



SUMMER IN CAMBRIDGE

The Bridge of Sighs.

With the students on their holidays, Susie Boulton finds Cambridge and the surrounding area is packed with culture, and things to see and do.



The historic St John's College.



Oliver Cromwell's House in Ely.



The iconic Trinity College.

FEW cities can equal the culture of Cambridge. The ancient university town has 31 colleges and more museums and art collections within a square mile than any other UK city outside London.

But it is also a market town, shopping centre and the hub of a high-tech revolution. With a rejuvenated hotel scene and lively new restaurants too, the city is ideal for a short break – and a visit can also be combined with the nearby cultural highlights of East Anglia.

THE COLLEGES

While a dreamy way to see Cambridge's historic university colleges is to take a punt along the River Cam, beside the glorious lawns, gardens and tree-lined avenues known as the Backs, by far the best method is on foot.

But be sure to obey the college rules at all times: no cycles, dogs, radios or picnics and, as you will be constantly reminded, no walking on the grass!

The starting point for all walks in Cambridge is King's College (www.kings.cam.ac.uk), founded by Henry VI in 1441, when he was only 20 years old.

Resolute that King's College Chapel should be unrivalled in size and splendour, the King himself laid the foundation stone of what was to become one of the greatest Gothic monuments in the world, and the showpiece of his grand project for the university.

But Henry was murdered in the Tower of London in 1471, and would never see the building's completion, which took another 90 years and four

more kings. The crowning glory is the fan vault. The largest in the world, it is seemingly only supported by the slender columns of the nave.

The chapel is full of finely crafted heraldic carvings, reflecting the changes in style throughout the five reigns. Henry VIII funded the exquisite stained-glass windows, which depict biblical scenes. Behind the altar, visitors will see Rubens' Adoration of the Magi, donated to the college in 1961.

Following an ancient tradition, the college's "choral scholars" and boy choristers sing daily during university term time (visitors are welcome), and the famous Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols is broadcast to millions around the world on Christmas Eve.

Turn left out of the main entrance of King's College, passing the Senate

House, where graduation ceremonies take place, and you are unlikely to miss the Great Gate of Trinity College (www.trin.cam.ac.uk), the largest and richest of Cambridge colleges.

Trinity College was founded by Henry VIII in 1546, and his statue features on the Great Gate. The apple tree to the right of the Gate is descended from the famous tree whose apple dropped on Isaac Newton's head and inspired the theory of gravity.

He was not the establishment's only famous student. The college has produced more than 30 Nobel laureates, six British prime ministers, two kings, five spies and numerous poets, writers, philosophers and scientists.

The vast Trinity Great Court, overlooked by the Chapel and the Master's Lodge, is famous for the Great Court Run around its perimeter. The race takes place only while the clock strikes 12, meaning participants must cover a distance of 401 yards in 43 seconds. The feat was recreated in the 1981 film *Chariots of Fire* by Ben Cross and Nigel Havers, which was in fact filmed at Eton, not Trinity.

For a break from hallowed quads, cross the road for sustenance at the art deco restaurant, The Ivy, now one of a group of dining rooms which began with the opening of the homonymous London restaurant in 1917.

Then there is St John's College (www.joh.cam.ac.uk), founded in 1511, after work was begun at the behest of Lady Margaret Beaufort.

Follow the red signs for the visitors' route – via the Neo-Gothic Chapel, the beautiful Tudor brick Second Court, and Kitchen Bridge, which



Jim Ede at home in Kettle's Yard.



The Fitzwilliam Museum is full of treasures.



The Round Church, Cambridge.



Visitors relax outside The Orchard tearoom.

> enjoys views over the Bridge of Sighs, modelled on its Venetian namesake.

New Court, known as The Wedding Cake, overlooks the immaculate lawns of the Backs.

Turn left out of the main gate and cross Bridge Street for the 12th-century Church of the Holy Sepulchre, familiarly known as The Round Church. It is one of only four surviving Norman round churches in England.

Heading towards the centre of town, you will pass Sidney Sussex College. The skull of Oliver Cromwell is buried in a wall of the chapel here.

At the main junction, turn right for Market Square, where stalls have been trading since the Middle Ages. South of the square, take Peas Hill and turn right into Bene't Street.

The Saxon tower of St Bene't's Church is the city's oldest architectural feature, believed to have been built around the year 1020, during the reign of King Canute.

Opposite the church, The Eagle is the famous pub where Watson and Crick announced to the world that they had discovered DNA, "the secret of life", in 1953. It's a cosy spot for a glass of DNA ale – and perhaps a pub lunch.

THE MUSEUMS

Cambridge has an outstanding collection of museums. The Fitzwilliam Museum (www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk) is one of the

great treasure houses of Britain, and is worth a visit to Cambridge on its own.

It houses an outstanding collection of paintings, drawings and prints from the early Italian School to the present day, alongside rare manuscripts and antiquities from Ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome.

Kettle's Yard (www.kettlesyard.co.uk) is a fascinating and quirky museum in four cottages, restored and made into a home in the 1950s by the former Tate Gallery curator Jim Ede, who filled this haven of peace and tranquillity with early 20th-century masterpieces.

Among the university museums, the Museum of Zoology (www.museum.zoo.cam.ac.uk) reopened in 2018 after a £4.3m revamp, and is now one of the city's major attractions.

THE HOTELS

University Arms Hotel, Regent Street, CB2 1AD; Tel: 01223 606066; www.universityarms.com

The oldest hotel in Cambridge is now the most glamorous, having undergone an £80 million facelift.

The vibe is British, and guest rooms combine college themes with contemporary comfort. The art-deco bar and Parker's Tavern are creating a real buzz in the city.

The Varsity Hotel & Spa; 24 Thompson's Lane, CB5 8AQ; Tel: 01223 306030; www.thevarsityhotel.co.uk

A stylish boutique hotel in a pretty residential quarter, close to the main colleges and river. It feels small but offers a panoramic roof-top bar and brasserie, a beautiful spa and a gym.

**Hotel du Vin
15-19 Trumpington Street,
CB2 1QA; Tel: 01223 928991;
www.hotelduvin.com/locations/cambridge/**

Opposite the Fitzwilliam Museum, this boutique hotel has comfortable, classic rooms and stylish bathrooms.

The hub is the Bistro du Vin, serving simple but flavoursome French and British classics.

THE RESTAURANTS

**The Ivy Cambridge Brasserie,
16 Trinity Street, CB2 1TB;
Tel: 01223 344044;
www.theivycambridgebrasserie.com**

This elegant art-deco brasserie opened in 2018 and offers all-day dining.

Think British classics such as fish and chips and shepherd's pie, along with vegetarian and vegan dishes.

**Midsummer House, Midsummer Common, CB4 1HA;
Tel: 01223 369299;
www.midsummerhouse.co.uk**
Daniel Clifford's riverside restaurant has long been the gastronomic hotspot of Cambridge.

The seriously sophisticated British cuisine found here has earned two Michelin stars.

**The Pint Shop, 10 Peas Hill, CB2 3PN; Tel: 01223 352293;
www.pintshop.co.uk**

This pub and restaurant in the city centre has become a hit for its beers, no-frills menu and great bar snacks.

Food focuses on charcoal-grilled steaks, kebabs and burgers, with a couple of fish and vegetarian options.

Fitzbillies, 51-52 Trumpington Street, CB2 1RG; Tel: 01223 352500; www.fitzbillies.com

Famous Fitzbillies has a reputation for wickedly sticky Chelsea buns, which have been fuelling students and dons for 99 years. It also serves a full brunch and light lunches.

GRANTCHESTER

The pretty village of Grantchester, less than three miles from Cambridge, is best reached on foot alongside the river or by punt.

As well as four pubs, there is the Orchard tearoom, where customers can relax in deckchairs under the apple trees.

This was a favourite haunt of poet Rupert Brooke and friends, including philosopher Bertrand Russell, writers E.M. Forster and Virginia Woolf, and the artist, Augustus John.

The last lines of Brooke's eulogy, The Old Vicarage, Grantchester (1912), immortalised the town:

Stands the Church clock at ten to three?

And is there honey still for tea?

THE SURROUNDING AREA

NEWMARKET

Horse racing at Newmarket dates all the way back to 1174, and Charles I inaugurated the first cup race in 1634. Today it is the most fashionable racecourse in the country.

Nearly 3,000 horses are trained here. You can watch the racehorses training on The Gallops on the east side of town most weekday mornings. For information on races, or for tickets, visit www.thejockeyclub.co.uk.

Coming from Cambridge, the A1303 to Newmarket will bring you in on the side of town with the National Stud – which offers guided tours only – and the two magnificent race courses: the Rowley Mile and the July Race Course. You don't have to be a horse lover to enjoy the National Heritage Centre for Horseracing & Sporting Art (www.palacehousenewmarket.co.uk), which opened in 2016 in the centre of town. The redeveloped five-acre site is a wonderful showcase of the history, science and art of "the sport of kings".

Visit the National Horseracing Museum, full of fascinating equine interactive exhibits; the Galleries of British Sporting Art, with its equestrian masterpieces; and the Rothschild Yard, where you will meet former racehorses and see how they are retrained.

Your visit will not be complete without a ride on the racehorse simulator in the King's Yard Galleries!

WICKEN FEN

Follow the A142 to Ely, then detour west on to the A1123 for an optional visit to Wicken Fen (www.nationaltrust.org.uk/wickenfen).

This is one of the few remaining areas of undrained fenland – a lost landscape of meadows, sedge and reed beds inhabited by rare species of plants, birds and dragonflies.

ELY

Formerly an island amid marshland teeming with eels, Ely today is a prosperous little town dominated by its cathedral. St Etheldreda selected this site for a Benedictine monastery in AD 673. After it was destroyed by invading Danes, a new monastery rose from the ruins in 1083, not long after Hereward the Wake famously used the treacherous marshland as a refuge when being pursued by William the Conqueror.

The sheer size of Ely Cathedral takes your breath away. The nave is the fourth longest in the UK, and leads you to the cathedral's crowning glory: the timber octagon, supported by eight columns and crowned by the seemingly weightless lantern tower. Other highlights include the Stained Glass Museum and the Lady Chapel.

Ely's most famous resident is Oliver Cromwell, who lived here for 10 years. His house near the cathedral has been restored as a simple museum, devoted to family life and his military career.

EXPLORE MORE OF ENGLAND...

Explore England is back for 2019. Our comprehensive guide to the country's top attractions features stately homes and castles, wildlife havens, museums, steam railways and gardens. We're on the trail of Arthur Conan Doyle in Sussex, riding the Victorian funicular railway in Scarborough, walking the Yorkshire Wolds way, finding England's pyramids and checking out horse sculptures in Newmarket. There's also so much more besides. It's available from the This England shop, see page 90.

