

Home

GOING PLACES LARK LANE, LIVERPOOL

Safely off the tourist trail, L17 has a quirky mix of shops and a feisty boho feel. By Sue Chester



Scouse proud
Restaurants and
cafes line Lark
Lane. Below, the
palm house at
Sefton Park



Why it's hot Lark Lane is away from Liverpool's touted waterfront and off the touristy Beatles track, but the bars, cafes, restaurants and vintage shops of the L17 conservation area – and its surrounds – are becoming a big draw for locals and visitors alike. The brightly painted shopfronts advertise everything from tattoo parlours and local arts and crafts to recording studios, and the Co-op had to toe the boho line when it tried to squeeze in the action, adopting an artisan-style facade to help overcome local opposition.

The Lark Lane area has followed a stealthy but increasingly well-trodden path to popularity over the past couple of decades, as creative types set up shop and students stuck around to buy in a diverse neighbourhood where Georgian mansions and Victorian terraces sit side by side with council estates.

At the north end is the gorgeous grade I listed oasis of Sefton Park, with a palm house and festivals, and there's often something on at the Old Police Station, a community centre where you can feel the defiantly independent local spirit.

Why it's not All the lonely people? You won't find them here. Half of Liverpool seems to gather in Lark Lane for fun nights at the many eateries and bars. The ring of laughter and a struggle for parking spaces come with the territory. If it's solitude you're after, look elsewhere.

Education, education, education

Schooling is a big pull here. St Michael in the Hamlet, St Charles' and Greenbank state primaries are all rated good by Ofsted, as are St Hilda's, St Margaret's and Bellevere secondaries. There are a couple of private options in Lark Lane, the Belvedere Academy and Clarendon College Montessori School. The city's only grammar, the outstanding Blue Coat, is a couple of miles away on the other side of the park, as is Liverpool College, a former independent that became an academy in 2013.

Get connected St Michaels station, a 10-minute walk away, is on Merseyrail Network's Northern Line, with four trains



SEFTON DRIVE

Close to Sefton Park's northern boundary, and just into L8, this period semi is set in mature gardens. It has five bedrooms, three bathrooms and two living rooms; there's also a self-contained one-bedroom basement flat that could be let.

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VOCAL LOCAL

Nikki Girvan, 35, a PR manager, moved to Beechdale Road, in an enclave of streets near Sefton Park known as the Dales, in 2010. She was returning to the city after a spell working in London, and paid £155,000 for her three-bedroom terraced home.

Born and brought up in Allerton and Huyton, in the south of the city, Girvan enjoys the Lark Lane lifestyle. "There's so much going on, it's a lovely place to live," she says. "My dad was a butcher and shopkeeper, so I support that drive to retain independent businesses."

As a keen runner and foodie, she finds plenty to keep her busy. "You can't move for bars and restaurants. If you're interested in sports, there's almost everything available in Sefton Park, including the Kadampa Meditation Centre, which has a cafe where they do mindfulness sessions for adults and kids."

an hour to Liverpool Central (seven minutes) or in the other direction to Liverpool South Parkway, where you can pick up a bus to Liverpool John Lennon airport. Buy a bus pass and you can use both Stagecoach and Arriva services on the frequent 82A and 82B services between the city centre and the airport.

Broadband connectivity isn't an issue: speeds of 200Mbps are standard.

Be seen in Bistro Rhubarb has a cosy vibe – it's a converted public lavatory – and offers breakfast, brunch (try the Skinny Rhubarb cocktail) and drinks from 9am to midnight, seven days a week. The family-run Belly offers a taste of Turkey, including homemade baklava. Or there's a real ale at prices in the Albert, a Victorian grandee that's about to have a conservation-approved makeover.

Buy in Aigburth Drive, overlooking Sefton Park, is first choice for an affordable semi. "You can guarantee they'll go within a day or two," says Mark Russell, manager of Venmore estate agency. Many of the 19th-century ship owners' mansions have been converted: two-bedroom flats can sell for £195,000.

Off Lark Lane, Hadassah Grove's Georgian and Victorian homes are also sought-after. Here you're looking at more than £500,000 for a seven-bedroom terrace. Lark Lane's southern end leads into Aigburth Road, one of the city's main arteries, where three- and four-bedroom family semis with gardens typically sell for £300,000.

Why we love it Socially democratic and architecturally eclectic, with great parks and schools.

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IVANHOE ROAD

A short stroll from the buzz of Lark Lane, this freehold one-bedroom duplex has a large open-plan living room/kitchen, with a 14ft x 12ft bedroom and bathroom downstairs. It was recently refurbished – and there's no chain.

0151 733 9000, venmores.co.uk