

DAY TRIPS FROM LONDON

The Kent day guide

One page for each of the five stops on Kent day trips: what it is, what to see, what fits in the time you have, and where to find toilets and food.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

1

Check how long your tour gives you at each stop. Your tour's page lists the stops and the time at each one.

2

On the stop's page, tap how long your tour stops there: the route shows what fits.

3

Set a phone alarm 10 minutes before you need to be back at the bus.

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Times are typical visit lengths, not a timetable. Opening hours and prices change: check the full guide online before you go.

BEFORE YOU ARRIVE · READ THIS ON THE WAY

Kent in two minutes

Why the White Cliffs are white

The cliffs are made of chalk, a soft white limestone. The National Trust says it formed from tiny green algae that lived in the sea. When they died, their remains sank to the seabed. Over millions of years the seabed rose above the sea.

Look for: The pale chalk face, and green patches where the cliff is not allowed to wear away.

Flint, brick and tile in the villages

Under much of east Kent lies chalk, and in places the soil on top is clay full of flints. The Kent Downs landscape assessment says villages here were traditionally built of local flint, brick and tile. Many are little more than a church, a manor and some farm cottages.

Look for: Church and cottage walls with dark, knobbly flint stones set in lime mortar or framed by brick.

Oast houses and hop gardens

The Kent Downs assessment says east Kent was once a place of widespread hop growing. Oast houses, the buildings used for drying hops, still dot the countryside, although almost no hop gardens are in production there now.

Look for: Oast houses in the fields you pass, the buildings where hops were dried.

A LITTLE HISTORY

A VERY OLD STORY

The white horse

No one knows for sure where Kent's white horse comes from. A famous story links it to Hengist and Horsa, but that is legend. The horse is still the county's emblem today.

1066 (A LEGEND)

Invicta, unconquered

Kent's motto is Invicta, Latin for unconquered. A local legend says it began when the men of Kent made a deal with William the Conqueror. It is a story, not proven history.

597

Augustine and Canterbury

St Augustine arrived in Kent in 597, sent by Pope Gregory the Great. He set up the first cathedral at Canterbury, and the Archbishop of Canterbury still has his seat there.

TODAY

The Garden of England

Kent is called the Garden of England because of its fruit orchards. The orchard fruit and juice are good things to taste while you are here.

White Cliffs of Dover

Sea air and open space

WHY STOP HERE

The White Cliffs are cliffs of chalk (a soft white rock) beside the sea, with grass above them. This is the part of the day for looking at the view, walking outside and feeling far from London's streets. With a longer stop you can walk above the coast and watch the sea (the English Channel) change in the light. With a short stop you still get the view.

DON'T MISS

Britain's front door

The French coast on the horizon (only on a clear day), the ferries in Dover Harbour, and Dover Castle on the hill behind it.





SO FAR	YOUR ROUTE · STOP WHEN "SO FAR" REACHES YOUR TIME
15 min	**First viewpoint** · 15 min here · free **DON'T MISS** — Dover Harbour and its ferries below you, Dover Castle on the hill behind, and the French coast on a clear day.
45 min	**Along the clifftop path** · 30 min here · free — Open chalk grassland, grazing ponies and cattle, and in summer wild flowers and blue butterflies.
65 min	**The Visitor Centre** · 20 min here · free — A shop with gifts and local products, a second-hand bookshop, and a café with a view of the docks and the sea.

Also here, with more time: Fan Bay and the Deep Shelter tunnels (120 min, own ticket) · South Foreland Lighthouse (120 min, own ticket)

TICKET	There is no entry charge to walk on the cliffs. Parking is charged unless you are a National Trust member or Blue Badge holder, and the lighthouse tower tour and Fan Bay are charged separately. Fan Bay and the lighthouse open on set days in season, so check before you plan to visit them.
TOILETS AND FOOD	The National Trust says the visitor centre is 150 metres from the bus parking. Toilets are at the back of the building. The cafeteria and the shop are at the front. The National Trust page was checked on 30 October 2026.

Dover Castle

Towers, defences and wartime stories

WHY STOP HERE

Dover Castle is a fortress on a hill above the town of Dover. It has a huge Great Tower and a long history of defending the coast. Choose it when you want the castle itself to be part of your day, with Canterbury or the cliffs. Allow time to go inside. With a pass-by (the tour goes past), you see the castle from outside but you do not visit it.

DON'T MISS

A Roman lighthouse and a Saxon church

Lines of thin red Roman tiles in the lighthouse walls, and more Roman tiles around the church windows. The top part of the lighthouse was rebuilt in the Middle Ages.





SO FAR	YOUR ROUTE · STOP WHEN "SO FAR" REACHES YOUR TIME
45 min	**The Great Tower** · 45 min here · in the entry ticket — Henry II's royal palace, with furnished medieval rooms, and views over the castle and the English Channel from the top.
65 min	**Roman lighthouse and St Mary in Castro** · 20 min here · in the entry ticket **DON'T MISS** — Britain's oldest standing lighthouse, built by the Romans, beside the Anglo-Saxon church on its grassy mound.
85 min	**Fire Command Post and Ramsay statue** · 20 min here · in the entry ticket — A First World War lookout above the cliffs, with wide views of the Channel and the White Cliffs, and the statue of Admiral Ramsay nearby.
115 min	**Underground Hospital, Secret Wartime Tunnels** · 30 min here · in the entry ticket — A guided tour of the Second World War hospital in the chalk, with its operating theatre, wards and corridors.
145 min	**Under Siege and the Spur** · 30 min here · in the entry ticket — An exhibition about the siege of 1216, the medieval tunnels under the north defences, and the Spur viewpoint where the attackers camped.

Allow at least 45 minutes here: the first stop is The Great Tower.

TOILETS AND FOOD

English Heritage says the castle has male, female and disabled toilets in five places. The main restaurant is the NAAFI, with hot food, sandwiches and soup. A small Tunnels Tea Room sells sandwiches, cakes and ice cream. You can also eat a picnic in the grounds. The page was checked on 30 October 2026.

Canterbury

Old streets and the river

WHY STOP HERE

Canterbury is a historic city you can walk around. You can see old streets, the Westgate Towers and a river with gardens and punts (flat boats pushed with a long pole). Time here is for wandering and finding a place to take a break. This stop is time in the city itself. If you want to go inside the cathedral, choose a tour with a planned cathedral visit.

DON'T MISS

A city gate built against invasion

The small openings for guns in the round towers, and the stone bridge over the river in front of the gate. Inside, the only way up is a narrow staircase of five flights.





SO FAR	YOUR ROUTE · STOP WHEN "SO FAR" REACHES YOUR TIME
20 min	**Westgate Gardens** · 20 min here · free — Lawns and flower beds beside the River Stour, and a plane tree more than 200 years old. Punt trips run on the river from mid-March to the end of October.
50 min	**Westgate Towers** · 30 min here · **own ticket** DON'T MISS — The largest medieval city gate still standing in England, built from 1379, with a small museum inside and a climb to the battlements for a view over the city roofs.
80 min	**The Old Weavers' House, Eastbridge Hospital and Greyfriars** · 30 min here · **own ticket** — The timber-framed Old Weavers' House by the river, and close by on the main street Eastbridge Hospital, which has welcomed pilgrims since 1190. Next door, the Franciscan Gardens hold Greyfriars Chapel.
110 min	**The Beaney** · 30 min here · free — Canterbury's museum, art gallery and library, in a grand building of 1897 to 1899 on the High Street.
155 min	**Canterbury Roman Museum** · 45 min here · **own ticket** — The mosaic floor of a Roman town house, found after the bombing of 1942, with Roman objects from the city around it.
215 min	**St Augustine's Abbey** · 60 min here · **own ticket** — The ruins of the abbey that Augustine founded after 597. There is a small museum, a free audio tour and a virtual reality view of the abbey in the early 1500s.

Has a page of its own: Canterbury Cathedral (60 min, page 6)

TOILETS	Visit Canterbury says the West End, by Westgate Gardens, has cafes, restaurants and bars. A mobile cafe runs at Tower House in summer. It says the Toddler's Cove playground, further along the river path, has toilets and a refreshment van.
FOOD	The Goods Shed, next to Canterbury West station, calls itself a farmers market, food hall and restaurant. Lunch is served Tuesday to Sunday, 12 pm to 3 pm. It is closed on Mondays.

Canterbury Cathedral

A medieval cathedral up close

WHY STOP HERE

Go inside the cathedral in the middle of Canterbury. You can see the nave (the long main hall) and the crypt (a room under the church), which is the oldest part of the building. There is also stained glass from the Middle Ages. It is a planned visit with its own entry ticket, so check what your tour includes and how long it gives you inside.

DON'T MISS

Look up into the central tower

From the top of the Pulpitum Steps, the fan-shaped stone ceiling high inside the tower. Watch your step while you look up. Outside, the same tower rises above the middle of the roof.





SO FAR	YOUR ROUTE · STOP WHEN "SO FAR" REACHES YOUR TIME
15 min	**The nave** · 15 min here · in the entry ticket — The main visitor door leads into the nave, the long main hall rebuilt between 1377 and 1405. Just inside, look for the Canterbury Cross carved in stone.
25 min	**The Martyrdom** · 10 min here · in the entry ticket — The place where Thomas Becket was killed in 1170, with his name in the floor, an altar and the sculpture of swords above it.
40 min	**The crypt** · 15 min here · in the entry ticket — The oldest part of the cathedral, with round Norman arches, carved columns and the place of Becket's first tomb.
50 min	**Pulpitum Steps and Bell Harry Tower** · 10 min here · in the entry ticket DON'T MISS — Climb to the top of the steps and look straight up into the fan vaulting of the central tower. The stone screen here is carved with Lancastrian kings.
65 min	**Trinity Chapel** · 15 min here · in the entry ticket — The candle that marks where Becket's shrine stood. The Miracle Windows are all around it, and the tomb of the Black Prince is close to the shrine site.
85 min	**Great Cloister and Chapter House** · 20 min here · in the entry ticket — The covered walk of the monks' monastery, with over 800 carved shields, green men, rabbits and a mermaid. Beside it is the Chapter House, where the monks met every day.

TICKET	Sightseeing needs a ticket, bought online or at the Visitor Centre. Going to a service or into a chapel to pray is always free. On Sundays the grounds and shop open before the cathedral church does, so check the day's hours.
TOILETS AND FOOD	Canterbury Cathedral says its public toilets are open 9.00 am to 6.30 pm daily. Its café, The Lounge at Cathedral Lodge, is open 10.00 am to 4.00 pm for coffee, lunch and snacks. In summer you can eat outside in the Campanile Garden. The cathedral page was checked on 30 October 2026.

Thomas Becket: the murder and the pilgrims

A murder in 1170, a saint, and centuries of pilgrims



Thomas Becket was Archbishop of Canterbury. On 29 December 1170, four knights killed him inside his own cathedral. This page tells the story, and why pilgrims came here for hundreds of years.

The murder, 1170

Becket and King Henry II argued for many years. The story says the king cried, "Who will rid me of this turbulent priest?" Four knights rode to Canterbury and killed Becket in the north-west transept. One sword blow was so hard that the tip of the blade broke on the stone floor.

A saint

Soon people said that sick pilgrims were healed through Becket. The Pope made him a saint in 1173. A stone in the floor with the name THOMAS marks the place where he died.

The shrine and the windows

A Canterbury monk, Benedict of Peterborough, wrote the miracle stories down. Between 1180 and 1220, glass makers turned dozens of them into pictures for twelve windows around the Trinity Chapel. In 1220 Becket's body was moved into a new shrine there, and pilgrims came from across Europe to pray. Henry VIII had the shrine destroyed in 1538.

Chaucer's pilgrims

Geoffrey Chaucer's poem, The Canterbury Tales, follows pilgrims who ride from London to Becket's shrine, telling stories on the way. The next page is about them.

The Canterbury Tales: why Canterbury?

A famous poem about pilgrims on the road to Becket



The Canterbury Tales is a poem by Geoffrey Chaucer. A pilgrim is a person who travels to a holy place. Chaucer's pilgrims ride from London to Canterbury, telling stories on the way.

Who was Geoffrey Chaucer?

Chaucer was born in London in 1342, the son of a rich wine merchant. He worked at the king's court and collected taxes at the Port of London. The cathedral's learning site says he never finished the Tales.

Why Canterbury?

The pilgrims are going to the shrine (the holy resting place) of Thomas Becket. He was killed in the cathedral in 1170 (see the page before this one) and made a saint in 1173. The cathedral says this made Canterbury the third most important Christian pilgrimage site in the world, after Jerusalem and Rome.

The contest, and the missing end

About thirty pilgrims meet at the Tabard Inn in Southwark, across the river from London. The innkeeper plans 120 stories, and the best teller wins a dinner paid for by the others. But the poem stops on the road, and the pilgrims never reach Canterbury.

The Tales in Canterbury today

The Canterbury Tales Experience, in St Margaret's Street, is a walk-through show that follows the pilgrims from the Tabard Inn to Canterbury. Its website says it is open seven days a week, 10:30 am to 4:00 pm, and lasts 45 to 60 minutes (checked 30 October 2026).

PILGRIMS YOU WILL MEET

The Knight

A respected soldier who had ridden to war farther from home than almost any other man.

The Wife of Bath

A cloth-maker from near Bath. She had married five times and had been to Jerusalem three times.

The Miller

A big, strong man who always won the wrestling prize and could break a door by running at it with his head.

Leeds Castle

A castle on the water

WHY STOP HERE

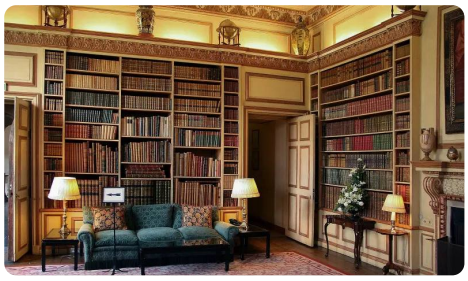
A castle reflected in water, rooms shaped by centuries of owners, and gardens to relax in. Leeds Castle brings royal history and the atmosphere of a country-house visit into one day from London. It is the place to choose if you would rather spend your day in and around one castle than move between several stops.

DON'T MISS

A castle for queens

The Gloriette on the smaller island, joined to the main castle by a stone bridge with arches over the water. The multimedia guide, included with your ticket, tells the queens' stories.





SO FAR	YOUR ROUTE · STOP WHEN "SO FAR" REACHES YOUR TIME
15 min	**Cedar Lake and the first view** · 15 min here · in the entry ticket — From the cascade at Cedar Lake, your first full view of the castle on its water.
75 min	**The castle** · 60 min here · in the entry ticket DON'T MISS — Cross the drawbridge to the castle island. Inside are the library and dining room, Lady Baillie's rooms upstairs, and the drawing rooms.
90 min	**The Dog Collar Museum** · 15 min here · in the entry ticket — A small museum of dog collars beside the castle. The collars range from a Spanish iron collar of the late 1400s to modern ones made from tyres, beads and plastic.
110 min	**The Culpeper Garden** · 20 min here · in the entry ticket — A cottage garden of roses, lupins and poppies inside low box hedges, where the castle's kitchen garden once grew.
130 min	**Lady Baillie Mediterranean Garden Terraces** · 20 min here · in the entry ticket — A sunny terraced garden with herbs and fragrant plants, and views across the Great Water.
150 min	**The Maze and Grotto** · 20 min here · in the entry ticket — A maze of 2,400 yew trees. From the mound at its centre you see the circular pattern, and an underground grotto with mythical creatures leads you back out.

With only 60 minutes, go straight to the castle (60 min).

TOILETS AND FOOD

Leeds Castle lists accessible toilets at the main entrance, on the Castle Island, near the Stable Courtyard and near the Knight's Stronghold playground. Its page names the Maze Café, the seasonal Boathouse catering outlet and Castle View Restaurant. The page was checked on 30 October 2026.

More days out from London

Each region has its own page, with every tour's stops and how long you get at each one.

Ready to choose a tour?

See every Kent day trip side by side: the stops, the minutes at each one, and what is included.
seebeyondthecity.com/london/kent/#compare

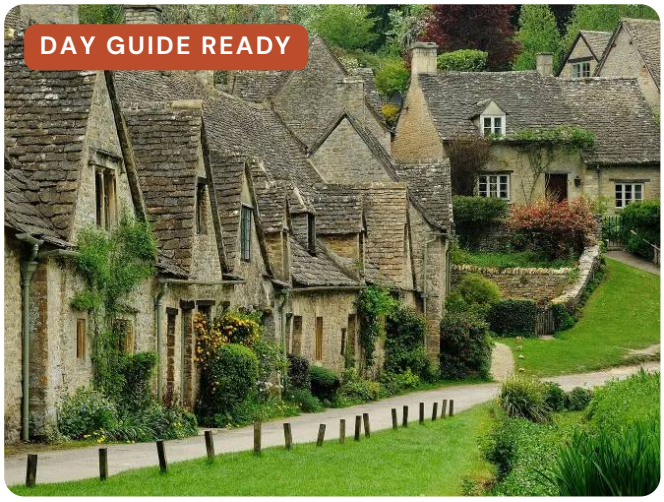


BATH AND STONEHENGE

Stonehenge & Roman Bath

Stonehenge · Bath · Castle Combe
Up to about 180 km · 111 miles

Get the Bath and Stonehenge day guide
seebeyondthecity.com/london/bath-stonehenge/



THE COTSWOLDS

Cotswold villages & market towns

Bibury · Bourton-on-the-Water · Stow-on-the-Wold
Up to about 153 km · 95 miles

Get the Cotswolds day guide
seebeyondthecity.com/london/cotswolds/

Spotted a change?

Opening times and prices change. Reply to the email this guide came in and tell us what you found.

Travelling with someone?

Forward the email, so they have the guide on their phone too.

Sources

Where each page's facts come from, by stop. Each name is a link to the source.

WHITE CLIFFS OF DOVER

National Trust: the White Cliffs of Dover
National Trust arrival guide: toilets and cafeteria
National Trust walking guide
National Trust Fan Bay guide

DOVER CASTLE

English Heritage: history of Dover Castle
English Heritage: Dover Castle itineraries
English Heritage: facilities and tours
English Heritage: Dover Castle Under Siege
English Heritage: things to see and do
English Heritage, Dover Castle
English Heritage: facilities at Dover Castle

CANTERBURY

Canterbury Archaeological Trust: Westgate and City Gaol
Visit Canterbury: Westgate Towers Museum and Viewpoint
Eastbridge Hospital
Visit Canterbury: Westgate Gardens
Canterbury Museums: Roman Museum visit information
Visit Canterbury: St Augustine's Abbey
Canterbury Museums: the Beaney
The Goods Shed, Canterbury

CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL

Canterbury Cathedral: architecture
Canterbury Cathedral learning site: the cathedral
Cathedral accessibility
Canterbury Cathedral: cathedral grounds
Cathedral tickets and opening times
Canterbury Cathedral: plan your visit

THOMAS BECKET: THE MURDER AND THE PILGRIMS

Canterbury Cathedral: our story
Canterbury Cathedral: miracles and masterpieces
Canterbury Cathedral learning site: pilgrimage today

THE CANTERBURY TALES: WHY CANTERBURY?

Canterbury Cathedral learning site: Chaucer
Canterbury Cathedral learning site: pilgrimage today
Harvard's Geoffrey Chaucer Website: summary of the framing narrative
The Canterbury Tales Experience
Harvard's Geoffrey Chaucer Website: General Prologue

LEEDS CASTLE

Leeds Castle: history of the castle
Leeds Castle: the castle
Leeds Castle: the Maze and Grotto
Leeds Castle: the Princess Alexandra Gardens
Leeds Castle: the Culpeper Garden
Leeds Castle: the Lady Baillie Mediterranean Garden Terraces
Leeds Castle: Dog Collar Museum
Leeds Castle accessibility: toilets and cafés

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PAGE	WHERE	PHOTO	BY	LICENCE	SOURCE
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3	**White Cliffs of Dover**	Dover White Cliffs 1	kallerna	CC BY-SA 4.0	Wikimedia Commons
3	**White Cliffs of Dover: First viewpoint**	Dover Harbour from Langdon Cliffs	Marathon	CC BY-SA 2.0	Wikimedia Commons
4	**Dover Castle**	1 dover castle aerial panorama 2017	Chensiyuan	CC BY-SA 4.0	Wikimedia Commons
4	**Dover Castle: Roman lighthouse and St Mary in Castro**	Roman Lighthouse and Church of St Mary in Castro, Dover Castle	Nessy-Pic	CC BY-SA 4.0	Wikimedia Commons
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6	**Canterbury Cathedral: Pulpitum Steps and Bell Harry Tower**	Canterbury - Cathedral - 2	Benjamin Smith	CC BY-SA 4.0	Wikimedia Commons
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9	**Leeds Castle: The castle**	Bibliothek (26521137302)	wolfgang.mller54 from Niedersachsen /Germany	CC BY 2.0	Wikimedia Commons
7	**Thomas Becket: the murder and the pilgrims**	Four Swords (4903700005)	Tony Hisgett from Birmingham, UK	CC BY 2.0	Wikimedia Commons
8	**The Canterbury Tales: why Canterbury?**	Canterbury Tales Ms.Bodl.686	Brigade Piron	CC BY 3.0	Wikimedia Commons
10	**Bath and Stonehenge**	Bath Abbey 2024 01	Julian Herzog (Website)	CC BY 4.0	Wikimedia Commons
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