



## Heritage Kent

### *Explore the oldest county in England*

Where can you find the world's most ancient seagoing boat? Where does the 'Key to England' unlock centuries of enthralling history? Where can you discover more castles and historic houses than in any other region? Take a fresh look at Kent, England's oldest county, and get in touch with thousands of years of heritage.

### Day One

Start your historical journey at [Ightham Mote](#), Sevenoaks. This moated medieval manor, nestling in a sunken valley and dating from 1320, has features spanning many centuries: including the Great Hall, Old Chapel, crypt and Tudor chapel with painted ceiling.

A short distance away is [Knole House](#), Sevenoaks. Here you can bring dreams of grand living alive in one of England's great treasure houses. Dating from 1456, Knole boasts 13 splendid state rooms, rare furniture and a wealth of 17th century tapestries. And it's all set in a glorious deer park.

For lunch go into [Sevenoaks](#), an attractive country town with many 16th-18th century buildings and a good choice of pubs and restaurants. You can follow the Town Trail to delights like the Red House, home of Jane Austen's uncle whom she often visited.

Finally stop at [Hever Castle](#). The magic of the 13th-century double-moated castle where Henry VIII romanced Anne Boleyn is matched by spellbinding gardens, including Rose, Tudor and Italian. The latter, without equal in Britain, was laid out in the early 20th century for then owner William Waldorf Astor, to display his outstanding collection of sculptures and statuary dating from Roman to Renaissance times. Wander Anne Boleyn's Walk beneath fine old trees, picnic by the lake, and don't miss the unique 'water' maze (April-October, weather permitting).

An alternative attraction on this day would be [Chartwell](#): Sir Winston Churchill's country retreat. We best know Winston Churchill from his public oratory, urging 'Victory at all costs'. But what was he like in private? Get some unexpected insights into his personality in the home where he drew inspiration from 1924 until the end of his life. Personal, political and important WW2 memorabilia paint a fascinating picture.

### Day Two

After a hearty breakfast drive to [Deal Castle](#), one of the finest Tudor artillery works in England. Deal Castle was one sturdy link in the chain of coastal fortresses built between 1539 and 1540 by order of King Henry VIII, who feared invasion from France.

A little further along the coast is [Walmer Castle & Gardens](#). Find out how this Tudor fort transformed into the elegant residence of the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, a role occupied by HM Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, Sir Winston Churchill and the Duke of Wellington, among others.

Take a drive via [Sandwich](#) which has more medieval buildings than anywhere else in the country. Check out the delicatessen called No Name Shop in No Name Street where you can buy sandwiches or stock up on all the essentials for a tasty picnic.

The day is rounded off by a trip to [Dover Castle](#) - known as the 'Key of England': unlock it and hostile forces believed they could push open the door to the rest of the country. Today you can unlock the compelling WW2 world of the Secret Wartime Tunnels, where the evacuation of Dunkirk was masterminded.

### **Day Three**

This morning explore [Canterbury](#), one of England's oldest cities with a continuous history. The story of its sublime World Heritage Site – the magnificent cathedral, [St Augustine's Abbey and St Martin's Church](#) – begins in AD 597 when St Augustine came to reintroduce Christianity to southern England.

Be uplifted by the daily singing of the choir in the [cathedral](#), walk in the footsteps of pilgrims to the very site where Thomas Becket was brutally murdered in 1170 – it still sends a shiver down the spine. Then head over to St Augustine's Abbey and take an interactive audio tour to piece together its fascinating past, from burial place of the kings of Kent to royal palace of Henry VIII. And did you know that St Martin's Church is the oldest working parish church in England?

Lunch at The Goods Shed farmers' market. All dishes are made from fresh, local, tasty produce.

In the afternoon travel to [Rochester](#), famous for its connections with Charles Dickens. Immerse yourself in the military might of Rochester Castle, among the best-preserved and finest examples of Norman building in the country. Then experience the peaceful atmosphere of England's second-oldest cathedral. If you have time drop into the (free-entry) Guildhall Museum and Conservancy Wing for displays on the local and social history of the Medway towns.

Alternatively visit [Leeds Castle](#), the residence of six medieval queens. Rising from a lake in 500 acres of parkland, it's the epitome of elegance and a treasure house of furnishings, paintings and antiques.

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