

Merton College



Entz Guide

2025

Introduction

Hi, and welcome to Merton! If there's any of the PDFs you've been sent that you should keep rereading, it's this one – who wouldn't want to know how to enjoy their time in Oxford?! The aim of this guide, written by Isaac Tan and Sophie Plant (your Entz reps for 2025-6) is to introduce you to the wonderful world of social activities that both college and the city more widely have to offer. It is very heavily based on our own experiences and those of the Entz reps before us (the lovely Perrine and Lilirose). We can't wait to show you all how much Merton is very much NOT where fun goes to die and are really excited to meet you.

As Entz reps, our first duty is to tell you you're not doomed to three years of academic pressure (don't worry, lots of degrees are 4 years or more :)) - it's quite the opposite. Between BOPS (keep reading to understand what on earth that means), wine and cheese (not as posh and Oxford-y as you may believe) and all sorts of other events (including sober ones if that's more your cup of tea), there's always loads going on. We hope that reading this will get you (even more) excited about coming here and start to make you feel like a true Mertonian. Feel free to ask us any questions when you arrive and, in the meantime, you should follow the Instagram [@mertonentz](#) for updates every term! Get involved with as much as you can in Freshers' - we promise it'll be worth it – and you should see everything planned for you on the timetable!

Not yet convinced of how cool we (and of course, college) are yet? Keep reading.

The College Bar

Time is money, and you'll spend a lot of both here. The bar is, for many of us, the central hub of college life; with pints currently priced at £4 (subject to cozy livs) along with a great selection of CDs in the jukebox, there's something for everyone here. Our college barman, Neal, is Merton's crown jewel, always seeming to be doing a million things at once and still managing to serve you 10/10 drinks (just don't try to wrangle any for free!).



Perhaps the central fixture of the bar is ~~the second year PPEists~~ the college drink. Even with a huge array of other drinks on offer, our college drink – the Power Pint – is a cult classic. Consisting of 2 shots of vodka, a VK and topped up with an energy drink, having one is almost a rite of passage, and having one too many is not uncommon. A couple of these in, you'll be prepared to face the sweaty ceilings of Tuesday Night Plush or the evil cloakroom managers in Bridge. With 7 flavours and counting, you're spoilt for choice (just avoid green/orange no matter what other people tell you – don't say you weren't warned).



It must be said, however, that we are, of course, massive advocates of drinking sensibly (even if only for Neal's sake, whose job description does not include taking care of people who don't know their limit... that's a job for your friends). Whilst the bar does serve alcohol, it also offers snacks and soft drinks, with cans of Diet Coke working out as cheaper than buying

them from Sainsbury's. The bar is additionally the location of many events such as quizzes and karaoke, as well as being a good place to meet people before heading off to a crewdate or different college bar.

It's also not uncommon to see Power Pint-fuelled late night library sessions (just don't let your tutors know that the secret to writing a great essay is alcohol, caffeine, and sugar. Or that's at least the secret to *thinking* you're writing a great essay.)

Opposite the bar is the games room, equipped with a pool table, darts, table football, sometimes a speaker, and a comfy sofa. Watch out for pool tournaments – they can get very intense – but, for everyone's sake, you will not be seeing Sophie participate.



BOPs

BOPs (Breaches of the Peace/Big Open Party) are college socials in fancy dress and are the highlights of the Entz calendar; you'll have your first on the Saturday of Freshers' Week. There are many reasons why Merton BOPs are some of the best around, as undiscovered as they are (we are giving grace to Balliol here, who throw a great party). Firstly, we provide free drinks at 'pre-BOP', beginning from 8:30pm in the JCR with everyone arriving in their very best costumes. We are almost certainly the only college to do this, with ladlefuls of cocktails (and mocktails), soft drinks, and VKs handed out to Mertonians and their guests.



A couple hours later, we shepherd you over to Merton's Sports Pavilion – the Pav. This is the second reason for Merton's BOP superiority. Other colleges have BOPs in their bars, JCRs or rent clubs, but at Pav we can keep dancing and drinking until 2am with the fabulous Neal and Cez bringing the bar to us. Such other colleges don't often know about this, so we can't be offended when they say we have no fun. Keep an eye out for music request opportunities (posted on the [@mertonentz](#) stories) and BOP themes. **The theme for your first BOP is M is for Merton** eg come as something beginning with 'm' (again, look at the entztagram for inspo), so get brainstorming and come in your best costume! A little incentive – this year we're introducing a Best Costume competition, the winners of which will get a free Power Pint available to cash in on request.

Once at Pav, you need your Bod Card (your uni ID) to get in – avoid disappointment at being turned away by being organised. To book onto a BOP, we use our meal-booking system called EPOS, and booking for out-of-college guests opens a few hours later. There will usually be a big announcement saying when booking opens (Thursday 9am) but it is first come first served, so get on it quickly! Your first BOP will also signal the end of your crazily fun and (hopefully) incredibly well-organised events in Freshers', and thus the start of your first term at Oxford.

P.S. - BOP is all about having fun and letting loose in a costume of your choice, so take the theme and run with it – you can dress as silly or sexy as you want.



Clubs

Don't get your hopes too high for the Oxford clubbing scene, especially if you come from a bigger city... We don't mean to make you question your decision of coming here – we've had many a good night out, but this is perhaps more down to good company than the quality of Oxford's clubs. The clubs here serve best for a spontaneous night of fun and dancing when you're not quite ready to go home yet rather than a highly planned event. However, from 2000s pop to RNB to techno to indie there's somewhere for everyone - you just need to look hard enough. Don't worry though, the events put on by yours truly generally form the largest part of nightlife at Oxford, so this is nothing to be concerned about. Luckily, your two Entz Reps are well versed in the Oxford club scene and have their wisdom to share on the clubs that you'll be enjoying all too soon. Our rating system is based on music, price, venue size and overall fun had.

Bridge

Walking time from Merton: 20 minutes

Biggest night: Thursday

Floors: 2 – one for house/techno, another for pop, rap and generally more dance-y songs. It's also partnered with a separate bar called Spirit which plays hiphop and is about as popular as Regents Park College



Info: Bridge Thursdays are definitely a good time but this does die down massively once you're past Michaelmas. A big, themed Thursday night can

be absolutely rammed (Christmas, Halloween etc), so maybe give it a miss if you're claustrophobic. The smoking area is large and social, and a good place to hang out. Probably the most popular place for colleges to plan a night out so you're likely to bump into people you know – don't know if that's really a positive, but oh well.

Price: £6-10

Rating: ★★★★★

Plush

Walking time from Merton: 10 minutes

Biggest night: Tuesday

Floors: 1 that plays pop (2000s-2020s), sometimes some RnB or pop punk

Info: Plush is notionally Oxford's gay club, but its cheap drinks mean that it is widely attended and the number of creepy old men has increased in recent years. In the vaulted cellars of the Union, unless you are a hobbit, you might want to mind your head, and you'll want to wear something you don't mind getting sweaty. 100% don't



go to this one if you're claustrophobic. You'll also want to watch out for someone carrying a card reader and a tray of Jagerbombs; they're dangerous, but worth it. Plush is also wheelchair accessible! The music can be good, although the DJ can talk a tad too much sometimes, but do look out for Drag and Disorderly for a fun night. Our word of advice: stay away from the walls - they drip.

Price: £3-8

Rating: ★★☆☆

Glam

Walking time from Merton: 10 minutes

Biggest night: Drag

Floors: technically 2 – the top one is the bar you enter off the street and plays more pop and indie music, the other is underground and plays quite similar music but you've likely only heard about 60% of it



Info: Glam has a really weird demographic. As Oxford's properly gay club, it's the expected fun crowd but then throw some middle-aged pub-goers dressed like they're 14 as well as some people who have gone after a black-tie dinner. The music is not everyone's cup of tea but can be fun if you're really out of it. Watch out for the toilets – sometimes flooded and hardly ever locking, this is not the place for cute club bathroom photos – and the incredible lack of good lighting anywhere. Despite all that, it can be a really funny night out in there, especially if you're people watching and want to be out by 3 on the dot.

Price: £5

Rating: ★★☆☆

Bullingdon

Walking time from Merton: 20 minutes

Biggest night: Boogaloo

Floors: 1 (with 1 bar) - it is small

Info: Bully is the best place to escape the cheese of the main Oxford clubs. Its late nights are presented by local DJs, and it's also host to many other music nights, including techno, Soul and DnB, so can be perfect for the avid ravers and groovers amongst you. This is probably the best place for when you get sick of Bridge or Plush, or if you want to pretend that you're cooler than you actually are to friends from other unis. It's also wheelchair accessible!



Price: £8-15

Rating: ★★★★★

The O2 Academy

Walking time from Merton: 20 minutes

Floors: 2 but the top one is rarely open, same music mostly played on both

Info: This is Oxford's main gig venue and thus acts as quite a big club, often the site of megabops. It promises a good time and is also where events such as Indie Fridays (not all people there are as unwashed as you would imagine), and Swiftageddon (being a Swiftie is very controversial in Oxford and neither of us love her all



that much so she won't be played at bops, sorry – make use of events like this to find your community).

Price: £10-15

Rating: 

Pubs and Bars

The college bar is unbeatable for value, but sometimes a change of scenery is great. We'll organise a few events with other colleges and across Oxford later in the year, but here are some of our favourites. Do bear in mind that the majority of these close by 11 (so make sure you get there early) and also that an evening of drinking will be expensive wherever you go, especially with Oxford prices being so high. For the readers who come from places other than London or the Home Counties, be prepared for your bank account to cry at the sight of the damages of a night out drinking in the most expensive city outside London to buy a pint. Also note that the college bar doesn't normally have an ale on, so if that's your drink of choice you'll need to find a good pub.

The Bear

As Oxford's oldest pub, The Bear is also the nearest to Merton and a good place to go for ales and lagers. Surrounded by American tourists on a tour of Oxford 9 times out of 10, if you don't like feeling like a zoo animal, it might be good to give this one a miss around late afternoon or early evening. The floors and ceilings are lined with old college and university ties from around the country, making it a quaint first stop on a pub crawl. However, it only needs about eight and a half people to be full, so you'll find yourself walking straight out more times than not. Despite this, it has a very spacious outside seating area that often hosts live music! Tuesday Night Jazz is a popular event. It's also £6/pint (subject to cozy livs), but worth it for the atmos.



Turf Tavern

Hidden behind some of Merton's second year housing on Holywell Street, it was in Turf that Bill Clinton famously 'did not inhale' when smoking illegal substances as a Rhodes Scholar. Beyond this claim to fame, it's cosy pub and serves excellent food (especially if your parents are paying). Merton owns the land which Turf is on, but don't let that fool you: it still costs us an arm and a leg to drink here. Great for a birthday drink or a date as long as you aren't the one it's costing.



The King's Arms

This confusing pink building sits on the corner of Holywell Street. You find a new room to sit in almost every time you go in, and the bar is always well-stocked. If you drink Estrella, be prepared to take out a small loan to drink here- learned from experience. It's really popular amongst larger groups after a show or performance so you'll probably always bump into someone you know.



Wetherspoons

Oxford has two Spoons, and they're naturally the only places that even come close to the prices in the college bar. The Four Candles and The Swan and Castle are generally very busy but are well-used by Mertonians. It's Spoons - cheap drinks, sticky tables, badly poured pints and overworked staff. If you're intrigued about bar fights, there's sometimes one outside the Four Candles.

Chequers

Almost as picturesque as Turf, much less busy, and conveniently located, tucked away on the High Street, Chequers is the perfect spot for a (relatively) decently priced pint outside of the College Bar. This is where the cool Mertonians often hang out and is the site of many a society pub quiz. With a large TV both outside and inside, make Chequers your first port of call to watch a big



sports event. Be warned though that this is also a common spot to find a Brexit geezer so it's always a mixed bag of people in here.

The Madhatter

On the other side of Magdalen Bridge, The Madhatter is one of the coolest spots in Oxford. If you like cheap drinks that are served to you quickly, it's most definitely not for you, but this small disadvantage is made up for with its speakeasy atmos accompanied by some quality jazz and sometimes a karaoke night. Anyone musical, we might catch you there!



The Jolly Farmer

Close to Westgate shopping centre, this is one of Oxford's gay pubs, and a great vibe can always be expected here. Think friendly staff, secluded corners and a chilly but lovely outside area. Most famously, the Jolly Farmer serves the 'peach pint' (yes that is actually a peach flavoured beer) which is often a popular first drink there, but quickly becomes anyone's last choice.



The Lamb and Flag

Just next to St John's College, The Lamb and Flag is a gorgeous little pub with cheaper prices than most, not to mention its cosy feel. It may be a bit more of a trek, but it's worth it if a modernised country pub is more your thing.



The Half Moon

Wondering where people are when the College bars have closed? This tiny pub just off Iffley roundabout is most likely the answer. With no outdoor seating, some very questionable staff, and very rarely a spare seat, this pub is not quite as picturesque as many of the others on this list. It is, however, open until 2am. Don't worry though - many a good night has been rounded off by the last orders bell in the Half Moon as it's a bit of a laugh, and something odd always seems to happen so you'll always have a story to relay the next morning. A word to the wise: don't pin your hopes on ending a night out here as the bouncers tend to refuse entry to whoever they want at random.

These are just a few of the classic Oxford pubs but there are many more - Oxford really is a great city for the pub lovers among you. To mix it up a little, take a walk down Cowley Road, where you can find cheaper drinks, better bars and affordable restaurants.

Restaurants and Cafes

Hall

Merton is blessed with a great hall and some lovely hall staff. Merton's lunch should be (although unfortunately isn't) famous around Oxford for its value and variety, while its formals are amongst the cheapest (£4.73 and £5.82 respectively). As well as being delicious, the food here is well worth the price and one sneaky way of getting even more bang for your buck is to get lunch and steal as many pieces of fruit/cheese/bread/yoghurts/Tupperwares of soup/bowls of salad as possible on top of your main meal and dessert. But we didn't tell you that.



Kitchens

There are kitchens accessible to all first years so there's always space for students to cook for themselves, just make sure to make friends in other accom blocks, so you can steal their kitchen space – this is especially important if you're in Merton Street. Get house trained please: don't let your food rot in the fridge you share with 20 other people, or you will not be all that popular...

Taylor's

A fixture of Oxford life, with 4 branches within a 15-minute walk from Merton including two on the high street alone, its toasted sandwiches are legendary and always less than £5, while its sweet treats are well-loved. It's not the cheapest, but it's a nice treat for when you miss lunch in the hall or are

walking back from a poorly timed tutorial across town. Look out for their cookie and hot drink deal once its past 2pm!

Alternative Tuck Shop

If there's one place in Oxford you should go for lunch, it's ATS. The guys here are so friendly and if you're nice enough, you might get a free drink every now and then. Located on the booming Holywell Street, this cosy green-fronted store is well positioned for a stop in between pretty much any two locations in Oxford.



G&Ds

A world-famous Oxford institution, G&D's sells a dazzling array of fresh ice creams. Keep your eyes peeled for Welfare trips here – all expenses paid. Beyond just ice cream, it also sells bagels, waffles, and paninis. Merton's nearest branch is round the corner on St. Aldates Street (by Christchurch), while there's also a branch on the way to Jericho if you want to cosplay as a yummy mummy and drink £5 oat milk flat whites.

The Covered Market

The Covered Market is a great place to grab a bite to eat, offering a wide range of culinary experiences, and it's a nice place to have a wander if you've got a bit of time for lunch (or even if you don't - it's close by). There are plenty of spots to eat here, including Sasi's Thai, Donburi Inn and Rozanas which all offer lovely food for very fair prices. Ben's Cookies is also



found here, a great place to get a comfort cookie during an essay crisis (or a prop to propose to your college spouse with).

Kebab vans

Oxford is no different from any other city in the sense that every good night ends at a kebab van. The closest to Merton is the one titled 'Best Kebab Van', where you can make friends with Hussein who will always high-five you in the street, but our personal favourite is Ahmed's, which is just by Univ's front door.

Gloucester Green

Gloucester Green food market is on from a Wednesday-Saturday, with all sorts on offer from paella to noodles to tacos to Korean bimimbap, all served by equally charming market vendors. Definitely worth the trip, but make it a treat unless you don't mind dropping a tenner on lunch every day. It's also accompanied by some clothes and jewellery vendors which are equally affordable.



Najar's

Forgot to book lunch in hall? Sick of lunch at ATS (if that's even possible)? Najar's is here to save you. For the same price of a meal deal, you can grab yourself a Lebanese wrap packed with falafel, hummus and pretty much any filling you like; you won't be able to finish whatever you order. The roasted cauliflower and tabbouleh is life changing. On the front doorstep of St John's, it makes



for a bit of a trek, unless you are a linguist or a classicist as your faculty is right opposite this delicious food truck. If you don't fancy the walk, we think Rozana's in the Covered Market is just as good, if not better (although slow with service). Just mind the queues - they go as far as Balliol at 1pm on a Wednesday lunchtime - and remember to get cash out as they don't accept card.

Westgate top floor

Wanting to wine and dine someone? Looking for a sophisticated brunch with rooftop views of the Oxford spires? Look no further than Westgate top floor. A lovely treat with some great spots not to be overlooked – but very expensive. Maybe enjoy this when your parents are here to pay.

Queen's Cafe

Allegedly the oldest coffee shop in Europe, this is a lovely place to go for lunch or a coffee, even if expensive. With both indoor and outdoor seating, you have a prime view of the high street and there's always something happening. If you fancy eavesdropping on middle aged people's gossip, this is the place to be.



University Church Vaults and Gardens

With friendly servers and an iconic view of Radcam, it's hard to go wrong here. The food is decently priced and there's a very varied selection. Highly recommend.

Other activities

Balls

Balls are the most sophisticated nights of the Oxford social calendar. They are generally pretty expensive, ranging from around £60 to £250, but always feature unlimited free alcohol and food as well as partying well into the night. There are balls every term, some hosted by societies and some hosted by colleges, and it's definitely worth splashing out to go to one for what will surely be a fantastic night. Ask people in the years above for advice on specific balls, but the most important of the year is undoubtedly Merton's Winter Ball which you guys will get to experience this year! It's triennial, white tie, and features a large range of activities and some well-known headliners. If you can't wait for that, follow the Ball Instagram ([@mertonball2025](https://www.instagram.com/mertonball2025)) for the theme and more info. If you've got the Ball bug after that, Facebook will be your best friend for finding even more.



Cinemas

There are plenty of cinemas in Oxford. There are two Odeons round the corner from each other, a Curzon in Westgate for a classier experience and the Phoenix Picturehouse and Ultimate Picture Palace, which both show



independent and international films. Furthermore, Merton has a TV room and a range of DVDs in the library to watch should you want to opt for a cosier option! Be warned – all cinemas in Oxford are costly, probably even more so than your local one back home.

Varsity Ski Trip

One of the biggest trips in the Oxbridge calendar is the joint Varsity Ski trip at the end of Michaelmas, and this year will be a great one off the back of last year being the centenary. It's exceptionally good value with entertainment provided throughout the week, and you don't need to have skied before to have a great time. Each college has a Varsity Rep who will answer any questions you have about it at the Freshers' Fair, and ours this year is Will (2nd year) so feel free to direct any questions his way – he's also looking for a Freshers' rep if that's something you might be interested in! The Merton Instagram for this year's trip is [@mertonvt25](#).

House parties

A close study of the Student Handbook will reveal that any gathering of more than ten people on college premises must be approved by the college at least a week in advance. However, with a little bit of organisation and the permission of everyone



in the house, larger parties are possible. The most important night of the year for this is Time Ceremony, and you'll be told how to organise this nearer the time. Anyone wanting to know more about house parties and the specific rules should talk to DePOP.

Time ceremony

Every college has a strange tradition, and ours, called Time Ceremony, began in 1971. It takes place each October when the clocks go back. We spend this extra hour walking backwards around Fellows' Quad in order to preserve the space-time continuum. Dressed in sub fusc, we traditionally drink port whilst doing this (bear in mind this may be subject to change following new regulations this year). There are plenty of normal things about being a student at Merton, but Time Ceremony is certainly not one of them; it is truly bizarre, but a great experience. If the universe has felt a bit off for you this year, it might be because several Mertonians didn't quite make it to the ceremony. Don't let it be you that can't handle your drink; pace yourselves like we did so you don't miss one of the best nights of the year. For some of you, it may even mark the day you get college married, either at the ceremony itself or at the karaoke before. Whether you remember it or not is a different question.



End note

This is only a taste of what college has to offer – feel free to form your own opinions and we're sure there are many things here which have slipped under this guide's radar. We're sure all of you will have a brilliant first year, whatever you get up to, and please send us any more recs you have that should make it into next year's guide! We've packed Freshers' Week chock full, so there really should be something for everyone. Please bear in mind that Freshers' isn't always where long-lasting friendships are made (although it definitely can be), so don't worry about feeling nervous or like you won't fit in. Merton's small community makes for one of the most welcoming colleges and hopefully you'll feel right at home. We hope what we have planned for Freshers' Week and beyond will be massively exciting and fun, but also always feel free to come to us and suggest new ideas for events for the rest of the year – we don't bite!

At the start of every term, you'll get an Entz term card emailed to you, telling you everything you need to know about the formal events we have planned. On top of this, we'll be pretty much a permanent fixture in the bar/JCR if you have any questions. For even more information and to keep up with what's going on throughout term, here's one last plug for the entztagram [@mertonentz](#) where we'll be posting quite frequently. We hope you're looking forward to a jam-packed Freshers' and the busy term ahead. See you soon!

See you in October,

Isaac and Sophie

JCR Entertainment Representatives 2025-26