

Canterbury's Woodland

An Outdoors Break in...

The Blean

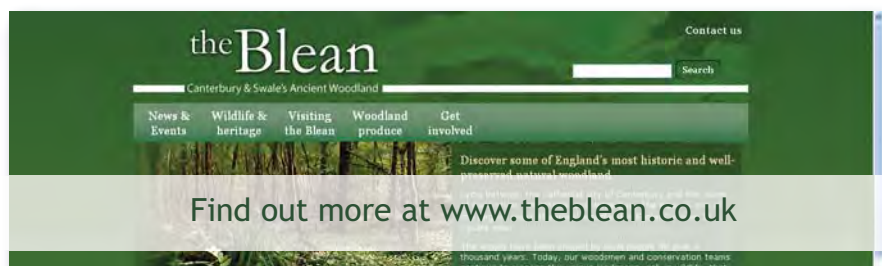
Canterbury's Ancient Woodland

This Country Break explores the woodlands and villages of **The Blean**, the area of ancient woodland between; Canterbury, Faversham, Whitstable, Herne Bay and the Marshes of Thanet.

Woodlands form the heart of **The Blean** covering over 3,000 hectares and it remains as one of the most extensive woodlands in the south east of England. This is ancient woodland and is particularly rich and diverse in wildlife, so much so that large areas are specially protected as Nature Reserves or Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

The Blean's very nature makes it superb for plenty of outdoor activities, but it really is a walking haven, with miles of footpaths (120 miles to be exact), accessible woodlands, good public transport, plenty of promoted routes and few busy roads. It is one of the few places where some truly car-free days out are possible.

The Blean provides a changing variety of experiences and sights through the seasons. Winter, spring, summer and autumn all bring a particular character to the Blean and it really can be a totally different place to visit depending on when you chose to come.



Oak leaves

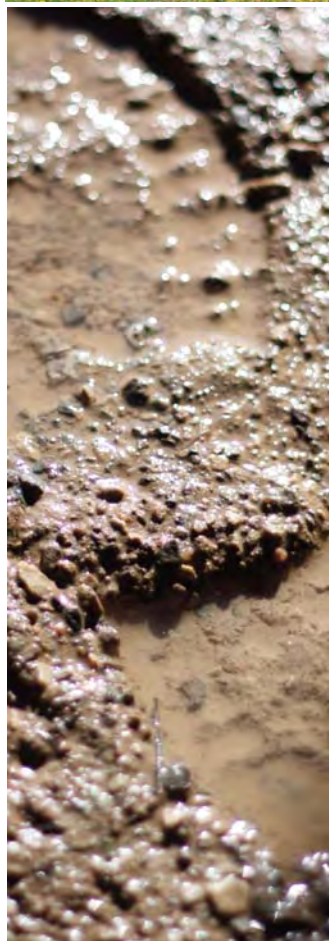
An Outdoors Break

With such a vast wooded area that is predominantly open to the public, it should come as no surprise that the Blean is a haven for walkers of all abilities. There are miles and miles of footpaths and waymarked routes criss-crossing the area, so it's easy to build your own routes, however below we've made some recommendations to help you see the best of the Blean whilst you are getting out and active.

It should be noted that the Blean is situated on heavy clay, so can get very wet and muddy after rain, but then that's all part of the fun isn't it...?



Getting out and about...



Further Information

- www.theblean.co.uk
- www.canterbury.co.uk
- www.faversham.org.uk
- www.seewhitstable.com
- www.visitkent.co.uk
- www.kent.gov.uk/explorekent
- www.kentdowns.org
- www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk



Getting There

The Blean is easily reached from Canterbury and the A2 or M2.

Several bus routes operated by Stagecoach cross the Blean between Canterbury, Whitstable, Faversham and Herne Bay.

There are several rail stations all with connections to London and points beyond



Hare

Where to start...

What else? Strap on your boots, grab your rucksack and take a walk in the woods to explore some of the Blean's heritage on a **Historic Hike**.

Find out more on page 3.



Follow part of the North Downs Way

A

Historic Hike

To Bigbury Camp and Harbledown

From Chartham Hatch stretch your legs on a hike along the North Downs Way to **Bigbury Camp**, site of Julius Caesar's first battle (and defeat of the Britons) in 54 BC after landing on the Kent coast somewhere between Walmer and Thanet. The Iron age Hillfort at Bigbury was probably established around 800BC as a safe and fortified place for the local farmers and their livestock against attacks by invaders from Northern France, but was almost certainly abandoned after the defeat to the Romans.

The route takes you through ancient orchards (including **No Man's Orchard**) and through the cattle annexe of the Bigbury site. Once you've taken a stroll around the Iron-age earthworks then get back on the trail to Harbledown, a short detour from the **North Downs Way**.

The village of **Harbledown** developed around the old Roman road of Watling Street and is the last village that pilgrims pass through before reaching Canterbury. It is also the point where the ancient track way between Winchester and Canterbury shares the route taken by Chaucer's pilgrims.

Break for lunch at the **Old Coach and Horses** in Harbledown and make the most of their seasonal menu. Afterwards take some time to enjoy the historic sites of Harbledown.



Bigbury Camp



No man's Orchard

Start at the former **St.Nicholas Leper Hospital** built In 1084, which today houses ten almshouses, but the entrance to the old hospital can be seen on the right hand side of the road on the way through the village towards Canterbury. Below the almshouses and tucked away from the road is **St.Thomas' well**, from where Henry II walked barefoot into Canterbury as part of his penance for his role in the death of Thomas a' Beckett. The well is also known as the Black Princes Well and is linked to the eldest son of Edward III (the Black prince) who it is said on his deathbed asked that water from the well be brought to him because it was known for its healing properties.

Had your fill of historical sites? Well then take a walk to the river Stour and return to Chartham Hatch along the **Stour Valley Walk**, and enjoy a well earned drink (and perhaps dinner) at the **Chapter Arms**. This establishment has been a hostelry for nearly 200 years, earlier it was the property of the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury Cathedral, hence its name.



Getting There

Chartham Hatch is easy to reach from Canterbury and the A2 or A28

Buses on **Stagecoach route 652** runs regularly between Canterbury and Chartham on the way to Ashford.

Regular trains run to **Chartham** station from **Canterbury West** station.



River Stour



Harbledown Village Sign

Further Information

- www.theblean.co.uk
- www.nationaltrail.co.uk
- www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk
- www.kentishstour.org.uk
- www.theoldcoachandhorses.com
- www.machadoink.com
- www.kent.gov.uk/explorekent
- www.chapterarms.com



Blossoms and Hops

Extending your break...

If you haven't yet had your fill of walking, then why not try something a little more challenging?

Head to page 5 for full details of our **Panoramic Picnic** break.



View From Victory Wood

A

Panoramic Picnic

Through Bossenden & Denstroude

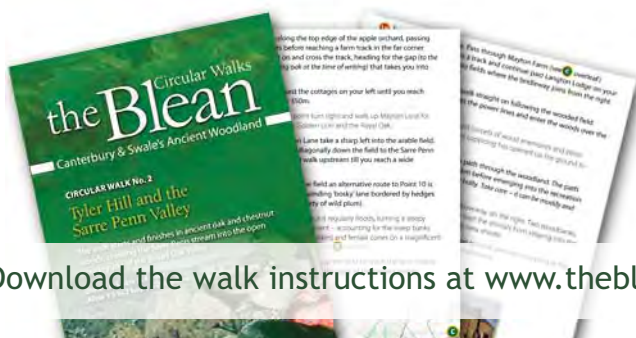
From your starting point at Dunkirk strap on your walking boots and come prepared with all sorts of packaged foodie delights for the picnic to end all picnics as you follow the 4.5 mile **Blean Initiative circular walk 3 - Dunkirk and Denstroude** with an added twist (and an extra mile or so!).

Begin your journey on the old Roman Road of Watling Street before turning north and taking a hike up through Bossenden Wood (site of the Battle of Bossenden - the last battle to be fought on English Soil) before dropping down into the Denstroude valley and some real ancient woodland.

Continue north in the woods to Denstroude farm, an isolated place where those suffering from the Black Death were banished in Medieval times from Canterbury.

The woods thin out at Denstroude, but for a real panoramic view follow the road a little way further until you reach the top of the ridge at Denstroude corner and the entrance into **Victory Wood**.

The view here is fantastic and a worthy spot to break open the hamper and take five.



Download the walk instructions at www.theblean.co.uk

Picnic accomplished it's time to head back downhill, which you can do by retracing your steps to Denstroude farm and following the remainder of the **Blean Initiative Walk 3** which takes you back down via Bossenden Farm.

Alternatively deviate a little East on the "New Road" (a wide ride in the woods) via the **Blean Woods National Nature Reserve** back to Dunkirk.

From there the choice is yours but there are some great options for refreshment (and a chance to find out more about Sir William Couteauy and the battle of Bossenden) at the **Red Lion** in Dunkirk.

If you fancy just walkign a little further there are more options of pubs or restaurants in nearby **Boughton**.



Getting There

Dunkirk is easily reached from the A2 and lies only minutes from the M2 itself.

Buses on Stagecoach **Route 3** operate between Canterbury Bus Station and Dunkirk three times an hour Mon-Sat.

The nearest rail station to Dunkirk is a few miles away at Selling.



'Boundary Veteran' in Bossenden Wood

Further Information

www.theblean.co.uk

www.woodlandtrust.org.uk

www.rspb.org.uk



Blue Tit



Victory Wood



Blean Woods NNR

Extending your break...

There's more to the outdoors in the Blean than just walking, so why not try another day this time packed with outdoor activities?

Try our ideas on page 7 for a **More Sedate** outdoors break.



Hawklands Bird of Prey Centre

A

More Sedate

Outdoor Experience

Not everyone is a born walker, but there's plenty to do in the glorious outdoors of **The Blean**, even if you don't bring your hiking boots. You could stay anywhere in the Blean for this break but **Boughton** or thereabouts is very convenient.

Begin your day with a stroll through **Mount Ephraim's** outstanding Edwardian Gardens, stroll amongst intoxicating colours and scents or enjoy a sedate exploration of the Mizmaze.

Alternatively you could perhaps indulge the big kid inside you with a stop at **Farming World** and a firsthand encounter with the hooved varieties of rural life.

Whilst there make sure to stop by the **Hawklands Bird of Prey Centre**, with its collection of over 40 birds of prey, which take part in educational displays twice daily.

Visiting these attractions will place you firmly in Hernhill, which is a lovely village with plenty of options for lunch but the **Three Horsehoes** or **Red Lion** in are probably the most convenient.



Farming World's Llama's



Edwardian Gardens at Mount Ephraim

After lunch its onto more serious outdoor pursuits, something tried and tested like a round of golf at **Boughton Golf Club** perhaps? Visitors can pay and play a full 18 hole course or a 9 hole "academy" course, all set within acres of Orchards. In addition book in advance for lessons, or simply stop by the 15 bay driving range and practice your swing.

Alternatively you could stray a little further East and pay a visit to **Chestfield Golf Club**, which boasts the 'oldest building in the World being used as a Clubhouse'. It dates back to the 15th century and along with a varying course which takes in oast houses and coastal views, it's a great day out in the Kent countryside .

Although this is certainly a more sedate experience we guarantee you'll be bushed by the time you hit the hay!

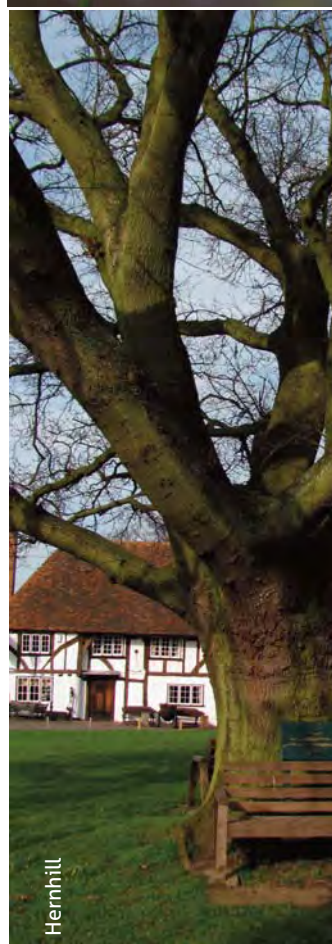


Getting There

Boughton is easily reached from the A2 and lies only minutes from the M2 itself.

Buses on Stagecoach **Route 3** operate between Canterbury Bus Station and Boughton three times an hour Mon-Sat.

The nearest rail station to Boughton is a few miles away at Selling.



Further Information

www.mountephraimgardens.co.uk

www.farming-world.com

www.hawklands.co.uk

www.shepherdname.co.uk

www.theredlion.org

www.pentlandgolf.co.uk

www.chestfield-golfclub.co.uk



Extending your break...

Here's something different! Why not consider learning some rural crafts or trying your hand at a very different experience?

Try our ideas on page 11 for **Getting your Hands Dirty** .



Bluebells in Thornden Woods



Escape the Coast

But leave the car behind...

A wonderful itinerary for those based in Whitstable or Herne Bay who want a real taste of the Blean woodlands and the countryside, made easy by using the **Route 4/6 triangle bus route**.

Starting from Whitstable, take an early morning visit to the town to stock up on picnic provisions. If you get the chance visit the **Whitstable Farmers Market** for some really special local produce. The Market is held 2nd & 4th Saturdays of the month in St.Mary's Hall.

Provisions on board head out to the Blean by taking a Bus on route 6 to Herne Common. Once there spend an enjoyable hour or so in **East Blean Wood National Nature Reserve**, before crossing back over the A291 (carefully!) and heading into West Blean woods.

At this point if you have the spare time you could take a detour to visit the animals of **Wildwood** (although beware its so much fun you might spend all day!), or just take a wander into **West Blean and Thornden Woods** and explore the **Wildart trail**, an art and sensory trail using natural, local materials to create sustainable, non-invasive artwork which will blend into the surroundings.



Fly Agaric

Don't forget a picnic as this is a great spot to sit down and enjoy the great outdoors, before pushing on through **Clowes Wood** to the Village of Blean.

When you arrive why not make a quick detour to the church of **St. Cosmus & St. Damian**? Or if you fancy a different kind of woodland adventure, finish your day with a stroll in the enchanted woodland at **Druidstone Park**, just outside the village.

At this point your route is up to you, you could catch the number 4 bus back to the coast or stay awhile in Blean for dinner at **the Royal Oak**, or a drink at **the Hare & Hounds**, the buses run until late, but try not to miss the last one back!



Getting There

Whitstable is a simple hop, skip and jump from the A299 Thanet Way and lies only minutes from the M2.

Buses on Stagecoach Routes **638, 4, 5 and 6** will take you out across the Blean.

Whitstable rail station is on the mainline from London and includes High Speed options.



East Blean Woods



Blean church

Further Information

- www.theblean.co.uk
- www.whitstablefarmersmarket.co.uk
- www.stagecoachbus.com
- www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk
- www.wildwoodtrust.org.uk
- www.forestry.gov.uk
- www.bleanchurch.net
- www.druidstone.net
- www.royaloakblean.co.uk



Sweet Chestnut

Extending your break...

if you enjoyed this little excursion to the Blean on foot, why not try it on two wheels? Our **Ride to the Sea** itinerary in the **Family Breaks guide** covers all you need to know about cycling the Crab and Winkle Way.



Learning about the landscape

Get

Your Hands Dirty

Learning Rural Crafts

Why just come and be a bystander? There's so much to the Blean and its surroundings, why not get really involved and try your hand at some real rural crafts and wildlife courses? Interested? if so then a great place to start is the **Kent Enterprise Trust** who run a number of outdoor course days on Hambrook Marshes. You can try your hand at courses from identifying grasses, wildflowers and trees, to traditional rural crafts like willow basket weaving, scything and charcoal making. For those interested in finding supper, there are also courses on fishing on the river Stour.

Most days start at 10am and continue to about 4pm (weather dependent of course!), they provide all the tools, materials and tea, you'll just need to come with lunch, good footwear, old clothes and enthusiasm.

You could also get involved hands on (literally) with some majestic birds of prey at **Hawklands Bird of Prey Centre** (at Farming World). Hawklands offer a range of experiences with a variety of birds, from short 1 or 2 hour sessions in the arena, to "Hawk & Walk" where you can tramp the woodlands of the Kent Countryside flying a team of Harris Hawks, all the way up to an accredited 5 day course to get you started on a career in falconry.



Woodland Crafts



Flying Harris Hawks

To explore the wild side of food you could join Fergus Drennan – the **Wild Man of Wild Food** who will teach you to identify and harvest all manner of wild plants, herbs, mushrooms and fruits which you will then cook together. Starting at 9am, the courses which typically last around 12 hours.

A great experience to be had as a zookeeper for the day at **Wildwood**. A day can vary but usually will include, food preparation and feeding, habitat refurbishment and yes the inevitable cleaning up and mucking out. Only one lucky person a month can book the experience so its best planned well in advance. Wildwood also offer Photography days for those snappers out there looking to get up close and personal with the wildlife.

Kent Wildlife Trust offer conservation volunteering from September - March most weekdays and the 1st Sunday of every month. There are plenty of activities on offer and for more information, please contact the Blean Project Office on 01227 719506.



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Wild Food...



Volunteering

Further Information

www.sekgroup.org.uk/ket

www.hawklands.co.uk

www.wildmanwildfood.com

www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk

www.wildwoodtrust.org.uk



Wild Mushrooms

Extending your break...

If you enjoyed getting hands on why not come back and do so again with someone special? Our **Winter Warmer** break one of the **Romantic Breaks** is the perfect mix of activity and enjoyment for a winters day.



Moth Spotting

Country Breaks in East Kent



Try your hand at some clays

Huntin' & Fishin'

Some more traditional pursuits

Of course we are not recommending actual hunting but you could quite easily have a "traditional country sports" experience in the Blean without killing anything (well some clay might be harmed).

Best place to start is the 75 acre **Greenfields Shooting grounds** just outside Sturry, which with its woodland glades and sweeping views has been a popular shooting venue for over 60 years.

Beginners can come and learn at the Sunday morning taster sessions and experienced shooters are welcomed throughout the week. If guns aren't for you then you can simply unwind at the clubhouse which is built of Norwegian spruce logs and with a traditional turf roof - 'green' ahead of its time in the UK.

Not quite hunting in a traditional sense but you could also get take a "Hawk & Walk" where you can tramp the woodlands of the Kent Countryside flying a team of Harris Hawks at **Hawklands Bird of Prey Centre** (at Farming World).



Tools of the trade



Flying Harris Hawks

Nothing goes with hunting quite like fishing, and there are numerous fisheries across the Blean, including both lake and river experiences at **Tyler Hill Fisheries, Broad Oak Lake, Lavender Farm** or **Longshaw fisheries**.

Whichever you choose it's a great way to sit back and soak up some of the lovely atmosphere of the countryside and enjoy those contemplative moments whilst you wait for supper to take a bite. All accept day anglers, provided you arrange in advance and take note of the local regulations.

The Blean is also home to its very own angling store, **Blean Angling** located within the village of the same name sells everything you could need to land a fish.



Getting There

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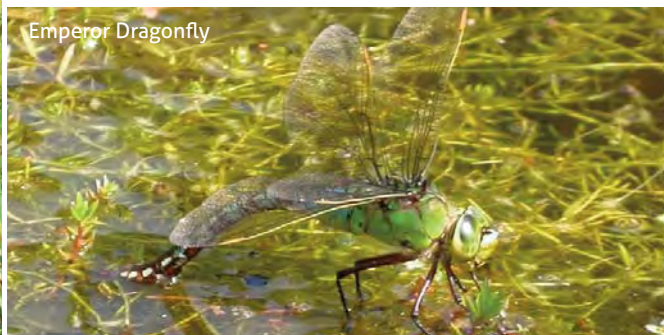
Further Information

www.greenfieldsshooting.co.uk

www.hawklands.co.uk

www.fishkent.co.uk/coarse

www.lavenderfarmfishery.co.uk



Extending your break...

If country pursuits are your thing, then why not try a more hands on approach and get involved in learning skills like foraging or even some fishing pointers on the Stour?

See page 9 for details

More Information

Listings & Details



Attractions

Name	Telephone	Website	Address
Bigbury Camp	01227 719506	http://www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/reserves/blean-complex/big-bury-camp/	Bigbury Road, Chartham Hatch, Kent, CT2 9BJ
No Man's Orchard	01233 813307	www.kentishstour.org.uk/no_mans_orchard.htm	Bigbury Road, Chartham Hatch, CT4 7
St.Nicholas Hospital	N/A	http://www.machadoink.com/St%20Nicholas%20Harbledown.htm	Harbledown, CT4
Victory Wood	01476 581111	http://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/en/our-woods/pages/wood-details.aspx?wood=5571	Dargate Road, Yorkletts, ME13 9
Blean Woods NNR	01227 455972	http://www.rspb.org.uk/reserves/guide/b/bleanwoods/index.aspx	New Road, Rough Common, CT2 9PB
Mount Ephraim Gardens	01227 751496	http://www.mountephraimgardens.co.uk	Hernhill, Kent, ME13 9TX
Farming World	01227 751144	http://www.farming-world.com	Nash Court, Boughton, Kent, ME13 9SP
Hawklands Bird of Prey Centre	07706 122796	http://www.hawklands.co.uk	Nash Court, Boughton, Kent, ME13 9SN
Boughton Golf	01227 752277	http://www.pentlandgolf.co.uk/boughton/boughton-golf-club	Brickfield Lane, Boughton ME13 9AJ
Chestfield Golf Club	01227 794411	www.chestfield-golfclub.co.uk	103 Chestfield Road, Chestfield, CT5 3LU
Whitstable Farmers Market	N/A	http://www.whitstablefarmers-market.co.uk/	St.Mary's Hall, Oxford Street, Whitstable, CT5 1DD

East Blean Woods	01227 719506	http://www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/reserves/blean-complex/	Hicks Forstal Road, Hoath, CT3 4JS
West Blean & Thornden Woods	01227 719506	www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/reserves/blean-complex/	Canterbury Road, Herne Common, Kent, CT6 7LF
Wildwood	01227 712 111	http://www.wildwoodtrust.org/	Herne Common, Kent, CT6 7LQ
Clowes Wood	01420 23666	http://www.forestry.gov.uk/website/recreation.nsf/LUWebDocs-ByKey/EnglandKentNoForestClowesWood	Radfall Road, Tyler Hill, CT3
St.Cosmus & St.Damian	01227 763373	http://www.bleanchurch.net/	Blean, CT2 9EZ
Druidstone Park	01227 765168	http://www.druidstone.net	Honey Hill, Blean, Kent, CT2 9JR
Greenfields Shooting Grounds	01227 713222	http://www.greenfieldsshooting.co.uk/	Sturry Hill, Sturry, CT2 9NG
Tyler Hill Fisheries	01227 760574	http://www.fishkent.co.uk/coarse/tylerhill/	Hackington Road, Tyler Hill, CT2 9
Broad Oak Lake	01785 530160	http://www.fishkent.co.uk/coarse/broadoak/	Broadoak, CT2 0
Lavender Farm Fisheries	01227 751149	http://www.lavenderfarmfishery.co.uk	Hernhill, ME13 9JH
Longshaw Fisheries	01227 710263	http://www.fishkent.co.uk/coarse/longshaw/	Calcott Hill, Sturry, CT3 4ND

Food & Drink

Name	Telephone	Website	Address
Red Lion Dunkirk	01227 750224	N/A	Old London Road, Dunkirk, ME13 9LL
Old Coach & Horses Harbledown	01227 761330	http://www.theoldcoachand-horses.com/	Church Hill, Harbledown, CT2 9AB

Outdoors

The Plough Harbledown	01227 763882	N/A	Upper Harbledown House, Harbledown, CT2 9AW
Chapter Arms Chartham Hatch	01227 738340	http://www.chapterarms.com	New Town Street, Chartham Hatch, Kent, CT4 7LT
The Three Horseshoes	01227 750842	http://www.shepherdneame.co.uk/pub/faversham/three-horseshoes.aspx	Staple Street, Hernhill, ME13 9UA
The Red Lion	01227 751207	http://www.theredlion.org/	Crockham Lane, Hernhill, ME13 9JR
The White Horse Boughton	01227 751343	http://www.whitehorsecanterbury.co.uk/	The Street, Boughton-under-Blean, Kent, ME13 9AL
Martin's Restaurant Boughton	01227 750304	http://www.martinsrestaurant.co.uk/	40 The Street, Boughton-under-Blean, Kent, ME13 9AS
Queens Head Boughton	01227 751369	www.thequeenshead-at-boughton.co.uk	111 The Street, Boughton-under-Blean, Kent, ME13 9BH
The Royal Oak	01227 760149	http://www.royaloakblean.co.uk	140 Blean Common, Blean, CT2 9JJ
The Hare & Hounds	01227 471594	N/A	4 Blean Hill, Blean, CT2 9EF

Walks & Rides

Name	Distance	Website	Start & End
North Downs Way	153 Miles	http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/Northdowns/index.asp	Farnham Surrey to Dover, Kent
Stour Valley Walk	58 Miles	http://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure_and_culture/countryside_and_coast/walking/stour_valley_walk.aspx	Lenham to Pegwell Bay
Blean Initiative Walk 3 - Dunkirk & Denstroude	4.5 Miles	http://www.theblean.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/walk-leafletblean3.pdf	Red Lion, Dunkirk
Clowes Wood Easy Access Trail	3.2 Miles	http://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure_and_culture/countryside_and_coast/explore_kent_documents/walks_documents/walks_for_all_documents.aspx	Brewers Road Clowes Wood

Events & Activities

Name	Telephone	Website	Address
Kent Enterprise Trust	01227 844500	http://www.sekgroup.org.uk/ket	Hambrook Marshes
Wildman Wild Food	N/A	http://www.wildmanwildfood.com	N/A

For more in The Blean

and across East Kent...

Active

Family

Romantic

Pick N' Mix

www.visitkent.co.uk/explore/coast-natural2.asp



 Hidden Britain
...Leading the way in discovering and developing responsible rural tourism

Supported and Developed by:

 Natural Economy
East Kent

Design by Hidden Britain
www.hiddenbritainse.org.uk

Country Breaks in East Kent