

# Eastern England



EASTERN ENGLAND

For a region that is largely flat as a pancake, Eastern England is far from featureless. This sweet-edged mix is seasoned by ancient cathedral cities, spiced by a wealth of delightful medieval villages, drizzled by inland waterways and fringed by crisp shingly beaches. But the dollop of cream on the top is undoubtedly the beautiful and venerable city of Cambridge, home of the world-famous university.

Most visitors make a beeline to this time-honoured institution of learning, but it's worth taking time to delve deeper into the region. Within the same county of Cambridgeshire alone are two of England's finest cathedrals at Ely and Peterborough, and one of Europe's top aircraft collections at the Imperial War Museum. Neighbouring Suffolk is a lovely pastoral county peppered with timber-framed villages that seem designed to adorn a chocolate box, and a coast of charming Edwardian seaside resorts.

Further north in Norfolk, visitors are rewarded by rich wildlife reserves and old-fashioned fun on the water, both on its placid Broads and along its varied coastline. Topping the region is the undervisited, underpopulated but undoubtedly lovely county of Lincolnshire, home to a more varied terrain, the captivating hilltop capital of Lincoln and a clutch of stunning stately homes and period towns that are accustomed to starring on the silver screen.

And while Eastern England isn't the best region for agoraphobics or hill-walkers, its smooth uncluttered horizons have their own appeal; giving centre stage to stunning sunsets and the sky-scraping spires of hundreds of churches, cathedrals and colleges built during the region's medieval heyday.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Gliding a river punt past historic colleges in **Cambridge** (p465)
- Falling in love with the fairy-pink timber-framed houses of **Lavenham** (p474)
- Popping in to see the Queen at **Sandringham House** (p490)
- Climbing the picturesque cobbled streets of **Lincoln** (p491)
- Cruising through the tranquil waterways of the **Norfolk Broads** (p484)
- Picturing yourself in a period drama in historic **Stamford** (p496)



■ POPULATION: 2.66 MILLION

■ AREA: 19,000 SQ MILES

EASTERN ENGLAND

## History

East Anglia was a major Saxon kingdom and the treasures unearthed in the Sutton Hoo burial ship (see p473) proved that they enjoyed something of the good life here.

The region's heyday, however, was in the Middle Ages, during the wool and weaving boom. Flemish weavers settled in the area, and the region's long drainage canals, windmills and the architecture also illustrate the cultural crossover with the Continental lowlands. Not to mention the grand churches and world-famous university that the new wealth helped to fund.

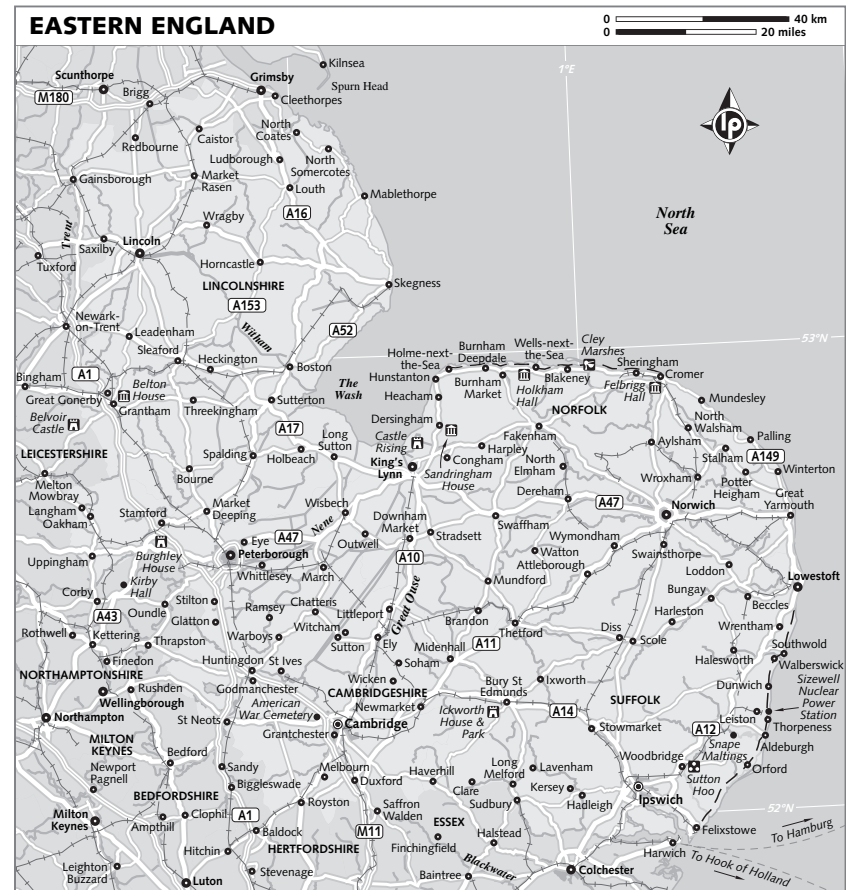
By the 17th century the emergence of a work-happy urban bourgeoisie coupled with a strong sense of religious duty resulted in the parliamentarianism and Puritanism

that would climax in the Civil War. Oliver Cromwell, the uncrowned king of the parliamentarians, was a small-time merchant residing in Ely when he answered God's call to take up arms against the fattened and corrupt monarchy of Charles I.

Eastern England's fortunes waned in the 18th century, however, when the real Industrial Revolution action was taking place up north. The cottage industries of East Anglia dwindled and today crops have replaced sheep as the rural mainstay.

## Information

Regional tourist information can be obtained from the **East of England Tourist Board** (☎ 0870 225 4800; www.visiteastofengland.com).



## Activities

Regional tourist websites are packed with walking, cycling and sailing information, and tourist offices are stacked high with leaflets, maps and guides covering activities offered in the area.

## CYCLING

The region is famously flat, so even the unfit can find vast swaths of Eastern England for a gentle potter on two wheels. All four counties boast networks of quiet country lanes, where the biggest natural hazard is the wind sweeping in unimpeded from the coast. When it's behind you, though, you can freewheel for miles. Cambridge is internationally celebrated as a bike-friendly city and an excellent base for cycle tours. There's also gorgeous riding to be had along the Suffolk and Norfolk coastlines and in the Fens. Mountain bikers can head for Thetford Forest, near Thetford, while much of the popular on- and off-road Peddars Way (see below) walking route is also open to cyclists.

## WALKING

Flat as an open palm, Eastern England is not everybody's idea of classic walking country. But itchy hiking feet can still be well satisfied with gentle rambles through farmland, beside rivers and lakes and along the wildlife-rich coastline.

The well-known **Peddars Way and Norfolk Coast Path** is a six-day, 88-mile national trail from Knettishall Heath near Thetford to Cromer on the coast. The first half trails along an ancient Roman road, then finishes by meandering along the beaches, sea walls, salt marshes and fishing villages of the coast. Day-trip-

pers and weekend walkers tend to dip into its coastal stretches, which also cover some of the best bird-watching country in England. The handy Peddars Wayfarer bus service ([www.nationaltrail.co.uk/peddarsway](http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/peddarsway); twice daily March to October) can whisk you to and from points en route.

Curving round further south, the 50-mile **Suffolk Coast and Heaths Path** wanders between Felixstowe and Lowestoft, via Snape Maltings, Aldeburgh, Dunwich and Southwold, but is also good for shorter rambles.

## OTHER ACTIVITIES

With wind and water so abundant here, it's no surprise that **sailing** is all the rage on the coast and in the Norfolk Broads, where you can easily hire boats and arrange lessons. Mind you, many people simply opt to put-put their way around the Broads in **motorboats** these days. More watery fun can be had in Cambridge, where the daring can try their hand at a spot of **punting**. Alternatively, land-lubbers can take advantage of the long, wide and frequently empty beaches of the Norfolk coast by **land yachting**, a growing sport in the region.

## Getting There & Around

Getting about the region on public transport, both rail and coach, is straightforward. **One Anglia** (☎ 0845 600 7245; [www.onerailway.com](http://www.onerailway.com)) offers some handy regional rail passes to explore Norfolk, Suffolk and parts of Cambridgeshire; the one-day pass (£11) can be used for unlimited regional travel after 9am, while the three-day pass (£22) covers any three separate days over a period of seven days. For train travel in Lincolnshire, **Central Trains**

## SOMETHING FOR THE WEEKEND

Start your weekend in style by snagging a river-view room at **Cambridge Garden House** (p466) and venture out for a nightcap at celebrated pub the **Eagle** (p467). Next morning check out the university colleges, dip into the sublime **King's College Chapel** (p462) and then reward yourself with lunch at swanky **Midsummer House** (p467). In the afternoon, work off your excesses by **punting** (p465) along the Backs before bidding farewell to the dreamy spires and breezing east to the **Stour Valley** (p473) and the time-transcending streets of gorgeous **Lavenham** (p474). Install yourself in the spectacular and none-too-frugal **Lavenham Priory** (p474), and explore the town's higgledy-piggledy lanes to work up an appetite for steak-and-ale pies at ancient inn the **Angel** (p475). On Sunday morning roll west to check out the twin stately homes of **Long Melford** (p473) to remind yourself how the other half lives, before heading back to your own cosy abode.

([www.centraltrains.co.uk](http://www.centraltrains.co.uk)) has Day Ranger tickets (£16.50). For public transport information, consult **Traveline** (☎ 0870 608 2608; [www.travelineeastanglia.org.uk](http://www.travelineeastanglia.org.uk)).

## CAMBRIDGESHIRE

It's easy to fall into the trap of thinking Cambridgeshire equals Cambridge, the breath-takingly beautiful city and world-renowned brains trust where a visit feels like plunging into the past and meeting the future rolled into one. And the university rightly tops any agenda to the region. But don't let Cambridge's dazzling attractions blind you to the county's other charms. Anywhere else, the extraordinary cathedrals at Peterborough and Ely would steal the limelight, and the rip-roaring Imperial War Museum would leave everyone from aeroplane-obsessed kids to their nostalgic grandparents wriggling with anticipation. Flat as an ironing board, the county also offers leisurely cycling through reclaimed fen, lush farmland and across myriad waterways. A nightmare for agoraphobics, the vast open landscapes nonetheless impress with epic sunsets and un sullied horizons.

## Getting Around

The region's public transport radiates from Cambridge, which is a mere 55 minutes' train ride from London. This line continues north through Ely to King's Lynn in Norfolk. From Ely, branch lines run east through Norwich, southeast into Suffolk, and northwest to Peterborough and into Lincolnshire. The useful *Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Passenger Transport Map* is available at all tourist offices or you can call **Traveline** (☎ 0870 608 2608; [www.travelineeastanglia.org.uk](http://www.travelineeastanglia.org.uk)).

## CAMBRIDGE

☎ 01223 / pop 108,863

Few cities can take the breath away quite like Cambridge. It's not just its tightly packed core of exquisite architecture, or even the mind-boggling mass of brain power that has passed through its world-famous university, but it's also the sensation of drowning in history, tradition and quirky ritual that only seems to deepen the more you discover. But so too there is plentiful opportunity to come up for air, relaxing in the manicured college gardens, punting along the beautiful river 'Backs' and roaming the lush water meadows that run out of the city.

And of course Cambridge is no mere repository of history and charm, it is very much a living city; its narrow streets are alive with the click and whirr of cyclists. The river is clogged with red-faced rowers, drifting punts and on occasion floundering freshmen. College porters still potter around in bowler hats, while gowned students wine and dine in cavernous medieval halls. Historic pubs echo with the same equal mix of intellectual banter and rowdy merrymaking that they have for centuries. And a new generation of designer boutiques, coffee houses and slick nightlife venues is finding its niche in among the intriguing passageways and medieval doorways of the old town.

While you'll find all these qualities and more in 'the other place' (as rival Oxford is referred to here), Cambridge is the more concentrated of England's two great university cities, and in our humble opinion, far the prettier.

## History

The University of Cambridge celebrates its 800th birthday in 2009, and its eventful eight

## BIZARRE ENGLAND

What? The English? Eccentric? Well, maybe just a little. Eastern England certainly has its fair share of bizarre events to prove it. Where else could you find the annual **World Snail Racing Championships** than at Congham, about 7 miles east of King's Lynn? Every year here in mid-July around 300 snails battle it out for a tankard full of juicy lettuce leaves. Visitors can enter their own pet invertebrate, complete with painted shell.

And for further proof that the English never quite grow out of childhood pranks, witness the annual **World Pea Shooting Championships**, in which contestants blast dried peas through a tube at various targets. The games take place in early July on the Village Green at Witcham, about 8 miles west of Ely.

And in the village of Stilton, a few miles south of Peterborough, every May Day Bank Holiday sees teams in fancy dress scramble along the High St to become **Stilton cheese rolling champions**.



centuries are inextricably linked to the history of England and even, thanks to some of the earthshaking discoveries made here, also of worldwide import.

First a Roman fort and then a Saxon settlement, Cambridge was little more than a rural backwater until 1209, when the university town of Oxford exploded in a riot between townspeople ('town') and scholars ('gown'), forcing a group of students to quit while their heads were still intact and move to Cambridge to found a new university. The plan was for tutors and students to live together in a community, much as a monastery. This collegiate system, unique to Oxford and Cambridge, came into being gradually, and the first Cambridge college, Peterhouse, was founded in 1284.

More colleges followed from the 14th century, founded by all manner of great and good: royalty, nobility, church figures, statesmen, academics, trade guilds and anyone rich enough to court the prestige that their own institution offered. All the colleges were for men only until, in 1869 and 1871, women were finally allowed to study here with the founding of women-only Girton and Newnham Colleges. However, the girls had to wait until 1948 to actually graduate.

The honour roll of famous graduates reads like an international who's who of high achievers, and a list of their accomplishments could fill several libraries. The discovery of DNA and theories of gravity and evolution: all by Cambridge students. Since 1904 the university has

INFORMATION		Great St Mary's Church.....23 D1		Fitzbillies.....44 B3	
Abbey National Bank.....	1 D2	Jesus College.....	24 B2	Michaelhouse.....	45 D1
Boots.....	2 D1	King's College Chapel.....	25 C2	Midsummer House.....	46 C1
Budget Internet Café.....	3 C4	Little St Mary's.....	26 B3	Rainbow Vegetarian Bistro.....	47 D2
CB2.....	4 D2	Magdalene College.....	27 B1	Tatties.....	48 D1
Cleanomat Dry Cleaners & Laundrette.....	5 C1	Pembroke College.....	28 B3	Twenty-Two.....	49 B1
Galloway & Porter.....	6 D1	Peterhouse College.....	29 B3		
Heffers.....	7 D1	Queens' College.....	30 B3	DRINKING ☕ ☪	
International Telecom Centre.....	8 D2	Riverboat Georgina.....	31 B1	Eagle.....	50 D2
Lloyds TSB (bank).....	9 D1	Round Church.....	32 B2	Fort St George.....	51 C1
Police Station.....	10 C3	Scudamore's.....	33 B3	Granta (and Punt Hire).....	52 A3
Post Office.....	11 D2	Senate House.....	34 C1	St Radegund.....	53 C2
Thomas Cook.....	12 D2	Trinity College.....	35 C1		
Tourist Office.....	13 D2	SLEEPING 🛏			
Victoria Café.....	14 C3	Arundel House Hotel.....	36 B1	ADC Theatre.....	54 B2
		Cambridge Garden House.....	37 B3	Arts Theatre.....	55 D2
		Cambridge YHA Hostel.....	38 D4	Corn Exchange.....	56 D2
		De Vere University Arms Hotel.....	39 C3	Fez.....	57 D1
		Sleeperz.....	40 D4	Twentytwo.....	58 D1
		Tenison Towers Guest House.....	41 D4	TRANSPORT	
		Warkworth House.....	42 C2	Cambridge Station	
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES				Cycles.....	59 D4
Bridge of Sighs.....	15 B2			City Cycle Hire.....	60 A4
Cambridge Chauffeur Punts.....	16 B3			Drummer St Bus Station.....	61 B2
Christ's College.....	17 D1			Mike's Bikes.....	62 C3
Church of St Bene't.....	18 D2	EATING 🍴			
Corpus Christi College.....	19 B3	Clowns.....	43 D1		
Emmanuel College.....	20 C3				
Fitzwilliam Museum.....	21 B3				
Gonville & Caius College.....	22 C1				

produced 81 Nobel Prize winners (more than any other institution in the world), 13 British prime ministers, nine archbishops of Canterbury, an immense number of scientists, and a healthy host of poets and other scribblers...and this is but a limited selection. Today it remains at the top of the research league in British universities, and in the top three worldwide, and international academics have polled it the top university in the world for science.

**Orientation**

The colleges and university buildings comprise the centre of the city. The central area, lying in a wide bend of the River Cam, is easy to get around on foot or by bike. The best-known section of the Cam is the Backs, which combines lush river scenery with superb views of six colleges, and King's College Chapel. The other 25 colleges are scattered throughout the city. The bus station is central on Drummer St, but the train station is a 20-minute walk to the south.

**Information**

- BOOKSHOPS**
- Galloway & Porter** (☎ 367876; 30 Sidney St) Remaindered and damaged stock.
- Heffers** (☎ 568568; 20 Trinity St) Vast temple of academic tomes and lighter reads.

**EMERGENCY**

- Police station** (☎ 358966; Parkside)

**INTERNET ACCESS**

- The going rate for internet access is £1 per hour.
- Budget Internet Café** (☎ 464625; 30 Hills Rd; ☎ 9am-11pm)
- CB2** (☎ 508503; 5-7 Norfolk St; ☎ noon-midnight)
- International Telecom Centre** (☎ 357358; 2 Wheeler St; ☎ 9am-10pm)
- Victoria Café** (☎ 307272; 86 Regent St; ☎ 8am-10pm)

**LAUNDRY**

- Cleanomat Dry Cleaners & Laundrette** (☎ 464719; 10 Victoria Ave; per wash £2; ☎ 8.30am-9pm)

**LEFT LUGGAGE**

- Cambridge Station Cycles** (☎ 307125; Station Bldg, Station Rd; ☎ 7am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat, 10am-5pm Sun, 10am-4pm Oct-Mar) Stores left luggage for £3 per day.

**MEDICAL SERVICES**

- Addenbrooke's Hospital** (☎ 245151; Hills Rd)
- Boots** (☎ 350213; 28 Petty Cury)

**MONEY**

- Helpful banks and bureaux de change:
- Abbey National** (☎ 350495; 60 St Andrew's St)
- Lloyds TSB** (☎ 0845 072 3333; 3 Sidney St)
- Thomas Cook** (☎ 543100; 8 St Andrew's St)

**POST**

- Main post office** (☎ 323325; 9-11 St Andrew's St)

**TOURIST INFORMATION**

The large bustling **tourist office** (☎ 0871 266 8006; www.visitcambridge.org; Wheeler St; ☎ 10am–5.30pm Mon–Fri, 10am–5pm Sat, 11am–4pm Sun Apr–Sep, 10am–5.30pm Mon–Fri, 10am–5pm Sat Oct–Mar) helps with maps, accommodation, tours and tickets. A £2.50 Visitor Card from here will get you three weeks' worth of discounts in restaurants, attractions and on guided tours.

**Sights****CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY**

Five of the university colleges – King's, Queens', Clare, Trinity and St John's – charge tourists admission. Some other colleges deem visitors too disruptive and often deny them entry. Most colleges close to visitors for the Easter term and all are closed for exams from mid-May to mid-June. Opening hours vary year to year, so contact the colleges, the tourist office or the university's **central information service** (☎ 337733) for updates.

**King's College Chapel**

In a city crammed with show-stopping architecture, this is *the* show-stealer. Chances are you will already have seen it on a thousand postcards, tea towels and choral CDs before you catch your first glimpse of the grandiose realty of **King's College Chapel** (☎ 331212; www.kings.cam.ac.uk/chapel; King's Pde; adult/concession £4.50/3; ☎ during term 9.30am–3.30pm Mon–Sat, 1.15pm–2.30pm Sun, outside academic terms 9.30am–4pm Mon–Sat, 10am–5pm Sun), but still it awes. It's one of the most extraordinary examples of Gothic architecture in Britain, and was begun in 1446 as an act of piety by Henry VI and finished by Henry VIII around 1516.

While you can enjoy stunning front and back views of the chapel from King's Pde and the river, the real drama is within. Mouths drop open upon first glimpse of the inspirational **fan-vaulted ceiling**, its intricate tracery soaring upwards before exploding into a series of stone fireworks. This vast 80m-long canopy is the work of John Wastell and is the largest expanse of fan vaulting in the world.

The chapel's length is also remarkably light, its sides flanked by lofty **stained-glass windows** that retain their original glass, rare survivors of the excesses of the Civil War in this region. It's said that these windows were ordered to be spared by Cromwell himself, who knew of their beauty from his own studies in Cambridge.

The antechapel and the choir are divided by a superbly carved **wooden screen**, designed and

executed by Peter Stockton for Henry VIII. The screen bears his master's initials entwined with those of Anne Boleyn. Look closely and you may find an angry human face – possibly Stockton's – amid the elaborate jungle of mythical beasts and symbolic flowers. Above is the magnificent bat-wing organ, originally constructed in 1686 though much altered since.

The thickly carved wooden stalls just beyond the screen are a stage for the chapel's world-famous **choir**, whose Festival of the Nine Lessons and Carols on Christmas Eve are beamed all over the globe. And even the most pagan heavy-metal fan will get shivers down the spine during **evensong** (admission free; ☎ 5.30pm Tue–Sat, 10.30am & 3.30pm Sun mid-Jan–mid-Mar, mid-Apr–mid-Jun, mid-late Jul, Oct–early Dec & 24 & 25 Dec), in which the sound waves almost seem to mirror and mingle with the extraordinary ceiling.

Beyond the dark-wood choir, light suffuses the **high altar**, which is framed by Rubens' masterpiece *Adoration of the Magi* (1634) and the magnificent east window. An eye-opening **Chapel Exhibition** is in the side chapels left of the altar, and charts the stages and methods of building set against its historical panorama.

Audio tours of the chapel are available for £2, and guided tours can be arranged at the tourist office.

**Trinity College**

As you walk through the impressive Tudor gateway to **Trinity College** (☎ 338400; www.trin.cam.ac.uk; Trinity St; adult/child £2.20/1.30), first created in 1546, have a look at the statue of the college's founder Henry VIII that adorns it. His left hand holds a golden orb, while his right grips not the original sceptre but a table leg, put there by student pranksters and never replaced. It's a wonderful introduction to one of Cambridge's most venerable colleges, and a reminder of who really rules the roost.

As you enter the **Great Court**, scholastic humour gives way to wonderment, for it is the largest of its kind in the world and drips with history. To the right of the entrance is a small tree, planted in the 1950s and reputed to be a descendant of the apple tree made famous by Trinity alumnus Sir Isaac Newton. Other alumni include Tennyson, Francis Bacon, Lord Byron and at least nine prime ministers, British and international, and a jaw-dropping 31 Nobel Prize winners.

The square is also the scene of the run made famous by the film *Chariots of Fire* – 350m in

43 seconds (the time it takes the clock to strike 12). Although many students attempt it, Harold Abrahams (the hero of the film) never actually did, and the run wasn't even filmed here. If you fancy your chances remember that you'll need Olympian speed to even come close.

The college's vast hall has a dramatic hammer-beam roof and lantern, and beyond this are the dignified cloisters of Neville's Court and the renowned **Wren Library** (☎ 338400; ☎ noon–2pm Mon–Fri, plus during term 10.30am–12.30pm Sat). It contains 55,000 books dated before 1820 and more than 2500 manuscripts, including AA Milne's original *Winnie the Pooh*. Both he (Milne that is, not Winnie) and his son, Christopher Robin, were graduates.

Henry VIII would have been proud to note, too, that his college would eventually come to throw the best party in town, its lavish college May Ball in June.

**Gonville & Caius**

Known locally as Caius (pronounced keys), this fascinating old **college** (☎ 332400; www.cai.cam.ac.uk; Trinity St) was founded twice, first by a priest called Gonville, in 1348, and then again in 1557 by Dr Caius, a brilliant physician who supposedly spoils his legacy by insisting the college admit no 'deaf, dumb, deformed, lame, chronic invalids, or Welshmen'! Given his attitude to the disabled, it's a darn good thing he wasn't around to deny wheelchair-bound megastar of astrophysics, Stephen Hawking, who is a fellow here. Of special interest are its three gates: Virtue, Humility and Honour. They symbolise the progress of the good student, since the third gate (the *Porta Honoris*, a fabulous domed and sundial-sided confection) leads to the Senate House and thus graduation.

**Christ's College**

Grand old institution **Christ's** (☎ 334900; www.christs.cam.ac.uk; St Andrew's St; ☎ 9am–dusk) celebrated its 500th birthday in 2005 and is worth visiting if only for its gleaming Great Gate emblazoned with heraldic carving of spotty Beaufort yale (antelope-like creatures), Tudor roses and portcullis. Its founder Lady Margaret Beaufort hovers above like a guiding spirit. A stout oak door leads into First Court, which has an unusual circular lawn, magnolias and wisteria creepers. Pressing on through the Second Court there is a gate to the fellows' garden, which contains a mulberry tree under

which 17th-century poet John Milton reputedly wrote *Lycidas*. Naturalist Charles Darwin also studied here.

**Jesus College**

A comical rebus or heraldic pun crowns the main gate of this late-15th-century **college** (☎ 339339; www.jesus.cam.ac.uk; Jesus Lane), which is accessed via a handsome bricked approach nicknamed 'the chimney'. Here you'll see a clutch of red-faced cockerels to represent the 'cock' and a globe to represent the 'all' in the college founder's name, Bishop Alcock. Inside, it's an unusually tranquil place, perhaps because it was once a nunnery before the bishop expelled the nuns for misbehaving. Be sure to visit the stunning chapel, which has a Norman arched gallery from the nunnery building, a 13th-century chancel and Art Nouveau features by Pugin, William Morris (ceilings), Burne-Jones (stained glass) and Madox Brown.

**Magdalene College**

Originally a Benedictine hostel, this appealing riverside **college** (☎ 332100; www.magd.cam.ac.uk; Magdalene St) was refounded in 1542 by Lord Audley. It has the dubious honour of being the last college to allow women students; when they were finally admitted in 1988, male students wore black armbands and flew the college flag at half-mast. Its greatest asset is the Pepys Library, housing the magnificent collection of books the famous mid-17th-century diarist bequeathed to his old college.

**Corpus Christi College**

Entry to this illustrious **college** (☎ 338000; www.corpus.cam.ac.uk; Trumpington St) is via the so-called New Court that dates back about 200 years. The door to the chapel here is flanked by two statues; on the right is Matthew Parker, who was college master in 1544 and Archbishop of Canterbury to Elizabeth I. A bright lad, Mr Parker was known for his curiosity; his endless questioning gave us the term 'nosy parker'. Meanwhile monastic atmosphere still oozes from the inner Old Court, which retains its medieval form. Playwright and Shakespeare's contemporary Christopher Marlowe (1564–93), author of *Dr Faustus* and *Tamburlaine*, was a Corpus man – as a plaque, next to a fascinating sundial, bears out. The college library has the finest collection of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts in the world.

### Queens' College

This gorgeous college (☎ 335511; www.queens.cam.ac.uk; Silver St; adult £1.50) sits elegantly astride the river and takes its name from two queens who founded it in the 15th century. For visitors, the college's main entrance is off Queens' Lane and this is where its two most enchanting medieval courtyards are found: Old Court and especially Cloister Court, unmistakable for its intimate cloisters and matchbox lawn that irresistibly call to mind images of distracted academics in slippers and poets draped in the corners. Here too is the beautiful half-timbered President's Lodge and the tower in which famous Dutch scholar and reformer Erasmus lodged from 1510 to 1514. Old Ras wasn't particularly enamoured of Cambridge: he thought that the wine tasted like vinegar, that the beer was slop and that the place was too expensive, but he did note that the local women were good kissers.

### Peterhouse College

The oldest and smallest college, Peterhouse (☎ 338200; www.pet.cam.ac.uk; Trumpington St) will leave you wanting to slip it into your handbag to take home. Founded in 1284 by Hugo de Balsham, later Bishop of Ely, it stands just south of the Little St Mary's Church. The church's unwieldy original name was St Peter's-without-Trumpington-Gate, which gave the college its name. Inside is a memorial to student Godfrey Washington, great-uncle of George. His family coat of arms was the stars and stripes, the inspiration for the US flag. Henry Cavendish, the first person to measure the density of water, also studied here. He also calculated the planet's weight: about six billion trillion metric tonnes if you must know.

Much of Peterhouse has been rebuilt or added over the years, including the exceptional little chapel built in 1632, but the main hall is bona fide 13th century and beautifully restored.

### Emmanuel College

Neither too big nor too small and surprisingly tranquil, this 16th-century college (☎ 334200; St Andrew's St) is particularly famous for two things. The first is facing you as you enter its Front Court: the 1677 Wren chapel, cloister and gallery is an architectural gem. And there's a plaque nearby commemorating its other off-repeated claim to fame, which is that it educated one of America's most famous educators. John Harvard (BA 1632) was a scholar here before he settled in New England and left

his money to found his namesake university in the Massachusetts town of Cambridge. His portrait also graces one of the chapel's stained-glass windows – but, as the artist had no likeness of Harvard from which to work, he used the face of Harvard's college contemporary John Milton!

### THE BACKS

Ah, the Backs. The place to be on a sunny day, these idyllic parklands line the river behind some of the most famous colleges and eat up camera films with their picture-postcard views of the college walls, graceful bridges, weeping willows and neatly manicured lawns upon which students picnic. There are several interesting bridges, especially the fanciful **Bridge of Sighs** (built in 1831) and the oldest crossing at **Clare College**, built in 1639 and ornamented with decorative balls. Its architect was paid a grand total of 15p for his design and, feeling aggrieved at such a measly fee, it's said he cut a chunk out of one of the balls adorning the balustrade so the bridge would never be complete. Most curious of all is the flimsy-looking wooden construction joining the two halves of Queens' College known as the **Mathematical Bridge**, first built in 1749. Don't fall prey to the punt-chauffeur's rose-tinted myths that it was the handiwork of Sir Isaac Newton or originally built without any nails, though. Whether it would actually hold without the nuts and bolts we'll leave to the university mathematicians to resolve.

### GREAT ST MARY'S CHURCH

Cambridge's staunch university church (☎ 741716; Senate House Hill; ☎ 10am–4pm Mon–Sat, 12.30–4pm Sun, to 5pm Jun–Aug) was built between 1478 and 1519 in the late-Gothic perpendicular style. A quirky fact about the church is that it's home to England's oldest bell-ringing society. If you're fit and fond of a view, climb the 123 steps of the tower (adult/child £2/1) past the cacophonous bells for superb vistas of the dreamy spires, albeit marred by wire fencing.

The beautiful classical building directly across King's Pde is the **Senate House**, designed in 1730 by James Gibbs; graduations are held here in summer when gowned and mortar-boarded students parade the streets to pick up those all-important scraps of paper.

### ROUND CHURCH

The pop-up-book pretty **Round Church** (☎ 311602; Bridge St; adult/child £1/free; ☎ 1–5pm Sun–Mon, 10am–5pm

Tue–Sat) is another of Cambridge's most visited gems and one of only four such structures in England. It was built by the mysterious Knights Templar in 1130 and shelters an unusual circular nave ringed by chunky Norman pillars. It now houses an exhibition on, shows videos about and runs walking tours on Cambridge's Christian heritage.

### CHURCH OF ST BENE'T

The oldest structure in the county, the **Saxon tower** of this Franciscan church (Bene't St) was built around 1025. The round holes above the belfry windows were designed to offer owls nesting privileges; they were valued as mouse killers. The church also has a bible that belonged to Thomas Hobson, owner of a nearby livery stable, who told customers they could hire any horse they liked as long as it was the one nearest the door – hence the term 'Hobson's choice', meaning no choice at all.

### FITZWILLIAM MUSEUM

Fondly dubbed 'the Fitz' by locals, this colossal neoclassical pile was one of the first public art museums (☎ 332900; www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk; Trumpington St; admission free; ☎ 10am–5pm Tue–Sat, noon–5pm Sun) in Britain, built to house the fabulous treasures that the seventh Viscount Fitzwilliam had bequeathed to his old university. Particularly in the entrance hall, this unabashedly over-the-top building sets out to mirror its contents in an ostentatious jumble of styles that mixes mosaic with marble, Greek with Egyptian, and more. It was begun by George Basevi in 1837, but he did not live to see its completion: while working on Ely Cathedral he stepped back to admire his handiwork, slipped and fell to his death.

The lower galleries are filled with priceless treasures from ancient Egyptian sarcophagi to Greek and Roman art, Chinese ceramics to English glass, and some dazzling illuminated manuscripts. The upper galleries shine with an incandescent collection of paintings by the likes of Leonardo da Vinci, Titian, Rubens, the Impressionists, Gainsborough and Constable, right through to Rembrandt and Picasso.

### Activities

#### PUNTING

Gliding a self-propelled punt along the Backs is a blissful experience once you've got the knack, though it can also be a wobbly-legged and manic challenge to begin. If you wimp

out you can always opt for a relaxing chauffeured punt.

**Cambridge Chauffeur Punts** (☎ 354164; www.punting-in-cambridge.co.uk; Silver St; per hr £14, chauffeured £50)

**Granta** (☎ 301845; Newnham Rd; per hr £10) A pub that hires punts on the side.

**Scudamore's** (☎ 359750; www.scudamores.com; Silver St; per hr £12, chauffeured £40)

### WALKING & CYCLING

For an easy stroll into the countryside, you won't find a prettier route than the 3-mile walk to Grantchester following the meandering River Cam and its punters southwest through flower-flecked meadows.

Scooting around town on a bike is easy thanks to the pancake-flat landscape, although the surrounding countryside can get a bit monotonous. The Cambridge tourist office stocks several useful guides including the free *Cambridge Cycle Route Map*.

### Tours

**City Sightseeing** (☎ 0871 666 0000; www.city-sightseeing.com; adult/child £9/4.50; ☎ 10am–4pm) Hop-on hop-off tour buses that run every 20 to 30 minutes. You can get on or off at 16 points along the route, including the train station, Fitzwilliam Museum, the Round Church and the American Military Cemetery.

**Riverboat Georgina** (☎ 307694; www.georgina.co.uk; depending on food/refreshments per person £12–23) Two-hour cruises from the river at Jesus Lock. Four-hour cruises may also be available.

**Tourist Tracks** (☎ 305847; www.tourist-tracks.com) For those who prefer to wander at their own pace, there are MP3 walking tours of the city. They can be downloaded for £5, mail ordered on CD for £7 or hired with an MP3 player at the tourist office for £6. The pack contains four separate 30-minute tours of the city centre.

**Walking tours** (☎ 457574; tours@cambridge.gov.uk; ☎ 1.30pm daily, sometimes with extra tours at 10.30am, 11.30am and 2.30pm depending on season; tickets including entry to King's/St John's Colleges £9/7) The tourist office arranges these, as well as other less frequent tours such as colourful 'Ghost Tours' (adult/concession/child under seven £14/12/7) and 'Punt and Pint Tours' (adult/concession/child under 12 £20/17.50/10). The tourist office has more details; book in advance.

### Sleeping

#### BUDGET

**Cambridge YHA** (☎ 0870 770 5742, 354601; www.yha.org.uk; 97 Tenison Rd; dm £17; ☎ ) The cheapest digs in the city and a position just 600m from the train station make this L-shaped hostel the busiest

in the region. Basically sound, the dorms are small, functional and well worn. Lockers and laundry available. Breakfasts can be a harried affair, however, due to large groups.

**Tenison Towers Guest House** (☎ 363924; www.cambridgecitytenison Towers.com; 148 Tenison Rd; s/d £30/55) The aroma of freshly baked muffins greets you at this home-style B&B just 300m from the train station. As well as bubbly personal service, it has a cute little patio, comfortably furnished rooms with hand-sponged walls and yes, muffins on the menu for breakfast.

### MIDRANGE

**Sleeperz** (☎ 304050; www.sleeperz.com; Station Rd; s/tw/d from £39/49/59; (P) (X) (Z)) Sitting amid a lawn of bicycles beside the train station is this converted warehouse with beamed ceiling and iron shutters, housing a one-night-wonder hotel that welcomes tired arrivals late into the night. Its pint-sized rooms squeeze in minuscule en suite, TV and functional futon or cabin-style bunk bed, all spotless but so snug that early-morning stretches may result in bruising. Doubles are larger.

**Harry's Bed & Breakfast** (☎ 503866; www.welcome toharrys.co.uk; 39 Milton Rd; s £45-56, d £65; (P) (X) (wi-fi)) Originally an Edwardian nursing home, this lively four-room B&B is a gem. Its perennially cheerful host bends over backwards for guests, and the en suite rooms are tastefully decorated in warm colours and modern furnishings. One has a shared toilet, but shower and basin within. Rates include free wi-fi and, joy of joys, free local and national calls.

**Warkworth House** (☎ 363682; www.warkworthhouse.co.uk; Warkworth Tce; s/d/ff from £45/65/85; (X)) Behind the blonde-brick façade and flower-flanked front steps of this Victorian terraced house, just off Parkside, is a long-established and much-loved guesthouse that retains period fireplaces, creaky wooden floors, bay windows and a pleasant patio. The comfy rooms have modern pastel-coloured furnishings, and children are welcome.

**Arundel Hotel** (☎ 367701; www.arundelhousehotels.co.uk; 53 Chesterton Rd; s/d/ff from £75/95/120; (P) (X)) Late-19th-century decorum meets bland 1990s hotel style in this handsome Victorian terraced building overlooking the Cam, with 103 uniformly pink-chintz rooms. Other than comfort, the biggest plus is pleasant views across the water and Jesus Green to central Cambridge – a short and extremely pleasant walk away.

### TOP END

**Cambridge Garden House** (Moat House; ☎ 259988; www.moathousehotels.com; Granta Pl, Mill Lane; s/d from £134/144; (P) (X) (Z) (A) (B) (C) (D) (E) (F) (G) (H) (I) (J) (K) (L) (M) (N) (O) (P) (Q) (R) (S) (T) (U) (V) (W) (X) (Y) (Z)) Bagging an enviable riverside spot in the city's heart, the interior of this resort-style hotel far surpasses expectations formed by its ugly modern shell. Design-mag perfect rooms are decorated with suede, leather, dark wood and boldly striped carpets, and even the bathrooms scream style. Best of all are the river-facing pool and the waterside gardens from which to watch punters glide past.

**De Vere University Arms Hotel** (☎ 351241; www.devere.co.uk; Regent St; d incl breakfast from £159; (P) (X) (Z) (A) (B) (C) (D) (E) (F) (G) (H) (I) (J) (K) (L) (M) (N) (O) (P) (Q) (R) (S) (T) (U) (V) (W) (X) (Y) (Z)) Cambridge's most distinguished hotel, this huge early-Victorian pile hunkers down beside bustling Parker's Piece as though fondly overseeing his great-great-grandchildren. Its public spaces ooze gentleman's-club atmosphere, its 120 rooms comfort and elegance. Look out for the enormous, creaky cage lift from 1927. Parking costs £10.

### Eating

#### BUDGET

**Fitzbillies** (☎ 352500; www.fitzbillies.com; 52 Trumpington St; ☎ shop 9am-5.30pm, restaurant 9am-9.30pm) Cambridge's oldest bakery, beloved by generations of students for its ultra-sticky buns and quaint wood shopfront, also has a classy music-free restaurant dotted with fresh flowers for a tranquil cream tea or meals.

**Tatties** (☎ 323399; 11 Sussex St; mains £2-6; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun) Fast-in, fast-out fishtank-style café and budget favourite that whips out baked and stuffed potatoes with innumerable fillings at lightening pace, as well as breakfasts, baguettes, salads and cakes. It gets very busy over lunch.

**Clowns** (☎ 355711; 54 King St; sandwiches from £2.75; ☎ 8am-midnight) Decorated with children's daubings of clowns, this is a thoroughly laid-back and charmingly personal spot for reading the newspaper, chatting over cappuccino, reasonably priced pasta or gelato, and relaxing on the roof terrace.

**Our pick Michaelhouse** (☎ 309167; Trinity St; mains £3.50-6; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri) You can sup Fair-trade coffee and nibble focaccia among soaring medieval arches or else take a pew within reach of the altar at this stylishly converted church, which still has a working chancel. The simple lunch menu is mostly vegetarian but also offers wine and beer for when God's back is turned.

### MIDRANGE & TOP END

**Our pick Rainbow Vegetarian Bistro** (☎ 321551; 9a King's Pde; mains £8-9; ☎ 10am-10pm Tue-Sat) First-rate vegetarian food and a pious glow emanate from this snug subterranean gem, accessed down a narrow passageway off King's Pde. It's decorated in funky colours and serves up organic dishes with a hint of the exotic, such as scrumptious Latvian potato bake and Indonesian gado gado.

**Midsummer House** (☎ 369299; www.midsummerhouse.co.uk; set lunch £20, 3-course dinner £55; ☎ lunch Tue-Sun, dinner Tue-Sat) Cambridge's gastronomic big-hitter, with two Michelin stars to its credit, this sophisticated restaurant is in a lovely grey-brick Victorian villa backing onto the river from its namesake common. Its adventurous French Mediterranean menu sends serious foodies weak at the knees. Book well ahead.

**Twenty-Two** (☎ 351880; www.restaurant22.co.uk; 22 Chesterton Rd; set dinner £24.50; ☎ 7-9.45pm Tue-Sat) Discreetly disguised amid a row of Victorian terraced housing is this outstanding restaurant, blessed by both its romantic candlelit ambience and its wonderful gourmet British and European menu with a commitment to local produce.

### Drinking

Punting and drinking are two of Cambridge students' favourite pastimes, and put the two together and you can really hit the relaxation jackpot or else end up quite literally drinking like a fish. The punting pubs, where rowers hang out and tourists can rent punts, are the best spots to join in the fun.

**Eagle** (☎ 505020; Bene't St) Cambridge's most famous pub has loosened the tongues and pickled the grey cells of many an illustrious academic in its day; among them Nobel Prize-winning scientists Crick and Watson, who are thought to have discovered the form of DNA. It's a traditional 16th-century pub with five cluttered cosy rooms, the back one popular with WWII airmen, who left their signatures on the ceiling.

**Fort St George** (☎ 354327; Midsummer Common) The ideal English summertime pub sandwiched between the grassy expanse of Midsummer Common and the punt-littered River Cam, and with lots of outdoor picnic tables at which to install yourself. Dating from the 16th century, the fort is said to be the oldest pub on the river, and has a snug,

crookedly beamed interior to decamp when the sun's gone in.

**St Radegund** (☎ 311794; 127 King St; ☎ 5-11pm Mon-Fri, noon-11pm Sat & Sun) A quirky little one-off pub – the smallest in town – run by an endearing eccentric and pulling a superb selection of unusual real ales, St Radegund is hidden behind a bluff exterior and sackcloth curtains; the interior is hung with paraffin lamps and the ceiling burnt with graffiti.

**Granta** (☎ 505016; Newnham Rd) If the exterior of this picturesque waterside pub overhanging a pretty mill pond looks strangely familiar, it could be because it's the darling of many a television director. Its terrace sits directly beside the water and when your Dutch courage has been sufficiently fuelled, there are punts for hire alongside.

### Entertainment

Pick up a *What's On* events guide from the tourist office or log on to www.cam.ac.uk/whatson.

### NIGHTCLUBS

**Fez** (☎ 519224; www.cambridgefez.com; 15 Market Passage; admission £5-7; ☎ 8pm-2am Mon-Sat) The city's top club, popular with town and gown ever since the stone age, Moroccan-themed Fez plays everything from hip-hop to Latin funk and scores the cream of visiting DJs. Come early or expect queues.

**Po Na Na Souk Bar** (☎ 323880; www.ponana.co.uk; 7b Jesus Lane; ☎ 8pm-midnight) Sipping your cocktail in the intimate atmosphere of a Moroccan kasbah and nodding along to an eclectic mix of Latin, house and hip-hop music, it's easy to understand why this late-night bar has remained a local favourite for a decade. Monday is hip-twisting salsa night.

**Twentytwo** (☎ 324600; www.twentytwo-cambridge.co.uk; Hobson's Passage, Sidney St; admission £5; ☎ 10pm-2am) Tucked down a tight passageway is this funky club kitted out in '70s décor with hallucinogenic carpets and baby-blue/pink backlights and playing mostly mainstream choons. On Tuesday nights it hosts the city's best-loved gay and lesbian night.

### THEATRE

**Corn Exchange** (☎ 357851; www.comex.co.uk; Wheeler St) This colossal ex-market building near the tourist office is the city's main centre for arts and entertainment, attracting the top names in pop and rock to ballet.

**Arts Theatre** (☎ 503333; www.cambridgeartstheatre.com; 6 St Edward's Passage) Cambridge's biggest bona fide theatre puts on everything from pantomime to drama fresh from London's West End.

**ADC** (☎ 300085; www.adctheatre.com; Park St) Students' theatre and current home to the university's Footlights comedy troupe, which jump-started the careers of scores of England's comedy legends, including John Cleese and Peter Cook.

## Getting There & Away

Cambridge is well served by trains, though not so well by bus. Trains run at least every 30 minutes from London's King's Cross and Liverpool St stations (£17.90, 45 minutes to 1½ hours). There are also three trains per hour to Ely (15 minutes) and hourly connections to Bury St Edmunds (£7.50, 44 minutes) and King's Lynn (£9.30, 48 minutes).

From Drummer St bus station there are hourly buses to Stansted airport (£9.70, 55 minutes), Heathrow (£25, 2½ up to 3¼ hours) and Gatwick (£29, 3¼ hours) airports while a Luton service (£12.20, 1½ hours) runs every two hours.

Buses to Oxford (£6, 3¼ hours) are regular but take a very convoluted route.

## Getting Around

### BICYCLE

There are few more bike-friendly cities than Cambridge, and joining the ranks of students on their mad dashes to lectures or leisurely rides around town is an experience in itself. No mountain bikes necessary here; most places rent three-speeds.

**Cambridge Station Cycles** (☎ 307125; www.stationcycles.co.uk; Station Bldg, Station Rd; per half-day/day/week £6/8/16) Handily positioned by the station; free map provided.

**City Cycle Hire** (☎ 365629; www.citycyclehire.com; 61 Newnham Rd; per hour/half-day/day/week from £3/5/8/15)

**Mike's Bikes** (☎ 312591; 28 Mill Rd; per week/month £12/35) Only long-term rentals.

### BUS

A free gas-powered City Shuttle runs around the centre stopping at Emmanuel St every 15 minutes. Four bus lines run around town from Drummer St bus station, including bus 3 from the train station to the town centre. Dayrider passes (£2.70) offer unlimited travel on all buses within Cambridge for one day;

### WORTH THE TRIP

An adorable 16th-century thatched pink cottage in the country, the **Pink Geranium** (☎ 01763-260215; www.pinkgeranium.co.uk; Station Rd, Melbourn; mains £18-27; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat, lunch Sun) is the kind of place you wish you'd brought your tweeds and wellies, and fasted for a week in preparation. Rumoured to have been Prince Charles' favourite when studying at Cambridge, 10 miles north, it's now a multi-award-winning restaurant and the archetypal English country getaway, surrounded by neatly snipped gardens, and full of cosy lounges and toned-down chintz.

Megarider passes (£9.50) are valid for one week. Buy them on board.

### CAR

Cambridge's centre is largely pedestrianised. It's best to use the well-signposted Park & Ride car parks (£1.40 to £1.80) on the outskirts of town. Shuttle buses run to the centre every 10 minutes between 7am and 7pm daily, then twice-hourly until 10pm.

### TAXI

Contact **A1 Cabco** (☎ 312444) or **Panther** (☎ 715715) for a taxi.

## AROUND CAMBRIDGE

### Grantchester

Punting, strolling or cycling along the river or through dreamy flower-speckled meadows to this too-cute-to-be-true riverside village of thatched cottages, cosy pubs and chocolate-box pretty gardens is a Cambridge tradition going back over a century.

And once here, it's an absolute joy to flop into a deck chair shaded by apple trees and wolf down cream teas and calorific cakes at the quintessentially English **our pick Orchard tea garden** (☎ 01223-845788; www.orchard-grantchester.com; Mill Way; ☎ approx 9.30am-5.30pm), favourite haunt of the Bloomsbury Group and other cultural icons.

Or to indulge in a post-punt pint, the **Red Lion** (High St) is a lovely pub near the river, with plenty of nooks and crannies to squirrel yourself away in.

Grantchester is 3 miles southeast of Cambridge on the River Granta.

## American War Cemetery

Glenn Miller, Joseph Kennedy and 3809 more American servicemen who lost their lives in battle while based in Britain are commemorated at this moving **cemetery** (☎ 01954-210350; www.abnmc.gov/ca.htm; Madingley; ☎ 8am-5.30pm mid-Apr-Sep, 8am-5pm Oct-mid-Apr), 4 miles west of the city. You can visit the cemetery as part of a City Sightseeing tour (see p465).

## Imperial War Museum

The romance of the winged war machine is alive and well at Europe's biggest **aviation museum** (☎ 835000; www.iwm.org.uk; adult/under 16yr £13/free; ☎ 10am-6pm mid-Mar-Sep, 10am-4pm Oct-mid-Mar) in Duxford, 9 miles south of Cambridge by the motorway. Almost 200 lovingly waxed aircraft from dive bombers to biplanes, Spitfire to Concorde are housed on this vast airfield, over which grown men scurry as though they just pulled their noses from boyhood *Biggles* books.

This airfield was no idle choice for the museum: it was a frontline fighter station in WWII, and played a crucial role in the pivotal Battle of Britain. It was the home of the famous Dam Buster squadron of Lancasters, and today is home to the Royal Air Force's Red Arrows squadron, which performs all kinds of celestial trickery at airshows throughout the world.

Also included is the stunning **American Air Museum** hangar, designed by Norman Foster, which has the largest collection of American civil and military aircraft outside the USA. Look out for the flying fortress *Memphis Belle*, which flew from here. The museum's legendary **airshows** of modern and vintage planes are some of the best you'll ever see (see the website for dates) and battlefield scenes are displayed in the land warfare hall, where you can check out WWII tanks and artillery. Kids will enjoy the adventure playground and the flight simulator. And a swanky new AirSpace hangar is also set to open in 2007.

From Monday to Saturday, Stagecoach bus C7 runs to Duxford (45 minutes) from Cambridge Drummer St bus station, via the train station, every 20 minutes until approximately 6pm; show your bus ticket and you'll get a reduced admission rate into the museum. On Sundays and Bank Holidays, Myalls runs services every two hours from 11am to about 5.25pm.

## ELY

☎ 01353 / pop 15,102

An easy and rewarding day trip from Cambridge, Ely (ee-lee) is a charming and historic city-town with a dazzling cathedral, scrupulously tidy Georgian and medieval centre and pretty riverside walks running out into the eerie fens around it. It's a thriving place, and while it used to be something of a joke that such a diminutive town could technically rank as a city, these days it's one of the fastest-growing cities in Europe. The odd name harks back to the days when Ely was an island marooned amid the undrained fens, which were inhabited by an abundance of eels that still make it into local cooking pots today.

## Information

The **tourist office** (☎ 662062; tic@eastcamb.gov.uk; 29 St Mary's St; ☎ 10am-5.30pm Apr-Oct, 11am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun Nov-Mar) makes accommodation bookings and has maps, and dishes out leaflets on the town's 'Eel Trail' walking tour, studded by modern works of art. Ask here about guided walking tours, including ghostly night-time tours. Banks and ATMs can be found along High St.

## Sights

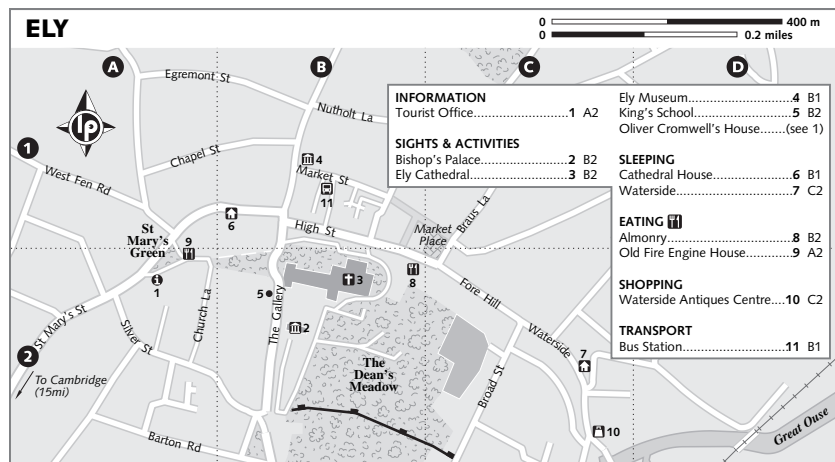
### ELY CATHEDRAL

Not only dominating the town but visible across the flat fenland for vast distances, the ghostly silhouette of **Ely Cathedral** (☎ 667735; www.cathedral.ely.anglican.org; adult/child/concession £5.20/free/4.50; ☎ 7am-7pm Easter-Aug, 7.30am-6pm Mon-Sat, 7.30am-5pm Sun Sep-Easter) is locally dubbed the 'Ship of the Fens'.

Walking into the early-12th-century Romanesque nave, you're immediately struck by its clean, uncluttered lines and lofty sense of space. The cathedral is renowned for its entrancing ceilings and the masterly 14th-century octagon and lantern tower, which soar upwards in shimmering colours that are well worth of a crick in your neck for gazing at them.

The vast 14th-century Lady Chapel is the biggest in England; it's filled with eerily empty niches that once held statues of saints and martyrs. They were hacked out unceremoniously by iconoclasts during the English Civil War. However, the astonishingly delicate tracery and carving remain.

Ely Cathedral was a centre of pilgrimage for many centuries thanks to the 7th-century queen of Northumbria, Etheldreda, who founded an



abbey here in 673. A colourful character, Ethel shrugged off the fact she had been twice married in her determination to become a nun. She was canonised shortly after her death.

There are free guided tours of the cathedral, and an octagon and roof tour (£8 including admission).

Near the entrance there's a small but gleaming **stained-glass museum** (☎ 665025; www.stainedglassmuseum.com; adult/child £3.50/2.50) that lets you get eye to eye with saints, misshapen monsters and all manner of domestic barbarity through vivid glasswork from the 14th century onwards.

To lap up a good singsong in splendid surroundings, Choral Sunday service is at 10.30am and evensong is at 5.30pm Monday to Saturday, 3.45pm on Sunday.

#### OTHER SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Historic sites cluster about the cathedral's toes. Within spitting distance of the tower are both the former **Bishop's Palace**, now used as a nursing home, and **King's School**, which keeps the cathedral supplied with fresh-faced choristers.

A short hop across St Mary's Green is the attractive half-timbered **Oliver Cromwell's House** (☎ 662062; adult/child £3.95/2.70; ☎ 10am-5pm Apr-Oct, 11am-4pm Nov-Mar), where England's warty war-monger lived with his family from 1636 to 1646, when he was the tithe collector of Ely. The house now has Civil War exhibits, portraits and waxworks and echoes with canned commentaries of – among other things – the great man's grisly death, exhumation and posthumous decapitation.

More town history can be explored in **Ely Museum** (☎ 666655; www.elymuseum.org.uk; adult/child £3/free; ☎ 10.30am-5pm Mon-Sat, 1-5pm Sun May-Oct, 10.30am-4pm Wed-Mon Nov-Apr), which is housed in the Old Gaol House complete with prisoners' cells and their scrawled graffiti.

Ely is also a great place for rummaging through antiques, and signs lead down to the river and bargain-hunting heaven **Waterside Antiques Centre** (☎ 667066; The Wharf; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 11.30am-5pm Sun). From here, charming riverside ambles flank the **Great Ouse**, which brims with activity, from Olympic rowers and riverboats to swans and hungry ducks. The towpath winds up- and downstream: for a quiet walk, turn left; turn right for the pub and tea garden. If you continue along this path you'll see the Fens stretching to the horizon.

#### Sleeping

**Ourpick Cathedral House** (☎ 662124; www.cathedralhouse.co.uk; 17 St Mary's St; s/d £45/75; ☎ P) Plenty of love has gone into the restoration of this gorgeous Georgian house, which is chock-a-block with fascinating antiques and curios. The individually decorated rooms are graced by original and period features, even in the bathrooms. Add to this a walled garden, converted stables and a central position and you're set.

**Waterside** (☎ 614329; www.29waterside.org.uk; 29 Waterside; d £60; ☎) This pocket-sized B&B is in a wonderfully character-rich 18th-century oak-beamed and wooden-floored building near the waterfront. It's furnished with reclaimed pine and has a cute walled garden.

#### Eating

Slippery eels are still a local delicacy dished up in several of the restaurants in Ely.

**Almonry** (☎ 666360; High St; snacks £1.50-4, lunch £7-9; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, 11am-5pm Sun) Vying for the best setting award, this traditional teashop cosies up to the cathedral, spilling into attractive gardens left of the Lady Chapel. Alternatively, you can shelter in its atmospheric 12th-century vaulted undercroft. Meals here are simple, but there's also a wide range of caffeinated pick-me-ups.

**Old Fire Engine House** (☎ 662582; St Mary's St; mains about £15.50; ☎ 10.30am-5.30pm & 7.30pm-9pm Mon-Sat, 12.30-5.30pm Sun) Dining at this delightfully homespun restaurant and art gallery feels like eating at a friend's. Backed by beautiful gardens and housing various intimate nooks, it serves classic seasonal and local dishes (with refills on request) and its afternoon cream teas are excellent.

#### Getting There & Away

Ely is on the A10, 15 miles northeast of Cambridge. Following the Fen Rivers Way (map available from tourist offices), it's a lovely 17-mile towpath walk.

Buses 19 and X12 run every hour from Cambridge's Drummer St bus station (one hour), or in Ely from the bus stop on Market St. Trains are much quicker and more frequent (15 minutes, every 20 minutes). There are also twice-hourly trains to Peterborough (£7.40, 35 minutes) and Norwich (£12.20, 55 minutes), and hourly services to King's Lynn (£5.60, 30 minutes).

#### PETERBOROUGH

☎ 01733 / pop 156,061

The sprawling, shopping-mad city of Peterborough is home to a remarkable cathedral that alone justifies it as a day-tripper's destination from Cambridge or London. And while the city's high-gloss shopping malls are unlikely to quicken the pulse of visitors, they do inject a lively buzz into its streets. A scattering of other mildly interesting attractions beef up the town's credentials, but really, see the cathedral and you can leave happy.

Peterborough's bus and train stations are an easy walk west of the city centre. The **tourist office** (☎ 452336; www.visitpeterborough.com; 3-5 Minster Precincts; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon & Wed-Fri, 10am-5pm Tue, 10am-4pm Sat) is in front of the cathedral's west front, and has information on guided walking and

ghost tours (adult/child £4/2). It also has information on other attractions in the vicinity, including a steam railway and reconstructed Bronze Age roundhouses at Flag Fen.

#### Peterborough Cathedral

England may be filled with fine cathedrals boasting ostentatious façades, but few can rival the instant 'wow' factor of Peterborough's unique early-13th-century western front, with its three deep yawning arches and arrow-sharp crests.

Visitors enter the **cathedral** (☎ 355300; www.peterborough-cathedral.org.uk; requested donation £3; ☎ 9am-5.15pm Mon-Sat, noon-5pm Sun), which was founded in 1118, through an odd 14th-century porch that peeks out between the cavernous arches like a dog from its kennel. Inside, you'll be immediately struck by the height of the magnificent three-storeyed Norman nave and by its lightness, created by the mellow local stone and fine clerestory windows. The nave is topped by a breathtaking early-13th-century painted-timber ceiling that is one of the earliest and most important of its kind in Europe, and still sports much of its original diamond-patterned paintwork.

Press on below the Gothic tower, which was painstakingly reconstructed in the 19th century, to the northern choir aisle and you'll find the rather plain tombstone of Henry VIII's first wife, the tragic Catherine of Aragon, buried here in 1536. Her divorce, engineered by the king because she could not produce a male heir, led to the Reformation in England. Her only child (a daughter) was not even allowed to attend her funeral. Every 29 January there is a procession in the cathedral to commemorate her death.

Just beyond this is the cathedral's wonderful 15th-century eastern tip, which has superb fan vaulting thought to be the work of master mason John Wastell, who worked on King's College Chapel in Cambridge.

Loop around into the southern aisle, and you'll find gold lettering marking the spot where the ill-fated Mary Queen of Scots was once buried. On the accession of her son, James, to the throne, her body was moved to Westminster Abbey.

#### Getting There & Away

There are regular trains to London (£22.30, 50 minutes to 1¼ hours), Cambridge (£11.90, 48 minutes) and Ely (£7.40, 35 minutes).



## SUFFOLK

You have to pinch yourself to remember that this charming rural backwater of England was once an astonishingly rich place that amassed great wool wealth and operated a string of busy ports. However, its gentle hills and lush valleys are filled with reminders of its golden age, from the magnificent 'wool churches' (as in paid for by, not made of) that dot the landscape, to the lavish pargeting (decorative stucco plasterwork) that adorns its buildings. The Stour Valley particularly delights with villages that seem freeze-dried since the Middle Ages, Bury St Edmunds impresses with both its mighty past and lively present, while the coast is strung with pretty and poignant seaside resorts increasingly nibbled by the sea.

### Information

You can whet your appetite for the region further through the websites [www.visitsuffolk.org.uk](http://www.visitsuffolk.org.uk) and [www.visit-suffolk.org.uk](http://www.visit-suffolk.org.uk).

### Getting Around

Consult **Suffolk County Tourism** ([www.suffolkonboard.com](http://www.suffolkonboard.com)) or **Traveline** (☎ 0870 608 2608; [www.travelineeastanglia.co.uk](http://www.travelineeastanglia.co.uk)) for local transport information.

### IPSWICH

☎ 01473 / pop 117,069

Suffolk's county capital was one of the very first Saxon towns in England, a thriving medieval centre of commerce and a major point of emigration to America. But while heavy investment jazzes up its lively waterfront marinas, in its centre beautiful timber-framed buildings moulder behind scruffy boards and ugly modern chain stores nudge medieval churches. The most beautifully preserved buildings, of which there are several humdingers, are occupied by private enterprises. That said, the town has some beautiful parkland, a burgeoning cultural scene and great transport connections.

### Information & Orientation

The **tourist office** (☎ 258070; [www.visit-ipswich.com](http://www.visit-ipswich.com); ☹ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat) is in 15th-century St Stephen's Church, off St Stephen's Lane. It organises 90-minute guided  **tours** (adult/child £2.50/2; ☹ May-Sep) at 2.15pm Tuesday and Thursday. In summer there are also walks on Saturday at 11am.

### A COTTAGE OF YOUR OWN

For self-catering country cottages in the area, have a browse through these sites:

**Farm Stay Anglia** ([www.farmstayanglia.co.uk](http://www.farmstayanglia.co.uk))

**Holiday Cottages Cambridge** ([www.holidaycottagescambridge.co.uk](http://www.holidaycottagescambridge.co.uk))

**Just Suffolk** ([www.justsuffolk.com](http://www.justsuffolk.com))

**Lincolnshire Cottages** ([www.lincolnshirecotages.com](http://www.lincolnshirecotages.com))

**Suffolk Secrets** ([www.suffolk-secrets.co.uk](http://www.suffolk-secrets.co.uk))

The train station is a 15-minute walk southwest of the tourist office along Princes St and across the roundabout.

Ipswich doesn't especially deserve an overnight stay, but contact the tourist office if you need accommodation.

### Sights

A glorious wedding-cake façade of crisp sugary-white pargeting decorates the front of the 17th-century **Ancient House** (☎ 214144; 40 Buttermarket; ☹ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Sat), its four panels each representing the continents discovered at the time. It's one of the finest examples of the craft you'll see anywhere and crawls with mythological creatures and characters. The building now houses a kitchen outfitters, but you can take a peek at the hammer-beam roof inside. The house is about 50m north of the tourist office.

Set in a lovely rolling park 300m north of town, the multigabled 16th-century **Christchurch Mansion** (☎ 433554; Soane St; admission free; ☹ mansion & gallery 10am-5pm Tue-Sat, 2.30-4.30pm Sun, closes at dusk in winter) is filled with period furniture and works by the likes of Constable and Gainsborough. Outside, look for the statue of a delightfully cantankerous granny – immediately recognisable to Britons as being the creation of local comic-strip artist Giles.

Less exciting are the dusty stuffed-and-mounted displays at **Ipswich Museum** (☎ 433551; High St; admission free; ☹ 10am-5pm Tue-Sat), with exhibits from natural history to Anglo-Saxon Ipswich.

**Ipswich Buses** (☎ 0800 919 390; [www.ipswichbuses.co.uk](http://www.ipswichbuses.co.uk)) runs one-hour city sightseeing buses from April to August.

### Getting There & Away

There are trains every 20 minutes to London's Liverpool St station (£26.80, 1¼ hours), twice hourly to Norwich (£10.90, 45 minutes) and

Bury St Edmunds (£6, 30 to 40 minutes). There are bus services roughly every half-hour to Sudbury Monday to Saturday and less frequently on Sunday.

### AROUND IPSWICH

#### Sutton Hoo

Soon after the world was consumed by Tut-ankhamen fever, England was to discover its own ancient treasure-trove. It was right here on this rather lonely rural spot that in 1939 archaeologists uncovered the hull of an enormous Anglo-Saxon ship, in which a king-like individual was interred with a fabulous wealth of Saxon riches. It's thought that this may be the burial site of Raedwald, King of East Anglia.

His exquisitely crafted helmet is now the site's symbol, and you can see a fine replica in the **visitors centre** (NT; ☎ 01394-389714; [www.suttonhoo.org](http://www.suttonhoo.org); Woodbridge; adult/child £5.50/2.50, discounts for those arriving on foot or bicycle; ☹ 11am-5pm daily Jul-early Sep, 11am-5pm Wed-Sun Easter-mid-April & early Sep-Oct, Sat & Sun only Nov-Easter) along with many of the original finds and a full-scale reconstruction of his ship and burial chamber. The finest treasures, including a warrior's helmet and shield, gold ornaments and Byzantine silver, are displayed in London's British Museum (p139).

There's little other than pimped burial mounds to see at the site itself, although you may still get an attack of the heebie-jeebies recalling that they were also used as a place of execution. For a better appreciation you can always join one of the enlightening one-hour tours (adult/child £2.50/1.50).

Sutton Hoo is 2 miles east of Woodbridge and 6 miles northeast of Ipswich. Bus 73, 71 and 171 together visit Sutton Hoo 10 times per day Monday to Saturday, passing through Woodbridge (10 minutes) en route to Ipswich (40 minutes).

**Seckford Hall** (☎ 01394-385678; [www.seckford.co.uk](http://www.seckford.co.uk); Woodbridge; s/d from £85/130; P ☎ ☹ ♿) is one of the best places to stay in the area. It's a commanding 16th-century Elizabethan country mansion just outside Woodbridge with luxuriously appointed rooms, oodles of antiques, a terrific restaurant and an 18-hole golf course next door.

### STOUR VALLEY

The River Stour trickles gently through a soft, pastoral landscape that has inspired some of Britain's best-loved painters from Constable to Gainsborough. Its impossibly pretty villages

are filled with the timber-framed houses and elegant churches that recall the region's 15th-century weaving boom, when this unlikely valley produced more cloth than anywhere else in England. In the 16th century, however, production gradually shifted elsewhere and the valley reverted to a rural backwater, ignored by the Industrial Revolution and virtually everyone else – bad news for locals, but great for today's visitors as its medieval villages have survived miraculously intact.

### Long Melford

☎ 01787 / pop 3675

For such a small and stringy village, self-important Long Melford has a lot to boast of. For starters there are its two fine stately homes and a 2-mile High St that claims to be the longest in England, not to mention the stunning timber-framed buildings and antique shops that line it. Here too is a magnificent church, which presides over a sprawling village green that's totally disproportionate to the village's size.

From outside, the romantic Elizabethan mansion of **Melford Hall** (NT; ☎ 376395; adult/child £5/2.50; ☹ 1.30-5pm Wed-Sun May-Sep, 1.30-5pm Sat & Sun Apr & Oct) seems little changed since it entertained the Queen in 1578. Inside, you can imagine her being fussed over in the panelled banquet hall. There's also much Regency and Victorian finery and a display on Beatrix Potter, who was related the Parker family that owned the house from 1786 to 1960.

There's a noticeably different atmosphere at Long Melford's other red-brick Elizabethan mansion, just up the road and down a tree-lined avenue. **Kentwell Hall** (☎ 310207; [www.kentwell.co.uk](http://www.kentwell.co.uk); adult/child £7.50/4.75, admission varies on event days; ☹ noon-5pm Apr-Sep) is a private home with a wonderfully lived-in feel despite being as full of centuries-old ghost stories and as much Tudor pomp as you could hope for. It's surrounded by a rectangular moat and there's a Tudor-rose maze and a rare-breeds farm that'll keep the kids happy. Kentwell bristles with bodices and hose from mid-June to mid-July, when several hundred Tudor enthusiasts don traditional attire and re-create a year in the Tudor calendar.

The magnificently pompous **Great Church of the Holy Trinity** (☎ 281836; ☹ 10am-5pm Apr-Sep, 10am-4pm Mar & Oct, 11am-3pm Nov-Feb) nearby is a very stately affair, well worth sticking a nose into if only for its stained-glass windows.

**SLEEPING & EATING**

**Denmark House** (☎ 378798; www.denmarkhousebb.co.uk; Hall St; s/d £33/55; ☒) Situated in the village's heart, this modest-fronted little town-house B&B is a Grade II-listed building with a long history, and parts dating back to medieval times. It has cosy beamed rooms with décor your granny would just love.

**Black Lion Hotel & Restaurant** (☎ 312356; www.blacklionhotel.net; the Green; s/d from £88/120) A gorgeous little 10-room hotel on the village green, the 17th-century Black Lion has individually styled rooms, some with period style and romantic four-posters and some altogether more quirky, such as the zebra-striped family room. It also has a superb restaurant (set menu £28).

**Scutcher's Bistro** (☎ 310200; www.scutchers.com; Westgate St; mains £14-19; ☒ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) Renowned throughout the Stour Valley for its exquisite menu of classic and more contemporary British dishes, Scutcher's nonetheless has a wonderfully unpretentious bistro feel, cheerfully painted and wood-beamed. It's just west of the Black Lion.

**GETTING THERE & AWAY**

Buses leave from the High St outside the post office. There are hourly services Monday to Saturday to Bury St Edmunds (52 minutes) calling at Sudbury (10 minutes). More services also shuttle back and forth to Sudbury (10 minutes) twice hourly during the week.

**Lavenham**

☎ 01787 / pop 1738

There's barely a straight line in the whole of topsy-turvy Lavenham, Eastern England's loveliest medieval wool town. Crammed into its centre are around 300 exquisitely preserved buildings that lean and lurch like old folks balancing their old wooden bones against each other. Lavenham reached its peak in the heady 15th-century wool wealth days, after which the town quietly fossilised. So modern-day visitors are treated to a remarkably complete medieval town where pretty, pink thatched cottages rub shoulders with timber-framed and pargeted houses that now house curiosity shops, art galleries, quaint tearooms and ancient inns.

The **tourist office** (☎ 248207; lavenhamtic@baberg.gov.uk; Lady St; ☒ 10am-4.45pm Apr-Oct, 11am-3pm Sat & Sun Mar & Nov) offers guided walks (£3.25) around the village departing at 2.30pm Saturday and 11am and 2.30pm Sunday.

**SIGHTS**

Many of Lavenham's most enchanting buildings cluster along High St, Water St and around Market Pl, which is dominated by the early-16th-century **guildhall** (NT; ☎ 247646; adult/child £3.50/1.50; ☒ 11am-5pm Apr-Oct, 11am-4pm Sat & Sun Mar, 11am-4pm Thu-Sun Nov-Dec), a superb example of a close-studded, timber-framed building and now a local history museum, with displays on the wool trade and weaving demonstrations on Thursdays.

Also on Market Pl, the atmospheric 14th-century **Little Hall** (☎ 247179; Market Pl; adult/child £2.50/free; ☒ 2-5.30pm Wed, Thu, Sat & Sun Easter-Oct) is another gem, with soft ochre plastering, timber frame and crown-post roof. Once home to a successful wool merchant, it's now a private residence open to the public.

At the village's high southern end rises the soaring steeple of the medieval **Church of St Peter & St Paul** (☒ 8.30am-5.30pm Apr-Sep, 8.30am-3.30pm Oct-Mar), which is a further testament to Lavenham's past prosperity. Built between 1485 and 1525, it is approached by avenues of box hedges.

**SLEEPING & EATING**

**Brett Farm** (☎ 248533; www.brettfarm.com; off Water St; s/d £35/60; ☒) The budget-minded will do very well at this modern farmhouse bungalow, a very friendly, unpretentious place with on-site stables, and comfortable spotless rooms with wicker furniture and textured ceilings. It's a short, pleasant walk south of the village. Carriage and bike hire are available.

**our pick** **Lavenham Priory** (☎ 247404; www.lavenhampriory.co.uk; Water St; s/d from £75/95; ☒) A rare treat, this sumptuously restored 15th-century building was once home to Benedictine monks, then medieval cloth merchants, and still perfectly captures its Elizabethan spirit with cavernous fireplaces, leaded windows and exquisite period rooms. Now an upmarket six-room B&B, it must be booked well in advance.

**Swan Hotel** (☎ 247477; www.theswanatlavenham.co.uk; High St; d £105-235; ☒) A warren of stunning timber-framed 15th-century buildings now shelters one of the region's best-known hotels. Rooms are suitably spectacular affairs, some with immense fireplaces, colossal beams and magnificent four-posters. Elsewhere the hotel cultures a genteel folk's country-club feel. The modern British restaurant in the lofty Great Hall has also won acclaim (set lunch/dinner £20/28.50).

**Angel** (☎ 247388; www.theangelhotel.com; Market Pl; mains £9-13; ☒) Eating is a deceptively informal affair at this lovely 15th-century inn, which actually serves award-winning modern British cuisine, with lip-smacking steak-and-ale pies the speciality of the house. The Angel also has beautifully appointed country-style rooms (single/double from £55/80).

**GETTING THERE & AWAY**

Chambers Buses connects Lavenham with Bury St Edmunds (30 minutes) and Sudbury (20 minutes), with an hourly bus (until 6pm Monday to Saturday, no service on Sunday) from Bury St Edmunds to Colchester via Sudbury and Lavenham. There are no direct buses from Cambridge; you must go via Sudbury, also the location of the nearest train station.

**BURY ST EDMUNDS**

☎ 01284 / pop 36,218

A new buzz with an old message has settled over the genteel market town of Bury St Edmunds of late. Once home to one of the most powerful monasteries of medieval Europe, the town has just seen the completion of its fine cathedral with a new Gothic lantern tower – a mere 500 years after the present building was begun. However, Bury has long attracted travellers for its powerful history, atmospheric ruins, handsome Georgian architecture and bustling agricultural markets, still held at Angel Hill on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Others come to the town on a mission to investigate the other reason for its fame: beer. Greene King, the famous Suffolk brewer, is based here with its doors wide open to visitors.

**History**

Bury's slogan 'Shrine of a King, Cradle of the Law' recalls two defining events in its history. The town's namesake St Edmund was the last king of East Anglia, decapitated by the Danes in 855. The martyr's body was reburied here in 903, and began to trot out ghostly miracles of pilgrimage and the core of a new Benedictine monastery. At its height the abbey was one of the most famous and wealthy in the country, at least until Henry VIII got his grubby hands on it in 1536, during the dissolution of the monasteries.

'Cradle of the Law' refers to how in 1214 the English barons drew up a petition that would form the basis of Magna Carta here in

the abbey, thus setting the country on the road to a constitutional government.

**Orientation & Information**

Bury is easily navigated thanks to Abbot Baldwin's original 11th-century grid layout – one of the first in the country. The train station is 900m north of the tourist office, with frequent buses to the centre. The bus station is in the town's heart.

Bury's **tourist office** (☎ 764667; tic@stedsbc.gov.uk; 6 Angel Hill; ☒ 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-3pm Sun Easter-Oct, 10am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat Nov-Easter) has maps and advice and is also the starting point for guided walking tours (£3) that depart at 2.30pm daily Easter to September. Audio tours (adult/child £2.50/1.50) of the abbey ruins are also available here.

**Sights****ABBEY & PARK**

Now a picturesque ruin residing in beautiful gardens behind the cathedral, the once all-powerful **abbey** (admission free; ☒ dawn-dusk) still impresses despite the townspeople having made off with much of the stone, and St Edmund's grave and bones having disappeared long ago.

You enter the park via one of two well-preserved old gates: opposite the tourist office, the staunch mid-14th-century **Great Gate** is intricately decorated but nevertheless ominously defensive, complete with battlements, portcullis and arrow slits. The other entrance sits further up along Angel Hill, where a gargoyled-studded early-12th-century **Norman Tower** looms beside the cathedral.

Just beyond the Great Gate is a peaceful garden where the **Great Court** was once a hive of activity. Just beyond is a dovecote that marks the only remains of the **Abbot's Palace**. The best-conserved remains of this once mighty abbey church are part of the western front and **Samson Tower**, which were borrowed by houses built into them. In front of Samson Tower is a beautiful **statue of St Edmund** by Dame Elisabeth Frink (1976). The rest of the abbey spreads eastward like a ragged skeleton, with various lumps and pillars hinting at its immense size. Just north of the church lie more clustered remains of **monastic buildings**.

**ST EDMUNDSBURY CATHEDRAL**

Completed in 2005, the 45m-high Millennium Tower of **St Edmundsbury Cathedral** (St James; ☎ 754933; www.steds cathedral.co.uk; requested

donation £3; (☎ 7.30am-6pm) is a vision in virginal Lincolnshire limestone, and its traditional Gothic-style construction gives a good idea of how the towers of many other English cathedrals must once have looked fresh from the stonemason's chisel.

Most of the rest of the building dates from the early 16th century, though the eastern end is postwar 20th-century, and the northern side was completed in 1990. It began life as a church and was only made a cathedral in 1914.

The overall effect is light and lofty, with a gorgeous hammer-beam roof and a striking sculpture of the crucified Christ by Dame Elisabeth Frink in the north transept. The impressive entrance porch has a tangible Spanish influence, a tribute to Abbot Anselm (1121-48), who opted against pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela in favour of building a church dedicated to St James (Santiago in Spanish) right here.

### ST MARY'S CHURCH

One of the biggest parish churches in the country, **St Mary's** contains the tomb of Mary Tudor (Henry VIII's sister and a one-time queen of

France). Built around 1430, it also has a host of somewhat vampirish angels swooping from its roof, and a bell is still rung to mark curfew, as it was in the Middle Ages.

### GREENE KING BREWERY

Churning out some of Britain's favourite booze since Victorian times, this famous **brewery** (☎ 714297; www.greeneking.co.uk; Crown St; museum adult/child £2/1, day/evening tours £8/10; ☎ museum 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, noon-4pm Sun, tours noon & 3pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am, 12.30pm & 3pm Sat, 11.30am Sun, 7pm Wed-Fri Easter-Sep) has a museum and runs tours, after which you can appreciate what all the fuss is about in their brewery tap bar. Tours are popular so book ahead.

### MOYSE'S HALL MUSEUM

**Moyses's Hall Museum** (☎ 706183; Cornhill; adult/child £2.60/2.10; ☎ 10.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 11am-4pm Sat & Sun) wows with its impressive 12th-century undercroft and tells some particularly gruesome stories in a room dedicated to death, burial and witchcraft. Among other curiosities, you'll discover a mummified cat that was purposefully buried alive in a building's walls,

a book bound in the tanned skin of an infamous murderer, and an armour-like gibbet that once displayed executed criminals.

### Sleeping

**Hamilton House** (☎ 703022; terrywelsh821@btinternet.co.uk; 4 Nelson Rd; s/d/tr from £25/48/58; ☎) This wonderfully friendly B&B is in an attractive red-brick Edwardian house with four large, cheerfully decorated rooms, nearby parking and a short walk from the town centre. Packed lunches can be arranged on request.

**Ounce House** (☎ 761779; www.ouncehouse.co.uk; Northgate St; s/d from £65/85; ☎) There are only a few rooms up for grabs at this dignified Victorian merchant's house, which mixes a personable atmosphere with pristine country-style rooms and the kind of neat 19th-century interior that makes you sit up straight and mind your Ps and Qs at the breakfast table. Request a room overlooking the walled garden.

**Angel Hotel** (☎ 714000; www.theangel.co.uk; 3 Angel Hill; s/d from £125/135; ☎) Peeking from behind a shaggy mane of vines, this famous old coaching inn has hosted many a dignitary in its long history, including fictional celebrity Mr Pickwick, who Dickens wrote enjoyed an 'excellent roast dinner' here. And you can follow his example in the hotel's top-class restaurant (set dinner £25 to £40). Rooms are split between a slick contemporary wing and traditional Georgian building.

### Eating

**Maison Bleue** (☎ 760623; www.maisonbleue.co.uk; 31 Churchgate St; mains £9-19, set lunch/dinner £14/24; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) This superb seafood bistro is justly popular with locals for its imaginative preparations of salmon, skate, monkfish and more. It has crisp white-linen style, chic waiters and colourful marine murals.

**Cupola House** (☎ 765808; www.the-cupola.com; The Transverse; mains £16-20, bar food £6-8.50) This grand 17th-century apothecary's home, topped by a baroque-style octagonal cupola, is rich with historic features. It was recently rescued from a severe state of disrepair and now houses a stylish contemporary restaurant with a meaty menu and relaxed atmosphere.

### Drinking

**Nutshell** (☎ 764867; The Traverse) Recognised by the *Guinness Book of Records* as Britain's smallest, this midget-sized timber-framed pub is an absolute gem and a tourist attraction in

its own right. Mind how you knock back a pint here as in the crush you never know who you're going to elbow.

### Getting There & Away

Centrally placed, Bury is a convenient point from which to explore western Suffolk. There are three daily National Express buses to London (£12.60, 2½ hours). From Cambridge, Stagecoach 11 runs to Bury (1¼ hours) hourly from Monday to Saturday; the last bus back to Cambridge leaves at 7.30pm.

Trains go to Ipswich (£6, 30 to 40 minutes, two per hour), Ely (£8, 30 minutes, six daily) and hourly to Cambridge (£7.50, 45 minutes), all of which have links to London (£30, two hours).

For taxis call **A1 Cars** (☎ 766777) or try the rank alongside the market.

### AROUND BURY ST EDMUNDS Ickworth House & Park

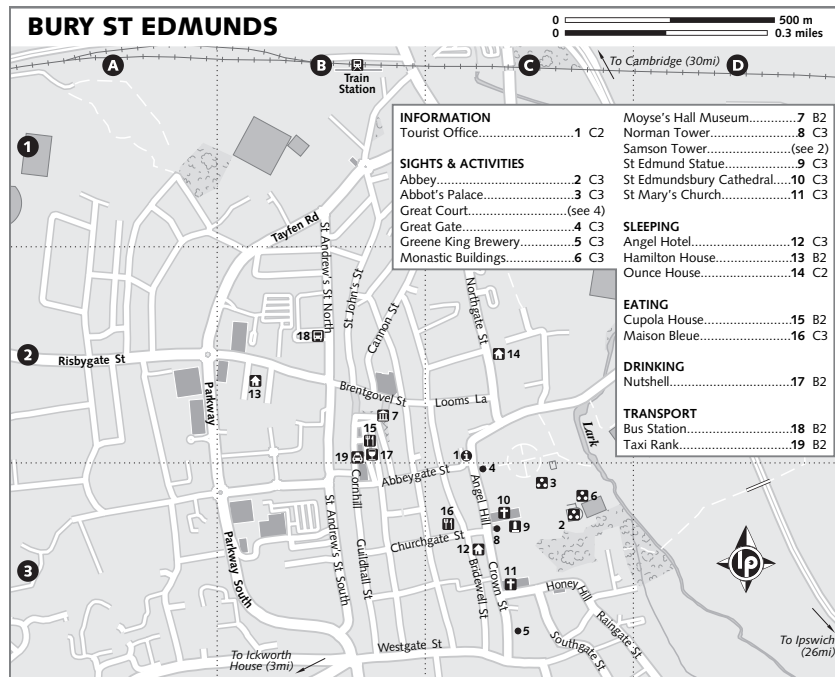
The puffed-up pomposity of stately home **Ickworth House** (NT; ☎ 735270; adult/child house & park £7/3, park only £3.40/90p; ☎ house 1-5pm Fri-Tue mid-Mar-Oct, park 8am-8pm year-round) is palpable from the minute you catch sight of its immense oval rotunda and wide outspread wings. The building is the whimsical creation of fourth Earl of Bristol and Bishop of Derry Frederick Hervey (1730-1803; see the boxed text, p478), and contains fine paintings by Titian, Gainsborough and Velasquez. There's also a lovely Italian garden, parkland bearing the landscaping eye of Capability Brown, a deer enclosure and a hide to explore. You can even imagine yourself a houseguest of the nutty earl thanks to a swanky new **hotel** (☎ 735350; www.ickworthhotel.com; d £180-490; ☎) in the east wing.

Ickworth is 3 miles southwest of Bury on the A143. Burton's bus service 344/5 from Bury train station (15 minutes) to Haverhill can drop you nearby.

### ALDEBURGH

☎ 01728 / pop 2790

The adorable little fishing village of Aldeburgh paints a rosy picture of a traditional British seaside resort, with ramshackle fishing huts selling fresh-from-the-nets catch, fine restaurants serving the best fish and chips in the southeast, a sweeping shingle beach that is steadily encroaching into the town's heart, and a lively cultural scene.



### THE ECCENTRIC EARL

The Hervey family had such a reputation for eccentricity that it was said of them that 'when God created the human race he made men, women and Herveys'. Perhaps the biggest weirdo of them all was the creator of Ickworth House, Frederick, the third son of the third Earl of Bristol. As Bishop of Derry (Ireland) he was renowned not for his piety but for his agnosticism, vanity and oddity: he would force his clergymen to race each other through peat bogs in the middle of the night, sprinkle flour on the floor of his house to catch night-time adulterers, champion the cause of Catholic emancipation (he was, after all, a Protestant bishop) and earn himself the sobriquet of 'wicked prelate' from George III.

Not content with his life in Ireland, in later years Frederick took to travelling around Europe, where he indulged each and every one of his passions: women, wine, art and intrigue. He tried to pass himself off as a spy in France, and for his trouble he was rewarded with a nine-month prison sentence in a Napoleonic gaol. While in Italy, he horrified visiting English aristocrats with his dress sense and manners; he often dressed in military garb and once chucked a bowl of pasta onto a religious procession because he hated the sound of tinkling bells.

Composer Benjamin Britten and lesser-known poet George Crabbe both lived and worked here; Britten founded East Anglia's primary arts and music festival, the **Aldeburgh Festival** (☎ 687110; www.aldeburgh.co.uk), which takes place in June and tops the grand old age of 60 in 2007. Britten's legacy is commemorated by Maggi Hambling's wonderful new *Scallop* sculpture, a short stroll left along the seashore. Its delicate, sometimes bird-like, sometimes fan-like interlocking shells invite clambering and crawling by holidaying kids who are only too quick to oblige.

Aldeburgh's other photogenic gem is the intricately carved and timber-framed **Moot Hall** (adult £1; ☎ 2.30-4pm May-Sep), which now sits warily beside the approaching seashore when once it sat plump in the town's centre.

Information can be found at the **tourist office** (☎ 453637; atic@suffolkcoastal.gov.uk; 152 High St; ☎ 9am-5.15pm Apr-Oct, 10am-4pm Mon-Sat Nov-Easter).

### Walking

A great way to enjoy the bracing sea air is by following the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Path, which passes just 1km north of Aldeburgh, up along the coast for a few miles. Alternatively, from Aldeburgh follow the path inland for a lovely 3-mile walk towards the village of Snape, through some pleasant wooded areas and fields.

### Sleeping

**Blaxhall YHA** (☎ 0870 770 5702; blaxhall@yha.org.uk; Heath Walk; dm £11; ☎) Housed in an old school building that gives it an extra-institutional aura, this hostel nonetheless has small, great-

value dorms. It's situated in good walking, cycling and birding country 6 miles from Aldeburgh, and west of Snape Maltings.

**Ocean House** (☎ 452094; jbreroh@aol.com; 25 Crag Path; s/d from £60/70, sea-facing extra £5; ☎) Plump in the middle of the town's shoreline, this cosy red-brick Victorian guesthouse has period décor and unimpeded sea views. Unexpected touches include crocheted bedspreads, a rocking horse, and the top-floor room even has a grand piano! Bikes can be borrowed and there's a table-tennis table in the cellar.

**White Lion Hotel** (☎ 452720; www.whitelion.co.uk; Market Cross Pl; s/d with sea view £90/156, without £78/132; ☎ ☎) Aldeburgh's oldest hotel is a large, traditionally run place overlooking the shingle beach, simple fishing shacks and historic Moot Hall. The building retains some 16th-century features, especially in the excellent oak-panelled restaurant, but has mostly straight-laced modernish rooms.

### Eating

**Café 152** (☎ 454594; www.152aldeburgh.co.uk; 152 High St; mains £10-18; ☎ lunch & dinner) Freshly netted seafood is always the dish of the day in this stylishly minimalist bistro, warmed by fresh flowers, simple wooden furniture and stripped-wood floors. The seasonal menu is delightfully creative, ranging from poached skate with vegetable ribbons to crisp anchovy fritter.

### SOUTHWOLD

☎ 01502 / pop 3858

One of the very prettiest of Eastern England's seaside resorts, Southwold sits atop sturdy

cliffs that have largely protected it from the fate of its increasingly subaquatic neighbours. Its reputation as a well-heeled holiday getaway has earned it the nickname 'Kensington-on-Sea' after the posh district of London, and its gorgeous sandy beach, pebble-walled cottages, cannon-dotted clifftop and rows of beachfront bathing huts are all undeniably picturesque. The occasional whiff of roasting malt is also a reminder that Southwold is home to the **Adnams Brewery** (☎ 727200; www.adnams.co.uk; Adnams Pl, Sole Bay Brewery), so what better excuse to try its creamy ales in one of the town's old coaching inns?

The **tourist office** (☎ 724729; www.visit-southwold.co.uk; 69 High St; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, 11am-4pm Sun Apr-Sep, 10.30am-3.30pm Mon-Fri, to 4pm Sat Oct-Mar) can help out with accommodation and information.

Starting inland, the **Church of St Edmund** (Church St; admission free; ☎ 9am-6pm Jun-Aug, to 4pm rest of year) is worth a quick peek for its fabulous medieval screen and 15th-century bloodshot-eyed Jack-o-the-clock, which grumpily overlooks the church's rear. A mere stone's throw away is an old weavers' cottage that now houses the **Southwold Museum** (☎ 726097; www.southwoldmuseum.org; 9-11 Victoria St; admission free; ☎ 10.30am-noon & 2-4pm Aug, 2-4pm Apr-Oct), where you can gen up on the explosive 132-ship and 50,000-men Battle of Solebay (1672), fought between the English, French and Dutch fleets just off the coast.

But Southwold's shoreline is really the place to be. Take time to amble along its promenade, admire the squat 19th-century **lighthouse** before ending up at the cute little **pier** (☎ 722105; www.southwoldpier.co.uk), first built in 1899 but recently reconstructed. In among a few cheap-and-cheerful bars, fast-food dispensers and amusements, you'll find a quirky collection of handmade slot machines including a mobility masterclass for zimmerframe-users, and a modern water clock sculpture with a naughty secret revealed every half-hour.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Acton Lodge** (☎ 723217; www.southwold.ws/actonlodge; 18 South Green; s/d £40/68; ☎ ☎) This huge Victorian homestead with a Gothic-style tower sits beside a sprawling green that runs down to the seafont. It's peppered with antiques and has just three colourful rooms with either sea or green views. The Aga-cooked breakfasts are uncommonly healthy, with fish options.

**Northcliffe Guest House** (☎ 724074; www.northcliffe-southwold.co.uk; 20 North Pde; s/d £55/70; ☎) This

spacious three-storey Victorian terraced house sits snootily overlooking the sea and pier. It has courteous owners, tasteful décor and lovely rooms variously decorated in pastel shades.

**Buchenham Coffee House** (☎ 723273; 81 High St; mains £6.60; ☎ lunch) Tucked away in a basement with low-beamed ceiling, exposed brick and art in the wall cavities, this café serves delicious vegetarian specials such as Tuscan bean crunch and vegetable moussaka.

### Getting There & Away

Bus connections are surprisingly limited: your best bet is to catch one of the hourly services to Lowestoft (45 minutes) or Halesworth train station (30 minutes) and continue from there.

## NORFOLK

There's an old saying that folks in Norfolk 'have one foot on the land, and one in the sea', although in truth there's a whole watery grey area in between. Seemingly spread by palette knife in a wide coastal arc, Norfolk is drizzled with inland waterways. The idyllic Norfolk Broads beckon for boating holidays. Bird-watchers flock to its marshy nature reserves, and the county's shingly coastline is a largely unspoilt crescent, fringed by pretty flint houses and boats hauling in fresh shellfish. And when you've had enough peace and quiet, you can always head for bustling county town, Norwich; in addition to castle, cathedral and medieval churches galore, it has the liveliest pubs, clubs and restaurants around.

### Information

Some handy websites include: **Independent Traveller's Norfolk** (www.itnorfolk.co.uk)

**Norfolk Coast** (www.norfolkcoast.co.uk)

**Visit Norfolk** (www.visitnorfolk.co.uk)

**Visit West Norfolk** (www.visitwestnorfolk.com)

### Activities

Waymarked walking trails include the well-known **Peddars Way** and **Norfolk Coast Path** national trail (see p458). Other long-distance paths include the **Weavers Way**, a 57-mile trail from Cromer to Great Yarmouth, and the **Angles Way**, which negotiates the valleys of

## NORFOLK, WHERE 'FOKES DEW DIFF'RUNT

Norfolk's inhabitants are duly proud of their reputation for bloody-mindedness. To quote a favourite local yarn, a new bishop arrived at his new diocese to be promptly warned by his predecessor that if he wanted to lead anyone here he should first find out where they were going and walk in front of them. It's often said that it was this doggedness that helped make the region a runaway commercial success in the Middle Ages. We'll let you decide for yourselves if the label still sticks.

the Rivers Waveney and Little Ouse for 70 miles. Meanwhile the **Wherryman's Way** ([www.wherrymanway.net](http://www.wherrymanway.net)) is a newly launched 35-mile walking and cycling route through the Broads, following the River Yare from Norwich to Great Yarmouth.

For a real challenge, the **Around Norfolk Walk** is a 220-mile circuit that combines most of the above.

## Getting Around

There's comprehensive travel advice and timetable information available at **Passenger Transport Norfolk** ([www.passengertransport.norfolk.gov.uk](http://www.passengertransport.norfolk.gov.uk)) or you can call the national **Traveline** (☎ 0870 608 2608).

## NORWICH

☎ 01603 / pop 121,550

Once described as having a pub for every day of the year and a church for every Sunday, vibrant Norwich (pronounced norritch) still has both in abundance and plenty more besides. These days the fabulous medieval wood churches that crop up on almost every street corner house everything from cybercafés to a puppet theatre in a heart-warming demonstration of how preservation and innovation can go hand in hand. Choice modern developments and the city's artsy student population further ensure that its steep zigzagging warren of historic streets brim with activity. The city is home to a remarkable Norman keep and a marvellous cathedral, and while the city's economic clout has waned considerably since its medieval heyday, Norfolk's capital is still one of the region's most appealing cities after Cambridge.

## History

Though Norwich's history stretches back well over a thousand years, the city's golden age was during the Middle Ages, when it was England's most important city besides London. Edward III encouraged Flemish weavers to settle here in the 14th century, and their arrival helped establish the wool industry that fattened the city and sustained it right through to the 18th century.

Mass immigration from the Low Countries peaked in the troubled 16th century. In 1579 more than a third of the town's citizens were foreigners of a staunch Protestant stock, which proved beneficial during the Civil War when the Protestant parliamentarians caused Norwich little strife.

## Orientation

The castle crowns central Norwich, surrounded by a compact medieval street plan. Within the circle of river and city walls there are scattered more than 30 parish churches and the Anglican cathedral. At the city's heart is its candy-stripe canopied **market** (Market Sq; ☎ approx 8am-4.30pm), one of the biggest and oldest markets in England, running since 1025. The enormous modern Forum building houses the tourist office.

## Information

Banks and ATMs can be found around the Market Sq.

**Boots** (☎ 767970; 19 Castle Mall) Well-stocked pharmacy.

**Library** (☎ 774774; Forum; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat, 10.30am-4.30pm Sun) Free internet for those with ID and the patience to fill out a few forms.

**Norfolk & Norwich University Hospital** (☎ 286286; Colney Lane) Four miles west of the centre.

**Norwich Internet Café** (All Saints Church, Westlegate; per 20min £1; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Sat, 12.30-4pm Sun)

**Post office** (☎ 761635; 84-85 Castle Mall)

**Tourist office** (☎ 727927; [www.visitnorwich.co.uk](http://www.visitnorwich.co.uk); ☎ 9.30am-6pm Mon-Sat & 10.30am-4.30pm Sun Apr-Oct, 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat Nov-Mar) Just inside the Forum on Millennium Plain.

## Sights

### NORWICH CASTLE MUSEUM & ART GALLERY

A solid sentinel overlooking medieval and modern Norwich from its hilltop perch, this massive Norman **castle keep** (☎ 493636; [www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk](http://www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk); castle & museum adult/child £4.30/3.15, art gallery & exhibitions £4.30/3.15, all museum

zones £6.30/4.60; ☎ 10am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 1-5pm Sun Jun-Sep, to 4.30pm Oct-May) – built in 1160 – ranks highly in the list of best-preserved examples of Anglo-Norman military architecture, despite a 19th-century face-lift and a gigantic shopping centre grafted to one side.

It's now home to a superb interactive **museum** and an **art gallery** to boot. The museum crams in a wealth of history, including lively exhibits on Boudicca and the Iceni, the Anglo-Saxons and Vikings, natural history displays and even an Egyptian gallery complete with mummies. Every room is enlivened with plenty of fun for kids, but best of all is the atmospheric keep itself, which sends shivers down the spine with graphic displays on grisly punishments meted out in its days as

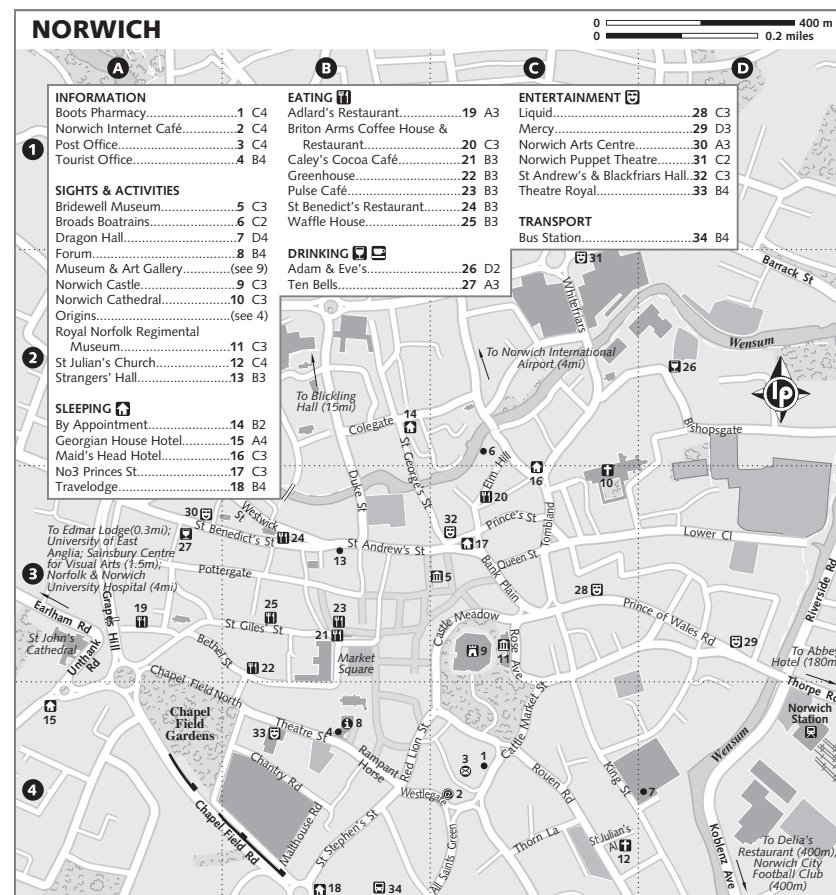
a medieval prison. Guided tours are offered around the battlements and dungeons.

Meanwhile the art gallery houses paintings of the acclaimed 19th-century Norwich School of landscape painting founded by John Crome, and – trust the English – the world's largest collection of ceramic teapots.

A claustrophobic tunnel from the castle emerges into a reconstructed WWI trench at the **Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum** (☎ 493649; adult/child £3/1.60; ☎ 10am-4.30pm Mon-Sat), which details the history of the local regiment since 1830. It has a less dramatic entrance from the road.

## THE FORUM & ORIGINS

The all-glass **Forum** is the most impressive building to hit Norwich's skyline in decades,



and is home to Norfolk's main library, the regional BBC and the tourist office. Here too is family-focused **Origins** (☎ 727920; www.originsnorwich.co.uk; the Forum; adult/child £5.95/3.95; ☎ 10am-5.15pm Mon-Sat, 11am-4.45pm Sun), a wonderful interactive museum that surrounds you with film, images and noise in its exploration of 2000 years of regional history. There are numerous buttons to push and games to play; you can have a go at speaking the original Norfolk dialect (not easy), flooding the Norfolk Fens or simply sit back for story time with weird and wonderful tales of the area's mythology.

### ELM HILL

An utterly charming medieval cobbled street of crooked timber beams and doors, intriguing shops and snug cafés, this street is also the centre of the local antique business. From here, walk down Wensum St to Tombland, where the market was originally located. Despite its ominous overtones, 'tomb' is an old Norse word for empty, hence space for a market.

### NORWICH CATHEDRAL

Focal point of the city, the creamy-coloured Anglican **cathedral** (☎ 218321; suggested donation £4; ☎ 7.30am-7pm May-Sep, 7.30am-6pm Oct-Apr) is an undeniably fine spectacle, its barbed spire soaring higher than any in England except Salisbury, while the size of its cloisters is second to none. But there's far more to this cathedral than its impressive scale.

Begun in 1096, it has managed to hang onto its character as a great Anglo-Norman abbey church more than any other English cathedral except Durham. However, the building's most renowned feature came in 1463 when its nave was topped by magnificent Gothic rib-vaulting punctuated with around 1200 sculpted roof bosses depicting bible stories. Together they represent one of the finest achievements of English medieval masonry, although you'll find yourself longing for a telescope to view them in all their finely detailed glory.

Outside the cathedral's eastern end is the grave of WWI heroine Edith Cavell, a Norfolk nurse who was shot by the Germans for helping POWs to escape. The cathedral close also contains handsome houses and the old chapel of King Edward VI School (where English hero Admiral Nelson was educated). Its current students make up the choir, which performs in at least one of the three services held daily.

### ST JULIAN'S CHURCH

Tucked away in a tiny alley, this simple **church** (☎ 767380; St Julian's Alley; admission free; ☎ 7.30am-5.30pm Apr-Sep, to 4pm Oct-Mar) is a shrine to Julian of Norwich and has been a centre for pilgrimage for centuries. Writer and mystic Julian (also known as Juliana, 1342-c 1429) wrote down her religious visions in a collection called *The Revelations of Divine Love*, which is unparalleled in English literature for its clarity and depth of perception. Sadly the cell where she wrote the book was torn down in the Reformation; much of the building was reconstructed after WWII.

### OTHER MUSEUMS

**Bridewell Museum** (☎ 629127; Bridewell Alley; adult/child £3/1.60; ☎ 10am-4.30pm Tue-Sat Apr-Oct), housed in a former merchant's house and 14th-century bridewell or 'prison for women, beggars and tramps', is filled with fascinating paraphernalia and reconstructions of Norwich's principal industries right through to a room devoted to the Norwich City football team.

About 250m west of here, along St Andrew's St and Charing Cross is the maze-like early-14th-century town house **Strangers' Hall** (☎ 667229; adult/child £3/1.60; ☎ 10.30am-4.30pm Wed & Sat), with atmospheric rooms furnished in period styles from Tudor to Victorian. Another remarkable medieval town house, this time built by a local businessman and four-times mayor of Norwich, **Dragon Hall** (☎ 663922; www.dragonhall.org; 115-123 King St; adult/child £5/3; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat Apr-Dec) has a stunning crown-post roof and timber-framed great hall from 1430. It's famous for its darling little carved green-and-orange dragon waving flame-like wings and sticking its tongue out amid the timber ceiling beams.

### SAINSBURY CENTRE FOR VISUAL ARTS

Reopened in mid-2006 with a swish new wing, the **Sainsbury Centre** (☎ 593199; www.scva.org.uk; admission free; ☎ 11am-5pm Tue-Sun, to 8pm Wed) was Norman Foster's first high-profile building and is filled with an eclectic collection of works by Picasso, Moore, Degas and Bacon, displayed beside art from Africa, the Pacific and the Americas. It's to the west of the city (a 20-minute bus trip from Castle Meadow).

### Tours

**City Sightseeing** (☎ 0871 666 000; www.city-sightseeing.com; adult/child £8/4; ☎ hourly 10am-4pm Apr-Oct)

runs a hop-on hop-off bus service stopping at nine destinations around the city centre including city hall. Or if you prefer to potter about on the river, **Broads Boatrains** (☎ 701701; www.cityboats.co.uk; adult/child £8.50/5.50) runs cruises from Station Quay off Elm Hill and rents out self-drive boats.

### Sleeping BUDGET

Norwich has no hostel and scarce budget options. Most of the more affordable B&Bs are outside the ring road, and around the train station.

**Abbey Hotel** (☎ 612915; 16 Stracey Rd; s/d £24/44, d with bathroom £58; ☎) This Victorian terraced house is one of the best-value B&Bs in a row of them up behind the station. It has simple, prim-and-proper floral rooms and pleasant service.

**Norwich Central Travelodge** (☎ 0870 191 1797; www.travelodge.co.uk; Queens Rd; r £26-55; ☎) Who cares if it has personality when it's new, central and has early-booking online deals in an expensive city? This no-frills addition to the chain is close to the bus station and has pay-and-display parking alongside.

**Edmar Lodge** (☎ 615599; www.edmarlodge.co.uk; 64 Earlham Rd; s/d from £35/40; ☎ ☎) This big, blonde-brick B&B with straightforward rooms and a familial atmosphere is situated in a residential area a 10-minute walk from town.

### MIDRANGE & TOP END

**Georgian House Hotel** (☎ 615655; www.georgian-hotel.co.uk; 32-34 Unthank Rd; s/d from £60/80; ☎ ☎) A rambling, elegant Victorian house opposite the Roman Catholic cathedral houses this 28-room boutique hotel, which has spacious modern rooms and a tree-filled garden. The restaurant wins much praise for its use of local ecofriendly ingredients.

**No 3 Princes St** (☎ 662692; www.3princes-norwich.co.uk; 3 Princes St; s/d £60/85; ☎) This recently restored, handsome red-brick Georgian home in the city's heart has four absolutely beautiful and individually styled en suite rooms. Three of them overlook St Andrew's opposite, the other has a view of a pretty gravel-filled back courtyard. The continental breakfasts are eaten in your room.

**ourpick By Appointment** (☎ 630730; 25-29 St George's St; s/d from £70/110; ☎ ☎) This fabulously theatrical and delightfully eccentric B&B occupies three heavy-beamed 15th-century mer-

chant's houses, also home to a labyrinthine restaurant well known for its classic English fare. Its antique furniture, creaky charm and superb breakfasts make this one of the best deals around. Book ahead.

**Maid's Head Hotel** (☎ 0870 609 6110; www.corushotels.com; Tombland; s/d weeknights £105/125, weekends per person £51; ☎ ☎ ☎) The stunning black-and-white exterior is the most arresting thing about this 700-year-old coaching inn near the cathedral. There's altogether less personality inside and its 83 modern rooms are comfortable but somewhat soulless.

### Eating BUDGET

Norwich's strong vegetarian scene is a great source of budget value.

**ourpick Pulse Café** (☎ 765562; Labour in Vain Yard, Guildhall Hill; snacks £2-4, mains £6-7; ☎ 10am-11pm Mon-Sat) You needn't be vegetarian to fall for this funky lounge bar in the old fire-station stables, which offers outstanding meat-free fare from enchilada to risotto. Eat in the tranquil courtyard or beside lovely low-arched windows inside. The drinks list is surprisingly lengthy, jumping between wines, organic ciders, beers and fruit liqueurs.

**Waffle House** (☎ 612790; 39 St Giles St; waffles £3-7; ☎ 10am-10pm Mon-Sat, 11am-10pm Sun) Delicious smells encase this small and ever-popular Belgian waffles café, which uses quality organic and free-range produce to concoct a long list of sweet and savoury creations. It's very family-friendly, but just as beloved by students and professionals.

**Greenhouse** (☎ 631007; 42-48 Bethel St; snacks & mains £3-7; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sat) This simple, organic, Fairtrade, vegetarian, vegan and all-round goody-two-shoes café is a hit with students and has a cute little vine-covered, herb-planted terrace.

### MIDRANGE & TOP END

**Briton Arms Coffee House & Restaurant** (☎ 623367; 9 Elm Hill; mains £5-10; ☎ 9.30am-5pm) Romantics and traditionalists should make a beeline to this darling little 15th-century thatched cottage tearoom, overhanging cobbled Elm Hill and snug with wooden beams, rustic wooden benches and a little terraced garden. It serves classic English comfort food as well as good coffee and cakes.

**Caley's Cocoa Café** (☎ 629364; Guildhall, Market Sq; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat) Chocolate-makers Caley's are

a Norwich institution, and you'll see why upon visiting their café in the equally confection-like Guildhall's old Court of Record, a handsome oval Georgian courtroom complete with judge's chair. They serve light meals and, of course, choccies to make your knees wobble.

**St Benedict's Restaurant** (☎ 765377; 9 St Benedict's St; mains £6-10; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) A bubbly little brasserie with excellent husband-and-wife chefs at the helm, St Benedict's has an Edwardian frontage and cheerful modern interior, and an original modern British menu that includes such quirky desserts as Horlicks ice cream.

**Adlard's Restaurant** (☎ 635322; www.adlards.co.uk; 79 Upper St Giles St; 3-course dinner £35; ☎ 12.30-10.30pm) This elegant and airy Michelin-starred eatery is the place to splurge on both food and excellent wines. It specialises in modern British cuisine with a French accent and keeps the décor simple and pleasing with wooden floors, large canvases and large windows.

## Drinking

**Adam & Eve's** (☎ 667423; Bishopsgate) A 13th-century brew-house built to quench the thirst of cathedral builders, this is now Norwich's oldest-surviving pub, and an adorable little sunken-floored gem. So snug is it that the upper bar barely fits the barmaid, perhaps why the staff has a reputation for grumpiness! Take a pew outside amid the old-mangle flowerpots, or keep an eye out for the resident ghost in the character-rich interior.

**Ten Bells** (☎ 667833; 76 St Benedict's St; ☎ 5pm-midnight, from noon Sat & Sun) This is this kind of faded 18th-century pub where people feel instantly at ease, calmed by the real ales, mellow red velvet and quirky memorabilia and amused by the red phone booth in the corner. It also fancies itself as an intellectuals' hang-out, with poetry readings and arts-school regulars.

## Entertainment

Norwich has a flourishing arts scene and pulsating weekend nightlife. For 'what's on' information from ballet to boozing try www.norwichtonight.com.

## NIGHTCLUBS

Nightclubs run from 9pm or 10pm to at least 2am.

**Liquid** (☎ 611113; www.liquidnightclub.co.uk; Prince of Wales Rd; admission £5; ☎ Mon, Fri & Sat) True to its name, Liquid is a big molten-themed club filled with warped furniture, lava lamps and

bubble projections, and playing everything from retro to R&B.

**Mercy** (☎ 627666; www.mercynightclub.com; 86 Prince of Wales Rd; ☎ Tue & Thu-Sat) A former cinema complete with mock-marble entrance and Renaissance-inspired décor, Mercy is a massive club with huge projection screens and DJs that favour R&B and club classics.

## THEATRE

Once home to Dominican Blackfriars, the spookily Gothic-looking **St Andrew's and Blackfriars' Halls** (☎ 628477; St George's St) now serve as an impressive civic centre where concerts, antique and craft markets, the Music and Arts Festival and even the annual beer festival are held.

**Theatre Royal** (☎ 630000; www.theatreroyalnorwich.co.uk; Theatre St) features programmes by touring drama, opera and ballet companies. **Norwich Arts Centre** (☎ 660352; www.norwichartscentre.co.uk; St Benedict's St), also in a medieval church, has a wide-ranging programme of alternative drama, concerts, dance, cabaret and jazz. **Norwich Puppet Theatre** (☎ 629921; www.puppettheatre.co.uk; St James, Whitefriars; adult/child £6/4), set in a cute little repurposed church, goes down a treat with small and big kids.

## Getting There & Around

National Express runs buses to London (£15.40, three hours, five daily). First Eastern Counties runs hourly buses to King's Lynn (1½ hours) and Cromer (one hour). There are twice-hourly services to Great Yarmouth (40 minutes).

There are twice-hourly train services to Ely (£12.20, 56 minutes) and Cambridge (£13.20, 1¼ hours), as well as regular links to Peterborough (£16.30, 1½ hours). Twice-hourly trains also go to London Liverpool St (£35.80, two hours).

**Norwich International Airport** (☎ 411923; www.norwichinternational.com) is just 4 miles north of town, and has cheap flights around Europe and to several British destinations. Hourly buses go from Norwich's train and bus stations.

If you're driving, the city has six Park & Ride locations (buses £2.80 return).

For city cabs, call **Loyal Taxis** (☎ 619619).

## NORFOLK BROADS

Nature lovers, birders, boaties and anyone fond of splashing about in the water will undoubtedly want to linger in the county's most beauti-

## THE BROADS: A NATURAL MANSCAPE

A great deal of head-scratching occurred over the years in response to the puzzle of how and why the Norfolk Broads came to exist. Though the rivers were undoubtedly natural, and many thought the lakes were, too – it's hard to believe they're not when you see them – still nobody could quite explain how they were formed.

However, the mystery was solved when records were discovered in the remains of St Benet's Abbey on the River Bure. They revealed that from the 12th century the land was used for peat-cutting. Since the area had little woodland, peat would have been the only reliable source of fuel and around 1040 hectares were dug over about 200 years.

But dig gaping holes in low-lying land and they're bound to spring a leak someday. And sure enough, water gradually seeped through, causing marshes and eventually lakes to develop. The first to be recorded was Ranworth Broad in 1275. Eventually, the increasingly aquatic diggers could dig no more, and the peat-cutting industry died out. In no other area of England has human effort changed the natural landscape so dramatically.

ful attraction, the Norfolk Broads. A member of the national park's family, the Broads are a mesh of navigable slow-moving rivers, freshwater lakes, wild water meadows, fens, bogs and saltwater marshes, flourishing nature reserves and bird sanctuaries that together form 125 miles of lock-free waterways.

A boat is by far the best vantage point from which to spy on its myriad birds, butterflies and watery wildlife. The tranquil landscape may not be dramatic in itself, but it is hypnotically peaceful and its very flatness means there's little to shield your binocular vision from the winged and water-bound action taking place on all sides.

The Broads' highest point is at How Hill, just 12m above sea level, which is scattered with many of the picturesque wind pumps first built to drain the marshland and to return water to the rivers.

## Orientation

The Broads form a triangle, with the Norwich-Cromer road, the Norwich-Lowestoft road and the coastline as the three sides.

Wroxham, on the A1151 from Norwich, and Potter Heigham, on the A1062 from Wroxham, are the main centres. Along the way there are plenty of waterside pubs, villages and market towns where you can stock up on provisions, and stretches of river where you can feel you are the only person around.

## Information

Details on scores of conservation centres and bird-watching hides can be found through the **Broads Authority** (☎ 01603-610734; www.broads-authority.gov.uk), including those at Berney Marshes

and Breydon Water, Cockshoot Broad, Hickling Broad, Horsey Mere, How Hill, Ranworth, Strumpshaw Fen, Surlingham Church Marsh and Whitlingham. There's more information on Norfolk Broads at www.norfolkbroads.com and from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) at www.rspb.org.uk.

## Getting Around

You can hire a variety of launches – from large cabin cruisers to little craft with outboards – for a couple of hours' gentle messing about on the river.

Boating holidays are operated by **Blakes** (☎ 0870 2202 498; www.blakes.co.uk) and **Hoseasons** (☎ 01502-502588; www.hoseasons.co.uk) among others. Depending on boat size, facilities and season, a boat for two to four people costs around £490 to £840 for a week including fuel and insurance.

Meanwhile boat yards around Wroxham and Potter Heigham hire out boats for quicker cruises, from an hour to several days. Look out for the traditional flat-bottomed boats known as wherries. In the height of summer, prices start from £28 for two hours, £39 for four hours and £67 for one day. Prices drop outside summer.

No previous experience is necessary, but remember to stay on the right-hand side of the river, that the rivers are tidal and to stick to the speed limit – you can be prosecuted for speeding.

If you don't feel like piloting your own boat, try **Broads Tours** (Wroxham ☎ 01603-782207; www.broads.co.uk; the Bridge; Potter Heigham ☎ 01692-670711; Broads Haven), which runs 1½-hour pleasure trips (adult/child £6/4.50) from April to September.

## GREAT YARMOUTH

☎ 01493 / pop 90,810

A seaside resort for 250 years, Great Yarmouth is frequently dismissed as a one-trick pony, famous for its neon-lit esplanade of jingling amusement arcades and grim greasy spoons, vast beaches and cheek-by-jowl hotels. But the resort also has a calmer old town sheltering a string of museums. So if ice cream, crazy golf, sandy-toed strolls and the odd educational interlude are on your agenda, Great Yarmouth will happily deliver. And while recent years saw it become increasingly run-down, new investment is now perking up its fortunes and improving its seafront parade.

The **tourist office** (☎ 846345; www.great-yarmouth.co.uk; 25 Marine Pde; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm Easter-Sep) is on the seafront and can point you towards the lovely Weavers Way (see p479) walking trail, which cuts into the Broads from here.

Most absorbing of Yarmouth's museums is **Time & Tide** (☎ 743930; www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk; Blackfriars Rd; adult/child £5.80/3.70; ☎ 10am-5pm Apr-Oct, 10am-4pm Mon-Fri, noon-4pm Sat & Sun Nov-Mar), in a Victorian herring-curing works (with a few lingering smells to prove authenticity). It tackles everything from prehistory to penny arcades and naughty postcards, but dwells on maritime heritage and reconstructs typical 17th-century row houses. There's plenty for kids, from touch screens to taking the wheel of a coastal drifter.

A cluster of other museums surround historic South Quay. The 16th-century **Elizabethan House Museum** (NT; ☎ 855746; 4 South Quay; adult/child £3/1.60; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 1.15-5pm Sat & Sun Apr-Oct) is a fine merchant's house faithfully reconstructed to showcase Tudor and Victorian domestic life and home to the 'Conspiracy Room' where Cromwell and chums decided Charles I must be executed.

Around the corner, the **Tolhouse Museum** (☎ 858900; Tolhouse St; adult/child £3/1.60; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 1.15-5pm Sat & Sun Apr-Oct) is a medieval gaol dating back 700 years; it dwells on the macabre inmates, witchcraft, grisly murders and nasty punishments and you can peek inside the spooky cells, all of which makes it an instant hit with kids.

The **Norfolk Nelson Museum** (☎ 850698; www.nelson-museum.co.uk; 26 South Quay; adult/child £2.90/1.50; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 1-4pm Sat & Sun Apr-Oct) celebrates the life, times, romances and – in obsessive detail – the death of the one-eyed hero of Trafalgar, who was a regular visitor to Great Yarmouth.

B&Bs are everywhere, especially chock-a-block Trafalgar St, and cost from £18 to £35 per person. The worn Edwardian corner-house hostel **Great Yarmouth YHA** (☎ 0870 770 5840; greatyarmouth@yha.org.uk; 2 Sandown Rd; dm £11; ☎ Apr-Oct) is three-quarters of a mile from the train station, near the beach.

There are hourly buses (40 minutes) and trains (32 minutes) to Norwich.

## CROMER

☎ 01263

Once a fashionable Victorian coastal resort, this faintly forlorn but still attractive town is perched on a cliff top overlooking the sea. It's famous for its crabs and has a long sandy beach and scenic coastal walks, but there's also a spooky side to Cromer: the nearby village of Shipden was washed into the sea in the 14th century and in stormy weather, locals say, you can still hear its subaquatic church bells ringing. Here too, Arthur Conan Doyle hatched his ghostly plot for *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, after hearing the local legend of Black Shuck, a black canine phantom that roams the shoreline.

Located by the bus station, the **tourist office** (☎ 0871 200 3071; cromer@north-norfolk.gov.uk; Cadogan Rd; ☎ 10am-5pm late-May–Aug, 10am-4pm Sep–late-May) has a town map, and can direct you to the small town **museum** (☎ 513543; Church St; adult/child £2.50/1.25; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, 2-5pm Sun Apr-Oct, 10am-4pm Mon-Sat Nov-Feb) nearby.

If you need a fix of 17th- and 18th-century finery, **Felbrigg Hall** (NT; ☎ 837444; adult/child £7/3.50; ☎ 1-5pm Sat-Wed end Mar-Oct) is one of the best stately homes in Norfolk. It incorporates a walled garden and orangery and is 2 miles southwest of Cromer. The Weavers Way walk runs through its estate.

The tourist office has lists of accommodation, and our favourite is the superbly situated **Captain's House** (☎ 515434; www.captains-house.co.uk; 5 The Crescent; d £68-76; ☎ ☒ ☒), a curvaceous Georgian town house overlooking the seafront in the heart of town. There are three freshly decorated rooms and a hearty breakfast of local sausages, homemade jams and biscuits.

Cromer has direct trains to Norwich hourly Monday to Saturday and services every two hours on Sunday (43 minutes).

## CLEY MARSHES

A bird-watching mecca with over 300 species recorded, Cley Marshes sits between Cromer

and Wells. There's a **visitors centre** (☎ 740008; www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk; adult/child £3.75/free; ☎ 10am-5pm Apr-Oct) built on high ground but the best spot for bird-watching is in the many hides hidden amid the golden reedbeds.

## BLAKENEY POINT

☎ 01263

The pretty village of Blakeney was once a busy fishing and trading port before its harbour silted up. These days it's a good place to jump aboard boat trips out to a 500-strong colony of common and grey seals that live, bask and breed on nearby Blakeney Point. The hour-long trips (adult/child £7/4) run daily April to October but the best time to come is between June and August when the common seals pup. Companies are split between the town's harbour and nearby Morston. They include:

**Beans Boat Trips** (☎ 740505; www.beansboattrips.co.uk; Morston)

**Bishop's Boats** (☎ 740753; www.bishopsboats.co.uk; Blakeney Harbour)

## WELLS-NEXT-THE-SEA

☎ 01328 / pop 2451

A fetching little holiday town with a silty harbour set back from the sea, Wells makes for a charming day trip or stopover. While there are few sights, the attractive Georgian streets, flint cottages and curio shops are good to browse and you can bag fresh fish and join the kids gillying (crabbing) on the waterfront.

There's a **tourist office** (☎ 710885; www.wellsguide.com; Staithe St; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, 10am-4pm Sun Mar-mid-Jul, Sep & Oct; 9.30am-6pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-5pm Sun mid-Jul-Aug) on hand for inquiries and accommodation lists. One agreeable distraction is to catch the **narrow-gauge steam train** (☎ 711630; www.wellswalsinghamrailway.co.uk; adult/child return £7/5.50; duration 30min, 3-5 departures daily Apr-Oct) that chuffs 5 miles to **Little Walsingham**, where there are shrines and a ruined abbey that have drawn pilgrims since medieval times.

**Wells YHA Hostel** (☎ 0870 770 6084; wells@norfolk@yha.org.uk; Church Plains; dm £13.95; ☎ ☒ ☒) is a superb little 32-bed hostel with mostly family-sized rooms and housed in an ornately gabled early-20th-century church hall.

The Coast Hopper bus goes through Wells approximately every two hours on its way between Hunstanton (45 minutes) and Sheringham (40 minutes).

## AROUND WELLS-NEXT-THE-SEA Holkham Hall

The high-and-mighty stately home of **Holkham Hall** (☎ 01328-710227; www.holkham.co.uk; adult/child £6.50/3.25; ☎ noon-5pm Sun-Thu Easter & May-Sep) is an extraordinarily grand Palladian mansion set in a vast deer park designed by Capability Brown. There's also a separate **Bygonnes Museum** (adult/child £5/2.50 or combined ticket £10/5; ☎ same as hall) of local folklore and domestic paraphernalia, though you're better off roaming the beautiful park, which is open year-round, or discovering the pristine white-gold sands of nearby Holkham Bay beach.

The hall is 2 miles from Wells.

## Burnham Deepdale

☎ 01485

In-the-know backpackers and walkers flock to this lovely coastal spot, with its tiny twin villages of Burnham Deepdale and Brancaster Staithe strung along a rural road. Stroked by the beautiful Norfolk Coastal Path, surrounded by beaches and reedy marshes alive with birdlife, crisscrossed by cycling routes and a base for a whole host of water sports from kitesurfing to kayaking to sailing, Burnham Deepdale is also home to one of the country's best backpacker hostels, around which activities pool.

The hostel operates a superb **tourist office** (☎ 210256; www.deepdalefarm.co.uk ☎ 10am-4pm Apr-Sep, closed Tue-Wed Oct-Mar), which is flush with information on the surrounding area and can help arrange accommodation and a variety of tours. It also has internet access (per 30 minutes/hour £1/1.50). For more information on the area go to www.itnorfolk.co.uk and www.brancasterstaithe.co.uk.

Anywhere else it might seem odd to have campers poking their heads out of Native American-style teepees, but at ecofriendly backpackers haven and hostel **our pick Deepdale Farm** (☎ 210256; www.deepdalefarm.co.uk; camping per adult/child £6.50/3, dm Sun-Thu/Fri & Sat £10.50/12.50, teepees for 6 £75-90 or 2 £60; ☎ ☒ ☒) it's just part of a wonderful experience. The set-up includes small and stylish en suite dorms in converted 17th-century stables, camping space, a coffee shop, laundry, barbecue facilities, lounges and picnic tables. Bike hire is also available. Teepees come with faux-fur mattresses, fuel for the iron chiminea and a lantern.

Just west of the hostel is gastropub extraordinaire the **White Horse** (☎ 210262; www.whitehorsebrancaster.co.uk; mains £5-9; d Sun-Thu/Fri & Sat



Apr-Oct £120/140, Nov-Mar £90/140; ☺ lunch & dinner; ☑ ☑ (wi-fi), which has award-winning platters of fresh fish and shellfish, a cosy bar, plus a conservatory and sun deck with lovely views overlooking the tidal marshes. It also has up-scale rooms, some with terraces, others with telescopes for bird-watching over the marshes.

The Coast Hopper bus stops outside Deepdale Farm hourly in summer on its run between Sheringham (1¼ hours) and Hunstanton (23 minutes); it also goes less frequently to King's Lynn (one hour). Ask at the tourist office for timetables.

## KING'S LYNN

☎ 01553 / pop 34,565

Long labelled 'the Warehouse on the Wash', the medieval port town of King's Lynn was once so busy with waterborne traders that it was said you could cross from one side of the River Great Ouse to the other by simply stepping from boat to boat. Staunchly pious citizens and wild-and-woolly sailors would mingle in its cobbled streets, and fishing fleets would rub woodwork with trading vessels and even New World explorers. Something of the salty port-town tang can still be felt in old King's Lynn, though the petite modern-day port barely passes as a shadow of its former self.

## Orientation

Old King's Lynn huddles along the eastern bank of the river. The train station is on its eastern side, while unexciting modern King's Lynn and the bus station are between them. Three markets still take place weekly on Tuesday, Friday and Saturday. The biggest is the Tuesday market, held in the unimaginatively named Tuesday Market Pl, while the others are conducted in front of St Margaret's Church.

## Information

Banks and ATMs can be found around Tuesday Market Pl.

**Post office** ☎ 692185; Baxter's Plain

**Tourist office** ☎ 763044; kings-lynn.tic@west-norfolk.gov.uk; ☺ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, noon-5pm Sun Apr-Sep, 10.30am-3.30pm Mon-Sat, noon-3pm Sun Oct-Mar In the Custom House (Purfleet Quay). It organises guided walks on historic Lynn (adult/concession/child £3/2.50/1, April to October, duration 1½ to two hours).

## Sights

Oddities worth seeking out at grand **St Margaret's Church** include two extraordinarily elabo-

rate Flemish brasses etched with vivid details of a peacock feast, strange dragon-like beasts and a mythical wild man. Outside by the west door there are also flood-level marks – 1976 was the highest, but the 1953 flood claimed more lives. Also remarkable is the 17th-century moon dial, which tells the tide, not the time, and sports a cute dragon-head pointer and man-in-the-moon face.

Another important historical landmark to tick off is the nearby 15th-century **St Margaret's House**, once the warehouse or 'steelyard' of the Hanseatic League (the Northern European merchants' group). Across Queen St is the chequerboard-patterned flint-and-brick **town hall**, dating back to 1421.

Next door, the petite **Town House Museum** (☎ 773450; 46 Queen St; adult/child £2.80/1.60; ☺ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat May-Sep, 10am-4pm Mon-Sat Oct-Apr) has exhibits on the town from the Middle Ages up to the 1950s; quirkier exhibits include an outdoor privy and basket made from an unfortunate armadillo.

Just around the corner, you can explore the old cells then gawp at the town's priceless civic treasures in the **Old Gaol House** (☎ 774297; adult/child £2.70/1.95; ☺ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat Easter-Oct, 10am-4pm Tue-Sat Nov-Easter); its pride and joy is the breathtaking 650-year-old King John Cup, exquisitely decorated with scenes of hunting and hawking.

Sauntering back along Queen St, look for **Clifton House**, with its barley-sugar columns and strange merchant's watchtower. Near the market square is **Purfleet Quay**, in its heyday the principal harbour. The odd boxy building with the lantern tower is the 17th-century **Custom House**, which houses the tourist office. Outside is a statue of **Captain George Vancouver** (1757–98), a local boy who charted 5000 miles of the northwest coast of the Americas; his family worked in the Custom House.

A short hop north again is the biggest 15th-century guildhall in England, **St George's Guildhall** has been variously incarnated as a warehouse, courthouse and armoury (during the Civil War), and now contains art galleries, a theatre and eateries. Then topping King St is the roomy **Tuesday Market Place**, flanked by handsome old buildings and still host to weekly markets.

On St Nicholas St is the **Tudor Rose Hotel**, a late-15th-century house with its original main door. North of here, on the corner of St Ann's St, is **True's Yard**, where the two remaining cottages of the 19th-century fishing community

that used to be here have been restored and now house a **museum** (☎ 770479; www.truesyard.co.uk; North St; adult/child £2.50/1; ☺ 10am-4pm Tue-Sat) detailing the life of a shellfish fisherman around 1850.

A newly revamped **Lynn Museum** (☎ 775001; Market St) is set to fully reopen in 2007, and to display the famous Bronze Age timber circle dubbed 'Seahenge'.

## Festivals

July's **King's Lynn Festival** (☎ 767557; www.kingslynnfestival.org.uk) is East Anglia's most important cultural gathering. The brainchild of Lady Ruth Fermoy, it offers a diverse programme of concerts and recitals of all kinds of 'serious' music, from medieval ballads to opera. The main festival is preceded by the free rock-and-pop festie in and around Tuesday Market Pl, **Festival Too** (www.festivaltoo.co.uk).

## Sleeping

**King's Lynn YHA** (☎ 0870 770 5902; kingslynn@yha.org.uk; Thoresby College, College Lane; dm £12; ☺ Easter-Oct by advance booking & varied times rest of year; ☑) Visitors are warned to watch their heads on low beams in this beautiful early-16th-century courtyard

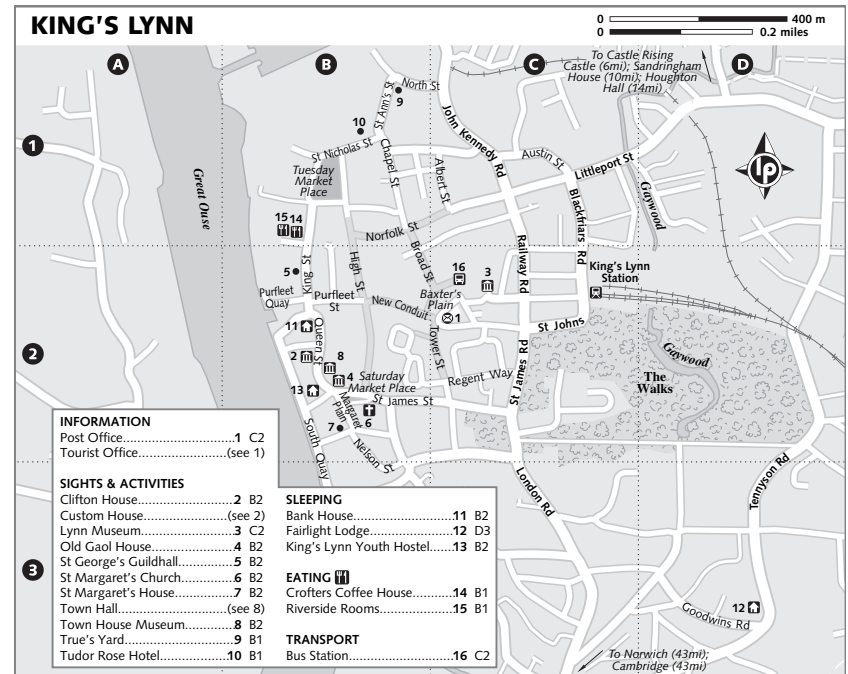
hostel on the quayside. Its facilities are relatively limited but you can't argue with the location.

**Fairlight Lodge** (☎ 762234; www.fairlightlodge.co.uk; 79 Goodwins Rd; s/d £32/49, without bathroom £27/43; ☑ ☑) There are seven beautifully furnished country-style rooms, four en suite and some overlooking the pretty garden, at this charming Victorian guesthouse a short walk via parkland from the centre. Thoughtful extras separate it from the competition, among them homemade biscuits in the rooms.

**Ourpick Bank House** (☎ 660492; www.thebankhouse.co.uk; Kings Staithe Sq; d from £75; ☑ ☑) This outstanding B&B has ticks in all the right boxes: history, location, atmosphere, comfort and welcome. On the waterfront near the tourist office, it's an 18th-century former bank and is now an elegantly furnished town house with five hotel-standard rooms, mixing original features and modern furnishings.

## Eating

**Crofters Coffee House** (☎ 773134; 27 King St; snacks £3.75-7; ☺ 9.30am-5pm Mon-Sat) This long brick-vaulted undercroft, once used as a civil-war gunpowder store and now a low-lit café, scores



top marks for atmosphere and serves light lunches, sandwiches, soups, salads, hot drinks and cakes. It's in the guildhall arts centre.

**Riverside Rooms** (☎ 773134; www.riversiderestaurant.com; King St; lunch £7-14, dinner £9-18; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat; ☒) Lynn's classiest restaurant overlooks the water from a converted 15th-century warehouse, with crisscrossing beams overhead and elegant white-linen tables below. It serves upscale cuisine from crab omelette to lovely beef-and-Boddingtons (bitter ale) pie.

### Getting There & Away

King's Lynn is 43 miles north of Cambridge on the A10. There are hourly trains from Cambridge (£9.30, 48 minutes) and London King's Cross (£25.50, 1¾ hours).

### AROUND KING'S LYNN

#### Castle Rising Castle

There's something bordering on ecclesiastical about the beautifully embellished keep of this **castle** (EH; ☎ 01553-631330; adult/child £3.85/2.20; ☎ 10am-6pm Apr-Oct, 10am-4pm Nov-Mar), built in 1138 and set in the middle of a massive earthwork upon which pheasants scurry about like guards. So extravagant is the stonework that it's no surprise to learn that it shares stonemasons with some of Eastern England's finest cathedrals. It was once the home of Queen Isabella, who (allegedly) arranged the gruesome murder of her husband, Edward II.

It's well worth the trip 4 miles south of King's Lynn. Bus 41 runs here (13 minutes) hourly from King's Lynn bus station.

### Sandringham House

Royalists and those bemused by the English sovereigns will have plenty to mull over at this, the Queen's country **estate** (☎ 01553-612908; www.sandringhamestate.co.uk; adult/child £8/5, gardens & museum only £5.50/3.50; ☎ 11am-4.45pm mid-Apr-Oct unless royal family is in residence) set in 25 hectares of landscaped gardens and lakes, and open to the hoi polloi when the court is not at home.

Queen Victoria bought the estate in 1862 for her son, the Prince of Wales (later Edward VII), but he promptly had it overhauled in the style later named Edwardian. Half of the surrounding 8000 hectares is leased to farm tenants (a royal living doesn't pay for itself, you know), while the rest is managed by the Crown Estate as forestry.

Visitors can shuffle around the house's ground-floor rooms, regularly used by the royal

family, then head out to the old stables, which house a flag-waving **museum** filled with diverse royal memorabilia. The vintage royal car collection is simply superb. It includes the very first royal motor from 1900, darling electrical toy cars driven by various princes when they were but knee high, and the buggy in which the recently deceased Queen Mother (who had a famously soft spot for the horses) would bounce around race tracks. For another oddity, look for the pet cemetery just outside the museum.

There are guided tours of the gardens on Friday and Saturday at 11am and 2pm. The **shop** is also worthy of a visit if only to browse the organic goodies produced on the sprawling estate, from bramble or walnut liqueurs to rare-breed pork bangers.

First Eastern Counties bus 411 or Coastliner run here from King's Lynn bus station (22 minutes), 10 miles to the southwest.

## LINCOLNSHIRE

A steady stream of movie-makers searching for ready-made period sets find their quarry in the stunning stately homes and time-capsule towns of rural Lincolnshire. This sparsely populated corner of Eastern England has a reputation for being flat, plain and proper, although on closer inspection it's remarkably varied and uncommonly friendly. County capital Lincoln is the perfect place to start, with a stunning Gothic cathedral, Tudor streetscapes and a dramatic hilltop location.

The gently rippling hills of the Lincolnshire Wolds smooth down to eastern marshlands and sandy coast, and the dyke-scored Lincolnshire Fens flat-iron the southeast. While flamboyant medieval wool-wealth churches, red-roofed stone houses and windmills grace many towns, here too you'll find arms-in-the-air beach resort Skegness and rich wildlife reserves where the loudest din is birdsong.

### Information

**South West Lincs** (www.southwestlincs.com)

**Visit Lincolnshire** (www.visitlincolnshire.com)

**Visit the Fens** (www.visitthefens.co.uk)

### Activities

To follow in the footsteps of history, the 140-mile Viking Way trails from the Humber Bridge through the Lincolnshire Wolds to Oakham in Leicestershire.

It can be more rewarding to explore by bike, however. Wheels can be hired in Lincoln, and leaflets on county cycle trails are available at tourist offices.

### Getting There & Away

Other than a speedy rail link between Grantham and London, Lincolnshire isn't the easiest county to get to and around. You're better off on the buses to reach Stamford and Lincoln, and don't be surprised if you have to change services en route.

### Getting Around

For regional travel information, contact **Traveline** (☎ 0870 608 2608; www.travelineeastmidlands.org.uk) or consult the travel pages of the **Lincolnshire County Council** (www.lincolnshire.gov.uk) website. Useful bus operators include **Lincs Interconnect** (☎ 0845 234 3344; www.lincinterconnect.com) and **Lincolnshire Roadcar** (www.roadcar.co.uk).

### LINCOLN

☎ 01522 / pop 85,595

An under-visited delight, Lincoln's tightly knotted core of cobbled streets and majestic medieval architecture is enough to leave visitors breathless, albeit as much for its thigh-pumping slopes as the superb stonework and timber-framed treasures to be found there. Uptown Lincoln is crowned by an extraordinary hill-topping cathedral, an unusual Norman castle and compact Tudor streets, although the town then tumbles down the hillside losing charm and picking up modern pace as it goes. At the hill's base, the university breathes life into a waterfront quarter where bars are positioned to watch boats come and go. While there's little to keep you for a longer stay, Lincoln has a welcoming aura and enough cultural clout in its centre to keep you very happy for a day or two at a stretch.

### History

With a hill that affords views for miles around and a river for swift sea access, it's hardly surprising that Lincoln's defensive location has been exploited by invading forces for the last 2000 years. The Romans set up camp soon after arriving in Britain and in the 11th century the Normans speedily constructed a castle after their invasion. The city yo-yoed between Royalist and Parliamentary forces during the Civil War, and the warfare theme continued into the 20th century, when Lincoln's heavy

engineering industry spawned the world's first tank, which saw action in WWI.

### Orientation

The cathedral stands imperiously on top of the hill in the old city, with the castle and other attractions nearby. Three-quarters of a mile downhill is the new town, and the bus and train stations. Joining the two is the appositely named Steep Hill, and believe us, they're not kidding. Even locals stop to catch their breath.

### Information

Several banks and ATMs sit on High St. Check www.lincolntoday.co.uk and www.lincoln.gov.uk for events listings.

**Abbey Washeteria** (☎ 530272; 197 Monks Rd; per load £3; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 9am-4pm Sun) Self-service laundrette.

**County hospital** (☎ 512512; off Greetwell Rd) **Post office** (☎ 526031; 90 Bailgate)

**Sun Internet Café** (36 Portland St; ☎ 11am-7pm Mon-Sat)

**Tourist office** (tourism@lincoln.gov.uk; www.visitlincolnshire.com) Main branch (☎ 873213; 9 Castle Hill; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Mon-Sat & 10.30am-4.30pm Sun Jul-Sep, 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Thu Oct-Jun); Cornhill branch (☎ 873256; 21 the Cornhill; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 11am-3pm Sun Jul-Sep, 9.30am-5pm Mon-Sat Oct-Jun)

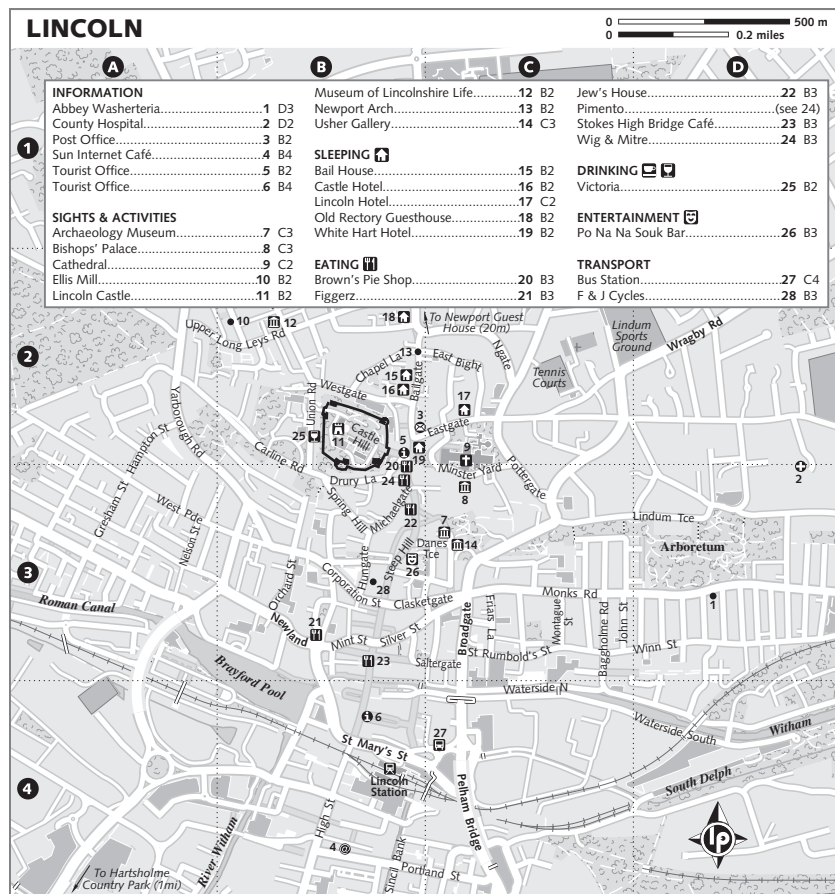
### Sights

The tourist office sells the Lincoln Time Travel Pass, which gives access to several heritage sites, including the castle, cathedral and Bishops' Palace for single/family £9.99/20 and lasts three/seven days.

### LINCOLN CATHEDRAL

All kinds of marvels and mischief can be found in the county's top attraction, **Lincoln Cathedral** (☎ 544544; www.lincolncathedral.com; adult/under 16yr £4/1; ☎ 7.15am-8pm Mon-Sat, 7.15am-6pm Sun Jun-Aug, 7.15am-6pm Mon-Sat, 7.15am-5pm Sun Sep-May). This soaring edifice has three great towers that dominate the city, one of which is the third highest in England at 81m, but it's claimed that until a storm in 1547 its spire was a jaw-dropping 160m high, topping even the great pyramids of Giza.

An eye-stretching façade carved with gargoyles, kings, dragons and hunters leers over the Great West Door. There are some fabulous but grisly friezes being steadily restored by stonemasons here, including maniacal devils jabbing sinners into the jaws of hell. On closer inspection you'll spot that the façade



is divided into two eras; the lower of which is from the Norman cathedral topped in an earthquake in 1185, and the rest dates to the building's 12th- and 13th-century reconstruction by Bishop Hugh of Avalon (St Hugh). The saint himself tops a pinnacle on one side of the West Front, and his counterpart on the other side is a swineherd who devoted his meagre lifefavings to the cathedral's reconstruction.

Inside the lofty nave, there's a chunky black-marble font from the 11th century and ringed with fearsome mythological beasts. Two awesome stained-glass rose windows face each other at either end of the transepts. The unique Dean's Eye still contains glass from the 13th century, while the 14th-century Bishop's Eye has some truly exquisite carved stone-leaf tracery.

Up in the central tower, the veteran Victorian bell Great Tom still swings its ponderous 2m, 270kg bulk to sound the hours. Just beyond the tower, the elaborate choir screen is studded with grotesque characters, including a stonemason sticking out his tongue just to the left of the door.

St Hugh's Choir itself is topped by some quirky vaulting dubbed the 'crazy vault' for its odd angles, while the superbly carved and canopied stalls below are a classic example of medieval craftsmanship. Just beyond this, the Angel Choir is graced by 28 angels carved high up the walls. It was built as a shrine to St Hugh but modern pilgrims are mostly preoccupied with hunting for the famous Lincoln Imp, a lovably roguish little horned character

that is now the city's emblem. Various fun legends surround the imp, but we like the one that says the mischievous creature was caught chatting up one of the carved angels and was promptly turned to stone.

One last stop before leaving: take a peek at the cathedral's round Chapterhouse, where the climax of *The Da Vinci Code* film was shot in 2005.

There are one-hour tours at least twice a day plus less frequent tours of the tower. Evensong takes place daily except Wednesday at 5.15pm (3.45pm on Sunday), and Eucharist is sung at 9.30am on Sunday.

### BISHOPS' PALACE

Beside the cathedral are the ravaged but still imposing ruins of the 12th-century **Bishops' Palace** (EH; ☎ 527468; adult/child £3.70/1.90; 🕒 10am-6pm Jul & Aug, 10am-5pm Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct, 10am-4pm Thu-Nov-Mar), which was gutted by parliamentary forces during the Civil War. In its day it was the power base of medieval England's largest diocese, and highlights of scrambling around its remaining walls include a barrel-vaulted undercroft and walled terrace garden with wonderful panoramas of the town below.

### LINCOLN CASTLE

After installing himself as king in 1066, William the Conqueror speedily set about building castles to keep his new kingdom in line. **Lincoln Castle** (☎ 511068; www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/lincolncastle; adult/child £3.80/2.50, event days £6/4; 🕒 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat, 11am-5.30pm Sun Apr-Sep, to 4pm daily Oct-Mar) was one of his first. While it's a fascinating castle with dramatic battlements to charge around and one of only four originals of democratic-milestone **Magna Carta** (dated 1215; see p45) on display, Lincoln Castle also has its spooky side. It was home to the city's court and prison for centuries, and public executions here used to draw thousands of bloodthirsty spectators. Here too is a chilling prison chapel with coffin-style pews that inmates were locked into.

There are free tours of the castle at 11am and 2pm daily from April to September and on weekends in winter.

**THE COLLECTION: ART AND ARCHAEOLOGY** Opened to acclaim in 2005, this **archaeology museum** (☎ 550990; www.thecollection.lincoln.museum; Danes Tce; admission free; 🕒 10am-5pm) aims to inspire budding Indiana Joneses, underlining how

Lincolnshire's rich past can be uncovered by anyone at any time, a point neatly underscored by a wonderful Roman mosaic discovered during the museum's construction. Other exciting artefacts include an Iron Age votive sword and impressive 7m log dugout. Kids will have a blast with the games, touch screens, dress ups and more.

Just east is the historic **Usher Art Gallery** (☎ 527980; Lindum Rd; admission free; 🕒 10am-5pm Tue-Sat, 1-5pm Sun), which now belongs to the same complex but sits separately in a grand mansion amid parkland. It dwells on the paintings and drawings of Peter de Wint (1784-1849) but also has works by JMW Turner, LS Lowry and others. The museum is also temporary home to bits and bobs belonging to Lincolnshire-born poet Alfred Lord Tennyson (1809-92), but you'll need to be accompanied to a back room to see them.

### OTHER SIGHTS

The whole length of **Steep Hill** is a delight to explore (at least until the climb back up), crowded with black-and-white Tudor beauties and curious antiquarian bookshops. Of particular note, however, is the Romanesque stone **Jew's House**, which is easily one of the best and earliest examples of 12th-century domestic architecture in Britain. It's now an upmarket restaurant (see p494).

Back up and through town, rough-edged **Newport Arch** (Bailgate) dates back even further as it was built by the Romans, and is the oldest arch in Britain that still has traffic passing through it.

History buffs may also make the short trek north to the **Museum of Lincolnshire Life** (☎ 528448; adult/child £3/2; 🕒 10am-5pm May-Oct, 10am-5pm Mon-Sat Nov-Apr), displaying everything from a reconstructed Edwardian nursery to an early tank named 'Flirt' that was famous for all the wrong reasons during WWI. Round the corner from the museum is cute little **Ellis Mill** (☎ 528448; Mill Rd; adult/child £1/50p) windmill.

### Tours

Guided **walking tours** (adult/child £3/1.50, 1½hr) run from outside the tourist office in Castle Hill at 11am and 2pm Saturday and Sunday from June to September, and at 11am weekdays in July and August. Also from the tourist office, a 1¼-hour **ghost walk** (☎ 874056; www.lincolnhistorywalks.co.uk; adult/under 12yr £4/2) departs at 7pm Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

## Sleeping BUDGET

**Hartsholme Country Park** (☎ 873578; hartsholmecp@lincoln.gov.uk; Skellingthorpe Rd; tent £6-14; ♻️ Mar-Oct) A stand-out camping ground next to a sprawling nature reserve, filled with lovely lakes, woods and meadows. It's 3 miles southwest of the train station. Take the regular daytime SB6 or evening 66A bus towards Birchwood Estate from Lincoln bus station; alight at Swanpool (15 minutes).

**Old Rectory Guesthouse** (☎ 514774; 19 Newport; s/d from £25/46; 📞 ☒) While well kept and charmingly run by its motherly host, this attractive red-brick Edwardian building clearly hasn't updated much since the last century. But far from minding, you'll find that adds to the homely character.

## MIDRANGE

**Newport Guest House** (☎ 528590; www.newportguesthouse.co.uk; 26-28 Newport; s/d/f £35/52/70; 📞 ☒) Bright, fresh-feeling rooms with contemporary style and plenty of space, plus a filling Lincolnshire breakfast are the winning qualities of this cheerful and efficiently run guesthouse just outside the city's historic core.

**our pick Bail House** (☎ 520883; www.bailhouse.co.uk; 34 Bailgate; s/d from £64.50/79; d superior £139-165; 📞 ☒ 📶 wi-fi) Stone walls, worn flagstones, Mediterranean-style gardens and one room with an extraordinary medieval timber-vaulted ceiling are only a few of the charms of this lovingly restored town house in central Lincoln. There's even a heated outdoor swimming pool for fair-weather days.

**Castle Hotel** (☎ 538801; www.castlehotel.net; Westgate; s/d from £70/90; 📞 ☒) A hefty red-brick former school from the Victorian era, this privately owned hotel looks up towards the castle battlements. It has personable and attentive staff, a mixed bunch of rooms with sober if fussy furnishings, and good facilities.

## TOP END

**White Hart Hotel** (☎ 526222; www.whitehart-lincoln.co.uk; Bailgate; s/d £75/100; 📞 ☒ 📶 wi-fi) You can't get more central or venerable than Lincoln's grand dame of hotels, neatly sandwiched between castle and cathedral and with a history of hostility here dating back 600 years. It has four dozen luxurious country-casual rooms, a few with partial views of the cathedral façade.

**Lincoln Hotel** (☎ 520348; www.thelincolnhotel.com; Eastgate; d £80-150; 📞 ☒ 📶 wi-fi) This pristine

retro-chic hotel shrugs off its blockish exterior and lays on sleek modern rooms with funky lights in unexpected places, stars on the doors, clean lines and bright colours. In a disorientating juxtaposition, it lies opposite the ancient cathedral's backside, of which front-facing rooms have simply unbeatable views.

## Eating

**Pimento** (☎ 544880; 27 Steep Hill; mains £4-7; ♻️ 10am-5pm) This split-level parlour café is a must for tea and coffee connoisseurs and also sells good-value dishes using local ingredients and delicious Lincolnshire plum bread. The front room has a big roasting machine, making it the warmest spot to be. And with 40 exotic brews the drinks menu resembles a cocktail list. Haiti voodoo-comet coffee anyone?

**Brown's Pie Shop** (☎ 527330; 33 Steep Hill; pies £8-12; ♻️ lunch & dinner) Rustic-chic in a nutshell, this popular pie shop serves Lincolnshire's speciality pies in lovely brick-vaulted cellars with candlelit tables and bare-wood floors. The local wild-rabbit pie is terrific and the stout pie popular.

**Wig & Mitre** (☎ 535190; www.wigandmitre.com; 30 Steep Hill; mains £11-20; ♻️ 8am-midnight) Civilised pub-restaurant the Wig has been steadily upgrading its menu for three decades and now considers itself an upscale eatery despite retaining the mellow cosiness of an old-world watering hole. No music will disturb your meal here, and the candle-lit evening meals are good for romantic liaisons.

**our pick Jew's House** (☎ 524851; Steep Hill; set lunch/dinner £12/27; ♻️ lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) Pass through the ancient round-arched doorway of this 12th-century stone house and you'll immediately know you're in for a treat. This ancient house, an attraction in its own right, is flush with antiques and oil paintings, and its award-winning Anglo-French cuisine will not disappoint. Dress smart and book ahead.

Some more options:  
**Figgerz** (☎ 576277; 1 Newland; mains takeaway/eat-in £3/4.50; ♻️ 8am-3pm Mon-Sat) Local organic fare at sensible prices.

**Stokes High Bridge Café** (☎ 513825; 207 High St; ♻️ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat) A delightfully precarious-looking 16th-century half-timbered teashop.

## Drinking & Entertainment

**Victoria** (☎ 536048; 6 Union Rd) A serious beer-drinker's pub with a pleasant patio looking up at the castle's western walls, Victoria has

a huge selection of guest brews, cask ales, thick stouts and superb ciders and preserves a mellow historic ambience undisturbed by sports or flashy lights. The pub runs two beer festivals a year.

**Po Na Na Souk Bar** (☎ 525828; 280-281 High St; ♻️ 10pm-3am Mon-Sat) Every night is different at this Moroccan-themed chain club, which alternately rocks to the sounds of indie, rock, R&B and house music, with some high-profile international guest DJs to get the party started. It has some kaleidoscopic cocktails, and there are hookah pipes in the chill-out room.

## Getting There & Away

Lincoln is 142 miles from London, 94 miles from Cambridge and 81 miles from York.

National Express runs a direct service between Lincoln and London (£21, 4¾ hours) daily. Buses also run daily from Lincoln to Birmingham (£13, three hours).

Getting to and from Lincoln usually involves changing trains. There are hourly links to Boston (£8.40, 1¼ hours) and Skegness (£11.50, two hours); change at Sleaford. There are also hourly trains to Cambridge (£24.50, 2½ hours); change at Peterborough or Ely. Links to Grantham (£7.50, 1½ hours) run twice hourly.

## Getting Around

### BICYCLE

**F&J Cycles** (☎ 545311; 41 Hungate; ♻️ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Sat) rents a few secondhand bikes for £6 to £8 per day and up to £40 per week.

### BUS

Regular buses link the lower town bus and train stations with the uptown cathedral area. To avoid the climb up Steep Hill, a 'Walk and Ride' electric bus also runs every 20 minutes during the day from outside the House of Fraser store on High St to Castle Sq (90p, five minutes).

## GRANTHAM

☎ 01476 / pop 34,592

Those that recall the colourful 12-year reign of Britain's first female prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, will find a fine model of her vision for Britain in the pleasing red-brick town of her birth. Baroness Thatcher first came into the world above her father's grocery shop at 2 North Pde, now a chiropractor's clinic with a modest plaque to signify its former inhabitant.

Sir Isaac Newton was also born and raised in the vicinity, and his statue stands erect in front of the guildhall (as yet conspicuously unaccompanied by a statue of Maggie).

The **tourist office** (☎ 406166; granthamtci@southkirsteven.gov.uk; St Peter's Hill; ♻️ 9.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-1pm Sat) is in the guildhall complex.

Until a commemorative statue is erected, the Iron Lady must content herself with her latex puppet from the hit 1980s political satire *Spitting Image* (see the boxed text, p496) in the town's **museum** (☎ 568783; St Peter's Hill; admission free; ♻️ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat). Here too is one of her famous handbags and spangled gowns, as well as displays on Sir Isaac Newton and another of Grantham's trailblazing women, Edith Smith, who became Britain's first policewoman in 1914.

The part 13th-, part 16th-century parish church of **St Wulfram's** (☎ 9am-4pm Apr-Sep, 9am-12.30pm Oct-Mar) is easily tracked down thanks to its needle-sharp 85m spire. It has an interesting crypt chapel and hidden up a steep stairwell is a rare 16th-century chained library where a young Isaac Newton once pored over his studies.

One of several favoured sets for ruffle-and-lace English period dramas in the region, the Restoration country-mansion **Belton House** (NT; ☎ 566116; A607; adult/under 16yr £8/4.50, grounds only £6/3.50; ♻️ 12.30-5pm Wed-Sun Apr-Oct) sits sedately amid a 400-hectare park 3 miles northeast of Grantham. Built in 1688 for Sir John Brownlow, it shelters some astonishingly ornate woodcarvings attributed to the master Dutch carver Grinling Gibbons. In the beautiful gardens is a sundial made famous in Helen Cresswell's children's classic *Moondial*. Bus 609 (15 minutes) runs here from near Grantham's train station.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Red House** (☎ 579869; www.red-house.com; 74 North Pde; s/d £27/55; 📞 ☒) This handsome Georgian town house near Maggie's birthplace has large, spick-and-span rooms, three with en suite, three without. The welcome is very friendly, beauty treatments are available and some rooms even boast a fridge and microwave.

**Angel & Royal Hotel** (☎ 565816; www.angelandroyal.co.uk; High St; s/d from £80/100; 📞 ☒) This veteran coaching inn claims to be England's oldest, with no less than seven kings of England purportedly having stayed here since 1200. Its 29

### PUPPET POLITICIANS

England's incisive political satire is notorious for being almost as vicious as its tabloid press, and many would point the finger at a controversial but iconic series that ran here from 1984 to 1996 as being where it all got a little bit nasty. *Spitting Image* was a satirical puppet show that crudely caricatured public figures, who were voiced by a modern-day who's who of British impressionists, many of whom went on to lampoon politicians in their own shows. At its height *Spitting Image* was deemed so subversive that it was banned from showing in the run-up to a general election. And while politicians were hammered by the show, they recognised that to be on it was to be somebody, so many more secretly craved their own puppet persona.

The most recognisable and enduring of all its latex stars was then British prime minister Margaret Thatcher, who was portrayed as a tyrannical man-woman who wore suits and used urinals. Her latex likeness now leers from behind glass in Grantham's museum while the town of her birth still awaits a genuine statue of its Iron Lady.

rooms are each individually decorated, beds occupied by a teddy bear, quaint floral patterns and copious olde-Englishe charm. The beautiful period-styled King's Dining Room is open for fine dining at weekends.

**Beehive** (☎ 404554; Castlegate) This famous old pub is best known not for its drinks or ambience but for its sign – a real beehive full of live South African bees! Buzzing around since 1830, it's one of the oldest bee populations in the world. Cheap lunches and drinks are available.

### Getting There & Away

Grantham is 25 miles south of Lincoln. Interconnect bus 1 runs between the two, hourly Monday to Saturday and four times on Sunday (one hour 10 minutes). Bus K17 (three daily Monday to Saturday) runs to Stamford (1½ hours), as does National Express (£5.70, 30 minutes).

You'll need to change at Newark to get to Lincoln by train (£7.50, 1½ hours, two per hour). Direct trains run from London King's Cross to Grantham (£25, 1¼ hours) hourly throughout the day.

### STAMFORD

☎ 01780 / pop 19,525

Come rain or shine, this elegant town seems bathed in a warm glow thanks to the beautiful honey-coloured Lincolnshire limestone with which it's built. Sloping gently up from the River Welland and a sprawling waterside park, its winding streets overflow with fine medieval and Georgian buildings. And if you feel as though you're walking through a period drama, there's a reason: Stamford has been used as a set for more drama productions than you can shake a clapperboard at.

The **tourist office** (☎ 755611; stamfordtic@southksex.gov.uk; 27 St Mary's St; ☎ 9.30am–5pm Mon–Sat year-round, plus 10am–4pm Sun Apr–Oct) is in the Stamford Arts Centre, and helps with accommodation. Staff can also arrange guided town walks (£3.50) and chauffeured punt trips.

The **Stamford Museum** (☎ 766317; Broad St; admission free; ☎ 10am–5pm Mon–Sat year-round, & 1–4pm Sun Apr–Sep) has a muddle of displays on the town's history, including models of circus-performing midget Charles Stretton (aka Tom Thumb) and local heavyweight Daniel Lambert, who tipped the scales at an astounding 336kg in life. After Lambert's death, the tiny Stretton caused great hilarity by playing hide and seek in Lambert's voluminous clothes.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Stamford Lodge** (☎ 482932; www.stamfordlodge.co.uk; 66 Scotgate; s/d £45/65) This former bakehouse sits in a lovely row of 18th-century Georgian buildings and has exposed stone walls and sloping ceilings. Rooms are sprucely decorated with modern furnishings and facilities and small en suites. The friendly hostess is keen to help out, and breakfasts are excellent. There's pay-and-display parking across the road.

**our pick George** (☎ 750750; www.georgehotelofstamford.com; 71 St Martin's St; s/d from £78/115, superior d £185; ☎ ☒ ☒) Recognised by a gallows sign across the road, welcoming travellers but warning off highwaymen, this wonderful riverside hotel likes to call itself 'England's greatest coaching inn', and with some justification. Parts of it date back 1000 years and its long history is reflected in its 47 luxurious rooms, each of which has its own unique character and flair, décor and price tag. The oak-panelled restaurant serves classy British and international cuisine.

**Meadows** (☎ 762739; www.themeadowsrestaurant.co.uk; 1–2 Castle Pl; mains £8–14; ☎ lunch & dinner Tue–Sun) This lovely semiformal restaurant in a 17th-century stone building serves traditional English dishes from sea bass to good ol' Lincolnshire sausages. It has a terrace at the back overlooking the meadows.

### Getting There & Away

Stamford is 46 miles from Lincoln and 21 miles south of Grantham.

National Express serves Stamford once daily from London (£12.80, 2¾ hours) via Lincoln (£8.30, 1½ hours). Kimes operates three buses daily Monday to Saturday between Stamford and Grantham (1½ hours). National Express also runs two buses daily (£5.70, 30 minutes). Delaine Buses run to Peterborough (one hour, hourly).

There are hourly trains to Cambridge (£15.80, 1¼ hours) and Ely (£11.80, 55 minutes). Trains to Norwich (£19.60, 2¼ hours) usually involve changing at Ely or Peterborough.

### AROUND STAMFORD Burghley House

This staggeringly ostentatious **Elizabethan palace** (☎ 01780-752451; www.burghley.co.uk; adult/child incl sculpture garden £9/4; ☎ 11am–5pm Sat–Thu Apr–Oct) was built to awe and still does a darn good job of it. Situated just a mile south of Stamford, Burghley (pronounced bur-lee) is the home of the Cecil family and was built by Queen Elizabeth I's adviser William Cecil. These days it's a regular star of the silver screen, with hit films like *The Da Vinci Code* and *Pride and Prejudice* just some of the productions utilising its showy interior as a dramatic stage.

Its roof bristles with cupolas, pavilions, belvederes and chimneys, and every inch of its 18 magnificent staterooms seems drenched with lavish finery. Hundreds of masterpieces from Gainsborough to Brueghel hang from the walls, while other rooms skip the frames and are splashed with wonderful 17th-century Italian murals overflowing with muscles, mammaries and mythology. Most impressive is the Heaven Room, which writhes with floor-to-ceiling gods and goddesses disporting among the columns; on the flip side, there's the nearby stairway to Hell, which depicts Satan as a giant cat-eyed uterus devouring the world. Other highlights include cavernous Tudor kitchens decorated with turtle skulls left over from the master's soup and an exhibit

detailing the career of David Cecil, the Lord Burghley who was an Olympic athlete and part-inspiration for the film *Chariots of Fire*.

Meanwhile the landscaped deer park outside is now home to a splendid **sculpture garden** with organic-looking contemporary works sprinkled sympathetically and often humorously throughout the grounds.

The house is a pleasant 15-minute walk through the park from Stamford train station. The internationally famous **Burghley Horse Trials** take place here in early September.

### BOSTON

☎ 01205 / pop 35,124

It was from this major medieval port that the Pilgrim Fathers – the first white settlers of the US – began their break for the freedom of the New World in 1607. These religious separatists suffered persecution and imprisonment, yet when word of their success made it back here, a crowd of locals followed them across the Atlantic to found a namesake town in the new colony of Massachusetts. Lying near the mouth of the River Witham, in the bay known as The Wash, the town is now a mere blip on the map in comparison to its US namesake, but it has hung onto much of its medieval appearance, timber-framed Tudor buildings and labyrinthine street grid with two main streets flanking the river and linked by footbridges.

The **tourist office** (☎ 356656; ticoboston@boston.gov.uk; Market Pl; ☎ 9am–5pm Mon–Sat year-round) is under the Assembly Rooms on Market Pl.

### Sights & Activities

In keeping with the town's high-flying status in medieval times, the early-14th-century **St Botolph's Church** (☎ 362864; church free, tower adult/under 18yr £2.50/1; ☎ 9am–4.30pm Mon–Sat, btwn services Sun) has a showy 88m-high tower, fondly dubbed the Boston Stump for its square tip as its fenland base was not firm enough to support a thin spire. Puff your way up the 365 steps on a clear day and you'll see to Lincoln, 32 miles away. Downstairs there's a 17th-century **pulpit** from which fiery vicar John Cotton delivered five-hour catechisms in the 1630s, and convinced his parishioners to emigrate in the footsteps of the Pilgrim Fathers.

You can see the very cells in which the Pilgrim Fathers were imprisoned in the 14th-century **guildhall** (☎ 365954; South St; adult/child £1.25/free; ☎ 10am–5pm Mon–Sat & 1.30–5pm Sun May–Sep), now

## THE FENS

One of England's most melancholy landscapes, the manmade Fens were once strange and desolate marshlands that stretched from Cambridge north to The Wash and beyond into Lincolnshire. Amid the wilderness lived isolated pockets of people who survived by fishing and farming scraps of land among a maze of waterways. Though Romans and land-hungry medieval monasteries dabbled with building flood banks to exploit the fertile land, it took the 17th-century arrival of Dutch engineer Sir Cornelius Vermuyden to begin the wholesale draining of the Fens. Not that the scheme proved easy or unopposed – unhappy Fen folk were known to diligently dig the dykes during the day, then sneak back at night when their landlords weren't looking and fill in their hard work! However, with the aid of wind and later steam pumps, the flat, open plains with their rich, black soil were created. Now an eerie, windswept but strangely mesmerising landscape, the region has inspired a wealth of literature, including Graham Swift's excellent novel *Waterland*.

As the world's weather pattern changes and the sea level rises, however, the Fens are beginning to disappear underwater again. It's estimated that by 2030 up to 400,000 hectares could be lost. To find out more on the past and future of the Fens, visit **Fenscape Discovery Centre** (☎ 01775-761161; www.fenscape.org; A151 at A16; admission free) near Spalding, Lincolnshire, or appreciate its wildlife at **Wicken Fen National Nature Reserve** (☎ 01353-720274; Lode Lane, Wicken; adult/child £4.50/2; ☼ dawn-dusk), 8 miles south of Ely.

a visitor centre with multimedia eulogies on their struggles. The museum will reopen from renovations in mid-2007.

About 800m northeast of Market Pl is the fully functional five-sailed **Maud Foster Windmill** (☎ 352188; adult/child £2.50/1.50; ☼ 11am-5pm Wed-Sun Jul & Aug, Wed, Sat & Sun only Sep-Jun), built in 1819 and the tallest working windmill in the country with no less than seven floors that creak and tremble with its flour-grinding exertions. It's well worth the walk, just don't wear black or you'll come out grey.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Palethorpe House** (☎ 359000; 138 Spilsby Rd; s/d £50/70; ☎ ☒ ☒) This delightful vine-covered Victorian villa has just two beautifully refurbished en suite rooms complete with living room, and it's situated a 10-minute walk from Boston's centre. It only serves continental breakfasts during the week.

**Maud's Tea Rooms** (☎ 352188; Maud Foster Windmill, Willoughby Rd; mains £5-8; ☼ 11am-5pm Wed-Sun Jul & Aug, Wed, Sat & Sun only Sep-Jun) A quaint teashop with a difference, Maud's is set in its namesake tower windmill, and serves a wealth of cakes baked the old-fashioned way with organic flour whisked straight from the millstone. It also offers filling lunches that include Lincolnshire cheeses, local sausages and vegetarian options.

## Getting There & Away

Interconnect 5 buses run hourly between Lincoln and Boston (1½ hours), or you can take

the train from Lincoln, changing at Sleaford (£8.40, 1¼ hours).

## SKEGNESS

☎ 01754 / pop 16,806

Famous for its saccharine candy-floss fun, vast bucket-and-spade beaches and a sea-front parade drowning in greasy fish-and-chip shops, bleeping and flashing penny arcades and kiss-me-quick hats, 'Skeggy' is a classic English seaside resort where many thousands of Britons descend each year to do brave impressions of sunbathing, inhale ice cream, fly kites and hit the town for nightly disco, bingo or cheesy cabaret. But the resort also works to keep fresh generations of punters rolling in, and its newer attractions include an orphaned seal pup sanctuary, facilities for windsurfing and kitesurfing and a fancy new skate park.

Cheap-and-cheerful B&Bs are just about everywhere and start at just £18 per person, but the **tourist office** (☎ 899887; www.funcoast.co.uk; Grand Pde; ☼ 9.30am-5pm Apr-Oct, 9.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri Nov-Mar) is also happy to help you find digs. It sits opposite the **Embassy Centre** (☎ 768333; www.embassytheatre.co.uk), the mothership of Skeggy's cabaret scene and the place to watch your favourite Abba tribute band. From July to September, this stretch of beach suffuses the night sky with light pollution as 25,000 glowing light bulbs ignite the Skegness Illuminations.

Skegness is simple to reach by public transport. Interconnect 7 buses depart hourly from Boston (1¼ hours) Monday to Saturday. From

Lincoln, Interconnect 6 buses run hourly Monday to Saturday and five times on Sunday (1¼ hours).

There are trains at least hourly Monday to Saturday and nine on Sunday between Skegness and Boston (32 minutes).

## LOUTH

☎ 01507 / pop 15,930

A bustling market town of narrow lanes lined with Georgian and Victorian architecture, Louth straddles the River Lud between the Wolds to the west and the marshes of the Lincolnshire coast. The town is cleaved into two hemispheres, as the zero longitude line splits the town; it is marked by a plaque in Eastgate and sculptures dot the line as part of the Louth Art Trail. Louth's other claim to fame is that it was the scene of a dramatic if short-lived revolt against Henry VIII in 1536.

The **tourist office** (☎ 609289; louthinfo@e-lindsey.gov.uk; New Market Hall, off Commarket; ☼ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, to 4.30pm Oct-Easter) has maps and can help find accommodation.

## Sights

While mustering the strength to climb Louth's main attraction – the tallest parish church spire in England – pop into **Louth Museum** (☎ 601211; www.louthmuseum.co.uk; 4 Broadbank; adult/child £2/1.20; ☼ 10am-4pm Tue-Sat Apr-Oct) to see its reproduction of an enormous panorama of Louth, which was painted from the top of the church's tower in the 19th century and makes a fascinating comparison to today's view.

With that image burnt into your retina, head for the spire itself. The part medieval, part Tudor **St James' Church** (☼ 10.30am-4pm Easter-Christmas) was described by Sir John Betjeman as 'one of the last great medieval Gothic masterpieces' and is propped up by dramatic buttresses and fortified by battlements. Inside, take a good look down the nave and you'll see that the left row of pillars – which are older than their opposite twins – are lurching off balance. Strange to think that the famous New World adventurer Captain John Smith (yes, the one in *Pocahontas*) once worshipped here. A long elbow-scraping climb up to the tower (£1) is rewarded by views better still than you'd hoped.

Louth's most elegant street is Georgian Westgate, which runs from beside the church.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Ourpick Priory** (☎ 602930; www.theprioryhotel.com; 149 Eastgate; s/d/f from £45/60/110; ☎ ☒ ☒) Half-castle, half-house but never a priory, this glorious whitewashed Gothic-style building from 1818 is set in sprawling gardens complete with folly and lake. The formidable task of its upkeep has been taken on by a passionate young family, and the rooms have beautiful period-style furnishings. Dinner is available most nights, and children are very welcome.

## Getting There & Away

Louth is 23 miles northeast of Lincoln, from where bus 10 runs every couple of hours (one hour).

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