

## **Kent, the Garden of England**

### *Enrich your senses!*

Dazzling colours, seductive scents, superb seasonal shows – Kent's gardens are rightly world renowned. And with 180-plus to choose from, there's one to match your every mood and interest: grand and historic, exotic and informal, innovative vistas in the making like the World Garden of Plants. Excite or soothe your senses on a genuinely revitalising escape (and pick up brilliant ideas for your own garden from celebrated designers across the ages).

### Day One

Start this romantic tour at Mount Ephraim, near Faversham. Let time drift by in this enchanting Edwardian garden as you follow terraces of fragrant roses to a small lake and a woodland area with views of surrounding orchards. Highlights include an extensive collection of shrubs and trees, a grass maze and Japanese rock garden.

Take a trip into Faversham for lunch at The Sun Inn – a traditional alehouse close to Britain's oldest independent brewer, Shepherd Neame (tours available).

Follow Jane Austen to Goodnestone Park Gardens, near Canterbury, a surprising haven of tranquillity hidden away in southeast Kent – the author was a frequent visitor to the family home of her sister-in-law. The walled garden is resplendent with clematis, jasmine and roses, and many admirers believe the view through a succession of enclosures to the church tower is one of the best in any English garden. See what you think. Then amble 14 acres of 18th-century parkland studded with rhododendrons, azaleas and camellias.

### Day Two

A beautiful drive through leafy country lanes takes you to Scotney Castle Garden, Lamberhurst near Royal Tunbridge Wells. What could be more bewitching than these gardens? Created in the 1830s by Edward Hussey III, they sweep around the fairytale part-ruins of a 14th century moated castle. In May-June it is ablaze with rhododendrons and azaleas, in full summer roses and wisteria ramble over the ruins, and in autumn trees and ferns light up the scene with warm colour. Delight in the ever-changing vistas provided by winding paths, parkland and woodland. For lunch stop to see the fruits of green fingers at Lamberhurst Vineyard. There are wine tastings, a bistro and shop selling local produce ideal for picnics. The Swan gastro pub serves excellent fare. There's also an extensively stocked Garden Centre, including nearly 100 varieties unique to the UK.

After lunch move on to Sissinghurst Castle Garden, near Cranbrook. One of the world's most celebrated gardens inspires no matter how many times you visit, with its bewitching play of colours and mood. The creation of writer Vita Sackville-West and her husband Sir Harold Nicolson, it surrounds the surviving parts of an Elizabethan mansion in a series of small compartments – among them, the iconic White Garden which certainly cools your senses after the abundance of 'hot' colours elsewhere. The Rose Garden in midsummer is packed with intoxicating, old-fashioned shrub varieties. Sissinghurst is most tranquil after 3pm.

### Day Three

Breakfast then on to Penshurst Place and Gardens, near Tonbridge. Get to the roots of horticultural traditions at Penshurst, whose 11-acre formal walled garden has records dating back to 1346. Then pop inside the ancestral home of Viscount De L'Isle to tour the state rooms and medieval Baron's Hall. Or simply relax in the ancient parkland. All-season interest ranges from spring daffodils and bluebells to golden and red apples in autumn. You can follow your nose around the (free-entry) display gardens at Dowderry Nursery, Hadlow near Tonbridge, which grow over 150 different lavenders and 30 types of rosemary. Enjoy an aromatic tour!

In the afternoon visit Emmetts Garden, Sevenoaks. Plunge amid exotic and rare trees and shrubs from across the world in this delightful informal garden influenced by William Robinson. You'll also come across the highest treetop in Kent!

Other fabulous gardens in Kent include:

[Hever Castle](#), near Edenbridge  
[Walmer Castle](#) and Gardens, Walmer  
[Lullingstone Castle](#), Eynsford

For more information see [www.visitkent.co.uk](http://www.visitkent.co.uk)