

MAGIC The Gathering **GRAND PRIX BIRMINGHAM**

Grand Prix Birmingham Travel Guide 11-13 August 2017



by Tomas Sukaitis

1. General Tips

Weather: Be prepared for rain, and lots of it – carry an umbrella with you, even if it is sunny and 20C. You can never tell when the skies will open. However, chances are it will be 15-20C and not too sunny.

Electricity: 240V, 3 pin UK/Irish plug. European plugs require a simple adaptor, available for purchase in most convenience stores, supermarkets, and hotels. 110V countries require a transformer.

International phone code: +44

Time Zone: British Summer Time (UTC+1)

Emergency Services: 999 or 112.

Non-emergency police: 101

Non-emergency medical help (minor and non-life-threatening injuries): 111

2. Hotels near the event site

- Crowne Plaza Birmingham NEC 4*
- Novotel Birmingham Airport 4*
- Hilton Birmingham Metropole Hotel 4*
- Genting Hotel at Resorts World Birmingham 4*
- Ibis Styles Birmingham NEC and Airport 3*
- Premier Inn Birmingham NEC/Airport
- ibis budget Birmingham International Airport 2*

3. Hotels that are very cheap (hostels included)

If you fancy something cheaper, look at booking a hotel in the city centre – prices are much lower, and the transport to the venue is easy (see section 10).

- Hatters Hostel offers free breakfast, and is highly recommended amongst backpackers.
- Central Backpackers is also highly rated.
- Britannia Hotel New Street Station 3*
- Holiday Inn Express 3*
- Ibis Budget Birmingham Centre 2*

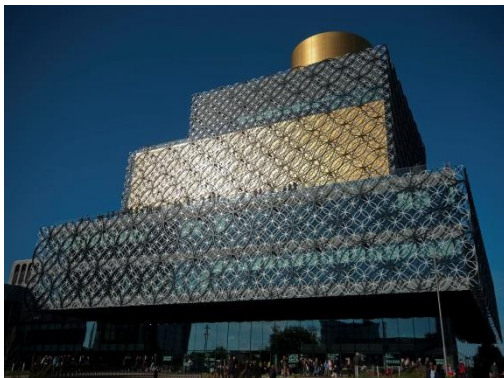
4. Most popular tourist spots

Bullring Shopping Centre

Many tourists end up in Birmingham shopping at the numerous shopping malls, the most widely known is the Bullring. Information points are scattered throughout, so don't feel overwhelmed.



Library of Birmingham, 4 Centenary Square



Birmingham hosts the largest public library in Europe, and it is a fantastic piece of architecture and one of my favourite places in the city. It was opened in 2013 by Malala Yousafzai. The top level of the library provides a home for the re-built Shakespeare Memorial Room, originally designed in 1882, a marvellous Elizabethan style room containing a comprehensive collection of Shakespeare's production.

Jewellery Quarter

Not too far from the city centre, this lovely corner of Birmingham houses the largest concentration of jewellery makers in Europe. With roughly 40% of all UK jewellery made here, there are plenty of shops to choose from if you were inclined to get yourself a set of Moxen.



Cadbury World, 84 Linden Road, B30 1LA



One of the largest attractions in Birmingham, Cadbury World is located in the grounds of the original Cadbury factory, but isn't a tour of the factory itself. Instead, you'll discover the history, the making and the magic of Cadbury confectionery as you journey through our chocolatey zones. There should be some free chocolate along the way too.

5. Places to visit that are less well known

Birmingham Back to Backs, 55-63 Hurst St, B5 4TE

A National Trust site preserving the Brummie way of life in late 19th – early 20th century. A guide will take you through a carefully restored, atmospheric courtyard of the working people's houses. Prebooking essential.

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/birmingham-back-to-backs>



Thinktank Science Museum, Curzon Street, B4 7XG

Thinktank is Birmingham's unique and award-winning science museum housed at Millennium Point in the heart of the city. This exciting attraction offers ten galleries of historical artefacts, modern interactives and fantastic futuristic facts



6. Escape rooms!

Join this popular post-GP activity with other judges: <http://www.escapelive.co.uk/escape-games/birmingham>

Look out for the forum thread by the Escape Room aficionado Dustin De Leeuw, or plan a trip with your other buddies.

7. How is the public transportation system

Bus services connect all parts of Birmingham to the city centre. A single journey costs £2.40-3, a short hop (up to a mile) ticket is £1-1.50, and day tickets are £4 or more. If you are paying on board, you need to give exact fare to the driver, as they are unable to provide change.

Midland Metro is a tram service connecting the New Street Station to Wolverhampton. Tickets range from £1 for a short hop to £6.50 for a return day ticket to Wolverhampton. Fares are purchased on board.

Taxis – hailing a cab works out to be a lot more expensive than booking one in advance.

- Uber
- TOA Taxis: 0121 427 8888
- Birmingham City Taxis: 0121 285 3672
- Birmingham Taxis: 0121 702 2000

8. Food and drink!

Britain's worldly cuisine reflects its colonial past, and many exotic dishes found their way to the British Isles. Indian curry and tandoori dishes are a must try for any food lover. Plenty of vegetarian options are available. Birmingham hosts a number of excellent Indian restaurants. Try one of these places, although booking in advance is recommended:

- Lasan Restaurant, St Paul's Square, B3 1SD
- Viceroy Tandoori, 108 Icknield Street, B18 6RZ
- Royal Watan Kashmiri Restaurant, 602 Pershore Road, Selly Park, B29 7HQ
- Rajdoot, 79 George Street, B3 1PY

For fans of more traditional British food, there are a variety of excellent pubs that will provide you with great British dishes: try fish and chips, a Shepherd's Pie, a beef burger, and wash it down with a pint of excellent beer on tap. Note that it is common for food orders to be taken at the bar, just remember your table number. Tipping is not common, but some restaurants will automatically add a 10% gratuity. Try one of these places:

- The Old Contemptibles, 176 Edmund Street, B3 2HB
- Beefeater, 3-6 Waterloo Street, B2 5PG
- All Bar One, New Street Station, B5 4AH

Of course, as a world city, major food franchises operate in Birmingham. Grand Central, which hosts the New Street rail station and the surrounding area will welcome you at Five Guys, Square Pie, Tortilla, Café Rouge, Giraffe, Wagamama's, Ed's Easy Diner, Yo-Sushi!, Pho, Handmade Burger Co., and many more are available to satisfy any particular craving. Or you can always pop in for a cheeky Nando's at the Bullring Shopping Mall, if only to have a slightly better understanding of that one particular internet meme. Cheaper options include Gregg's, McDonald's, Burger King or Tesco sandwich deals.

The NEC does not seem to have too many great options for dining, and they appear to be higher priced. If you wish to not to travel to the city centre, I would recommend Gourmet Burger Kitchen, Nando's or Las Iguanas.

9. Ways to get here

If you are flying to UK, or are a non-Brummie UK resident, you will need to take advantage of the excellent and dependable UK public transportation system. Birmingham is well connected to the rest of the country by rail, road or air.

1. Easiest way to fly in to the city

That would be Birmingham Airport (IATA code BHX, not to be confused with Birmingham, Alabama, which is BHM!). If you arrive here, you are within walking distance to the GP venue, as the airport has a direct shuttle to the Birmingham International Railway station.

2. By Rail

There are three rail stations in the city centre that provide fast and frequent connections to national destinations. The busiest one and the one you will probably arrive at is New Street Station (code BHM). Travellers from London might wish to look into travelling to Moor Street (BMO) or Snow Hill (BSW) stations as the tickets are frequently cheaper for the slower services going to these stations.

3. By Coach

There is a wide range of National Express services that call at the Digbeth Coach Station, just a few minutes from the city centre.

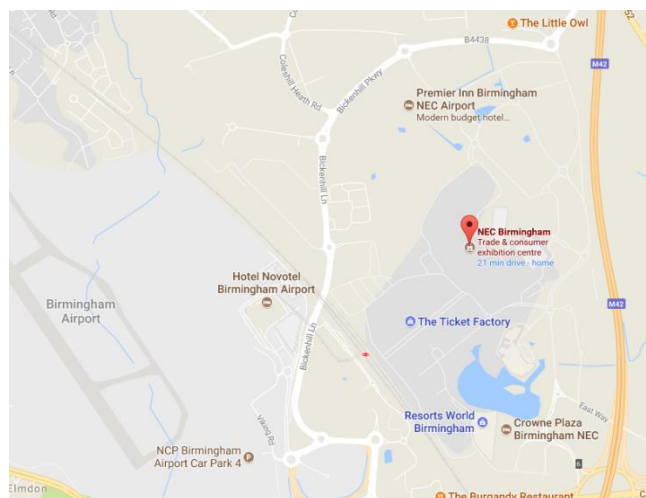
4. By Road

Birmingham is linked to the M5, M6, M40, and M42 motorway networks, as well as M6 Toll road. Be aware that there are ongoing major roadworks all around M5 and M6, and take that into account for your travel time estimations.

10. Tournament venue location, and how to get there from the airport/s. Expected time of travelling.

National Exhibition Centre – Hall 11
North Ave
Marston Green
Birmingham B40 1NT
United Kingdom

Grand Prix Birmingham will be held at the National Exhibition Centre (NEC) in Birmingham. The NEC is a 10-minute walk from Birmingham International Railway Station, where direct services to Birmingham run all day. On Sunday, 13th August, the last train to Birmingham New Street will depart at 23:56. A single ticket from New Street to Birmingham International will cost up to £3.70, and a return ticket will cost around £7. Taking a taxi from the Birmingham city centre to the venue will set you back around £30.



11. Local game stores?

There are a few local game stores in Birmingham. One of the largest ones is Manaleak Tournament Centre, located about 10 minutes away from Birmingham New Street Station, at Unit 109, The Jubilee Centre, 130 Pershore Street, B5 6ND.

Geek Retreat is also located centrally, also 10 minutes walk from Birmingham New Street Station, at 38 The Priory Queensway, B4 7LA

12. Helpful information about local security rules to follow carefully when arriving at the airport.

Birmingham is like any other major city in a western European country, generally safe, but awareness of surroundings helps, and common sense is recommended to avoid trouble. Pickpockets exist as they do everywhere. Beggars asking for spare change are usually polite, and will leave you alone if you just say 'Sorry mate'. Smile, nod, keep calm and carry on.

13. Local and other contacts

Regional Coordinator

Jack Doyle

+44 7411 207 127

scryus@gmail.com

Local L2

Tomas Sukaitis

+44 7794 828 154

sukaitis.tomas@gmail.com