



The birthplace of a maritime legend  
on the Kent & East Sussex coast

# THE CINQUE PORTS



[www.cinqueports.org](http://www.cinqueports.org)



Kent & East Sussex

# The Lord Warden

There have been Lord Wardens of the Cinque Ports, or Keepers of the Coast as they were originally called, since Saxon Times. From the middle of the 13th century, the office has always been combined with the post of Constable of Dover Castle. Appointed by the Crown to control the naval and military defences of the vulnerable south-east coast of England, but sworn to uphold the rights and privileges of the Cinque Ports, the Lord Warden was once one of the most powerful officials in the land. The position was often held by members of the Royal family (for example Henry, Prince of Wales before he became King Henry V in 1413) or by influential nobles like Richard Earl of Warwick ("Warwick the Kingmaker") during the Wars of the Roses, in the 15th century.

More recently, the office has become largely ceremonial and has been conferred in recognition of distinguished public service. William Pitt the Younger (Prime Minister during the Napoleonic Wars), the 1st Duke of Wellington (hero of the Battle of Waterloo), Sir Winston Churchill (Prime Minister during the Second World War) and Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother have all served as Lord Warden.

The current Lord Warden, Admiral of the Fleet the Lord Boyce, was Chief of the Defence Staff before his retirement in 2003. He was appointed to the office by Her Majesty the Queen, in 2004. He writes:-

*"I am honoured to follow in the footsteps of so many illustrious predecessors.*

*Since my appointment, I have spent many happy days within the 14 Cinque Port towns and have visited all the Head Ports and surviving limbs on many occasions. I am always struck by the distinctive character of each town, as well as the unique history and traditions which they share. I hope that this leaflet will give you a flavour of what these historic communities have to offer residents and visitors alike. You will be assured of a warm welcome."*



**Admiral of the Fleet  
the Lord Boyce, KG, GCB, OBE, DL**



## Welcome...

Over the centuries the rugged coastline of Kent and East Sussex has beckoned men to battle, smuggling and trade, and what could be more invigorating than discovering the maritime adventures of the past and the unique Confederation of the Cinque Ports?

With a coastline that was permanently exposed to potential attack it's no wonder that the ports of Hastings, Romney, Hythe, Dover and Sandwich were seen as the perfect launch point for a defensive force before England had a formal navy.

This part of the south east coast offers visitors a truly historical experience – discover the relics and ruins from the past in the museums, castles and smugglers' haunts that are scattered throughout the towns and villages.

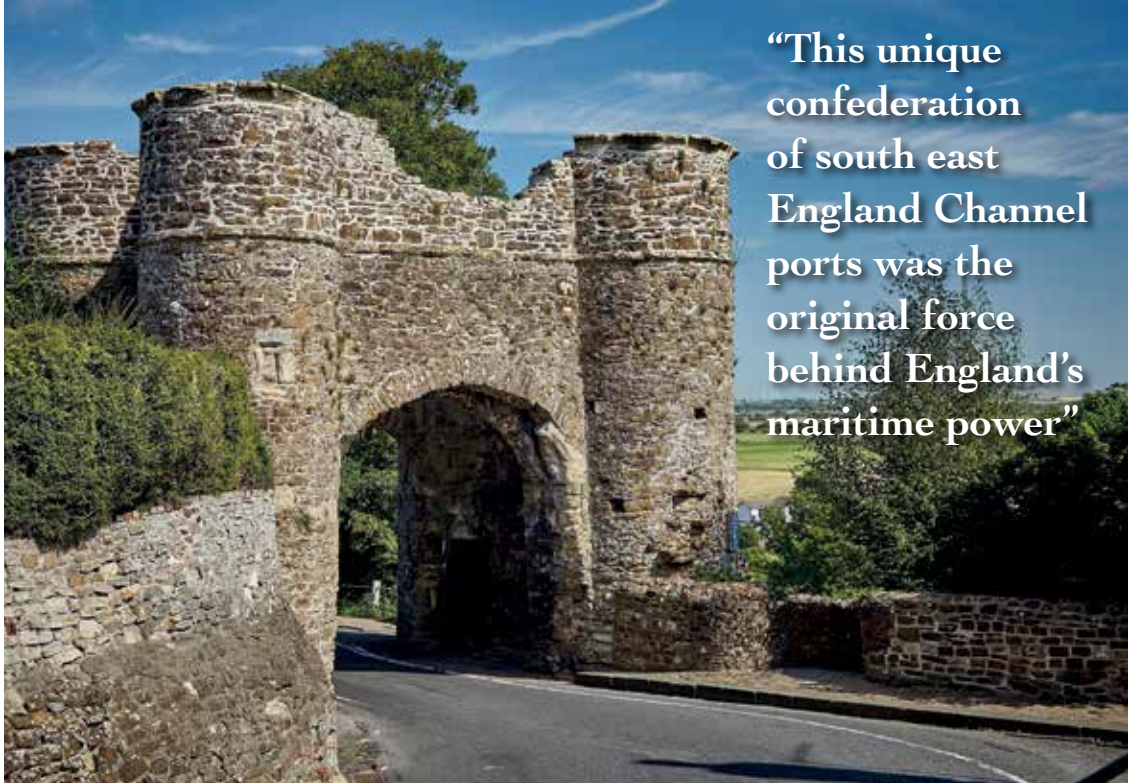
And with great walking, cycling and sailing activities plus every kind of accommodation to choose from, this area is perfect for a short break, to enjoy at your own pace.

[www.cinqueports.org](http://www.cinqueports.org)

Supported by the Confederation of the Cinque Ports and its member towns, 1066 Country Marketing and Visit Kent. Special thanks to Ian Russell, Registrar and Seneschal of the Cinque Ports for his contribution.

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“This unique confederation of south east England Channel ports was the original force behind England’s maritime power”

## The History...

Long before the towns were formally recognised as the Cinque Ports, around the time of the Norman conquest in 1066, the five original ‘head ports’ of Hastings, Romney, Hythe, Dover and Sandwich were busy fishing and trading centres.

For more than 500 years the five towns provided the ships and men who guarded king and country from frequent and vicious attacks in return for special privileges. This unique confederation of south east England Channel ports was the original force behind England’s maritime power and can justly be called the Cradle of the Royal Navy.

Under the system of ‘ship service’, the ports were required to supply 57 ships, each with a crew of 21 men and a boy, for 15 days every year. In return the ports were granted special rights which included, amongst many other things, exemption from the jurisdiction of certain courts and the right to levy their own local taxes. These ships were used not only in warfare, but also to transport the King, his family and armies between England and Europe. Neighbouring towns and

villages eventually joined the original five towns and were known as ‘limbs’ and helped fulfil the quotas of ships and crew. The ‘two Antient towns’ of Rye and Winchelsea later became head ports in their own right.

The early 14th century saw a sharp decline in the power and influence of some members of the Confederation. The south east coast had been devastated by extremely violent storms in the previous century, permanently changing the coastline and making some harbours unusable. When a permanent navy was founded in the 16th century by Henry VIII the days of the Cinque Ports as a collective force were numbered.

Today, the Confederation (now consisting of the original five ports and two Antient towns, together with the surviving limbs of Deal, Faversham, Folkestone, Lydd, Margate, Ramsgate and Tenterden) still plays an active part in the ceremonial affairs of state. Places of honour are reserved for the Cinque Ports Barons at Westminster Abbey, during coronations. The Lord Warden is still installed in office with great ceremony, at Dover.





# The coastline before the storm of 1287

## How it was...

In 1287, a storm hit the southern coast of England with such ferocity that whole areas of coastline were redrawn. It caused the cliff at Hastings and half its castle to fall into the sea, ruining its harbour. The town then moved eastward. What remained of 'Old' Winchelsea was completely destroyed. Its replacement, 'New' Winchelsea, was already being built on its present site. Further along, the storm silted up the New Romney harbour and the town became landlocked, a mile from the coast. The River Rother, that had previously entered the sea at New Romney changed course and now entered at Rye. It also turned Lydd's harbour into farmland and marsh, and the land grew around the island.

Tenterden ■

Rye ■

Winchelsea ■

Hastings ■

Faversham ■

Lydd ■

New Romney ■

Hythe ■

Folkestone ■

Dover ■

Deal ■

Sandwich ■

Ramsgate ■

Margate ■





## DEAL



- Deal is a limb of Sandwich and its motto is 'Befriend the Stranger'.
- Lacking a harbour, Deal had the benefit of the Downs Anchorage, the stretch of water between the shore and the Goodwin Sands.
- The town rapidly rose to prosperity as the local boatmen earned a profitable livelihood from servicing naval and merchant ships which anchored there.
- During the 18th and 19th centuries the Sandwich Haven silted up.
- Today Deal is a popular summer holiday resort.

### Did you know?

Deal Pier opened in 1957 and is 1026 feet long. It was the last pleasure pier to be constructed in Britain.

Deal's Timeball Tower is one of only 4 working in the world.

Lord Nelson stayed at the Royal Hotel with Emma Hamilton.

📞 01304 369576 🌐 [www.whitecliffscountry.org.uk](http://www.whitecliffscountry.org.uk)



## Today...

Today the Confederation of the Cinque Ports is made up of seven head ports and seven limbs, from Hastings in the west to Margate in the east.

Each of the 14 towns has a wealth of rich heritage and strong maritime traditions to discover. Explore narrow cobbled streets and passageways where you can see medieval houses and ancient landmarks. Visit the many museums, attractions, forts and castles that dominate the rugged coastline and re-live the days of fearsome battles at sea, smuggling and piracy.

## DOVER



- Known since the height of the Cinque Ports' power as the 'key to England' and famous for the iconic 'White Cliffs'.
- Today, Dover is Europe's busiest roll-on/roll-off port.
- Its massive fortifications have been used in every phase of England's history.
- Overlooking the harbour are the vast grey walls of Dover Castle, enclosing a Saxon church and the ruins of a Roman lighthouse.
- Visit the Maison Dieu housing an original 17th century Cinque Ports banner and also see the Bronze Age Boat in Dover Museum.

### Did you know?

There are numerous monuments including those to Bleriot – the first man to fly the Channel and also Captain Webb – the first man to swim the Channel. Samphire Hoe is made from Channel Tunnel spoil.

📞 01304 205108 🌐 [www.whitecliffscountry.org.uk](http://www.whitecliffscountry.org.uk)



## FAVERSHAM



- The Mayoralty dates back to 1292 with Mayors listed in the Guildhall, which was built in 1574.
- The Guildhall just a few minutes' walk away from the tidal creek, which in the 16th century became the leading port for the export of English wool.
- The only town in the UK whose leopard coat of arms is linked to the Royal Arms of England.
- In 1847, the world's first high explosives were manufactured in Faversham.

### Did you know?

The town is home to Shepherd Neame, the UK's oldest brewery. The Chart Gunpowder Mills made powder for Nelson at Trafalgar & Wellington at Waterloo. Traces of a ruined Abbey, the resting place of Queen Matilda and King Stephen and the Maison Dieu founded, by Henry III, attest to Faversham's links to Royalty.

📞 01795 534542 🌐 [www.visitfaversham.org](http://www.visitfaversham.org)

## FOLKESTONE



- It is thought that people first settled in Folkestone 70,000 years ago.
- There is a suggestion that Folkestone comes from Folca's stone, a rock marking the meeting place of local people.
- St Eanswythe, daughter of King Eadbald of Kent, founded the first nunnery on the cliff top at Folkestone in AD 630.
- In 1313, King Edward II granted the Town a Charter of Incorporation, by which it could elect a Mayor, bailiff and 12 jurors. It was at about this time that Folkestone joined the Cinque Ports as a "corporate limb" of Dover.

### Did you know?

Every beauty pageant can be traced back to Folkestone's first pageant in 1908. The Channel Tunnel, built in 1994, is the world's longest marine subway. Leas Lift: only the 3rd lift in England to be built operating by water balance.

📞 01303 213173 🌐 [www.visitfolkestone.co.uk](http://www.visitfolkestone.co.uk)

## HASTINGS



- The original port of Hastings lies deep below today's town centre.
- In 1287 the Great Storm ruined its harbour and the town moved east.
- Today, Hastings Old Town is a charming mix of half-timbered houses, narrow streets and passageways, known locally as 'twittens'.
- Based on the Stade (an old Saxon word for 'landing place') Hastings is home to the largest beach-launched fishing fleet in Europe.
- Two maritime museums located in the Stade area vividly recall old seafaring days and famous local sunken ships.

### Did you know?

Rare basking sharks have been spotted off the Hastings coast. The remains of the Dutch East Indiaman 'Amsterdam', wrecked in 1749 can be seen at low tides (lowest spring tides are best). 18th century smugglers stored contraband goods in hidey holes throughout Hastings Old Town.

📞 01424 451111 🌐 [www.visit1066country.com](http://www.visit1066country.com)

## HYTHE



- Hythe is in south east Kent, where the countryside meets the sea.
- It is on a broad bay of the English Channel, and on a clear day you can see France.
- The town has one of the longest and best high streets in Kent with many specialist shops.
- Its military history dates back to the Roman times and it is still a major training area for the Ministry of Defence.

### Did you know?

Hythe has medieval and Georgian buildings, the Royal Military Canal, winding streets leading up to St. Leonard's church with its collection of ancient skulls, a glorious seafront promenade and the famous Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch railway. Summer visitors can join in with the famous Hythe Venetian fete or the Hythe festival, which run in alternate years.

📞 01303 258594 🌐 [www.hytheguide.co.uk](http://www.hytheguide.co.uk)

## LYDD



- The settlement of Lydd is ancient and by the 8th century there was a manor encompassing the whole area.
- Around 1150 Lydd was established as a limb of the Cinque Ports.
- Because of its rivalry with New Romney, Lydd only gained borough status in 1885, and it became a parish again in 1974.
- The town's museum is open every afternoon throughout the summer.
- From July to September, on Wednesday afternoons there are conducted local history tours around the town.
- The area offers fine beaches and a unique, bracing environment.

### Did you know?

The high explosive lyddite was named after the Town. An early form of sound location was tried here before the invention of radar. Lydd has an airport with direct flights to Le Touquet.

📞 01303 258594 🌐 [www.discoverfolkestone.co.uk](http://www.discoverfolkestone.co.uk)

## MARGATE



- Margate's Old Town Hall is housed in a 17th century building.
- The Turner Contemporary art gallery built in honour of JMW Turner is now open and proving very popular.
- The resort has a golden mile of beach with lots of activities on offer and traditional seaside food to enjoy – fish and chips, cockles and whelks, as well as a wide variety of other fare.
- You can go 'seal watching' off Margate's coast.
- Dreamland has now been re-opened as a Heritage Amusement Park with the oldest scenic railway in the country and the only ride of its kind to be listed with Grade II\*

### Did you know?

Benjamin Beale rolled out the first fully fledged Bathing Machine here in 1750. The Tudor House in King Street is believed to be the oldest of its type, built in 1525.

📞 0870 264 6111 🌐 [www.visitthanet.co.uk](http://www.visitthanet.co.uk)

## NEW ROMNEY



- Capital of the Romney Marsh; also referred to as 'The Fifth Continent'.
- New Romney lost its historic port following the Great Storm of 1287 which changed the course of the River Rother. Mooring rings can still be found on the walls of St. Nicholas Church – over a mile from the current coast.
- A bustling small town; a centre for green tourism.
- Wonderful wildlife and beautiful coastline with views to France.
- The world's smallest railway 'The Romney Hythe and Dymchurch Railway' is based at New Romney.
- There is evidence that William Shakespeare may have visited New Romney in 1609 and 1612 with the King's Players.

### Did you know?

In 1923, 'The Course Doctor' – Alister MacKenzie, co-designer of the USA's famed Augusta National, re-designed Littlestone Golf Course.

📞 01303 258594 🌐 [www.theromneymarsh.net](http://www.theromneymarsh.net)

## RAMSGATE



- The original town of Ramsgate was at St Laurence.
- Today it nestles between two chalk cliffs, with a fine array of Regency buildings and one of the largest marinas on the south coast.
- A lifeboat station was established at Ramsgate as early as 1802.
- The 19th century Clock House has maintained strong maritime connections for nearly 200 years.
- The town has the only 'Royal' harbour in the UK, a title bestowed by King George IV in 1821.

### Did you know?

Princess Victoria (later Queen Victoria) spent summer holidays in Ramsgate. The lantern on St. George the Martyr Church acted as a navigational aid for shipping. Augustine, the 1st Archbishop of Canterbury, who brought Christianity to Britain, landed at Ramsgate in AD596.

📞 01843 598 750 🌐 [www.ramsgatetown.org.uk](http://www.ramsgatetown.org.uk)

## RYE



- Rye was reclaimed from the Abbey of Fécamp, Normandy by Henry III in 1247 when a castle (now Rye Museum) was built to defend the town.
- Until recently Rye was surrounded on three sides by the sea. Today, it retains a busy fishing fleet and pleasure craft moorings in the town itself at Strand Quay.
- Fine views of the town and Romney Marsh may be had from the tower of St Mary's Church.
- The Rye Heritage Centre contains the Rye Town Model Sound and Light Show and old pier amusement machines.

### Did you know?

John Ryan, the creator of Captain Pugwash lived in Rye. The Town Hall attic houses a gibbet cage containing the remains of John Breeds, an aggrieved local butcher who attempted to murder the Mayor in 1742. The author EF Benson's Mapp and Lucia series is based on Rye.

📞 01797 226696 🌐 [www.visitrye.co.uk](http://www.visitrye.co.uk)

## SANDWICH



- The complete town is a conservation area and a maze of ancient streets, alleyways and attractive old buildings.
- There are four historic churches; St Clement's, St Peter's, St Mary's and a 17th century United Reformed Church.
- Strand Street has what is considered to be the longest continuous stretch of timber-framed buildings in the country.
- The walls surrounding the medieval town make a pleasant walk.
- A museum reflecting the history of the town is incorporated within the Elizabethan Guildhall; guided tours are available.

### Did you know?

Thomas Paine, the remarkable political writer and radical thinker of the 18th century, came to Sandwich in 1759 and opened a shop in New Street. Celery was first grown in Sandwich. The sandwich was invented by John Montagu, the 4th Earl of Sandwich in 1762.

📞 01304 613565 🌐 [www.sandwichtowncouncil.gov.uk](http://www.sandwichtowncouncil.gov.uk)

## TENTERDEN



- Tenterden joined the Cinque Ports Confederation as a "limb" of Rye in 1449, supplying ships and men against French raiders.
- Today, Tenterden, the 'Jewel of the Weald', is an attractive market town with independent shops, cosy cafes, a beautiful tree-lined high street and an abundance of historic buildings.
- The Kent & East Sussex Railway takes visitors on a nostalgic steam ride through un-spoilt countryside.
- A vineyard and brewery trail with tours and tastings showcases Tenterden's world class offer.
- The town's compelling history is revealed at Tenterden Museum with hopping, brewing and the Cinque Ports as highlights.

### Did you know?

St. Mildred's Church served as a beacon for ships and remains a beautiful landmark for miles around.

📞 01233 330316 🌐 [www.tenterdentown.co.uk](http://www.tenterdentown.co.uk)

## WINCHELSEA



- Old Winchelsea was built on a shingle spit in the English Channel and inundated by the sea after the Great Storm of 1287.
- By 1300 Edward I had rebuilt the town on a hill, using a grid system to provide housing for around 6,000 inhabitants. Only 220 people live here now.
- He also built two hospitals, a monastery, a half-mile-long harbour (now 2 metres below ground level), 12ft high defensive walls, three town gates and a cathedral-like church. Only the beautiful chancel is left.
- There is a Grade I listed Court Hall and Museum. The Museum is open from May to the end of September.

### Did you know?

There are 34 early medieval wine cellars open and approximately 30 more are known in the surrounding fields. To book a cellar tour please email [cellars@winchelsea.com](mailto:cellars@winchelsea.com) or ring 07596 182874.

🌐 [www.winchelsea.com](http://www.winchelsea.com)





# How it is... The coastline today



## How to get here... it's easy

**By train:** Less than 1½ hours from London, with train stations at most of the towns. Please note: The nearest station for Hythe is Sandling.

**By road:** There are good road links with a number of major motorways and A roads into and around the area.

For more details when planning your journey visit [www.nationalrail.co.uk](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk) or [www.theaa.co.uk](http://www.theaa.co.uk)



## Discover the area...

Whether you enjoy walking, cycling, water sports or just strolling on the beach, there is something for everyone. Within the Cinque Ports you'll find large expanses of outstanding natural beauty, plenty of adventure and many tranquil locations.

### Cycle through the Cinque Port towns and explore...

**Romney Marsh** - various routes to enjoy including:

**Folkestone to Rye**, 32 miles (52km) - see unique Marsh wildlife and learn about local Marsh legends.

**Sheep ahoy, Romney Marsh**, 13miles (20km) - travel around Romney Marsh and discover churches, inns and the famous Romney lamb.

**Chalk and Channel Way**, 8 miles (13km) - lies within the Dover/ Folkestone Heritage Coast and is a designated area of national importance for its unspoilt natural beauty.

**Viking Coastal Trail**, 27 miles (43km) - linking Margate and Ramsgate, by way of chalk cliffs and historic villages.

**Cinque Ports Circuit**, total circuit approx 150 miles (241km) – circular route connecting all the 14 historic towns taking you through the beautiful surrounding countryside, wherever possible following designated cycle routes and avoiding major roads.

## Walk through the beautiful countryside...

**Royal Military Canal Path**, 28 miles (45km) - begins near Folkestone, passes through Hythe and Rye to Cliff End, near Hastings and is a haven of wildlife and plants.

**The Saxon Shore Way**, 160 miles (257km) running from Gravesend to Hastings, including Faversham, Deal, Dover, Rye and Hastings. Tracing the coast as it was in Roman times and offering 'some of the finest coastal walking'.

**North Downs Way**, from Farnham, Surrey to Dover. Follows the crest of the North Downs ridge across Kent and goes through Folkestone before ending near the famous White Cliffs at Dover. Dramatic chalk hills dotted with ancient beech woodlands, carpeted with grassland rich in wild flowers and native orchids, offering panoramic views.

**1066 Country Walk**, 31 miles (50km) following William the Conqueror's footsteps from Pevensey to Rye via Battle and Winchelsea and joining the Saxon Shore Way with the South Downs Way including links to Hastings and Bexhill.

## Nature Reserves...

Witness all kinds of wildlife in its original habitat by visiting the many and varied nature reserves including: **RSPB at Dungeness, Rye Harbour, Pett Pools, Sandwich & Pegwell Bay, Gazeen Salts** and the **Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory**.





These are just a sample of activities in the area, there is so much more to enjoy, and with an abundance of events you will see why a day or two is not enough time to spend in this beautiful part of the South East.

## Take to the High Seas...

Sail at Rye Harbour, Dover, Sandwich, Hythe and Ramsgate. Visit the annual regattas at Dover and Ramsgate or invigorate yourself with extreme water sports at Rye Harbour or Dover. Take a dip from the blue flag beaches at Margate, Ramsgate and Dover officially recognised for safety and accessibility, plus Hastings beach, which has also received a prestigious award from the Environment Agency for its cleanliness.

Check out Camber Sands, a very popular sandy beach, with picturesque dunes and interesting wildlife, and frequently used for filming.



## Discover Smugglers' haunts...

and re-live the fascinating story of the notorious Kent and Sussex smugglers.

Smuggling, or 'owling' as it was originally termed, developed around the year 1300 after customs duty was introduced on the export of wool. Fleeces were smuggled to weavers on the Continent and the famous Romney Marsh sheep provided high profits. During the 18th and 19th centuries high taxes led to a dramatic increase in illegal imports and this stretch of coastline was ideally placed as a drop off point for contraband.

Many of the area's secluded spots are steeped in the intrigue and violence of the smugglers' activities, from the Marsh's isolated churches (Snargate Church is believed to have been used to hide smuggled goods) to Rye's Mermaid Inn (where the infamous Hawkhurst Gang would sit and drink with loaded pistols on the table) and Hastings' All Saints graveyard (reputedly haunted by the ghost of a young priest who was hanged on the beach for helping local smugglers). Deal was renowned for building 'Guinea boats' - large, fast rowing boats used for smuggling contraband across the English Channel and capable of outpacing the customs cutters.

Whether you're looking for a major seafront hotel, a boutique B&B, a country house or a self-catering fisherman's cottage, we have every kind of accommodation at highly competitive prices.

Visit the following websites for more details and ideas

[www.visitkent.co.uk](http://www.visitkent.co.uk)

[www.visit1066country.com](http://www.visit1066country.com)

# Tourist Information Centres

## Deal

Deal Town Hall  
High Street  
Deal CT14 6TR  
01304 369576  
info@deal.gov.uk  
www.whitecliffscountry.org.uk

## Dover

Visitor Centre  
Market Square  
Dover CT16 1PB  
01304 205108  
tic@doveruk.com  
www.whitecliffscountry.org.uk

## Faversham

10-13 Preston Street  
Faversham ME13 8NS  
01795 534542  
ticfaversham@btinternet.com  
www.faversham.org

## Folkestone

The Town Hall  
1-2 Guildhall Street  
Folkestone CT20 1DY  
01303 213173  
tourism@folkestone-tc.gov.uk  
www.visitfolkestone.co.uk

## Hastings

Tourist Information Centre  
Aquila House  
Breeds Place  
Hastings TN34 3UY  
01424 451111  
hic@hastings.gov.uk  
www.visit1066country.com

## Hythe

Visitor Centre  
Hythe Railway Station  
Scanlons Bridge Road  
Hythe CT21 6LD  
01303 266421

## Margate

12-13 The Parade  
Margate CT9 1EY  
(Closed Sun & Mon)  
08702 646 111  
visitorinformation@thanet.gov.uk  
www.visitthanet.co.uk

## New Romney

Visitor Centre, Romney,  
Hythe & Dymchurch Railway,  
New Romney Station,  
New Romney TN28 8PL  
01797 363353

## Ramsgate

Custom House, Harbour  
Parade  
Ramsgate CT11 8LP  
01843 598 750  
visitorinformation@thanet.gov.uk  
www.ramsgatetown.org.uk

## Rye

The Old Sail Loft, Strand Quay  
Rye TN31 7AY  
01797 226696  
ryeheritage@btconnect.com  
www.ryeheritage.co.uk

## Sandwich

Guildhall, Sandwich CT13 9AH  
(Open April to Oct)  
01304 613565  
tourism@sandwich  
towncouncil.gov.uk  
www.sandwichtown  
council.gov.uk

## Tenterden

Tenterden Gateway,  
2 Manor Row, High Street,  
Tenterden TN30 6HP  
01580 762558  
tenttic@ashford.gov.uk  
www.ashford.gov.uk  
www.tenterdentown.co.uk

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Country



# VISIT

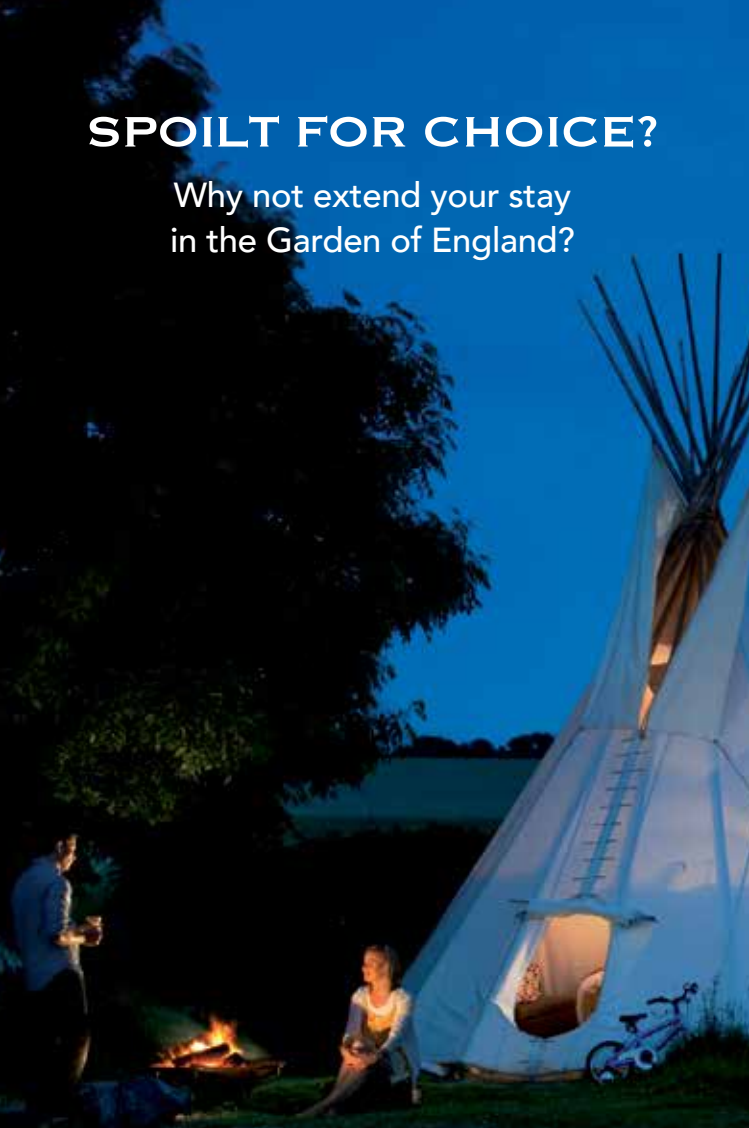
## HASTINGS & 1066 COUNTRY

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