

As a Beatles documentary airs and new Liverpool museum opens, get your ticket to ride

JOIN THE FAB TOUR!

by **ROB
McGIBBON**

SITTING at a 1950s upright piano in Paul McCartney's childhood living room seems like an imposition — especially when all I can do is clunk the keys randomly.

But it's also extraordinarily thrilling to be here on the eve of a three-part documentary, *The Beatles: Get Back*, directed by Peter Jackson, starting tomorrow on Disney+.

This long-awaited fly-on-the-wall film will take everyone back to the final chapter of *The Beatles*, but stepping inside Macca's terrace house at 20 Forthlin Road, five miles from the city centre, helps you relive the days before the frenzy of Beatlemania.

I am here with my wife and our 13-year-old son on the first stop of a tour of Beatles sights in Liverpool. The house, in the suburb of Allerton, is now run by the National Trust.

McCartney and his younger brother Mike closely advised the Trust on every detail, so it has a wonderful 1960s authenticity, from the choice and positioning of the furniture, to the curtains and threadbare rugs.

One mile away at Menlove Avenue is Mendips, John Lennon's semi-detached home where he lived with his aunt Mimi and uncle George Smith.

The house was bought by Yoko Ono in 2003 to save it from falling

into private hands. She then donated it to the Trust.

It is eerie to stand in Lennon's sparse upstairs bedroom. Framed on the bed is a touching letter from his widow Yoko. 'Everything that happened afterwards germinated from John's dreaming in his little bedroom,' she writes.

From the house, we see the spot where John's mother, Julia, was killed by a car in 1958 when John was 17. Then, we take ourselves

down to Strawberry Field, the grounds of a grand house where he played as a child. It is now a newly refurbished Salvation Army centre.

We then jump in a Fab 4 Taxi to go here, there and everywhere with our cheerful driver Phil on lead vocals. An extended playlist of Beatles anecdotes tumble out with a smiley flash of golden molars. He takes us to George and Ringo's homes, and then to

Woolton for Penny Lane and Eleanor Rigby's grave at St Peter's Church. Across the road we stand in the exact spot where John and Paul first met on July 6, 1957.

Our tour runs at a helter-skelter pace, so we relax later in the Lennon Suite at Hard Days Night Hotel — complete with a white baby grand piano — before hitting the city centre. We pose alongside



Beatlemania: Statues on Liverpool Waterfront. Inset, the museum sign

the bronze statues of the Fab Four in the docks, before a deep dive into The Beatles Story museum nearby. Then we walk to Mathew Street, home of the original Cavern Club, which is still a popular basement music venue.

Our final gig is just down the street at the new Liverpool Beatles Museum, owned by Roag Best, half-brother to legendary former Beatles' drummer Pete. They have the same mum — Mona — but Roag's dad is ex-Beatles executive and Macca's childhood buddy Neil Aspinall.

There are drum kits, rare signs, costumes, McCartney's lighter, Brian Epstein's fountain pen, letters, and original 1960s merchandise galore. There's even an Apple plastic bag and some wood flooring that supported Pete's drum kit.

Even the most arbitrary artefact connected to The Beatles gains reliquary status in Liverpool. Quite right, too.

TRAVEL FACTS

The Beatles Childhood Homes are £27.50 per adult. £9.50 for Trust members, nationaltrust.org.uk. Fab 4 Taxi Beatles Tours from £65, fab4taxitours.com. The Lennon and McCartney Suites from £300 per night at Hard Day's Night Hotel, harddaysnighthotel.com. Plan your Liverpool tour, visitoliverpool.com

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Nowhere is this mix more obvious than in the city of Valencia itself, where the art-filled cathedral and medieval towers rub shoulders with the futuristic-looking City of Arts and Sciences. Designed by Santiago Calatrà-



Peñíscola

va, its amazing aquarium, 3-D cinema, interactive science museum, and stunning opera house offer culture for all ages.

For somewhere a little more off the tourist track, try Peñíscola, known as the City in the Sea, with its massive Templar castle and medieval walls surrounded by water. Once a papal residence, and more recently a Game of Thrones location, it is flanked by beautiful beaches. There are yet more beaches at Dénia, with 20km of coastline between Alicante and Valencia as well as a historic town preserved within ancient walls and a scenic castle on a hill.



Valencia's City of Arts and Sciences

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bodegas where you can try cava, as well as red, white and sweet wines.

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For more details, see www.regionofvalencia.com

