

Manchester

Posted on Fri, 15 August 2025 by Christian and Nick

In our podcast we pay two visits to Manchester to vada the reviews for the bars and clubs of Canal Street. On the first occasion we pop into Centre Stage, Via, Thompson's, The New Union, Cruz 101 and Company Bar while on our return visit we sample the delights of G-A-Y Manchester, The Church, The Eagle, New York New York (NYNY) and Oscars.

Fun Facts about Manchester

Manchester's name is based on the two hills which stand in between a crossing point on the River Medlock. Now these two hills were thought by the Romans to

resemble a woman’s breasts, so the place was called “Mamucium,” which means “breast-shaped hills”. In due course, the name of the city was changed to Manchester by the Normans which may be just as well.

In 1761, the Industrial Revolution started when Bridgewater Canal was opened, and Manchester became one of the cornerstones of the textile industry. It’s also the birthplace of Rolls-Royce as a result of Henry Rolls, a car salesman, and Charles Royce, an engineer, first meeting in 1904 at The Midland Hotel and agreeing to establish their automotive company. It’s also where the atom was first split by Erenst Rutherford in 1917.

Over two hundred years ago the vegetarian movement was initiated by Reverend William Cowherd, who established the first vegetarian church in the UK known as Beefsteak Chapel. And talking of movements, The Suffragette Movement was founded by Emmeline Pankhurst int Manchester in 1903.

The Manchester Gay Scene

Canal Street is the site of Manchester’s famous gay village. In the 19th Century, the area surrounding Canal Street was thriving – not with bars and clubs but with the cotton trade but when the canals were replaced by other transport methods and the cotton industry stalled, the areas around the canals became deserted. This vacuum created a red-light district, attracting sex workers and gay men to the area. Today though the pedestrianised street is lined with all sorts of gay bars and restaurants and was of course popularised by the television drama Queer as Folk which first aired on Channel 4 in February 1999.

Centre Stage

Located on Bloom Street, just behind Canal Street, Centre Stage describes itself as “Manchester’s leading venue dedicated to the songs of yesteryear, offering camp cabaret and nostalgic tunes”. It’s open from 3pm daily, offering theatre themed cocktails, running until 2am weeknights and 4am on weekends. It’s quite a small venue, decorated in red and gold, rather theatrical, with a stage right by the door, so the drag queens do sometimes pounce on unsuspecting punters!

Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/CentreStageMCR

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/centre_stage_mcr

Address: 51 Bloom St, Manchester M1 3LY

Via

Via is the self-proclaimed ‘grand dame’ of Canal Street. Formerly a carpet warehouse, it was transformed into a gay bar in 1995 and originally named Via Fossa. It’s a multi-floor venue, operating as a bar, club and restaurant, depending on the time of day, serving up a feast of live entertainment, including drag shows, tribute acts and household names: Clare Richards from Steps, Mutya Buena from the Sugababes and X Factor’s Sam Bailey have all graced the stage in recent years. Via is a true scene staple, made internationally famous through its starring role in Queer in Folk.

Website: https://www.viamanchester.co.uk/manchester

Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/Via.Canal.Street/

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/via_canal_street/

Address: 28-30 Canal St, Manchester M1 3EZ

Thompsons

Thompsons, or The Thompsons Arms, is one of the longest running LGBT+ venues in Manchester’s gay village. Located in Sackville Street, very close to the Manchester coach station, its Google profile claims it offers an array of classic cocktails, moody lighting, lounge seating and rotating events. They also have a pool table and a large smoking terrace.

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/thompsonsarms_mcr

Address: 23 Sackville St, Manchester M1 3NJ

The New Union

Built in 1865, The New Union has been frequented by gay clientele since at least World War Two, during which drag shows were held at the venue. Police raids were common in the area along with arrests of both gay men and prostitutes in the area. The two groups, however, often arranged to meet at the Union to pass themselves off as married couples. In the 1950s, the owner actually went to prison for running a

public house of ill repute!

Today the venue says this on their website: Whether it’s a quiet pint in the pub with a game of pool during the day or if you like to dance the night away into the early hours, you’ve found the right place. With drag queen DJ’s through the week and a fantastic cabaret show on a Sunday, The New Union Hotel really is a place for carefree fun and leaving your inhibitions at the door.

Website: https://newunionhotel.co.uk/

Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/NewUnionHotelShowbar/

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/newunionhotelmcr/

Address: 111 Princess St, Manchester M1 6JB

Cruz 101

Cruz 101 is a popular and long-running gay club having opened in a former shipping warehouse in 1992. In 1999 the exterior lighting and signage of the club was changed temporarily from “Cruz 101” to Babylon as a backdrop for scenes in Queer As Folk. Over the years it has hosted many famous acts, including The Weather Girls, Take That, The Nolans and Steps. These days it is open Thursdays to Sundays from 10.30 pm to 5 or 6 in the morning with a very selection of club nights.

Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/cruz101manchester

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/cruz101official

Address: 101 Princess St, The, Manchester M1 6DD

Company Bar

The TravelGay website describes Company Bar as a small popular men-only basement bar, frequented by the leather and fetish crowd – a place to be seen and to enjoy happy hour drinks that continue late into the evening.

Website: https://companybar.co.uk/

Address: 26 Richmond St, Manchester M1 3NB

G-A-Y Manchester

Part of the G-A-Y brand, the brainchild of Jeremy Joseph, the Manchester outpost was opened in 2011 in the former venue of Spirit Bar on Canal Street. Famed for its unashamedly pop soundtrack and jukebox video screens, the venue spans three floors and boasts a rooftop smoking terrace. Open from noon daily until 4am, G-A-Y provides regular drag entertainment, as well as bingo and karaoke nights.

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/gaymanchester

Address: 63 Richmond St, Manchester M1 3WB

The Church

Next up is The Church, formally known as Churchills. Located on the corner of Canal Street and Chorlton Street, you can't miss the venue as it has a giant mural of Lily Savage covering the exterior wall. Open from 3pm till late on Sundays through till Thursdays, with a 5am closing time on weekends, The Church offers a packed rota of regular nights included Waka Wak Bingo with Misty Chance every Thursday, Friday night with Bev (playing chart toppers and camp classics) and on Saturdays you can sing-a-long with Miss Coco in the afternoon, before settling down to a cabaret drag show from The Alter Girls in the evening.

Website: https://www.thechurchmcr.co.uk/

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/thechurch_mcr

Address: 37 Chorlton St., Manchester M1 3HN

The Eagle

The Eagle advertises itself as the North West's premier, men only, fetish venue. It's located on Bloom Street, just behind Canal Street and, according to their website, boasts an interior design that compliments Manchester's rich industrial history, with a nod towards plush Victoriana and Steam Punk style. Closed Monday and Tuesday, The Eagle is open till 3am on Thursdays and Sundays, and 6am on Fridays and Saturdays, with theme nights include Sunday Service with Snow White Trash, Beareoke hosted by The Moody Bear, as well as regular leather social nights.

Website: https://www.eaglemanchester.com/

Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/eaglebarmanchester

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/eaglemanchester

Address: 15 Bloom St, Manchester M1 3HZ

New York New York

For over thirty years New York New York bar has been known for its hands-in-the-air nights with music, promoting itself as Party Palace. You can expect camp tunes and cabaret whilst enjoying cocktails and canapes.

Upstairs there's a private room for birthday parties and the like, and it is very much a family run place, with many shout outs in its reviews for Tracey the owner and also Wayne, Lauren, DJ Gareth and also The Man in the Hat.

Website: https://www.newyorknewyorkbar.com/

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/newyorkbarmcr/

Address: 94-98 Bloom St, Manchester M1 3LY

Oscars

Oscars is an intimate, theatre style bar showing classic and modern musical film clips in glamorous surroundings, offering a warm welcome in the heart of Canal Street to the LGBT community and friends. The bar offers live music from singers and pianists on selected nights, serves premium wines and cocktails and plays endless showtunes which you're encouraged to sing along to.

Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/oscarsbarmcr

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/oscarsbarmcr

Address: 34 Canal St, Manchester M1 3WD

Visit www.theonetofiveguide.com for our Gay Scene Guides to: Newcastle, Brighton, Leeds, Soho, Cardiff, Birmingham, Manchester, Edinburgh, Blackpool, Glasgow, Belfast, London, Liverpool and the Regions. And finally, please remember that even if we are a little tongue in cheek in our

podcast, we do love each and every venue on the scene, and we urge you all to get out there and support your local gay bars!