



Strawberry Field operated as an orphanage from 1936 till 2005; its gates (left) were replaced with replicas in 2011 in order to protect the originals. The facade of the Hard Days Night Hotel, located in the historically significant, 1884-built Central Buildings, is graced with Beatles statues, including John Lennon (right).

with kids in the Salvation Army home, Strawberry Field, next door. Guide Paula Fay said John told his aunt, "They won't hang me for it," recalling the line, "...nothing to get hung about" in *Strawberry Fields Forever*. The lyrics also mention "in my tree," perhaps a reference to the tree house where he sat and dreamed. "He was a sensitive boy who always felt he was different," said Fay.

Aunt Mimi disapproved of John's guitar-playing friends Paul McCartney and George Harrison, telling him, "The guitar is all right as a hobby, John, but you'll never make a living playing it."

But there was no disapproving adult at Paul's house. His mother, Mary, died of breast cancer when he was 14, so his dad raised him and his brother, Mike. He "was very good about letting us rehearse here," said Paul on an audio recording played during the tour of his home. Dad was strict about curfew, though. Visitors can see the red drainpipe on the back of the house that Paul and Mike used to climb into a second-story window when their father locked them out.

The Real Penny Lane

The Magical Mystery Tour passes outside the boyhood homes of all four Beatles and stops at the red iron gates and graffiti-covered pillars of Strawberry Field's former entrance. I couldn't resist, so I climbed aboard a colorful bus for a visit. As we navigated a roundabout at the top of Penny Lane, guide Neil Brannan said the boys often waited at a bus stop here in the suburbs and composed the eponymous song about what and who they saw around them: bank, barbershop, nurse, fireman. "Penny Lane is in my ears

Goosebumps rose on my arms as I walked into John Lennon's bedroom. Above the tidy twin bed in his childhood home hang pictures of Brigitte Bardot and Elvis Presley. In the bathroom, I peered into the same mirror he used for his first shave.

It was 50 years ago on Feb. 7 that the Beatles landed in New York to screams from 5,000 fans in the throes of Beatlemania. On Feb. 9, 1964, they performed on *The Ed Sullivan Show* and changed rock music forever.

But five years earlier they were just teenage boys growing up in Liverpool, England, writing songs in their bedrooms and playing in one of the city's many dance bands—and a mediocre one at that. Who they were and how they came to be music legends is a story told in Liverpool in a handful of tours and exhibits that captivate Beatles fans.

A Peek Inside

The Beatles Childhood Homes Tour given by The National Trust, a historic preservation organization, visits the homes of John Lennon and Paul McCartney.

From age 5, John lived with his Uncle George and Aunt Mimi, who scolded him for climbing the garden wall to play

The 50th anniversary of the Fab Four's U.S. debut calls for an exploration of their roots.

Liverpool ROCKS

BY KATHERINE
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and in my eyes,” read the lyrics. “There beneath the blue suburban skies.”

Last stop on the tour is the Cavern Club on Mathew Street, where the Beatles made 292 appearances from Feb. 9, 1961, to Aug. 3, 1963. The original club was torn down and later rebuilt at the same location using 15,000 of the original bricks. The club is packed almost every night with fans spilling out onto the pedestrian-friendly street. Performers on two stages inside range from local bands to rock stars, with a Beatles tribute band on Saturday nights. The Hard Days Night Hotel, featuring Beatles memorabilia in every guestroom, is around the corner.

The Cavern Club bills itself as the birthplace of the Beatles, a claim disputed by the Casbah Coffee Club. Roag Best, whose brother Pete was replaced on drums by Ringo Starr, tells visitors his mother created the club in 1959 in their home’s basement to give local teens a place to hang out. Among them was the Quarrymen, a group formed by John and joined by Paul and George. The space for the stage in the club’s Rainbow Room, where the boys decorated the ceiling with cans of leftover paint, is so small, visitors can extend their arms to touch opposite walls.

Early Influences

For more of the Beatles’ backstory, visitors can check out the Museum of Liverpool’s Wondrous Place gallery, which has the iconic early-1960s Beatles suits, the bedspread from John and Yoko Ono’s 1969 Bed-In in Montreal, and the St. Peter’s stage where Paul first met John at a church festival in 1957.

The Beatles Story museum exhibits in Britannia Pavilion at Albert Dock—a popular entertainment spot on Liverpool’s historic waterfront—chronicle the life story of each of the Beatles, how they met and how they rose to fame. A second location at the Mersey Ferries Terminal at nearby Pier Head has a temporary exhibition, “Elvis and Us,” which explains the deep influence the King had on the Fab Four. With both Beatles and Elvis memorabilia featured, the exhibition’s proved so popular that its showing has been extended through the end of 2014.

Planning Your Trip

For more information, go to www.visitliverpool.com. For National Trust tour information and tickets, go to www.nationaltrust.org.uk/beatles. For trip-planning assistance, visit your local AAA Travel agent or AAA.com/travel. **H&A**



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