



The gentle rural landscapes of Essex, sprinkled with rivers and lit by constantly changing East Anglian skies, have inspired generations of artists. Most famous is John Constable – in fact the area around Dedham was known as Constable Country even during the artist's lifetime. Today, the artistic tradition continues, as heralded by Harlow's treasure trove of public sculptural art and the wealth of contemporary talent in hotspots such as Great Bardfield, Wivenhoe and Leigh-on-Sea. This, combined with innovative display spaces such as Naze Tower and Colchester's sensational new cultural attraction, firstsite, make Essex a truly memorable place to soak up centuries of our county's art heritage.

art

Echo by Brazzy's Antanas in Harlow

- Sir Alfred Munnings Art Museum**
Dedham Tel: 01206 322127
www.siralfredmunnings.co.uk
Best known for his equestrian portraits, Sir Alfred Munnings lived in this large country house for 40 years. It has now been restored and contains a superb collection of his paintings, including many of the rural scenes he loved, together with regular loans of other artists' work.
- Becroft Art Gallery**
Westcliff-on-Sea Tel: 01702 347418
www.becroft-art-gallery.co.uk
Set on the seafront, the Becroft houses an eclectic collection comprising some 2,000 works, from fine old European Masters and paintings by Constable and Russell to contemporary British works by Seago, Frank Brangwyn and David Cox. The gallery hosts a regular programme of exhibitions including the prestigious Essex Open.
- Constable Country**
Flatford Tel: 01206 298260 (Bridge Cottage)
www.nationaltrust.org.uk
The hamlets of Flatford and Dedham are famous as the locations for many of John Constable's best-known paintings. 16th century Bridge Cottage houses an exhibition about the painter. From here you can walk along the towpath to the painter's birthplace at Flatford Mill and Willy Lott's Cottage (which featured in The Hay Wain). Boats are also available for hire.
- firstsite**
Colchester Tel: 01206 577067
www.firstsite.uk.net
Opening spring 2009, this stunning new cultural attraction will add a 21st century dimension to Colchester's wealth of architectural gems. Set in parkland with great views of the Roman wall, the site will feature a vibrant programme of exhibitions, workshops, lectures and films and includes a 200-seat auditorium, café and shop selling work by local artists.

- Fry Art Gallery**
Saffron Walden Tel: 01799 513779
www.fryartgallery.org
This unique collection features the work of a group of artists, lead by Edward Bowden, who founded an artists' colony in Great Bardfield in the mid 20th century. Works by Michael Rothenstein, John Aldridge and Bernard Cheese are included as well as significant contemporary works, underlining the area's continuing artistic tradition.
- Gibberd Garden & Harlow Sculpture Trail**
Harlow Tel: 01279 442112
www.thegibberdgarden.co.uk (Gibberd Garden)
www.visitharlow.com (sculpture trail map)
Designed by Sir Frederick Gibberd in the 1950s, Harlow pioneered the practice of sculpture in the living environment. Today it is home to an extensive collection including works by Moore, Hepworth, Frink and over forty others, as well as Gibberd's own highly individual garden, recognised as an important contribution to 20th century garden design.
- Leigh-on-Sea**
www.leigharttrail.co.uk
The cobbled streets and clapboard cottages of Leigh's old town are home to many practising artists, craftsmen, potters and photographers, whose works are celebrated during the annual Leigh Art Trail. You may see them at work during the year, while galleries throughout the town specialise in local talent and stage regular exhibitions.



firstsite, Colchester

- St Michaels & All Angels, Copford**
A true hidden gem, this 12th century church in its pretty woodland setting contains remarkable medieval wall paintings, showing a strong Byzantine influence in content and design, as well as technical excellence and lavish execution, described by journalist Simon Jenkins as 'amongst the best in England'.
- Naze Tower**
Walton-on-the-Naze Tel: 01255 852519
www.nazetower.co.uk
Situated on the scenic Naze headland, this octagonal landmark, once a shipping beacon, is today a thriving art gallery, representing a unique marriage of history and contemporary art. There's also a museum as well as tea rooms, where you can refresh your palate surrounded by artworks, and a rooftop platform offering panoramic views.
- Wivenhoe**
www.wivenhoe.gov.uk
A long line of artists and writers have taken inspiration from this unpretentious fishing town with its quaint streets and pretty quayside. They include James Dodds, famous for his linocuts, his father, watercolourist Andrew Dodds, contemporary poet Martin Newell and Ernie Turner, dubbed Wivenhoe's Alfred Wallis, as well as many others who exhibit regularly in the town's galleries.

built heritage & gardens v v museums >>

Close to the European mainland, Essex has been influenced by many different cultures. The Romans made Colchester their capital, while the Normans left their mark with castles at Colchester, Heddingham and Stansted. Later, Huguenot settlers made Braintree one of the great weaving centres of the 17th century. Today, museums celebrate this rich cultural legacy, as well as taking a closer look at some of the county's home-grown industries from Tiptree Jam and Colchester-crafted clocks to Southend pier's colourful history. They also illustrate the county's strategic military role as London's front line of defence. Harwich Redoubt fort is a reminder of the threat of Napoleon, whilst the fascinating bunker at Kelvedon Hatch is a grim relic of the Cold War.

museums

Hollytrees Museum, Colchester

- Braintree District Museum**
Braintree Tel: 01376 325266
www.enjoybraintreedistrict.co.uk
Housed in a Victorian schoolhouse, this award-winning museum explores Braintree's artistic and industrial heritage from Crittall windows to Warners silks, Castle Heddingham pottery and works by the Great Bardfield artists. The nearby Warner Textile Archive also houses some fine displays, celebrating the skills of the local textile craftsmen.
- Chelmsford Museum**
Chelmsford Tel: 01245 605700
www.chelmsford.gov.uk/museums
Chelmsford Museum is located in the attractive Victorian Oaklands House and tells the story of the Essex capital from prehistoric times to the present day. It also includes displays of natural history and geology, paintings and decorative arts, and features a full programme of exhibitions and events.
- Colchester Museums**
Colchester Tel: 01206 282939
www.colchestermuseums.org.uk
Housed in the largest Norman keep in Europe, Colchester Castle Museum includes superb Roman displays, hands-on activities and year-round events underlining Colchester's importance as the capital of Roman Britain. Children will also enjoy a visit to the Natural History Museum and Hollytrees Museum, which explores 300 years of domestic Essex life, whilst the timber-framed Tymperleys Museum houses a unique collection of fine clocks and watches.
- East Anglian Railway Museum**
Chappel Tel: 01206 242524
www.earm.co.uk
This open-air museum, located just north of the famous Chappel Viaduct, represents 100 years of railway history with a varied collection of rolling stock including passenger and freight vehicles, working signal boxes, a restoration shed and a small exhibits museum. The museum runs regular steam days and special events.
- Harwich Redoubt Fort**
Harwich Tel: 01255 503429
www.harwich-society.co.uk
This impressive moated circular fort was built in 1808 to defend Harwich against Napoleonic invasion. Ten guns sit on the emplacements; a museum below houses military uniforms and other artefacts. A short stroll north, on the coast, the low lighthouse (one of a pair) is now the town's Maritime Museum.
- Mountfitchet Castle Experience**
Stansted Mountfitchet Tel: 01279 813237
www.mountfitchetcastle.com
Travel back to medieval England at Mountfitchet's reconstructed castle and Norman village. Adjacent to the castle is the House on the Hill Toy Museum, where you can come face to face with Daleks, check out old board games, play vintage slot machines and have a close encounter with dinosaurs.
- Museum of Power**
Langford Tel: 01621 843183
www.museumofpower.org.uk
Power, whether steam-driven, water-generated or solar, is the theme behind this museum housed in a former pumping station. Attractions include steam engines, working power displays, a model railway and an Edwardian workshop. There is also a miniature railway that travels through the museum grounds.
- Secret Nuclear Bunker**
Kelvedon Hatch Tel: 01277 364883
www.secretnuclearbunker.co.uk
Buried 80 feet below the Essex countryside, this ex-government bunker, complete with kitchen, dormitories, power plant, plotting floor and communications room, was designed to house up to 600 personnel charged with organising the survival of the population in the aftermath of a nuclear war. A chilling, yet fascinating, visit.
- Southend Pier Museum**
Southend-on-Sea Tel: 01702 611214/614553
www.southendpiermuseum.co.uk
Permanent and temporary displays bring to life the fascinating story of the longest pleasure pier in the world, stretching over a mile out to sea. Learn about its Victorian heyday and its disasters, the amusements, the war years, the people who worked here and the famous railway, complete with restored trains.
- Tiptree Jam Museum**
Tiptree Tel: 01621 814524
www.tiptree.com
The Wilkin family have been making jam here since 1885. A stroll around the museum shows how preserve-making has advanced over the years and includes a presentation of the production process. There's also a shop and tea room, where you can taste the real thing.



Warner Textile Archive, Braintree Tiptree Jam Museum

With over 14,000 listed buildings, Essex is unusually well supplied with interesting architecture of all shapes and sizes. These range from major landmarks, such as Audley End House, to a wealth of architectural gems in towns and villages such as Coggeshall, Saffron Walden, Great Dunmow and Thaxted, where half-timbered merchants' houses and vast, beautifully decorated churches stand as testament to the wood trade which brought prosperity in the Middle Ages. More ancient landmarks have also survived: from the world's oldest wooden church at Greensted and Bradwell's tiny Saxon chapel to Cressing's vast medieval barns and Heddingham's Norman keep. All this is combined with a legacy of watermills and windmills (285 in the late 1800s) as well as a more recent legacy of inspirational gardens which beckon exploration.

built heritage & gardens

Beth Chatto Gardens

- Audley End House and Gardens**
Saffron Walden Tel: 01799 522842
www.english-heritage.org.uk
Built by the Earl of Suffolk to entertain royalty, this magnificent stately home includes over 30 lavishly decorated rooms with interiors by Robert Adam and a wonderful collection of paintings and furnishings. The surrounding parkland, designed by 'Capability' Brown, includes a 19th century parterre and organic Kitchen Garden. Don't miss the new visitor experience Real Life below stairs.
- Beth Chatto Gardens**
Elmstead Market Tel: 01206 822007
www.bethchatto.co.uk
Created from a neglected hollow, Beth Chatto's gardens are a triumph of planting in every condition, from the large gravel garden filled with drought resistant plants to stunning sunny borders, a dramatic water garden and dry woodland shade. Inspirational plantings throughout show how to use leaf and flower to best advantage.
- Cressing Temple**
Braintree Tel: 01376 584903
www.cressingtemple.org.uk
This scheduled ancient monument has its origins in the 12th century, when the two vast wooden barns were constructed by the Knights Templar. Nestled to one side is the Tudor-inspired walled garden. There are also a range of other historic rural buildings, together with a full programme of events including falconry displays.
- Greensted Church**
Chipping Ongar Tel: 01992 564273
In a county famed for its churches, this is a real gem. The oldest wooden church in the world, tiny Greensted dates from the 11th century. It features a Tudor brick chancel and sanctuary, 17th century tower and an ancient slab to the right of the porch, thought to mark a crusader's grave.
- Heddingham Castle**
Castle Heddingham Tel: 01787 460261
www.heddinghamcastle.co.uk
Heddingham's Norman keep, was built around 1140 and is the best preserved in England. Its four floors include a magnificent Banqueting Hall spanned by a massive 28-foot arch and Minstrels' Gallery. Special events throughout the year include jousts, re-enactments and a production by the touring Globe Theatre on 15th-17th July.
- Hylands House**
Chelmsford Tel: 01245 605500
www.chelmsford.gov.uk/hylands
This beautifully restored Grade II* listed house is set in 574 acres of historic parkland and gardens, landscaped by Sir Humphrey Repton. Its remarkable interior includes the ornate Banqueting Room, glazed Drawing Room, Grand Staircase and Repton Room, with stunning views over the grounds.
- Ingatstone Hall**
Ingatstone Tel: 01277 353010
This unspoiled 16th century mansion was built by Sir William Petre, Secretary of State to four Tudor monarchs. Remarkably, 15 generations of his family have continued to live in the house, which has largely kept its Tudor appearance and is packed with family treasures.



Ingatstone Hall Heddingham Castle

- Layer Marney Tower**
Layer Marney Tel: 01206 330784
www.layermarneytower.co.uk
Resplendent in red brick, Layer Marney is the tallest Tudor gatehouse in Great Britain, set in tranquil gardens. Climb the tower for magnificent views, visit the church and learn a little of the tower's history. There are also woodland walks while children will enjoy meeting the livestock in the medieval barn.
- RHS Garden Hyde Hall**
Rettendon Tel: 01245 400256
www.rhs.org.uk
This 24-acre garden has a great diversity of plants and planting styles, providing wonderful seasonal interest. Highlights include the Dry Garden with its Mediterranean plantings, scented Rose Garden, Australian Garden and the vast colour-themed herbaceous border, guaranteed to inspire.
- Tilbury Fort**
Tilbury Tel: 01375 858489
www.english-heritage.org.uk
Henry VIII built the first fort here to defend London against invasion. The present fort, dating from 1672, is the best example of 17th century military engineering in England and includes a magnificent water gate built by Charles II. It remained in military use until 1950 and today stages regular historical re-enactments.

- Hylands House, Chelmsford**

Hylands House, Chelmsford

- Harwich Redoubt Fort**
Harwich Tel: 01255 503429
www.harwich-society.co.uk
- Mountfitchet Castle Experience**
Stansted Mountfitchet Tel: 01279 813237
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- Harwich Redoubt**

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www.mountfitchetcastle.com
- Harwich Redoubt**

Yet enjoying culture in Essex is not just about commemorating the past; it is a process that also celebrates the present. Such a juxtaposition of old and new is reflected in Colchester, Britain's oldest recorded town. It is also reflected in the county's continuing artistic tradition, its lively performing arts scene and its year-round programme of cultural events, everything from Shakespeare under the stars at Heddingham Castle to the head-banging line-up at Chelmsford's V Festival. Summer 2008 also sees the start of the Jingsu Festival, when visitors will be treated to a unique insight into Chinese culture. And to be commemorated by a great range of pieces to stay, meaning there's even more reason to make a break of it.

John Constable said "I love every stile and stump... as long as I am able to hold a brush I shall never cease to paint them." We hope that you will come and share this view.

The towns and villages of Essex represent a fascinating mix of the old and the new. Their theatres, arts centres and concert halls reflect this mixture too. Whether you see a performance in a converted church, a Victorian seaside theatre or a purpose-built venue, you're in for a great night out. The range of entertainment is vast, from blockbuster West End musicals (at one third of West End prices!) to stand-up comedy, chamber recitals and rock bands. In the summer you can picnic in style while enjoying open-air performances at venues across the county, from Audley End's Last Night of the Proms to the touring Globe Theatre performed against the magical backdrop of Heddingham Castle.

theatre

Mercury Theatre, Colchester

- West Cliff Theatre & Arts Centre**
Tel: 01255 433344
www.westcliffclacton.org
Princes Theatre Tel: 01255 686633
www.tendingdc.co.uk
Clacton is fortunate to have two venues for live entertainment. The West Cliff is a traditional theatre staging a range of professional and amateur productions, together with regular art exhibitions. It is complemented by the Princes Theatre, a multi-purpose venue with a varied programme of family entertainment and community activities, and home to the Princes Theatre Youth Company.
- Basildon Towngate Theatre** Tel: 01268 531343
www.basildon.gov.uk
The Towngate is more than just a theatre, with daily activities for the community and regular live music alongside a programme of dance, comedy, plays and shows. These include the Towngate's own productions, as well as popular and occasionally more controversial touring productions chosen to appeal to a broad audience.
- Brenwood Brenwood Theatre** Tel: 01277 200305
www.brenwood-theatre.org
This popular community theatre opened in 1993 following 15 years of campaigning and fundraising. Today it provides a professional venue for musical and drama groups from Essex and beyond, offering visitors a wide-reaching programme of performing arts.
- Chelmsford Civic and Cramphorn Theatres**
Tel: 01245 606505
www.chelmsford.gov.uk/theatres
The 505-seat Civic Theatre and smaller Cramphorn Theatre together provide a varied programme of large-scale professional productions and smaller amateur events. These range from classical drama, dance and an eclectic music programme to family favourites, as well as an innovative programme of film screenings at the Cramphorn.

- Clacton-on-Sea West Cliff Theatre & Arts Centre**
Tel: 01255 433344
www.westcliffclacton.org
Princes Theatre Tel: 01255 686633
www.tendingdc.co.uk
Clacton is fortunate to have two venues for live entertainment. The West Cliff is a traditional theatre staging a range of professional and amateur productions, together with regular art exhibitions. It is complemented by the Princes Theatre, a multi-purpose venue with a varied programme of family entertainment and community activities, and home to the Princes Theatre Youth Company.
- Colchester Mercury Theatre** Tel: 01206 573948
www.mercurytheatre.co.uk
Colchester Arts Centre Tel: 01206 500900
www.colchesterartscentre.com
Lakeside Theatre Tel: 01206 873261
www.essex.ac.uk/arts
Colchester boasts a rich and varied arts scene, from nationally acclaimed productions of the Mercury, both by the Mercury's own company and visiting groups, to a wide range of professional and amateur productions at the Lakeside. In addition, the Colchester Arts Centre, housed in a converted church, offers a packed programme of performing arts from theatre, dance and children's theatre to music and film.
- Grays Thameside Theatre** Tel: 01375 383961
www.thurock.gov.uk/theatre
This contemporary 323-seat theatre presents a wide-ranging programme of mainly professional performances, from country music and rock to drama, film and celebrity appearances. The theatre shares a building with the local history museum and central library.

- Harlow Playhouse** Tel: 01279 431945
www.playhouseharlow.com
Victoria Hall Tel: 01279 422131
From drama and ballet to comedy and theatre workshops, the programme at Playhouse continues to expand, bringing new celebrities and live bands, as well as one of the best-known pantomimes in the country. Nearby, the small and friendly Victoria Hall Theatre showcases a variety of events, mainly by talented members of the local community.
- Hornchurch Queens Theatre** Tel: 01708 443333
www.queens-theatre.co.uk
This vibrant theatre is home to resident company *to the chase*, who present an entertaining programme of eight productions a year. The theatre also hosts a variety of guest shows, both amateur and professional, and a popular pantomime at Christmas, as well as an education and outreach programme aimed at young people and adults.
- Loughton Corbett Theatre** Tel: 0208 508 5983
www.east15.ac.uk
Housed in a converted medieval tilth barn, the Corbett Theatre is a unique performance space with a special atmosphere. It is home to the East 15 Acting School, part of the University of Essex.
- Southend-on-Sea Cliffs Pavilion and Palace Theatre**
Tel: 01702 351135
www.thecliffspavilion.co.uk
The Cliffs Pavilion is the largest purpose-built arts venue in the south east, showcasing everything from touring West End musicals to concerts by the Philharmonia Orchestra, opera, dance and more. This, combined with a full and varied programme at the nearby Palace Theatre, place Westcliff truly at the centre stage of the Southend arts scene.

The information contained in this document can be translated, and/or made available in alternative formats on request.

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Front cover images: main image Audrey End House (left), inset right Layer Marney Tower, inset left by Brimthorpe statue in Malton.

www.real Essex.co.uk
Visit our website:
harwhitch@btconnect.com
0845 600773
By telephone:
County Hall, Chelmsford CM1 1LX
Essex County Council, Essex Tourism,
This information is issued by Essex County Council
You can contact us in the following ways:
For a better quality of life
Essex Works
For a better quality of life

For those who think they know Essex, the beautiful, tried and exquisite villages of Hatfield and timber set in gently rolling countryside come as no surprise. But what many visitors are unprepared for is that rural exterior bears an ancient heart, steeped in centuries of heritage and culture. Local events celebrate the county's rich history and its year-round programme of cultural events, everything from Shakespeare under the stars at Heddingham Castle to the head-banging line-up at Chelmsford's V Festival. Summer 2008 also sees the start of the Jingsu Festival, when visitors will be treated to a unique insight into Chinese culture. And to be commemorated by a great range of pieces to stay, meaning there's even more reason to make a break of it.

John Constable said "I love every stile and stump... as long as I am able to hold a brush I shall never cease to paint them." We hope that you will come and share this view.

From fairs to festivals and music to mud racing, whenever you come, wherever you go, soak up a little local colour by attending one of the hundreds of cultural events that take place in Essex each year. Opposite is a handful of some of the most popular. For more information on what's happening visit www.realessex.co.uk. 2008 also sees the start of the nine-month Essex Jingsu Festival, the biggest international arts festival ever in Essex. See overleaf for a faster of some of the hundreds of events taking place and join us for a fascinating taste of Chinese culture.

events

Burnham Art Trail

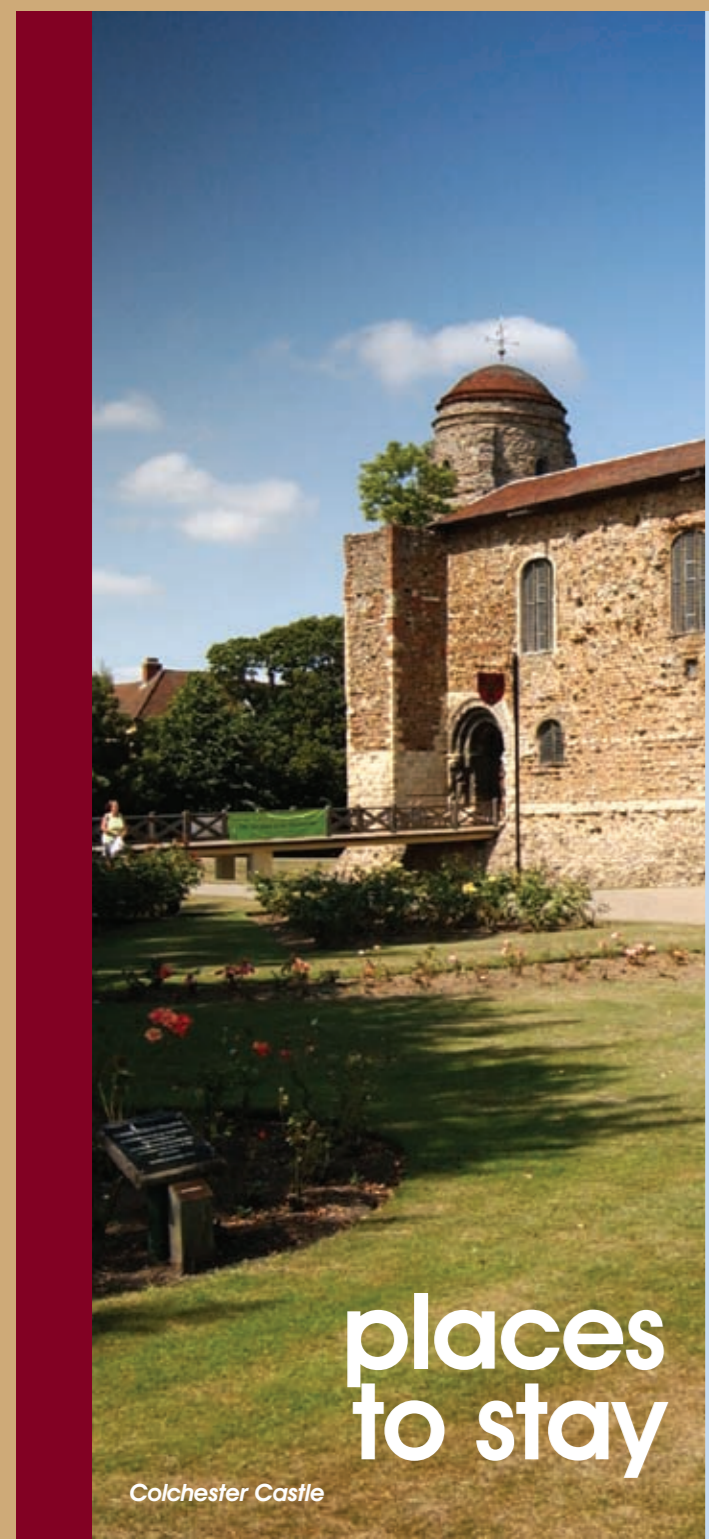
- Thaxted Festival**
20 June – 13 July (weekends only)
Thaxted Tel: 01371 831421 www.thaxted.co.uk
Thaxted's church is often referred to as the Cathedral of Essex owing to its beauty and impressive size. It provides an atmospheric setting for the annual Thaxted Festival, founded by composer Gustav Holst, which draws performers of national and international standing to play classical music and jazz.
- Dunmow Flitch Trials**
12 July
Great Dunmow www.dunmowflitchtrials.co.uk
The ancient Flitch Trials – the traditional test of a happy marriage – date back to 1120. Held every four years, they exist to award a flitch (side) of bacon to married couples who can satisfy the jury that in 'twelvemonth and a day' they have not 'wished themselves unmarried again'. The winning couple is paraded through the town and awarded their flitch with much celebration.
- Guardians to the King: Terracotta Treasures from Ancient China**
19 July – 2 November
Colchester Castle Museum Tel: 01206 282939
www.colchestermuseums.org.uk
Don't miss this most stunning exhibition to date featuring 43 miniature terracotta figurines from the Chinese Han Dynasty. This is only the second time these figurines have been seen outside China and their first visit to the UK.
- Victorian Games and Inventions**
30 July – 3 August
Audley End House & Gardens, Saffron Walden Tel: 01223 582700 www.english-heritage.org.uk
Learn to make your own toy to take home or sit inside a recreated Victorian camera. Take the opportunity to visit the sumptuous splendour enjoyed by royalty and the aristocracy in one of England's grandest stately homes.

- Classic Vehicle Show**
9 & 10 August
Royal Gunpowder Mills, Waltham Abbey Tel: 01992 707370
www.royalgunpowdermills.com
Vintage and classic cars rub shoulders with commercial and military vehicles, caravans and motorbikes at this two-day event. It is one of many outdoor spectacles at the Royal Gunpowder Mills including military re-enactments, jousts, archery and other historic events.
- V Music Festival**
16 & 17 August
Hylands Park, Chelmsford www.vfestival.com
The renowned 'V' concerts have provided the best of contemporary rock and pop music live over one weekend in August since 1996.
- Shrings at Southchurch**
16 August
Southchurch Hall Museum, Southend-on-Sea Tel: 01702 467671
www.southendmuseums.co.uk
A unique chance to find out about different musical instruments, talk to expert musicians and perhaps even have a go yourself.
- Bawden in the Middle East**
18 & 19 September
Fry Art Gallery, Saffron Walden Tel: 01799 513779 www.fryartgallery.org
An exhibition of watercolours by Edward Bawden which were executed in Iraq and Iran during his appointment as a War Artist 1940-1944.

- The Essex Art & Design Show**
27 - 28 September
Cressing Temple, Braintree Tel: 07944 806340
www.essexartanddesignshow.co.uk
Set in the unique 12th century Cressing Temple Barns over 70 artists/designer makers are showcasing and selling a diverse range of work including fine art, photography, jewellery, ceramics, and other contemporary crafts.
- King Harold Day**
11 October
Abbey Gardens, Waltham Abbey Tel: 01375 374786 www.kingharoldday.co.uk
Medieval festival commemorating the last Saxon King of England, who was Lord of the Manor of Waltham. Historical enactments, music, drama, art competition, birds of prey, craft fair and exhibitions providing a nostalgic day out.
- Essex Country Show**
13 & 14 September
Barleylands, Billerica Tel: 01268 290228
www.barleylands.co.uk
Once an Essex farming family's informal gathering, this is now the largest event of its type in the South East. Aside from steam engines and farm machinery it includes a specialist food hall, children's amusements, arena events and over 200 craft and trade stands.
- Saffron Walden Book Festival**
25 September – 5 October
Saffron Walden Tel: 01799 510444
www.hartsevents.co.uk
Budding writers flock to Saffron Walden to take part in this popular annual festival. It includes talks and demonstrations by published authors and illustrators, signings, film screenings and a series of workshops for adults and children.

REthink
REconsider
REdiscover Essex culture

www.realessex.co.uk
Essex County Council



places to stay

Below is a selection of 3 and 4 Star hotels where you can expect a warm welcome and enjoy a relaxed break. For a complete listing of all inspected accommodation please visit www.realessex.co.uk

BRAINTREE
 White Hart Hotel ★★★
 Tel: 01376 321401
www.oldenglishinns.co.uk

BRENTWOOD
 Marygreen Manor Hotel ★★★★
 Tel: 01277 225252
www.marygreenmanor.co.uk

CHELMSFORD
 Best Western Atlantic Hotel ★★★
 Tel: 01245 268168
www.atlantic-hotel.co.uk

The County Hotel ★★★
 Tel: 01245 455700
www.countyhotelgroup.co.uk

Pontlands Park Hotel ★★★
 Tel: 01245 476444
www.pontlandsparkhotel.co.uk

COGGESHALL
 White Hart Hotel ★★★
 Tel: 01376 561654
www.whitehart-coggeshall.com/

COLCHESTER
 Best Western Rose & Crown ★★★
 Tel: 01206 866677
www.rose-and-crown.com

Ramada Colchester ★★★
 Tel: 01206 230900
www.butterflyhotels.co.uk

Wivenhoe House Hotel ★★★
 Tel: 01206 863666
www.wivenhoehousehotel.co.uk

DEDHAM
 Maison Tailbooth Hotel ★★★
 Tel: 01206 322367
www.milsom-hotels.com

milsoms ★★★
 Tel: 01206 322795
www.milsom-hotels.com

GREAT CHESTERFORD
 The Crown House Hotel ★★★
 Tel: 01799 530515
www.crownhousehotel.com

GREAT DUNMOW
 The Starr ★★★
 Tel: 01371 874321
www.the-starr.co.uk

HALSTEAD
 The Bull Hotel ★★★
 Tel: 01787 472144
www.bull-hotel-halstead.com

HARWICH
 The Pier Hotel ★★★
 Tel: 01255 241212
www.milsom-hotels.com

HATFIELD HEATH
 Down Hall Country House Hotel ★★★★
 Tel: 01279 731441
www.downhall.co.uk

KELVEDON
 Prested Hall ★★★
 Tel: 01376 573300
www.prested.co.uk

MARKS TEY
 Best Western Marks Tey ★★★★★
 Tel: 01206 210001
www.marksteyhotel.co.uk

SOUTHEND-ON-SEA
 Roslin Beach Hotel ★★★
 Tel: 01702 586375
www.roslinhotel.com

Essex County Hotel ★★★
 Tel: 01702 279955
www.essexcountyhotel.com

STANSTED
 Radisson SAS
 Tel: 01279 683210
www.radissonsas.com

STOCK
 Greenwoods Hotel Spa & Retreat ★★★★★
 Tel: 01277 829990
www.greenwoodsestate.com

THAXTED
 The Swan Hotel ★★★
 Tel: 01371 830321
www.swan-hotel-thaxted.com

TOLLESHUNT KNIGHTS
 Five Lakes Resort ★★★★★
 01621 868888
www.fivelakes.co.uk

WALTHAM ABBEY
 Marriott Waltham Abbey Hotel ★★★★★
 Tel: 01992 717170
www.walthamabbeymarriott.co.uk

WICKFORD
 Chichester Hotel ★★★★★
 Tel: 01268 560555
www.chichester-hotel.co.uk

theessex • jiangsufestival
 2008-2009
 埃塞克斯-江苏节

The biggest international arts festival the county has ever enjoyed will include cultural shows and events coming all the way from Jiangsu. Highlights include:

- An exhibition of 2000 year-old terracotta figurines from the Han Dynasty
- A spectacular outdoor event based upon the Chinese Mid-Autumn Moon Festival
- Performances from the award-winning Yangzhou Puppet Company
- A touring photography exhibition capturing everyday life in Jiangsu
- Thrilling Dragon Boat Racing
- Performances from the Little Red Flowers, some of China's most talented young performers
- A rare visit from the world-famous Kun Opera

There are hundreds of events taking place all across Essex, for full listings and information please visit www.essex-china.org or call 0845 743 0430 for a brochure

Crafty buys

With over 70% of Essex classified as rural, it's no wonder that it's a great place to pick up a whole range of local crafts. A good place to start is Barleylands Craft Village, which features over 50 specialist workshops. Here you can watch the various artisans at work producing their original and unusual gifts, including glassblowers, wood-turners and blacksmiths. Blake House also houses a variety of arts and crafts shops selling everything from Steiff bears to stuffed olives, while historic Moulsham Mill houses a range of outlets featuring pottery, jewellery, handmade cards and candles and home furnishings.

The Guild of Essex Craftsmen runs a programme of craft fairs throughout the year, often in historic venues around the county, including Cressing Temple Barns and Hylands House, so if you are lucky, you can combine shopping for crafts with a visit to a heritage attraction. Farmers' markets and local farm shops also often include a selection of local crafts. Check in the local press for information or ask at Tourist Information Centres.

If you're after a souvenir with a bit more history, there's no shortage of antiques shops in Essex - why else do you think the antics of loveable rogue 'Lovejoy' were filmed here! Coggeshall, Halstead, Saffron Walden, Leigh-on-Sea, Finchingfield and Colchester all have their fair share of outlets, or, if you're after something on a larger scale, try Battlesbridge, the biggest antiques centre in Essex, housing over 80 dealers. Alternatively, you can buy the popular Colchester Collection range of gifts, souvenirs and treats all made by local artists or companies directly from the VisitColchester Information Centre.

After all, what better souvenir of a happy holiday to take home with you than a piece of our creative heritage.

For more information:
 Barleylands Craft Village Tel: 01268 290226
www.barleylands.co.uk
 Blake House Tel: 01376 344123
www.blakehousecraftcentre.co.uk
 Moulsham Mill Tel: 01245 608200
www.moulshammill.co.uk
 Guild of Essex Craftsmen
www.essexcraftguild.co.uk
 Battlesbridge Antiques Centre Tel: 01268 734005
www.battlesbridge.com
 VisitColchester Information Centre
 Tel: 01206 282920
www.visitcolchester.com

Essex eats

Eating out is one of life's great pleasures and visitors to Essex will find there's no shortage of local delicacies to tempt the tastebuds. For centuries, the county has harvested fish and shellfish from its 350 mile coastline and the Colchester Native Oyster is still harvested off Mersea Island today. Favourited by top chef, Jamie Oliver, you can try some fresh out of the sea on Mersea Island. Legend has it the Romans grew grapes on the island and, with its gentle south-facing slopes, vines still flourish today at Mersea Vineyard. The vineyard also contains a tiny brewery whose concoctions include the apple-named Oyster Stout, brewed with oysters in a tradition dating from 1900.

Nearby Purleigh is also famed for its vineyard and the venue for the popular English Wine Festival in September. The tidal waters of Maldon's Blackwater estuary have also given rise to another regional delicacy. Maldon Sea Salt has been manufactured here for over 2,000 years and is renowned for its high quality. Further south, don't leave Leigh-on-Sea without treating yourself to a tray of cockles. The cockle sheds here have been passed down through generations and offer the freshest seafood for miles.

Inland from the coast there's no shortage of temptation either. Farm shops and farmers' markets abound selling everything from meat and game to sausages, pies, preserves and cooking oils as well as the pick of seasonal fruit and vegetables. Where there's meat there's dairy produce, including the delicious Hadley's ice cream. Time your visit to the farm to combine with the milking (about 4.30-5.30 every day). The kids will love it and it's free! And when it comes to lifetime treats, you'll also be spoilt for choice with tea shops in pretty villages across the county serving a delicious range of home-baked goodies. Look out for Wilkins Jam, locally made at Tiptree. If you're in the area, pop into the popular tea rooms attached to the Wilkins factory and museum - what better place to enjoy a taste of Essex!

For more information:
 Mersea Oyster Bar
 Tel: 01206 381600
www.westmersea-oysterbar.com
 Mersea Island Vineyard & Brewery
 Tel: 01206 385900
www.mersea-wine.com
 English Wine Festival
 Tel: 01621 828343
www.newhallwines.co.uk
 Maldon Crystal Salt Company
 Tel: 01621 853315
www.maldonsalt.co.uk
 Hadley's Ice Cream
 Tel: 01787 220420
www.famerbills.co.uk
 Wilkins Jam
 Tel: 01621 814524
www.tiptree.com