



TimeOut



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The best day trips from London

Spanning cities, seaside towns and countryside escapes, these are the day trips from London we're planning right now

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As glorious as the capital is in the summer – all nine million of us Londoners making a beeline for the nearest [beer garden](#), [green space](#) or [rooftop bar](#) – the sheer volume of revellers thronging the city can occasionally leave you feeling a bit claustrophobic.

Luckily, the 'stay local' order looks likely to be a thing of the past, with [day trips](#) and [overnight stays](#) in [Airbnbs](#), [campsites](#) and [hotels](#) now permitted. And that means we can once again hit the coast, hike a forest trail or explore a postcard-perfect village whenever the bustle of the Big Smoke gets a bit much.

Planning a quick getaway soon? Here's some fuel for your own day(trip)dreams. These are our 17 of our favourite day-tripping spots, complete with [cute pubs](#) and ace [restaurants](#) – all close enough to London to get there and back in one glorious day.

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Editor's Pick

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17 dreamy day trips from London

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1. The New Forest

A trip to the New Forest is about as close as you can get to going on safari without buying a plane ticket. As you make your way down dappled lanes and across the heather-covered heath you'll be watched the famous ponies, which have grazed there for thousands of years, plus free-ranging Highland cattle and pigs hoovering up fallen acorns. Don't fancy being stuck in the car all day? Hire a two-seater electric Twizzy buggy to explore in, or book a beginners' hack at one of the stables. Don't forget to make time for a proper ploughman's lunch at the Royal Oak in Fritham.

How far? 90 miles

Get there one hour 30 minutes by train from London Waterloo to Brockenhurst; around two hours by car. Just remember that animals, not drivers, have right of way.

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2. Deal

It doesn't get as much attention as Margate and Whitstable, but with its tidy rows of Georgian townhouses, quirky independents and thriving Saturday market, Deal ticks all the day-trip boxes. Start at Deal Castle (built by Henry VIII as part of an ambitious chain of coastal forts), then treat yourself to lunch at 81 Beach Street or Victuals & Co. Parisian-style bottle shop Le Pinardier is great for stocking up on gluggable goodies, and make sure you stop by gallery-cum-homewares boutique Taylor-Jones and Son, where Delilah the sheepdog will welcome you with open paws.

How far? Just over 80 miles

Get there one hour 20 minutes by train from London St Pancras International; around two hours by car.

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3. Box Hill

Biking to green and pleasant Surrey is a wheely nice way to spend a Sunday (sorry) – plus, Box Hill was part of the 2012 Olympic road-cycling route. Start in Richmond Park and pedal down past Hampton Court – it should take you about two hours. After a 1.6 mile climb and some hairpin bends (easier than it sounds!), you'll be rewarded with stunning views of the North Downs from the top of Box Hill itself. Grab a slice of cake from the National Trust café, but save space for lunch at The Tree, which serves homemade pies and crumbles. Your last stop is Box Hill and Westhumble station, where you can load your bikes on to a train back to Waterloo. Whewf!

How far? 30 miles

Get there by bike (obviously). Plan the route carefully before you set out, and take a map and a puncture repair kit, plus water and snacks.

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4. Dungeness

Dungeness's shingly, shipwreck-dotted beach is so spookily empty that it's often described as Britain's only desert (though the Met Office refuses to recognise it as such, the party-poopers). But look a little closer and there's plenty going on. It's a nature reserve, for one thing – follow the two-mile trail around RSPB Dungeness for the chance to glimpse glossy ibises and marsh harriers. Come lunchtime, queue up at the famous Dungeness Snack Shack: they'll serve you their catch of the day in a warm bun, lobster and crab rolls or smoked cod chowder. Finally, go in search of the huge concrete 'sound ears', which date from the First World War and were designed to listen out for planes.

How far? 86 miles

Get there one hour by train from London St Pancras International to Folkstone, with a one hour 30 minute bus ride to Dungeness; around two hours by car.

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5. Hastings

From the battleground of William the Conqueror's victory in 1066 to its role as an eighteenth-century smuggler hotspot, Hastings sure has a lot of colourful history. And so it makes total sense that London's sunseekers have been flocking like seagulls to this town for centuries also.

Learn more about the town's rich history by exploring the beautiful ruins of its Norman castle or paying a visit to Smugglers Adventure (a museum housed in former smugglers' caves). Browse the independent shops in picturesque Old Town, stroll along the pier, and definitely just take some time to admire the views from the clifftop at the summit of Britain's steepest funicular, the Hill Cliff Railway.

How far? 54 miles

Get there One hour 30 minutes by train from London Bridge; around two hours by car.

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6. Mersea Island

Attached to the mainland by a causeway that floods (and pub quizzers, take note: this is the UK's most easterly inhabited island), Mersea feels properly, peacefully remote at high tide. The big draw is The Company Shed, which serves seafood platters that pull in crowds from all over the country every weekend. It's BYOB – bring your own bread – and they don't take bookings, so get there before noon to make sure you can feast on prawns, smoked fish, oysters and dressed crab. Speaking of which, catch-and-release crabbing is encouraged – there are specially marked areas near the water, and shops selling the kit. Or you can book a boat trip around the bay.

How far? 69 miles

Get there one hour by train from London Liverpool Street to Colchester, then a 45 minute bus to Mersea Island; around two hours by car. Don't forget to check the tide timetable before you set off...

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7. Whitstable

It's hard to think of a lovelier seaside spot than Whitstable. Kick off a day there at Blueprint Coffee and Books with a pot of something strong and ethically sourced (and maybe a mini orange-and-rosemary bundt cake). Next, rent a bike from Whitstable Cycle Hire and pedal your way along the five-mile seafront Oyster Bay Trail. And for lunch? Oysters, natch – watch them being shucked in front of you at The Forge. Stay on the beach for a drink as the sun sets: Whitstable is one of the few in the UK with a pub, the Old Neptune, right on the shingle.

How far? 61 miles

Get there one hour 20 minutes by train from London Victoria or one hour 10 minutes from St Pancras International to Whitstable; around one hour 40 minutes by car.

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8. Rye

With its antique shops and higgledy-piggledy cobbled lanes, Rye feels like a little piece of the Cotswolds on the coast. After a browse in The Tiny Book Store (does what it says on the tin), treat yourself to a seafood lunch surrounded by lobster pots at Globe Inn Marsh, followed by Sussex real ale or a glass of local wine at The George Tap – the Chapel Down vineyard is just up the road and well worth a visit. Ten minutes away are the pillowy dunes of Camber Sands: roll your trousers up and splash through the shallows, take a kite for a spin or just park your towel and stretch out.

How far? 79 miles.

Get there one hour 10 minutes by train from London St Pancras International, with a change at Ashford; around two hours by car.

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9. Margate

The Turner Contemporary opening in 2011 was the long-neglected Margate’s invitation to the ball. Today, the Kent coast’s most famous Cinderella story is awash with cold-brew coffee and craft beer, with just enough salty charm to still give it an edge. Start at the Turner, then mosey over to retro theme park and roller-disco Dreamland. Once the effects of the Waltzer have worn off, head to Hantverk & Found for a lunch of the freshest seafood and natural wines. Spend the rest of the afternoon shopping: browse immaculate vintage piece in Breuer & Dawson, and stock up on seaweed-based skincare at Haeckels.

How far? 76 miles

Get there one hour 25 minutes by train from London St Pancras International; around two hours by car.

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10. Bath

reproduction Georgian garms at the Fashion Museum. Peckish? Sally Lunn's teahouse is home to the Sally Lunn Bun, a kind of sweet brioche bap – for a Bath take on the cream tea, order one toasted and spread with strawberry jam and clotted cream.

How far? 115 miles

Get there one hour 30 minutes by train from London Paddington; two hours 30 minutes by car.

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11. Brighton

If Brighton were a stick of rock, it would have GOOD TIMES! running right the way through it. With its perfect pebble beach, wall-to-wall live music venues and buzzing LGBT+ scene, there's nowhere like it for topping up your Vitamin Sea levels. Start by dodging seagulls on the Palace Pier, then shop up a storm in the Laines, which are packed with independent boutiques, record stores and vegan eateries. Sit down to a couple of pints in the Brighton Beer Dispensary, which champions small Sussex breweries like the Hand Brew Co.

How far? A little over 50 miles

Get there one hour by train from London Victoria, Blackfriars or London Bridge; around two hours by car.

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12. Canterbury

In Chaucer's day this was where people came for a big old knees-up. Today its default is a little more sedate, but a large student population means there's still a pleasingly rowdy edge. Kick things off with a leisurely stroll down the King's Mile, home to boutiques a-plenty. Lunch-wise you're spoilt for choice, from gourmet Scotch eggs with slaw and fries at Pork & Co, bento boxes at Tamago or pizza straight from the oven at indoor farmers' market The Goods Shed. Round off your very own Canterbury tale with a visit to the Beaney House of Art and Knowledge, which features one of the world's most important collections of cow paintings and an Egyptian mummified cat.

How far? 61 miles

Get there one hour by train from London St Pancras International; around one hour 30 minutes by car.

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Harry Green

13. Guildford

Heads up, horror fans: Guildford’s cathedral starred in cult bone-chiller ‘The Omen’. That being said, everything else about Surrey’s county town is bucolic in the extreme: if it’s sunny you can lounge by the water at pretty Dapdune Wharf, or actually get in it at the Guildford Lido. Lunch on locally-sourced nacho boxes at Burrito Loco, before checking out the 400-year-old Star Inn. Still thirsty? Hop on a train to tour the nearby Hogs Back Brewery.

How far? 31 miles

Get there 30 minutes by train from London Waterloo; around one hour by car.

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14. Southend-on-Sea

For nostalgic seaside fun, you could do much worse than Southend. From amusement parks, fairground rides and the world’s longest pier to old-school chippies and retro ice-cream parlour Tomassi’s, the place has all the typical



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How far? 36 miles

Get there One hour 15 minutes by train from Fenchurch Street; two hours by car.

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15. Cambridge

Smaller, quieter and (whisper it) prettier than Oxford, Cambridge has its own language: bumps, backs, quads. Start your day with a visit to the Fitzwilliam Museum, then refuel at Fitzbillies and buy a box of the sticky Chelsea buns to take home. Spend a couple of hours wandering around the colleges and King's Chapel before taking to the river for a spot of punting: behatted guides will do the hard work, or you can hire a boat of your own (beware: it's trickier than it looks). Come tea time, head for Grantchester and feast on scones in The Orchard Tea Gardens, just like no



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Get there 45 minutes by train from London King's Cross, or one hour 10 minutes from London Liverpool Street; around two hours by car.

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16. Chichester

Dinky, pastel-coloured Chichester looks like it's been built of macarons – but it's more than just a pretty face. Start at the Norman-meets-Gothic cathedral before moving onto the Pallant House Gallery, home to brilliantly curated exhibitions, a first-class bookshop and a courtyard cafe that gives Rochelle Canteen a run for its money. Some of the best bits of Sussex are an easy drive (or, if you're feeling full of beans, a slightly less easy bike ride) away, from the Goodwood Estate to West Dean Gardens and the gorgeous sandy beach at West Wittering.

How far? 80 miles

Get there one hour 30 minutes from London Victoria; around two hours by car. Car is best, so you can really explore.

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17. Stratford-upon-Avon

The Bard, of course, is the big draw here, and Shakespeare's house, his wife Anne Hathaway's cottage and the RSC's home theatre are all must-sees. But Stratford's more than just a Tudor Disneyland, you know. Take a boat tour of the canal basin to find out more about the West Midlands' waterways, refresh yourselves in the Grade II-listed Old Thatch Tavern and stop for a scoop of Eton Mess ice cream at Hooray's British Gelato Kitchen.

How far? 104 miles

Get there two hours 15 minutes by train from London Marylebone; around two hours by car.

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