



Art Hostel: An Artist's Haven



The Art Hostel is a project designed to welcome and host visitors to Leeds in an individual and inspiring setting, whilst showcasing some of the very best artists the City has to offer.

Welcoming visitors to Leeds

Developed by East Street Arts, the project hopes to welcome guests from Leeds and further afield, and engage them in the City's cultural history – from tasting a pint of local real ale to popping down to the Henry Moore Institute.

The concept for the Art Hostel was born over 10 years ago, in the hope of giving artists from all over the world a place to come and exchange ideas whilst exploring the City.

Funded by a Kickstarter campaign which raised £6,000, East Street Arts have secured a 5-year lease on the beautiful City Centre building. Each room has been designed by a different artist, giving the space an eclectic feel – it provides a unique and interesting living space for the visitors, with each room themed differently; from furry ceilings to nautical history.



We chatted to Art Hostel Manager Rhian Aitken as she gave us a sneak peek at the hostel before it opens to the general public in May – and we can tell you, it looks amazing!

Talking us through the concept behind the Art Hostel, Rhian explained East Street Art's hope to show fellow artists the real Leeds:

“When we send artists over to different parts of Europe they are hosted with other artists, and, sadly, when we’ve brought artists to Leeds they’ve ended up in little beige, generic hotel rooms where they sit until their exhibition. They don’t get to see the proper underbelly of the City, experience our vibrant culture, meet the other artists, or spend time with normal, everyday, Leeds-y type people - and they miss out on a bit of good Yorkshire hospitality, which is a shame!”

Alternative tourist information

The East Street Arts team have set up in a wonderful central location on Kirkgate. This is excellent for the guests, as they can easily access travel links across Yorkshire – being so close to the bus and train stations allows for easy access to culture around the county, taking guests out to Yorkshire Sculpture Park, or Howarth.

The location is perfect for getting around the City and its sights, and Rhian says they plan to offer alternative tourist information to patrons:

“The aim is getting like-minded people together, and showing them the best of our fair City! We’ll be the anti-tourist information centre – the cultural, alternative view of Leeds, if you like.”

Unique layout

The dorm rooms have the most amazing bunks, all overlapping and intersecting at odd angles – almost like a game of Jenga with beds. Although the spaces aren't yet occupied, it doesn't take much to imagine the rooms buzzing and full of vibrancy.



There are plenty of different room options for people looking to stay at the Art Hostel, as well as the chance to catch an exhibition. Rhian

explains:

“We have this lovely building, and we’ve got an exhibition space in the basement where we’re aiming to have about four exhibitions a year. There are two big dorm rooms, so you can either just hire a bed in the room, or hire the whole room with a group of friends. There are a few twins as well, if there are only two of you and you don’t want to share in the larger one.”

Bespoke features

From beautiful lamps made of old packing fabric designed by Alison Smith, to a big metal winch in one of the dorm rooms that has been painted gold to make it look ornamental, everything in the hostel is bespoke. Even the bunkbeds have been tailor-made, so you can sleep easy knowing the entire Art Hostel experience is totally unique (no pun intended).

Precious Art Collective’s room is particularly memorable, with a hot pink fluffy ceiling that gives the room a fun touch – something often missing from more conventional city accommodation. Lorna Barrowclough and Hondartza Fraga of Curio.sea.tea have created a room which celebrates travel and the sea, combining cartography with art, and adorning the room with travel-themed talismen and charms to keep you safe while travelling – fitting for a hostel!

Drew Millward has made some incredible curtains, wallpaper, and a floor graphic made up of geometric interlocking owls, paying homage to Leeds’ animal patrons. In fact, he was so pleased with the results that he’s thinking of creating a stand-alone range of curtains and cushions to be available to the general public.



Looking around the hostel, it's clear that this is a uniquely creative space made which a lot of love and hard work has gone into – it's a testament to all of the organisers and artists, and will be a real feather in the City's cultural hat. Get down there in May – you won't be disappointed!

You can follow Art Hostel on [Twitter](#) or like their [Facebook page](#).



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Photography provided by Mark Wheelwright

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