

ON THE TRAIL OF OLYMPIC ADVENTURE IN KENT

In 2012 London hosts the Olympic and Paralympic Games, and Kent, right next door, offers the perfect base for visiting: it's under 10 minutes by high-speed rail link to the Olympic Park.

The Garden of England also provides its very own trail of Olympic and sporting adventure. Over 40 Olympians past and present have lived, trained or worked here and the county's top-class facilities have been designated as 2012 training camps for competitors from around the world. Come on a tour of beautiful Kent and discover where so many Olympic dreams have first taken shape. Explore magical coast, countryside, cities and towns in the footsteps of world beating medal winners.

Be inspired to have a go yourself, too: opportunities for watersports, cycling, and all sorts of indoor and outdoor fun abound. Choose your own pace, from a gentle ramble on the Kent Downs to adrenaline-fuelled surfing around the Isle of Thanet! There's plenty of wonderful sightseeing along the way, too.

Day One: Dover, Gateway to England

*Dover, the shortest sea crossing from the Continent (21 miles/32km), has been a natural gateway to England for centuries. And in 1948 when London last hosted the Summer Games the historic coastal town provided the welcome point for the **Olympic Torch**. It was a first for both Dover and England because the 1908 London Games took place more than two decades before the Torch Relay tradition began.*

*The flame, setting out from Olympia in Greece, travelled in 1,531 stages totalling 720 miles (1,160km), and 1,720 weatherproof torches – including spares – were manufactured to carry it on its way! Brought from Calais to Dover aboard HMS *Bicester*, a destroyer of the Nore Command, the flame then continued its relay via the Kent towns of **Canterbury, Charing, Maidstone and Westerham**, through Surrey and Berkshire and on to Wembley.*

What better place, then, to begin our tour than the ancient town of **Dover**. Today the Port of Dover bustles with 64 Channel crossings a day and handles trade worth £80 billion a year. Turn back the clock for a moment and imagine Herbert Barnes, chief petty officer, bayonet fencing champion and all-round sportsman, receiving the Olympic Torch here aboard HMS *Bicester* in 1948.

Then look beyond the town's Georgian seafront and visit mighty **Dover Castle**. Known as 'the key to England', the fortress has been on the frontline of history for over nine centuries. Step inside the Great Tower and experience the sumptuously recreated medieval world of Henry II, a king who knew just how important it was to establish a magnificent welcome point for visitors arriving in England.

Next, drop into **Dover Museum and Bronze Age Boat Gallery** where, among many fascinating artefacts that tell the town's story, you can view the world's oldest known seagoing vessel. Discovered in 1992 during road building between Dover and Folkestone, the wooden boat is around 3,550 years old and would have been propelled by at least 18 paddlers, while also carrying passengers, livestock and other cargo. Technology in boat building has moved on a little since then, as Britain's top rowers will tell you – among them **Dover-born James Morgan and Alastair Mckean** from Canterbury, who together won **bronze in the LTA coxed fours at Beijing Paralympics 2008**. James rows at Deal and Alastair at Herne Bay, and they may be the first of Kent's water babies to be mentioned on our tour, but they are far from the last – which is hardly surprising given the county's dazzling coastline and rivers.

Hilary Lister, although not an Olympian, has a remarkable a story of how she became the first disabled woman to sail solo around Britain. Hilary sailed clockwise along the coasts of Cornwall, Wales, The East Coast of Ireland, Scotland, The Caledonian Canal, The East Coast of England and home to the finish line in Dover. This was all done by sucking and blowing tubes to control the steering and sails of her ship.

The Market Square in Dover is one of 18 locations across the UK to be lucky enough to have a big screen erected in it; it will be the destination for news, events and live screenings of the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2012.

Feeling peckish, yet? In 1948, due to post-war rationing, many teams who attended the Olympic Games had to bring their own food with them. No need to today: you will find a good range of eateries in Dover, including at the castle. Then, nicely refuelled, spend the afternoon exploring the coast.

White Cliffs Country is perfect for getting in shape – or just gently rambling amid stunning scenery. **Shakespeare's Cliff** between Dover and Folkestone is the traditional start point for the famous cross-Channel swims. In 1967 six 12-year-old swimmers from Royal Tunbridge Wells Monson Swimming Club set a record for the **youngest team to swim the English Channel** and appeared in the *Guinness Book of Records*.

Samphire Hoe, created from the material dug to build the Channel Tunnel, is a superb haven for walks, wildflowers, birds and picnics, much of it accessible to wheelchairs. Or combine walking with wildlife watching at **Whinless Down** and **Western Heights** nature reserves. And do step out along the iconic **White Cliffs**, taking 80 million years of evolution in your stride – that's how long it took for the iconic chalk edifice to form. There's a Visitor Centre, clifftop paths, and rare flora and fauna found only on this chalk grassland: all in all a 'breathtaking' finale to our day.

Refresh: The Naafi restaurant at Dover Castle serves tasty food and drinks sourced from local Kent producers.

Overnight:

Ramada Hotel Dover – www.ramadadover.co.uk

The White Cliffs Hotel, Dover - www.thewhitecliffs.com

The Marquis, Dover – www.themarquisatalkham.co.uk

Wallett's Court. St. Margaret's-at-Cliffe –

www.wallettscourt.com

The Royal Hotel, Deal – www.theroyalhotel.com

The Bell Hotel, Sandwich – www.bellhotelsandwich.co.uk

Find out more:

Dover Castle www.english-heritage.org.uk

Dover Museum and Bronze Age Boat Gallery

www.dovermuseum.co.uk

Port of Dover www.doverport.co.uk

Samphire Hoe www.samphirehoe.com

The White Cliffs of Dover www.nationaltrust.org.uk

Day Two: Canterbury and Faversham

*Follow the 1948 Olympic Torch Relay to Canterbury and you will discover a city that's not only one of the oldest in England but also the stomping ground of many Olympians: the home town of equestrian star **William Fox-Pitt**, who picked up a **bronze** with Britain's eventing team at Beijing 2008 and a **silver** for the same at Athens 2004. It's home town, too, of **Georgina Harland**, Athens bronze medallist in the individual modern pentathlon: competing in five different sports – shooting, fencing, swimming, riding and cross-country – all in one day, makes hers one of the most demanding of Olympic challenges.*

*And that's not all! Hockey player **Sean Kerly**, MBE, was a mainstay of Britain's 1988 Olympic gold medal-winning squad in Seoul and he also scooped a team bronze at Los Angeles 1984: he still plays for Canterbury Hockey Club. In fact, the club has fielded a number of Olympians over the years, including Dover-born **Melanie Clewlow** (Sydney 2000, Beijing 2008) who also still wields a stick in Canterbury.*

What to do and see in Canterbury? If you are after sporting action, check out the fixtures of **Canterbury Hockey Club** who play at PoloFarm Sports Club. **Kent County Cricket Club** also has a ground nearby on the Old Dover Road: what more pleasant, traditionally English way to pass a few hours on a summer's day?

Or look up the internationally famous sights familiar to the sporting heroes who have lived and played in the city: including the magnificent **World Heritage Site of Canterbury Cathedral**, **St Augustine's Abbey** and **St Martin's Church**. For a change from browsing ancient cobbled streets, join **Canterbury Historic River Tours** and glide along the River Stour for some chauffeured sightseeing.

Tear yourself away from hockey, cricket and city heritage and there is another, rather curious Olympic connection a few miles away in the market town of **Faversham**. This was the birthplace of **Lieutenant General Sir Philip Neame** (1888-1978) (nephew of Percy Beale Neame, a founding father of the Kent-based Shepherd Neame brewing dynasty and great

great grandfather of present Shepherd Neame chief executive Jonathan Neame), a British Army officer awarded the Victoria Cross for gallantry. He also won a gold medal as part of Britain's 1924 **Olympic Running Deer team** in Paris: the only person to sport both Victoria Cross and Olympic Gold. In case you wonder – the Running Deer event, no longer in the Games, involved teams firing at moving targets that simulated deer.

'Running deer' and Sir Philip may be gone, but there's plenty to see and do in Faversham. The town was once a bustling port – follow the town trail to uncover stories of press gangs, smuggling and oysters. Abbey Street is among Britain's most charming medieval streets and **Shepherd Neame Brewery** on Court Street is the country's oldest brewer: book a tour and discover the secrets of its ales, you'll be thirsty after a walk around town.

Refresh: Canterbury is full of cosmopolitan restaurants and cafés. Maybe seek out the restaurant at the Goods Shed, Canterbury's scrumptious farmers' market.

Overnight:

Abode, Canterbury – www.abodehotels.co.uk

Canterbury Cathedral Lodge –

www.canterburycathedralodge.org

Holiday Inn Express, Canterbury –

www.hiexpresscanterbury.co.uk

The Woolpack Inn, Chilham –

www.woolpackinnchilham.co.uk

University of Kent, Canterbury – www.kent.ac.uk/holidays

Find out more:

Canterbury www.canterbury.co.uk

Canterbury Hockey Club www.polofarm.org

Faversham www.faversham.org

Kent County Cricket Club www.kentcc.com

Day Three: Countryside or Coast

Just as Canterbury's Olympians are diverse in their talents – horse riding, running, swimming and hockey – so there are exciting activities on the city's doorstep to suit every taste, mood and ability. Countryside, river valleys, woods and hills, as well as beautiful beaches and coast are the perfect playground. Wind down on a walk or get buzzing with high adrenaline sports. Make a day of it or be inspired to base a short break around outdoor adventure.

Glorious Countryside

Walking, cycling and horse riding routes are all just a step away from Canterbury. Ramble a stretch of the long-distance **North Downs Way**, following the historic Pilgrim's Way that medieval travellers came along to visit the tomb of St Thomas Becket in Canterbury Cathedral. The ancient droeways of the breezy **Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty** are also great for horse riding.

Or turn to pedal power and cycle the family-friendly 7.5-mile (12km) **Crab and Winkle Way from Canterbury to Whitstable**. The mainly traffic-free route takes its name from the railway line that once operated here and is dotted with modern sculptures and medieval earthworks. You could even extend your excursion – why limit the feelgood fun? – and spin around the **Isle of Thanet peninsula** on the 27-mile (44km) **Viking Coastal Trail**, combining attractive landscapes with historic places to visit.

Exhilarating Coast

Quirky-chic Whitstable and fresh-air Herne Bay are just two coastal escapes that are quick to reach from Canterbury. Set **sail in wonderful waters from Whitstable to Margate**. Whiz across **Herne Bay** by jet ski.

Wherever you go along Kent's coast you can dip your toes, find golden sand beaches for leisurely paddling and brisk waves for watersports. Catch the **surf in Joss Bay** or get to grips with **kite surfing in Minnis Bay** – its gently shelving beach is just right for beginners.

Enjoy yourself at your own pace, or learn from the experts with taster sessions and courses: canoeing, jet skiing, kite surfing, sailing, surfing, wakeboarding, waterskiing and windsurfing will all get the endorphins flowing. Who knows where your talents might lead?

Find out more:

Make a day of it or a short break! For lots of ideas for walks, cycling and horse riding routes, hire facilities, and watersports venues see – www.kentsplash.co.uk; www.visitkent.co.uk/coast or www.visitkent.co.uk/explore

Day Four: Ashford to Royal Tunbridge Wells

*Back en route, from Canterbury set course for **Ashford in the hop and orchard country of the Weald**. Travel via **Charing** if you want to follow the trail of the 1948 Olympic Torch.*

*The picturesque Heart of Kent countryside is perfect for exploring by bike or foot – little wonder that **cycling ace Jamie Staff**, who won **gold in the team sprint** at Beijing 2008, hails from Ashford, while Director of Sport at the University of Kent **Louis Passfield** has worked as a **Sports Scientist with the British Cycling Olympic teams**. **Runner Lisa Dobriskey**, who narrowly missed medalling in the 1500m at Beijing, was also born in Ashford. And yet another local girl, **sailor Sarah Ayton, OBE**, one of the famous 'Three Blondes in a Boat', struck **gold in the keelboat (yngling)** event at both Beijing 2008 and Athens 2004.*

If you are still in active mode from yesterday's coast or countryside adventure, you could **cycle all the way from Ashford to Royal Tunbridge Wells**: it's a 42-mile (67km) route along small country lanes through the **High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty**, taking in quintessential Garden of England scenery and picture-postcard villages. But it's not flat, so be prepared to push those legs! The route forms part of the well signposted National Route 18.

For a more gently paced day by motor, begin with a browse of **Ashford's** attractive streetscapes. It's a welcoming market town where modern cafés stand in lively counterpoint to medieval, Georgian and Jacobean houses hidden down narrow alleyways.

Then drive on via **Tenterden** – known as the 'Jewel of the Weald' thanks to its lovely architecture, ranging from white weather boarding to medieval timber framed buildings. Seems genteel? Behind the scenes there's more than a little cut-and-thrust: **fencer Ralph Johnson**, who competed in the men's individual and team épée at Mexico City 1968, Munich 1972, Montreal 1976 and, finally, the épée team at Los Angeles 1984, still pursues his sport at Tenterden Swords Fencing Club. Now in his 60s, he continues to win competitions, too!

For a romantic interlude, immerse yourself in the celebrated **gardens of Scotney Castle**, Lamberhurst, designed around the fairytale ruins of the 14th-century moated castle. Spectacular spring displays are followed by wisteria and roses in summer and rich autumn colours. Or, if you prefer, check out **Lamberhurst Vineyard** instead. Have a wander, take a guided tour, indulge in a wine tasting, and have a snack in the bistro.

The afternoon beckons and next up is **Royal Tunbridge Wells**, where the **RTW Monson Swimming Club** has a reputation since 1901 not only for encouraging young **cross-Channel record-breaking swimmers**, but also **Olympians**: the earliest among them, Fred Dove, was at the Olympic Games in Berlin 1936. Later members have appeared at Moscow 1980, Los Angeles 1984, Seoul 1988, Barcelona 1992 and Atlanta 1996, while swimmer Darren Leach competed in two Paralympic Games, achieving medal successes in the category for blind participants.

Royal Tunbridge Wells has been a fashionable destination ever since the **Chalybeate Spring** was discovered here in 1606: you can still sample the water today, served in traditional style by a costumed 'dipper'. Or maybe you'll opt for refreshment in one of the town's restaurants or cafés, before sauntering along **the Pantiles** – the town's famous colonnaded shopping street.

Refresh: Snack at Lamberhurst Vineyard or take your pick of eateries in Royal Tunbridge Wells.

Overnight:

Ashford International Hotel – www.ghotels.co.uk

Eastwell Manor Hotel and Spa, Ashford –
www.eastwellmanor.co.uk

Holiday Inn Ashford Central – www.holiday-inn.com/ashfordcentral

Holiday Inn Ashford North – www.hiashford.com

Hotel du Vin, Royal Tunbridge Wells –
www.hotelduvin.com

The Spa Hotel, Royal Tunbridge Wells –
www.spahotel.co.uk

Ramada Jarvis, Royal Tunbridge Wells –
www.ramadajarvis.co.uk

The New Flying Horse, Wye – www.newflyinghorse.co.uk

Find out more:

Heart of Kent www.visitheartofkent.com

Lamberhurst Vineyard www.lamberhurstvineyard.net

Scotney Castle www.nationaltrust.org.uk

Day Five: Tonbridge to Westerham

*We begin our day in the market town of Tonbridge where, in the early 1980s, a 12-year-old schoolgirl called **Kelly Holmes** was encouraged by her PE teacher to take up athletics and she joined Tonbridge Athletic Club. In 2004 when Pembroke-born Kelly returned from the **Athens Olympics with gold medals in both the 800m and 1500m**, more than 80,000 fans greeted her on a parade around her home towns of Tonbridge and Hildenborough. Now Dame Kelly, she still trains at Tonbridge School's Sports Centre and lives at Hildenborough.*

*Fellow Athens medal winner **Ian Wynne** is also from Tonbridge: he scooped **kayak bronze** in the K-1 500m despite spraining his ankle the day before and arriving at the canoeing course on crutches!*

Choose from two routes today: Tonbridge, then follow the final Kent leg of the 1948 Torch Relay route to Maidstone and Westerham. Or take a tip from **heavyweight boxing legend Sir Henry Cooper**, resident like Kelly Holmes at Hildenborough, and from Tonbridge visit his favourite building, Hever Castle, before rounding off the day at Westerham.

Firstly, picture the scene in 2004 when Kelly was feted with presentations and speeches on the lawns of motte and bailey **Tonbridge Castle**. Then 'storm' the massive 13th-century gatehouse and discover over 700 years of eventful history: of kings and archbishops, heroes and villains. Interactive displays, special effects and an audio tour excitingly recreate the life and times.

If you want to spend more time exploring, stroll the castle's 14 acres of landscaped lawns and gardens, take a short riverboat trip along the Medway, or become a water baby like Ian Wynne and hire a rowing boat.

Followers of the Olympic Torch should now head north to **Maidstone**, where historic attractions include the 14th-century **Archbishops' Palace** (group tours by special arrangement, email tourism@maidstone.gov.uk). Then take a relaxing stroll through **Maidstone Millennium River Park**.

Alternatively head from Tonbridge to **Hever Castle & Gardens**, a quick jaunt to the west at Edenbridge. It's not only boxers who fall under the castle's spell: King Henry VIII romanced Anne Boleyn here before making her his second wife, and you'll find lots of reminders of their dizzy affair and ill-fated marriage. Magnificent grounds surrounding the double-moated 13th-century castle include Italian Gardens, an intriguing yew maze, a splashing water maze, an hour-long lake walk and children's adventure playground.

From either Maidstone or Hever, continue on to **Westerham**. Sir Winston Churchill, wartime prime minister and personification of the famous British bulldog spirit that also fires so many sportsmen, lived here at **Chartwell**. He loved the breathtaking views over the Weald of Kent – have a good look, they are captivating. Indoors, rooms are packed with Churchill's personal memorabilia; outdoors, you can wander the terraced gardens and admire the lakes he created, as well as Lady Churchill's Rose Garden.

Refresh: Choose from an array of restaurants and pubs in Maidstone, with fare ranging from English to Italian and Chinese. Alternatively enjoy the new Guthrie Pavilion with lake views or the Moat Restaurant at Hever Castle.

Overnight:

Chilston Park Hotel – www.handicked.co.uk
Hilton Maidstone – www.hilton.co.uk/maidstone
Tudor Park, a Marriott Hotel and Country Club – www.marriotttudorpark.co.uk
The Ramada Maidstone – www.ramadajarvis.co.uk/maidstone
The Village Hotel – www.village-hotels.co.uk

Find out more:

Heart of Kent www.visitheartofkent.com
Maidstone www.tour-maidstone.com

Day Six: The Home of Charles Darwin and The World Garden of Plants

London's Olympic Park will create a green backdrop to the Games 2012 with trees and thousands of wetland plants. There will also be gardens that celebrate the British passion for horticulture, tracing the journey of the UK's plant collectors around the globe, through more than 250 species of plants, trees, meadows and herbs. Here's your chance to get ahead of the field because Kent already has its very own World Garden. It has another gem, too, which throws light on the theory of the 'Survival of the Fittest', a phrase, no doubt, that from a stamina point of view spurs many an Olympian to glory!

Olympic bronze and two-times silver medal winning javelin thrower Steve Backley, OBE, claims Sidcup for his home town and he went to primary school in Orpington. Scarcely a javelin's throw away, at Downe, is **The Home of Charles Darwin** who authored the groundbreaking works, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* and *Descent of Man*. While Darwin was not the first to coin the phrase 'Survival of the Fittest', he certainly acknowledged its accuracy and his theories are often thus neatly summed up. Push open the door to his home and see where the great Victorian carried out many of the experiments that led to his revolutionary ideas. Then trace his steps on his 'thinking path' in the garden.

Awaken your senses further with an afternoon at **Lullingstone Castle & The World Garden of Plants**, Eynsford. Intrepid modern plant hunter Tom Hart Dyke, whose ancestors have lived at Lullingstone since the 15th century, had the idea for the UK's first ever world garden back in 2000 and he has gone on to create a miniature landscape in which plants from around the globe grow in their respective countries of origin. Rare highlights include the Dinosaur Tree (Wollemi Pine), the oldest tree in the world, which Tom has planted close to his Ayers Rock in the Australian border. This is one place where you don't need to be a superhuman marathon runner to complete a world tour in just an hour or two!

Refresh: Enjoy Shepherd Neame's Kentish Ales and excellent food made with locally sourced produce at The Crown Inn, Chislehurst or try out one of the other great Kentish pubs scattered throughout the countryside.

Overnight:

Thistle Hotel, Brands Hatch – www.thistle.com/hotels/dartford
Hilton Dartford Bridge – www.hilton.co.uk/dartfordbridge
Holiday Inn, Bexley – www.ichotelsgroup.com
Marriott Bexleyheath – www.bexleyheathmarriott.co.uk
Rowhill Grange Hotel and Utopia Spa – www.rowhillgrange.com
The Crown Inn, Chislehurst – www.crownchislehurst.co.uk

Find out more:

The Home of Charles Darwin www.english-heritage.org.uk/downhouse
Lullingstone Castle & The World Garden of Plants www.lullingstonecastle.co.uk

Day Seven: Dartford to Maritime Medway

*It's our final day and we are on the very brink of 2012. Kent is so close to the Olympic Park, it's no wonder that its top-class facilities will be used by visiting competitors as well as home-grown talent. **Dartford Judo Club** is a base for the British Judo*

Association to prepare for the forthcoming Games; it is also named as an official training venue for foreign teams in the lead up to the Olympics and Paralympics.

Just a few miles away is **Gillingham's new £11 million Medway Park**, an approved training camp for no fewer than 13 Olympic and eight Paralympic sports. Look out in the meantime for top sporting events taking place here.

Previous Olympians from the area include **Ann Packer, who won gold (800m) and silver (400m) at Tokyo 1964, just a year after graduating from Dartford College of Physical Education. Frank Sando, who ran in the 10,000m in Helsinki (1952) and Melbourne (1956), is a life member of Medway and Maidstone Athletic Club, while Gary Smith, trampolinist in Athens 2004, was born in Chatham, lived in Rainham and trained in Gillingham.**

Medway Park is the official sports and activities zone of the new **Great Lines Heritage Park** located above Chatham. You could begin your day in Great Lines: 173 acres (70ha) of parkland offering superb views over the **River Medway, Fort Amherst, The Historic Dockyard Chatham** and towards **Rochester**. Enjoy a breath of fresh air, a stretch of the legs, and a good look at an historic maritime panorama. Then choose which of the attractions, laid out before you, to visit.

Perhaps put your walking shoes on and follow Victorian author Charles Dickens around **Rochester** – he was an insatiable rambler who often covered 22 miles (35km) in a day and would surely have bagged a gold medal in long distance walking, if only the modern Olympics had been invented in his lifetime! By coincidence, 2012 when the Games come to London also marks the bicentenary of his birth. A leaflet, *In Dickens' Footsteps* (available from the Visitor Information Centre on the High Street), will take you to the places he made famous in his novels, including ancient **Rochester Cathedral** and **Rochester Castle**.

Then our afternoon opens up with a variety of exciting possibilities. Dive into the past at **The Historic Dockyard Chatham**. Time travel 400 years (faster than any Olympic runner) across 80 acres (32ha), climb aboard three historic warships, and check out No. 1 Smithery: the stimulating new cultural venue and centre for world-class maritime collections.

Or complete your Olympic trail through Kent on an activity high. Test your 'winter sporting' skills at **Chatham Ski and Snowboard Centre** – jump in a Sno-tube on the cresta run! **The Ice Bowl** and **Strand Leisure Park**, both in Gillingham, entice with the contrasting challenges of ice-skating and tennis, swimming or crazy golf: all great for the kids and young at heart. Then settle the pulse rate back down at **Riverside Country Park**, on the Medway estuary, watching wildlife that inhabit the mudflats, salt marsh, ponds and reed-beds.

Refresh: Rochester is Medway's gourmet hotspot, including English, Continental and Asian fare and summer outdoor dining along the High Street's pedestrian areas. Or savour the waterfront setting of the new restaurant quarter at Chatham Maritime.

Overnight:

Bridgewood Manor Hotel, Chatham – www.ghotels.co.uk
Holiday Inn Rochester – www.holiday-inn.co.uk
The Ship and Trades, Chatham Maritime – www.shipandtradeschatham.co.uk

Find out more:

Chatham Ski and Snowboard Centre
www.chathamskislope.co.uk
Dartford Judo Club www.dartfordjudoclub.com
The Historic Dockyard Chatham www.thedockyard.co.uk
The Ice Bowl www.theicebowl.co.uk
Medway www.medway.gov.uk/tourism
Medway Park www.medwaypark.com
Riverside Country Park www.medway.gov.uk/tourism
Strand Leisure Park www.medway.gov.uk

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Travel – Olympic style

However you come to Kent, by ferry, road or rail, getting around is easy. You can certainly make some great Olympic train connections! Local hero Dame **Kelly Holmes**, double gold winner in the 800m and 1500m at Athens Olympics 2004, officially opened **Ebbsfleet International Station** in 2008 and it now provides a **high-speed gateway** to Continental Europe and London – Ebbsfleet to the Olympic Park is less than ten minutes.

Dame Kelly plus fellow Kent-born **Olympic champions Jamie Staff** (cycling gold at Beijing 2008) and **Steve Backley**, OBE (javelin silver at Sydney 2000 and Atlanta 1996, bronze at Barcelona 1992) have even lent their names to three of **Britain's first 12 high-speed trains**. They were among stars selected by a public vote to find the fastest Britons and you can now hop aboard their namesakes: it's just 37 minutes from St Pancras International to Jamie Staff's home town of Ashford, for example. To find out more about Southeastern train services throughout the county, including group travel rates, visit www.southeasternrailway.co.uk

But that's not all....

There are two other big events to mark in 2012, the Dickens Bicentenary and Queen Elizabeth's Diamond Jubilee – so come to Kent and join in the events and celebrations being organised.

Dickens itinerary is also available.

For further information go to www.visitkent.co.uk/trade

Please note: This is only a sample itinerary to provide inspiration for visiting Kent and is not to be used as an 'official' Olympic itinerary for a stand alone package. We hope the itinerary helps provide you with information on connections to some sporting figures and venues, should you be bringing clients into the region during 2012.

If you wish to check the official guidelines on branding/terminology visit the London 2012 website – www.london2012.com