

Welcome to England

This green land, this sceptred isle, this crucible of empire and pioneer of parliamentary democracy, is the most eccentric, extraordinary and downright intriguing place on Earth.

Variety Packed

From the Roman remains of Hadrian's Wall to London's incomparable theatre scene, England is full of astounding variety. In the cities, the streets buzz day and night, filled with tempting shops and restaurants, and some of the finest museums in the world. After dark, cutting-edge clubs, top-class performing arts and formidable live music provide a string of nights to remember. Next day, you're deep in the English countryside or enjoying a classic seaside resort. There really is something for everyone, whether you're eight or 80, going solo, or travelling with your friends, your kids or your grandma.

Time Travel

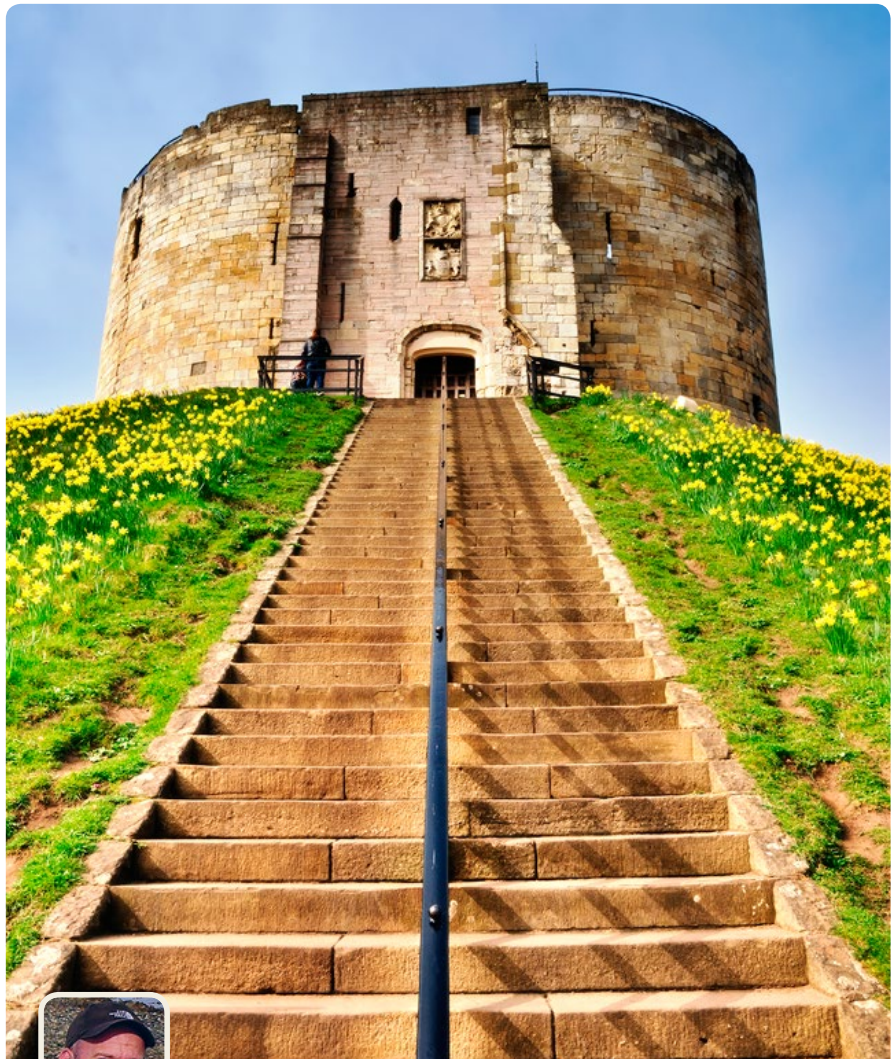
A journey through England is a journey through history. But not history that's dull and dusty – history you can feel and re-live. You can lay your hands on the ancient megaliths of a 5000-year-old stone circle, or walk the battlements of a medieval fortress – just as they were patrolled by chain-mail-clad defenders many centuries ago. Visit the sites of the legend of King Arthur, the sonnets of Shakespeare and the palaces of monarchs – past and present. Then fast forward to the future and admire 21st-century architecture in Manchester, or explore the space-age domes of Cornwall's Eden Project.

English Spoken Here

While England has developed a culture and tradition that may appear complex, much of it will be familiar – on the surface at least – to many visitors, thanks to the vast catalogue of British pop music, films and TV programs that have been exported around the world. The same applies when it comes to communication – this is, after all, the home turf of the English language. For many visitors this means there's no need to carry a phrasebook, although you might get a little confused by local accents in places such as Devon or Liverpool.

Easy Does It

Travel here is a breeze. Granted, it may not be totally effortless, but it's easy compared with many parts of the world. And although the locals may grumble (in fact, it's a national pastime), public transport is very good, and a train ride through the English landscape can be a highlight in itself. But whichever way you get around, in this compact country you're never far from the next town, the next pub, the next restaurant, the next national park or the next impressive castle on your hit list of highlights. The choice is endless.



Why I Love England

By Neil Wilson, Writer

England's most appealing feature is the aura of deep-rooted history that emanates from almost every corner of the land. There's a sense that its towns and villages, castles and cathedrals have grown organically over many centuries, to create calming and comfortable landscapes that the mind settles into like a favourite armchair. It's a place that encourages leisurely contemplation, whether gazing at dreaming spires from a thousand-year-old bridge, taking in the view at the top of a not-too-tiring hill or – best of all – ensconced in the corner of a thatch-roofed, stone-floored country pub with a well-earned pint in hand.

For more about our writers, see p704

Above: Clifford's Tower (p485), York