



Castles in Kent

There are many Castles in Kent to choose from here are a few of them that you may wish to visit.

Leeds Castle –



Leeds Castle, set on two islands on the River Len in the heart of Kent, has been home to royalty, lords and ladies for over 1000 years.

Visitors are transported through 900 years of the castle's history; an eclectic mix of period architecture, sumptuous interiors and family treasures waiting to be discovered.

Our internationally renowned aviaries offer a fascinating glimpse into the world of modern conservation and captive breeding programmes. Black swans glide on the moat and waterways, peacocks wander through the grounds and birds of prey soar on the wind during daily falconry displays.

The gardens offer continuous colour throughout the year. From a mass of spring bulbs and wild flowers in the wood garden, through fragrant herbs and roses in the quintessentially English Culpeper garden, to late flowering borders in the drought-resistant Mediterranean garden.

The castle you see today is the result of over 900 years of alterations and changes. It has Norman foundations; a mediaeval gatehouse; the Gloriette, built by Edward I a Tudor tower; and a 19th



and updated in Henry VIII's times; century country house - all of which were substantially refurbished in the 20th century.

The last private owner of the castle, Olive, Lady Baillie, left an indelible mark on the place. The heiress to an American fortune from her mother's family and the daughter of an English Lord, she married three times.

It was with her second husband, Arthur Wilson Filmer that she bought the castle in 1926, and embarked on a complete refurbishment, using the finest French architects and designers to create an elegant country residence.

She filled the castle with art and antiques, collected on her frequent buying trips around Europe, and with glamorous house parties at which she entertained princes, film stars and politicians. Her guests enjoyed the use of the castle's cinema, swimming pool, squash and tennis courts, and marveled at the extraordinary creatures in the grounds; Lady Baillie's fascinating collection of birds and waterfowl, zebras and llamas as well as the more usual horses and dogs.

For opening times and admission prices please visit – www.leeds-castle.com

Dover Castle and secret



wartime tunnels –



No fortress in England boasts a longer history than Dover Castle. Commanding the shortest sea crossing between England and the continent, the site has served as a vital strategic centre since Roman times.

William the Conqueror strengthened the existing Anglo-Saxon fort in 1066, both Henry II and Henry VIII made their own additions, and Vice Admiral Ramsay famously oversaw the Dunkirk evacuations from the tunnels built into the cliffs beneath the castle.

The White Cliffs are one of England's most celebrated sights, yet hidden inside them is a fascinating and secret world. Deep underground lies an extensive network of tunnels – some first dug during the Napoleonic Wars, but so strategically useful that they continued to be used right through to the 20th century.

In May 1940 these tunnels provided the nerve centre for Vice Admiral Ramsay to plan The Secret Wartime Tunnels Operation Dynamo – the evacuation of British and allied troops from the Dunkirk beaches of northern France.

Today you can tour the Secret Wartime Tunnels and experience life as it was lived by the 700 personnel based here in the worst days of World War II. You can see the Command Centre where Sir Winston Churchill viewed the Battle of Britain, and relive the drama as a surgeon struggles to save the life of an injured pilot. .

The 1216 Siege Experience, a stunning presentation using light, film and sound technology, highlights the stronghold's key role in resisting invasion. It recounts the epic sieges of 1216-17, when Dover Castle held out almost alone for King John against rebel barons and their French ally Prince Louis.

Following the annulment of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon, his excommunication by the Pope and the 1538 peace treaty between France and Spain, Henry VIII was isolated in Europe and a Catholic invasion of England seemed inevitable. The King commissioned a great chain of coastal artillery forts, coming to Dover in 1539 to inspect the work personally. An exciting exhibition at the castle offers a tableau of the preparations for Henry VIII's visit. Very close to Dover you will find two more of Henry's coastal defences, Deal Castle and Walmer Castle.



Also of interest at the site are the Princess of Wales' Royal Regiment Museum; one of the best-preserved Roman lighthouses in Europe; and the most complete Saxon church in Kent.

The Stone Hut, originally built in 1912 for the Royal Garrison Artillery, has now been converted and is being used as an archaeological store for the South East. On the first Friday of every month (or by prearranged booking), visitors can view changing exhibitions of treasures from across the region, including Roman coins and pots, as well as artefacts from both World War II and the Cold War.

For further information, admission prices and opening times please see – www.english-heritage.org.uk

Other castles that might interest you:

Deal and walmer castle – www.english-heritage.org.uk

Hever Castle – www.hever-castle.co.uk

Rochester castle – www.castles-abbeyes.co.uk

