A Brief Guide to Oxford

Things to do:

1. Walking: Get away from the crowds of tourists and enjoy some of Oxford’s lovely green spaces. University Parks, Christ Church Meadow and Port Meadow are all easily accessible from the workshop location. Christ Church Meadow is particularly recommended.
2. Punting: One of the most popular Oxford summer activities. Punts are available at the boathouse near Magdalen bridge.
3. Taking a tour: There are various guided tours of famous Oxford landmarks available starting from Broad St. Footprints Tours seems to have particularly strong online reviews.
4. Concert going: Oxford is a great venue for classical music. There are posters and placards advertising upcoming concerts on Broad St, near the Museum of the History of Science.
5. Catching a play: Summer is Shakespeare season and there are a number of theatre companies putting on productions. Shakespeare in the Quad, performed in the historic setting of the Bodleian Library, might be worth a punt. If you’re looking for something more cutting-edge, try Creation Theatre.

Places to See:

1. Colleges: Worcester College is fairly close to the Maths Institute and has some scenic gardens. Christ Church is a bit farther away, but well worth a visit, especially for those with an interest in Lewis Carroll and Harry Potter.
2. Museums: My personal favourite is the Ashmolean, the world’s first university museum. A wonderful free exhibition of works by the Sudanese artist Ibrahim El-Salahi is currently on, and there are countless other treasures. The Natural History Museum is famous for its dodo, and the adjoining Pitt Rivers Museum is bizarrely eclectic. The Museum of the History of Science on Broad St is often overlooked – it has an exquisite collection of astrolabes, compasses, sundials and globes. The Museum of Modern Art offers a refuge from the weight of tradition in Oxford.
3. Blackwell’s Bookshop: Worth a visit just for the basement Norrington Room.
4. Bodleian Library: A temple of Oxford scholarship. There is a Tolkien exhibit on at the Weston Library, which is the section of the Bodleian across Broad St.
5. Botanic Garden: The oldest such in the UK. Nice glasshouses, and the setting by the River Cherwell is idyllic.

Where to Eat: Oxford isn’t great for food, but there are some reasonable places. At the higher end of the price range, Oxford Kitchen has a good reputation. I quite like the Old Parsonage, which is just a short walk from the Maths Institute. No. 1 Ship Street is a newcomer that’s made a splash.

The above all specialize in British food. Brasserie Blanc on Walton St does some decent French food. Will’s Deli just up the road from the Maths Institute is reliable and cheap.

The relatively new Westgate development has some nice restaurants. My favourite so far is Cinnamon Kitchen. Pizza Pilgrims does nice Neapolitan pizzas. The White Rabbit close to the Ashmolean also does good pizza.
Some of the best food in Oxford is to be found at the ethnic stalls in Gloucester Green Market, at lunchtimes on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.

There a number of popular pubs not too far from the Maths Institute. The Eagle and Child is famous for being the haunt of the Inklings: Tolkien, C.S. Lewis and co. The Lamb and Flag opposite is cosy. The Bear Inn off High St claims to date back to 1242, and looks it. The Turf Tavern is a favourite with locals. There are also some nice pubs in the Jericho neighbourhood, including the Victoria and the Harcourt Arms. If you go walking in Port Meadow, you should stop for a drink at the Perch.