



## Defence of the Realm

Make **Dover** your base to journey along the 'frontline of history'. Centuries of defence-boosting activity, from the reign of Henry VIII to World War II, are right here on the doorstep.

**Dover Castle**, strategically sited to peer over the Channel to the Continent, was known as the 'Key of England', and leaders from Roman times onwards were keen to ensure it would not be unlocked. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century King Henry VIII was no different. Fearing invasion by France and Spain, he strengthened the bristling edifice with stone bulwarks and bastions, and you can view the remains of a gun platform next to Cannons Gate.



Invasion never came, but the castle played a vital role in World War II: tour the **Secret Wartime Tunnels**, some dating from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, deep beneath the White Cliffs – not all notable landmarks are above ground! Now you're at the heart of the operation centre for the evacuation of Dunkirk – just feel the tense drama of those dark days come to life. Back above ground, a museum with stunning sets and audio-visual effects also reveals the story of the Princess of Wales' Royal Regiment. Have refreshments in the Naafi or Second World War themed tea bar.

Journey north from Dover with Henry VIII. As part of his scheme to defend England he built a chain of coastal castles, including **Walmer**, **Deal** and the now vanished **Sandown**. These 'castles in the Downs' protected the safe anchorage of the Downs, the stretch of water between the shoreline and treacherous Goodwin Sands where many a ship has foundered. At **Deal Castle** you can't but admire the virtually impregnable Tudor Rose design of multiple bastions clustered around a central keep. The fortress once carried 119 guns and it's among the finest artillery works in England. Relive 'The Story of Deal Castle' with an audio tour, explore battlements and dark passages.

You can spot Henry's 'housestyle' for his new generation of artillery forts at neighbouring **Walmer Castle and Gardens**, too: raised bastions supporting guns to fire at enemy ships and secondary defences to counteract landing parties. Walmer has been much gentrified over the years because since 1708 it's been the official residence of the Lords Warden of the Cinque Ports. Formed in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the Confederation of the Cinque Ports – including **Sandwich**, **Dover**, **Hythe** and **Romney** – agreed to provide the king with men and ships in return for special privileges.



Cue a jaunt a few miles further north to **Sandwich**, to investigate reminders of raids, invasions and shipping heritage: The Barbican built for Henry VIII, the Quay, Ropewalk and St Mary's Church. Or return to 'base' at Dover ready to head south with Napoleon.



In Dover, take a walk around the **Western Heights** (access via South Military Road). Today it's a local nature reserve and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, but a network of restored footpaths leads to fortifications from the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Structures like the Citadel, the Drop Redoubt, the Detached Bastion and the North Entrance formed Britain's largest series of defences to stave off possible attack during the Napoleonic Wars (1802-15). Later, during World War II, men were stationed here on anti-aircraft duties. Look up to the skies and just imagine the adrenalin pumping as the Battle of Britain raged.

Plot your way south now following a line of Martello Towers: built 1805-12 along the south coast to fend off attack from Napoleon, whose forces had been mustering across the Channel at Boulogne. Many towers still stand in Kent, some in ruin, some transformed into private dwellings. **Martello Tower No. 3 at Folkestone** continues to live and breathe as a visitor centre. Or get a compelling picture of the times at **Dymchurch Martello Tower** (English Heritage), which has been fully restored and equipped with replica gunpowder barrels and a cannon on the gun platform.

Along the way, take time out to relax beside the **Royal Military Canal at Hythe**. Constructed to enable the swift movement of men and stores while Napoleon threatened, the pretty 28-mile waterway today is a peaceful spot for walking, boating and fishing. Also try out the 'acoustic mirror' that picks up voices on the opposite bank. It's a modern interpretation of the mysterious 'listening ears' built in the 1920s and 1930s around **Hythe** and **Dungeness**: huge concrete sound mirrors designed to detect incoming aircraft from distances up to 27 miles away. The invention of radar rendered them redundant, but keep your eyes – or ears – out, you can still spot a few scattered like artworks sculpted by giants.



For more information see [www.visitkent.co.uk](http://www.visitkent.co.uk)

