



Friends, Romans, Vikings

Since time out of mind the Kent coast has been the gateway to friends and foe, and each has left a mark. Come and retrace their steps on an enthralling historical adventure.



We begin around **Ramsgate and Pegwell Bay**, where three momentous landings changed the course of English history.

The Romans stepped ashore in 43 AD and set up base at **Richborough Roman Fort**, a launch pad for conquering the rest of the country. As you browse the impressive remains of walls and defensive ditches, it's easy to envisage their once-bustling town.

If you like to stretch your legs, follow the long-distance Saxon Shore Way that links Richborough to **Reculver** on Kent's North Shore. The name Saxon Shore comes from a series of Roman fortifications built to defend against raids by Saxon pirates. **Reculver Towers** mark the site of the Roman fort of Regulbium.

Back in Pegwell Bay follow the fortunes of the Saxons with our second Kent landing. Hengist, Horsa and their chums disembarked at **Ebbsfleet** in 449 AD, overcame the locals and established England's first Anglo-Saxon kingdom. A full-size replica **Viking Ship, *Hugin***, on the cliff top commemorates the invasion.

Then, a little way north at **Cliffsend**, find the Celtic-design **St Augustine's Cross**. Placed here in 1884, it recalls St Augustine's arrival in 597 AD on his mission to reintroduce Christianity to southern England. It's said Augustine celebrated his first Mass at this spot. Two thought-provoking memorials, two very different chapters in history.

We head inland, now, to **Canterbury** and **St Augustine's Abbey**, which Augustine founded to mark the success of his mission. Take an interactive audio tour around the evocative ruins, among the most significant religious monuments in the country. St Augustine himself is buried here. Complete your pilgrimage to **Canterbury's World Heritage Site** with a visit to **St Martin's Church**, the oldest parish church in England still in constant use, and magnificent **Canterbury Cathedral** where Augustine, first Archbishop, established his 'cathedra' or seat.





The final leg of our journey takes us back to the coast. **Dover**, the shortest sea crossing to mainland Europe, also attracted the attention of Roman invaders. Julius Caesar came and went between Dover and Deal a couple of times in 55 and 54 BC. More permanent conquest came later and in the 1st century AD the Romans began to develop Dover as a port. At the highest point of Dover Castle you can still see the gnarled tower of their 'pharos', a **Roman Lighthouse**, which was originally 80ft tall: a truly rare survivor.

Meanwhile **Dover Roman Painted House** gives insights to early commuter life. Constructed around 200 AD, it formed part of a large mansion or official hotel for cross-Channel travellers. Time Team-style excavations have revealed the original underground heating system and outstanding wall paintings covering more than 400 sq ft of plaster – the most extensive ever found north of the Alps. Exhibition galleries provide lots more fascinating information and you can also view a section of the massive Roman fort wall and defensive bastion from a Saxon Shore fort.

If you're feeling energetic, pull on your walking boots again and the Saxon Shore Way will take you back to Richborough!



For more information see www.visitkent.co.uk

