canals in the area and there is still over 100 miles that remain navigable. Birmingham's first canal was opened in 1769 and used to carry coal from Wednesbury's coalfield to the industries in Birmingham. Walk the tow paths and see the city in a whole new light, there are over 15 miles of canal within the city centre.

Gas Street Basin was the hub of Birmingham's canal system and today it is well worth a visit for its range of waterside pubs and to see the pretty canal boats moored there.

Stroll into the city to discover the wealth of shops including the controversial Selfridge's building an iconic curved structure with a cladding of 15,000 spun aluminium discs. The Bull ring has been a site to a market for more than 800 years and is still hosting indoors and outdoor markets today. Visit the Jewellery Quarter where you can find the best deals and prices amongst hundreds of traders.

In the heart of the city discover The National Sea Life Centre a tropical paradise where you will meet everything from a starfish to a shark. See the largest residents - two enormous giant sea turtles named Molokai and Gulliver. Take a tour there and learn about the magic and mysteries of the deep.

With 26 acres of living history the Black Country Museum offers you an insight to a fascinating world of bygone times. Go underground into a coal mine and take a ride on a tramcar or trolleybus.

Meet the characters who lived and worked in this era and see the historic building brought to life.

There will be a warm welcome awaiting you at the Bottle and Glass where you can try a traditional pint of Black Country Real Ale. Pay attention in your lesson at St James School or for fun visit the traditional fairground or see a film at The Limelight Cinema.

Some of the biggest and best exhibitions are hosted at The National Exhibition Centre. Opened in 1976 it is the biggest exhibition centre in Europe and it has over four million visitors each year.

Dudley Zoological Gardens is the home to some of the world's rarest and exotic animals in the world. Dudley Zoo is helping to save some of the world's most endangered species such as the Asiatic lions and the Sumatran tiger.

Dudley Castle was founded by the Normans around 1071 and was used by the Royalist during the Civil War. At the castle today find out what daily life would have been like and find out facts about medieval food, the past Earls of Dudley and how it would have looked during the Norman and Tudor times.

Located at Bournville is the world famous chocolate factory take a tour and see your favourite chocolate being made. Visit the Cadbury museum for the history of chocolate from the Aztec's to present day. In 1879 George and Richard Cadbury moved their chocolate factory from Birmingham to its present site at Bournville. In 1893 George bought 120 acres of land and built at his own expense a model village for his workforce.

The Cadbury's were concerned for the health and the welfare of their workforce and encouraged swimming, walking and outdoor sport building a lido sports pitches and a running track. You will not find any public houses in the village as the Cadbury's were strict Quakers. The Cadbury's also owned a fleet of immaculate painted narrowboats to carry the raw materials to the factory.