Canterbury and its History

St Augustine, sent by Pope Gregory the Great, arrived as a missionary to England in 597AD and established his seat (‘cathedra’) in Canterbury, becoming the first Archbishop of Canterbury.

Augustine was given a church (St Martin’s) by King Ethelbert. His wife, Queen Bertha, was a French princess and already a Christian. St Martin’s Church is the building in which she and subsequently Augustine and his followers first worshipped.

The ruins of St Augustine’s Abbey include the remains of the monastery where Augustine and his followers lived and worshipped. It was not only the principal mission centre for the conversion of the English people to Christianity, but a centre of learning and culture, and the burial place of Kentish kings and several archbishops of Canterbury, including St Augustine himself.

Canterbury is often described as the cradle of Christianity, as St Martin’s Church, St Augustine’s Abbey and Canterbury Cathedral are directly and tangibly associated with the history of the re-introduction of Christianity in England.
St Martin’s Church

Situated just outside the city centre, St Martin’s was Queen Bertha’s chapel before Augustine’s arrival. It is the oldest parish church in continuous use in the English-speaking world.

The current chancel encapsulates the remains of the original Roman brick-built church. Here, Augustine, Ethelbert and Bertha prayed as the Cathedral and Abbey projects were planned. An Anglo Saxon Nave and a medieval tower complete the building.

The churchyard contains several notable graves and there’s a fine city view from the terrace.

St Martin’s Church is free to visit, but donations are greatly appreciated.

For up-to-date opening times, visit St Martin’s website www.martinpaul.org

St Augustine’s Abbey

The abbey was one of the most significant religious sites in medieval England; a thriving centre of Benedictine monasticism for almost 1000 years. The dissolution of the monasteries in 1538 resulted in the ruined remains we see today.

Explore the evocative ruins with the audio tour. Inside try the award-winning Virtual Reality experience to see the 1500s abbey.

The abbey’s extensive archaeological collection is also displayed inside, including some of the most important Saxon religious artefacts in the country.

For opening times and prices visit
www.english-heritage.org.uk/staugustinesabbey

Canterbury Cathedral

Canterbury Cathedral is the Mother Church of the worldwide Anglican Communion and seat of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The Cathedral attracts thousands of pilgrims every year - most famously to visit the shrine of Thomas Becket who was murdered in the Cathedral in 1170.

The Cathedral houses one of the most important collections of early medieval stained glass windows in the country, depicting bible stories, royal connections and the miracles associated with the murder of Thomas Becket.

For opening times and entry charges, please visit the Cathedral website
www.canterbury-cathedral.org