

LONDON ESCAPES



Over 70
Captivating
Day Trips
from London

David Hampshire

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City Books • Bath • England

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The Author

David Hampshire's career has taken him around the world and he lived and worked in many countries before taking up writing full-time. He's the author, co-author or editor of over 30 titles, including *London's Secret Places*, *London's Secrets: Museums & Galleries*, *London's Secrets: Parks & Gardens*, *London's Green Walks*, *London's Village Walks*, *London's Monumental Walks* and *Peaceful London*. David was born in Surrey and lived and worked in London for many years and still considers himself a Londoner. Nowadays he divides his time between London and Dorchester (Dorset).

The Publisher

City Books is an imprint of Survival Books, which was established in 1987 and by the mid-1990s was the leading publisher of books for expats and migrants planning to live, work, buy property or retire abroad. In 2000, we published the first of our London books, *Living and Working in London*, and since then have published over 20 additional London titles, including a series of city walking guides. We now specialise in alternative London guidebooks for both residents and visitors. See our websites for our latest titles.

Readers' Guide

- ◆ **Contact details:** These include the address, postcode and website. You can enter the postcode to display a map of the location on Google and other map sites or, if you're driving, enter the postcode on your satnav.
- ◆ **Rail:** Train times are from the Trainline website (thetrainline.com) and may vary depending on the time of day and day of the week. Most venues are served by direct trains – when a change is necessary it's indicated – but may involve a further bus or taxi journey or a 'short' walk.
- ◆ **Road:** Approximate travel times by road from central London are taken from the AA Route Planner (theaa.com/route-planner/index.jsp) and vary considerably depending on traffic and weather conditions. Note that parking is difficult (and expensive) in some towns and cities and not all venues provide free parking.
- ◆ **Opening Times:** These may vary depending on the time of year, particularly during public holiday periods, and the day of the week. Some venues are open only in spring/summer. Check websites for current times.
- ◆ **Fees:** Where applicable, entrance fees (2019) for an adult/child (under 5s are usually free) are shown and don't include extras such as Gift Aid. Some venues offer concessions for families, students and pensioners. You may receive a reduction if you book online – and can also avoid ticket queues – and/or travel by public transport (tickets must be produced). When entry to a venue is free, it's indicated.
- ◆ **Nearby:** Interesting places nearby are listed – those featured in this book are shown in **bold**.
- ◆ **Food & Drink:** Recommended cafés, pubs and restaurants are included for all venues. Telephone numbers are listed where bookings are advisable or necessary, otherwise booking isn't usually required or even possible. A rough price guide is included – £ = inexpensive, ££ = moderate – most places fall into the inexpensive category.

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Disabled Access

Many historic public and private buildings don't provide wheelchair access or provide wheelchair access to the ground floor only. Wheelchairs are provided at some venues (although users may need assistance) and you may also be able to hire a mobility 'scooter'. Most museums, galleries and public buildings have a WC, although it may not be wheelchair accessible. Contact venues directly if you have specific requirements. The Disabled Go website (disabledgo.com) provides more in-depth access information for some destinations.



King's College Chapel, Cambridge (see page 17)

Introduction

Samuel Johnson famously observed that ‘when a man is tired of London, he is tired of life’ and no one would deny that the city is an exciting and stimulating place to live and visit, offering a wealth of diversions. However, even old Sam would no doubt agree that sometimes you need a change of scenery – to escape the city’s constant hustle and bustle and visit somewhere quieter with a gentler, slower pace of life. London is also the perfect base for visitors wishing to explore southeast England’s numerous attractions.

When you yearn for some bracing sea air or wish to commune with nature, experience life in an idyllic village or imagine you’re lord of the manor, get up close and personal with some exotic wildlife or treat the kids to an exhilarating day out, *London Escapes* will point you in the right direction. It contains over 70 great day trips – from historical towns and charming villages to magnificent stately homes and gardens, nostalgic seaside resorts and lovely beaches to spectacular parks and nature reserves – with something to suit every taste.

A plethora of tour operators offer coach trips to major attractions from London – including many of the destinations featured in this book – or you can travel by private car. However, we believe in letting the ‘train take the strain’, which is the most relaxing and often the fastest way to travel (strikes excepted!). All the places highlighted can be reached in under two hours by train (or car) and many in under an hour – usually by direct trains. Travelling by car generally takes longer and you also have the problem and added expense of parking. However, some destinations, particularly those without a direct rail link from London, are easier to reach by car (and one – Woburn Safari Park – is accessible only by car), which also allows you to tour an area and visit nearby attractions at the same time.

A good day out deserves a good lunch and *London Escapes* contains recommendations – historic pubs, relaxing restaurants and cosy cafés – where you can be assured of a tasty meal. Many venues – such as stately homes, gardens and theme parks – have on-site cafés/restaurants and provide dedicated picnic areas.

So, why not escape the city for a day and explore the exciting world of adventures on London’s doorstep? We trust you’ll enjoy discovering them as much as we did.

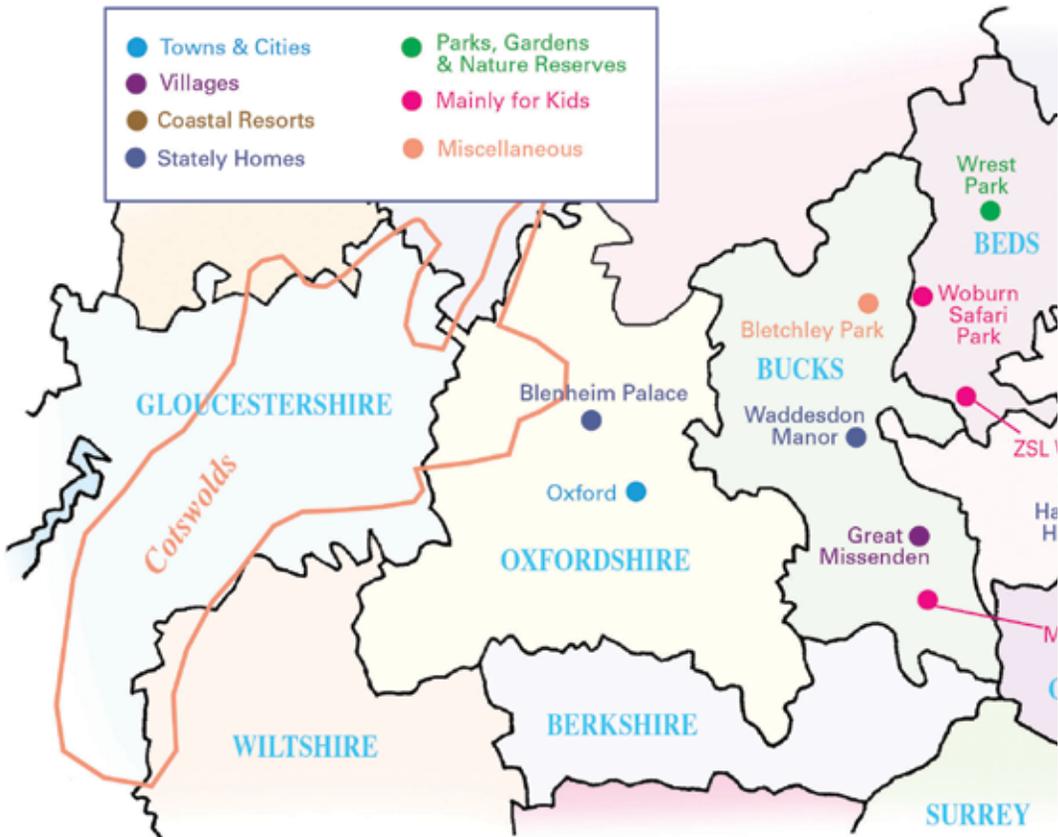
David Hampshire
July 2019



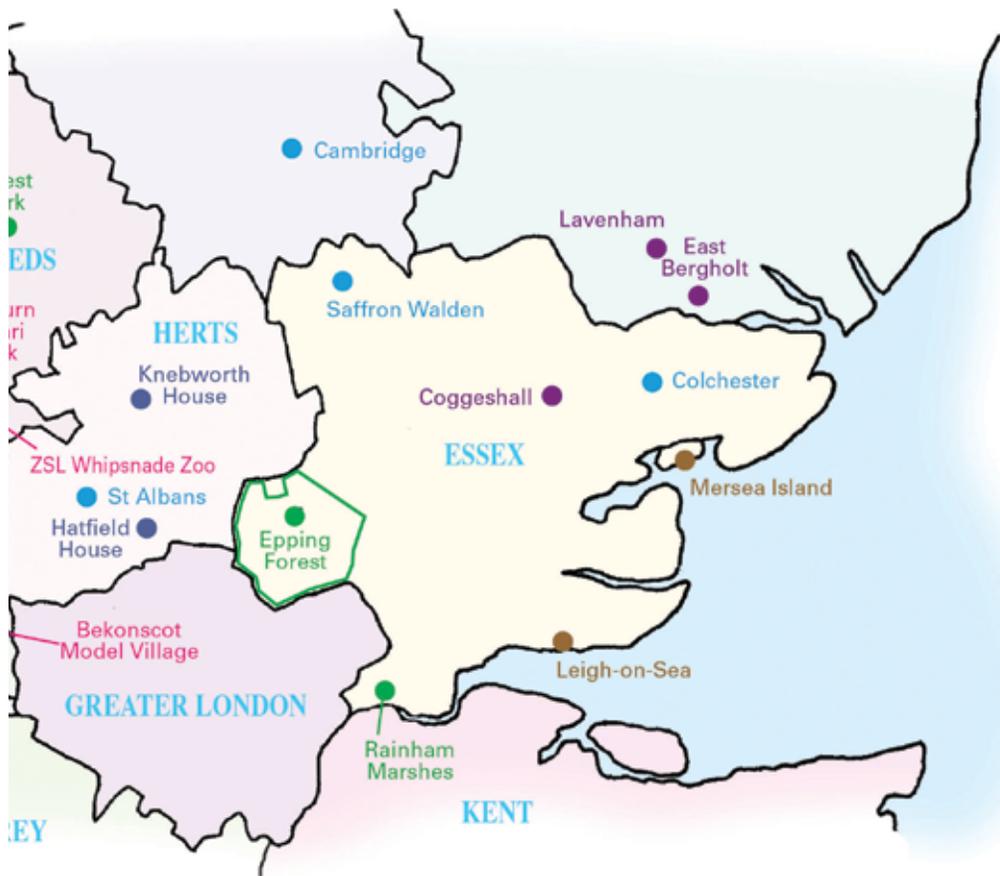
South of London



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| ● Villages | ● Mainly for Kids |
| ● Coastal Resorts | ● Miscellaneous |
| ● Stately Homes | |



North of London





Salisbury Cathedral, Wiltshire (see page 47)

1. Towns & Cities

Scores of cities and towns are accessible from London for day trips. We have chosen fourteen of the most interesting and rewarding, which are less than 90 minutes by train (usually more by car). These include the beautiful UNESCO World Heritage city of Bath; the historic university cities of Cambridge and Oxford; the ancient cathedral cities of Canterbury, St Albans and Winchester; plus less well-known (but no less interesting) small towns which include Faversham, Saffron Walden and Rye.

Before setting out it's worth doing some research to decide what you most want to see (useful websites are listed), as it's often impossible to see everything on a day trip, particularly when visiting the larger cities. Nearby places of interest that can be visited on a day trip are also shown.

Bath



Address: Bath BA1 5AW (visitbath.co.uk)

Rail: from 1h 30min via Paddington station

Road: 2h 20min (115mi) via M4

Nearby: Bradford-on-Avon, Castle Combe, Cotswolds, Dyrham Park

Set in the rolling countryside of the River Avon valley, beautiful Bath – the only city in the UK that’s designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site (since 1987) – is located in Somerset, 115 miles west of London and 11 miles southeast of Bristol. Famous for its natural hot springs and ravishing Georgian architecture – built from local honey-coloured Bath stone – a stroll around Bath is a journey through centuries of architectural delights. These include splendid 16th-century **Bath Abbey** (fee), noted for its fan-vaulting, tower (which you can climb) and striking stained-glass windows; the majestic **Royal Crescent** and inspired **Circus**; along with a wealth of gorgeous streets and buildings. Don’t miss the



Assembly Rooms (free), the social hub of Georgian Bath, or the chance to stroll along Great Pulteney Street and across **Pulteney Bridge**, inspired by Florence’s Ponte Vecchio and one of only four bridges in the world lined with shops.



Pulteney Bridge

Built for pleasure and relaxation – it was the centre of fashionable life in England during the 18th century – Bath has been a spa destination since Roman times. The waters remain a big draw, both the ancient **Roman Baths** (*Aquae Sulis*) and the modern **Thermae Bath Spa** (see box), the only natural thermal hot springs in Britain where you can still wallow in the waters. Restored in 2011, the Roman-era baths are now a museum (fee) and include the Great Bath, Roman statues and a temple, comprising one of the finest historic sites in Northern Europe. The city’s unique thermal springs rise here and the Baths still flow with natural hot water, while interactive exhibits and computer-generated reconstructions illustrate their importance to our Roman ancestors.

Bath has a wide choice of museums and galleries, and enjoys year-round festivals, theatre, music and sports. If it’s culture you’re after, there’s an abundance of choice, including the impressive **Holburne Museum**

Roman Baths

(home to the fascinating collection of Sir William Holburne); the **Fashion Museum** (fee) at the Bath Assembly Rooms; the museum of Georgian life at **No 1 Royal Crescent** (fee); classic and contemporary art at the splendid **Victorian Art Gallery** (free); Bath's **Old Theatre Royal**, opened in 1750, home to the excellent **Masonic Museum** (fee); and the **Jane Austen Centre** (fee), which celebrates one of Britain's favourite authors, who lived in Bath 1801-06. A short way out of town is the **American Museum** (fee), set within 125 acres of beautiful grounds, home to the finest collection of Americana outside the United



Thermae Bath Spa



Although you can no longer take the waters at the Roman Baths, you can enjoy the same natural hot spring water at the award-winning Thermae Bath Spa, which brings the spa into the 21st century, with luxurious treatments and a rooftop pool offering panoramic views over the city (thermaebathspa.com).

States. Bath also offers an abundance of commercial art galleries and antiques shops.

If you wish to stretch your legs, Bath has some beautiful parks and gardens, including the expansive **Royal Victoria Park** (57 acres) and **Botanical Gardens**, the bijou riverside **Parade Gardens** (fee), charming **Henrietta Park** and delightful **Sydney Gardens** straddling the Kennet & Avon Canal. A short walk from the centre, **Alexandra Park** offers spectacular views



Royal Crescent

over the city, while a bit further away is magnificent **Prior Park** (National Trust, fee), an 18th-century landscape garden created by Bath entrepreneur Ralph Allen (1693-1764).



Holburne Museum

When you need a break from sight-seeing, the city is overflowing with places to eat and drink, and also offers some of the best independent shops and boutiques in the UK, along with the indoor Guildhall Market, a weekly farmers' market, and regular antiques fairs and markets.

If you're tempted to remain

longer you'll find a profusion of excellent hotels, fine dining and no less than five theatres. The annual programme of festivals includes the Bath Festival (music and literature) in May and the Jane Austen Festival in September.

Bath Panorama



Food & Drink



- **Circus Restaurant:** Located on Brock Street between the Circus and Royal Crescent, the award-winning Circus Restaurant serves modern British cuisine and is an excellent choice for a tasty lunch (01225-466020, lunch noon-2.30pm, 2pm Sat, closed Sun, £-££).
- **Sotto Sotto:** Popular Italian restaurant and bar located in atmospheric, 18th-century barrel vaults just south of Parade Gardens, Sotto offers classic Italian cuisine (01225-330236, noon-2pm, 5-10pm, £).
- **Pump Room Restaurant:** An elegant restaurant housed in the splendid Georgian Pump Room on Stall Street, one of the city's most historic lunch venues and a perfect setting for afternoon tea (01225-444477, lunch noon-2pm, afternoon tea noon-4.30pm, ££).

Cambridge



Address: Cambridge CB1 0AP (visitcambridge.org)

Rail: from 48min via King's Cross, St Pancras and Liverpool Street stations

Road: 1h 40min (65mi) via M11

Nearby: Bury St Edmunds, Ely, Newmarket, Saffron Walden

The county town of Cambridgeshire, Cambridge lies on the River Cam 65 miles north of London, just south of the low-lying coastal wetland known as the Fens. An important trading centre during the Roman and Viking periods, the first town charters were granted in the 12th century, although modern city status wasn't officially conferred until 1951. Quintessentially English (possibly the most English of all English cities), with its rich history, charming streets, stunning architecture, bucolic riverside walks, lovely open parkland, handsome pubs and much more, Cambridge is difficult to beat for a day trip from London.



River Cam at Jesus Green



The city is synonymous with its world-class university (cam.ac.uk) founded in 1209, although the oldest existing college, Peterhouse, wasn't established until 1284. It has much in common with Oxford University (see page 34) – from ancient colleges to a shared affection for the flat-bottomed pleasure boats known as punts – but has more green space, less traffic and is much prettier than its academic rival.

A tour of the majestic university colleges is a must and the highlight of any visit. There are 31 colleges – founded between the 13th and 20th centuries – each with its own separate grounds and gardens, student



Bridge of Sighs, St John's College

King's College

St Mary the Great



housing, chapels, dining halls and classrooms. A visit to any college is worthwhile, but the most popular include King's College (and its magnificent chapel), Trinity College (home of Sir Christopher Wren's Library), Peterhouse, St John's – famous for its romantic Bridge of Sighs – and Queen's College. The latter features the wooden Mathematical Bridge, so called because it was built without nails, relying for its strength on meticulous calculation (although today's version is a 1902 reconstruction).

Cambridge also has a treasure trove of beautiful medieval churches, which include the **Church of St Mary the Great**, aka Great St Mary's or GSM, at the

north end of King's Parade. Built in the 15th century – a parish church and the university church of Cambridge University – it has a fine interior and a tower dating from 1608. Also of note is **Little St Mary's Church** (St Mary the Less, 1352), which is noted for its beautiful stained-glass windows, and the **Round Church** (aka the Church of the Holy Sepulchre), built around 1130 and one of only four Norman round churches in England. Other historic churches worth a visit include St Bene't's (c 1020) – the oldest building in Cambridge – St Clement's (1225) and St Botolph's (c 1350).



Kettle's Yard

Cambridge offers something for everyone when it comes to culture and entertainment, including a variety of museums and galleries, an exciting theatre and performance scene encompassing drama, dance and family entertainment, and a wide range of music from

College Visitor Information & Fees

For college opening times and fees (if applicable), see cambridge-news.co.uk/news/cambridge-news/cambridge-university-colleges-free-visit-13810784.



Fitzwilliam Museum

Botanical Garden

pop to classical, jazz to rap, not forgetting the sublime choir of King's College Chapel.

The city's many museums – eight cultural and scientific museums are operated by Cambridge University alone – include the splendid **Fitzwilliam Museum** (free), whose world-class collections of art and antiquities span centuries and include masterpieces by Titian, Modigliani and Picasso, along with ancient artefacts from Egypt, Greece and Rome. Another must-see collection is **Kettle's Yard** (free), the former home of one-time Tate curator Jim Ede, housing a major collection of 20th-century and contemporary art, including works by Ben Nicholson, Barbara Hepworth, Henry Moore, Joan Miró and Constantin Brancusi.

When you've had your fill of academia, a punting trip along the River Cam is a splendid way to see the city on a summer's day, perhaps culminating in a picnic alongside the Backs, the meadows bordering the willow-shaded Cam.

Other museums include the Museum of Cambridge, the Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology, the Museum of Classical Archaeology, the Sedgwick Museum of Earth Sciences, the Polar Museum, the University Museum of Zoology, the Whipple Museum



of the History of Science, the Cambridge Museum of Technology, and the Centre for Computing History.

If you fancy a walk (or bike ride) after all that culture, Cambridge offers an abundance of green spaces, including magnificent riverside parks, tranquil water meadows and ravishing gardens. The natural fen landscape flows gently through the city centre along the **River Cam**, with cows grazing within sight of glorious **King's College Chapel**, and the beautifully manicured college grounds, fellows' gardens and the university's lovely **Botanic Garden** (fee) dating from 1831. The city's public parks and commons are a paradise for children and include **Jesus Green** (close to Jesus College), where the river laps its northern edge and an avenue of London plane trees provides a leafy canopy, while adjoining



Christ's Pieces

Punts on River Cam