

Explore Royal Windsor and Eton



How long do I need? One day

Where is it? Windsor and Eton

Highlights

The oldest and largest inhabited castle in the world has made Royal Windsor irresistibly unique. Her Majesty the Queen's 1,000 year old residence is an awesome presence, dominating the town as it stands guard over a beautiful stretch of the River Thames. Like the castle, which is a working royal palace, the town's regal haunts are very much lived in and alive. The 2.2 mile Long Walk, which runs straight from the castle gates, is a fantastic facility for scenic parkland picnics and walks. Queen Victoria's royal station, opened over 100 years ago, is the centrepiece of Windsor Royal Shopping – one of several high-class shopping areas in the town. The River Thames, the monarch's former highway, is now a scenic route for pleasure craft and passenger boat rides.

The highlights here are all easy to reach on foot. Just a short stroll from the castle, a bridge takes you over the River Thames to picturesque Eton where the famous college is frequently open for tours. Don't think of this simply as an "add on" to a Windsor visit. To see inside these magnificent buildings, and feel the ambiance of this hallowed institution, is a truly memorable experience.

Start your day at Windsor Castle

Awesome from the outside, 'the greatest castle in the world' is also breathtaking within. William the Conqueror first fortified the site in the 1070s to guard the western approaches to London, which was then a day's march away. Since then it has evolved to cover 26 acres of ground which contain the royal palace, a magnificent chapel and the homes and workplaces of a whole community of people. Near disaster struck the castle in 1992, when a huge fire damaged or destroyed more than 100 rooms. Fortunately, many were empty at the time and few of the castle's priceless art treasures were lost. £37 million was spent restoring the building and its contents, a mammoth task completed in just five years. The work has made this ancient castle a sumptuous showcase for the very finest craftsmanship available in the world today.

Allow at least two hours for your visit, which can include:

- The magnificent State Apartments: hung with famous works from the Royal Collection, including paintings by Rembrandt, Rubens, Canaletto and Gainsborough.
- From October to March: you can enjoy George IV's private apartments (the Semi-State Rooms), among the most richly decorated interiors in the Castle.
- During August and September: the East Terrace is open to visitors. Overlooking Home Park and the rose garden created for George IV in the 1820s, it offers views of the East façade of the castle, not normally visible to the public.
- From August to early October: take a guided tour of the Great Kitchen, used to prepare ceremonial state banquets served in St George's Hall. Dating from the 13th century, this is "the oldest, substantially unchanged and still working kitchen in the country".
- St George's Chapel: one of the most beautiful church buildings in England. Dating from 1475, it is the spiritual home of the Order of the Garter, the senior order of British Chivalry established in 1348 by Edward III. The chapel contains the tombs of 10 sovereigns, including Henry VIII and his third wife Jane Seymour, and Charles I.
- Queen Mary's Dolls' House: the world's most famous dolls' house has electric lighting, hot and cold running water and even flushing lavatories. Some 1,500 craftsmen and artists worked on the house, which took three years to complete.
- The Drawings Gallery: shows changing exhibitions of material from the Royal Library housed in the Castle.
- The Changing of The Guard: this ceremony at Windsor Castle symbolises the pageantry of royal life at Windsor. Be in position by 10.50 to watch the new guards marching up the High Street to the Castle, or catch the old guards marching back at around 11.25. A marching band usually plays when weather permits. Morning visitors can watch the 30-minute 'changing' ceremony outside the Guardroom in the Lower Ward. Changing the Guard takes place daily from April until the end of July (except Sundays) and on alternate days for the rest of the year. Please check dates online at www.royalcollection.org.uk.

Windsor Castle

Windsor Castle, Windsor, SL4 1NJ

Opening hours: March – October, 9.45 -17.15 (last admission 16.00). November – February, 9.45 – 16.15 (last admission 15.00). On Sundays the Chapel is open to worshippers only.

Costs: Admission costs apply – see website or call for details

Tel: +44 (0)20 77667304

Web: <http://www.royalcollection.org.uk>

Relax on a river trip

The River Thames is Windsor's oldest highway and still provides the most stylish viewpoint for the town. [French Brothers](#) (tel: +44 (0)1753 851900)

offer 40-minute or two-hour passenger boat trips from Windsor Promenade, just 10 minutes walk from the Castle. Take the 40-minute trip to relax after a Castle visit, cruising upstream to Boveney Lock and returning with classic views of the Castle and Eton College. The two-hour trip cruises upstream as far as Monkey Island, allowing time for a drink from the bar with light refreshments on board. Tickets include information about sights and scenery along the route.

Two-hour cruises: operate daily from 2 April to 1 October, with departures between 13.30 and 14.30.

French Brothers

Windsor Promenade, Windsor

Opening hours: 40-minute cruises: February – October, operate hourly and daily from 10.00 -17.00, November – December, operate hourly at weekends only from 10.00 – 16.00. Two hour cruises: operate daily from April 2 – October 1, with departures between 13.30 and 14.30

Costs: Admission costs apply – see website or call for details

Tel: +44 (0)1753 851 900

Web: www.boat-trips.co.uk

A bite to eat?

With cafés, pubs and restaurants of every kind, and 16 different types of cuisine to choose from, you'll find lots of lunchtime options in every part of the town. Historic eating houses include the 17th-century Drury House Restaurant in cobbled Church Street and the Royal Oak, in the shadow of the Castle, with its roaring fire in the winter and summer terrace for Castle views. Contemporary choices include lots of quality, independent establishments as well as favourites such as Browns, Pizza Express, Wagamama and eateries inspired by well know names like Carluccio's and Anthony Worrall Thompson's Windsor Grill. Drop in on the All Bar One in Royal Windsor Station to see Queen Victoria's toilet and handbasin, which make up part of the décor!

Time to shop

Windsor and Eton boast 60 Royal Warrant holders, so the seal of approval is guaranteed. Shop in the traffic-free triangle of Peascod Street, King Edward Court and [Windsor Royal Shopping](#) for a good mix of famous names and high street favourites plus designer and contemporary brands and a variety of interesting, "one off" stores. Cross the bridge to Eton High Street, where many shops have premises dating back to medieval times. Browse here for art and antiques, gifts, clocks and books, tailoring, couture, furnishings and fine food.

The Eton College tour

Early afternoon shopping will give you time to catch the second of two afternoon tours of this famous school, which is just 10–15 minutes walk from the River Thames. Eton College was founded in 1440 by King Henry VI to provide free education for 70 poor scholars who would then go on to further their education at King's College, Cambridge. Now one of the best known schools in the world, its old boys include the Princes William and Harry and 19 prime ministers. Guided tours of the college last an hour,

visiting the Cloisters, the superb 15th-century Chapel, the oldest classroom (complete with centuries of graffiti) and the Museum of Eton Life housed in the vaulted undercroft of the original dining hall. Tours take place at 14.00 and 15.15 on some Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays during term time and daily during Eton's holidays. Dates of terms (known as "Halves") in 2011: 12 January – 30 March; 27 April - 1 July; 7 September – 14 December.

Pre-booking is a must. Tickets are available from the Royal Windsor Information Centre, from the entry desk located at the end of College Chapel and from the Eton College Gift Shop on Eton High Street, open March-December from 11.00-17.30.

Eat out by the river

Enjoy an elegant dinner overlooking the River Thames at [Sir Christopher Wren's House](#) (tel: +44 (0)1753 861354), the luxury waterside hotel on the Windsor side of Eton Bridge. Swans glide gracefully past the terrace bar and generous windows of the award-winning Strok's Restaurant, noted for its superb views and fine dining based on modern European cuisine.

Windsor Race Nights

Take a French Brothers boat (tel: +44 (0)1753 851900) from Windsor Promenade to the evening meetings at [Royal Windsor Racecourse](#). The outward service operates from two hours before the first race until the beginning of the second race. Return trips start at the beginning of the penultimate race and finish approximately 40 minutes after the last race. Boat tickets are [bookable online](#) or can be bought on the day at Windsor Tourist Information Centre or French Brothers Promenade.

More ways of exploring Windsor

Enjoy a regal view from a horse-drawn carriage. Licensed carriages leave from the High Street taxi rank outside the castle walls for a 30-minute tour through the town and down the famous Long Walk to the Great Park. A one-hour tour goes further into the Great Park, via the deer park. Tours operate (in fine weather only) from 12.30 from Easter to the end of October and (on fine weekends) for the rest of the year.

Take a [City Sightseeing](#) open top double-decker bus tour of Windsor & Eton at any time of the year. The circular tour route takes 45 minutes, with tickets allowing for hop-on-hop-off stops at 11 points of interest along the route.

Join a themed [Windsor Town Walk](#), on Saturdays and Sundays from Easter to the end of August.

To explore Windsor at your own pace, download this [Heritage Trail](#) around the walls of the castle, the River Thames and Eton.

Getting to Windsor

By Car: Windsor is just 30 miles west of London with Heathrow Airport just 15 minutes' drive away. Luton and Gatwick airports are within an hour's drive. The whole of the Royal Borough is easily accessible via the

major motorway networks of the M3, M4, M25 and M40 and is well served by public transport. Parking: Windsor has a choice of multi-storey and open-air car parks, with long-stay options for the best-value all-day parking. Take advantage of Windsor's [Park and Ride facilities](#), which operate at [Legoland Windsor](#) (seven days a week during the park's open season) and [Home Park Car Park](#) (Monday to Friday).

By Train: First Great Western operates services from London Paddington and Reading to Windsor & Eton Central station with a change at Slough (minimum journey time 25 minutes). South West Trains operate direct services from London Waterloo via Richmond to Windsor & Eton Riverside station (approximate journey time 55 minutes). For train times and ticket information call National Rail Enquiries on +44 (0)8457 48 49 50.

By Bus: First operates services throughout the Royal Borough and surrounding districts. Call +44 (0)1753 524144 or visit www.firstgroup.com for details. Green Line 702 service operates between London Victoria and Windsor. Visit www.rainbowFARES.com for timetables and fares. A regular bus service also links Windsor and Heathrow Terminal 5: contact the Royal Windsor Information Centre for details. Windsor Taxis: the taxi rank is located outside Windsor Castle on the High Street. Tel: +44 (0)1753 862020.

Visitor Information

Windsor Information Centre

Old Booking Hall, Windsor Royal Station, Thames Street, Windsor, SL4 1PJ

Opening hours: May – August, weekdays 9.30 – 17.30, Saturday 9.30 – 17.00, Sunday 10.00 – 16.00. September – April, Monday – Saturday 10.00 – 17.00, Sunday 10.00 – 16.00

Tel: +44 (0)1753 743 900

Web: www.windsor.gov.uk