

Gravesham

Visit the home of Charles Dickens at Higham or the Elizabethan Cobham Hall. Discover the final resting place of Pocahontas and stroll along the Riverside. Take a trip to the outstanding countryside and visit the attractive villages on the slopes of the North Downs.



Facts about Gravesham

Did you know that...??

Located on the South bank of the river Thames, 25 miles from central London, the borough of Gravesham comprises the towns of Gravesend and Northfleet, and the villages of Cobham, Higham, Luddesdown, Meopham, Shorne and Vigo. It covers 38.2sq miles including 25,000 acres of the most varied countryside in south east England and holds the key to Kent Thameside in Britain's prime regeneration area of the Thames Gateway.

Gravesend and Northfleet, the towns at the heart of the borough, have much to offer visitors, residents and businesses alike. Great care is also being taken to preserve the charm of the Borough's rural areas, many of which are officially designated Areas of Outstanding National Beauty.

The River Thames has long been an important feature in the borough's life and may well have been the deciding factor for the first settlement here. One of Gravesend's first distinctions was when it was given the privilege to transport passengers to and from London by water in the late 14th century. The first steam boat plied its trade between Gravesend and London in the early 19th century, bringing with it a steadily increasing number of visitors to The Terrace Pier Gardens, Windmill Hill, Springhead Gardens and Rosherville Gardens. Gravesend soon became one of the first English resort towns and thrived from an early tourist trade. With unrivalled views of the estuary, and the beautiful countryside, Gravesend was second only to Brighton as the major tourist attraction of its time.

Northfleet was an early Saxon settlement and the area was very much inhabited during the Roman occupation, when the camp at Springhead was a place of great religious importance. The area is also well known for Chalk cutting, which has been a thriving local industry since earliest times and the town became internationally famous, when William Aspdin, the inventor of Portland cement, set up his kilns in 1846 and began to export around the world.

Gravesend received its first charter in 1268 and a Borough market was established which still thrives today. Unfortunately, due to a series of fires in the town centre during the 18th and 19th centuries, many of Gravesend's oldest buildings were destroyed; however, a wealth of fine buildings have survived and Gravesham Council works tirelessly to preserve the architectural heritage.

The High speed rail link station at Ebsfleet lies just to the east of the borough bringing international services within easy reach, as well as fast links to London by 2009.

History:

- The town is recorded as Gravesham in the Domesday Book in 1086 as belonging to the Bishop of Bayeux. The original cause of the name "Gravesham probably "lies in the usual name of the officer lately created in this town – his is commonly called Portreve, but the word anciently and truly founded in Portgereve, that is to say, the limit, bound or precinct of such a rule of office. Combined with the Saxon word "ham", meaning home, Gravesham would have been the home of the headman of the local tribe. The Lord to the Manor.
- The town Gravesend was originally a farming community and during the Middle Ages received its name from a well-known family. Richard de Gravesende was Bishop of London at the end of the 13th century and he was succeeded by his brother, Stephen in 1318.
- Milton Chantry, the oldest building still standing in Gravesham, was founded by Aymer de Valence, Earl of Pembroke, in the early years of the 14th century.
- Pocahontas was to become the first Native American to visit England. The daughter of Powhatan, chief of the Powhatan confederacy of Indian tribes, came into contact in 1607 with a group of English settlers at Jamestown, in Virginia. A legend was born

when she famously saved the pioneer Captain John Smith from the immediate threat of death by shielding him. She was then made a hostage by the English settlers. During her captivity, leading colonists worked to convert her to Christianity. One of those colonists was John Rolfe who fell in love with her. Pocahontas married Rolfe and accepted Christianity, and was baptised Rebecca. She later sailed with Rolfe to England, with their infant son, Thomas, where she became something of a celebrity and was "taken up by society".

After seven months in England, Rolfe decided to return his family to Virginia and, in March 1617, they set sail. It was soon apparent, however, that Pocahontas would not survive the voyage home as she was deathly ill. She was taken ashore at Gravesend, England, and died there. Buried in the parish church of St George's, the exact location of her grave is unknown, due to a church fire and subsequent reconstruction in the early 1700s. She was 22 years old at the time of her death, but her son survived to have many descendants.

- Charles Dickens is another famous person linked to Gravesend. When he was a boy Charles and his father took a walk through Kent. On Gravesend Road, Higham, they passed a house called Gad's Hill Place. Young Charles was very impressed. His father noted his interest and told Charles that if he "were to be very persevering and work very hard he might one day live there". He did. He bought the house in 1856 and lived there until his death in 1870. The Dickens' Honey Moon Cottage and the Forge (mentioned in Great Expectations) can still be seen in the village of Chalk, Gravesend.
- St George's church is known for the final resting place of Pocahontas, however many religious documents were lost when the church was burnt down in August 1727. The church was later restored in 1731 in the Georgian style of the period. In 1958 a life size statue of Pocahontas was erected in St. Georges Churchyard, followed by the creation of the Pocahontas Garden.
- In 1815 the first steamboat started plying between Gravesend and London, an event which was to bring undreamed wealth and prosperity to the town. The number of visitors steadily increased. It was estimated that, during the season, some 20,000 visitors travelled weekly to Gravesend by water from London.
- In 1830 the Clifton Baths were built, followed by the Terrace Pier Gardens and then in 1842 the Literary Institution with facilities for a library, concerts, balls. Today visitors can still see the world's oldest remaining cast iron pier dating from 1834 which was restored and reopened at the beginning of 2006. Visitors can also enjoy a drink and/or a meal at the bar and restaurant on the pier while watching ships sailing by.

Towns & Villages

Gravesend boasts a wide variety of landscapes, from Thameside's estuarine marshland, to the ridge of the North Downs, from the industrial townscapes of Gravesend and Northfleet, to the secluded hills and valleys of the rural parishes.

Gravesend is the main town of the borough; it has a rich Victorian history as a tourist destination. Today the town boasts shopping facilities, bars, restaurants and many original historic buildings such as the old Clock Tower and colonnades.

Northfleet is an industrial town, 2 miles from Gravesend situated on the River Thames. The village has a rich and fascinating industrial history; it is where cement was made and where its dockyard was once home to over 1800 boats.

Shorne is a rural parish which lies to the east of Gravesend, stretching from Watling Street to the Thames. Shorne offers fine views across to Essex and London.

Higham is a small village bordering the Hoo Peninsula, in Kent, between Gravesend and Rochester. Higham has developed as two parts, the original Saxon village of Higham to the north, and a more recent settlement to the south around the main road.

Cobham is a rural parish of 1240 hectares on the northern slope of the North Downs. The village's attractions are a the 13th century church and its collection of old brasses, Cobham College (originally established as a college for priests) and Cobham Hall, a late Elizabethan and eighteenth century mansion. The village also has close associations with Charles Dickens.

Luddesdown is the smallest and most secluded of the six rural parishes and forms part of the North Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It's located in a dry valley to the south of Gravesend and is named after a scattered group of houses and farms around *Luddesdown Court* and its church. It is an extremely popular and attractive place for walkers, cyclists and horseriders.

Meopham is a large rural village. The parish lies to the south of Gravesend, which is made up of four smaller villages: Meopham Green, Culverstone Green, Hook Green and Harvel. It is famous for the cricket matches played here on one of the best kept village greens in the country.

Vigo is a small parish situated in the middle of woodland alongside Trosley Country Park which forms part of the North Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Due to its altitude, it enjoys its very own climate and snow can often be found there while the rest of the borough has none.

Cycling & walking routes:

The Thames & Medway Canal 1809-1934

The canal was built from fears that enemy ships might venture into the Thames estuary and attack the naval dockyards. Today the towpath has recently been renovated for use by pedestrians and cyclists. It now forms part of Route 1 of the National Cycle Network from Dover to John o' Groats.

Riverside Leisure Area

National Cycle Route 1 passes through Riverside along Gordon Promenade and past the Canal Basin and then follows the route of the Thames and Medway Canal towards Higham.

Camer Park Walk is 1.25 miles through Camer Country Park, a 45 acre site of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The original house of the estate can also be seen through the woodlands.

Meopham Walk is 4.7 miles starts at Camer Park. The route offers walkers the chance to enjoy the spectacular views across the rolling landscapes, as well as the opportunity to explore Meopham village known as the longest village in Kent!

The Saxon Shore Way long distance walking route is named after the line of historic fortifications that defended the Kent coast at the end of the Roman era. This 160 miles route starts from the bustling port of Gravesend, through to Hastings, East Sussex.

The Wealdway Walk covers the 82 miles from Gravesham to Eastbourne through some of the most spectacular scenery in south-east England.

Shorne Wood Country Park features a short 0.75 mile walk through the paths of the woodlands. Walkers will pass the dam pond and the Sensory Garden, which provides fragrance, colour, touch, shape and sound.

Places to visit:

Art Centre:

Tours:

A wide selection of guided tours around Gravesend and villages are available.

For more information and booking please contact Towncentric.

Tel: 01474 22 76 00

St Andrews Arts Centre (originally a mission church)
Royal Pier Road, Gravesend,
Kent DA12 2BE

For more information on opening times contact Towncentric
Tel: 01474 33 76 00

Heritage:

Statue of Princess Pocahontas 1595- 1617 and St George's Church
Church Street, Gravesend
Tel: 01474 33 76 00

Old Town Hall 1836 and Borough Market 1268
Market open 6 days a week Monday - Saturday
Old High Street, Gravesend

The Town Pier (1834) - World oldest cast iron pier
Town Pier, Gravesend

The Mission House
Royal Pier Road, Gravesend

Bawley Bay
Next to St. Andrews Church,
Royal Pier Road Gravesend

The Gravesend Blockhouse (one of the five artillery blockhouses built in the area by Henry VIII)
Royal Pier Road, Gravesend

The Clarendon Royal Hotel (originally intended as a residence for the Duke of York before he became James II)
Royal Pier Road, Gravesend

Royal Terrace Pier (built in 1842 and used by Princess Alexandra of Denmark who married the Prince of Wales)
Royal Pier Road, Gravesend

The Clock Tower & Colonnades 1887
Berkley Crescent, Milton Road, Gravesend.

The Chantry Heritage Centre (seasonal openings)
Fort Gardens, Milton Place,
Gravesend, Kent, DA12 2BT
Tel: 01474 33 76 00/33 74 42

New Tavern Fort & Fort Gardens (1780) (seasonal openings)
Fort Gardens, Milton Place, Gravesend
Tel: 01474 33 76 00/33 74 42

Cold War Bunker
Woodlands Park, Wrotham Road, Gravesend
Tours are available by appointment only
Tel: 01474 33 76 00

Gravesend Cemetery
Old Road West, Gravesend
Tours are available by appointment only
Tel: 01474 33 76 00

Cobham Hall, Cobham, DA12 3BL

The house is open to the public on special events.

Website: www.cobhamhall.com

Gad's Hill Place (Home of Charles Dickens)

Rochester Road, Higham, Kent, ME3 7PA

(Now an independent school, can be viewed from outside).

Tel: 01474 33 76 00

Parks & Gardens:

Riverside Leisure Area

The Riverside Leisure Area lies along side the River Thames near Gravesend Town Centre. The area encompasses the Fort Gardens, Gordon Gardens and Recreation Ground, Gordon Promenade and the Canal Basin Marina. It is the venue for many outdoor events including regattas, music festivals and fireworks display.

Windmill Hill and Gardens

Situated between Rouge Lane/Clarence Place

Windmill Hill is located on the highest ground near Gravesend town centre and provides an excellent view over the river and the town. At the foot of the hill on the northern side are Windmill Gardens.

Woodlands Park

Woodlands Park is a 15-acre park on the boundary between Gravesend and Northfleet.

Facilities include a bowling green, tennis courts, a crazy golf course and children's play areas.

Springhead Recreation Ground

Springhead Recreation Ground is located in Northfleet adjacent to Thames Way. Springhead Linear Park will shortly provide a cycling and footpath connection between Thames Way and Springhead Road.

Northfleet Urban Country Park

The site lies on the eastern edge of Northfleet off Thames Way and covers 10.5 hectares.

The site benefits from extensive native tree and wildflower plantings, creating various wildlife habitats.

Wombwell Park

Wombwell Park in Northfleet offers a variety of recreational activities including a bowling green, cricket square, tennis courts, multi-sports courts and children's play areas.

Cobham Park

Cobham Park is a Registered Historic Park (Grade II*) with many important buildings and landscape features. Ashenbank Wood includes areas of ancient woodland and former wood pasture. Cobham Wood includes areas of ancient woodland, former wood pasture, and more recent coppice woodland. Within the Park are two Scheduled Ancient Monuments: a Bronze Age burial mound and a Roman villa, not to forget the newly restored Darnley Mausoleum.

Shorne Wood Country Park, Brewers Road, Shorne

The park is 174 acres and is in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest. Visitors can enjoy the award winning eco friendly visitor centre as well as a number of fascinating trails.

Camer Park, Meopham

This popular 45-acre designated area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is suitable for a stroll or informal games. There are also many walking routes through this park.

Trosley Park, Waterlow Road, Meopham

Once part of Trosley Towers Estate, Trosley Country Park covers 170 acres of beautiful woodland and chalk downland. The park's two waymarked trails benefit from some fantastic

sights. The easy access trail winds through the dense woodland, which is rich in wildlife. More adventurous walkers, will enjoy the walk on the downland, which offers spectacular panoramic views across the Weald, from the steep grass slopes

Vineyards & Windmills:

Meopham Valley Vineyard

Norway House, Wrotham Road,
Meopham, Kent, DA13 0AU
Tel / Fax: 01474 812727
Website: www.meophamvalleyvineyard.co.uk

Meopham Windmill

Wrotham Road, Meopham, Kent
Tel: 01474 813518

Boat Trips:

Gravesend to Tilbury Passenger Ferry

The ferry operates a regular service Monday to Saturday.
Ferry pier, West Street with car parking nearby.
Tel: 07973 390124.

MV "Princess Pocahontas" Day Excursions from
Gravesend to Greenwich, London or Southend from May to September.
Lower Thames and Medway Passenger Boat Co Ltd
Tel: 01732 353448
Web: www.princess-pocahontas.com

Churches:

St Georges Church

Church Street
Gravesend
Kent, DA11 0DJ
Email: info@stgeorgesgravesend.org.uk
Web: www.stgeorgesgravesend.org.uk

Pubs of Historical Interest:

Three Daws

Town Pier, Gravesend
This public house is over 500 years old and has Underground tunnels lead from its cellars, which were use by smugglers and men escaping from press gangs.

The Rum Puncheon

West Street, Gravesend
Well known as a former smugglers' pub, its name was changed in the mid 19th Century to the "New Falcon". However it has recently being renamed "Rum Puncheon".

The Leather Bottle

The Street, Cobham
Charles Dickens visited the inn on several occasions, where he wrote the Pickwick Papers. Today, people can enjoy looking at memorabilia while enjoying a drink or a meal.

Shopping:

Gravesend Town centre is host to 2 shopping centres, St. George's Shopping Centre and the Thamesgate Shopping Centre. The Town centre main shopping street, New Road is also pedestrianised, with many brand name shops such as Marks & Spencers and Debenhams. For more specialised boutiques there is the old High Street, Windmill Street, Queen Street and King Street.

Theatres:

Woodville Halls Theatre

Box Office: (01474) 337774

Fax: (01474) 337458

Email: Woodville.halls@gravesham.gov.uk

Leisure Centres:

Cascades Leisure Centre

Thong Lane, Gravesend, DA12 4LG

Tel: 01474 33 74 71/33 74 72

Web: www.gcll.co.uk

Cygnets Leisure Centre

Old Perry Street, Northfleet, DA11 8BU

Tel: 01474 33 74 84/33 74 85

Web: www.gcll.co.uk

Tourism Figures: Key headline figures for Gravesham for 2006

- ◆ It is estimated that around 201,824 overnight tourism staying trips were made to Gravesham in 2006. Of these trips, domestic visitors made 87% of trips (175,157) and overseas visitors made 13% of trips (26,667).
- ◆ In total, it is estimated that around £26,870,723 was spent by staying visitors on their trip to Gravesham in 2006.
- ◆ It is estimated that around 1.4 million tourism day trips were made to Gravesham in 2006, generating a further £44,411,056 trip expenditure.
- ◆ In total £71,281,779 was spent by all visitors on their trip
- ◆ In addition, expenditure by friends and relatives on visitors, and visitors spend on second homes (i.e. maintenance) generates a further £7,903,000. With the addition of other expenditure tourism activity generated £79,184,779 expenditure.
- ◆ Of this expenditure, £74,800,000 translates into direct income for local business; and a further £22,440,000 of income is generated through indirect and induced effects (a total of £97,240,000 business turnover).
- ◆ This income supported 1,352 FTE jobs and 1,849 Actual jobs. Overall it is estimated that tourism expenditure supported 4% of local employment.

*Figures from Cambridge Model 2006

Type of Accommodation	Bedrooms/ Units/Pitches	Bed spaces
Self catering (Cottages, Barns & Houses)	2	8
Serviced (Hotels, B&B's & Inn's)	487	978

*Information sourced by Tourism South East

Population Figures

	Male	Female	Total
Population (Mid 2006)	47,800	49,600	97,400
Population Forecast	-	-	-
2011			97,100
2016			97,400

Source: Population Estimates Unit, Office for National Statistics (ONS)

Useful Tourism Contacts:

TOWNCENTRIC

18A St. George's Square,
Gravesend, Kent, DA11 0TB
Telephone (01474) 33 76 00
Fax Number (01474) 33 76 01
Email: info@towncentric.co.uk
Website: www.towncentric.co.uk

Visit Kent

Kent County Council
Invicta House
County Hall
Maidstone
Kent, ME14 1XX
Tel: +44 (0) 1622 671411
Website: www.visitkent.co.uk
www.visitkent.co.uk/business

