

Dartford

Originally a Roman settlement, Dartford is an old market town with a rich industrial heritage. The Borough has been revitalized since the arrival of Bluewater Shopping Centre. The regions green belt boasts wild marshlands and green country parks that form part of the Garden of England!



Facts about Dartford

Did you know...??

Dartford has a bright future ahead with many new developments currently being undertaken. The town centre has been given £94 million to create a vibrant and welcoming town centre for both residents and visitors enjoy. The aim is to restore Dartford's reputation as a major retail and leisure centre.

Bluewater is Europe's largest shopping centre, situated between Dartford and Gravesham; it was built in March 1999. Since then Bluewater has won a variety of awards for its modern approach to British retailing. Bluewater combines retail with entertainment, eating out, family fun and stunning architecture.

In 2006 Princes Park Community Stadium was open for use of the local football club and also conference and banqueting facilities. The stadium cost £6.5 million to build and is award winning for being unique and environmentally friendly.

Ebbsfleet International Station serves the Eurostar, as well as the new high-speed domestic service to St Pancras International, London. It provides a 17-minute journey into central London, as well as a redeveloping local area.

Since the development of the Channel Tunnel rail link at Ebbsfleet and the development of Bluewater, Ebbsfleet Valley and The Bridge are the latest advances in Dartford. Ebbsfleet Valley is the largest regeneration project in North Kent, encompassing 1,038 acres of brownfield land. Over the next twenty years the former chalk quarry opposite Bluewater, will become a vibrant mixed-use community comprising of shops, homes and 400 acres of open space, lakes and parkland. The Bridge will redevelop the land around the Queen Elizabeth II Bridge in Dartford into an area for businesses, new homes, schools and leisure.

As well as Dartford's future developments, its history has not been forgotten. Many of the old buildings and historic features in the town centre are being repaired through the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Town History

- During the Cretaceous Period 70–100 million years ago, the Dartford area was under 700ft of water, part of a sea covering Northern Europe, which means that Dartford and the surrounding area is rich in chalk and flint deposits, which have been mined in the area for many years. Chalk and flint played a vital part in the early development of the area.
- The first people appeared in the Dartford area around 250,000 years ago. A tribe of prehistoric hunters called Swanscombe Man (a piece of skull from Swanscombe Man can be seen in the Horniman Museum, Forest Hill) and the town's situation has made it an important settlement through the Stone, Bronze and Iron Ages.

- The years 1000-1500 saw a remarkable transformation in the size and importance of this former royal manor. Dartford evolved into a thriving and successful medieval town supporting a population of approximately 1,000 people.
- Dartford's status was further enhanced by its role in the religious life and administration of Kent. The expansion and increasing economic prosperity of Dartford during the medieval period was also helped by the large numbers of pilgrims who passed through the town *en route* to the cathedral shrines at Rochester and Canterbury.
- Dartford was one of nearly 700 market towns in England. These towns traditionally depended on agriculture and trading for their prosperity. Dartford was more fortunate than many other similar towns because it was relatively close to London.
- Henry VIII chose Dartford to construct a Manor House between 1541 and 1544 for his personal use. In 1545, this venue became one of the most politically important in Tudor England, when the Privy Council met here. Anne of Cleves was given the Manor House as part of her divorce settlement by Henry and lived there between 1553 and 1557.
- The Borough of Dartford is home to 11 churches that were included in the Domesday Book. One of the most interesting of these is Holy Trinity, located in Dartford town centre. The oldest part of the Church is the lower section of the main tower which was built between 1050 and 1080.
- Dartford paper mills were built in 1862, when excise duty on paper was abolished. Engineering, especially heavy engineering, both in Dartford and the surrounding area expanded and gave a positive effect on the local economy. Since then Dartford has been a popular community for many diverse people and cultures.

Local Towns and Villages

Bean village is about 3 miles from Dartford town centre. This small parish is surrounded by ancient woodlands, and excellent transport links near to the A2.

Ebbsfleet sits between the borough of Dartford and Gravesham. The Ebbsfleet River is of great historical importance as it was fed by 8 different natural springs, and therefore attracted settlers to the area. The Ebbsfleet valley is the location of urban regeneration, where the new Channel Tunnel rail link has been built. Ebbsfleet International Railway Station now provides high speed rail links with Eurostar into Paris and Brussels.

Greenhithe village grew up from chalk and lime found in the area, which led to the development of the cement industry nearby. In Victorian times it was a tourist resort with a pier built in 1842 across the river. Bluewater shopping centre is located in a chalk quarry in Greenhithe. Built in 1999, it is a luxury outlet with shops, cinemas, dining places and family entertainment.

Stone, also known as Stone-next-Dartford is a village on the Gravesend to Dartford road on the South Bank of the River Thames. Iron Age remains have been found here which proves that settlements were made here. North of Watling Street is Stone Castle dating from the 11th century, made completely of flint.

Longfield is located 10 miles south of Dartford and originates from Saxon times when the village was pronounced 'Langafel'. The local village has a railway station, shopping area, countryside pubs and a historic church. It is part of the New Barn parish near to Meopham.

Swanscomb is the location of the cement making industry due to its local resources of chalk and clay. It also has a rich history of Viking settlements as well as prehistoric bones which are now held in the National History museum in London. Today it too is the location for regeneration as the International Rail link passes through.

Parks & Open Spaces

Visit www.dartford.gov.uk or www.visitwoods.org.uk

Central Park, Market Street, Dartford comprises of 26 acres ranging from formal gardens near to the Town Centre, through ornamental areas, to informal open spaces including large grass areas and junior football pitches. Central Park hosts numerous events, particularly in summer, including the popular Dartford Festival weekend in July.

Hesketh Park, Park Road, Dartford features many active facilities. The main areas are dominated by sports and the park is home to the Dartford Cricket and Bowls Clubs, and Crackenford Hockey Club. There is also a children's play area and woodland area.

Dartford Heath, Upper Heath Lane is an area of 130 hectares of outstanding natural beauty and provides opportunities for informal recreation. The heathland soils support a unique range of wildlife and are popular with dog walkers. There are 3 ponds as well as the Heath, which has played an important role throughout Dartford's history.

Beacon Wood County Park, Southfleet Road, Bean is a Nature Conservation Interest site, as well as being packed full of amazing history. The park attracts many different types of wildlife depending on the season. Several sites of the industrial past can still be seen including the foundation blocks of gunpowder buildings and the routes of the railway lines used to transport clay.

Darenth Country Park, Gore Road, Dartford was developed as a National Millennium Project. However, the park also offers visitors a taste of history as the area was an ancient Saxon burial ground, with twelve Saxon graves discovered, as well as artefacts from the period. The park also includes a Site of Special Scientific Interest and mainly comprises grazing pasture and environmentally managed wildflower meadows.

Darenth Wood, Wood Lane, Dartford is a nationally important site for a number of semi-natural ancient woodland types which has been developed on the range of different soils associated with the area. Another important feature of the high forest in particular is standing and fallen dead timber, which is used by hole-nesting birds and many types of wildlife.

Places to Visit

Heritage Sites

The Manor Gate House - Priory Road, Dartford

Henry VIII built the house in 1541 and 1544 for his personal use. It was then given to Anne of Cleves as part of her divorce settlement by Henry and she lived there between 1553 and 1557. Elizabeth I retained the use of the Manor house but only stayed there on two occasions. Today, it is just the Gatehouse that remains and visitors can view the exterior.

Swanscombe Skull Site - Southfleet Road, Dartford

This was the site that 3 perfectly matching pieces of a 400,000 year old skull were found in Swanscombe in 1935, 1936 and 1955. These pieces are amongst the oldest human remains ever discovered in Europe. Three commemorative stones mark the places where the fragments of the skull were found. Thousands of primitive stone tools have been found on this site from this period, some of which are at display at the Dartford Borough Museum.

Holy Trinity Church, Dartford town centre.

The oldest part of the Church is the lower section of the main tower which was built between 1050 and 1080. Holy Trinity became popular with pilgrims on their way to Canterbury. Sights inside the Church include a dramatic 15th century wall painting of St George and the Dragon together with the early 17th century tomb of Sir John Spilman.

Theatres

Acacia Hall

High Street, Dartford, Kent, DA1 1DJ
Tel: (01322) 343477
Email: gail.mills@dartford.gov.uk
Website: www.acaciahall.co.uk

Mick Jagger Centre

Shepherds Lane, Dartford, Kent, DA1 2JZ
Tel: Box Office - (01322) 291100
Tel: Enquiries - (01322) 291101
Website: www.themickjaggercentre.com

Miskin Theatre

Oakfield Lane, Dartford, Kent
Website: www.miskintheatre.com
Tel: (01322) 629472

Orchard Theatre

Home Gardens, Dartford,
Kent, DA1 1ED
Tel: (01322) 220000
Email: info@orchardtheatre.co.uk
Website: <http://orchardtheatre.co.uk>

Museums & Libraries

Dartford Library

Central Park, Dartford, Kent, DA1 1EU
Tel: 08458 247200
Fax: (01322) 278271
Email: dartfordlibrary@kent.gov.uk

Dartford Borough Museum

Market Street, Dartford, Kent, DA1 1EU
Tel: (01322) 224739
Email: museum@dartford.gov.uk
Website: www.dartford.gov.uk

Shopping & Family Entertainment

Dartford Town Centre is pedestrianised and features a wide range of shopping facilities. The traditional main streets are the High Street, Spital Street, Hythe Street and Lowfield Street. There are also two shopping centres; the Priory Centre and the Orchards' Shopping Centre. Just outside Dartford is Bluewater shopping centre, with over 330 stores of fashion, 40 cafes, bars and restaurants plus a 13-screen cinema.

Bluewater

Greenhithe, Kent, DA9 9ST

Tel: 0870 777 0252

Website: www.bluewater.co.uk

Big Blue Rock Climbing Wall at Bluewater

Tel: 07870 194695

Showcase Cinema Bluewater

Tel: 0871 2201000

www.showcasecinemas.co.uk/pages/bluewater

Boating at Bluewater

Tel: (01732) 360630

Cycles and Tandems at Bluewater

Visit the booking office (outside the Wintergarden)

Golf Pro Tour Putting at Bluewater

Visit the booking office (outside the Wintergarden)

Swanscombe Leisure Centre

The Swanscombe Centre, Craylands Lane,

Swanscombe, Kent. DA10 OLP

Tel: (01322) 386362

Email: info@gcll.co.uk

Fairfield Pool & Leisure Centre

Lowfield Street, Dartford,

Kent, DA1 1JB

Tel: (01322) 224400

Website: www.leisure-centre.com

Broadditch Farm - Treasure Trail

Broadditch Farm Shop,

New Barn Road, Kent DA13 9PU

Tel: (01474) 834161

Email: enquiries@broadditch.co.uk

Sports and Leisure

Dartford Judo Club

Cotton Lane, Stone, Dartford,

Kent, DA2 6PD

Email: info@dartfordjudoclub.com

Website: www.dartfordjudoclub.com

Tel: (01322) 222071

Dartford Football Club

Princes Park Stadium,

Grassbanks, Dartford, Kent, DA1 1RT

Tel: (01322) 299990

Website: www.dartfordfc.co.uk

Dartford and District Angling and Preservation Society

DDAPS, Lake House, 2 Walnut Tree Avenue,

Dartford, Kent, DA1 1LJ

Website: www.ddaps.org

Tel/Fax: (01322) 270397

Lakes: Brooklands / Sutton at Hone / Horton Kirby

Princes Park Stadium

Grassbanks, Dartford, Kent, DA1 1RT

Tel: (01322) 299990

Website: www.dartfordfc.co.uk

Princes Golf at Princes Park Stadium

Website: www.dartford.gov.uk

Dartford Roadrunners at Princes Park Stadium

Website: www.dartford.gov.uk

Mini Pitches at Princes Park Stadium

Website: www.dartford.gov.uk

Email: generalmanager@dartfordfc.co.uk

Local Markets

Dartford has a fantastic tradition of hosting markets and as well as holding traditional weekly markets on Thursdays and Saturdays. A number of speciality markets including French, Italian and Farmers Markets take place throughout the year.

Thursday's Market is held in the car park of the Priory Shopping Centre.

The Saturday Market is held in Dartford High Street.

Website: www.dartford.gov.uk/markets

Tel: Market Manager – (01322) 343812

Famous residents of Dartford

Sir Mick Jagger and Keith Richards of The Rolling Stones are said to have met at Dartford railway station in the early sixties, although they had already known each other at primary school. Jagger attended Dartford Grammar School, Richards attended the then Dartford Technical College. Today the Grammar School is the location for The Mick Jagger Centre, a funded arts centre for all of the local community to use.

Pete Tong, legendary DJ and radio presenter was born in Dartford. Pete has gone onto perform at huge Ibiza events, produced music, and even has his name used in Cockney Rhyming Slang.

Tourism Figures: Key headline figures for Dartford for 2009

- It is estimated that around 209,000 overnight tourism staying trips were made to Dartford in 2009. Of these trips, domestic visitors made 88% of trips (185,000) and overseas visitors made 12% of trips (24,000).
- It is estimated that around 9.3 million tourism day trips were made to Dartford in 2009, raising overall trip expenditure to £374,291,000.
- In total, around £405,138,000 was spent on trips to Dartford in 2009 by staying and day visitors. Expenditure by friends and relatives on visitors, and visitors spend on second homes generates a further £10,196,000 for the local economy. This puts total expenditure at £415,334,000.
- Of this expenditure, £398,225,000 directly benefited local businesses and a further £75,656,000 of income was generated through indirect and induced effects.
- Drawing together direct business turnover, supplier and income induced expenditure, and the additional expenditure spent on second homes and by friends and relative, the total value of tourism activity in Dartford in 2009 was estimated to have been around £473,881,000 in 2009.
- This income supported 6,479 FTE jobs and 9,062 Actual jobs.

- Retail was the dominant area of trip expenditure, - accounting for 43% of total trip expenditure. It is estimated only 3% went towards accommodation and 34% was spent in catering establishments.

*Figures from Cambridge Model 2009

Accommodation in Dartford:

Of all commercial accommodation available to visitors, serviced accommodation (hotels, guest houses and B&Bs) was a popular choice among visitors (used by 28% of domestic staying visitors and 21% of overseas staying visitors). Significant proportions of both domestic and overseas visitors were accommodated in the homes of friends and family during their trip to Dartford (72% and 75% respectively).

| Type of Accommodation | Bedrooms/ Units/Pitches | Bed spaces |
|--|-------------------------|------------|
| Caravan & Camping | 15 | |
| Self catering (Cottages, Barns & Houses) | 4 | 36 |
| Serviced (Hotels, B&B's & Inn's) | 717 | 1,551 |

*Information sourced by SusTRIP Kent Accommodation Audit 2012

Population Figures:

| | Male | Female | Total |
|-----------------------|--------|--------|---------|
| Population (Mid 2010) | 46,400 | 48,200 | 94,600 |
| Population Forecast | - | - | - |
| 2012 | 48,300 | 50,300 | 98,600 |
| 2026 | 61,700 | 65,500 | 127,200 |

Source: Population Estimates Unit, Office for National Statistics (ONS) and KKC Strategy Forecast (Oct 2011)

Useful Local Tourism Contacts:

Dartford Borough Council
 Civic Centre, Home Gardens,
 Dartford, Kent, DA1 1DR
 Tel: (01322) 343434
 Fax: (01322) 343422
 Website: www.dartford.gov.uk
 Email: customer.services@dartford.gov.uk

Visit Kent
 28-30 St Peter's Street,
 Canterbury, Kent, CT1 2BQ
 Tel: (01227) 812900
 Website: www.visitkent.co.uk
www.visitkent.co.uk/business

