

Hiring a darkroom

There are a number of darkroom services across the UK and Ireland. We take a look at some of the best

While the advent of digital imaging has certainly made it harder to find darkrooms, that doesn't mean they've disappeared. In fact, there are a number of businesses and individuals across the UK and Ireland who have recognised the importance of keeping film photography alive – evident not least in the fact that they hire out time in their darkrooms. Many of these services include ample assistance from experienced staff and some even provide – at a price – the paper you'll need to start printing your masterpieces.

England

Photofusion

Photofusion in London provides resources and services for those looking to produce quality black & white traditional hand prints. The firm's rental darkroom is perhaps one of the best equipped in the country, offering affordable access to top-quality equipment for both black & white and colour negative printing, along with expert advice and assistance from an experienced team of technicians. Once there, you can also purchase a wide range of film and paper to work with. Prices are affordable, ranging from £34–£40 – and cost even less if you become a member.

Visit www.photofusion.org/darkrooms or call 0207 738 5774 for more information.

Farnham Maltings

If you're based in or around Farnham in Surrey, it may be worth visiting Farnham Maltings – an organisation that works with artists and communities to help them get involved in creating and viewing art. The organisation's darkroom is fully equipped and is available in half-day slots. New members will require an induction, and thereafter the darkroom is available at a half-day rate of £5 or full day for £10. Farnham Maltings is notable for the wide range of other services and skills it has available, which include printing and framing. The organisation is also host to a variety of other art forms and crafts, such as making jewellery, painting and theatre, meaning you're surrounded by a truly inspiring environment.

Visit www.farnhammaltings.com or call 01252 745 444 for details.

Bristol Folk House

Bristol is one of the most exciting and vibrant cultural locations in the UK, particularly when it comes to photography. If you're looking for some time in a darkroom, then it's worth getting in touch with the Bristol Folk House, which recently opened a brand-new, purpose-built, wet-based photography facility. The darkroom offers a programme of traditional photography courses and workshops throughout the year. The facilities include seven black & white enlargers for 35mm, medium and large format, black & white film development facilities, print-finishing facilities, technical support and chemistry. Call or email for prices.

Visit www.bristolfolkhouse.co.uk or call 0117 926 2987.

Vale of York Darkrooms

Vale of York Darkrooms in North Yorkshire is run by Peter Heaton, a lecturer and artist with over 25 years' experience in photography. The darkrooms offer a varied range of black & white photographic courses throughout the year. These are suitable for both beginners and more experienced photographers, and cover traditional and experimental techniques. The black & white darkroom is also available for hire to both groups and individuals. Contact Peter via the link below for details or to arrange a booking. Visit www.peterheaton.co.uk/vale-of-york-darkrooms.

Leicester Lo-Fi Photography

This darkroom was set up by a group of Leicester-based photographers, all of whom



Hiring a darkroom is a good way to try your hand at printing to see if you'd benefit from setting one up in your own home (see pages 16-19)

embrace the traditional aspects of photography by using film cameras, toy cameras, pinholes, alternative processes and darkroom printing. They hold regular meet-ups to swap ideas, take pictures, make prints, set projects and hold exhibitions. They also run a community-based darkroom, which has recently been refurbished. The 'grand opening' is on 25 October. The room is fitted with six enlargers that can handle black & white negatives in 35mm, medium-format (all ratios) and 5x4in sizes. Darkroom sessions last three hours and cost £5 for members and £10 for non-members. Visit www.leicesterlofi.co.uk or email leicester-lofi@hotmail.com

Wales

Chapter Arts Centre

For those based in Wales, the name Chapter will likely ring a bell. It's with good reason, as the

centre in Cardiff has firmly established itself as one of leading lights in all things creative. Chapter, in collaboration with Ffotogallery (the national development agency for photography in Wales), offers a number of educational facilities, including two black & white darkrooms that can be used for printing small, medium and large-format films. They supply all chemistry, which is included in the cost of membership (£20–£30). Visit www.chapter.org or call 029 2034 1667.

Scotland

Stills Centre for Photography

Situated on the lower ground floor, beneath the Stills gallery in Edinburgh, are Scotland's largest open-access darkrooms and only dry-to-dry colour print processor. Whether you want to get to grips with the basics of the medium, experiment with new techniques

or produce professional hand-made fibre-based and C-type prints, Stills darkrooms can meet all your needs. There are no membership fees and signing up has its benefits, such as having a little more interruption-free access to the spaces. All new users need to do is go through a one-hour induction (£20). Thereafter, access is available with a day pass (£12) or a month pass (£45), and consumables are charged according to usage. Visit www.stills.org/darkrooms or call 0131 622 6200.

Dundee Contemporary Arts

The Dundee Contemporary Arts Print Studio has state-of-the-art facilities to create print photography and digital work. Courses and pre-arranged one-to-ones provide an introduction to the equipment they offer, and new users are always welcome. Anyone can become a registered Print Studio user,

allowing you open access to the space that costs £48 for the year. On registering, users take part in an induction course, which outlines how to book equipment, health and safety practices and operating information. Once registered, pop-in sessions (of up to two hours) only cost £2.50, while a day rate is £5. Monthly, quarterly and yearly rates are also available. Best of all, a member of staff will always be available to help with any queries you may have. Visit www.dca.org.uk/visit/print-studio or call 01382 909 900.

Ireland

The Gallery of Photography

The Gallery of Photography in Ireland has a darkroom available for hire to members. Becoming a member is easy and open to all. The darkroom can accommodate

three single users and one session (three hours) costs €15, while a full day (11.30am–5.45pm) is €28. They can cater for all formats from 35mm to 5x4in. They supply the chemicals – all you need to bring is paper and negatives. The darkrooms are communal and each enlarger is allotted to only one person. Block bookings are available by arrangement. Visit www.galleryofphotography.ie or call +353 1 671 4654.

Others

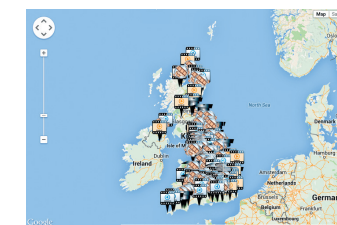
Bespoke services

If you lack the time or skills to print your own images, an option worth considering is handing the printing duties over to a professional. AP regular Andrew Sanderson offers such a service, has many years' experience and is, most importantly, an Ilford Master Printer. His prices range from £20 for a 7x5in print to £150 for a 24x20in, depending on the paper used. Andrew also offers a bespoke 'interpretative' printing service, where he identifies the best ways to get the most out of your negatives.

Visit www.thewebdarkroom.co.uk or call Andrew on 0797 943 0676.

DARKROOM FINDER

An absolutely fantastic resource comes from Ilford, which offers a handy feature whereby you can find a darkroom near you. Just navigate your way across the interactive map provided and you can see your closest facilities. Prices vary, as will the size and equipment available in each space, so it's always worth doing a bit of extra research. Each location comes with ample information, detailing what to expect and the level or assistance available once you're there. Perhaps the best feature is for amateurs, as the map also locates a variety of places that will offer darkroom tuitions. Visit www.localdarkroom.com to find out more.



Ilford can help you to locate a darkroom in the UK near you

Many darkrooms offer ample assistance to help you on your way