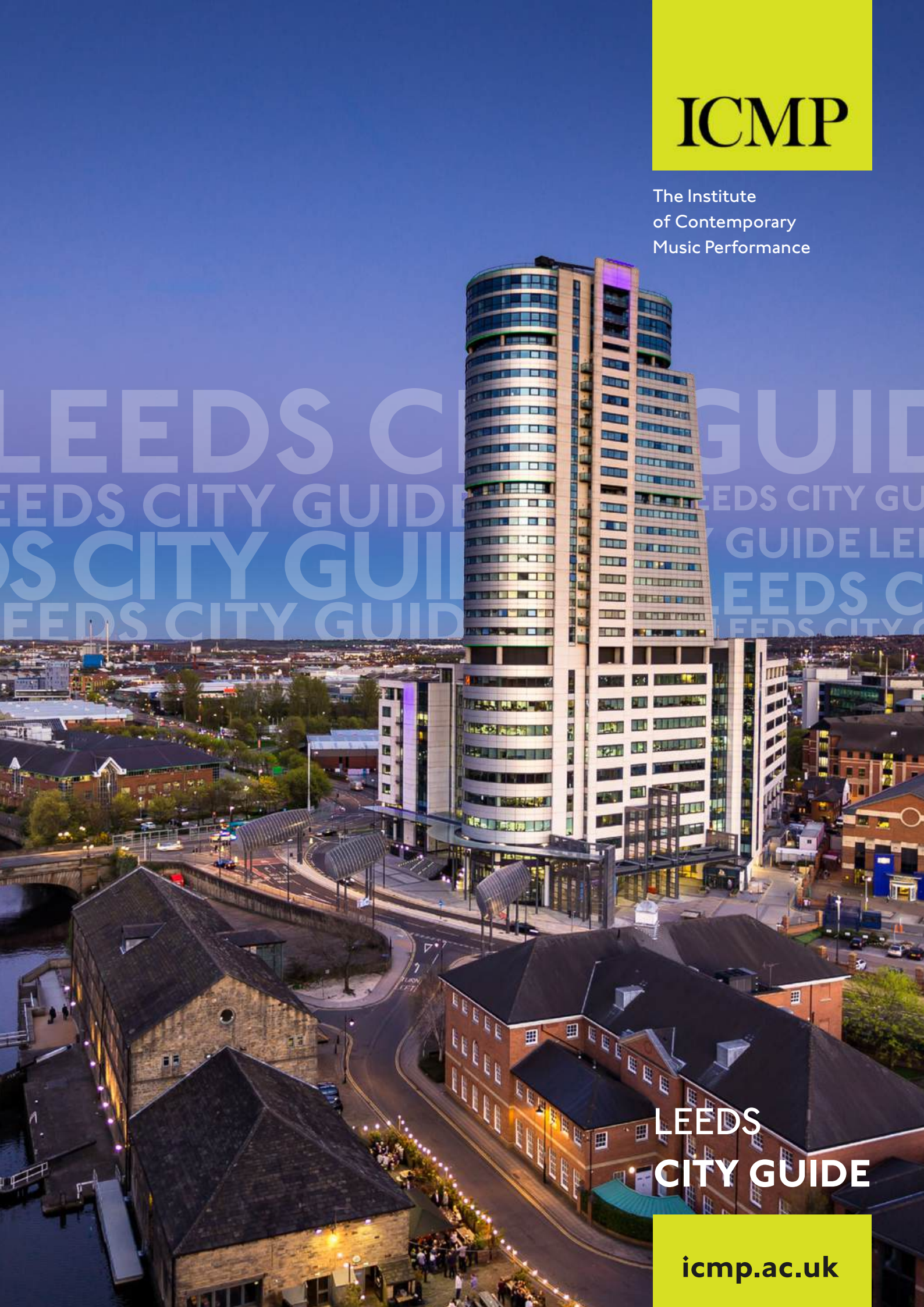
ICMP

The Institute
of Contemporary
Music Performance



LEEDS
CITY GUIDE

icmp.ac.uk

Contents

Welcome to Leeds: Heritage and Culture	3
Getting Around The City	4
Student Accommodation	5
Eating Out On A Budget	6
Leisure & Attractions	10
Music Venues, Hotspots & Opportunities	12
Contact Information	13



Welcome to Leeds

Heritage and culture

With roots dating back to the 5th century, Leeds has grown from a medieval market town into one of the UK's most dynamic and student-friendly cities. Once a powerhouse of the Industrial Revolution, the city has transformed into a thriving hub for culture, creativity, and innovation all while keeping its proud Yorkshire character.

Leeds is a northern epicentre for music and the arts, with a vibrant scene that ranges from underground indie and electronic gigs to world-class orchestras and festivals. Legendary venues like the Brudenell Social Club and Leeds O2 Academy sit alongside rising stars like Belgrave Music Hall and Headrow House, showcasing the city's diverse musical heartbeat.

This is a place where Victorian arcades meet contemporary art galleries, and traditional pubs live comfortably alongside independent coffee shops and rooftop bars. Whether you're digging through records in the Corn Exchange or catching a late-night jazz set in the Northern Quarter, Leeds invites you to dive headfirst into its creative energy.

Each part of the city offers something different. Hyde Park is a student stronghold with affordable eats and a buzzing community vibe, known for its vintage shops, independent cafés, and lively student nights. The city centre blends big-brand retail therapy in Trinity Leeds with indie treasures in Kirkgate Market. For a more laid-back scene, Headingley brings green spaces, beer gardens, and a famous cricket ground all just a short bus ride away.

Beyond the music and nightlife, Leeds is home to leading universities and institutions, with a strong focus on research, media, and the arts. It's also a growing hotspot for start-ups, especially in digital, gaming, and fintech, so you're just as likely to find your future career path here as your next favourite band.

Need a break from the city buzz? Leeds has no shortage of green escapes. Take a walk along the Leeds-Liverpool Canal, chill in Roundhay Park (one of Europe's biggest city parks), or hop on a train to the Yorkshire Dales for unbeatable scenery and some much-needed headspace.

Leeds is more than just a great place to study, it's a city that lives and breathes creativity, community, and ambition. It's where big ideas take shape, lifelong friendships begin, and every day brings a new discovery.

Getting Around The City

Leeds is a compact, walkable city, with most campuses, shops, music venues, and nightlife spots easily reached on foot. Many students find they can get through the week without spending much, if anything, on transport. But when you need to travel further, Leeds has a reliable, affordable network that keeps the whole city connected.

Buses

Leeds has an extensive bus network operated by First Bus. Students can get discounted weekly and monthly passes through the First Bus app, and single journeys are capped at £2 thanks to a government price freeze. Buses run frequently through the day and late into the night, especially on main student routes like Headingley and Hyde Park into the city centre.

Trains

Leeds Train Station is one of the busiest outside London and connects you to cities across the North and beyond. Manchester, Sheffield, York and even Edinburgh are all within easy reach. If you're planning regular weekend trips or visiting mates at other unis, a 16-25 Railcard will save you a third on most rail fares. You can also link it to your digital ticket apps for smoother booking.

You'll typically spend anywhere from £0–£25 a week on travel, depending on how often you use buses or trains. Most students save by walking, cycling, or using discounted travel passes. Below, we've listed key transport options and money-saving tips plus the best apps to help you plan your route and track live updates.

Cycling

Leeds is steadily improving its cycling infrastructure, and many students choose to bike around. There are plenty of cycle lanes, and you'll find secure bike racks around most campuses and city spots. If you don't own a bike, look out for second-hand sales or uni forums.

Late Night Travel

Leeds doesn't have a night tube, but it's got your back with late buses, especially on weekends. Most student areas are just a short cab or Uber/Amber taxi ride from the city centre if you're out late. Just make sure to plan ahead and stay safe getting home.

Essential Apps

Grab the First Bus app for real-time updates, mobile tickets, and student deals. Trainline is a good one for rail journeys, and Citymapper is your all-in-one route planner.



Student Accommodation

For students, housing options include halls of residence, which offer a diverse blend of communal living spaces suitable for newcomers to city life, especially those studying at ICMP and other universities

Private rentals can be a more flexible and affordable option, but might require more consideration and management. This could be less suitable for those living away from home for the first time.



Halls of Residence

Most providers offer an variety of room options for different needs including single room's with shared facilities, en-suite rooms or studio spaces with private kitchenettes.

Pros	Cons
• Inclusive billing • Communal living areas • Extra facilities such as gyms • Maintenance and security services	• Tend to be costlier than private rentals • Might involve longer commutes

Private Rentals

Always work with letting agents endorsed by ICMP or your university and use deposit protection. Agents are forbidden from charging for admin or references.

Pros	Cons
• Pick your housemates • Flexible about where you live • Available garden/driveway • Options vary from houses to studios • Bills might be included	• Longer rental agreements • Bigger deposits • You handle the admin • Guarantor usually needed

Guarantors are often needed for student rentals.
Visit the Citizens Advice website for more information.

Essential Resources & Support

Spotahome

This is a convenient online rental platform where you can find and book medium to long-term housing. The service includes fraud protection, assistance with last-minute cancellations, and a promise to show real property images and videos. ICMP students are entitled to a 20% discount - find out more at one of our Accommodation Day events.

Rightmove.co.uk/students

This useful accommodation finder lets you search for specialist university accommodation, including more traditional student housing, such as halls of residence and private halls.

- For information about renting rights visit www.gov.uk/private-renting
- FAQs and guidance at england.shelter.org.uk
- Essential info about the deposit protection scheme depositprotection.com
- Top tips from Save The Student and their own property viewing checklist

Visit icmp.ac.uk/accommodation for a dedicated accommodation guide and find out which halls of residence are popular with ICMP students.

Eating Out On a Budget

Budget Friendly Eateries

1. **Hyde Park Book Club -** A student staple just off Woodhouse Lane, this quirky café-bar hybrid serves up everything from vegan brunches to loaded burgers at decent prices. Bonus points for the basement gig space and regular open mics.
2. **Trinity Kitchen -** Located inside Trinity Leeds shopping centre, this rotating street food market brings in a new lineup of vendors every few weeks. Expect global flavours, generous portions, and plenty of veggie/vegan options all on a student budget.
3. **Manjit's Kitchen -** This independent Indian street food gem in Kirkgate Market dishes out mouth-watering curries, bhajis and wraps at wallet-friendly prices. Vibrant, flavourful, and always packed with locals in the know.
4. **Falafel Guys -** Find their red food truck parked on Briggate and thank us later. Their legendary falafel wraps are massive, delicious, and perfect for a quick, filling lunch under a fiver.
5. **Pieminister -** When the Yorkshire chill kicks in street food gem in Kirkgate Market dishes out mouth-watering curries, bhajis and wraps at wallet-friendly prices. Vibrant, flavourful, and always packed with locals in the know.

Local Area

The Switch - Millenium Square

a cultural hotspot where grand Victorian buildings meet buzzing student life. Step outside and you're surrounded by cafés, bars, and venues perfect for lunch breaks or last-minute nights out.

- **Belgrave Music Hall and Canteen -** Just a few minutes' walk away, this multi-storey hangout offers live music, rooftop views, and rotating street food vendors a firm favourite with local students.
- **Millenium Square -** Often hosts festivals, outdoor cinema nights, and pop-up food markets. Perfect for a lunch break with a view.
- **Bengal Brasserie -** A long-standing local favourite for affordable Indian food, with generous portions and student-friendly prices.
- **The Library Pub -** don't be fooled by the name, this isn't a study space. It's a popular student pub with cheap drinks, big screens, and pub grub staples.

Surrounded by unis and buzzing with student life, the Civic Quarter puts you at the centre of it all — gigs, galleries, clubs, cafés and more.

Money Saving Hacks

Exploring Leeds' food and drink scene on a student budget is entirely possible with a bit of planning and some local know-how. Whether you're after a late-night bite, a cheap day off, or a solid night out, Leeds has plenty of affordable options that won't drain your bank account.

- **Student Discounts -** Always ask if there are student discounts available. Many places offer a percentage off the bill upon showing a valid student ID. Apps like Unidays and Totum, can help you find available student discounts.
- **Lunch Offers -** Dining out during lunchtime can often be cheaper than dinner. Look for lunch specials, which are common in many restaurants.
- **Happy Hours and Special Deals -** Keep an eye out for happy hours and special deals. Many restaurants and cafés offer early bird specials or set menu deals that are great value.
- **Loyalty Programs -** Sign up for loyalty programs at places you frequent. Collecting points can lead to free meals or drinks.
- **Food Markets and Street Food -** London's food markets and street food stalls are a goldmine for delicious, affordable food. Markets like Borough Market, though on the pricier side, also have budget-friendly options if you look around.
- **Supermarket Reduced Section -** Major supermarkets will often reduce the price of food that's nearly expired. Sourcing items from this section can be a great way to save money on lunch and dinner. Check to see if any of the ingredients you need can be bought at a reduced cost.
- **BYOB Restaurants -** Look for places that allow you to bring your own bottle (BYOB). This can significantly lower the cost of dining out, as drinks can add a considerable amount to the bill.
- **Use Apps -** There are several apps designed to find the best deals in your area, including discounts and offers specific to restaurants. Food waste apps like Too Good To Go and Karma, are also great for getting cheap ingredients and tasty meals that would otherwise go to landfill.



Leisure & Attractions

Museums and Galleries

Leeds serves up a strong culture game. Hit **Leeds Art Gallery** for contemporary British work, then slide into the **Henry Moore Institute** for iconic sculpture. For something a bit different, check out **The Royal Armouries** - think medieval weapons, samurai swords, and live-action demos that go full Game of Thrones.

Parks and Green Spaces

Need a break from the buzz? **Woodhouse Moor** (a.k.a. Hyde Park) is the unofficial student backyard, perfect for picnics, frisbee, or pretending to revise. **Roundhay Park** is huge, has lakes, gardens and an indoor rainforest. Yep, with actual monkeys. Don't skip **Temple Newsam** for stately vibes and walking trails.

Pubs and Bars

Leeds knows its way around a pint. Grab drinks in **The Dry Dock** - a small pub serving food and drinks in a boat, on land! **Whitelock's Ale House** is a historic fave with Yorkshire ales, while **Belgrave Music Hall** blends rooftop views, pizza, and pints like a pro. Cheap deals, good tunes, no pretence.

Live Music

Whether you're into sweaty indie gigs, jazz nights, or raves that end at sunrise, Leeds has it all. **O2 Academy** brings in the names. **Brudenell Social Club** is legendary for intimate shows and **Headrow House** and **Belgrave** are go-tos for rising acts and local legends. Festival-wise, **Live at Leeds** and **Slam Dunk** are essential student experiences

Nightlife

From house to techno, pop bangers to DnB, Leeds delivers after dark.**Mint Warehouse, Wire** and **Beaver Works** are staples on the student circuit. Prefer a dance floor that's a little less intense? Try **Call Lane** for a bar crawl vibe, or **HiFi Club** for soul, funk and disco nights done right.

Shopping

Retail therapy? Sorted. **Trinity Leeds** covers all the big brands, while **Victoria Leeds** brings the luxury. **Kirkgate Market** one of the UK's biggest, expect everything from fresh street food to quirky vintage. For second-hand steals, head to **Blue Rinse** and **Best Leeds.**

Events and Festivals

Leeds keeps the calendar stacked.Think **Light Night, Leeds International Film Fest, Pride,** and student-friendly foodie markets popping up all year round. From street parades to indie film premieres, there's always something worth checking out.

Historical Landmarks

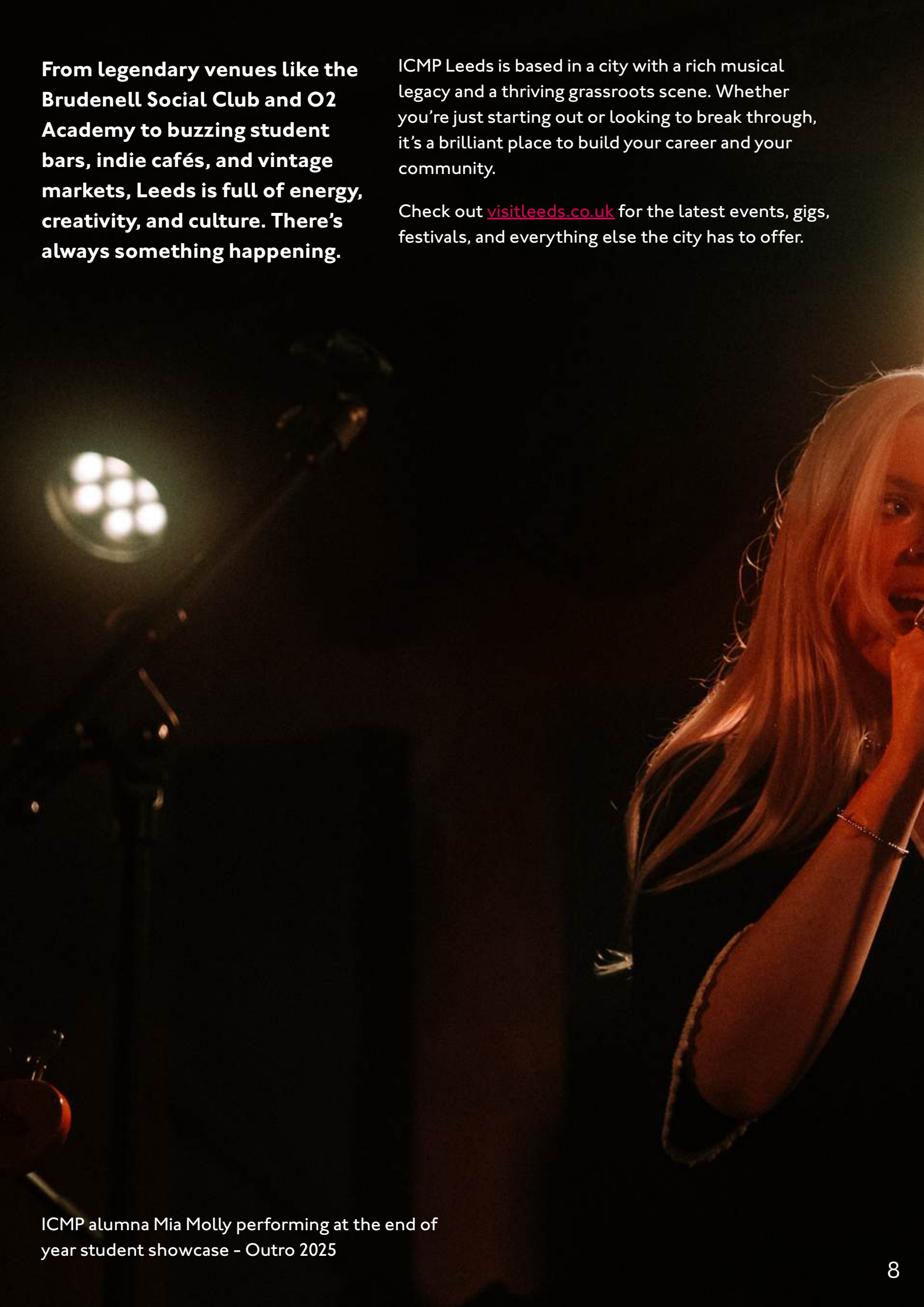
Mix old with new. Tour the gothic **Leeds Town Hall** explore the circular majesty of **Leeds Corn Exchange,** or take a trip to **Kirkstall Abbey,** a jaw-dropping medieval ruin that's pure cinematic.



From legendary venues like the Brudenell Social Club and O2 Academy to buzzing student bars, indie cafés, and vintage markets, Leeds is full of energy, creativity, and culture. There's always something happening.

ICMP Leeds is based in a city with a rich musical legacy and a thriving grassroots scene. Whether you're just starting out or looking to break through, it's a brilliant place to build your career and your community.

Check out visitleeds.co.uk for the latest events, gigs, festivals, and everything else the city has to offer.



ICMP alumna Mia Molly performing at the end of year student showcase - Outro 2025



Music Venues, Hotspots and Opportunities

Leeds punches way above its weight when it comes to music. It's not just home to legendary venues and thriving indie spots, it's also got serious industry presence, from talent agencies and promoters to a fiercely independent scene that's big on DIY and collaboration. Leeds is stacked with opportunities to perform, get noticed, and grow your network. Here's a selection of venues our tutors, students and alumni love:

1. Brudenell Social Club
The crown jewel of Leeds' live scene. A true grassroots venue that's hosted everyone from local legends to global icons.

2. O2 Academy Leeds
Major acts roll through here. A go-to for big shows and tour supports.

3. Belgrave Music Hall and Canteen
Multi-floor venue with gigs, club nights and rooftop hangouts. A proper Leeds vibe.

4. Hyde Park Book Club
Café, venue, and creative space rolled into one. Perfect for open mics, launches and laid-back live sets.

5. The Wardrobe
Known for soul, funk, hip hop and jazz nights. Regularly hosts both emerging artists and cult names.

6. The Key Club
Your home for alternative, punk and metal. Great for gritty, high-energy gigs.

7. Old Red Bus Station
Electronic music, underground nights, and big energy. Also a great space for networking with creatives.

8. Headrow House
Classy but cool. Live music, rooftop bar and great food often booked for showcases and industry events.

9. Project House
Huge industrial space bringing warehouse energy to live gigs, art events and club nights.

10. Verve Bar
Basement bar with a cult open mic. A great place to try out new material or just soak in the vibes.



Open Mics & Jams

Leeds has a lively open mic scene that welcomes all styles and skill levels. Some of the best regular nights include Verve Bar on Call Lane, known for its upbeat and busy atmosphere and a student favourite; Whitelock's Ale House, one of the city's oldest pubs with a surprisingly lively acoustic night; Sela Bar, an intimate underground spot with a loyal crowd and strong sound setup; and Hyde Park Book Club, hosting weekly nights that attract a mix of students, locals, and industry professionals.

Most open mics allow 2–3 songs, but the vibe is friendly and supportive so bring 5–6 polished tracks to rotate and keep your performances fresh.

Busking

Leeds City Council allows busking in most public spaces, but you'll need to stick to their code of conduct stay clear of shop doorways, respect volume limits, and avoid overcrowding the area.

Hotspots include:

- Briggate
- Albion Street
- Outside Trinity Leeds
- Near Leeds Train Station (with permission)

You don't need a licence for most places in the city centre, but rules apply on private land like shopping centres and stations, so always check first. Busking is a solid way to test new material, meet other musicians, and build your local fanbase.

Check: leeds.gov.uk
Busking tips: foundinmusic.com

Bonus Tips

Follow @musicinleeds on socials for gig alerts, jam nights, and performance opps. The scene's wide open — time to plug in.

ICMP Freshers Showcase, O2 Academy Islington, 2024

CONTACT ICMP

Our Student Support teams remain on hand to assist with any questions you have throughout your time at ICMP.

Admissions

enquiries@icmp.ac.uk
020 3820 6432

Finance

finance@icmp.ac.uk
020 7604 2465

Disability and Wellbeing Department

studentwellbeing@icmp.ac.uk

Accommodation Queries

accommodation@icmp.ac.uk

ICMP, 1B Dyne Road, London NW6 7XG.
Company registration number: 04780788

icmp.ac.uk