

Colchester
For many years Colchester has celebrated its status as Britain’s oldest recorded town - documented since it was the Celtic stronghold of Camulodunum. Today it is a place which offers a happy blend of heritage of international importance together with a strong contemporary atmosphere including small specialist shops, cafés, restaurants and galleries.

The picture postcard castle, built by the Normans on top of the Roman Temple of Claudius so despised by Queen Boudica in AD60 is now home to the award-winning Castle Museum. The castle is set in a classic Victorian park, just off the High Street, which is a great place to relax after shopping in the town’s quiet lanes of small specialist shops. In fact, Colchester is home to Williams & Griffin, Britain’s leading independent department store, so finding that special treat should not be difficult.

Lovers of contemporary art will make the firstsite gallery their first port of call. The new purpose-build visual arts space will add a 21st century dimension to Colchester’s span of architectural gems through the ages. The new look firstsite new site will have a 200 seat auditorium, shop, café and new parkland sweeping down to the Roman wall.

The surrounding area also has a range of places to visit. Colchester Zoo is one of the county’s most popular attractions. In the north-west, the East Anglian Railway Museum welcomes lovers of steam and the nearby Chappel Viaduct is another must for the photo album. Colchester has plenty of open spaces and nature reserves. Largest of these is High Woods Country Park on the north of the town. The Visitor Centre, which opens at weekends, is the place to find out all about the natural history of this ancient piece of landscape. And don’t miss the Natural History Museum for ‘hands on’ events.

In the south-east visit Wivenhoe - a delightful gem on the River Colne. The streets are small and quaint, retaining much of their original character. Look out for Quay House near the waterfront which has a blue plaque in memory of Sir John Martin-Harvey, actor/manager who was born here in 1863. His father and grandfather were successful designers and builders of racing yachts and schooners. The charming waterfront continues to be alive with fishing boats and small sailing craft. In fact, the place has inspired a number of artists to such an extent, they made it their home. Wivenhoe is surrounded by beautiful countryside, has great walks and rides and wildlife is in abundance.

In the north east is the Dedham Vale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, also known as Constable Country. Best discovered on foot or by bike, the Dedham Vale received its national designation due to its cultural importance.

Its gentle agricultural landscape dotted with church towers and mills features strongly in the works of the 18th century artist and national favourite John Constable. Colchester’s range of attractions and places to visit are complemented by a great range of places to stay as you’ll need a few days to explore it fully.

Attractions along the route:
1. Colchester Castle Museum & Castle Park
The largest Norman keep in Europe. Superb Roman displays, hands-on activities and tours. The imaginative audio visual displays explain Boudica’s burning of the temple and also the civil war siege in 1648. Particularly effective is a sound and light experience which tells of the fate suffered by local ‘witches’ in the castle jail during the 17th century. Underneath the castle you can visit the foundations of the temple which, as Colchester was then capital of Roman Britain, must have been one of the finest in the Roman Empire.
Tel: 01206 282939
www.colchestermuseums.org.uk

2. firstsite
Since it was established in 1995, firstsite has built a regional, national and international reputation for the high quality of its exhibitions of contemporary art from around the globe. Past exhibitions have included work from Bridget Riley, Antony Gormley, Mark Dion, Yoko Ono, Phil Collins and Louise Bourgeois. Firstsite is located in an impressive Georgian townhouse with a shop, café and beautiful walled garden.
Tel: 01206 577067
www.firstsite.uk.net

3. Mercury Theatre
The Mercury stages an exciting and varied programme for all ages and tastes, including nationally acclaimed productions by the Mercury Theatre Company. It has recently won the Barclay’s Stage Award for Special Achievement in Regional Theatre.
Tel: 01206 573948
www.mercurytheatre.co.uk

4. Natural History Museum
Housed in the unique setting of the former All Saints Church in 1957, the Museum focuses on the rich natural heritage of north-east Essex. Travel from the open landscape, through the salt marshes and beaches, to the more familiar urban environments of the park. Discover what rocks lie beneath your feet with a look at local geology.
Tel: 01206 282941
www.colchestermuseums.org.uk

5. Hollytrees Museum
Three centuries of fascinating toys, costume and decorative arts displayed in an attractive Georgian town house from 1718. Parkland, children’s play area, shop and sensory garden.
Tel: 01206 282940
www.colchestermuseums.org.uk

6. Tymperleys Clock Museum
Enjoy this beautiful 15th century timber-framed house, once home of William Gilbert, scientist and physician to Elizabeth I. Tymperleys now houses part of the famous Bernard Mason collection, one of the largest collections of clocks in Britain, and all made in Colchester between 1640 and 1840.
Tel: 01206 282939
www.colchestermuseums.org.uk

7. Rollerworld/Quasar
Internationally recognised as one of the finest roller-skating rink in Europe, Rollerworld has got the lot! Everyone can enjoy the fun at Rollerworld from absolute beginner to world champion.
Tel: 01206 868868
www.rollerworld.co.uk

8. Colchester Zoo
Award winning zoo - one of Europe’s finest. Interact with the animals in daily displays. Feed elephants and giraffes, touch a snake or fly a bird of prey. Don’t miss the Playa Patagonia – the underwater sea lion experience.
Tel: 01206 331292
www.colchester-zoo.co.uk

9. St Michael and All Angels Church
Celebrated 12th century apsidal church with magnificent colour medieval wall paintings, showing a strong Byzantine influence in content and design as well as technical excellence and lavishness of execution.
Tel: 01206 210488
www.copfordchurch.org.uk

10. Carter's Vineyards
Forty acre site including seven acres of vines and a variety of trails through woodland, around lakes and wildflower meadows. Self guided tours and tastings of our wines. Winery powered by wind and sun generated energy.
Tel: 01206 271136
www.cartersvineyards.co.uk

11. Sir Alfred Munnings Art Museum
Castle House, the home, studios and grounds where Sir Alfred Munnings lived and painted for 40 years. Large collection representing his life’s work augmented by private collection loans of paintings not usually shown to the public.
Tel: 01206 322127

12. Dedham Art & Craft Centre
The centre is located in an imaginatively converted church in the heart of ‘Constable Country’. Three floors housing resident artists, ceramics, candle shop, jewellery maker, toy museum. A vast array of beautifully crafted items including furniture, paintings and prints, interior designer and furniture restorer can be found there. On-site is also a whole food vegetarian restaurant serving delicious home-made fayre.
Tel: 01206 322666
www.dedhamartandcraftcentre.co.uk

13. St Mary the Virgin Church
The tower of the parish church of Dedham is familiar to many who have never visited the village through the work of the great English landscape artist, John Constable, in many of whose paintings it features. It has stood as a witness to the centuries since 1492 and was the last of the so-called ‘wool’ churches to be completed.

14. Green Island Gardens
Professionally designed gardens within 19 acres of woodland and laid out as a series of structured gardens displaying a huge range of unusual trees, shrubs and perennials with lots of interest all year around.
Tel: 01206 230455
www.greenislandgardens.co.uk

15. Beth Chatto
Wonderful landscaped gardens with many unusual plants grown in a variety of conditions; ranging from the dry gravel area filled with drought-resistant plants, to dramatic water and woodland gardens.
Tel: 01206 822007
www.bethchatto.co.uk



Images clockwise from top:
- Colchester Castle
- The Sun Inn, Dedham
- Wivenhoe

Getting to Colchester
Arriving by train
Colchester is served by a regular service by One Railway www.onerailway.com directly from London Liverpool Street.

Arriving by Road
There is good access to Colchester from all parts of the country via the A12, M25 and A14.



Other useful information

There are a number of Tourist Information Centres throughout the county. Friendly staff will be able to assist you with in-depth knowledge of their particular area and book accommodation should you require it.

For the Colchester and Dedham area please contact the following:
Visit Colchester Information Centre
Telephone 01206 282820
vic@colchester.gov.uk
www.visitcolchester.com



Colchester Routes

Key

Cycle Route 4

Short Rides

Traffic-free Section

Cycle Essex: Complete Route

Church

Telephone in rural area

Public House

Colchester Town Centre



Total distance of main route is 76km/47miles

Short Rides

These are between 5 and 20 miles and are ideally suited for families or new cyclists. All these routes have at least one stopover facility.

Actual Ride Distances

- A 18.4km/11.5miles
- B 14.2km/8.9miles
- C 17.4km/10.9miles
- D 37.8km/23.5miles
- E 31km/19.4miles
- F 18.9km/11.8miles

Attractions along this route

- 1 Colchester Castle Museum & Castle Park
- 2 firstsite
- 3 Mercury Theatre
- 4 Natural History Museum
- 5 Hollytrees Museum
- 6 Tymperleys Clock Museum
- 7 Rollerworld/Quasar
- 8 Colchester Zoo
- 9 St Michael and All Angels Church
- 10 Carter's Vineyards
- 11 Sir Alfred Munnings Art Museum
- 12 Dedham Art & Craft Centre
- 13 St Mary the Virgin Church
- 14 Green Island Gardens
- 15 Beth Chatto



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