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University of
Reading

Student Local Guide

CREATED FOR STUDENTS, BY STUDENTS

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student-friendly cafés. V
pancakes, espresso, or
hangouts are perfect

Roll, Recharge: The B
and Around Reading for

Take a break from deadlines and

Welcome

As your Student Local Guides, we're really excited to welcome you to our town and campus. Over the years studying here, we've come to really appreciate this place, and we want to share that with you. There's so much going on here for you to explore, but most importantly, there's a strong community that brings the town to life, helps people who need a hand, and creates plenty of opportunities for personal growth, enjoyment, and making the most of your time here.

We want to share everything we've learnt; all the tips, places, and social experiences we've gathered during our time here, plus recommendations from other students and locals so you can explore and enjoy Reading from day one. Who knows, maybe you'll love it so much you'll want to stay after graduation. It happens more often than you might think. Whether you're into trying new food spots, catching theatre shows or cinema screenings, discovering historic walks around town, going on countryside hikes, finding cute study spaces, or enjoying music and dance, there's plenty here to get excited about.

This guide is here to help you discover, explore, and make your time here even better.

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Scan the QR code to listen to our podcast UoR Voice Episode 3 | Community with a focus on Art

Reading: The Best Nature
sunset bike rides. All

What do your Student Local Guides love about Reading?

Ajibola:

“I love everything about Reading. I've had the pleasure of exploring all the areas in Reading and had the opportunities to see places change over time. In my expert opinion the best places in town are Boom Battle Bar and Monty's.”



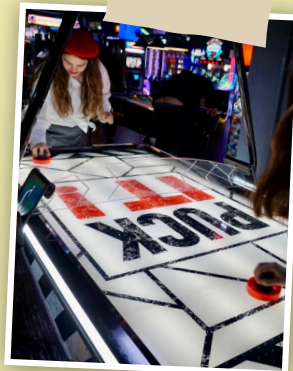
Daria:

“I love hiking around Reading, exploring small villages, and meeting sheep along the way. Two of my favourite spots were Braziers Park in Oxfordshire and Welford Park in Newbury, which has a beautiful snowdrop season from January to March.”



Kimberly:

“I love playing sports and keeping active, I enjoy using the SportsPark facilities and the tennis courts around Loddon and Cintra park. There are so many places around Reading where you can get some fresh air and keep active, like Palmer and Cintra Park.”



Rosy:

“I love doing the beautiful walk along the Thames path to Henley, checking out the local charity shops, then sitting by the water and having a drink or two before getting the train home.”

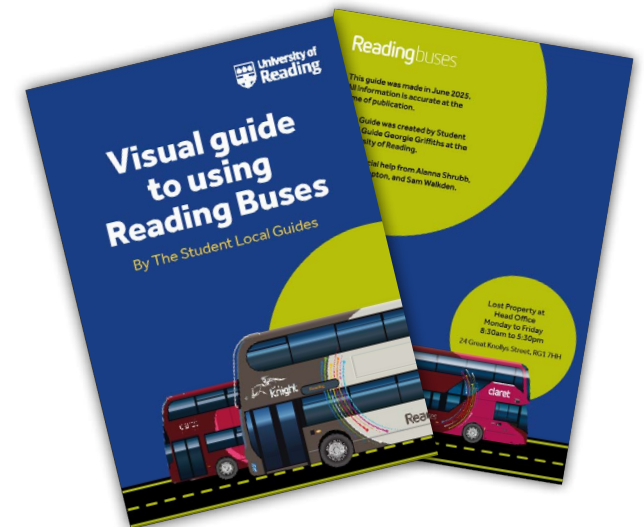


Georgie:

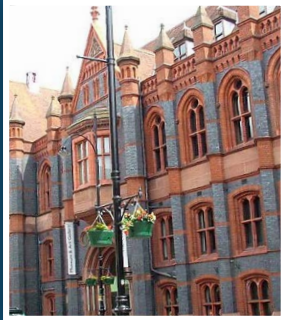
“I really love playing board games! I travel over to Eclectic Games every Monday to play Lorcana with my friends.”

Top tips and advice for travel

Check out Georgie's visual guide to getting the bus for some tips on navigating the buses as well as information about train travel and sustainable travel options.



Arts and culture



Reading Museum

📍 Town Hall, Blagrove Street, RG1 1QH right next to the Reading's local museum showcasing the history of Reading from the Saxon times to now. Learn about Huntley and Palmer's Biscuit factory and the influence they had on the town. See the Victorian copy of the Bayeux Tapestry depicting the battle of 1066.

Student Local Guide Tip: *Keep an eye out for special exhibitions held at the museum.*

Reading Rep Theatre

📍 Kings Rd, RG1 4LY

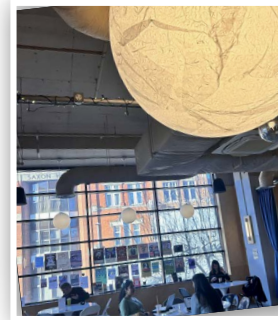
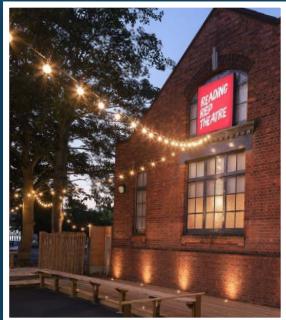
Known for bold, imaginative productions that rework classics and spotlight new voices, Reading Rep has earned national recognition. Their programme includes touring shows and National Theatre Live broadcasts bringing top tier London theatre straight to Reading. It's about a 1 mile walk from campus, heading in the direction of Palmer Park.

Ticket Info:

Students can usually get tickets with a 70% discount off the standard £22 ticket price. Under 30s can also grab £5 tickets during the first week of performances, with code 30UNDER (limited to 30 tickets per show).

Look out for captioned performances especially helpful if English isn't your first language.

Student Local Guide Tip: *Volunteering as an usher is the ultimate student hack: free tickets, hands-on experience, and a great way to connect with Reading's theatre scene.*



Reading Biscuit Factory

📍 1 Queens Walk, RG1 7QE (next to Broads Street Mall)

Reading's go-to indie cinema and cultural hub, with films, live music, comedy nights, a rooftop terrace, Board games, and even a record store. Students can enjoy £4.95 films on Tuesdays, plus concessions year-round with student ID (£6.99) – buy at the till to save the booking fee. There's always something going on, from themed quizzes to creative workshops or board game nights. It's also a great study spot.



Credit: GuideDaria Svitalo

The Rising Sun Arts Centre

📍 30 Silver Street, RG1 2ST

A friendly volunteer-run space with live music, theatre, comedy, dance classes, art markets, and creative workshops. Most events are just £3–5, making it an easy and affordable way to get involved in Reading's cultural life. You can also volunteer, help run events, or get involved in regular workshops and creative sessions.

Student Local Guide Tip: *Try the Thursday night African drumming workshop; £5 entry, great energy, and a welcoming community vibe.*

South Street Arts Centre

📍 21 South Street, RG1 4QU

Buzzing venue hosting touring theatre, comedy, live music, and poetry nights. The monthly Poet's Café is a relaxed open-mic where you can perform or just soak up the atmosphere. It's also home to bold local companies like RedCape Theatre, known for experimental and thought-provoking work. South Street even takes performances beyond its walls with SITELINES – staging shows in unexpected places like post office vans and car parks. Concession tickets are generally around £13 and Poet's cafe is £4.



Walk and listen

Terry's Reading Walkabouts – discover Reading's hidden Stories.

Terry's Reading Walkabouts take you off the beaten path to explore lesser known corners and surprising stories of Reading. From tales of the town's architectural evolution to the origins of its photographic heritage, each tour brings a unique narrative to life. Tours run on various dates, with a small fee of £5 or a £10 donation, all of which supports local charities. Check the website and Facebook page for the latest updates and booking information.

Reading's Audio Trails – hear the town's stories come alive as you explore Reading on foot.

Discover Reading's hidden stories with two free self guided audio trails, perfect for exploring the town's rich history at your own pace. No ifs, No buts, Only Gingernuts: Huntley & Palmers Journey takes you from Market Place to London Street, sharing the history of the famous biscuit factory and its workers.

Pies, Pints and Protest – The Hidden Worlds of Castle Street & St Mary's Butts uncovers local legends and historic tales from up to 500 years ago, guided by BBC presenter Fiona Talkington. Both trails are easy to access on your smartphone with headphones. Start your adventure and learn more at Reading Borough Council's Audio Trails page or by searching the titles on SoundCloud.



Nature and green spaces



Caversham Court Gardens

Just across the river from central Reading, Caversham Court Gardens is a peaceful green escape ideal for a riverside picnic, quiet read, or gentle walk under the trees. It's around a 40 minute walk from Whiteknights campus and open daily from 11.00–17.00.

Don't miss the volunteer run tea kiosk (seasonal) serving homemade cakes with a Thames view.

Student Local Guide Tip:

Make a tour through Caversham neighbourhood. Browse NOOD store for organic skincare and cute gifts, grab a bite at vegan café Vegivores, and explore the great charity shops.

Forbury Gardens & Abbey Ruins

Take the 20 or 21 bus from campus and get off just after Duke Street (15 minute journey)

Pretty gardens with colourful flowerbeds in the summer, the iconic Maiwand Lion statue, and the medieval Abbey Ruins to stroll around. Great for picnics and chill vibes.

Fobney Island Nature Reserve

Island Road, Reading, RG2 0RP

A peaceful wetland haven really near the centre of town with reed beds, wildflower meadows, and a beautiful canal path, it's perfect for spotting kingfishers and dragonflies.

Dinton Pastures

Davis Street, Hurst, Wokingham, RG10, 0TH or take the 13 or 14 bus from town

Lakes, meadows, adventure playground, toilets and a café. You can kayak, paddleboard, or just stroll with ducks.

Maiden Erleigh Local Nature Reserve

Instow Road, Earley, Reading, RG6 5QH take 21 bus from town get off at Marefield Woodland trails, a small lake, and loads of wildlife, this is a little haven really near campus! Nice if you want to switch it up from the campus lake, similar vibes.

Thames Valley Park

Thames Valley Park, RG6 1PU—about a 2 mile walk from campus

Riverside trails and nature walks with epic sunset views. Calm, quiet, and super scenic. A hidden gem for a de-stress chill, walk or bike ride. Check out the wooded areas and keep an eye out for herons!

Student Local Guide Tip:

Keep an eye on Thames Valley Park's events page, some activities are totally free and perfect for a budget-friendly day out.



Walking routes

The Cunning Man pub

This is one of our favourites, it takes approximately 1.5 hours to walk there from campus. We recommend going via Waterloo Meadows and following the Kennet path to maximise time in green space. The pub has a great garden, and there is even a bus stop right outside the pub that goes back to Reading town centre (2a lime) if you don't fancy the walk home!

Sonning Bridge along the Thames Path

A gorgeous walk that takes about 1.5 hours from campus. There are a few pubs and restaurants in Sonning if you need to refuel before the walk home! If you fancy going further, you can continue the walk along the Thames Path to Shiplake (2.5 hours total) or Henley (4 hours total), and then get the train back to Reading instead! Train tickets are approximately £5 if you have a railcard and can be bought at the station.

Thames Riverside – Caversham to Pangbourne (or part way!)

Start from Caversham Riverside next to the train station and follow the Thames Path heading west toward Pangbourne, one of the most scenic countryside stretches near Reading. Early on, you'll pass Caversham Court Gardens, a peaceful riverside spot perfect for a coffee or picnic under the trees. The full walk to Pangbourne takes about 2.5–3 hours one way (around 6.5 miles), but you don't have to do it all. Mapledurham Farm or Purley make great halfway options.

Berkshire Walkers – Sunday Plans Sorted

Sometimes it's hard to rally your friends or make plans that go beyond the group chat but that's where Berkshire Walkers comes in. This friendly group for people in their 20s and 30s run weekly hikes; you can just turn up so no planning needed. Walks often start in Reading or nearby towns, and take you through woodlands, snowdrop valleys, vineyard paths, and more, with pub stops and post-hike socials along the way. Your first three walks are free, and student membership is just £2.50/month. "Search Berkshire Walkers" on Meetup to see what's coming up!

Student Local GuideTip: *If you want to go a little further afield, the app 'AllTrails' is free and has loads of great routes!*



Food and drink



Coffee Under Pressure (C.U.P)

📍 53 St Mary's Butts, RG1 2LG (next to Minster Church),
7 Blagrove Street, RG1 1PJ (near the train station,
heading toward Market Square bus stop)

Dog friendly café with specialty hot chocolates, teas,
and even a Freddo Espresso to try. This coffee shop is
for hanging out with friends and sharing pastries!



Seven Flowers and Tea

📍 4 Cross Street, Reading RG1 1SN

Price range: £5 for most tea options, cakes and
muffins (try the mango/passion fruit sponge)

Student Local Guide Tip:

*It's important to take a break, University can be
full on so this is the perfect place to relax and
treat yourself!*



Madoo: Italian deli & cafe

📍 10 – 14 Duke Street, Reading RG1 4RU

Price range: Sandwiches (£6.20-£6.90), drinks,
(£1.80-£5.50), salad/boxes (£6.50-£8)

Weekdays: 7:30 am to 6pm, Weekends: 9am to 6pm

Student Local Guide Tip:

*Madoo's Italian design really makes it a stand
out cafe, along with the amazing assortment of
different pastas and condiments, not forgetting
the incredible hot chocolate!*



Café Yolk

📍 44 Erleigh Road, Reading, RG1 5NA

14 Wokingham Road, Reading, RG6 1JG

Tucked away on Erleigh Road in Reading, Café Yolk is
a bright and bustling brunch spot loved by locals and
students. Known for its sunny décor and friendly
service, it serves up generous portions of all-day
breakfast classics, from Canadian fry-ups to veggie
and gluten free options. Weekdays: 8am-3pm.
Weekends: 8am-4pm



Blue Collar Corner

📍 15 Hosier Street, next to Broad Street Mall

This open-air food court is a lively weekend favourite
with rotating street food vendors, outdoor seating,
and a buzzing atmosphere that's ideal for group
hangouts or casual evenings. Expect everything from
stacked burgers to bao buns and loaded fries, plus
a bar serving local beers and cocktails. There's often
live music or DJs on the weekends too, which adds to
the festival-like vibe.



Fluffy Fluffy

📍 Kings Walk, 19-23 Kings Street Reading, RG1 2HG

A cool dessert spot famous for its super light
Japanese soufflé pancakes. They've got loads of tasty
toppings like tiramisu and Nutella, plus croffles and
matcha lattes. The vibe is cosy and stylish, making it
a great place for a sweet study break or hanging out
with friends. Students get 10% off their order plus they
tend to do special students deals during
Welcome Week.

Escape the library and explore Reading's top
student-friendly cafés. Whether you're
pancakes, espresso, or hangouts

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Nights out and live music

Purple Turtle – Reading's iconic Indie nightlife hub

Since the 1990s, Purple Turtle has been a cornerstone of Reading's alternative scene – a gritty, multi-level venue known for its musical excellence, bold décor (Dracula basement and vibrant graffiti walls), and electrifying atmosphere. Most music nights are free, featuring everything from indie and punk to reggae, reggaetón, and visiting bands from across the UK and Europe. Drinks are reasonably priced, with cocktails from around £7.50 and plenty of beer and cider on tap. With its big courtyard and late night hours (open till 3am most nights), it's a staple of Reading's underground nightlife.

The Butler – live music at Reading's Oldest Pub

Unlike Purple Turtle, The Butler is more laid back; no dancing, just good music, quizzes, and open mic nights with a smaller, cosier crowd. It's perfect if you want a fun night out without the club buzz, with cheap drinks and friendly faces. A great spot to relax, catch up with friends, or meet new people after a busy day.

Siren Brewery – local craft beer near Reading station

Siren Brewery stands out with its sleek, urban design and lively atmosphere, offering a fresh take on the classic English pub. Just a short walk from Reading Station on Station Hill, it's the perfect spot to enjoy local craft beers brewed right here in Berkshire. They've even released an exclusive lager called Show Your Stripes, inspired by the Climate Stripes developed at the University of Reading. Plus, enjoy 2-for-1 on selected drinks Monday to Thursday between 5pm and 7pm, a great reason to drop by after lectures!

Milk Bar – award-winning cocktails & creative vibes

Milk Bar is Reading's award-winning independent cocktail bar, loved for its retro interiors, vinyl DJ sets, and laid-back creative energy. It's a go-to for students and locals looking for something cooler than chain pubs. Happy Hour runs from 5–7pm (Sunday–Friday) with two cocktails for £12.50, and on Wednesdays, there's a third off top-shelf spirits. DJs spin every Friday and Saturday, while jazz nights offer a chilled midweek alternative. Stylish, social, and always buzzing, Milk is a local gem.



Berkshire Artistree – where Reading's Music scene comes alive

It's great to know all the local bars, but keeping up with the most exciting gigs and events can be tricky. If you're a music fan, Berkshire Artistree is the perfect way to stay in the loop. This online hub collects all the info on live gigs, open mic nights, and music quizzes happening around town. Most events are free or really affordable. Follow their website and socials to never miss out on the best local sounds.

Boom Battle Bar

📍 12–14 Station Rd, Reading RG1 1JX

Prices: augmented reality darts (£45 8 per lane for 55 minutes), beer/prosecco pong (£35 or £40 up to 6 per table), axe throwing (£17 per person).

Boom Battle Bar is the ultimate indoor playground to have fun with your friends! You can play epic games including axe throwing, shuffleboard and darts.

Student Local Guide Tip: *This is a great place if you don't want to drink alcohol.*



Activities and leisure

Eclectic Games

📍 Town Centre, 21 Duke Street.

Winner of the 2024 Retailer of the year: Reading's major board game retailer with a games room and board game library. Eclectic sell a range of popular and niche board games, including trading card games and traditional board games. Board game events are run in their games room, with a board game library of over 2000 games! Follow their events calendar on their website and keep an eye out for their FREE board game nights run most half terms.

Open Monday to Friday – 11am–7pm and Saturday & Sunday 10am–6pm.

Price: To use the games room upstairs, board game nights cost £5 per person, with differing prices for other events.

Student Local Guide Tip: Book your ticket online for free board game nights, to make sure you don't miss out on getting a space!

Urban Fun Arcade

📍 Broad Street Mall, RG1 7QE, just take the 20 or 21 bus from campus towards St Mary's Butts.

Reading's brand new arcade, complete with a Dance Dance Revolution machine, Augmented Reality darts, pool, air hockey, a private karaoke booth, and loads of well stocked games. It's a fun spot to blow off steam whether you're competing with friends or just need a solo dance break. You can either load up an arcade card (starting at £10 for 100 tokens) or pay £15 for two hours of unlimited play – a great deal if you're planning a longer visit.

Student Local Guide Tip: Top up your arcade card with a friend and share the cost or visit for Half Price Wednesdays to get 50% off specific games.



Spinners

📍 Queens Walk, RG1 7QF

Located next to Broad Street Mall, Spinners is a stylish social gaming venue perfect for groups or date nights. It has a 12-hole mini-golf course with blossom trees and water features, boutique style bowling lanes, and interactive darts.

The bar serves artisan pizzas, creative cocktails, and a relaxed atmosphere that mixes fun with comfort. Spinners offers a unique blend of games, food, and nightlife, making it a go-to spot for casual competition and memorable evenings in the heart of the town. Roughly £10-30 per person.

Student deals

15% off games booked online with code RDGSOST15 (Sun-Thurs only) and 50% off your second activity with code RDG50 (Mon-Thurs only)

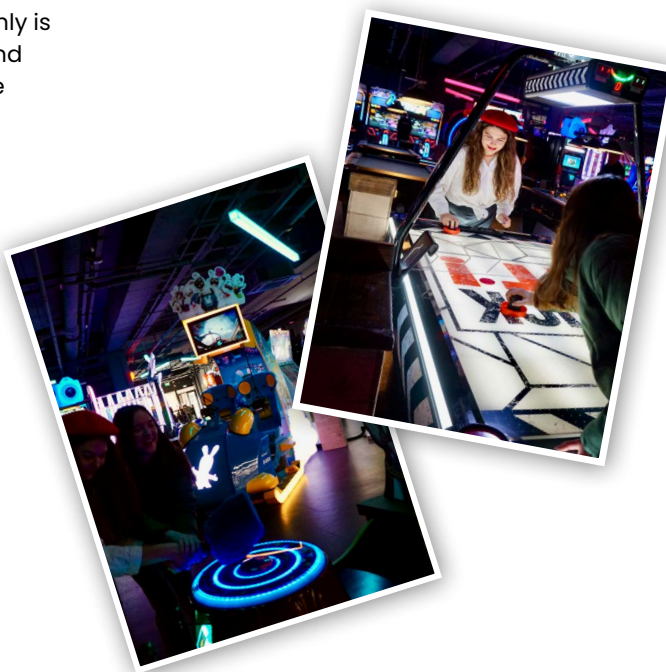
Wokingham Super Bowl

📍 Wellington Rd, Wokingham RG40 2NJ

Wokingham Super Bowl is in the heart of Wokingham town centre. Not only is the bowling great, you can also find arcades, laser tag and grab some cheap food and drinks.

Student Local Guide Tip:

Next door you can find the leisure centre and library so you can plan a full day in Wokingham with a book and a swim!



Oxygen trampoline park

📍 8 Bridgewater Close, Reading, RG30 1JT

Oxygen is a giant indoor trampoline park where you can bounce, flip, and climb your way through 60 minutes of Open Play (£15.50 per person). It's perfect for blowing off steam with friends, and there's more than just trampolines: think dodgeball, climbing walls, and a giant inflatable course. Grab the Play Together ticket to get 4 jumpers in for the price of 3. You'll need special Oxygen grip socks to jump (you can't bring your own, but they sell them onsite and they're reusable). A fun, active way to switch things up without leaving town.



Off-campus study spaces

Reading Biscuit Factory

📍 Queens Walk, Reading RG1 7QE

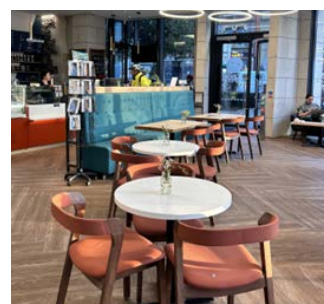
Study sessions served with flat whites and people watching. Need a break from the usual library scene? The Biscuit Factory is a great place to study on weekdays; it's quiet from 10 AM to 5 PM, with chill music, comfy seating, good coffee, and plenty of plugs.

There's a cool, creative vibe here: Stylish people, friendly atmosphere, and even a sunny terrace if you fancy working outdoors. Wi-Fi is easy to access with any drink or snack (the password's on the receipt), and the café's perfect for a mid-session coffee break. If you're a regular, grab an annual membership for 15% off food and drinks plus six free cinema ticket.

Reading Central Library

📍 Civic Centre, Bridge Street, RG1 2LU

While the university library is great, sometimes you need a quiet spot elsewhere – maybe during your commute, while you're in town, or just for a change of scenery. Reading Central Library has peaceful study areas, free Wi-Fi, and plenty of plug sockets ideal for solo focus time. You can register online or in person just bring proof of your name and current address. Keep an eye out for free events too, from craft clubs to board games and author talks.



Atrium

📍 Atrium Café is inside the Greyfriars Church, just off Friar Street and a few minutes' walk from Broad Street Mall.

The cafe is located inside a beautiful church building, and offers a welcoming environment to everyone.

Student Local Guide tip: When you're not studying, try to talk to people, it's a great way to mingle with the locals in town and acclimate to town life, especially if you're from a smaller town or village.

STUDY



Where to Study in Reading:
Libraries, and Peaceful Spaces

Looking for more recommendations?

Scan the QR code to explore our Local Area Google Map, here to help you discover even more recommendations for the local area!



Find our seasonal calendar of events and ways to connect with the community on Essentials:

reading.ac.uk/essentials/community



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exhibited the highest
ion and skill, earning high marks
judges and applause from
ers.

Switch to your study
Libraries, and Peaceful Spaces for
Reading weekday focus
And a calm atmosphere
more unique, try the Atrium
with a welcoming community feel.

EXPLORE