



Wonders of WINCHESTER

Ancient history and scenic walks await in this gorgeous Hampshire city

England's first capital, Winchester, is a well-preserved gem, its tight lanes and alleyways jammed with historic treats, from medieval palaces to a world-famous cathedral. Yet it's far from being stuck in the past, with a lively centre that's teeming with cool galleries, shops and restaurants.

Winchester Cathedral

This medieval masterpiece draws coachloads of visitors, but still holds regular services, including evensong. Take a pew inside and gaze at the soaring Gothic nave, Europe's largest. Then seek out treasures like rare 12th-century wall paintings embellishing the Holy Sepulchre

chapel, and the statue of William Walker, whose work as a diver helped shore up the cathedral's sinking foundations in the early 20th century. Jane Austen is buried here too, along with a host of kings, queens and bishops.

The crypt is where young evacuees from bombed-out Portsmouth and Southampton slept in safety during World War Two. It frequently floods in winter and the reflective water adds to the ethereal effect of its famous sculpture – entitled

Sound II – a lead-cast figure with a bowed head made by Sir Antony Gormley. It's well worth taking one of the guided tours included in the admission price (£13.50; winchester-cathedral.org.uk).

Jane Austen's house

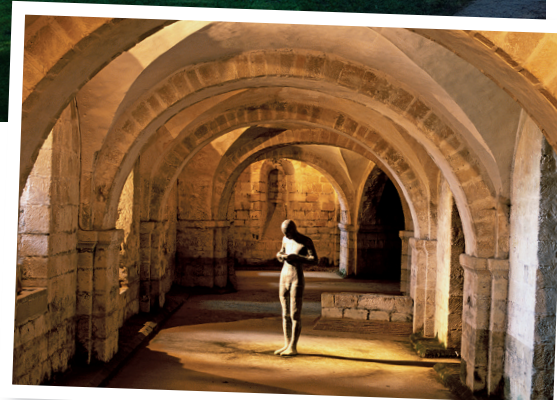
Number 8 College Street, a butter-yellow townhouse, is where Jane Austen lived with her sister Cassandra in the months before her death in 1817, aged just 41. It has been a private house for

years, but was recently bought by Winchester College and, as part of celebrations marking 250 years since Jane's birth, will open to the public for a brief window in summer. Tickets will go like hot cakes, so book ahead (visitwinchester.co.uk/events/no-8-college-street).

The Great Hall

Just off the High Street, look for the marble-columned Great Hall, a remnant of mighty Winchester Palace,

built by William the Conqueror. Its most talked-about treasure is the heavy oak Round Table, inscribed with the names of King Arthur and his knights.



Take in the Great Hall and statue in the crypt (above right)



Jane Austen lived here just before her death



Outside, relax in Queen Eleanor's Garden, a herb-scented sanctuary with a turf seat, vine-covered arbour and trickling fountain.

Nearby Westgate is the last surviving main gate into the city. Once a debtor's prison – you can find graffiti scratched on the walls by inmates – it's now a family-friendly museum and offers fine views across the city's rooftops.

Poetic walks

Keats was inspired to write his famous ode *To Autumn* after staying in the city in 1819.

Follow his tracks on a two-mile trail that threads past the ruins of Wolvesey Castle (the medieval bishops' palace) to the banks of chalk-bottomed River Itchen, flanked by water

meadows and the emerald cricket pitch of Winchester College. The trail finishes at The Hospital of St Cross and Almshouse of Noble Poverty, which once gave out ale and bread to famished travellers.

Nowadays, you can enjoy tea and cake in the summer tea room and colourful borders in the Master's Garden (hospitalofstcross.co.uk).

More ambitious hikers might like to tackle a section of the South Downs Way, starting at the National Trust's old City Mill, grinding flour since the time of King Alfred's reign. Before you set off, fuel up at the mill's riverside cafe and watch footage of nocturnal-visiting otters.



sandwiches with chips or salad, or more substantial dishes like wild mushroom polenta or lamb pie with mash. Its five elegant rooms come with Egyptian cotton bedding and a mini bar. Rooms from £134 B&B; wykehamarmswinchester.co.uk

EAT AND STAY

* For a light bite with art on the side, drop by the Arc (arcwinchester.org.uk), a gallery space and hub for music and comedy events.

* Or take a table at The Old Vine, an 18th-century pub with six rooms, some with fabulous views of the cathedral. Its menu includes vegan, low-dairy and low-gluten options. Rooms from £165 B&B; oldvinewinchester.com
* Equally central, The Wykeham Arms is a red-brick corner pub in Kingsgate. Tuck into



Imagine waking up to the spectacular views of an Italian lake, wandering through the charming streets of lakeside towns and catching glimpses of the Alps in the background. The views are like no other. Or perhaps you're more inclined to a city break – the landmarks here are world-renowned (and so is the food).



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