# Ben Aitken champions underrated UK towns with new travel book Sh\*tty Breaks



Ben Aitken, a writer known for his engaging travel narratives like 'A Chip Shop in Poznan' and 'The Gran Tour,' has embarked on a unique exploration of often-overlooked locales, culminating in his latest book, *Sh*tty Breaks\*. Through a year-long odyssey, Aitken sought out what he describes as “unfashionable places” that possess quiet brilliance, directing attention away from mainstream tourist hotspots to highlight towns that are full of charm. Newport, among the selected cities, serves as a key example of Aitken’s mission to uncover hidden treasures often overshadowed by more popular destinations.

In his book, Aitken insists that there is “no such thing as a sh\*tty break,” promoting a more affordable and sustainable approach to travel. This philosophy seeks to spread affection beyond conventional tourist trails, encouraging audiences to discover the allure of overlooked towns and their respective cultures. His narrative aims to serve as an antidote to the oftentimes “smug travelogues” associated with trendy locations, fostering appreciation for the authenticity and unique experiences these "underdog" cities provide.

Reviews from fellow authors emphasise Aitken's light-hearted yet penetrating insight into these destinations. Kate Wickers, author of *Shape of a Boy*, expressed enthusiasm for Aitken’s approach, stating, “After reading this, I’m off to Newport instead to see what’s occurring.” Although Newport is not extensively detailed in the book, Aitken's visit to the city has generated excitement, with hopes that more content may emerge in future editions or events.

Aitken's initiative resonates with a broader trend towards rediscovering local experiences amidst a global travel landscape still reeling from the impacts of the pandemic. By shining a light on places like Wrexham, Sunderland, and Preston—cities he has highlighted for their rich histories and engaging communities—Aitken invites readers to reconsider their travel choices. For instance, his time in Sunderland, which he described as having a robust food scene and friendly atmosphere, reveals his earnest intent to celebrate, rather than critique, these environments.

Culminating his book launch in Newport, Aitken will host an interactive signing event at Waterstones on Commercial Street, offering readers an opportunity to engage directly with him. This event is not only a celebration of his literary work but also a testament to the significance of local cultures that often go unnoticed. As Aitken actively promotes this positive narrative, he beckons a new generation of travellers to the joys of experiencing what he deems "hidden gems" across the British Isles.

With travels that have taken him to the likes of Dunfermline and beyond, it is clear that Aitken's mission extends significantly past mere exploration; he aims to forge a deeper connection between travellers and the less-celebrated parts of the UK. As he himself articulates, the joy of travel lies not only in the destinations themselves but in the stories, people, and experiences that can be unearthed along the journey.

By inviting a fresh perspective on travel, Aitken’s *Sh*tty Breaks\* not only challenges prevailing notions of where to go and what to see but also champions the underappreciated, reminding us all that there is beauty in the less-visited corners of the world.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.southwalesargus.co.uk/news/25189828.newport-included-authors-quest-find-hidden-gems/?ref=rss), [[2]](https://www.iconbooks.com/ib-title/shitty-breaks/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.southwalesargus.co.uk/news/25189828.newport-included-authors-quest-find-hidden-gems/?ref=rss), [[2]](https://www.iconbooks.com/ib-title/shitty-breaks/), [[5]](https://www.sunderlandecho.com/news/my-books-called-shtty-breaks-but-its-really-a-love-letter-to-sunderland-5121726)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.newryreporter.com/travel/bens-fond-of-the-place-after-his-shtty-break-to-newry-5116361), [[4]](https://www.lep.co.uk/news/my-books-called-shtty-breaks-but-its-really-a-love-letter-to-preston-5121345), [[7]](https://www.wrexham.gov.uk/events/meet-author-ben-aitken)
* Paragraph 4 – [[5]](https://www.sunderlandecho.com/news/my-books-called-shtty-breaks-but-its-really-a-love-letter-to-sunderland-5121726), [[6]](https://www.blogpreston.co.uk/2025/05/preston-appears-in-shtty-breaks-an-ode-to-rarely-visited-uk-cities/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.southwalesargus.co.uk/news/25189828.newport-included-authors-quest-find-hidden-gems/?ref=rss), [[2]](https://www.iconbooks.com/ib-title/shitty-breaks/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.southwalesargus.co.uk/news/25189828.newport-included-authors-quest-find-hidden-gems/?ref=rss), [[2]](https://www.iconbooks.com/ib-title/shitty-breaks/), [[3]](https://www.newryreporter.com/travel/bens-fond-of-the-place-after-his-shtty-break-to-newry-5116361)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.southwalesargus.co.uk/news/25189828.newport-included-authors-quest-find-hidden-gems/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.iconbooks.com/ib-title/shitty-breaks/> - Ben Aitken's book, 'Sh\*tty Breaks,' is a celebration of unsung cities, focusing on twelve lesser-visited spots in the UK and Ireland. The author aims to uncover the hidden gems in these places, demonstrating that they can be interesting and enjoyable when approached with the right mindset. The book promotes a more sustainable and affordable form of travel by highlighting destinations beyond the usual tourist hotspots. Aitken's previous works include 'A Chip Shop in Poznan' and 'The Gran Tour.'
3. <https://www.newryreporter.com/travel/bens-fond-of-the-place-after-his-shtty-break-to-newry-5116361> - In an interview, Ben Aitken discusses his visit to Newry, featured in his book 'Sh\*tty Breaks.' He describes his experience as pleasant, enjoying the local cuisine and countryside walks. Aitken emphasizes that the book is a celebration of these cities, aiming to challenge the negative perceptions associated with their titles. He encourages readers to consider these destinations as worthwhile alternatives to more popular tourist spots.
4. <https://www.lep.co.uk/news/my-books-called-shtty-breaks-but-its-really-a-love-letter-to-preston-5121345> - Ben Aitken shares his positive experience in Preston, featured in his book 'Sh\*tty Breaks.' He highlights the city's rich history, welcoming people, and vibrant culture. Aitken emphasizes that the book aims to challenge the negative perceptions associated with its title, presenting a genuine appreciation for the places visited. He encourages readers to explore these underrated cities to discover their unique charm.
5. <https://www.sunderlandecho.com/news/my-books-called-shtty-breaks-but-its-really-a-love-letter-to-sunderland-5121726> - In an interview, Ben Aitken discusses his visit to Sunderland, featured in his book 'Sh\*tty Breaks.' He describes the city as having a lot to offer, including friendly people, beautiful beaches, and a thriving food scene. Aitken emphasizes that the book is a celebration of these cities, aiming to challenge the negative perceptions associated with their titles. He encourages readers to consider these destinations as worthwhile alternatives to more popular tourist spots.
6. <https://www.blogpreston.co.uk/2025/05/preston-appears-in-shtty-breaks-an-ode-to-rarely-visited-uk-cities/> - Ben Aitken's book 'Sh\*tty Breaks' features Preston as one of the lesser-visited UK cities. The author shares his positive experiences in the city, highlighting its rich heritage and welcoming atmosphere. Aitken emphasizes that the book aims to challenge the negative perceptions associated with its title, presenting a genuine appreciation for the places visited. He encourages readers to explore these underrated cities to discover their unique charm.
7. <https://www.wrexham.gov.uk/events/meet-author-ben-aitken> - Ben Aitken, author of 'Sh\*tty Breaks: A Celebration of Unsung Cities,' is scheduled to speak at Wrexham Library on May 14, 2025. The event will delve into his experiences in Wrexham, including activities like karaoke at The Golden Lion and attending a football match. Aitken's book highlights lesser-visited cities in the UK and Ireland, aiming to uncover their hidden gems and challenge negative perceptions associated with their titles.