



# Get away for... THE WEEKEND!

‘Steel’ away to Sheffield for a cutting-edge break  
in a ‘green’ city where sparks still fly

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHY: Carol Kubicki

**A**s we sat outside our van enjoying the views across fields and woodland in evening sunshine with birds singing and bees buzzing among the flowers, we marvelled at how Fox Hagg Farm is such a peaceful rural spot that is just a few miles from Sheffield’s bustling centre.

Sheffield has reinvented itself since its industrial era. In the 1930s, George Orwell described it as ‘the ugliest town in the Old World’ with a river ‘bright yellow with some chemical or other’ and ‘chimney beyond chimney, fading away into a dim blackish haze’. Today, Sheffield is still proud to make steel, but it also holds its head up as a green city, peppered with parks, woodland and green corridors.

I thought about Orwell’s words as we explored Abbeydale Industrial Hamlet, now a rustic collection of workshops arranged

around a cobbled courtyard and surrounded by trees. As I felt the weight of a rusty scythe blade left on a bench, I shut my eyes to imagine the cacophony and stench I would have found here 100 years ago when they made crucible steel and scythes.

The site is a time capsule; little appears to have been tidied away since it was abandoned in the 1930s. Workshops are littered with rusty tools. Looking like Roman amphora, clay crucibles were made at Abbeydale, filled with the ingredients for steel and placed in the furnace to produce crucible steel.

Every stage of the industrial process happened here. In one workshop sparks flew as a man sharpened the blade of a sword on a stone grinder. He explained that the swords were being made for Royal Navy officers. “One sword can take between 30 ►



*Why?*... To explore history and culture  
in a lively and green city surrounded  
by stunning countryside



MAIN Enjoying the views  
on Stanage Edge

FAR LEFT Relaxing in Sheffield  
Peace Garden

BELOW LEFT Kelham Island was  
once a centre for metal working

BELOW RIGHT Even a pub has  
a colourful wall painting





## US AND OUR 'VAN



*Carol Kubicki...*

and her husband, Anthony, use their camper to pursue their hobbies of walking and cycling while exploring the historical and natural environments



2015 Devon Tempest on a 2.3-litre Renault Master. At 5.5m, we think our Devon is enormous and luxurious

and 60 minutes to grind, depending on the size," he told us.

Watching people labour is hot work and we headed off in search of ice cream. Local folklore tells that Sheffield, like Rome, was built on seven hills, although in reality Sheffield probably has more than seven! On the slopes of one hill on the edge of the city is Our Cow Molly ice cream parlour and we enjoyed excellent cornets with a view over the city.

From our campsite we walked up another hill to Fox Hagg Nature Reserve 10 minutes away. This lovely patchwork of birch woodland and bilberry bushes is criss-crossed with footpaths.

Keen to explore Sheffield's green spaces, we opted to get into the city under our own steam rather than take the bus. Climbing over Lodge Moor we reached the River Porter, one of Sheffield's five rivers and a natural green ribbon into the city.

The level path along the river is popular with dog walkers and cyclists and full of bird song, but it once powered industry. One water wheel remains at Shepherd Wheel and sites of others are marked.

The valley opens out at Endcliffe Park, where an outdoor keep fit class was in full swing. The path took us by the Mi Amigo memorial, marking where a B-17 Flying

Fortress crashed in 1944.

It was only a short distance along suburban roads to Sheffield's Botanical Gardens, another oasis. Opened in 1836, the gardens have glass pavilions and winding paths among a kaleidoscope of flower beds separated by expansive lawns.

In warm sunshine the huge greenhouse full of exotic plants had little appeal, so we wandered through the attractive gardens while energetic squirrels raced along the grass. In the rose garden I breathed in the scents and admired the lively sculpture of Pan surrounded by different animals.

We caught a bus the short distance to the city centre and headed off to find some examples of Sheffield's thriving street art scene. On the walls in the streets around the university there were a couple of stunning paintings; one of a vibrant kingfisher and another of two blue tits.


Beyond the Winter Garden is Sheffield's Peace Garden, a twenty first century arched building of wood and glass that is full of greenery. With the elegant nineteenth century town hall as a backdrop, this garden was laid out in the 1930s. A 1990s redesign gives a nod to Sheffield's industrial past with water features reminiscent of mill races.

Designed for people, the square is a focal point for the city, a place to meet and relax.


**RIGHT** The splendid greenhouse in Sheffield's Botanical Gardens

## INFORMATION

A vibrant city bursting with character and creativity

 [welcometo-sheffield.co.uk](http://welcometo-sheffield.co.uk)


Sheffield Botanical Gardens are spread over 19 acres

 [sbg.org.uk](http://sbg.org.uk)


Discover over 250 locations for Sheffield's street vibrant art scene

 [streetartsheffield.com](http://streetartsheffield.com)

Friends of Porter Valley has information about Endcliffe Park and more

 [fopv.org.uk](http://fopv.org.uk)

Info on 15 nature reserves across Sheffield and Rotherham

 [wildsheffield.com](http://wildsheffield.com)



*Must do...* The Sheffield Botanical Gardens are gorgeous and worth a visit in any weather and every season



On a hot day it was bustling and joyful. The playful fountains attracted the children, who ran among the jets of water laughing. I wished I was three again! In the square overlooking the Peace Garden we relaxed outside a Portuguese café that made excellent pastries. I felt very continental.

Walking around Sheffield's cathedral we made for the Kelham Island Museum, an industrial museum on an artificial island on the River Don. Kelham Island has been a centre for metal working for some 400 years.

In the museum I really got a handle on 'Made in Sheffield'. I learnt how steel production grew from Abbeydale's small scale to the steam-powered industries Orwell saw. The museum houses the 400-ton River Don Engine (1905), producing 12,000 horsepower – Britain's biggest, most powerful steam engine.

The informative displays included interactive exhibits and mock-up workshops. Stopping to look at some examples of superior Bramah locks, invented by Yorkshireman Joseph Bramah, Anthony remembered a Sheffield friend would exclaim that something of quality was 'a reet Bramah'.

Brewing and industry went hand in hand and we retired to The Fat Cat, one of Kelham Island's surviving pubs. Once here

to quench the thirst of steel workers, today the charming Fat Cat has a brewery in the back yard and a great range of ales.

Kelham Island is now reinventing itself as a trendy place to live and has its own share of street art. A large animated painting by Italian artist, Jupiterfab, of three women talking, their mobile phones to one side, particularly caught my eye.

With some of the best outdoor and indoor climbing in and around the city and artificial rocks for bouldering in some of the city's many parks, it isn't surprising that climbers flock to Sheffield. I'm no climber, but it wouldn't have been a Sheffield weekend without a walk on a gritstone edge.

Next morning we headed away from Sheffield. Taking the paths further through Fox Hagg Woods, we climbed up to Redmires Reservoirs and the open moors, hunted by kestrels and buzzards. The Long Causeway, a former packhorse route from Sheffield, took us to Stanage Edge, passing Stanedge Pole that marks the boundary with Derbyshire.

The rocky outcrop of Stanage Edge is an impressive three-mile long gritstone cliff and is justly popular with climbers and walkers. Gritstone, also known as millstone grit, has no natural lines of weakness and was perfect for millstones. Abandoned ➤

## ESSENTIALS

### HOW LONG

Three nights

### WHEN

Any time, but

Fox Hagg Farm

Camping and Caravan Site is only open April to October (see campsite information)

### HOW MUCH

Fuel Average 34mpg

(119 miles).....£20.50

Site fees.....£52.50

Entrance fees Two adults:

Abbeydale Industrial, Kelham Museum .....£23.64

Public transport

Two adults: Sheffield bus day ticket.....£9.40

Parking Two hours:

Yorkshire Sculpture Park.....£6.50

**TOTAL.....£112.54**



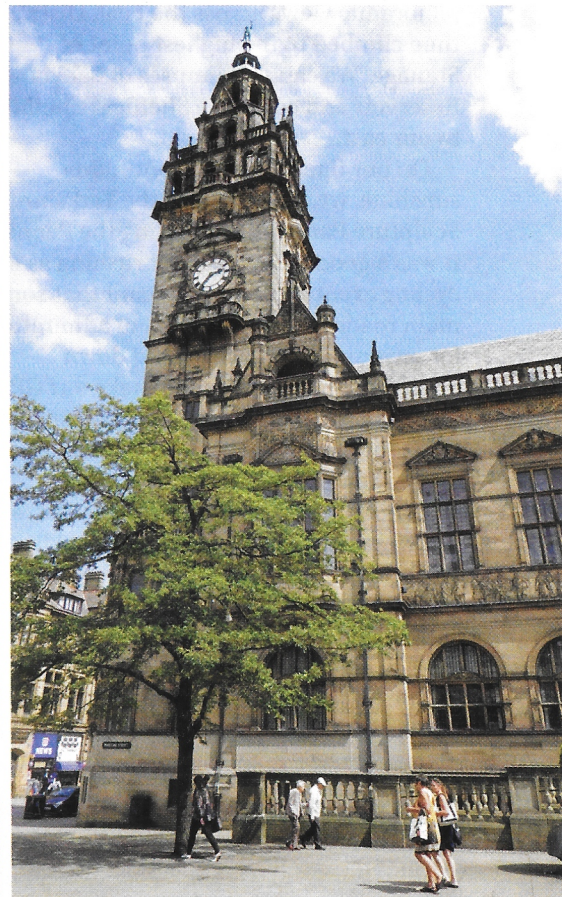
### BELOW LEFT TO RIGHT

Comparing Yorkshire beers; Niki de Saint Phalle's Buddha at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park; Sheffield's elegant Town Hall

## TOP TIPS

The number 51 bus terminates near The Sportsman on Lodge Moor about 15 minutes' walk uphill from Fox Hagg Farm campsite and runs about every 10 minutes during the day

Sheffield Industrial Museums Trust offers annual membership for £20, which gives visitors admission to Abbeydale Industrial Hamlet, Shepherd Wheel and Kelham Island Museum  
simt.co.uk





## Must see... The vibrant Kingfisher wall painting by Faunagraphic on Brown Lane near the Sheffield Hallam University Students Union



circular millstones still lie under the crags.

We sat on a cliff with our picnic, enjoying panoramic views across the Peak District, then climbed to the highest point of Stanage. We caught glimpses of Ladybower Reservoir and could see Sheffield's buildings to our east.

On our final day, with continuing sunshine, we opted to visit the Yorkshire Sculpture Park before crossing the Pennines. It was a good job we weren't rushing as a cycling event in Sheffield meant that some main roads were closed. Full of admiration for anyone who cycles up and down Sheffield's hills, I battled to make our GPS understand the road closures and navigate us out of the city. This took some time!

The Yorkshire Sculpture Park is a splendid place to soothe frayed nerves, a stunning combination of rolling parkland and culture. In the sunshine, we ignored the indoor exhibitions and headed for the garden and park to find old favourites and see new displays.

The huge wire hare-human sculpture by Sophie Ryder sits on a hillside. A mythical figure connecting to nature and fertility, this

sculpture has been here for some years and fits happily in the pastoral setting.

More incongruous was a screen with LED images of people rushing along city pavements. A giant colourful Buddha, inspired by Gaudi's Spanish mosaic tiling, stood out among the trees and caught my imagination. There are sculptures for everyone, from the quirky to the traditional, created by international sculptors and UK artists such as Barbara Hepworth, Henry Moore and Elisabeth Frink.

The lively city of Sheffield had much more to see than our few days allowed and, in cooler weather, we might have found time for other attractions. We missed the city's art galleries and didn't get a chance to see the National Emergency Services Museum, a museum dedicated to videogames and so much more.

Instead, we explored Sheffield's green spaces and found a city that bears no resemblance to Orwell's 1930s apocalyptic vision. Today, successfully combining culture with science and the contemporary with the past, Sheffield proves to be a great choice for a relaxing short break. [MMM](#)

**ABOVE CLOCKWISE** The River Porter is a lovely green ribbon into Sheffield; Sheffield has a colourful collection of street art; Grinding the blade of a sword at Abbeydale Industrial Hamlet

### THE CAMPSITE

**Fox Hagg Farm Camping and Caravan Site**, Lodge Lane, Sheffield, Yorkshire S6 5SN

☎ 01142 305776

🌐 [foxhaggfarm.com](http://foxhaggfarm.com)

📅 1 April-31 October

£ Two adults, pitch and electric: £17.50

This feature was written prior to the coronavirus pandemic. We are publishing it for your enjoyment and to help you plan future trips. Readers must follow the latest government advice before leaving their homes [gov.uk/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)