

Warkworth Castle and Hermitage, Northumberland

Crowning a hilltop in a loop of the river Coquet, 12th-century Warkworth Castle was once among the biggest, most impressive castles in northern England and chief residence of the equally formidable Percys – one of the most powerful families in the region during much of the Middle Ages.

Don't miss...

Embark on one of five new interactive quests around the castle grounds, each guided by a different character. Whether you decide to help John del Wardrobe find the earl's missing robe or patrol the castle with William Stowe, you'll discover the daily life of your chosen character as you trace Warkworth's story. And keep your eyes peeled for the lions – the Percy family's emblem – carved throughout the castle. To complete your adventure, take a walk beside the river followed by a boat trip to discover the Hermitage (open on selected days), a medieval chapel carved out of the rock. www.english-heritage.org.uk/warkworth

If you like this, you'll love this...

Richmond Castle, North Yorkshire

If you enjoyed getting acquainted with characters from across history, you'll love the imaginative displays at Richmond Castle featuring people from the castle's past. Find out how generations of residents lived as Richmond's story is brought to life.

Trace Warkworth's story and discover the daily life of your chosen character'



GOOD JOURNEY SCHEME

Find out how to reach our sites on public transport at www.english-heritage.org.uk/days-out-without-a-car



Above left An interactive trail reveals the stories of various characters

Above One of the sculptures that forms part of the Warkworth quests

Left Exploring the great tower, which was built more than 600 years ago

Framlingham Castle, Suffolk

Built in the late 12th century by Roger Bigod, Earl of Norfolk, Framlingham remained home to the Dukes of Norfolk for more than 400 years until passing into the hands of Mary Tudor, who was proclaimed queen at the castle. Framlingham later became a prison and fell into disrepair, before finding life as a home for the poor with the addition of a 17th-century workhouse.

Don't miss...

March across the magnificent wall-top walkway as you admire the spectacular views over the Suffolk countryside. In the workhouse, explore the varied lives of people of Framlingham's past – rich and poor – by trying on a host of historical hats and playing a game to discover what they ate.

www.english-heritage.org.uk/framlingham

If you like this, you'll love this... Rochester Castle, Kent

If Framlingham's massive curtain walls leave you in awe, a visit to 12th-century Rochester Castle and its imposing great stone keep is a must. Standing almost 40 metres high, it's the tallest Norman keep in England. Climb the spiralling steps to the roof for breathtaking views.



Above There's lots for younger visitors to explore during a day at Framlingham Castle

Storm the gates

From royal strongholds to battle-scarred ruins, we've got many of England's mightiest castles to explore. Here are seven of the best for a fun family day out this summer

WORDS KELLY RAY

Beeston Castle and Woodland Park, Cheshire

Standing high above the Cheshire Plain, Beeston Castle was built by Ranulf, Earl of Chester in the 1220s and seized by Henry III shortly after. But the crag it sits on has an even longer history: evidence for human activity dates back to the Neolithic period and suggests Beeston was an important Bronze Age metalworking centre. The crag later became the site of an Iron Age hillfort whose banks and rock-cut ditches were incorporated into the medieval fortress we see today.

Don't miss...

Climb up the hill to the inner bailey, where you'll be rewarded with perhaps the most spectacular views from any castle in England. Peer into the castle well – over 100 metres deep – where Richard II's lost treasure is said to be buried. Immerse yourself in Beeston's 4,000-year story in the Castle of the Rock exhibition and reconnect with our Bronze Age ancestors in the extraordinary replica roundhouse. www.english-heritage.org.uk/beeston

If you like this, you'll love this... Scarborough Castle, North Yorkshire

Scarborough Castle is another hilltop fortress boasting a prehistoric past – and spectacular views. Discover artefacts spanning 3,000 years and soak up the sweeping panoramic views from the viewing platforms.



Above Head up the inner bailey for spectacular views – and a very deep well



Explore more than 1,000 years of history at Carisbrooke Castle

Carisbrooke Castle, Isle of Wight

Dominating the heart of the island, Carisbrooke Castle has been a key stronghold on the Isle of Wight for more than 1,000 years. Built shortly after the Norman conquest and later remodelled as an artillery fortress, the castle has seen many changes over the years and has an equally colourful history of residents – most notably the defeated King Charles I, who was imprisoned here following the Civil War.

Don't miss...

Young explorers will love creating adventures in the grounds, conquering the cobbled steps and narrow walkways. Play bowls on Charles I's bowling green and see the room in which he was held captive. In the gatehouse, kids can step into the shoes of a medieval soldier by dressing up in armour and firing a mini cannon. Head to the well house to meet the castle's donkeys. Donkeys once worked the tread wheel to draw water from the well. Their modern-day counterparts now provide demonstrations of the wheel every day the castle is open – although their duties are much lighter than they were in the past.

www.english-heritage.org.uk/carisbrooke

If you like this, you'll love this... Totnes Castle, Devon

This is another classic example of a motte-and-bailey castle, established after the Norman conquest to subdue the Anglo-Saxon town. Climb to the top of the keep for stunning views over Totnes, before relaxing in the grounds. See if you can spot the 'graffiti' carved on the trees by prisoners during the Second World War.

'Kids can step into the shoes of a medieval soldier and dress up in armour'

Pendennis Castle, Cornwall

This coastal castle was built by Henry VIII to guard the Fal estuary and access to the ports of Penryn and Truro, sharing the task with its sister fortress, St Mawes. Pendennis has been updated in the face of changing conflicts over its four-century history, even playing a vital role in the First World War as a base for local coastal defence.

Don't miss...

The Castle Explorers trail is the perfect way for families to embark on a day of discovery at Pendennis. Kids will love exploring the keep's maze of rooms and twisty stone staircases, soundtracked by wartime drama as gunners rush to their stations after spotting a suspected enemy ship. In the recreated battery observation post, scan the horizon for enemy ships and listen in on telephone conversations. There's also a soft play area where kids can let off steam, while adults kick back with a Cornish cream tea in the café. To make the most of your day out, you can then take a ferry across the estuary to visit St Mawes Castle. www.english-heritage.org.uk/pendennis



Above Pendennis Castle is one of a handful of circular artillery forts built in the 1540s

If you like this, you'll love this... Deal Castle, Kent

Built shortly before Pendennis, Deal Castle was among the first of Henry VIII's chain of device forts built to defend England's south coast. These early device forts share their distinctive circular keeps, designed

to allow tiered, all-round defence. Kids will delight in defending the castle as they roam the underground tunnels armed with a replica musket. Nearby is Walmer Castle, a pleasant 30-minute stroll along the seafront.

'Explore the keep's maze of rooms and twisty stone staircases, soundtracked by wartime drama as gunners rush to their stations'



Capture the castle

Looking for some Instagram inspiration? Here are four of our most photogenic castles – the perfect locations for taking stunning social media-friendly snaps

Bolsover Castle, Derbyshire

The grand exterior of the 17th-century Little Castle vividly catches the light on sunny days, creating a yellow-tinged glow on the stonework to stunning effect. Or the wall paintings in the Heaven Closet and Elysium Closet are among the most dramatic castle interiors you'll see.

Dover Castle, Kent

The imposing Dover Castle looks good from almost any angle but for a classic castle silhouette, try photographing it as you approach the main gatehouse. For close-up shots, keep an eye out for intriguing details and hidden nooks inside the Great Tower, which also has a lavish recreated medieval interior.

Dunstanburgh Castle, Northumberland

These enigmatic ruins, perched on a remote, wave-battered headland, make a great focal point for rugged landscape images. Indeed, you'll be in good company in taking inspiration from the site – many artists have also created depictions of the castle, including JMW Turner.

Old Wardour Castle, Wiltshire

While your eye can't help but be drawn upwards as you approach the castle, for memorable photographs try instead climbing the stone steps of the east tower, where you'll be rewarded with stunning views of the lake and countryside beyond, framed by the castle walls.





Carlisle Castle has been continuously occupied since 1092

Carlisle Castle, Cumbria

For 500 years, until the English and Scottish crowns were united in 1603, Carlisle Castle was England's chief point of defence on the north-western border with Scotland. During this time it endured 10 sieges, approaching an English record. First established in 1092 by William II and later rebuilt under Henry I, the castle is where Mary, Queen of Scots was held prisoner by order of her cousin Elizabeth I. Unusually for a medieval fortress, the castle remained in working use well into the 20th century, most recently as the headquarters of the King's Own Royal Border Regiment.

Don't miss...

Step into the Warden's Apartments, once the bedroom of Richard III, and see the stair turret of the tower where Queen Mary was kept captive. Explore the castle keep and marvel at the hundreds of mysterious 15th-century stone carvings thought to have been carved by bored prison guards – can you spot George and the



Above Throughout its history, Carlisle Castle endured a total of 10 sieges

Dragon, Richard III's boar badge and the mermaid? In the former Regimental Institute, Cumbria's Museum of Military Life tells the story of both world wars. www.english-heritage.org.uk/carlisle

If you like this, you'll love this...

Etal Castle, Northumberland

Further east, and also close to the Scottish border, stands another fortress that was built as a defence against raiders in the mid 14th century. While you're here, hop over to the nearby Flodden Battlefield – the site of English victory over James IV's invading Scots army in 1513.

'Mary, Queen of Scots was held prisoner here by her cousin, Elizabeth I'

Dover Castle, Kent

Established by William the Conqueror shortly after the Battle of Hastings and later transformed by Henry II, Dover Castle takes the crown as the most iconic medieval fortress in England. Dover later played a vital role in the defence of Britain in the First World War and was central to the evacuation of hundreds of thousands of troops from Dunkirk during the Second World War as the headquarters of Operation Dynamo.

Don't miss...

An entire day of family adventure throughout the centuries awaits at Dover. Explore the grandeur of Henry II's Great Tower and its vividly recreated rooms, and imagine life as a king or queen. Don't forget to climb to the top for unrivalled views across the Channel. Journey back to the First World War in the Fire Command Post, where you can try your hand at morse code messaging and learn how to spot enemy ships. Underground, kids will love exploring the Secret Wartime Tunnels, which bring the dramatic story of the Dunkirk rescue to life.

www.english-heritage.org.uk/dover

If you like this, you'll love this...

Pevensey Castle, East Sussex

The landing place of William the Conqueror's army in 1066, this Roman 'Saxon Shore' fort-turned-medieval castle also found itself as an emergency stronghold in the Second World War. Look out for the machine-gun posts that are camouflaged into the castle walls and see a recreated 1940s commander's office.



Above There's a huge amount for children to see and do during a day at Dover Castle