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Summary Article: **Kent**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

County of southeast England, known as the 'garden of England' (since April 1998 Medway Towns has been a separate unitary authority).

Area 3,730 sq km/1,440 sq mi

Towns and cities Maidstone (administrative headquarters), Ashford, Canterbury, Deal, Dover (ferry terminus), Gravesend, Hythe, New Ash Green (a new town), Sevenoaks, Tunbridge Wells; Folkestone, Margate, Ramsgate, Whitstable (resorts)

Physical the North Downs; White Cliffs of Dover; rivers: Thames, Darent, Medway (traditionally, a 'man of Kent' comes from east of the Medway and a 'Kentish man' from west Kent), Stour; marshes (especially Romney Marsh); the Isles of Grain, Thanet and Sheppey (on which is the resort of Sheerness, formerly a royal dockyard); the Weald (an agricultural area); Dungeness (peninsula and headland)

Features Leeds Castle (converted to a palace by Henry VIII); Ightham Mote; Hever Castle (where Henry VIII courted Anne Boleyn); Chartwell (Churchill's country home), Knole, Sissinghurst Castle (16th-century) and gardens; Brogdale is home to the national Fruit Collections; the former RAF Manston became Kent International Airport in 1989; Dungeness nuclear power station

Agriculture cereals, hops, apples, soft fruit, vegetables; livestock production

Industries cement, paper, shipbuilding, tourism. The East Kent coalfield ceased production in 1989

Population (2001) 1,329,700

Famous people Edward Heath (British politician), Christopher Marlowe (author and poet)

Topography Kent is bounded by Thurrock and Medway Towns to the north; by London and Surrey to the west, and by East Sussex to the south. It is a county of great geographical contrast, and the arrival point in England for thousands of foreign visitors. A long-distance footpath follows the crest of the North Downs and some of the Pilgrims' Way, and near Ashford a loop goes off to take in Canterbury and the surrounding orchard country. The gentle northward chalk slopes of the North Downs provide the excellent conditions for Kent's fruit farming, especially around Faversham and Sittingbourne. The rocks of the Tertiary period found in this area are also found in the isles at Grain, Sheppey, and Thanet. To the south of the North Downs is the Weald, which extends into Surrey and Sussex and has a complement of small towns such as Cranbrook and Hawkhurst with half-timbered yeomen's houses set in rolling, wooded countryside. Parts of northwest Kent have now been absorbed into outskirts of London, or lie within the commuter belt.

History Kent's proximity to the continent and to London has meant that many historically important events have taken place in the county. It was on the coast of Kent that Caesar landed in 55 BC; to which Hengist and Horsa brought their Saxon mercenaries; and to which St Augustine led his followers. The archbishop of Canterbury traces his descent as Primate of all England from St Augustine. St Thomas à Becket was murdered in Canterbury Cathedral, and his shrine became a place of pilgrimage

until the Reformation. Canterbury is of great antiquity and evidence has been found here for continuity of settlement from Roman to Jute and Frankish times. The influences of these groups reflected in Kent's language, custom, and settlement pattern, which contrast with those of the more predominantly Saxon Surrey and Sussex. Parts of Kent are open countryside, which could easily be invaded, and the former Royal Military Canal was cut across Romney Marsh as a defence against Napoleon.

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