

KENT
GARDEN *of* ENGLAND

visitkent.co.uk

ON THE WRITE TRACKS IN LITERARY KENT



Fire your imagination and come and be inspired – like so many great writers – by Kent’s idyllic rural landscapes, captivating cities, castles and gardens.

DAY ONE

Start your literary tour with Charles Dickens. The author featured **Rochester** in his writings more than any other town apart from London. You can still clearly recognise the old-world Rochester the author knew so well: from the castle where Mr Pickwick leant ‘contemplating nature and waiting for breakfast’ to The Guildhall where Pip was indentured as an apprentice – an exhibition in the museum here is dedicated to Dickens. At nearby Higham on certain days you can tour Gad’s Hill Place, Dickens’ home from 1857 until his death in 1870.

In the afternoon enter Dickens World at Chatham Maritime, themed around the life, work and times of the author. Featuring Europe’s largest ‘dark’ boat ride through the streets of Dickensian London, ghostly encounters with Ebenezer Scrooge, animatronic and live theatre, it’s a must-do attraction for all the family.

DAY TWO

Today take a tip from Geoffrey Chaucer and follow the trail of his *Canterbury Tales* pilgrims. His world-renowned story was the first book to be printed in England, in 1476, and you can sample the full exuberance of its side-splitting humour, romance and horror at **The Canterbury Tales**. Glorious **Canterbury Cathedral**, site of pilgrimage since the martyrdom of Thomas Becket in 1170, is also the setting for T S Eliot’s verse drama *Murder in the Cathedral*, first performed here in 1935. Maybe take in a performance at **The New Marlowe Theatre** (opening autumn 2011), named after Canterbury-born Elizabethan playwright and spy Christopher Marlowe. The mysteries surrounding his life and death are explored in the **Museum of Canterbury**. Here, too, you can indulge in a little childhood nostalgia in the **Rupert Bear Museum**. Mary Tourtel, the artist who created Rupert, was also born in Canterbury and is buried in St Martin’s Churchyard.

DAY THREE

This morning share the elegant surrounds of **Goodnestone Park Gardens**, near Canterbury, with Jane Austen. Her brother had married the daughter of the house and after one jaunt here, in 1796, Jane began writing the novel that became *Pride and Prejudice*. Become her contemporary for an hour or two amid Goodnestone’s 14 acres of 18th-century parkland and lose yourself in reverie in old-fashioned rose gardens. For lunch take a trip to nearby

Bekesbourne, where Ian Fleming lived for a while. He wrote the James Bond adventure *You Only Live Twice* at The Duck at Pett Bottom. Stop here for a pub lunch and a drink (shaken, not stirred) and see if the creative juices flow for you, too. Fleming is thought to have taken Bond's famous 007 tag from the number of the London to Dover coach. Ian Fleming's weekend cottage is located in nearby St Margarets Bay.

This afternoon pick up the Dickens trail again and share his love for the delightful, unspoiled seaside resort of Broadstairs, his favourite holiday retreat where he completed many of his books – Bleak House where he wrote *David Copperfield* overlooks the tiny harbour. Find out more in the Dickens House Museum.

DAY FOUR

If you're feeling romantic head for **Penshurst Place**, Penshurst, one-time home of Sir Philip Sidney the charismatic Elizabethan courtier and poet. Mortally wounded in battle, he selflessly gave his water canister to another dying soldier with the words 'Thy necessity is yet greater than mine', a maxim that has transcended the centuries. So, too, have the magnificence of Penshurst's medieval Baron's Hall and the beguiling magic of gardens whose records date back to 1346. And here's a thought-provoking connection: a distant relative of Sir Philip lived at **Chartwell**, Westerham – wartime leader Sir Winston Churchill, no less. He retreated here from the pressures of public and political life, and it was also here that he wrote his history of England, *The Sceptred Isle*. You'll be fascinated by memorabilia from 40 years of his life at Chartwell, offering some surprising insights into his enigmatic character.

OTHER LITERARY CONNECTIONS IN KENT INCLUDE:

- H E Bates - The Darling Buds of May– Pluckley and Smarden
- Frances Hodgson Burnett - Maytham Hall (inspiration for the Secret Garden)
- Sir Arthur Conan Doyle - Groombridge Place Gardens (The Valley of Fear, Sherlock Holmes)
- Edith Nesbit - Romney Marsh (The Railway Children)

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

