

EXPERIENCE ENGLAND



26 ULTIMATE EXPERIENCES

England offers terrific experiences that should be on every traveler's list. Here are Fodor's top picks for a memorable trip.



1 Oxford and Cambridge

England is home to these two prestigious universities, where you'll find centuries of English history among ancient buildings and museums. Tour the accompanying towns via punting boats on local waterways. (Ch. 4, 12)



2 London

London is the beating heart of England, home to some of the country's most iconic sights including world-class museums and picture-perfect palaces. (Ch. 3)



3 Football Matches

Whether you're rooting for Liverpool or Man U, attending a game or watching at a pub, a football match is a great way to observe locals at their most passionate. (Ch. 10)



4 The Cornish Coast

Quaint Cornish seaside towns like St. Ives and Padstow offer fresh seafood, charming harbor views, and sandy beaches. (Ch. 7)



5 Yorkshire

The stunning natural landscape of Yorkshire's moors and dales inspired the Brontës and continues to attract hikers, cyclists, and nature-lovers. (Ch. 13)



6 English Gardens

The English know how to garden, so there's no shortage of bucolic splendor here, from the landscaped wonders of Stourhead to the roses of Sissinghurst Castle Garden. (Ch. 5, 6)



7 Wimbledon

Every summer, the world's oldest (and many say most prestigious) tennis tournament takes place in London to much fanfare and with much tradition. (Ch. 3)

8 Hadrian's Wall

This ancient wall, parts of which date back to AD 122, once marked the edges of Roman rule and remains one of the last great Roman ruins in England. (Ch. 14)



9 Bath

One of the most beautiful cities in Europe, Bath is a testament to both the architectural skills of the Georgians and the Roman love of thermal spas. (Ch. 8)





10 Literary England

From Jane Austen and Beatrix Potter to Wordsworth and the Brontë sisters, the homes of famous authors and the inspirations for their works are found all over England. (Ch. 6, 11, 13)



11 Afternoon Tea

For a quintessential English ritual, enjoy a pot of tea served in bone china alongside finger sandwiches, fruit scones, and cakes. (Ch. 3)



14 Art Museums

Art museums here hold both historic treasures and contemporary delights. London's Tate Britain and Tate Modern in particular have some of the most celebrated collections in the world. (Ch. 3)



15 Stratford-upon-Avon

The birthplace of William Shakespeare offers plenty for fans of the Bard, including performances of his plays at the Royal Shakespeare Company. (Ch. 9)



12 Brighton

With its grand architecture, seaside charm, and vast array of music venues and art galleries, it's easy to see why Brighton is often labeled London-by-the-Sea. (Ch. 5)



13 Historic Homes and Castles

From Windsor Castle and Blenheim Palace to Highclere Castle and Charlecote House, the manors, castles, and palaces in England will fulfill any Downton Abbey fantasy. (Ch. 4, 6, 9)



16 The Lake District

Lake District National Park covers over 880 square miles of picturesque wilderness, complete with lovely villages, England's highest mountain, and, of course, lakes galore. (Ch. 11)



17 Fish-and-Chips

Whether it's from a small seaside town or a rowdy city pub, fried fish-and-chips are the ultimate British comfort food (don't forget the malt vinegar and mushy peas). (Ch. 7, 13)



18 Steam Trains

Once the main mode of transportation for the upper class, today a trip on one of England's few remaining steam railways is a unique way to see the countryside. (Ch. 7)



19 Stonehenge

Awe-inspiring and mystical, Stonehenge is one of the most famous prehistoric sites in England, as well as one of history's most enduring mysteries. (Ch. 6)

20 The Jurassic Coast

Not only is Dorset's 95-mile Jurassic Coast the most beautiful stretch of coastline in England, but it's also an ancient geological wonder teeming with fossils. (Ch. 6)





21 Manchester

England's true second city, Manchester has transformed from a gritty birthplace of industry to a cutting-edge source of excellent music, culture, and cuisine. (Ch. 10)



22 Culinary London

London is one of the world's great foodie cities, offering everything from authentic Indian cuisine to smoky Jamaican jerk chicken, from lip-smacking street food to acclaimed fine-dining restaurants. (Ch. 3)

25 The Cotswolds

Full of quaint English villages, the Cotswolds is one of the prettiest regions of the country, thanks to its stone cottages, manicured gardens, and rural charm. (Ch. 8)



23 Grand Cathedrals

The majestic cathedrals of Canterbury, Salisbury, and York Minster, among many others, are essential parts of England's urban landscapes and its history. (Ch. 5, 6, 13)



24 Historic Pubs

The history of England's taverns and pubs is the history of the country itself. Grab a pint or a G&T and get to know how the locals live. (Ch. 3)

26 The Beatles in Liverpool

A former merchant city, Liverpool is also the birthplace of the Beatles, and fans can trace the musical history here, from John Lennon's childhood home to Penny Lane. (Ch. 10)



WHAT'S WHERE

1 London. Not only Britain's financial and governmental center but also one of the world's great cities, London has mammoth museums, posh palaces, double-decker buses, and singular sights—from Buckingham Palace to Tower Bridge.

2 Oxford and the Thames Valley. London's commuter belt takes in the charming spires of university city Oxford, as well as Windsor, where the late Queen spent most weekends, and Eton, home to the prestigious private school. There are also peaceful river towns such as Henley and Marlow that offer relaxing river excursions, as well as a host of stately homes, from Blenheim Palace to Waddesdon Manor.

3 Canterbury and the Southeast. This compact green and pleasant region within day-trip distance of London takes in Canterbury and its famous cathedral. Other regional highlights include funky seaside resort Brighton, the appealing towns of Rye and Lewes, and Dover's dramatic white cliffs.



4 Stonehenge and the South. Hampshire, Dorset, and Wiltshire have quintessential English countryside, with gentle hills and green pastures. Explore the stone circles at Stonehenge and Avebury, take in Winchester (Jane Austen country) and Salisbury, and discover Highclere Castle and Lyme Regis.

5 Cornwall and the West Country. Somerset, Devon, and Cornwall are sunnier and warmer than the rest of the country, with inviting sandy beaches. Cornwall is famed for its stunning coastline and lush gardens. Of the cities, Bristol is the largest and most vibrant, while Wells and Exeter are attractive and compact. Take in the brooding heaths and moors of Exmoor, Dartmoor, and Bodmin, too.

6 Bath and the Cotswolds. The grand Georgian town of Bath is one of England's highlights, with the Roman baths and golden-stone 18th- and 19th-century architecture. Nearby, the Cotswolds region is justly famous for tranquil, stone-built villages, such as Chipping Campden, Stow-on-the-Wold, and Tetbury.

WHAT'S WHERE

7 Stratford-upon-Avon and the Heart of England. About 100 miles northwest of London, Stratford-upon-Avon is the place to see Shakespeare's childhood home and watch his plays. Nearby Warwickshire has Warwick and Kenilworth castles while Birmingham offers a modern urban experience.

8 Manchester, Liverpool, and the Peak District. Liverpool rides the Beatles' coattails but, like Manchester, has transformed its warehouses and docks into sleek hotels, restaurants, and shops. The surrounding Peak District has great opportunities for walking and visiting stately homes such as Chatsworth and Haddon Hall.

9 The Lake District. Home to a popular national park, this startlingly beautiful area has craggy hills, wild moorland, stone cottages, and glittering silvery lakes. Nature lovers and hikers crowd the region in summer. Among the literary high points are the homes of Wordsworth and Beatrix Potter.



10 Cambridge and East Anglia. The biggest lure in this green, flat, low-key region is Cambridge, with its medieval halls of learning. The countryside is dominated by the cathedrals of Ely and Norwich, as well as by time-warped towns such as Lavenham and coastal spots like Aldeburgh.

11 Yorkshire. This wilder part of England has great appeal for lovers of the outdoors, but the ancient walled city of York is also a center of attention. To York's west are the moors and dales that inspired the Brontës, and in east Yorkshire the moors collide with the sea at towns such as Whitby.

12 Hadrian's Wall and the Northeast. Walk in the footsteps of Roman soldiers along atmospheric Hadrian's Wall. Bamburgh and Dunstanburgh castles guard the coast while Alnwick Castle has stunning gardens. The small city of Durham is a medieval gem and a real contrast to modern, cosmopolitan Newcastle.

England is the biggest region in the United Kingdom (or the U.K.), the nation that also includes Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, and the Channel Islands (Guernsey and Jersey). England, Scotland, and Wales form what is referred to as Great Britain (or just Britain). Despite being given the opportunity in a 2014 referendum to become an independent nation, Scottish voters chose to remain part of the United Kingdom—though there are increasing rumblings of a second, post-Brexit referendum. It's worth noting that, while England, Scotland, and Wales are all part of Britain and the U.K., Wales and Scotland aren't part of England, and vice versa. Get that one wrong at your peril—you haven't seen angry until you've seen a Scot referred to as English.

Although it's about the size of Louisiana, England has a population 12 times as large: 56 million people find space to live on its green rolling hills and in its shallow valleys and crowded cities.

THE DEATH OF THE QUEEN

The passing of Queen Elizabeth II in September 2022 was a seismic event. For most Britons, the Queen was the only monarch they'd ever known; just six months earlier, she had celebrated her Platinum Jubilee (70 years on the throne). For many, even those with anti-monarchy leanings, she was a respected figure, representing continuity and a living link to a nostalgic past—a fact evidenced by the 10-mile-long queues to see her lying in state at London's Westminster Abbey during the nation's period of mourning. It's unlikely that her son and successor, King Charles III (formerly Prince Charles), will garner the same kind of loyalty; a growing anti-monarchist sentiment among younger generations—as well as talk of various Commonwealth countries considering independence referendums—suggest that the British

Monarchy could be set for some difficult years ahead.

POLITICS

Since the general election of 2015, the United Kingdom's government has been in the hands of the Conservative Party. But the unexpected result of a June 2016 referendum, in which the country voted to leave the European Union (a decision known commonly as Brexit), led to the resignation of prime minister David Cameron, who was replaced by Theresa May. Following three turbulent years, May was replaced by Boris Johnson who, despite being seen as a deeply divisive figure, secured an overall parliamentary majority for the Conservatives at the December 2019 general election and proceeded to finally take the U.K. out of the European Union. But in March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic turned the world upside down, and Britain's exit from the E.U. slid down the list of most people's priorities. In September 2022, the combined impact of Brexit, the pandemic, and the invasion of Ukraine on the cost of living in the U.K., as well as police investigations into parties at Downing Street held during COVID lockdown, finally led to the resignation of Boris Johnson. In September 2022, newly elected Conservative leader Liz Truss moved into 10 Downing Street, but her plans for tax cuts caused an uproar, leading to her resignation after just 50 days in office (the shortest PM tenure in British history). In October 2022, Rishi Sunak became Prime Minister (the first person of color to hold that role).

BREXIT

The United Kingdom officially began to leave the European Union in January 2020, but despite this, most experts agree that this issue is set to dominate British politics (and newspaper column inches) for years to come. The U.K. officially left the single market on January

1, 2021, but some contentious issues, such as the Northern Ireland Protocol, continue to rumble on. In terms of travel, new immigration policies have been introduced, which have meant changes to entry requirements and visa validity for many. But once on the ground, visitors to England shouldn't really feel the effects of Brexit on their travel plans.

THE ROYAL FAMILY

Essentially a figurehead monarchy with a symbolic political role, the Royal Family and each member of its three generations continue to exercise the public's fascination, both at home and abroad. Although the taxpayer cost for supporting the family is estimated at £87.5 million (around \$107.5 million) a year, many have traditionally considered the tourists they bring worth the cost (tourism numbers have been helped along in recent years with the success of television shows like *Downton Abbey* and *The Crown*). However, the death of the Queen and ascension of the less universally popular King Charles III in 2022, as well as a series of scandals involving Prince Andrew, may be beginning to change that sentiment.

Next in the line of succession is Prince William, whose personal life has generated plenty of buzz in recent years, from his 2011 wedding to Kate Middleton (now known publicly as Catherine, Princess of Wales) to the births of their three children: future king Prince George, Princess Charlotte, and Prince Louis. However, in the last few years, most of the headlines have gone to his younger brother Harry, first for his wedding to American actress Meghan Markle in May 2018, then for the birth of their first child Archie, and then for the announcement in January 2020 that the couple would step down as senior members of the Royal Family and move to California.

SPORTS

Many of the world's most popular sports, including soccer (aka football), cricket, and tennis, were codified in England during the 19th century, and sport continues to play a prominent role in everyday life here. While the United Kingdom sends a combined team to the Olympics (colloquially known as "Team GB"), England has individual national representation for most team sports. The England soccer team is a particular obsession, with its performances at major tournaments affecting the mood of the nation. England is also home to the Premier League, the world's most watched sports league, with globally popular soccer teams like Manchester United, Liverpool, and Chelsea. When the locals aren't watching soccer, you'll find them at rugby games, cricket matches, tennis tournaments, athletics meets, or Formula One races instead. Until recently, England was home to all four of heavyweight boxing's major belts (shared between Anthony Joshua and Tyson Fury), and compulsory fights mean it may be again in the near future. Don't worry if you prefer less adrenaline-filled sports; England is the spiritual home of darts and snooker (a variation on pool), too.

What to Eat and Drink in England



PIMM'S CUP

Best enjoyed while outside in the sun, Pimm's is a gin-based liqueur typically mixed with lemonade and ice, then filled with sliced strawberries, cucumber, and mint. Popular at weddings, regattas, and Wimbledon, it's the British version of the Aperol Spritz.

FISH-AND-CHIPS

England's most famous dish is available throughout the country and comes in many shapes and sizes. Best enjoyed out of a hot paper wrap from a typical fish-and-chip shop, or *chippy* (and generally takeaway only), the meal should be eaten with a miniature wooden fork for extra authenticity. The fish is usually cod (but haddock, skate, and rock are not uncommon) covered in a crispy deep-fried batter. Chips are thick-cut fried potatoes and sides can include anything from pickled eggs to mushy peas. You can also opt for a sauce, with regional variations including tartare, curry sauce, and gravy.

AFTERNOON TEA

Typically enjoyed between an early lunch and late dinner, afternoon tea is a very British way to spend a few hours. A true afternoon tea consists of cakes, pastries, finger sandwiches, and scones with jam and clotted cream displayed on a tiered stand and served with steaming pots of loose-leaf tea. In many establishments, you can expect a tea menu (and the fanciest might even have a tea sommelier) where you can consider the likes of Earl Grey, Assam (the late Queen's favorite teas), Darjeeling, and Ceylon.

CURRY

The 1970s saw a wave of South Asian immigrants arriving in England and setting up restaurants in big urban centers like London, Birmingham, and Manchester. These days, almost every major village has a mix of Indian, Bangladeshi, and Pakistani restaurants serving some of the finest curry anywhere outside of Asia. Aside from classics like vindaloo (super hot!), madras, and tandoori meats, the range of sweet, salty, spicy, and sour curries makes it one of the country's best-loved cuisines.

SUNDAY ROAST

Roasted meat (chicken, beef, pork, or lamb), roast potatoes, assorted vegetables, cauliflower cheese, Yorkshire puddings, and various condiments (mint sauce, bread sauce, English mustard, horseradish, cranberry jelly) make up some of the most important elements of a traditional Sunday roast—a meal that should leave you ready to sleep within 30 minutes of eating it. Almost every pub and restaurant in England serves a roast on Sunday, and the quality ranges dramatically depending on the establishment. You'll also find "carveries" serving buffet-style roasts every day of the week.

CASK ALES

The increased interest in the provenance of food and drink throughout England extends to beer, encouraging microbreweries to develop real or cask ales: beer that's unfiltered and unpasteurized, and that contains live brewer's yeast.

Full English breakfast



The ales can be from kegs, bottles, or casks, and they range from pale amber to full-bodied. The Casque Mark outside pubs signals their availability.

CHEESE

The stalwart cheddar, Cheshire, Double Gloucester, and Stilton cheeses are complemented by traditional and experimental cheeses from small, local makers. Some cheeses come wrapped in nettles or vine leaves, others stuffed with apricots, cranberries, or herbs. Dairies are also producing more sheep and goat cheeses, yogurts, and ice creams.

ETON MESS

Named after the famous boarding school near Windsor, this traditional dessert consists of meringue, whipped cream, and strawberries (or other summer fruits). As the name suggests, it looks a little messy, but it tastes divine.

FULL ENGLISH BREAKFAST

Consisting of eggs (usually fried or scrambled), sausages, bacon, fried tomatoes, black pudding, baked beans, mushrooms, and toast, the classic Full English breakfast is best enjoyed with a classic builder's tea on the side to cut through the greasy, calorific mess.

ENGLISH CIDER

Sweet and refreshing, traditional English cider is made from pure apple juice and twice fermented. The drink is usually carbonated, though some variations—like the West Country specialty *scrumpy*—can be still. Perry is a similar drink made from pear juice.

BANGERS AND MASH

Simple but effective, this pub grub staple comprises sausages served on a bed of mashed potatoes and topped with onion gravy. The "bangers" are usually Cumberlands—long, coiled, and particularly meaty pork sausages—but they can also be made from lamb or beef.

CORNISH PASTIES

This traditional, semicircular pastry, which looks similar to an empanada, is filled with minced beef, onion, potato, and rutabaga and seasoned with pepper. As they are easily carried, eaten without cutlery, and stay warm for hours, the pasties were a staple of Cornish tin miners, who subsequently spread the concept everywhere from Australia to Mexico.

What to Buy in England



Gin

LONDON DRY GIN

Gin has had a big resurgence in recent years, and today you'll find a huge selection of gins available in pubs, clubs, and supermarkets across England. Opt for a stylishly packaged, 21st-century gin like Curio, Sipsmith, or Whitley Neill, or choose a classic, centuries-old spirit like Beefeater, Bloom, or Plymouth.

ENGLISH BREAKFAST TEA

Tea is the quintessential souvenir from any England trip, and English Breakfast is probably the country's most popular blend. It's a full-bodied, robust black tea that goes well with a splash of milk and a spoonful of sugar. You can pick up common brands like Twinings and PG Tips from any supermarket or treat

yourself to superior blends from the likes of Harrods and Fortnum and Mason.

CADBURY CHOCOLATE

England's best-selling chocolate bar is Cadbury Dairy Milk, which you'll find in every corner shop (and airport duty-free store) in the land. Along with Dairy Milk, Cadbury makes dozens of other popular chocolate bars, from the

Stuffed Paddington Bear



biscuit-filled Boost to the honeycomb-toffee Crunchie. If you're visiting between New Year and Easter, pick up a Creme Egg, a distinctive egg-shaped confection with a sweet white and yellow filling encased in a thick chocolate shell.

HP SAUCE

A true icon of British culture, this "brown sauce" has a tomato base, blended with malt vinegar, sugars, dates, and tamarind. HP stands for Houses of Parliament, which explains the Westminster illustration on the front of the bottle.

BISCUITS

"Biscuits" here are hard, sweet, baked treats that are akin to cookies or crackers in North America—and they're a cornerstone of English life. For a true local experience, pick up a packet of chocolate digestives,

bourbons, or custard creams to take home and dunk in your cup of tea.

A UNION JACK ITEM

More than just a national flag, the Union Jack (well, technically the Union Flag, but we won't get into that) is also a global style icon. Don't think England's souvenir shops haven't noticed; you'll find them packed to the rafters with Union Jack items, from key rings and cushions to handbags and dresses. You'll also find more upscale designs incorporating the Union Jack in department stores like John Lewis.

STUFFED PADDINGTON BEAR

First appearing in the Michael Bond children's book *A Bear Called Paddington* in 1958, the friendly Peruvian bear has had a new lease on life

in recent years thanks to two hugely successful and critically acclaimed movies, with a third currently in production (as of 2023). You can pick up a "cuddly toy" version of Paddington in souvenir shops around London and elsewhere.

FOOTBALL GEAR

Football (that's soccer in the States) is England's favorite sport, and probably it's second-favorite topic of conversation (after the weather), so a soccer jersey—or any other item of football merchandise—makes the perfect souvenir or gift. Take your pick from big-name clubs like Liverpool, Manchester United, and Chelsea, or opt for some national England team merch.

Best Museums in England



ROMAN BATHS AND THE PUMP ROOM, BATH

The hot springs of Bath have drawn visitors for thousands of years. This museum displays relics from the Roman bath complex that used to stand on the site, as well as the Pump Room, a hangout for 19th-century society members.



THE BRITISH MUSEUM, LONDON

Established in 1753, the British Museum has long been one of the world's most famous national museums. Today, the London landmark is home to a permanent collection of 8 million works, including the Rosetta Stone and the Elgin Marbles.



NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE ROYAL NAVY, PORTSMOUTH

Part of the Portsmouth Historic Dockyard, this fascinating maritime museum showcases treasures from the last 350 years of Royal Navy history. Highlights include exhibits related to national hero Horatio Nelson and the Battle of Trafalgar.

INTERNATIONAL SLAVERY MUSEUM, LIVERPOOL

Tracing the shameful history and legacy of the transatlantic slave trade, in which the city of Liverpool played a significant role, this important dockside museum recreates what life was like in West African compounds and aboard crammed slave ships bound for the Americas. There's also a focus on today's African diaspora in England, as well as moving exhibits on modern slavery, human trafficking, and child labor.

TATE MODERN, LONDON

This spectacular contemporary art gallery starts with a bang, thanks to its entrance, Turbine Hall, filled with gigantic temporary installations from artists including Ai Weiwei, Abraham Cruzvillegas, and Kara Walker. Venture farther inside for the Tate Modern's impressive permanent collection of works by the likes of Warhol, Picasso, Dalí, Rothko, and Gormley, then head to the roof terrace for a gorgeous view of the city.

ASHMOLEAN MUSEUM, OXFORD

Known to locals simply as "The Ash," this extraordinary Oxford University museum was founded in 1683 (the first public museum in the United Kingdom). With a focus on art and archaeology, the collection spans everything from Egyptian mummies and Saxon jewelry to Renaissance artworks and the world's last remaining dodo skull.

International Slavery Museum



SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY MUSEUM, MANCHESTER

Housed within five buildings, all set around the world's first passenger railway station (built in 1830), the Science and Industry Museum brings Manchester's industrial past, present, and future to life through several fascinating and interactive artifacts, including

some focusing on steam engines, cotton looms, and Victorian sewers.

IRONBRIDGE GORGE MUSEUM, TELFORD

Billed as "the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution," the deep canyon known as Ironbridge Gorge was home to an abundance of coal, iron ore, and limestone, fueling the region's

18th-century industry. It also resulted in the building of the world's first iron bridge, a gorgeous river-spanning arch that's the highlight of the UNESCO-listed site.

VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM, LONDON

With millions of applied arts and design artifacts, the V&A is one of London's big-hitting museums. It's best known for its eclectic fashion collections—expect 18th-century court dresses and royal bridal gowns alongside modern Alexander McQueen designs and David Bowie outfits—but you'll also find everything from ornate Tudor furniture to Japanese samurai armor behind the museum's grand Edwardian facade.



TATE ST. IVES, ST. IVES

Set within a quirky, modernist building, the contemporary Tate St. Ives art gallery displays the work of the artists who lived and worked in Cornwall in the 20th century, as well as influences like Picasso, Braque, and Mondrian.

Best Royal Sites in England



THE ROYAL PAVILION, BRIGHTON

Built as a pleasure palace for King George IV and one of England's most eccentric feats of architecture, the Royal Pavilion is an exotic, Eastern-influenced classical building that has more in common with the Taj Mahal than with Buckingham Palace.



THE TOWER OF LONDON, LONDON

Dating back almost a millennium, the world-famous Tower of London has at times been a fortress, a mint, a palace, a zoo, and a prison. Today, it welcomes tourists to explore its historic attractions, from the Bloody Tower to the Crown Jewels.



WESTMINSTER ABBEY, LONDON

One of England's most famous buildings, Westminster Abbey has hosted 38 coronations (beginning with William the Conqueror in 1066) and 16 royal weddings. Fascinating royal sights include the Coronation Chair (used since 1308), Henry VII's Lady Chapel, and the tombs of Elizabeth I and her sister "Bloody" Mary I.



SANDRINGHAM HOUSE, SANDRINGHAM

The Royal Family traditionally spends Christmas at Sandringham, a vast, redbrick Victorian mansion and estate near the coast in East Anglia. But for most of the rest of the year, it's open to visitors. Along with the opulent Edwardian interiors and pretty formal gardens, you'll also find a superb transport museum.



WINDSOR CASTLE, WINDSOR

Visible for miles around, this enormous fortification-cum-royal residence (the largest inhabited castle in the world) has been used by the Royal Family since the Middle Ages. It is now the final resting place of Queen Elizabeth II.



BUCKINGHAM PALACE, LONDON

Probably the world's most famous royal residence, Buckingham Palace was the late Queen's main home for her 70-year reign, and King Charles III also plans to eventually reside there. When the monarch is not home, the palace's 19 State Rooms are open to visitors.



SUDELEY CASTLE, WINCHCOMBE

It may officially be called a castle, but this Cotswolds icon is more akin to a Tudor palace. Once the home of Catherine Parr, Henry VIII's sixth and final wife (the only one who "survived"), it was used as a refuge by Charles I and besieged by Cromwell's army, reducing it to ruins.



HEVER CASTLE, HEVER

Arguably England's most picture-perfect castle, Hever Castle is a 700-year-old mass of turrets, battlements, and gardens, all enveloped by a moat. It was the ancestral home of Henry VIII's second wife Anne Boleyn until her 1536 execution, after which Henry gave it to new wife Anne of Cleves.

HIGHGROVE HOUSE, TETBURY

The personal home and estate of King Charles III and Camilla Queen Consort since his days as a prince, Highgrove House is renowned for its exquisite gardens, orchards, and woodlands, which showcase the king's enduring commitment to organic produce.

HAMPTON COURT PALACE, LONDON

This spectacular Tudor residence is one of England's most iconic royal buildings. Begun in 1515 by Cardinal Wolsey in order to curry favor with a young Henry VIII, Hampton Court's Great Hall and State Apartments provide a real insight into the lives of Tudor monarchs.

Best Literary Experiences in England



WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

While visitors to London can pop into Shakespeare's Globe for a live performance, true theater fans should travel north to Stratford-upon-Avon. Along with Shakespeare's birthplace, Stratford is home to the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, where the world-renowned Royal Shakespeare Company regularly performs the Bard's plays.



THOMAS HARDY

The market town of Dorchester in Dorset was immortalized in Thomas Hardy's 1886 novel *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. Today, the town and the area surrounding it (known as "Hardy country") is packed with Hardy-related sites, including the author's birthplace.



THE LAKE DISTRICT

For many, the Lake District is forever associated with William Wordsworth, where he "Wandered Lonely as a Cloud." But this bucolic English landscape has also given us other literary greats like Lord Alfred Tennyson, John Ruskin, and—best of all for lovers of children's literature—Beatrix Potter.

SHERLOCK HOLMES

The London address of Sherlock Holmes (221B Baker Street, London) is as familiar to audiences today as it was when Arthur Conan Doyle first wrote his detective stories in the 19th century. In fact, the address was the real-life home of the author, and today it houses the Sherlock Holmes Museum.

OXFORD UNIVERSITY

C. S. Lewis, Oscar Wilde, and Lewis Carroll all roamed the streets of Oxford, but if there's one writer who is "Mister Oxford," it's J. R. R. Tolkien. After attending Oxford University, he worked at the Oxford English Dictionary, then returned as a professor. And it was there that he wrote his seminal fantasy novels *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*.



HARRY POTTER

Fans of the books and movies can visit the Harry Potter Studio Tour and Platform 9¾ at King's Cross station. In addition, the dramatic exterior of imposing Alnwick Castle in Northeast England is immediately recognizable as the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry in the films.

The Sherlock Holmes Museum, London



JANE AUSTEN

Hampshire in the South of England is known as "Jane Austen country," and for good reason: the *Pride and Prejudice* author's connections span the county, from her House Museum in Chawton to her grave in Winchester Cathedral. However, she is also celebrated farther west in Bath, where she moved at the age of 25. The city is home to the Jane Austen Centre, as well as an annual festival celebrating all things Austen.

CHARLES DICKENS

The Charles Dickens Museum may be in London, but the nearby town of Broadstairs has the strongest connections to the author. This seaside town in Southeast England is where the author lived for several years while writing works like *David Copperfield* and *Oliver Twist*, and you can visit his House Museum there. You'll also find Dickens' famous Bleak House in town, and there's a Dickens Festival each June.

THE BRONTË SISTERS

The little village of Haworth in Yorkshire was once the residence of three titans of English literature: the Brontë sisters. The writer siblings—Emily (the author of *Wuthering Heights*), Charlotte (the author of *Jane Eyre*), and Anne (the author of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*)—lived in Haworth Parsonage, now the Brontë Parsonage Museum, and were influenced by the dramatic landscapes of the region when writing their novels.

London's Royal Legacy

THE ROCKY MONARCHY

From medieval castles and keeps to Royal Parks, palaces, pageants, ceremonies, and processions, London has had a tumultuous and sometimes bloody royal history, which can still be encountered at practically every turn. London has been the royal capital of England since 1066 when the Norman king William the Conqueror began the tradition of royal coronations at Westminster Abbey. All but two reigning monarchs since then—from Richard I (the “Cœur de Lion”) in 1189 to Queen Elizabeth II in 1953—have been crowned at the Abbey. The coronation of King Charles III is expected to take place there in 2023.

Many of England's illustrious—and sometimes downright notorious—kings and queens have left a legacy or their majestic mark on the city. You'll find many of the finest places have royal associations: William I subjugated London with the imposing Tower of London, Henry VIII hunted deer at Hampton Court, Elizabeth I enjoyed bear-baiting in Southwark, and Charles I was publicly executed on Whitehall. Tyrannical but weak monarchs like King John (1199–1216) granted the City of London extra power under the Magna Carta, while the first “Parliament” sat at the Royal Palace of Westminster in 1265 under Henry III. The late medieval Tudors, however, rarely brooked dissent: Elizabeth I's half-sister, “Bloody” Mary I (1553–58), burned heretic Protestant bishops at the stake, and traitors were hung, drawn, and quartered, with their heads stuck on pikes on London Bridge.

A CULTURAL RENAISSANCE

From 1558 to 1601, peace under Elizabeth I (“the Virgin Queen”) led to a cultural renaissance and the great flowering of English theater, poetry, letters, music, and drama, centered on Shakespeare's Globe and the open-air playhouses of

Southwark. Charles I was later captured by the formidable Puritan Oliver Cromwell during the English Civil War and beheaded on a freezing day outside the Banqueting House in Westminster in 1649.

Although the Interregnum lasted only 16 years (outlawing simple pleasures, such as dancing and theater), the Restoration of Charles II in 1660 and subsequent monarchs saw London grow and transform into a teeming metropolis. These monarchs included the Dutch Protestant William III and Mary II—who moved into Kensington Palace, now the home of the Prince and Princess of Wales—and the House of Hanover's four Georgian kings and later Queen Victoria.

THE MODERN ROYALS

Prior to the Queen's death in 2022, there was also a rich calendar of royal ceremonies, including the color, pageantry, and marching bands of the Changing the Guard ceremony at Buckingham Palace. It's likely that King Charles III will continue with these traditions. The Ceremony of the Keys to lock up the Tower of London has taken place at 9:53 pm each night for more than 700 years (bar the odd bombing during the Blitz), and you can see the monarch take the Royal Salute from the Household Division at the annual Trooping the Colour march from Horse Guards Parade to St. James's Park. The monarch is also drawn by four horses in the dazzling Irish State Coach from Buckingham Palace to the Palace of Westminster in a huge royal procession for the State Opening of Parliament each autumn, and also pays homage to the war dead at the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday.

You might also spot the new Prince and Princess of Wales (Prince William and Kate Middleton) walking in Kensington Gardens with their three young children.

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ENGLAND THROUGH THE AGES

English unflappability can cover up a multitude of dark deeds. A landscape, village scene, or ruined castle may present itself as a serene, untroubled canvas, but this is mere show. Trauma and passion are the underlying reality of history; dynastic ambitions, religious strife, and sedition are the subtext. Dig deeper, and what might appear to be a vast, nation-wide museum turns out to be a complex tapestry of narratives and personalities.

On a far-flung corner of Europe, England's geographical position can account for many things: its slowness in absorbing technological and cultural influences from the great Mediterranean civilizations, its speedy adaptation to the global explosion of trade in the early modern era, and its separate, rather aloof identity. But other factors have molded English history too, not least the waves of immigration, settlement and conquest, by Celts, Romans, Danes, and Normans among numerous others. Perhaps the greatest factor of all

has been the unforeseen events, accidental meetings, and random coincidences that history delights in throwing up. The careful—sometimes over-zealous—custodianship of England's heritage may pretend otherwise, but behind every object and beneath every ruin lies a tangle of interconnected events. With some context, history is lifted out of the realm of show and into biting reality.

—by Robert Andrews

On stage at Shakespeare's Globe, London

3000 BC: First building of Stonehenge (later building 2400–1600 BC)

55–54 BC: Julius Caesar's exploratory expeditions to England

AD 410: Roman rule of Britain ends

597: St. Augustine arrives in Canterbury to Christianize Britain

1066: William of Normandy defeats King Harold at the Battle of Hastings

1086: Domesday Book completed, a survey of all taxpayers in England

1215: King John signs Magna Carta at Runnymede

3000 BC

1000 BC

0

AD 900

AD 1000

AD 1100

AD 1200

AD 1300



(clockwise from top left) Avebury Stone Circles in Wiltshire; Roman Baths, Bath; Illuminated manuscript, *Liber Vitae*, 1031; Iron Age coins from Yorkshire



(clockwise from top left) Tower of London; Bayeux Tapestry, scene where the English flee from Normans; Stone carvings on Litchfield Cathedral; Reliquary of St. Thomas à Becket, 12th century



5000 BC–55 BC

Early Arrivals

The British Isles had already assumed their current shape by 5000 BC, after the final thawing of the last ice age had resulted in a substantial northwestern promontory being detached from the rest of mainland Europe. However, the influx of different peoples and cultures from the east continued as before. It may have been one of these waves of immigrants that brought agriculture to the islands. Numerous burial sites, hill forts, and stone circles have survived from these early societies, notably in the soft chalk downs of southern England.

55 BC–AD 450

Roman Britain

The emperor Claudius declared Colchester Rome's first British colony soon after the invasion of AD 43, and legionary fortresses in the north were established by AD 75. Resistance included Queen Boudicca's uprising and the razing of Londinium (London). However, a Romano-British culture was forged with its northern limit at Hadrian's Wall, built in AD 128. To the south, Celtic Britain became integrated into the Roman Empire with the construction of villas, baths, fortifications, and roads.

450–1066

Anglo-Saxons

Following the withdrawal of the Roman legions, Britain fell prey to invasions by Jutes, Angles, and Saxons from the mainland. The native Celts were pushed back to the fringes of Britain: Cornwall, Wales, northern England, and Scotland. Eventually seven Anglo-Saxon kingdoms emerged, all of which had adopted Christianity by 650. In the 8th century, the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms faced aggressive incomers from Scandinavia, halted only when Alfred the Great, king of Wessex, unified the English against the Viking invaders.

1066–1381

Middle Ages: Normans and Plantagenets

The course of England's history altered radically when William, duke of Normandy, invaded and became king of England in 1066. A Norman military and feudal hierarchy was established, French became the language of government, and the country became more centralized. Trading and dynastic links with Europe meant that military campaigns abroad consumed resources, while artistic innovations were more easily absorbed at home—for example, the introduction of Gothic architecture in England's churches and

cathedrals. The Plantagenet dynasty came to power in 1154 with the accession of Henry II. A power struggle with the church led to the murder of Henry's archbishop Thomas à Becket in Canterbury Cathedral, which became a center for pilgrimage. The autocratic ambitions of Henry's son John were similarly stymied when he was forced to sign the Magna Carta, promulgating basic principles of English law: no taxation except through Parliament, trial by jury, and property guarantees. In 1348–49, the Black Death (bubonic plague) reduced Britain's population from 4.25 million to 2.5 million.

1381–1485

Twilight of the Middle Ages

English kings invested resources in the Hundred Years War, a struggle to increase their territories in France, but Henry V's gains at Agincourt in 1415 were reversed following the succession of the infant Henry VI. In the domestic Wars of the Roses, the House of York, with a white rose as emblem, triumphed over the House of Lancaster (red rose as emblem), when Edward IV seized the crown. But Edward's brother Richard III was defeated by Henry Tudor, who became Henry VII.

TIMELINE

1485: Henry Tudor (Henry VII) defeats Richard III at the Battle of Bosworth

1530s: Dissolution of the monasteries under Henry VIII

1588: Spanish Armada fails to invade England

1620: Pilgrims sail from Plymouth on the *Mayflower*

1660: The Restoration: Charles II restored to the throne

1689: Bill of Rights: Parliament established as England's primary governing body

1795–1815: Napoleonic Wars: Britain and its allies defeat France

AD 1450

1500

1550

1600

1650

1700

1750

1800



(clockwise from top left) Hampton Court Palace; Elizabeth I; English ships and the Spanish Armada; Queen Mary I; Henry VIII



(clockwise from top left) The Great Fire of London by Turner; George III; West front entrance of St. Paul's Cathedral; Charles II; Chippendale mahogany bonnet-top highboy, 1770s



1485–1603

Tudor Renaissance

The Tudor era saw the political consolidation of the kingdom but a deep religious divide.

Henry VIII's break with Rome in order to obtain a divorce from Catherine of Aragon coincided with the Reformation, and he pursued his attack on the church with the dissolution of the monasteries. Protestantism became further entrenched under the short reign of Henry's son, Edward VI, but Catholicism was again in the ascendant under Mary. Elizabeth I strove to heal the sectarian divisions while upholding the supremacy of a Protestant Church of England.

Her position was further imperiled by the threat of invasion by Spain, which abated with the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588. Elizabeth encouraged piratical attacks on the Spaniards throughout the Atlantic, as well as voyages to the New World, with Walter Raleigh leading expeditions to Virginia in the 1580s. A major flourishing of arts and letters took place during the reign of Good Queen Bess, with such figures as Edmund Spenser and William Shakespeare. When Elizabeth died without an heir, her chief minister, Robert Cecil, invited the Stuart James VI of Scotland to occupy the throne as James I of England.

1603–1660

Stuart England

The Stuarts' attempts to rule independently of Parliament led to disaster. Religious tensions persisted, and Puritans and other dissenters began to seek refuge in the New World. Those who stayed were persecuted under James's son Charles I, who alienated the gentry and merchant classes until war was declared between king and Parliament. The Civil War ended with Charles's trial and execution in 1649 and an interregnum in which Oliver Cromwell, the general who became Parliamentary leader, was declared Lord Protector.

1660–1714

Restoration

In an uneasy pact with Parliament, Charles I's son was invited back from exile to reign as Charles II. The Restoration led to a revival of the arts, especially in the fields of theater and literature, and a wave of church building. Old divisions resurfaced when Charles was succeeded by James II, whose conversion to Catholicism led to the Glorious Revolution (1688), when Parliament offered the English crown to William of Orange and Mary Stuart, James II's daughter. The thrones of England and Scotland were united in the Act of Union (1707).

1714–1837

Georgian England

With the death of Queen Anne, the Stuart monarchy came to an end and the succession of the new kingdom of Great Britain passed to the Protestant German House of Hanover. But real power now lay with Parliament. George I spent most of his reign in Germany; George II leaned heavily on Robert Walpole (the first "prime minister"); George III was intermittently mad; and George IV's life was marked by dissipation. However, despite losing the Thirteen Colonies in the American Revolution, Britain had by now become the leading European power

in the Indian subcontinent. It demonstrated martial supremacy over France in the wars that simmered throughout this period, finally ending in Britain's two victories against Napoleon at Trafalgar and Waterloo. The growing empire, combined with engineering and technical advances at home, helped bring about an early Industrial Revolution in Britain. The process accelerated urbanization, especially in the Midlands and north, and created an urban working class. Partly in response, a new sentimental view of rural England emerged, reflected in the building of stately homes with landscaped estates.

1832 and 1867: Reform Acts extend the franchise

1887: Victoria celebrates her Golden Jubilee at the height of the British Empire

1914–18: World War I

1939–45: World War II

1952: Queen Elizabeth II accedes to the throne

1994: Channel Tunnel opened

2022: Queen Elizabeth II dies

1840

1865

1880

1915

1940

1965

1990

PRESENT DAY



(clockwise from top left) Queen Victoria in characteristic mourning clothes; Edward VII in coronation robes; Trellis wallpaper Arts and Crafts design by William Morris, 1862; British troops in France, World War I



1837–1901

Victorian Age of Empire

Victoria's reign coincided with the high-water mark of the British Empire, expanding into Africa and consolidating in India. Two parties dominated politics: the Liberals and the Conservatives. These parties supplied such prime ministers as Benjamin Disraeli (Conservative) and William Gladstone (Liberal), who left their mark in reformist measures relating to working conditions, policing, education, health, welfare provision, and the extension of suffrage—all areas highlighted in the literature of the time, notably in the works of Charles Dickens. A

network of railways and a nationwide postal service enhanced infrastructure and the growth of industry. In other spheres, the Victorian age harked back to the past, whether in art, as in the Arts and Crafts and Pre-Raphaelite movements, or in architecture, which revived old forms of building from classical to Gothic and Tudor. After Prince Albert's death in 1861, Victoria became a recluse in her Isle of Wight palace, Osborne House, though her golden and diamond jubilees restored her popularity while glorifying the achievements of her long reign.

1901–1918

Edwardian England and World War I

Edward VII, Victoria's son, was a keen sportsman, gambler, and society figure who embodied the blinkered spirit of the country in the aftermath of the Victorian age. The election to Parliament of 29 members of the newly formed Labour Party in 1906 signaled a realignment of politics, though the eruption of World War I sidetracked domestic concerns. The intense fighting across Europe brought about huge loss of life and economic meltdown.



(clockwise from bottom left) Winston Churchill; London Aquatics Centre for the 2012 Olympics; The Beatles; The wedding of Prince William and Catherine Middleton, April 2011 (their son, Prince George, future heir to the throne, was born in 2013)



1918–1952

Depression and World War II

The interwar period was one of social upheaval, and the unemployment caused by the Great Depression rose to 70% in some areas. At the start of World War II, Hitler's forces pushed the British army into the sea at Dunkirk. The aerial Blitz that followed devastated cities. Winston Churchill's rousing leadership and the support of United States and Commonwealth forces helped turn the tide, with Britain emerging triumphant—but bankrupt. Elected in 1945, the new Labour government introduced important reforms in welfare and healthcare and initiated the dismantling of the British empire, starting with independence for India and Pakistan in 1947.

1952–PRESENT

The Modern Era

For 70 years, Queen Elizabeth II reigned as monarch, ushering in the modern era and the immense changes that came with it. After the Queen ascended the throne in 1952, England saw several years of austerity until the late 1950s, but the following decade saw a cultural explosion that covered every field, from art to music to fashion. British industry never recovered its former, pre-war strength, however, and inflation and industrial strife marked the 1970s. Britain's entry into the European Economic Community (later to become the European Union) in 1973 did not immediately slow the economic decline.

Manufacturing was largely forsaken by Margaret Thatcher (Conservative) and Tony Blair (Labour) in favor of service industries, but Britain's heavy reliance on finance meant that the economy was hit hard by the crash of 2008. While an economic recovery finally began in 2010, the 2016 referendum to leave the E.U. brought chaos and uncertainty, which has only continued into the 2020s, thanks to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Prime Minister shake-ups of 2022. The Queen's death in September 2022 and the 2023 coronation of King Charles III was a huge cultural moment for Britain, bringing arguments about the monarchy's continued relevance in the 21st century.

What to Watch and Read

BEND IT LIKE BECKHAM

Offering insight into England's society-wide obsession with soccer—and with its prodigal son David Beckham—this 2002 romantic comedy sports film follows 18-year-old Jess as she defies her conservative Sikh parents to play for her local women's football team.

BRIDGERTON

Another American take on an English setting, this Regency London period drama was a record-breaking lockdown hit for Netflix. Based on a collection of historical romance novels by Julia Quinn, it has been acclaimed for its strong female viewpoint and diverse cast. The second season was released in early 2022, with seasons three and four set to follow in the coming years.

CALL THE MIDWIFE

This BBC period drama, which follows a group of nurse midwives working in the East End of London in the 1950s and '60s, has been widely praised for tackling subjects like miscarriage, abortion, and female genital mutilation. Eleven seasons of 95 episodes have been shown since 2012.

CHEWING GUM

Written by and starring Michaela Coel, who would go on to create the critically acclaimed, Emmy Award-winning *I May Destroy You* (also set in London), this cult British sitcom features 24-year-old shop assistant Tracey Gordon, who wants to break free of her strict religious upbringing and learn more about the modern world.

THE CROWN

Since it debuted on Netflix in November 2016, this historical drama about the reign of Queen Elizabeth II has picked up a host of accolades and awards, from Emmys to Golden Globes. Your trip to

England is bound to include at least one of the many palaces, castles, and other locations featured in the show.

DOWNTON ABBEY

The hugely popular television series, which ran between 2010 and 2015, is one of England's most successful TV exports of recent years, while movie adaptations were released in 2019 and 2022. Most of the filming for the show takes place at Highclere Castle in the South of England; it's available to visit throughout the summer.

FLEABAG

Probably the most talked-about TV show of the late 2010s, this award-winning comedy-drama follows creator Phoebe Waller-Bridge's titular character as she attempts to cope with life and love in London, all while coming to terms with a recent tragedy.

THE GREAT BRITISH BAKE OFF

A quaint television baking competition has become an international phenomenon. Every season, a fresh-faced group of 10 amateur bakers is given a series of baking challenges over several weeks to determine the ultimate winner. The Bake Off has spawned dozens of international versions all over the world, including *The Great American Baking Show* on ABC, but the original—now 13 seasons in—remains the best.

A HARD DAY'S NIGHT

This 1964 musical comedy film, which stars John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison, and Ringo Starr as themselves, portrays a fictionalized 36 hours in the life of the band at the very height of Beatlemania. *Time* magazine rated it one of the 100 greatest films of all time.

LOVE ACTUALLY

Since it was released in 2003, this romantic comedy has become a staple of Christmases all over the world. The movie follows the loosely interconnected love stories of several characters in London, played by a who's who of British acting royalty, including Colin Firth, Kiera Knightley, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Emma Thompson, and Hugh Grant.

PEAKY BLINDERS

Set in Birmingham, England in the aftermath of World War I, this BBC show (now owned by and airing on Netflix) follows the exploits of the Peaky Blinders gang, based on a real-life gang that operated in the city in the late 19th-century.

POLDARK

Based on a series of historical novels by Winston Graham, this BBC drama series follows Captain Ross Poldark after his return to Cornwall following the 1783 American War of Independence. Poldark's developing romance with scullery maid Demelza, combined with regular shots of lead actor Aidan Turner's toned torso, sustained the show for 43 episodes over five seasons.

TED LASSO

This Emmy-winning Apple TV+ comedy-drama series tells the story of an American football coach who moves to England to manage the fictional Premier League soccer team AFC Richmond. Although not always 100% accurate in its terminology (British journalists saying "tie" instead of "draw" is a particular clanger), it's a fun introduction to the strange world of elite Association Football.

THE ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES BY ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

First published in the 1890s, these short stories about fictional private detective Sherlock Holmes, who uses observation, deduction, and logical reasoning to crack seemingly unsolvable cases, have fascinated audiences ever since. The recent BBC series *Sherlock*, based on the stories and starring Benedict Cumberbatch and Martin Freeman as modern versions of Sherlock and his assistant Watson, has breathed new life into the character.

BRICK LANE BY MONICA ALI

Set on the eponymous Brick Lane, the heart of London's Bangladeshi community, this novel follows the life of Nazneen, an 18-year-old Bangladeshi woman who struggles to adapt to life in England after marrying an older man.

HARRY POTTER SERIES BY J. K. ROWLING

The best-selling book series in history, J. K. Rowling's epic fantasy novels chronicle the lives of young wizard Harry Potter, along with his friends Hermione and Ron, as they attend the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Visitors to the Northeast can explore the real-life Hogwarts at Alnwick Castle.

MIDDLEMARCH BY GEORGE ELIOT

Set in a provincial Midlands town in the 1830s, *Middlemarch* centers on the lives of several local residents, including the pious, 19-year-old Dorothea Brooke, who decides to marry the pompous 45-year-old scholar Edward Casaubon (with disastrous consequences).

OLIVER TWIST BY CHARLES DICKENS

Charles Dickens's second novel is perhaps his most famous, recounting the story of orphan Oliver Twist and his life as a juvenile pickpocket for the criminal Fagin. It offers a fascinating, unflinching insight into the criminal gangs and cruel treatment of orphans in London during the mid-19th century.

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE BY JANE AUSTEN

This romantic, Regency-era novel is one of the world's most enduring love stories. It follows 20-year-old Elizabeth Bennet and the course of her relationship with the older Mr. Darcy. There have been several film and television adaptations of the book, but perhaps the most loved is the BBC's 1995 adaptation starring Jennifer Ehle and Colin Firth.

THE REMAINS OF THE DAY BY KAZUO ISHIGURO

This Man Booker Prize-winning novel by British author Ishiguro tells the story of an English butler who reflects on a life of service and the sacrifices he has made. A 1993 film adaptation, starring Anthony Hopkins and Emma Thompson, was nominated for eight Academy Awards.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S HISTORIES

The Bard's series of historical plays chronicle the lives of four centuries of English monarchs, including King John, Henry V, and Richard III. Although widely regarded as Tudor propaganda (Shakespeare lived during the reign of Elizabeth I, the last Tudor monarch), the histories are hugely entertaining and informative, too.

WHITE TEETH BY ZADIE SMITH

This award-winning 2000 novel focuses on the lives of two best friends—Samad Iqbal and Archie Jones—and their families in North London. The novel, which was Zadie Smith's debut, deftly explores themes of cultural identity, faith, race, and gender in modern England.

WUTHERING HEIGHTS BY EMILY BRONTË

Originally published under the pen name Ellis Bell, this English literature classic from the third-eldest Brontë sibling was groundbreaking and controversial for its stark depiction of mental and physical cruelty, gender inequality, and religious hypocrisy.