

YOUR 6 PAGE GUIDE TO SHORT BREAKS AROUND BRITAIN

BEYOND

LONDON

Visit
the Queen's
Windsor
Castle



Day trips
less than an
hour away



Fun times await
at Legoland



Leeds Castle is closer
than you think



Snap up style bargains
at Bicester Village



By Jo Caird

One of Windsor Castle's lavish bedrooms



BIGGEST
This is the world's largest inhabited castle



The exterior of Windsor Castle



St. George's Chapel

Windsor Castle

1 Windsor Castle is the world's oldest inhabited castle and one of the official residences of Her Majesty the Queen – you'll see the Royal Standard flying from the Round Tower when the monarch is at home. There's lots to explore, including the State Apartments, the magnificent St. George's Chapel (where you'll find the tomb of Henry VIII) and the Semi-State Rooms, the private apartments of George IV.

A good way to begin your visit is by joining a free 30-minute tour of the Castle Precincts, led by the Wardens. In spring and summer, the Changing the Guard ceremony takes place within the castle grounds (Mon-Sat 11am). This 45-minute ceremony, with its Regimental Band

and troupe of drummers, is a spectacle not to be missed. Windsor Castle is also home to a significant number of important artworks. They make up part of the Royal Collection, which comprises over a million pieces of fine and decorative art. The State Apartments feature paintings by Rembrandt, Rubens and Canaletto, and many works are still in the same place as they were centuries ago. There are also regular temporary exhibitions to showcase paintings from the collection. Remember to ask a Warden at Windsor Castle to stamp your ticket to turn it into a 1-Year Pass. For more information, visit royalcollection.org.uk.

Event highlights

To 5 May
Capturing The Castle: Watercolours Of Windsor By Paul And Thomas Sandby. Depictions of the castle during George III's reign by Paul Sandby, the 'father of English watercolour', and his brother Thomas.

From 17 May
Treasures From The Royal Archives. An exhibition of rarely-seen objects relating to the history of the British Monarchy. Diaries and letters offer insights into the private lives of kings and queens.



Queen Victoria statue at Windsor Castle

How to get there

- 1** Windsor
- London Waterloo to
- Windsor & Eton Riverside in approximately 60 minutes.



HERITAGE IS GREAT
BRITAIN
You're invited

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BEYOND LONDON



The Castle's moat dates back eight centuries

LEGACY
The site has been home to a castle since 1119

All within one hour of London



There's so much to see and do at Chessington (above and below)



2 Leeds Castle

This fairytale lakeside castle in 500 acres of beautiful Kentish parkland dates back to Norman times and has been the property of six royal queens.

Much of the interior decoration was introduced by the last private owner of the castle, an Anglo-American heiress who bought it in 1926. But there are signs of the building's extraordinary history all over the place, from the drawbridge over the moat, which dates from the time of

Eleanor of Castile, 800 years ago, to the extensive Victorian renovations that we see today.

Admire the beautiful interiors, then explore the grounds. There's punting on the moat, regular falconry displays, two mazes and an underground grotto to get to grips with, plus several picturesque gardens and a nine-hole golf course that dates back to 1931. Segway tours of the grounds are also available. Don't miss the most curious attraction: the country's only dog collar museum (leeds-castle.com).

3 Legoland

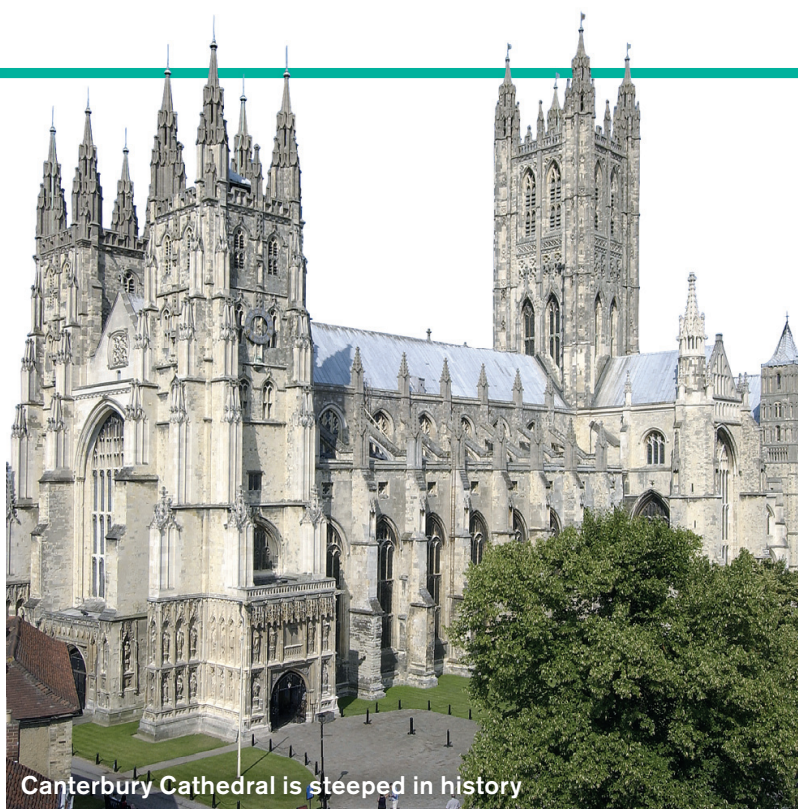
When Lego began producing its now famous interlocking plastic bricks in Denmark in 1949, no one could have predicted that the construction toy would one day be famous across the globe. Yet as well as selling hundreds of billions of Lego bricks, there are now six theme parks to visit, one of which is just a short train ride from London.

Of the nearly 55 million pieces of Lego at *Legoland Windsor*, you'll find 40 million of them in Miniland, where scenes from Europe and the USA have been recreated in impressive detail. There are a total of 55 rides, live shows, attractions, driving schools and workshops in the park. New this spring is *Pirate Shores*, which features an adventure play area, more than 100 new models and another restaurant (legoland.co.uk).



Fun times at Legoland





Canterbury Cathedral is steeped in history



The Great Cloister and a vaulted ceiling (below)



CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL: IMAGE © CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL; GREAT CLOISTER AND CEILING IMAGES © BRITISH TOURIST AUTHORITY



OF CHESSINGTON WORLD OF ADVENTURES; LEGOLAND IMAGES © LEGOLAND



4 Chessington World Of Adventures

It would be easy to spend a whole day experiencing the thrilling rides, fun live shows and interactive animal experiences at *Chessington World Of Adventures*, which incorporates a theme park, zoo and Sea Life aquarium.

From the treetop-skimming Vampire roller coaster to the relaxing observation wheel, Peeking Heights, there's something for everyone in the park's 10 themed lands. Minimum heights for the rides vary, but even the youngest visitors will be kept busy by the likes of the Temple Of Mayhem

and Tiny Truckers. Between the zoo, aquarium and Zufari, the new safari-truck expedition ride that opened last year, there are more than 1,000 animals at Chessington, including rare white rhinos. Chessington Zoo boasts the most successful condor breeding programme in Europe too (chessington.com).

5 Canterbury Cathedral

As the seat of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the leader of the Church of England, *Canterbury Cathedral* is one of the most important religious sites in the country. It's also a major pilgrimage destination and

a World Heritage Site. Dating back to the 11th century, Canterbury Cathedral is famous for being the place where Archbishop Thomas Becket was murdered in 1170 by the knights of King Henry II. Look out for the martyr in the cathedral's stained-glass windows, and visit his shrine. Guided tours take place throughout the day (Mon-Sat) and audio guides are available.

As well as being open to visitors, the cathedral is a working church, with Morning and Evening Prayers, and the Eucharist, being read each day. Seven choral services a week are led by the famous choir (canterbury-cathedral.org).

How to get there

2 Leeds Castle

➤ London Victoria to ➤ Bearsted in 60 mins. Then take a coach shuttle.

3 Legoland

➤ London Waterloo or Paddington to ➤ Windsor & Eton Central or Windsor & Eton Riverside in approximately

30 mins. Then take a shuttle bus to the park.

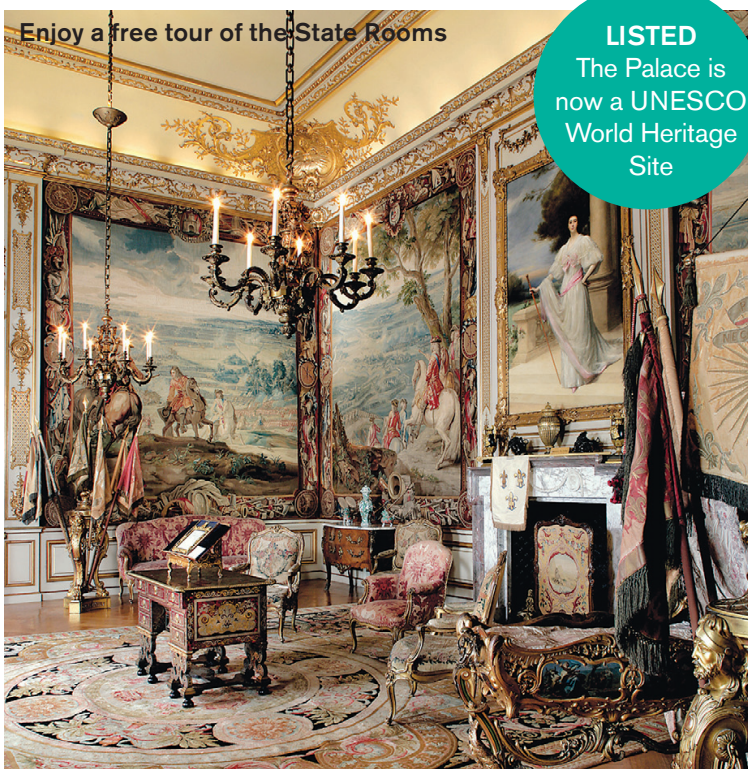
4 Chessington

➤ London (various termini) to ➤ Chessington South in approximately 35 mins.

5 Canterbury Cathedral

➤ London St. Pancras to ➤ Canterbury West in approximately 60 mins.



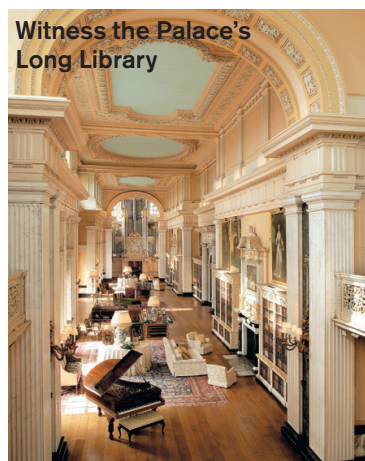


Enjoy a free tour of the State Rooms

LISTED
The Palace is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site



The magnificent exterior of Blenheim Palace



Witness the Palace's Long Library

6 Blenheim Palace

This World Heritage Site is one of England's largest houses. Built in the early 18th century, it's now home to the 11th Duke and Duchess of Marlborough, but was the birthplace of wartime Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill. There's a permanent exhibition devoted to him, in a room close to the one he was born in.

Blenheim is a beautiful example of English Baroque architecture – free tours of the imposing State Rooms run throughout the day. *Blenheim Palace: The Untold Story*,

meanwhile, is an engaging route into the life of the palace over the past three centuries. A stroll around the formal gardens and Capability Brown landscape is a rewarding way to complete your visit (blenheimpalace.com).

7 Bicester Village

Just an hour from London by train, this designer outlet 'village' is made up of 130 boutiques from some of the world's biggest brands. Exquisite offerings from European icons like Yves Saint Laurent, Prada and Dior sit alongside stand-out designs

from international heavyweights, such as Hugo Boss, Versace and Diane Von Fürstenberg. This is the place to buy luxury for less. You'll find savings of up to 60 per cent on past seasons' collections, with delivery available to any address in the world via the air courier service.

Enjoy a VIP shopping experience by taking the Shopping Express, a luxury coach from central London. Then tuck into a two-course meal and enjoy a three-hour personal style consultation for as little as £188 (chicoutletshopping.com).

How to get there

6 Blenheim Palace
➤ London Paddington to Oxford in approximately 60 mins. Then take the S3 bus.

7 Bicester Village
➤ London Marylebone to Bicester North in 60 mins. Then take the shuttle bus.



Shop in style at Bicester Village

BLENHHEIM PALACE IMAGES COURTESY OF BLENHHEIM PALACE; BICESTER VILLAGE IMAGE © BICESTER VILLAGE





ACROSS THE UK



1 Manchester

Rugby fans rejoice as the *Magic Weekend* returns to Manchester's Etihad Stadium (17-18 May). A complete round of rugby league fixtures takes place over two days, with fans from 14 UK clubs coming together to support their teams in seven exciting matches. Off the pitch, a fan village, house band and entertainment programme keep spirits high (rugbyleaguetickets.co.uk).

🚆 ➡ London Euston to
➡ Manchester Piccadilly
in two hours, 10 mins.

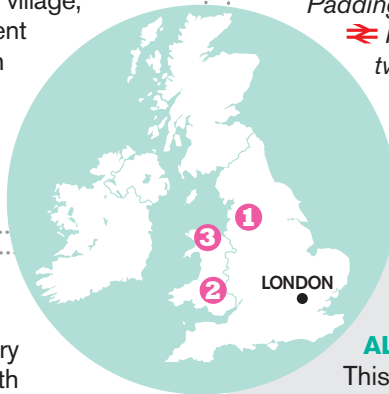
2 Hay-on-Wye

Each spring, this tiny town on the border of England and Wales becomes the buzziest literary destination in the UK, courtesy of the *Hay Festival* (from 22 May). What began life as a niche event for the publishing industry is now a 10-day festival of literature and the arts, featuring talks, comedy, music, workshops, a children's area and stalls. Among the personalities taking part this year are Toni Morrison, Arianna Huffington and Dame Judi Dench (hayfestival.com).

🚆 ➡ London Paddington to
➡ Hereford in two hours, 40 mins.
Then take the festival bus service.

STAR NAMES

Dame Judi Dench is among Hay's guests



3 Llandudno

It was during the 19th century that this coastal town in North Wales became known as a major seaside resort. The impressive pier and much of its architecture dates from this period, and this glorious heritage is celebrated each May at the *Llandudno Victorian Extravaganza* (3-5 May). On the bill are steam-engine displays, performances by pipe and drum bands, magic and variety acts, and a fun fair. Look out for the QR codes that form a self-guided walking tour of fascinating Victorian locations (victorian-extravaganza.com).

🚆 ➡ London Euston to
➡ Llandudno
in about three hours.



More great places

ALRESFORD

This picturesque medieval town is home to the pretty Watercress Line steam railway. *New Alresford, Hampshire*. alresford.org. ➡ London Waterloo to ➡ Alton in one hour, 15 mins.

STONEHENGE

This prehistoric circle of standing stones dates back to 3,500 BC. Daily 9.30am-7pm. Admission £14.90, child £8.90. Off A344 Road, near Shrewton, Wiltshire, SP3 4DX. 0870 333 1181. english-heritage.org.uk. ➡ Waterloo to ➡ Salisbury in one hour, 20 mins.

STRAWBERRY HILL HOUSE

Horace Walpole's 18th-century Gothic castle. 268 Waldegrave Road, Twickenham, TW1 4ST. 020 8744 1241. strawberryhillhouse.org.uk. ➡ Strawberry Hill.

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