

NBA Confirms Return to UK with London and Manchester Games Scheduled

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The National Basketball Association (NBA) will make its long-awaited return to the United Kingdom, confirming regular-season fixtures in London for 2026 and Manchester for 2027. This marks the first NBA action on British soil since 2019, with both cities set to host major games that reinforce the league's growing presence in Europe.

The O2 Arena in London has been confirmed as the venue for a regular-season game between the Orlando Magic and Memphis Grizzlies on Sunday, 18 January 2026. The fixture will be the first NBA match played in the UK since the Washington Wizards faced the New York Knicks in January 2019. Between 2011 and 2019, London had been a recurring host for NBA matches, making this a welcome return to the capital.

In 2027, Manchester will stage its first-ever NBA regular-season game at the Co-Op Live Arena. While the participating teams for the Manchester match are yet to be announced, the city previously hosted a pre-season encounter between the Oklahoma City Thunder and Philadelphia 76ers in 2013, at what is now the AO Arena.

Commenting on the announcement, Mayor of London Sir Sadiq Khan said the capital's global sporting reputation would be further enhanced: "London is now the undisputed sporting capital of the world, and the NBA coming to The O2 in January 2026 will further cement our global status." Meanwhile, Councillor Bev Craig, leader of Manchester City Council, noted the appeal of the city for major international events, stating: "Manchester once again has shown what a magnificent draw it is for major events, and we are thrilled to welcome the NBA back to our city."

This initiative is part of a wider commitment by the NBA to increase its European presence, with two games scheduled each year in Europe from 2026 to 2028. Berlin will host the second game in 2026, while Paris will do so in 2027. Both cities are slated to host games again in 2028, with full team details to be released ahead of each season.

NBA Deputy Commissioner and Chief Operating Officer Mark Tatum met with Mayor Khan in September 2024 to discuss the league's return to London. Regular dialogue has since continued, including a meeting with NBA Commissioner Adam Silver. The league's renewed interest in the UK comes amid a boost in British talent and support for basketball.

Nottingham-born Amari Williams was recently selected by the Boston Celtics in the second round of the NBA Draft, making him the fourth active British player in the league upon his debut. He joins OG Anunoby (New York Knicks), Tosan Evbuomwan (Brooklyn Nets), and Jeremy Sochan (San Antonio Spurs), who, although born in the UK, represent Poland at the international level. Additionally, Belfast's CJ Fulton impressed during the NBA Summer League with the Minnesota Timberwolves and may earn a professional contract later this year.

The NBA's expansion into the European market could grow further. In March 2025, Commissioner Silver confirmed discussions with the International Basketball Federation (FIBA) about establishing a professional men's league across Europe. The proposed model includes up to 16 teams, featuring permanent clubs based in cities such as London, Manchester, Berlin, and Paris.

Basketball has become the second most-played team sport in the UK, with around 1.5 million weekly participants. It is also notably popular among Generation Z audiences, with an estimated eight million basketball fans nationwide. The return of the NBA to British venues is expected to build further momentum for the sport's development in the region.