

HERITAGE WEEKENDS

52 BREAKS EXPLORING BRITAIN'S PAST

- A unique, full-colour guide featuring 52 inspirational, hand-picked weekend breaks, ideal for all the family
- Part of the best-selling 'Bradt on Britain' series
- Supported by a comprehensive PR and marketing campaign

History and heritage are among Britain's greatest passions. Travel writers and historians Helen and Neil Matthews have selected 52 places that are wonderful examples of natural, architectural, industrial or cultural heritage. Some are neglected or under-rated and deserve more attention. Others are famous locations waiting to be enjoyed from new perspectives. Heritage Weekends is here to help the reader explore Britain's past: from the Prehistoric era, through ancient, medieval, Tudor, Regency and Victorian times to the 20th century. As well as detailed descriptions of the sites, the book includes suggested itineraries, directions and top tips for accommodation and eating out. England, Wales, Scotland, Jersey and the Isle of Man are all covered, with weekends divided into in-depth and shorter entries. All weekends include detailed information on how to get there, as well as suggestions for further places to visit if you have time to spare. From St Albans' Roman remains at Verulamium to Avebury's stone circle, Windsor Castle to York's Jorvik Centre, Shakespeare's Stratford-upon-Avon to the standing stones and chessmen of the Isle of Lewis, there's more than enough to entice, stimulate and entertain the whole family. Full chapter list overleaf.



NEIL & HELEN MATTHEWS

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SEAT OF POWER

Much of modern Windsor hails from the 18th and 19th centuries, but parts are older. Peasod Street is probably Saxon origin. Most significantly, Windsor Castle – first built under William the Conqueror – has been a royal residence for over 900 years. The castle sits on a prime strategic site, across the Thames from the world's most famous school. There's no better place to explore almost a millennium of British history, power and privilege.

STAR ATTRACTIONS

In seeing a fraction of Windsor Castle's rooms (there are 951 in the Upper Ward alone, one of three main sections), your eyes and neck muscles get a thorough workout. Look up to admire the magnificent fan-vaulted ceiling of the east end of St George's Chapel, where Prince Harry married Meghan Markle in 2018. There's homage to British heroes – check out the massive marble bust of Nelson in the Queen's Guard Chamber – and more than a touch of European influence.

• Captain to come

WINDSOR AND ETON MODERN/ANTIQUE 15

Our favourite item is the exquisite **Queen Mary's Dolls' House**, the world's largest dolls' house... without dolls. It's a fully furnished architectural model of the ideal of an early 20th-century English gentleman's house. The miniature library includes tiny bound volumes by over 170 authors. The rest of the model house and basement garage showcases miniatures of great British brands from Rolls Royce to Huntley and Palmer biscuits.

Head down to the river and cross the **Windsor Town Bridge** to find Eton. The boys' school **Eton College** has trained 20 British prime ministers, including the current incumbent at the time of writing. Henry VI set the college up in 1440 for the free education of 70 poor boys who would then go on to King's College Cambridge (founded in 1441). His statue stands in the schoolyard; walk on his right hand side as per tradition, so that your heart is closer to him and your sword arm is free. The college chapel boasts post-war stained-glass windows designed by John Piper, and Flemish wall paintings which were hidden by whitewash for centuries. Look out, in the Upper School and the College Hall, for boys' names carved into the wood paneling by the boys themselves, including a young Percy Shelley. As a seal counterpart, memorials in the chapel antechamber and around the cloisters remember many old Etonians who died fighting in wars. As Thomas Gray, an Old Etonian, put it in his *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*: 'The paths of glory lead but to the grave.'

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE Regular trains from London Waterloo take around an hour. Windsor is 15km from London Heathrow (with direct bus links) and is well connected by the motorway network (M4 [6] for Windsor, M3 [8], M25 [3] or M40 [4]).

TIME TO SPARE? There are several other local attractions of historical interest including **Windsor Museum** (windsormuseum.org.uk) on the High Street, housed in the Guildhall in whose construction Christopher Wren had a hand. **Frogmore House** (royalcollection.org.uk/visit/frogmorehouse) is a private retreat for the Royal Family, open to visitors for a few days each year meanwhile, the landscapes of **Windsor Great Park** (windsorgreatpark.co.uk) include stone ruins from Legia Magna (now part of modern Libya) and **Dorney Court** (dorneycourt.co.uk) is a Grade I-listed Tudor manor house where legend has it that the first pineapple grown in England was presented to Charles II.

MORE INFORMATION

Windsor Castle (royalcollection.org.uk/visit/windsorcastle)
Eton College (etoncollege.com/visits.aspx)

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ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE The railway station, 15 minutes from the town centre, is an aspect of the Birmingham-Midland-Southern-Spina line, use Chiltern Railways from London Marylebone or London Midland from Hereford. For driving, the M40 is the closest motorway (exit J15), but the M1, M5 and M6 pass close by too.

STAYING For half-timbered cosiness in the historic heart, try the Mercure Shakespeare on Chapel Street, for closeness to the theatre, the Arden (theardenhotelstratford.com) on Waterside. Some hotels' parking is limited, so you may need to use the multi-storey on Bridgeway or the car park on Arden Street.

EATING There are plenty of local bistros and national chains, especially in Sheep Street. The Royal Shakespeare Theatre's own rooftop restaurant is efficient and convenient, while Sorrento (sorrentorestaurant.co.uk) in Ely Street offers a delicious traditional Neapolitan lasagne. For afternoon tea, the dog-friendly Other Place café, the World War II-themed FourPies (thefourpies.co.uk) on Sheep Street or the car café Shakespeare (shakespearecafe.co.uk) in Union Street are all palatable hits.

TIME TO SPARE? Beyond the Bard, there's plenty of history to explore around here. A few miles northeast, via the A453 (lie two notable castles: **Warwick** (warwick-castle.com), still going strong after 1,100 years and as in 64 acres of Capability Brown-landscaped grounds; and the remains and gardens of **Kenilworth** (english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/kenilworth-castle), where the Earl of Leicester entertained Elizabeth I. There are also several National Trust properties and a short drive from Stratford, **Chalfont Park**, home to the same family for 900 years, to the east of Stratford, with **Coughton Court**, **Baddesley Clinton** (a medieval moated manor house) and Tudor-era **Packwood House** to the north.

For a taste of modern industrial heritage, the **British Motor Museum** (britishmotormuseum.co.uk), the world's largest collection of historic British cars, is around a dozen miles east of Stratford. A Time Road gives you the low-down on this 20th-century British story of success and decline, an interactive 'Under the Bonnet' section explains what's under the bonnet and there's a recreation of William Morris' office. But of course the cars are the stars, with special sections for sports cars, Jaguars and Land Rovers, as well as motors from the movies.

MORE INFORMATION

Royal Shakespeare Theatre (rsc.org.uk)
Shakespeare's Birthplace Trust (shakespeare.org.uk)
Visit Stratford-upon-Avon (visitstratforduponavon.co.uk)



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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Heritage Weekends is **Helen and Neil Matthews'** second book for Bradt, following their guide to the *Chilterns and Thames Valley* (2019). Their travel writing has appeared in *Wanderlust*, *This England* and other publications. Both hold PhDs in history and Helen is a member of the Royal Historical Society. Pen & Sword has published Helen's *The Legitimacy of Bastards: The Place of Illegitimate Children in Later Medieval England* (2019) and Neil's *Victorians and Edwardians abroad: The Beginning of the Modern Holiday* (2016).



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