



Visiting Chester? What to Know Before You Go

Tracy Collins with Briony Wilson from Mountain Goat

TUESDAY 27 OCTOBER 2026

IN THIS EPISODE

A city where you can walk a Roman wall, shop in a medieval gallery and be in Wales twenty minutes later. In episode 224 of the [UK Travel Planning Podcast](#), Tracy is joined again by *Briony Wilson from Mountain Goat*, who spent ten years living in Chester and says it is her next favourite place in the UK after the Lake District. She shares what to see, how much time to give it, and how to use Chester as a base for North Wales, Liverpool and Manchester.

This is the next episode in our Before You Go series, following [Edinburgh](#), [York](#) and [the Lake District](#). When Briony joined Tracy for the [autumn episode](#), she mentioned she had lived in Chester for ten years, so she was the perfect person to come back and talk about it. Chester is a walled Roman city, compact enough to see on foot, a direct train from London Euston, and it puts North Wales, Liverpool, Manchester and Wrexham all within easy reach. It is somewhere Tracy and Doug have loved every time they have visited.

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What you'll learn in this episode

- Where Chester is, and how close it sits to Liverpool, Manchester, Wrexham and the Welsh border
- How to get there by direct train from London Euston in about two hours, and why going via Crewe can give you more train times for an extra five or ten minutes
- Why you won't need a car in the city, and how the park and ride works if you are driving in
- What the Rows are (R-O-W-S, not Rose) and how these medieval galleries are used today

- How the Cross works as the centre point of the city, and why there is no Westgate or Southgate Street
- Where to take the classic photo of the Eastgate Clock
- Whether to stay inside the city walls or just outside the centre, and what to check before booking an older building with lots of stairs
- How many days to give Chester, and why three to five days works so well
- What happens to the city on race days, and why it is worth checking the dates before you book
- The big days out near Chester, from Chester Zoo and the racecourse to Jodrell Bank, Tatton Park, Dunham Massey and Cheshire Oaks
- How to use Chester as a base for North Wales, and what the Mountain Goat tour covers, from Llandudno and Conwy to Caernarfon and Eryri National Park
- Why Chester works for football fans, with Wrexham 20 minutes away and Liverpool and Manchester within an hour
- Briony's full day in Chester, from breakfast and the city walls to lunch at Chester Market and the bars on Watergate Street
- Briony's quickfire picks: where to stay, what to eat at Chester Market, the view worth the effort and the one thing to bring home

It really is a big city with a small mindset. There's so much independent culture.

BRIONY WILSON

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Briony's day in Chester

MORNING

Start with a good breakfast. Briony's favourite is Kookaburra Bakehouse, which is closed on Mondays and Tuesdays, so on those days try The Flower Cup. From there, head to the top of Northgate Street, take the steps up onto the city walls and walk anti-clockwise. The full circuit is just under two miles and takes about an hour with photo stops, and doing it first thing gives you your bearings for the rest of the day. You walk towards the racecourse and on past Chester Castle and the River Dee, and about halfway round you reach the Eastgate Clock, said

to be the second most photographed clock in the UK after Big Ben. You can get on and off the walls here by steps, so take your photos from the top and then from the street below by the Chester Grosvenor.

MIDDAY

The circuit brings you back to where you started, by the Town Hall and Chester Cathedral. The cathedral runs tours and always has events on, and if you are visiting around Christmas, the area outside the Town Hall is where the Christmas market takes place. For lunch, Briony's pick is Chester Market, just behind the Town Hall. There are around twenty food vendors on a buzzer system, so everyone can choose something different and still eat together, plus butchers, fishmongers and small shops.

AFTERNOON

The Chester Visitor Information Centre is close by, and it is where many of the guided tours start, from history walks led by a Roman or a gladiator to ghost tours and food tours. If you would rather not be marched round the city by a gladiator, it is easy to explore on your own. Half of the Roman amphitheatre is uncovered, and you can walk in and sit inside it. Past the amphitheatre are the Roman Gardens, which a lot of people miss. It is a long, narrow garden with steps down past mosaic features and the remains of a Roman underfloor heating system, and it brings you out at the River Dee. Down at the Groves you can sit by the water with a Cheshire Farm ice cream or take a boat trip on the river. Grosvenor Park is a short walk away, and in summer it is home to the theatre in the park.

EVENING

Head back to the Cross, where the four main streets meet, for dinner at one of the independent restaurants. Then make your way along Watergate Street, which Briony calls Bar Street, for the cocktail bars and wine bars.

GETTING AROUND

Chester is compact and best seen on foot, but it is an old city, so expect uneven surfaces, steps and level changes. There are accessible routes to every section of the Rows, and most of the city walls can be managed by wheelchair, though not the full circuit.

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Briony's quickfire picks

THE ONE PLACE PEOPLE PICTURE

The Eastgate Clock

WHERE TO STAY

Oddfellows, an independent hotel with Alice in Wonderland tea parties and a secret garden

WHERE TO EAT

Chester Market, and the truffle risotto from the pasta stall

THE VIEW WORTH THE EFFORT

Down at the Groves with an ice cream, looking back at the city from the water

ONE THING TO BRING HOME

Cheshire cheese. Many are waxed, so they travel well

BOOK BEFORE YOU GO

A tour, whether that is Mountain Goat into North Wales or a ghost, food or history tour in the city, and race tickets early if you are going to the races

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Links mentioned in this episode

[Mountain Goat Tours](#)

Small group tours, including the North Wales tour Briony talks about in this episode.

USE CODE

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Where Tracy and Doug stayed, and one of their favourite stays. Read our review.

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