

Family Fun in and around Canterbury and Sandwich

There are so many things to do in Canterbury that will keep children – and adults – happy for hours. Top must-see is surely [Canterbury Cathedral](#), but then also seek out [Rupert Bear](#) at the [Museum of Canterbury](#) and explore bygone eras at the [Canterbury Tales Museum](#). Each is enthralling in its own way! The city also serves up a great variety of family-friendly restaurants and cafés, so energy levels need never flag.

The surrounding countryside is bursting with exciting adventures, too. And here are just a few suggestions for a memorable family break in the great outdoors.



Day One – School Holiday Boredom-Busters and the Old Port of Canterbury

1) Canterbury Environmental Education Centre

What to do when school's out? Head over to [Canterbury Environmental Education Centre](#) which offers family trails during all school holidays, Monday to Friday, excluding bank holidays. The centre opens from 10am to 4pm.

Discover the sensory garden, explore the reed bed trails and visit the bird hides to spot wildlife like herons, swans and kingfishers. Make a clay hedgehog, do a brass rubbing or some pond dipping to see how many amazing creatures live in the lake. Or simply enjoy a cup of tea at the picnic site overlooking the water. It's a fun-filled day out for all, within only a mile of the city centre.

2) Fordwich – the Old Port of Canterbury

Continue east of Canterbury and you will come to [Fordwich](#), the smallest town in Britain. This was once the Port of Canterbury and pilgrims from all over Europe came here by boat on their way to visit Becket's shrine at Canterbury Cathedral. Maybe pause for lunch in one of the two pubs – the [George & Dragon](#) and the [Fordwich Arms](#),

Another claim to fame is that Fordwich boasts the smallest and oldest Town Hall still in use today. Poke your nose inside and have a peek around.

Then who's for a spot of mystery to stir the imagination? In the [Church of St Mary the Virgin](#) you can admire craftsmanship spanning 900 years, as well as the enigmatic Fordwich Stone: this was carved around 1100 as a shrine for a saint's relics, possibly even those of St Augustine, and it may have been in Canterbury Cathedral at one time. It's a puzzle



From Fordwich it is possible to take a circular ramble up into Trenley Park Wood by following the Stour Valley Walk out of the town and onto the public footpaths. (Use OS map 150.) The section of the Great Stour east of Fordwich is particularly good for exploring the river and nearby wetlands of Westbere Marshes. Call the [Kentish Stour Countryside Project](#) on 01233 813307 for a copy of their Wild Sites leaflet. Indeed, if you're feeling energetic, it is possible to walk to Fordwich from Canterbury: along the Stour Valley Walk, or take the train or bus to Sturry and follow the public footpaths.



Trenley Park Wood

Day Two – Gorillas and Hops

1) Howletts Wild Animal Park

Who needs to jump on an aeroplane and fly half way around the world when you can go on safari at [Howletts Wild Animal Park](#) in Bekesbourne! Embark on a 90-acre adventure of wide-eyed delight, spotting tigers, gorillas, monkeys and tapirs. See clouded leopards, Iberian wolves, macaques, rhinos and many other rare and endangered species, all thriving in beautiful parkland.

You can easily spend the whole day at Howletts, but whilst in Bekesbourne do drop in at [Mama Feelgoods](#) for breakfast, morning coffee, a light lunch or afternoon tea. Shop in their mouthwatering delicatessen and buy some hop garlands from their neighbours, [Essentially Hops](#). Both are located at Chalk Pit Farm. A good lunch stop is also [the Unicorn](#). The Unicorn can provide you with details of walks around Bekesbourne, too.



2) Sandwich delights

Trundle on to [Sandwich](#) for the evening, where you've a wide choice of family-friendly restaurants, cafés and pubs, and a great selection of accommodation (see the listings pages). Check out the latest releases at the art deco [Empire Cinema](#).



River Stour at Sandwich

Historic Sandwich

Day Three - A Sandwich Full of Wildlife

1) Historic Sandwich

Begin your day with some time travel, discovering the secrets of Sandwich on the [Historic Town Trail](#) (trail leaflets can also be obtained at the Tourist Information Centre at the Guildhall). Sandwich has two nature reserves – [Gazen Salts](#) and [Monks Wall](#) – located just a five-minute walk from the town centre. Come and watch ducks and other colourful creatures.

2) Rare Species Conservation centre

To continue yesterday's exciting wildlife theme, you could visit the [Rare Species Conservation Centre](#), just outside Sandwich near Worth, and observe the magnificent Tibetan Snow Leopard, the African Pygmy Goose and the Cambodian Sun Bear, as well as other endangered species from around the world. Satisfy any tummy-rumblings with lunch in the café or return to Sandwich.

3) Sandwich River Bus

For a complete contrast to the exotic animals you've seen at Howletts and the Rare Species Conservation Centre, catch a ride on the [Sandwich River Bus](#) down river towards the sea to look for our native wildlife. In summer you may have a good chance of seeing playful seals.

On the way, Captain Colin will show you where there was once a huge army seaport used during World War I. It's a compelling tale: how large numbers of troops and supplies were needed on the Continent, so a new port was secretly built at Richborough and the East Kent Light Railway extended to service it. Nowadays little remains other than the ghostly traces of old jetties, but a hundred years ago the scene bustled with landing facilities, a train ferry and barge terminals, marshalling yards, over 60 miles of railway sidings and around 60,000 people working here!

Day Four - Cycling and Beach Adventure

Spend your morning at Sandwich Bay – it's the best time of day for seeing the birds, so the earlier you arrive the better. Look out for events held by the [Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Field Centre](#), which all take place in the morning – except for their moth trapping nights! Or simply enjoy a romp on miles of sandy beach and dunes.

The SBBOT has a fully equipped field centre with ringing room and classroom, and it is possible to view their ringing work. Throughout the six reserves that they manage in and around the Bay are a number of hides from which you can spy on the great variety of resident and migratory birds.

And there's more! SBBOT holds pond-dipping activities for children and runs a Wildlife Explorers Group for 8–12 year olds. Walks and talks on natural history subjects take place regularly as well as monthly workshops, and there are six Wine & Wisdom evenings a year. Please note, attendance at most events needs to be pre-booked and there is sometimes a waiting list for SBBOT's popular monthly boat trip with the Sandwich River Bus to view the birds out in the estuary – so do plan ahead.

2) Fowlmead Country Park

Chow down for lunch at the [Blue Pigeons](#) or the [St Crispin Inn](#) at Worth, a pretty village near Sandwich complete with duck pond in the centre opposite the church.

Finally, hop over to [Fowlmead Country Park](#) and get going with activities like cycling, orienteering, geo-caching and fossil collecting, all in a safe, off-road environment. (Bike hire is available from spring 2010.) At the end of your break you'll have one very happy-tired family – and magical memories for months to come.



Attraction	Telephone	Web address	Opening Times	Address
Canterbury Cathedral	+44 (0) 1227 762862	http://www.canterbury-cathedral.org/	Check website alternatively phone	Canterbury Cathedral, Cathedral House, 11 The Precincts, Canterbury, CT1 2EH
Museum of Canterbury	+ 44 (0) 1227 475 202	http://www.canterbury.gov.uk/main.cfm?objectid=48	Check website alternatively phone	Museum of Canterbury with Rupert Bear Museum, Stour Street, Canterbury, Kent CT1 2NR
Canterbury Tales Museum	+44 (0) 1227 479227	http://www.canterburytales.org.uk/	Check website alternatively phone	The Canterbury Tales, St. Margaret's Street, Canterbury, Kent, CT1 2TG
Canterbury Environmental Education Centre	+44 (0) 1227 452 447	http://www.naturegrid.org.uk/	Check website alternatively phone	Canterbury Environmental Education Centre, Broad Oak Road, Canterbury, Kent, CT2 7PX
George and Dragon	+44 01304 613106	http://search.visitbritain.com/en-EN/details.aspx?contentid=828883	Check website alternatively phone	George and Dragon 24 Fisher Street Sadwich Kent, CT13 9EJ
Fordwich Arms	+44 (0) 1227 710444	http://fordwicharms.co.uk/index.html	Check website alternatively phone	Fordwich Arms King Street Fordwich Canterbury Kent CT2 0DB
Howletts Wild Animal Park	+44 (0) 1227 721286	http://www.totallywild.net/howletts	Summer 10:00-18:00 (last admission 16.30) Winter 10:00-17:00pm (last admission 15.30)	Howletts Wild Animal Park, Bekesbourne, Nr. Canterbury, Kent, CT4 5EL

Mama Feelgoods	+44 (0) 1227 830830	http://mamafeelgoods.com/	Monday to Saturday 9:30 to 17:00, Sunday 10:30 to 16:00	Chalkpit Farm, School Lane, Bekesbourne, Canterbury, Kent, CT4 5EU
Essentially Hops	+44 (0) 1227 830666	http://www.essentiallyhops.co.uk/	Monday to Saturday 9.00 - 17.00, Sunday 10.30am - 16.00	Chalkpit Farm, School Lane, Bekesbourne Nr. Howletts Zoo, Canterbury, Kent, CT4 5EU
Empire Cinema	+44 (0) 1304 620480	http://www.empire sandwich.co.uk/	Check website alternatively phone	Empire, 15 Delf Street, Sandwich, Kent, CT13 9HB
Rare Species Conservation Centre	+44 (0) 1304-611-578	http://www.rarespeciesconservationcentre.org/	Only open on special days, do please check the website and book in advance	Rare Species Conservation Centre & Zoological Gardens, Bellar's bush, Dover road, Sandwich, Kent, CT13 0DG.
Blue Pigeons	+44 (0) 1304 613 245	http://www.bluepigeonsatworth.co.uk/home.php	Check website alternatively phone	Blue Pigeons The Street, Worth, Nr Sandwich, Kent, CT14 0DE
The St Crispin Inn	+ 44 (0) 1304 612081	http://www.stcrispininn.com/info.htm	Check website alternatively phone	The St Crispin Inn, The Street, Worth, Deal, Kent CT14 0DF