

Maidstone's Shared Story

1. Full Page version:

At the heart of the Garden of England is Kent's historic County Town of Maidstone, set in a region of wide fertile river valleys and ancient woodlands, dotted with prosperous villages. Less than an hour from London and you're in another, gentler world ...

The busy County Town itself – the site of a famous battle from the English Civil War – stretches across one of England's great rivers, the Medway. To the north is the Pilgrims' Way, an ancient route from London to Canterbury along the tops of the North Downs. To the south is the gentle rolling landscape of the Kent Weald, with its oasts, orchards and vines ...

There's a strong Kentish feel to Maidstone and its villages ... the ragstone walls, the weatherboarding, the Kent peg tiles, the green hop ales, the soft fruit and top fruit ... apples and cobnuts, and bowls of cherries at the farm gate. The County Town's roots may be Roman and medieval, but you could say the countryside – with its timbered 16th century houses – is quintessential Tudor England: it was Henry VIII, after all, who ordered the cherries to be planted, and who first called this "the Garden of England". And Leeds Castle – just east of the County Town and known as "the loveliest castle in the world" – was home to six medieval queens, then transformed into a fairy-tale Tudor palace.

This area at Kent's heart is the natural place to stay when visiting the county – half way between the channel ports and the capital city. It's a great base for exploring – along the Medway on a river cruise, hiring a boat or canoe, or walking and cycling beside the river. Following the Blossom Trail in the spring. Visiting vineyards in the autumn. Sampling the best of Kent produce in contemporary restaurants and gastro pubs. Enjoying the shops and markets in the broad streets and squares of the County Town.

It's Kent's capital for big events too – with tens of thousands at a time coming here for the South East's biggest pop concerts, classical extravaganzas, and business shows.

And always within easy reach are Canterbury, Chartwell, Hever, Sissinghurst, Romney Marsh, and the coast.

Short Versions

2. In a paragraph:

There's a strong Kentish feel to Maidstone and its villages. At the heart of the Garden of England is the historic County Town, surrounded by oasts, vineyards, orchards and hop fields, with the great River Medway running through it. The town has Roman and medieval roots; the countryside is quintessential Tudor England. Less than an hour from London and the Channel ports, this area is the natural place to stay to explore Kent – to sample the local produce, shop in the broad streets and squares of the County Town, walk the Pilgrims' Way, cycle beside the river, experience Kent's biggest events, and visit the loveliest castle in the world ...

3. In a sentence:

There's a strong Kentish feel to the County Town of Maidstone and its historic villages – a region of rivers and oast houses, of vineyards and cherry orchards, of gastro pubs and ancient castles ... and a natural place to stay to explore the Garden of England.