

YOUR 9 PAGE GUIDE TO SHORT BREAKS AROUND BRITAIN

# BEYOND LONDON

Explore  
the UK's  
ancient  
university  
cities

THE BRIDGE OF SIGHS, CAMBRIDGE © RICCARDO PETRILLO

## Take a punt on Oxford & Cambridge



Revel in Cambridge's  
rich architecture



Reach for the skies  
at IWM Duxford

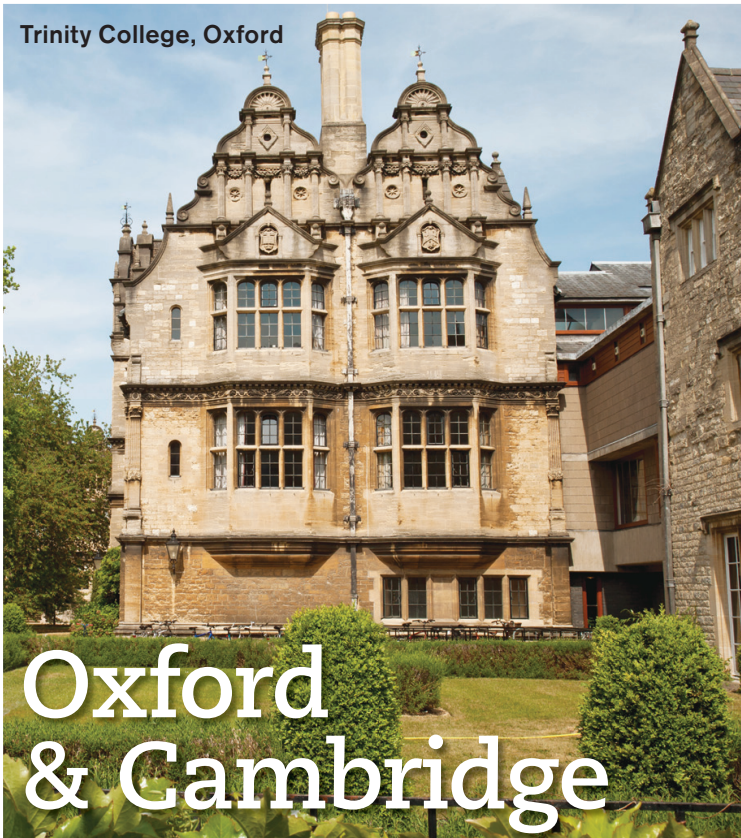


See the splendour  
of Blenheim Palace





By Jo Caird



Trinity College, Oxford

## Oxford & Cambridge

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When you think of British universities, you think of Oxford and Cambridge, cities that have been home to illustrious institutions of higher education for nearly 1,000 years. Both places are full of extraordinary architecture and important museums, and they have a buzzy atmosphere thanks to the many students that call Oxford and Cambridge their home.

The universities – made up of dozens of separate colleges – count among their alumni many of the UK's top scientists, writers and politicians, past and present. Current British Prime Minister David Cameron and physicist Professor Stephen Hawking both went to Oxford, while film star Rachel Weisz (*The Constant Gardener*) studied at Cambridge. The list of notable alumni goes on and on – Oxford and Cambridge are still Britain's most respected universities.

The two cities both have centres small enough to get around easily on foot, though visitors may opt for the students' favourite mode of transport: the bicycle. You can hire them easily.

If you need a break from sightseeing, the cities' beautiful college greens and Botanic Gardens both provide excellent opportunities for kicking back.

Another outdoor pursuit not to be missed is punting, a leisurely form of boating that uses a flat-bottomed craft called a punt. Take a punt tour or hire one yourself and pretend you're a student skipping a lecture.

### Event highlights

#### OXFORD

**6 Jun-13 Jul:** *Garsington Opera*, Wormsley ([garsingtonopera.org](http://garsingtonopera.org))

**To 8 Jun:** *Oxford Fringe* ([oxfordfringe.org](http://oxfordfringe.org))

**12 Jun-2 Nov:** *The Great War*, Bodleian Library ([bodleian.ox.ac.uk](http://bodleian.ox.ac.uk))

**20-22 Jun:** *Blenheim Palace Flower Show* ([blenheimflowershow.co.uk](http://blenheimflowershow.co.uk))

**To 22 Jun:** *Cézanne And Modern Masters*, Ashmolean Museum ([ashmolean.org](http://ashmolean.org))

#### CAMBRIDGE

**7 Jun:** *Strawberry Fair*, Midsummer Common ([strawberry-fair.org.uk](http://strawberry-fair.org.uk))

**8, 22, 29 Jun:** *Jazz And Brass In The Parks*, Jesus Green/Cherry Hinton Hall ([cambridge.gov.uk/summer-in-the-city](http://cambridge.gov.uk/summer-in-the-city))

**18-23 Jun:** *Midsummer Fair*, Midsummer Common ([cambridgesummerinthecity.co.uk](http://cambridgesummerinthecity.co.uk))

**20, 27 Jun:** *Newmarket Nights*, Newmarket Racecourse ([newmarketracecourses.co.uk](http://newmarketracecourses.co.uk))



King's College, Cambridge

### How to get there

**1 Oxford**  
 ➤ London Paddington to ➤ Oxford in 60 mins.

**2 Cambridge**  
 ➤ London King's Cross or ➤ London Liverpool Street to ➤ Cambridge in 45 mins.





## HISTORIC

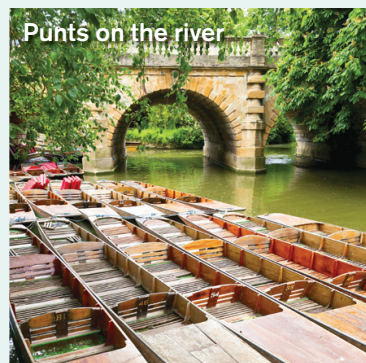
Oxford is home to the world's second oldest university



One of Blenheim Palace's many opulent rooms



Oxford University, Christ Church



Punts on the river

# Oxford

## Colleges

A stroll around the city centre is the best way to get familiar with Oxford's 38 colleges – you will find stunning examples of every period in English architectural history in what's known as the 'city of dreaming spires'. *Official Guided Walking Tours* leave from the tourist office throughout the day, but there are a few extra-special college buildings you really shouldn't miss.

*Christ Church* is Oxford's largest college and the site of the city's cathedral ([chch.ox.ac.uk](http://chch.ox.ac.uk)). Its Great Hall was the inspiration behind the one in the *Harry Potter* films and many famous movie scenes were shot around the college. *The Bodleian Library*, which dates back to 1602 in its present form, is a working library open to the public for guided tours. The 19th-century *Radcliffe Camera* extension is one of Oxford's most recognisable buildings ([bodleian.ox.ac.uk](http://bodleian.ox.ac.uk)). *Oxford*

*University Shop* ([oushop.com](http://oushop.com)) stocks a range of official Oxford merchandise including hoodies, college scarves and ties.

## The Covered Market

For Oxford's most atmospheric shopping experience, head to this 18th-century architectural treasure in the heart of the city centre. Designed by John Gwynn, the architect behind the *Magdalen Bridge*, another Oxford landmark, the *Covered Market* is home to dozens of stalls selling food, drink, clothing and souvenirs. *Ben's Cookies*, now a company with stores nationwide, began life in the market in 1983 – its cookies are no less delicious today than they were 30 years ago ([oxford-coveredmarket.co.uk](http://oxford-coveredmarket.co.uk)).

## Oxford University Museum Of Natural History

This grand Neo-Gothic building reopened in February following more than a year of work on its beautiful glass-tiled roof. Explore the museum's zoological and

geological collections, including a dinosaur display boasting four species that once lived in the surrounding area, a giant bee that belonged to the Victorian naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace (who co-discovered the theory of evolution with Charles Darwin) and the gorgeous Corsi Collection of decorative stones ([oum.ox.ac.uk](http://oum.ox.ac.uk)). *The Pitt Rivers Museum*, the entrance to which is through the larger institution, is a collection of archaeological and anthropological artefacts which is highly recommended for young visitors ([prm.ox.ac.uk](http://prm.ox.ac.uk)).

## Ashmolean Museum Of Art And Archaeology

Britain's first public museum dates back to 1683, when Elias Ashmole, a 17th-century politician, left his collection of antiquities and natural curiosities to the University of Oxford. Today, the *Ashmolean Museum* boasts some of the finest archaeological artefacts in the world, plus a huge range of fascinating miscellaneous objects. Think Pre-Raphaelite

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paintings, Renaissance bronzes, Egyptian mummies, Anglo-Saxon swords, a death mask of Oliver Cromwell and a collection of rings that allegedly inspired Oxford native J.R.R. Tolkien's vision of the 'One Ring' from *The Lord Of The Rings* trilogy ([ashmolean.org](http://ashmolean.org)).

### Blenheim Palace

It would be easy to spend a whole day in Oxford, but there are delights beyond the city limits too. Just a 30-minute bus ride away is Blenheim Palace (p. 116), one of England's largest houses and the birthplace of wartime Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill. This World Heritage Site is a stunning example of English Baroque architecture – tours of the imposing State Rooms run throughout the day. There's also a permanent exhibition devoted to Churchill in a room close to the one where he was born. Make sure you enjoy a stroll in the grounds, which were designed by famous landscape architect Capability Brown.

### Bicester Village

Shopaholics will love this designer outlet shopping centre in the Oxfordshire countryside. There are around 130 stores, selling everything from beauty to menswear and homewares to lingerie, all at favourable discount prices. International brands such as DKNY, Dior and Missoni stand alongside classic British labels including Paul Smith and Vivienne Westwood. This year Bicester Village has teamed up with the *Royal Academy Of Arts* to sell a range of limited-edition prints by artists including Grayson Perry. And **until 17 Aug** there's a chance to discover emerging fashion talent with a special *Designers' Collective* boutique ([bicester-village.com](http://bicester-village.com)).



The beautiful Bridge Of Sighs

**STUNNING**  
This Victorian covered footbridge was built in 1831

# Cambridge

### Colleges

A range of official walking tours of Cambridge, the University and the Colleges depart from the *Tourist Information Centre* seven days a week. They take in the most important aspects of the city, including *King's College And Chapel*, arguably the grandest of the university's colleges. King's College Chapel is a particularly fine example of late-Gothic English architecture and boasts the largest fan-vault ceiling in the world. The chapel's famous choir performs at services and concerts daily ([kings.cam.ac.uk](http://kings.cam.ac.uk)).

*Queens' College* is another real beauty that's covered by the official tour: it was founded in 1488 by Margaret of Anjou, wife to King Henry VI, founder of King's. Don't miss the *Mathematical Bridge* that connects the two parts of the college across the River Cam ([queens.cam.ac.uk](http://queens.cam.ac.uk)).

### Fitzwilliam Museum

Cambridge University's museum of art and antiquities occupies an impressive Neo-Classical building whose entrance hall was designed by Edward Barry, the architect behind the *Royal Opera House* in London. The Fitzwilliam's collections, which extend from the 13th century to the present day, include an extensive collection of paintings by J.M.W. Turner, 20,000 pieces of decorative work from Europe, Asia and India, and the correspondence of many authors, composers and artists ([fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk](http://fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk)).

### Kettle's Yard House And Gallery

A unique cultural experience is on offer at the former home of Jim Ede, a *Tate Gallery* curator in the 1920s and 1930s. Jim and his wife, Helen, built up an extraordinary collection of





Inside awe-inspiring King's College Chapel

**IMPRESSIVE**  
Construction on the Gothic chapel began in 1446



Cambridge University has a rich history



See the splendid displays at Imperial War Museum Duxford

20th-century art, displaying it at their cosy cottage via 'open house' tours. *Kettle's Yard* is now owned by the university, but the house has been kept as it was before the Edes moved out in the 1970s, with the addition of an exhibition space. The permanent collection includes work by Barbara Hepworth, Joan Miró and Henry Moore, and the gallery hosts temporary exhibitions too ([kettlesyard.cam.ac.uk](http://kettlesyard.cam.ac.uk)).

### Scott Polar Research Institute

At the beginning of the 20th century, the race was on to reach the South Pole. When British naval officer Captain Robert Falcon Scott arrived there with his team in January 1912, he discovered Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen had beaten them to it by a matter of weeks. Tragically, Scott and his team never made it back from

that expedition, but Scott's devotion to science and exploration was celebrated with the founding of the *Scott Polar Research Institute* eight years later. Today this important research centre, which is the home of the British Antarctic Survey, is open to the public, displaying an unrivalled collection of objects relating to Polar exploration, including indigenous objects from Arctic cultures, Polar artworks and pieces decorated by people who are involved in the whaling industry ([spri.cam.ac.uk](http://spri.cam.ac.uk)).

### Imperial War Museum Duxford

The aerodrome at Duxford was built during World War I, making this centenary year a particularly good time to visit the *Imperial War Museum's* Cambridgeshire base ([iwm.org.uk](http://iwm.org.uk)). As well as the *Battle Of Britain Exhibition*, which

explores the UK's role in this pivotal World War II air battle, you'll find a huge collection of tanks and military vehicles too big to display at the IWM London, plus the largest collection of historic American military aircraft in Europe. Duxford is a working airfield, so it's possible to take leisure flights in historic aircraft ([classic-wings.co.uk](http://classic-wings.co.uk)).

### Anglesey Abbey

This country house six miles from Cambridge began life as a monastery in the 12th century but was converted into a grand home around 1600. The building you visit today, however, owes its unique style to Huttleston Broughton, a rich mining heir who inherited it in 1930 and created luxurious interiors and a beautiful garden. Be sure to see the wildlife area and the working water mill ([nationaltrust.org.uk/anglesey-abbey](http://nationaltrust.org.uk/anglesey-abbey)).

KING'S COLLEGE CHAPEL PHOTO © VISIT ENGLAND/AIN LEWIS; CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PHOTO © VISIT ENGLAND/AIN LEWIS; IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM DUXFORD © GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCKPHOTO







# ACROSS THE UK

## 1 Stonehenge

A visit to these prehistoric standing stones is always thrilling, but never more so than on the summer solstice (**21 Jun**). The longest and shortest days of the year are the only times when you can walk among the stones and touch them. English Heritage allows open access to Stonehenge from the evening of **20 Jun** to dawn (around 5am) the next day ([english-heritage.org.uk](http://english-heritage.org.uk)). London Waterloo to Salisbury in 90 mins, then 30 mins by bus.



## 2 Colchester

Colchester's Castle Park is the venue for this year's *Colchester Food and Drink Festival*, a celebration of all things culinary (**28-29 Jun**). As well as stalls selling everything from fish and chips to bhajis, there will be demonstrations. There is also one of Europe's biggest circus tents, so fun is guaranteed. ([foodanddrinkfestivalsuk.co.uk](http://foodanddrinkfestivalsuk.co.uk)). London Liverpool Street to Colchester in 50 mins.



## UK ATTRACTIONS

### BLenheim PALACE

Famed as the birthplace of Sir Winston Churchill, this masterpiece of English Baroque architecture is set in 2,100 acres of Capability Brown parkland and formal gardens. Opening hours vary, please check website. Palace, Park & Gardens: Adult £21.50, child £11.80. Woodstock, Oxfordshire, OX20 1PP. 0199 381 0530. [blenheimpalace.com](http://blenheimpalace.com). Paddington to Oxford (50 mins).

### DICKENS WORLD

Enjoy a 90-minute 'Grand Tour' with a costumed guide which brings the Victorian world of British author Charles Dickens' brilliant novels to life. Daily 10am-3.30pm. Admission £7.50 (first tour of the day, £5.50). *Leviathan Way, Chatham Maritime, Kent, ME4 4LL*. 0844 858 6656. [dickensworld.co.uk](http://dickensworld.co.uk). Victoria to Chatham (50 mins).

### LEEDS CASTLE

This medieval fortress turned Tudor palace sits on the River Len. The castle has 500 acres of gardens. Daily 10.30am-6pm (last admission to castle 4.30pm). Admission £21, child £13.50. *Maidstone, Kent, ME17 1PL*. 0162 276 5400. [leeds-castle.com](http://leeds-castle.com). Victoria to Bearstead (one hour).

### WINDSOR CASTLE

Windsor Castle has the distinction of being the world's oldest, largest inhabited castle, and it's also known as one of the Queen's official residences. Visit the beautifully decorated State Apartments, furnished with a selection of paintings that have been specially chosen from the Royal Collection.

**To 25 Jan 2015:** *Treasures from The Royal Archives*. Rarely-seen letters, diaries and objects reveal the history of the British monarchy. Daily 9.45am-5.15pm (last entry 4pm). Admission £18.50, child £11. *Windsor, Berkshire, SL4 1NJ*. 020 7766 7300. [royalcollection.org.uk](http://royalcollection.org.uk). Waterloo to Windsor & Eton Riverside (approximately one hour).

## 3 Stirling

Enjoy the historic action of *Bannockburn Live* (**28-29 Jun**), a one-off event commemorating the 700th anniversary of the Battle of Bannockburn. Watch a live battle show and listen to a celebration of Scotland's music. *Battle of Bannockburn Visitor Centre, Glasgow Road, Stirling, FK7 0LJ*. 0844 481 8727. [battleofbannockburn.com](http://battleofbannockburn.com). London King's Cross to Stirling in approx five hours, 30 mins.



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