



Canterbury and Canterbury Cathedral Visitor information



Canterbury –

Full of delightful surprises Canterbury is one of the oldest cities in England with a continuous history. However the past is not its only inspiration and there are many other delights to enjoy. A rich and vibrant culture boasts more festivals than any other part of England and the region has strong literary links – from Chaucer to Chitty Chitty Bang Bang. The city – despite its size – attracts big name stores, but its appeal lies in its diversity. Shoppers will find a rich and satisfying range of goods from hand-painted pottery and fine foods to paintings and sculptures. 'The Canterbury Tales', museums, an abbey and a castle offer further evidence of the area's rich and diverse history.

Go Shopping -

The district has some exceptional shopping to offer for all tastes so be sure to spend some time perusing the shops and soaking up each town's unique ambience.

In Canterbury itself, the Whitefriars (www.whitefriars-canterbury.co.uk) development offers many popular retailers in one spacious and well-designed location. This recently opened venue has helped to ensure the city offers some of the best shopping opportunities in the county.

Heading towards Westgate Towers and the St Dunstan's area, you will come across a range of specialist, privately run emporia offering everything from antiques and collectables to classical music. That theme continues as you walk in another direction, this time along the King's mile, a continuation of the city centre's pedestrianised area, and on towards Northgate.

Food And Drink –

If you've exhausted yourself shopping and sightseeing, you will welcome the chance to sit down, relax and have something to eat or drink.

You can enjoy food and drink in many different ways in Canterbury. Pizza restaurants, American burger bars, English, Greek, Mexican, Chinese, Thai Arabic and Indian restaurants will ensure you have plenty of choice at most hours of the day. Among those worth a visit is the independently owned Café des Amis near the Westgate Tower, whose carefully prepared Mexican dishes have won it a firm reputation among local diners. A few to wet your appetite –

www.augustinesrestaurant.co.uk

www.cafebelge.co.uk

www.crabandwinkle.co.uk

www.thecuban.co.uk

Good Evening -

When the evening sets in, the district is alive with theatregoers, film buffs, foodies and those enjoying a relaxing drink in one of the city's many pubs and bars.

Theatres are in abundance in the district, with the Marlowe (www.marlowetheatre.com) and Gulbenkian (www.kent.ac.uk/gulbenkin) in Canterbury, Kings Hall in Herne Bay and the Horsebridge and the Playhouse in Whitstable.

Whether you want to go to the 1000-seated Marlowe for a touring show of dance, opera, comedy or a West End production, or the Gulbenkian, a smaller theatre at the University of Kent, there is something to suit all tastes.

There are also two cinemas in Canterbury and one in Herne Bay, offering all the latest box office hits as well as a few less well-known films.

For further information please visit – www.canterbury.co.uk

Canterbury cathedral –

The Cathedral and its history

St Augustine, sent by Pope Gregory the Great, arrived in 597 AD as a missionary and became the first Archbishop, establishing his seat (or 'Cathedra') in Canterbury.

In 1170 Archbishop Thomas Becket was murdered in the Cathedral and ever since, the Cathedral has attracted thousands of pilgrims, as told most famously in Geoffrey Chaucer's Canterbury Tales.

Today the Cathedral is still very much a working, living church and community, where Services, sung by our world-renowned choir, take place every day and where stonemasons and stained glass conservators continue the tradition of restoring old and adding new.

For many millions of Anglicans all over the world the Cathedral is their Mother Church and the place where the Archbishop of Canterbury celebrates and presides over ceremonial Services

World Heritage Site

Canterbury Cathedral, St Augustine's Abbey and St Martin's Church make up Canterbury's World Heritage Site.

St Martin's Church, the building in which Augustine and his followers first worshipped, is the oldest working church in England.

The ruins of the St Augustine's Abbey include the remains of the monastery here his monks lived and worshipped and where Kentish Kings and the first Archbishops were buried.

The Precincts

The Cathedral is set within its own walled Precincts and surrounded by medieval buildings and ruins. Each building has its own story to tell - from the Water Tower, a Romanesque gem once the center of the monastic water supply, to the monastery's Granary, Bakery and Brewery now part of King's School. The Chapter House, the largest of its kind in England, with its lofty oak roof and noble seat for the Prior, still stands as a tribute to the monks who assembled here daily to discuss the Cathedral's business and who made the Cathedral into one of the most important churches in the world.

The Nave

One of the most magnificent surviving examples of English Perpendicular Gothic the present Nave was built in the 14th century, taking 28 years to complete and replacing a much smaller Romanesque Nave. Its tall columns rise up to meet in delicate vaulted arches and gilt roof bosses.

The Quire

The Quire was re-built and extended in the 12th century after a disastrous fire destroyed the earlier structure. It housed Thomas Becket's shrine until it was demolished and removed during the Reformation by order of Henry VIII. Beautiful stained glass windows illustrate miracles and stories associated with St Thomas.

The Crypt

The Crypt is the oldest part of the Cathedral and the largest of its period in the country. It dates back to the 11th century and is Romanesque in style. Many of its details survive intact, including traces of contemporary wall painting in St Gabriel's Chapel and an array of carved capitals and decorated columns.

The Martyrdom

Canterbury's role as one of the world's most important pilgrimage centres is inextricably linked with the martyrdom of its most famous Archbishop, Thomas Becket, in 1170. When, after a long lasting dispute, King Henry II is said to have exclaimed 'Who will rid me of this turbulent priest?' four knights set off for Canterbury and murdered Thomas in his own Cathedral. A sword stroke was so violent that it sliced the crown off his skull and shattered the blade's tip on the pavement. The murder took place in what is now known as The Martyrdom. Two years later Thomas was made a saint.

How to get to Canterbury Cathedral

Canterbury is within easy reach of London, the Channel ports and Ashford International (Eurostar).

By road Canterbury is easily accessible from both the M2 and M20 motorways. Follow signs to the A2 or Canterbury. Once in the city, follow the tourist information signs for car parks or Cathedral.

National Express run coach services throughout the day between London Victoria and Canterbury. Several tour operators operate a daily service to Canterbury with collection from many London hotels.

By rail Rail services are available direct from London Victoria, London Bridge and Dover Priory to Canterbury East or West stations. Steam Dreams 'Cathedrals Express' runs regular services throughout the summer season into Canterbury (tel 01483 209888). The Cathedral is a short walk into the City.

Guided tours

Our guides are experts at making the Cathedral and its rich history come to life and we strongly recommend that you book a tour for your group or join one of the general tours that take place throughout the day (Monday-Saturday).

Guided tours in several languages as well as special tours of an extended or specialised character can be arranged, starting any time between 09.00 and 15.30 hrs (Monday-Friday) and 09.00 and 13.30 hrs (Saturday). There are no guided tours on Sunday. *Only accredited Cathedral guides are permitted to conduct tours in the Cathedral.*

Behind-the-scenes tours

Many visitors do not realise that behind-the-scenes some 200 people still go about their daily business, preparing Services, creating beautiful music, restoring the stained glass or conserving unique and rare books and documents, much as the monks did so many years ago. Groups visiting the Cathedral can now experience these fascinating aspects of Cathedral life. Special tailor-made packages can be arranged to visit the Cathedral's priceless archives and rare books library, learn more about stained glass conservation, view the beautiful church vestments, visit the organ-loft or observe the skills of stone masons. Please note that these facilities are very popular and limited to a certain number – after all staff have work to do! Alternatively, you may like to book special tours or lectures on topics such as stained glass, architecture, music, heraldry or monastic buildings.

Audio-Visual

Audio-visuals in several languages, lasting 20 minutes, provide an appropriate introduction or conclusion to a visit (pre-booked groups only).

Audio-tours

Audio-tours, available in 7 languages, lasting 40 minutes are available inside the main entrance.

Pilgrimages

We welcome many church and pilgrimage groups to the Cathedral and would be pleased to discuss special requirements for Services or guided tours.

Facilities for the disabled

These include toilets, ramps, wheelchairs, a touch and hearing system and a lift. A leaflet giving full details is available at the Welcome Center or from staff.

Clergy availability

Chaplains are on duty in the Cathedral at certain times. Otherwise a priest is always available and any Cathedral official will help to locate him/her.

The Cathedral Shop

A large range of guidebooks, publications, souvenirs and gifts to suit every pocket is available. The main shop is situated at the exit from the Precincts and there are several, sale points in the Cathedral. A mail order service and catalogue are available.

Concerts

Various orchestral and choral concerts as well as occasional dramatic productions are held in the Cathedral throughout the year. For information on using the Cathedral as a venue, contact the Events Coordinator.

Tickets for concerts are normally available from Canterbury Bookings Ltd, tel. 01227 378188.

Photography and Filming

Arrangements for photography and filming for professional or reproduction purposes must be made in advance through the Events Co-ordinator. Permits for individual, personal photography and video filming in the Cathedral can be obtained from the Welcome Centre or Cathedral gift stalls.

Archives/Library

The Archives and Library are open to the public for research by appointment, Monday-Thursday 09.00-17.00 hrs and on the first and third Saturdays of the month 09.00-13.00 hrs.

Parking

Parking is not possible within the Precincts except for a very limited provision for disabled drivers, by prior arrangement.

For more information on Canterbury and its countryside, contact the Canterbury Information Centre, 01227 378100, visit the Canterbury website, www.canterbury.co.uk or the Kent website, www.kenttourism.co.uk

For more information on the cathedral, opening times and prices please visit-

www.canterbury-cathedral.org