



THINGS TO DO AROUND THE CASTLE

Walking Trails

Rambling is a British tradition, with rights of way that have been used for centuries that are protected by British law. The castle is at the junction of several public footpaths and public bridle paths, including the 1066 Country Walk. Getting lost is very easy, so it is recommended that you bring a map. Note that you will often be cutting through fields, sometimes with livestock, so be sure to close any gates, and it is recommended to avoid fields with cows. If you are feeling very ambitious, it is possible to walk to the coast in about three hours. A good reference is the [rights of way map](#) for East Sussex.

The walk to Herstmonceux Village takes around 35 minutes. If you are not up to the footpaths you can use the lane. Go past the church just outside the castle grounds, and down the lane to the right. The village has two small shops, a hairdresser, some nice restaurants, a pub and a tea room. There is a cash withdrawal machine in one of the shops.



East Sussex Falconry

Falconry is an ancient tradition of using birds of prey such as falcons, hawks, kestrels or owls for hunting. East Sussex Falconry operates out of the castle grounds and offers the opportunity to watch the birds in flight as well as flying some yourself.

To book, contact them at [East Sussex Falconry](#).

LOCAL PUBS AND RESTAURANTS

Close by

[The Lamb in Wartling](#) (photo to the right), is excellent and close. The road is unsafe for walking, so take a taxi, especially after dark. You can also walk there using the rights of way footpaths through the fields, though it is easy to get lost.

You can walk easily to the [Bull's Head](#) in Boreham Street. It is very pleasant and has good food.

The two pubs in Herstmonceux are much less atmospheric and the food is nowhere near as good, but you can walk to the village safely by starting at the church, and it's a pretty, rural walk. There is a very good Indian restaurant, [Eastern Promise](#), and [The Sundial](#) is an excellent, but expensive, French restaurant.



If you have a car

On a nice day or evening, go to [The Tiger Inn](#) in East Dean (photo to the right), after going for a walk on Beachy Head past Eastbourne. The inn has lovely rooms if you want to stay over.



Other nice pubs with good food:

- [The George Inn](#) in Alfriston.
- [The Ram](#) in Firle, which is in a charming small village and has very nice rooms.
- [The Gun](#) in Heathfield is great but can be a bit tricky to find.
- [The Horse and Groom](#) in Rushlake Green.
- [The Cricketer's Arms](#) in Berwick has a lovely garden and don't miss the church.
- [The Curlew](#) in Bodiam is more a superb restaurant than a pub, and quite far – combine a trip with a visit to Bodiam Castle.
- And two that have been recommended that haven't been tried yet: [The Plough](#) at Upper Dicker which is walking distance from Michelham Priory and the [Three Cups Inn](#) at Three Cups Corner which is a little further north from Rushlake Green.

NEARBY TOWNS AND SIGHTS



Alfriston Village

[Alfriston Village](#) is lovely town has a very pretty high street with a wonderful used bookstore [Much Ado Books](#), two very good pubs - [The George Inn](#) and [The Star Inn](#), and several tearooms including [Badgers](#), which is lovely.

The pretty green has an interesting church and the [Alfriston Clergy House](#), a National Trust property open 10:30 am – 5:00 pm every day.



Lewes

You can easily get to [Lewes](#) by train from Polegate or Eastbourne.

It is a very pleasant market town, including [Harvey's brewery](#), specializing in traditional cask ales, and good shopping, antiques and restaurants.

[The Lewes castle and museum](#) requires an admission fee, but offers a panoramic view of the surrounding area.

Brighton

[Brighton](#) is also easily reached by train, and there are frequent minibuses on weekends. It is a big, busy seaside city, with lots of excellent shopping, pubs and restaurants. Running for over 50 years and definitely worth attending is [The Brighton Festival](#), a large arts festival in May including music, theatre, dance, circus, film, visual arts and literature. [The Royal Pavilion](#), a historic seaside pleasure palace, is a must, and the [Brighton Museum and Art Gallery](#) next door is free and worth a look. [The Lanes](#) are great for independent shops, and the North Laine area has young, quirky and diverse shops.

Charleston Farmhouse



In 1916 the artists Vanessa Bell, who was the sister of Virginia Woolf, and Duncan Grant moved to [Charleston](#) with their unconventional household. For the next 50 years, Charleston was the country meeting place of the group of artists, writers and intellectuals known as the Bloomsbury Group. Clive Bell, David Garnett and Maynard Keynes lived at Charleston for considerable periods; Virginia and Leonard Woolf, E.M. Forster, Lytton Strachey and Roger Fry were frequent visitors. Inspired by Italian fresco painting and the Post-Impressionists, the artists decorated the walls, doors and furniture. The rooms display the decorative art of the Bloomsbury artists: murals, painted furniture, ceramics, paintings and textiles. The collection includes work by Renoir, Picasso, Derain, Sickert, and Delacroix. There is a lovely walled garden.

The house is open for tours from Wednesday to Saturday from 1:00 pm – 6:00 pm and for self-guided visits on Sundays from 1:00 pm – 5:30 pm.

Charleston also hosts a wonderful [book festival](#) in late May.



Berwick Church

[Berwick Church](#), a traditional Sussex church damaged by bombs in World War II, was transformed with a series of controversial mural painted by Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant. This is a good visit to combine with Charleston and/or Alfriston. The church is open every day until dusk.

The village has a good pub, the [Cricketer's Arms](#).

Monk's House

[Monk's House](#) was Virginia and Leonard Woolf's summer house in Rodmell, near Lewes. It is open Wednesday to Sunday 1:00 pm – 5:00 pm.



Michelham Priory

[Michelham Priory](#) is the site of a former Augustine Priory, which became a country house after the dissolution of the monasteries.

The house and beautiful gardens are open every day from 10:30 am - 5:00 pm.



Battle Abbey

[The Abbey](#) was built to commemorate the Battle of Hastings, fought on this site. It's worth taking the audio tour around the battlefield – it's just a field, really, but they do a good job of making it interesting.

Trains to Charing Cross go from Battle, as an alternative to the Polegate – Victoria route. Taxis would be a little more than to Polegate, but the town of Battle is far more interesting than Polegate.



Rye

[Rye](#) is a really charming town. Once almost surrounded by sea, it played an important role in the defense of the south coast of England as one of the Cinque Ports. The coast is now over 1½ miles from Rye along a picturesque river (the sea moved, not the town). The tower of St Mary's church tower offers tremendous views. The nearby town of Winchelsea is also interesting, and in the other direction you come to Camber, one of the few sandy beaches in Sussex.

Located in Rye is the National Trust property [Lamb House](#), home at various times to Henry James and several other authors, is small but interesting, and has a lovely garden. It is open Tuesday, Friday and Saturday from 11:00 am – 5:00 pm.



Great Dixter House and Gardens

[Great Dixter](#) is a gorgeous 15th century timber-framed manor house set in one of the most beautiful gardens in England. In the early 20th century Nathaniel Lloyd commissioned Sir Edwin Lutyens to renovate and extend the house. The gardens were created and maintained by Nathaniel's son Christopher Lloyd, one of England's most famous garden writers.

The house and gardens are open Tuesday to Sunday afternoons.



Bateman's - Rudyard Kipling's House

[Bateman's](#) is a Jacobean house containing the belongings of Rudyard Kipling, who lived here from 1902 until his death in 1936. Most of the rooms are much as he left them. The beautiful gardens run down to a small river where there is a watermill.

The house is open every day 11:00 am – 5:00 pm.

Bodiam Castle

[Bodiam Castle](#) is a perfect example of a late medieval moated castle. It is really beautiful but, as the interior is an empty ruin, it can be seen fairly quickly.

The castle is open daily from 10:30 am – 5:00 pm. Don't miss [The Curlew Restaurant](#) nearby.



Beachy Head / Birling Gap



Just past Eastbourne you can park at the top of [Beachy Head](#), or drive a little farther to Birling Gap, and enjoy the spectacular scenery. There are endless walks and trails along the dramatic white cliffs.

A short walk in-bound will bring to you the village of East-Dean; don't forget to stop at [The Tiger Inn](#).

Glyndebourne Opera

[Glyndebourne Opera](#) is a hugely expensive but world-famous opera house, excellent for watching posh people have picnics in the lovely grounds. It can be difficult to buy tickets, and it is black tie – not so difficult for women, but tricky for men not travelling with a dinner jacket (i.e. a tuxedo). Sometimes the musicians in residence at the castle offer tickets for a dress rehearsal – go if you possibly can.

FURTHER AFIELD (IN KENT)

Sissinghurst Castle



[Sissinghurst Castle Garden](#) is one of England's most famous and beautiful gardens, designed and established by the author and poet Vita Sackville-West and her diplomat and author husband, Harold Nicolson, in the 1930s.

The garden is open from 11:00 am – 5:30 pm.

Hever Castle



[Hever Castle](#) dates from 1270, when the gatehouse, outer walls and moat were constructed. 200 years later, the Boleyn family added a Tudor dwelling house inside the walls. Hever Castle was the childhood home of Anne Boleyn. In 1903, American William Waldorf Astor acquired the estate and restored the castle, building a fake Tudor Village. The castle has an excellent collection of furniture, and paintings and spectacular gardens.

The nearby Tudor village of [Chiddingstone](#) is picturesque and has a nice pub and yet another castle.



Standen

[Standen](#) is a lovely arts-and-crafts family home with William Morris interiors and beautiful gardens.

The house is open from 11:00 am – 4:30 pm and the gardens are open from 10:00 am – 5:00 pm.



Penshurst Place

[Penshurst Place](#) is one of Britain's outstanding country houses, as well as one of England's greatest defended manor houses, in a peaceful rural setting. The medieval manor house was built in 1338, with Tudor, Jacobean and neo-Gothic wings. The residence of Elizabethan poet Sir Philip Sidney, it also has associations with Ben Jonson and other writers. There are two nice tearooms in the village.

SOME WEEKEND IDEAS BY PUBLIC TRANSIT

- Take a taxi to Battle and take the train to London for the day, or to Tunbridge Wells for good shopping.
- Take a minibus or taxi to Eastbourne – walk from Eastbourne to Beachy Head / Birling Gap / East Dean.
- Take a taxi or the train to Lewes and stay at [Trevor House](#) or [Berkeley House](#) or [Dubois Bed and Breakfast](#).
- From Eastbourne or Lewes you can take the train to London or Brighton for the day.
- Take the train from Polegate or Eastbourne to Rye and stay here at [Jeakes House](#) – though you will need to book far in advance. Other options include [The Mermaid Inn](#) or [The George](#) – check trip advisor.
- Take the train to [Hastings](#), which has a nice old town and a lovely seafront, and also some sketchy parts. Stay at [The Old Rectory](#) or the [Swan House](#) and then take the train to Rye, or London, for the day.
- A day or overnight trip to Brighton or London from Polegate or Eastbourne or Battle.
- Or just move a few houses down the lane for some variety at stay at [Cleavers Lyng](#).

London Hotel Suggestions

- [122 Great Titchfield Street B&B](#) is a particularly good and central B&B.
- For trendy, cheap accommodation, book at The Hoxton in [Shoreditch](#) or [Holburn](#).
- For inexpensive central accommodations, look at any of the London Club Quarters. The one in Trafalgar Square is the most central.
- For a lovely but hugely expensive stay, look at any of the hotels in [The Firmdale Group](#). Or just go for tea and a drink.
- For other B&B and hotel options across the UK, search the [Sawday's website](#).
- For stays of more than 3 or 4 days, rent an apartment or house through [One Fine Stay](#) or [Ivy Lettings](#).



AFTERNOON TEA SUGGESTIONS

In Sussex

- Alfriston: [Badger's](#), [The Singing Kettle](#)
- Eastbourne: [Neate's Cakery](#), [The Grand Hotel](#)
- Lewes: [Shelleys](#)
- Rye: [The George](#), [Fletcher's House](#), [The Cobbles](#), [Edith's House Cafe](#)
- Brighton: [The Mock Turtle](#), [MetroDeco](#), [Julien Plumart](#)

In London

In London you basically have 3 types of options.

Somewhere interesting and not touristy:

- [Dean Street Townhouse](#) in Soho
- [Charlotte Street Hotel](#) in Soho – make sure you book in the Drawing Room or Library
- [The Covent Garden Hotel](#)
- [The Haymarket Hotel](#)
- [The Wolseley on Piccadilly](#) – a very trendy restaurant in an amazing old car showroom
- [Dukes Hotel in St James's](#) – very traditional but nice and not ludicrously expensive
- [The Orangery in Kensington Gardens](#) - gorgeous and well worth making a point of going
- [Liberty](#) on Regent Street – a lovely and expensive department store, worth seeing for the arts and crafts interior
- [Bea's of Bloomsbury](#)

Tea in the restaurant of a museum or sight you might visit anyway – these are all very good:

- [Royal Academy](#)
- [The National Gallery](#) - good value, and champagne for 4 pounds
- [National Portrait Gallery](#)
- [British Museum](#)
- [St Paul's Cathedral](#)
- [The Wallace Collection](#)
- [Victoria and Albert Museum](#) - not a proper tea, although there are scones, but the café is in amazing rooms

Somewhere grand and traditional but expensive, and often stuffy and/or touristy. Don't go to the Ritz, it is too touristy. But, if you must spend a fortune:

- [Claridge's](#)
- [Fortnum & Mason](#)
- [Brown's](#)
- [Savoy](#)