



Kent's Cathedral Cities

Reach deep into the country's spiritual heartland at some of the mightiest cathedrals in England, then get off the beaten track to some lesser-known treasures.

Day One – arrival

Canterbury – simply inspirational!

(1½ hours' drive from London)

An historic city with a 21st century twist, **Canterbury** is the perfect place for a short break or a longer stay. Ranging from vintage to modern, this walled city offers plenty of attractions, theatres, galleries, museums and plenty of shopping opportunities. Explore the city's World Heritage Site, walk on the medieval city walls or sample the global cuisine. Canterbury is an experience you won't want to miss.

The first stop is of course **Canterbury Cathedral**, Mother Church of the worldwide Anglican Communion. The infamous murder of Thomas Becket in the Cathedral in 1170 sparked millions of pilgrimages to Canterbury. Impressive highlights here include the Romanesque crypt dating back to the 11th century, the 12th century early Gothic quire and the stunning collection of medieval stained glass windows that depict miracles and royal connections. www.canterbury-cathedral.org.uk

Specialist facilities available:

- visiting choirs: informal midday recitals, sing at Cathedral Services during choir holidays, choir workshops;
- private Eucharist/Mass for church/pilgrimage groups;
- private guided tours;
- 'behind the scenes' tours to Stained Glass Studio, Stonemasons' Workshop, Archives, Library, Vestry;
- specialist tours and lectures on religion, history, architecture, art, etc.
- J2A programmes

All facilities are tailor-made to special interests, available time and budget.

From the Cathedral, walk up to **St Augustine's Abbey** and explore the evocative ruins of one of the most important historical religious centres in the country. Part of the Canterbury World Heritage Site, the abbey was founded by St Augustine in AD598 to house his monks and mark the rebirth of Christianity in southern England. www.english-heritage.org.uk/staugustinesabbey

Make a visit to the oldest parish church in England still in constant use, **St Martin's**, where St Augustine worshipped before he established a monastery of his own. Plus the chapel and house of the first Franciscan settlement in Britain, **Greyfriars**, dating from the 13th century.

www.canterbury.co.uk

If there is time to spare in the afternoon, Canterbury has an abundance of **shops** - from traditional high street shopping to speciality shops in cobbled streets: something for everyone.

Other places to visit in Canterbury:

- The Canterbury Tales Visitor Attraction
- Canterbury Roman Museum
- Museum of Canterbury
- West Gate Towers
- Canterbury River Tours
- The Goods Shed – the country's first and only full-time farmers' market where you can dine in style right next to the market stalls

Alternatively, visit one of the county's most beautiful gardens at **Goodnestone Park Gardens** (20 minutes' drive from Canterbury), which was a favourite of Jane Austen and is said to have inspired her into writing *Price and Prejudice*. Just 8 miles from Canterbury, this 14-acre garden with fine trees, a large collection of shrubs and old fashioned roses, wallen gardens, woodland garden and small arboterum will delight everyone. www.goodnestoneparkgardens.co.uk.

Stay overnight in the Canterbury Cathedral Lodge, located in the Cathedral grounds, immediately next to the Cathedral, www.canterburycathedralodge.org.

Day Two

Rochester

(45 minutes' drive from London)

Start your tour at **Rochester Cathedral**. Follow pilgrims who have flocked for nearly 1,400 years to England's second-oldest cathedral. Established in AD604, it's an interesting blend of Norman and early English architecture. Look out for the crypt containing an altar to Ithamar, the first bishop. www.rochestercathedral.org.

Whilst in Rochester take time to visit **Rochester Castle**, one of Britain's finest and best-preserved Norman castles. Rochester is also famed for its connections to Charles Dickens – if time permits visit the **Guildhall Museum** and the dedicated Dickens exhibition or **Dickens World**, the brand new attraction based on the life and times of Rochester's famous writer.

Other places to visit in Rochester area:

- The Historic Dockyard Chatham
- Restoration House
- Upnor Castle
- Paddle steamer Kingswear Castle
- Royal Engineers Museum

www.medway.gov.uk

Other combinations with your visit to Canterbury / Rochester:

- Canterbury is just 25 minutes' drive from Dover and Folkestone, where you can board the ferry or Eurotunnel train to France. Crossings take just 35 minutes with Eurotunnel and 1½ hrs by ferry.
- Eurostar (passenger train services to the continental) takes you to Paris in 2 hours and Brussels in 1½ hrs from nearby Ashford.
- Dover Castle (25 minutes' drive from Canterbury) – a 'double' attraction now that English Heritage has refurbished and furnished the Castle in magnificent medieval splendour. Together with the Castle's secret wartime tunnels where Churchill planned World War II strategies, this is a full day of history and fun.
- Other famous castles nearby are Leeds, Walmer, Deal and Hever Castles. The latter was Ann Boleyn's childhood home where Henry VIII courted Ann before their marriage.
- Down House, Darwin's home, recently completely refurbished, brings Darwin's life and work to life as nowhere else.
- The county of Kent has more gardens than any other region of England: Sissinghurst, Penshurst Place, Yaldic Organic Gardens, Lullingstone World Garden and many more.
- Kent is surrounded by the sea and the many coastal villages and towns offer a quintessential English beach experience, including donkey rides!