

Your introduction to York

Now you've committed to at least three years at York, **Bob Higson** explains how to get the most out of it

First and foremost - welcome freshers! Congratulations on getting into this fine university. No doubt you've been excited about this moment, losing days of sleep over the prospect of the Vengaboys gracing our fair campus. The next few weeks are most likely going to pass you by in a furious blur of new faces, alcohol, awkward conversations, ducks and queues - lots and lots of queues.

Now, for some reason, the way that people talk about Freshers' Week, (in our case, fortnight) you'd think that unless you partied continually, injecting vodka for 24 hours a day, you were something of a Ming Campbell type: dull to the point of oblivion. This is, of course, utter tripe. But it is true that probably never in your life will you have as much free time, disposable income and people of the same age as you than at university. Admittedly, I'm biased. I love York, and to be honest I wouldn't swap it for anything. And here's why.

Firstly, York itself. Needless to say, York is a beautiful city steeped in tradition, history and inspiring architecture. I still remember the first time I got off the train and was confronted with city walls and the towering spires of the Minster in the distance. I'd never really seen anything like it and it still impresses me now. It's not in every city that you can pop to the shops whilst passing sights such as Clifford's Tower, or even meander down the Shambles for a sandwich. So go and explore the city and make the most of it. Should the start of your university career be daunting or the campus environment ever get too much, always remember that York is a truly fantastic place to be studying.

Freshers' Fortnight itself is a hectic bombardment of leaflets, advice, freebies and events of varying quality. If booze isn't your cup of tea, then no worries - there's still plenty to immerse yourself with. There's the York Student Cinema, for example, or RAG (Raising And Giving). For the politically minded, there are the societies of the various political parties and then groups such as Amnesty International. Your best bet is to head to the Freshers' Fair and check out all the stalls. There's a chance you'll meet your future housemates at one of these fresher events (as I did) or, equally, there's the chance you'll meet someone you want to throw into the Ouse. Either way, get out and about and get chatting.

Should you need help negotiating your way round York during the early days, there's your STYC (Second or Third Year Contact) whose job it is to help with any teething troubles. If

Spend all your loan on trainers, and you'll only have beans to eat.

Image by Ed Maier



you're unsure of anything, contact them and they will more than happy to help. College porters, though pesky when they nick your footballs in the summer, are also founts of knowledge about who to speak to and where to go when

bleary-eyed and yes, there is duck shit everywhere, but I still think it's ace.

York's greatest strength though is its dizzying number of clubs and societies to join. Try and think of a society that hasn't been thought of and chances are it exists. If it doesn't, then you can always get up and create it yourself and the Students' Union will help you do so.

Just look at YUSU's A-Z list of societies on their website: Comedy Soc, Hitch to Morocco Soc, Love Soc, Medieval Re-enactment Soc, Poker Soc, and so on. Fancy an in-depth convo about Karl and Susan's recent smooch - there's Neighbours Soc. Not liking the words of your humble narrator? Well, come and write for Nouse then!

Here in York, you may come to love your college, or hate it, but either way, it forms part of the day-to-day experience for most of us. The different colleges form a social structure - a sort of university family each with their own defining foibles, charms and characteristics. Derwent would be the trendy teenager, forever aiming to be as cool as possible; Halifax, the second-cousin no-one ever visits and Langwith, the pissed uncle who turns up late and ruins it for

everybody.

As York operates a collegiate system you can also get involved through joining the Junior Common Room Committees. This is not only a great way to meet new people, but also to get your say in how you want to see your university run. After all, you're the one paying to be here so if you want to see something done, then tell people come election time.

For the athletic amongst us, there are many opportunities to play college sport. Quality and years of experience is not essential; enthusiasm and simply turning up goes a long way. Try your hand at squash, footy, rugby, tennis, ultimate Frisbee - just look out for team signing up sheets around your college and speak to your college sports reps. University sports trials are mostly held in week 1 - check yusu.org for details.

York's Achilles Heel, however - and a big one at that - is its club-scene. Indeed, club-life centres on drunken nights in Ziggy's and Toffs. I recommend trying both, though it's not for everybody (when your nose stumbles into someone's armpit on a sweaty Wednesday night you'll see what I mean). Having said that, Leeds is half an hour away by train with regular services. Still, there are some great pubs, bars and cafés in York that deserve a visit. For example there's Fibbers, who book some cracking bands - October showcases The Young Knives, Ed Harcourt and MTV 2's Gonzo on Tour.

Make the most of your first few weeks here. Get to know people. Should you find yourself sat in your room with nothing but the walls as company, go knock on your neighbour's door. Try and involve yourself with people from your course too by going to the free departmental get-togethers - free drink and food, if anything - can't be bad. Remember: help is at hand for those who find it all a bit daunting, and I truly wish you the best!

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slightly confused.

It's certainly a quirky place. My jaw hit the floor when I moved into my room in Langwith to find out that Jimmy Hendrix, my hero, had played in the hall opposite my bedroom window a few decades before. Yes, the buildings look so hideously monstrous that even Lawrence Llewelyn-Bowen would recoil in horror; yes, Central Hall looks like a cosmic toasty-maker when

Socialise with these people at your peril

One Night Wonder

You've had a few in the campus bar and suddenly a hormone-fuelled wave of euphoria renders the boy or girl in the corner rather attractive. "Why not?", you reason. It's weeks later amidst deathly awkward chit-chat in Costcutters that you'll feel the pangs of regret. Remember folks: York is a very small place.

The Second Year Perv

A usual subset of the first group (although only if you let them, boys and girls!) "fresh meat" and "new blood" are phrases I've heard countless times. Not many second or third years go to the campus events, so if do you see one skulking on the dance floor periphery eyeing up unsuspecting freshers, be wary.

The Boring Gapper

A familiar stereotype, but still sadly prevalent at York, especially during Freshers' Week. Although for the sake of politeness we may initially appear interested, there's only so long we can listen to inane stories of how you spent £2,000 'finding yourself' washing toilet huts in the depths of Outer Mongolia.