

## **Stereotypical Manchester?**

What is the first thing that springs to mind if you think about Manchester? A rainy grey city, where the police sirens never stop? If that is so, you may be quite right, because even though Manchester has developed over the last decades, it has retained much of its old charm. When the excursion group first arrived at Manchester, the city did much to present itself from its best side. Cold winds and heavy rain seem to be more fitting for late October than early September. The location of our accommodation matched the stereotype as well. Just off the highway, next to a police station, we found ourselves in one of the most troubled suburbs of the city. As a taxi driver described it: “Manchester itself is nice, but you should not be out in Salford at night.”

One can get used to the sirens at night, but accepting the rain as our constant companion on the trip proved much more difficult. There is only so much Manchester has to offer when you do not want to find yourself wandering around in the rain. The Mosi, the Museum of Science and Industry, is a good location if you want to spend a day warm and dry. Stuffed with everything that relates to the industrial and technological history of the city, it presents its exhibition with lots of hands-on attractions. The exhibition is not only interesting for children, but offers an easy insight into the political and economic significance of the area. Hence, the museum can enchant almost anyone, but not my companion.

If the weather would allow it, we would often find ourselves wandering the streets of Manchester’s Northern Quarter. The streets’ exterior does not make a welcoming impression, much like the rest of the city, but if one can ignore the stinky dumpster at the street corner for a moment, one can find oneself in the midst of fine record and clothing shops. With many little, independent cafes and bars the Northern Quarter is home to Manchester’s alternative youth culture. At night the quarter is buzzing with students on their way to one of the many nightclubs.

Leaving Manchester for a daytrip proves to be a good idea. Liverpool, on the only sunny day of the trip, proved to be the real star of the trip. With lots of little independent shops and many sightseeing attractions Liverpool can hardly be visited completely in a day. Blackpool, on the other hand, should only be a destination for dry and warm days as visitors of the amusement

park will otherwise find themselves soaked after the first ride. Others found little else to do then to find a pub or tearoom. The trip to Llandudno was evidence for the same point and only led to another cup of tea for my friends and me.

Conwy and Conwy castle were a pleasing destination for a dry but still windy morning. The castle ruins with the Shakespearian drama look did not fail to impress me and the little town surrounding it felt welcoming. The Old tea room offered a warm soup and a hot cup of tea just when it was about to rain again. The same welcoming feeling was spread by Haworth, even though the town, and especially the high street, did show how the local government expected lots of tourists. Haworth did therefore lack a bit of authenticity, by just trying too hard to look like an authentic but yet stereotypical English village.

Overall, my idea of the English North stays the same. A grey and rainy area where crime seems order of business and poverty is common. However, I would still like to travel there again, see the Library, that was closed for construction purposes, and maybe to take a dry walk around the city. I however would not go on another excursion, as it seems impossible to please everyone in the group and the scheduled trips allowed little alternation.