

Girl About Kent's 48 hours in **EAST KENT**

MY 2 NIGHT ITINERARY FOR A FRESH-AIR-FUELLED OUTDOOR WEEKEND



"If you are a lover of the great outdoors then look no further than Kent for the perfect outdoor activity weekend. Called the Garden of England for good reason, there is no end to green spaces, woodlands, coast and countryside for you to get some fresh air therapy"

Kirsty - Girl About Kent

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If you are a lover of the great outdoors then look no further than Kent for the perfect outdoor activity weekend.

Called the Garden of England for good reason, there is no end to green spaces, woodlands, coast and countryside for you to get some fresh air therapy!

From canoeing, guided walks, cycling tours and boat trips there is something for every outdoor lover promising the perfect outdoor weekend.

This itinerary covers mainly East Kent, in particular Whitstable, Canterbury and the Isle of Sheppey giving you the best of historic cities, countryside and coastal towns. In order to enjoy the best of the weekend, you'll probably need a car, especially if bringing all of your camping gear.

To enjoy the most of this outdoor activity weekend, pack some comfy walking boots, a pair of binoculars and of course your camera and enjoy everything that beautiful Kent has to offer.



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There is no end to green spaces, woodlands, coast and countryside



**Kirsty -
Girl About Kent**

Friday afternoon

If you're going to have a true outdoor activity weekend, then you might as well camp! Pitch up a tent at Nethergong Camping, perfect for families, couples and groups of friends. This gorgeous site will really allow you to reconnect with nature with hundreds of wildlife species living in harmony with the guests.

Take your pick of camping spots, by the frog pond being one of most popular. This is suitable for paddling and pond dipping which the kids will love! If you're after a bit more comfort than a tent can provide you could hire a wagon, hut or bell tent.

For somewhere completely different you could try 'champing' and book a stay in a church. Stay overnight in St Mary the Virgin in Fordwich, a small and welcoming church. Camp bed, camp chairs, tea & coffee making provisions will be set up ready for your arrival, along with fairy lights and lanterns which add to the lovely atmosphere of the beautiful church.

If camping really isn't your thing then how about one of the many hotels in Canterbury? I'd recommend The Abode. A luxury hotel in the heart of the city, complete with a restaurant and champagne bar. The Falstaff is another great option and the bar serves delicious cocktails.

Before the evening's activities begin, why not explore some of the gorgeous area by bike? In Canterbury, you can hire bikes from Kent Cycle Hire. Cycle along the river and towards Chartham for picturesque scenery.

You'll notice chauffeured punts floating lazily down the river as well as the odd swan.

If you fancy something a bit more bespoke, get in contact with Col's Kent bike tours. Col specialises in cycling tours in and around Canterbury and offers a range of private tours.





Afterwards, head back to the campsite for some stargazing. And if you've got room, some toasted marshmallows. Surely no outdoor activity weekend is complete without them!

Saturday morning

Start your day with a hearty breakfast – you've got a lot to fit in! Either cook a fry up at the campsite or head in to Whitstable. Farm and Harper is great if you've got the kids with you.

Delicious food, lots of choice and crayons to keep the children occupied. Grain and Hearth is also a must-visit. Famed for their amazing pastries, be prepared to queue and grab something to go. If you haven't tried a cruffin yet, I insist you do.

Other great brekkie spots include Samphire and the Umbrella Cafe.

Friday evening

In the evening make the most of the stunning Kent sunsets with an evening guided paddle. Canoe Wild will guide you along the beautiful River Stour as the sun goes down from Fordwich (Britain's smallest town) to Grove Ferry. If you are lucky enough you will get to see the wild beavers that make this area their home.

The tour will end around 7 pm so make sure you've booked somewhere for dinner after.

At your destination, you will find a traditional English pub, The Grove Ferry Inn. However for something truly special I would recommend heading back to your starting point and dining at The Fordwich Arms. Make sure you book ahead for this gorgeous, Michelin starred restaurant. During the winter months, sit inside the cosy, oak-panelled dining room, which boasts three open fires. In the summer choose to sit outside on the beautiful dining terrace, with views of the River Stour. Expect an amazing seasonal menu of the best, local ingredients, direct from Kentish farms and producers.





Saturday morning continued

Now it's time to meet Rebecca of The Salt Marsh Walking Company for a fabulous guided walk. Choose Salt Paths and Strawberry Fields, a 6-mile walk that takes around 3 hours. This tour will show you a part of Whitstable and beyond, that tourists don't usually see.

Along the coast and into the beautiful countryside. If the season is right you'll see the delicious local strawberries being grown. (I'm sure no one will notice if you sneak one. Or two!) Rebecca is a fabulous guide; don't forget your binoculars as she has an amazing knowledge of the local birdlife and may even be able to point out the lazy seals across the Estuary.

Now every outdoor activity weekend deserves a decent picnic so why not pre-book one as part of your walk?

Based on your preferences Rebecca will source some of the best Kentish produce from local Whitstable bakeries and produce stores. Plates, cutlery and cups are all included along with a cosy blanket to sit on.

Saturday afternoon

Head back to Whitstable and take a wander along the coast towards the harbour. No trip to Whitstable is complete without trying the local oysters so grab some if you've got time. You can get these to go from The Forge or West Whelks and in the warmer months The Oyster Shed.

Time for a boat trip... There is quite a choice at the harbour; from trips to see the seals, photography tours of Herne Bay Pier and trips out to the Kentish Flat Windfarms. Just take your pick.

My recommendation would be to take a boat out to the fascinating Sea Forts with Whitstable Boat Trips.

These amazing structures were built during WW2 to protect the area from aerial and naval attacks. Since they have been used as a pirate radio station but are now abandoned seeming almost apocalyptic. Don't forget your camera for this one!

Saturday evening

Now is the time to hop in the car and drive over to the somewhat overlooked Isle of Sheppey. Having only visited recently myself and with its gorgeous coastline and beautiful natural areas, this is a bit of a hidden gem! Your first stop is Elmley Nature Reserve. A wonderful location for a outdoor activity weekend. Book a dusk tour.

As the sun sets explore the reserve on a route tailored to see the best wildlife. Look out for Marsh harriers and merlins soaring through the sky, as well as bearded reedlings and peregrine falcons. The most spectacular sight is the many different species of owl that make the reserve their home.

For a truly special night, stay on the reserve. There is a wide range of breathtaking accommodations each with its own individual character and amazing views of the stunning landscape. My choice would be the Damson, with floor to ceiling windows for an epic view and a vintage outdoor bathtub you'll feel close to nature whilst enjoying pure luxury.

You can choose to self-cater, have a hamper delivered or instead book an evening meal in Kingshill Farmhouse. Expect warming dishes in an intimate setting, with ingredients sourced from local suppliers.

Sunday morning

For the ultimate luxury, make sure you've pre-ordered your breakfast delivered to your hut. Enjoy it in bed taking in the views of the magnificent marshes. Tuck into bacon sandwiches, hearty porridge or pastries.

Before you head home, spend some more time exploring the Isle of Sheppey. Explore one of the beautiful beaches and take a dip if you are feeling brave.

My top choice would be Shellness beach, its wild shores and ramshackle beach huts make for a gorgeous wander. Another great choice is Minster on Sea Leas Beach, with its pretty coloured beach huts.



My 5 favourite places to stay

- >> Nethergong Camping
- >> Elmley Nature Reserve
- >> St Mary the Virgin in Fordwich
- >> The Falstaff
- >> Abode Canterbury