

Eastbourne

Borough of Eastbourne

— Town & Borough —



Eastbourne seaside



Borough of Eastbourne shown within East Sussex

Coordinates:  [50°46′N 0°17′E](#)[50.77°N 0.28°E](#)

Sovereign state [United Kingdom](#)

Constituent country [England](#)

Region [South East England](#)

**Non-metropolitan
county** [East Sussex](#)

Status [Non-metropolitan district](#)

Admin HQ Eastbourne

Incorporated

Government

• **Type** Non-metropolitan district council

• **Borough council** [Eastbourne Borough Council](#) ([Liberal Democrat](#))

• **Mayor** Carolyn Heaps

• **MPs** [Stephen Lloyd](#) (Liberal Democrat)

Population (2010 est.)

• **Total** 97,000

• **Rank** 233rd [\(of 326\)](#)

Time zone [GMT \(UTC0\)](#)

• **Summer (DST)** [BST \(UTC+1\)](#)

Postcodes [BN20-23](#)

Area code(s) 01323

ONS code 21UC

OS grid reference [TV608991](#)

Website www.eastbourne.gov.uk

Eastbourne (ⓘ pronunciation [\(help·info\)](#)) is a large town and borough in [East Sussex](#), on the south coast of England between [Brighton](#) and [Hastings](#). The town is situated at the eastern end of the chalk [South Downs](#) alongside the high cliff at [Beachy Head](#). The modern town emerged in the early 19th century as a seaside resort, assisted by the arrival of the railway in 1849, and developed a spacious, regular layout.^[1]

Prior to its [Victorian](#) development, the area consisted of the estates of the [Duke of Devonshire](#) and others, which had evolved around the village of East Burne. From the [Bronze Age](#) onward there were small settlements in and around the "Burne", an ancient stream which ran from what is now Motcombe Gardens down to the sea.^[2] During the [Middle Ages](#) sheep farming and fishing were the main activities. Eastbourne's earliest claim as a seaside resort was a summer holiday visit by four of [King George III](#)'s children in 1780. During the [Napoleonic Wars](#), the Wish Tower and the Redoubt were built as defences. In the wake of the fall of France in 1940, the town's population fell sharply as this part of the south coast was considered a likely invasion zone. The town was badly bombed thus gaining it the dubious reputation of being 'the most raided town in the southeast'. Thousands of Canadian soldiers were stationed in and around Eastbourne from the summer of 1941 to the run-up to D-Day.

The sheltered position of the main town behind the cliff contributes to Eastbourne's title of sunniest place in Great Britain.^[3] The town's reputation for health and sea breezes was a factor leading to the establishment of many private boarding schools in the 19th century. However, the number of schools started to decline during the inter-war years and today there remain just four. Although Eastbourne has some industrial trading estates, it is essentially a seaside resort and derives its main income from tourism, an element of which includes the provision of English language courses for overseas students. Its facilities include four theatres, numerous parks, a bandstand and museums. The focus of the tourism trade is the four miles (6 km) of shingle beach, lined with a seafront of hotels and guest houses. [Eastbourne Pier](#), built in 1865, is a symbol of Eastbourne and today houses [amusement arcades](#), a nightclub and a [public house](#). It has a rare, working [camera obscura](#).^[4] The town has an estimated population of 98,673 as of 2011.^[5] The town's climate, quiet charm and elegance have contributed to its popularity as a retirement destination and the number of resident pensioners exceeds the national average.

History

Flint mines and other [Stone Age](#) artefacts have been found in the surrounding countryside, and there are [Roman](#) remains buried beneath the town, such as a Roman bath and section of pavement between the present pier and the redoubt fortress, and a Roman villa near the entrance to the pier and the present Queens Hotel.^[6] An [Anglo-Saxon](#) charter, circa 963 AD, describes a landing stage and stream at Bourne. Following the [Norman Conquest](#), the [Hundred](#) of what is now Eastbourne, was held by [Robert, Count of Mortain](#), [William the Conqueror's](#) half brother. The [Domesday Book](#) lists 28 ploughlands, a church, a watermill, fisheries and salt pans.^[7]



 St Mary's Church (12th century), Old Town, Eastbourne

A charter for a weekly market was granted to Bartholomew de Badlesmere in 1315–16; this increased his status as Lord of the Manor and improved local industry.^[8] During the Middle Ages the town was visited by [King Henry I](#) and in 1324 by [Edward II](#).^[6] Evidence of Eastbourne's medieval past can be seen in the fourteenth century Church of St Mary's and the manor house called Bourne Place. In the mid-sixteenth century the house was home to the Burton family,^[9] who acquired much of the land on which the present town stands. This manor house is owned by the [Duke of Devonshire](#) and was extensively remodelled in the early [Georgian era](#) when it was renamed Compton Place. It is one of the two Grade I [listed buildings](#) in the town.^[10]

Eastbourne's earliest claim as a seaside resort came about following a summer holiday visit by four of [King George III's](#) children in 1780 (Princes [Edward](#) and [Octavius](#), and Princesses [Elizabeth](#) and [Sophia](#)).^[11] In 1793, following a survey of coastal defences in the southeast, approval was given for the positioning of infantry and artillery to defend the bay between Beachy Head and Hastings from attack by the French. 14 [Martello Towers](#) were constructed along the western shore of Pevensey Bay, continuing as far as Tower 73, the Wish Tower at Eastbourne. Several of these towers survive: the Wish Tower is an important feature of the town's seafront, and part of Tower 68 forms the basement of a house on St. Antony's Hill. Between 1805 and 1807, the construction took place of a fortress known as the [Eastbourne Redoubt](#), which was built as a barracks and storage depot, and armed with 10 cannons.^[12]



The Bourne stream running through Motcombe Gardens

Eastbourne remained an area of small rural settlements until the 19th century. Four villages or hamlets occupied the site of the modern town: Bourne (or, to distinguish it from others of the same name, East Bourne), is now known as Old Town, and this surrounded the bourne (stream) which rises in the present Motcombe Park; Meads, where the Downs meet the coast; South Bourne (near the town hall); and the fishing settlement known simply as Sea Houses, which was situated to the east of the present pier.^[12]

By the mid-19th century most of the area had fallen into the hands of two landowners: [John Davies Gilbert](#) (the [Davies-Gilbert](#) family still own much of the land in Eastbourne and [East Dean](#)) and [William Cavendish](#), Earl of Burlington.^[13] The Gilbert family's holdings date to the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries when barrister Nicholas Gilbert married an Eversfield and Gildredge heiress.^[14] (The Gildredges owned much of Eastbourne by 1554. The Gilberts eventually made the Gildredge Manor House their own. Today the Gildredge name lives on in the eponymous park.)^[15]

In 1752, a dissertation by Doctor [Richard Russell](#) extolled the medicinal benefits of the seaside. His views were of considerable benefit to the south coast and, in due course, Eastbourne became known as "the Empress of Watering Places".^[16]

An early plan, for a town named Burlington, was abandoned, but on 14 May 1849 the [London, Brighton and South Coast Railway](#) arrived to scenes of great jubilation. With the arrival of the railway, the town's growth accelerated. Cavendish, now the 7th [Duke of Devonshire](#), hired [Henry Currey](#) in 1859 to lay out a plan for what was essentially an entire new town – a resort built "for gentlemen by gentlemen". The town grew rapidly from a population of less than 4,000 in 1851 to nearly 35,000 by 1891. In 1883, it was incorporated as a municipal borough; a purpose-built town hall was opened in 1886.^[16] This period of growth and elegant development continued for several decades. A royal visit by [George V](#) and Queen Mary in March 1935 is commemorated by a plaque on chalet number 2 at Holywell.^[17]



The Wish Tower [Martello Tower](#) in Eastbourne

The Second World War saw a change in fortunes.^[18] Initially, children were evacuated to Eastbourne on the assumption that they would be safe from German bombs, but soon they had to be evacuated again because after the fall of France in June 1940 it was anticipated that the town would lie in an invasion zone.^[19] Part of [Operation Sea Lion](#), the German invasion plan, envisaged landings at Eastbourne.^[20] Many people sought safety away from the coast and shut up their houses.^[18] Restrictions on visitors forced the closure of most

hotels, and private boarding schools moved away.^[18] Many of these empty buildings were later taken over by the services.^[18] The Royal Navy set up an underwater weapons school,^[21] and the Royal Air Force operated radar stations at [Beachy Head](#)^[16] and on the marshes near [Pevensey](#).^[22] Thousands of Canadian soldiers were billeted in and around Eastbourne from July 1941 to the run-up to [D-Day](#).^[18] The town suffered badly during the war, with many Victorian and Edwardian buildings damaged or destroyed by air raids. Indeed, by the end of the conflict it was designated by the Home Office to have been 'the most raided town in the South East region'.^[23] The situation was especially bad between May 1942 and June 1943 with hit-and-run raids from fighter-bombers based in northern France.^[24]

In the summer of 1956 the town came to national and worldwide attention,^[25] when [Dr John Bodkin Adams](#), a [general practitioner](#) serving the town's wealthier patients, was arrested for the murder of an [elderly widow](#). Rumours had been circulating since 1935^[25] regarding the frequency of his being named in patients' wills (132 times between 1946 and 1956^[25]) and the gifts he was given (including two [Rolls Royces](#)). Figures of up to 400 murders were reported in British and foreign newspapers,^[26] but after a controversial trial at the [Old Bailey](#) which gripped the nation^[26] for 17 days in March 1957, Adams was found [not guilty](#). He was struck off^[27] for 4 years but resumed his practice in Eastbourne in 1961. According to [Scotland Yard](#)'s archives, he is thought to have killed up to 163 patients in the Eastbourne area.^[25]

After the war, development continued, including the growth of Old Town up the hillside (Green Street Farm Estate) and the housing estates of [Hampden Park](#), Willingdon Trees and [Langney](#). During the latter half of the 20th century, there were controversies over the demolition of Pockocks, a 15th century manor house on what is now the Rodmill housing estate, and the granting of planning permission for a 19-storey block at the western end of the seafront. The latter project (South Cliff Tower) was realised in 1965 despite a storm of protest led by the newly formed Eastbourne and District Preservation Committee, which later became Eastbourne Civic Society, and was renamed The Eastbourne Society in 1999. Local conservationists also failed to prevent the construction of the glass-plated [TGWU](#) conference and holiday centre, but were successful in purchasing [Polegate Windmill](#), thus saving it from demolition and redevelopment.^{[17][28]}

In 1981, a large section of the town centre was replaced by the indoor shops of the [Arndale Centre](#). Most of the expansion took place on the northern and eastern margins of the town, gradually swallowing surrounding villages. However, the richer western part was constrained by the Downs and has remained largely unchanged.

In the 1990s, both growth and controversy accelerated rapidly as a new plan was launched to develop the area known as the Crumbles, a shingle bank on the coast to the east of the town centre. This area, now known as [Sovereign Harbour](#), containing a marina, shops, and several thousand houses, along with luxury flats and apartments, was formerly home to many rare plants. Continued growth in other parts of the town, and the taming of the central marshland into farmland and nature reserves, has turned Eastbourne into the centre of a conurbation, with the appearance from above of a hollow ring. Currently under review is the demolition of some of the town centre, to extend the existing Arndale shopping centre, and the adaptation of several existing roads to form an inner ring road. In 2009 the new Towner Arts centre was opened abutting the listed Congress Theatre built in 1963.^[29]

Geography

The [South Downs](#) dominate Eastbourne and can be seen from most of the town. These were originally chalk deposits laid down under the sea during the Upper [Cretaceous](#) period, and were later lifted by the same [tectonic plate](#) movements that formed the European Alps, during the middle Tertiary period.^[9] The chalk can be clearly seen along the eroded coastline to the West of the town, in the area known as [Beachy Head](#) and the [Seven Sisters](#), where continuous erosion keeps the cliff edge vertical and white. The chalk contains many fossils such as [ammonites](#) and [nautilus](#). The town area is built on geologically recent [alluvial](#) drift, the result of the silting up of a bay. This changes to [Weald](#) clay around the [Langney](#) estate.^[9]

A part of the South Downs, [Willingdon Down](#) is a designated [Site of Special Scientific Interest](#). This is of archaeological interest due to a Neolithic camp and burial grounds. The area is also a nationally uncommon tract of chalk grassland rich in species.^[30] Another SSSI which partially falls with the Eastbourne district is [Seaford to Beachy Head](#). This site, of biological and geological interest, covers the coastline between

Eastbourne and Seaford, plus the Seven Sisters country park and the Cuckmere valley.^[31] Several nature trails lead across the Downs to areas such as the nearby villages of [East Dean](#) and [Birling Gap](#), and landmarks like the Seven Sisters, [Belle Tout lighthouse](#) and Beachy Head.



🖼️ A panoramic view of Eastbourne, as seen from the west on Beachy Head

Climate

As with the rest of the [British Isles](#) and South Coast, Eastbourne experiences a [maritime climate](#) with cool summers and mild winters. The local climate is notable for its high sunshine levels, at least relative to much of the rest of England - Eastbourne holds the record for the highest recorded amount of sunshine in a month, 383.9 hours in July 1911.^[32] Temperature extremes recorded at Eastbourne since 1960 range from 31.6 °C (88.9 °F) during July 1976,^[33] down to −9.7 °C (14.5 °F) In January 1987.^[34] Eastbourne's coastal location also means it tends to be milder than most areas, particularly during night. A whole six months of the year have never recorded an air frost, and in July the temperature has never fallen below 8.3 °C (46.9 °F). All temperature figures relate to the period 1960 on.

[hide] Climate data for Eastbourne 7m asl, 1971-2000, Extremes 1960-

Month	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Year
Record high °C (°F)	14.8 (58.6)	14.7 (58.5)	16.7 (62.1)	24.0 (75.2)	26.3 (79.3)	29.0 (84.2)	31.6 (88.9)	30.4 (86.7)	26.9 (80.4)	21.4 (70.5)	17.4 (63.3)	15.2 (59.4)	31.6 (88.9)
Average high °C (°F)	7.8 (46.0)	7.6 (45.7)	9.7 (49.5)	11.9 (53.4)	15.3 (59.5)	17.8 (64.0)	20.1 (68.2)	20.5 (68.9)	18.2 (64.8)	14.9 (58.8)	11.1 (52.0)	9.0 (48.2)	13.7 (56.7)
Average low °C (°F)	3.6 (38.5)	3.2 (37.8)	4.5 (40.1)	5.9 (42.6)	9.1 (48.4)	11.8 (53.2)	14.2 (57.6)	14.4 (57.9)	12.4 (54.3)	9.7 (49.5)	6.3 (43.3)	4.7 (40.5)	8.3 (46.9)
Record low °C (°F)	−9.7 (14.5)	−8.8 (16.2)	−6.1 (21.0)	−1.7 (28.9)	0.0 (32.0)	3.3 (37.9)	8.3 (46.9)	7.1 (44.8)	5.2 (41.4)	0.1 (32.2)	−3.7 (25.3)	−7.8 (18.0)	−9.7 (14.5)
Precipitation mm (inches)	81.4 (3.205)	51.7 (2.035)	59.4 (2.339)	48.1 (1.894)	46.0 (1.811)	54.2 (2.134)	46.6 (1.835)	48.9 (1.925)	74.3 (2.925)	98.8 (3.89)	92.6 (3.646)	87.7 (3.453)	789.7 (31.091)
Avg. rainy days	12.6	9.7	10.1	8.4	8.3	7.8	6.9	7.0	9.5	11.1	11.3	12.0	114.7
Sunshine hours	64.8	83.3	127.4	187.5	235.0	234.3	243.7	239.6	168.6	125.6	83.7	55.2	1,848.6

Source no. 1: Met Office^[35]

Source no. 2: Royal Dutch Meteorological Institute/KNMI^[36]

Districts



 Grove Road, part of the Little Chelsea area of Eastbourne

Eastbourne's greater area comprises the town of [Polegate](#), and the civil parishes of [Willingdon and Jevington](#), [Stone Cross](#), [Pevensey](#), [Westham](#), and Pevensey Bay village. All are part of the [Wealden](#) District. Within Eastbourne's limits are:


- [Langney](#): Langney Rise, Shinewater, Kingsmere, Langney Village, The Marina, Langney Point.
- [Hampden Park](#): Hampden Park Village, Willingdon Trees, Winkney Farm, Ratton.
- *Inner areas*: Rodmill, Ocklynge, Seaside, Bridgemere, Roselands, Downside.
- *Town centre*: Town centre, Little Chelsea, [Meads](#), [Holywell](#), Old Town, Upperton.
- [Sovereign Harbour](#): North Harbour, South Harbour.

There was a community known as Norway, Eastbourne in the triangle now bounded by Wartling Road, Seaside and Lottbridge Drove. The name being a corruption of North Way,^[37] as this was the route to the North. The area is now a housing estate and the only evidence there was a Norway are a Norway Road and the local church whose sign reads "St Andrew's Church, Norway".

The former fishing [hamlet](#) of [Holywell](#) (local pronunciation 'holly well') was situated by the cliff on a ledge some 400 yards to the southwest of the public garden known as the Holywell Retreat. It was approached from what is now Holywell Road via the lane between the present Helen Gardens and St Bede's School which leads to the chalk pinnacle formerly known locally as 'Gibraltar' or 'The Sugar Loaf'. The ground around the pinnacle was the site of [lime kilns](#) also worked by the fishermen.^[38] The fishing hamlet at Holywell was taken over by the local water board in 1896^[39] to exploit the springs in the cliffs. The water board's successors still own the site, and there is a pumping station but little evidence of the hamlet itself, as by now even most of the foundations of the cottages have gone over the cliff.^[40]

Governance



 The local council operates from a Victorian town hall

Eastbourne Borough Council is responsible for local governance, with representation provided by twenty seven councillors from nine wards,^[41] with [elections to the council](#) being held every four years.^[42] The [2011 election](#) resulted in a council made up of 15 Liberal Democrat and 12 Conservative councillors.^[43] The council operates out of a Victorian town hall designed by W. Tadman Foulkes, and built between 1884 and 1886 under supervision of [Henry Currey](#), the Duke of Devonshire's architect.^[44] [East Sussex County Council](#) has responsibility for education, libraries, social services, civil registration, trading standards and transport.

Out of the 49 seats, nine are filled by the Eastbourne wards.^[45] The [2009 East Sussex County Council election](#) resulted in 29 Conservatives, 13 Liberal Democrats, 4 Labour and 3 Independent, of which Eastbourne provided 6 Liberal Democrats and 3 Conservatives.^[46]

The [Parliament Constituency of Eastbourne](#) covers a greater area than the nine local wards, extending to the north and the east. Eastbourne is a [marginal seat](#) contested between the [Conservatives](#) and the [Liberal Democrats](#).^{[47][48]} The Liberal Democrat Member of Parliament for Eastbourne is [Stephen Lloyd](#), who took the seat from the sitting Conservative MP [Nigel Waterson](#) with a 3.8% swing on a turnout of 67% in the [2010 General Election](#).^[49] At European level, Eastbourne is represented by the South-East region, which holds ten seats in the [European Parliament](#). The 2009 election returned 4 Conservatives, 2 Liberal Democrats, 2 UK Independence, 1 Labour and 1 Green.^[50]

Demographics

Eastbourne has historically been a popular retirement destination on account of its "quiet charm and elegance".^[51] The 2001 census showed that it had a larger than average over-60 population (just over 25% of the population being of retirement age as opposed to the UK average of 18.4%).^[52] In terms of residents of pensionable age, the parliamentary constituency ranks 6th in England and Wales.^[51] However, while the overall population of Eastbourne is growing (between 2001 and 2008 the population grew from 89,800 to 94,800),^[53] the age profile is dropping as younger people move into the town.^[53] Ethnically, the town is 93.7% white, with small non-white minority groups including Chinese, and white minority groups including East Europeans, Greeks (mainly from Cyprus), and other Europeans.^[54] The 2001 census indicated that the largest non-white ethnic group were Chinese; studies conducted by the local council in 2008 indicated that there has been a growth in people arriving from Eastern Europe, particularly Poland.^[55] Unemployment is higher than the regional average,^[56] with the low skill and education levels of the local population deterring business investment.^[57] Health is largely in keeping with the national average, though the number of teenage pregnancies is higher.^[58] Violent and sexual crime is higher than average, though thefts and burglaries are lower.^{[59][60]}

Economy

Eastbourne's economy relies largely on tourism and, increasingly, conferencing and foreign language students. The town is normally a short break resort, although hotels can be full during special events such as the [Eastbourne International](#) tennis tournament.^[16] A 1998 study calculated an annual figure of £48 million of income creation and just over 4000 jobs were directly attributable to tourists. A further £18 million is generated by business conference visitors and foreign language students.^[61] Eastbourne Council has developed a seafront strategy in order to boost the tourism economy. Already under way are grants provided for general improvements to accommodation. The regeneration of Seaside, the road running parallel to the coastline, is now complete. The new A22 and Polegate bypass provide a speedier link into the main town.^[62] The seafront strategy further outlines priorities for the future, improvements to online bookings and more conference hosting promotion. National marketing campaigns, some based on Eastbourne as a gateway to the [South Downs National Park](#), are in progress.^[62] The [Sovereign Harbour](#) development is a recent source of revenue for the town with visitors arriving via the harbour.^[7]

Tourism



Eastbourne beach and parade with [Beachy Head](#) in the background

The seafront at Eastbourne consists almost entirely of [Victorian](#) hotels. Along with its [pier](#) and [bandstand](#), this serves to preserve the front in a somewhat timeless manner.^[63] The [Duke of Devonshire](#), retains the

rights to the seafront buildings and does not allow them to be developed into shops.^[39] A stretch of 4 miles (6.4 km) of shingle beach stretches from [Sovereign Harbour](#) in the east to [Beachy Head](#) in the west. In a 1998 survey 56% of visitors said that the beach and seafront was one of Eastbourne best features, although 10% listed the pebbled beach as a dislike.^[61] Other recreation facilities include two swimming pools, three fitness centres and other smaller sports clubs including [scuba diving](#).^[64] A children's adventure park is sited at the eastern end of the seafront. There are various other establishments scattered around the town such as [crazy golf](#), [go-karting](#) and [Laser Quest](#). The pier is an obvious place to visit and is sometimes used to hold events, such as the international [birdman](#) competition held annually, although cancelled in 2005 due to lack of competitors.^[65] An annual raft competition takes place where competitors, usually local businesses, circumnavigate the pier in a raft made by themselves, while being attacked by a water-cannon. A major event in the tourist calendar of Eastbourne, now the world's biggest seafront air show,^[66] is the annually held 4 day, international [air show](#), '[Airbourne](#)'. Started in 1993,^[67] based around a long relationship with the [Red Arrows](#) display team, the event features [Battle of Britain](#) memorial flights and aircraft from the [RAF](#), [USAF](#) and many others.

One of the museums in Eastbourne is *How We Lived Then*, a museum of shops and local history, with exhibits representing complete scenarios such as shops and houses with life sized dummies. The museum contains more than 100,000 exhibits, covering the period from the 1800s to the Second World War.^[68]

Culture

The [London Philharmonic Orchestra](#) makes regular appearances and has an annual season at the Congress Theatre. [Eastbourne Bandstand](#) lies between the Wish Tower and the pier. It stages the 1812 Firework Concerts, [Rock N Roll](#) nights, [Big Band](#) concerts, [Promenade concerts](#) and Tribute Nights with tributes to artists such as [ABBA](#), [Elvis Presley](#) and [Queen](#). There was once a second similar bandstand (also built in 1935) in the "music gardens" near the redoubt fortress. The bandstand was removed to make way for the Pavilion Tearooms but the colonnades built around it are still there (behind the tea rooms). Before 1935 each of these sites had a smaller "birdcage" bandstand; the one in the music gardens having been moved from a rather precarious position opposite the Albion Hotel. The kiosk in the music gardens was originally one of the toll kiosks at the entrance to the pier.^[7]

Local radio station [Sovereign Radio](#) broadcasts to Eastbourne from nearby Hailsham.^[69] There are two other regional radio stations, [Heart Sussex](#), (previously Southern FM) which broadcasts across [Sussex](#) from [Portslade](#) and [BBC Sussex](#) which broadcasts from [Brighton](#).

Theatres

See also: [Eastbourne Theatres](#)



[Devonshire Park Theatre](#) (1884)

Eastbourne has four council-owned theatres; the Grade II* [listed](#)^[70] [Congress Theatre](#), the Grade II listed [Devonshire Park Theatre](#), the Grade II listed Winter Garden and the Grade II listed [Royal Hippodrome Theatre](#). The Devonshire Park Theatre is a fine example of a Victorian theatre with ornate interior decorations, and the Royal Hippodrome has the longest running summer show in Britain.^[71] Other theatre venues in the town include the volunteer-run Underground Theatre, in the basement of the town's Central Library,^[72] and [The Lamb Theatre](#), based at the Lamb Inn in Old Town, and launched in August 2009.^[73] In 2009, Eastbourne gained a new cultural centre,^[74] replacing the Manor House (which has now been sold) as

home of the Towner Art Gallery; it is located in the cultural district next to the Congress Theatre and Devonshire Park. Eastbourne has two cinemas—the Curzon Cinema and [Cineworld](#). The Curzon Cinema is a small, family-run, independent cinema in Langney Road, in the town centre. Cineworld is a large [Multiplex cinema](#) with six screens, located in The Crumbles Retail Park, near Sovereign Harbour.

Cultural connections

Eastbourne has Cornish connections, most notably visible in the Cornish [high cross](#) in the churchyard of St Mary's Church which was brought from an unspecified location in Cornwall.^{[13][75]} [Trevithick](#), the inventor of the steam locomotive (a claim disputed on the grave of one Vyvyan in the churchyard at [Camborne](#)), is reported to have spent some time here.^[76] A connection with India comes in the shape of the 18th-century Lushington monument, also at St Mary's, which commemorates a survivor of the [Black Hole of Calcutta](#) atrocity which led to the British conquest of Bengal. Proximity to London has led to Eastbourne being the home of actors and television personalities,^[citation needed] including the comedian [Tommy Cooper](#). A metal silhouette of the latter can be seen on the wall of a house opposite Motcombe Gardens.

Eastbourne is the name of an Italian poem concerning the seafront.^[77]

The seafront and the iconic cliff at Beachy Head has been used for many scenes in feature films, and the local council has set up a film liaison unit to encourage and facilitate the shooting of film sequences in and around the town.^[78] The 2006 [Academy Award](#)-nominated film [Notes on a Scandal](#) includes scenes filmed at Beachy Head, Cavendish Hotel and 117 Royal Parade. One of the Harry Potter films also filmed scenes at Beachy Head. Scenes from [Half a Sixpence](#) (1969) were filmed on the pier and near to the bandstand. The seafront area was also used for the film [Angus, Thongs and Perfect Snogging](#) directed by [Gurinder Chadha](#).^[79] A sequence of a rainy day at the seaside for the Doel family has as its backdrop the Wish Tower, the bandstand, the Cavendish Hotel and the pier in the 1987 British/American drama film [84 Charing Cross Road](#) directed by [David Hugh Jones](#).^[80]

Television too has used Eastbourne as a backdrop. The series [Little Britain](#) had the character [Emily Howard](#) strolling along the promenade. Other brief appearances were made in the television series [Agatha Christie's Marple](#), [French & Saunders](#) and [Foyle's War](#). One scene in [Bang Bang, It's Reeves and Mortimer](#), was shot in and based around what is now known as "D2L" on Seaside Road. The town was used as a location for the BBC's 2009 series, [Psychoville](#). [BBC South East Today](#) and [ITV Meridian](#) are the two regional news channels.

Parks and gardens



Manor Gardens, a small park adjoining Gildredge Park, and containing Manor House (1776)

Eastbourne has numerous parks and gardens, although there are several smaller open spaces including Upperton Gardens, the Carpet Gardens and the Western Lawns. The first public park in Eastbourne was Hampden Park, originally owned by Lord Willingdon and opened on 12 August 1902.^[9] Facilities include: football pitches, rugby club, indoor bowls, a large lake (formerly a [Decoy](#) pond), lakeside cafe, children's recreation area, tennis courts, [BMX](#) and skate facility, [disc golf](#) course (target) and woodland. The largest and newest park is Shinewater Park, located on the west side of Langney and opened in 2002. There is a large fishing lake, basketball, football pitches, a BMX and skate park and children's playground.^[81]

Gildredge Park is a large open park located between the town centre and Old Town; it is very popular with families and has a children's playground, cafe, tennis courts, [disc golf](#) course (target) and bowls lawns. The smaller, adjoining, Manor Gardens combines both lawns and shady areas as well as a rose garden. Until 2005, Manor Gardens was the home of the [Towner Gallery](#). This gallery incorporated a permanent exhibition of local art and historical items, plus temporary art exhibitions of regional and national significance. It was relocated to a new, £8.6 million purpose-built facility adjacent to the Congress Theatre, Devonshire Park which opened on 4 April 2009.

Princes Park obtained its name during a visit by the Duke of Windsor as Prince of Wales in 1931.^[37] Located at the eastern end of the seafront, it has a children's playground with paddling pool, cafe, bowls and a large lake, noted for its swans. The lake is used by a nearby water-sports centre, which offers kayak and windsurfing training. Princes Park lake is also home to Eastbourne Model Powerboat Club^[82] and Eastbourne Model Yacht Club.^[83] Close by are tennis and basketball courts and a football pitch. At the north of the park is [Eastbourne United F.C.](#). Devonshire Park, home to the pre-Wimbledon ladies tennis championships, is located just off the seafront in the town's cultural district. Other parks include: Helen Gardens and the Italian Gardens at the western end of the seafront, Sovereign Park between the main seafront and the marina and Motcombe Gardens in Old Town.

One feature that has always been heavily promoted is Eastbourne's floral displays, most notably the Carpet Gardens along the coastal road near the pier. These displays, and the town as a whole, frequently win awards – such as the 'Coastal Resort B' category in the 2003 [Britain in Bloom](#) competition.

Sport



 [Devonshire Park Lawn Tennis Club](#) – opened 1874

Eastbourne's Devonshire Park is the venue for the [Eastbourne International](#), a tennis tournament held in the town since 1974 and serving as a warm-up to [Wimbledon](#).^[84] Previously a women only tournament, in 2009 the [Lawn Tennis Association](#) merged it with the men only event the [Nottingham Open](#).^[85]

Eastbourne has three senior football clubs: [Eastbourne Borough F.C.](#) play in the [Conference South](#),^[86] [Eastbourne Town F.C.](#) play in the [Isthmian League Division One South](#) while [Eastbourne United F.C.](#) play in [Sussex County League](#) Division 1. The [Eastbourne Eagles](#) are a [speedway](#) club located at Arlington Stadium, just outside the town. They compete in the [Speedway Elite League](#), the highest level of speedway in England. The stadium also sees [stock-car racing](#) on Wednesday evenings in the summer months. Local sports clubs include cricket, [hockey](#), [rugby](#), [lacrosse](#) and golf. There is an annual [extreme sports](#) festival held at the eastern end of the seafront. Eastbourne Sovereign Sailing Club, on the seafront towards the eastern end, organises dinghy sailing for its members and visitors from Easter to Boxing Day and usually holds a National Championship Series for a popular UK class in the summer months.

Landmarks



Beachy Head and lighthouse, one of Eastbourne's landmarks

Beachy Head

Main article: [Beachy Head](#)

[Beachy Head](#) cliff, to the west of the town, is an infamous suicide spot. Statistics are not officially published to reduce suicidal mimicry,^[87] but unofficial statistics show it to be the third most common suicide spot.^[88]

The lighthouse at the foot of the cliff came into operation in October 1902. Although originally manned by two keepers, it has been remotely monitored by [Trinity House](#) via a landline since June 1983. Prior to its construction, shipping had been warned by the [Belle Tout lighthouse](#) on the cliff top some 1,500 metres to the west. Belle Tout lighthouse was operational from 1834 to 1902, and closed because its light was not visible in mist and low cloud. It became a private residence, but was severely damaged in the Second World War II by Canadian artillery.^[89] In 1956, it was rebuilt as a house and remains a dwelling to this day. In March 1999, the structure was moved 55 feet (17 m) back from the cliff edge to save it from plunging into the sea.^[90]

Eastbourne Pier

Main article: [Eastbourne Pier](#)

Eastbourne Pier was built between 1866 and 1872 at the junction of Grand and Marine Parades. The pier interrupts what would otherwise have been a ribbon development of buildings – to the west, high-class hotels, with modest family hotels and boarding houses to the east.^[91] The Eastbourne Pier Company was registered in April 1865 with a capital of £15,000^[92] and on 18 April 1866 work began. It was opened by [Lord Edward Cavendish](#) on 13 June 1870, although it was not actually completed until two years later. On New Year's Day 1877 the landward half was swept away in a storm. It was rebuilt at a higher level, creating a drop towards the end of the pier. The pier is effectively built on stilts that rest in cups on the sea-bed allowing the whole structure to move during rough weather. It is roughly 300 metres (1000 ft) long. A domed 400-seater pavilion was constructed at a cost of £250 at the seaward end in 1888. A 1000-seater theatre, bar, [camera obscura](#) and office suite replaced this in 1899/1901. At the same time, two saloons were built midway along the pier.^[93] Access to the camera obscura was destroyed by an arson attack in 1970, but was restored in 2003 with a new stairway built.^[91]

Eastbourne Redoubt

Main article: [Eastbourne Redoubt](#)

Eastbourne Redoubt on Royal Parade is one of three examples of a type of fortress built to withstand potential invasion from Napoleon's forces in the early nineteenth century.^[94] It houses collections from [The Royal Sussex Regiment](#), [The Queen's Royal Irish Hussars](#), and the Sussex Combined Services Collection; including four [Victoria Crosses](#) and General [Hans-Jürgen von Arnim](#)'s [Steyr Automobile](#) 1500A [Afrika Korps](#) Staff Car.

Education



[St. Bede's Prep School](#), where [Eddie Izzard](#) was a pupil

Eastbourne's reputation for health, enhanced by bracing air and sea breezes contributed to the establishment of many independent schools in the 19th century and in 1871,^[95] the year which saw the arrival of Queenwood Ladies College, the town was just beginning a period of growth and prosperity.^[95] By 1896, Gowland's Eastbourne Directory listed 76 private schools for boys and girls. However, economic difficulties during the inter-war years saw a gradual decline in the number of independent schools.^[96]

In 1930, the headmistress of [Cloveley-Kepplestone](#), a well-established boarding school for girls, referred to "heavy financial losses experienced by schools in the past few years".^[96] In 1930, this school was forced to merge its junior and senior departments; in 1931, one of its buildings was sold off, and in 1934 the school closed altogether. Finally, indicative of the changes that would later befall many of the larger buildings in the town,^[97] the school was demolished to make way for a block of flats, which was completed in 1939.^[96]

The Eastbourne (Blue Book) Directory for 1938 lists 39 independent schools in the town. With the [fall of France](#) in June 1940, and the risk of invasion, most left – the majority never to return.^[18] By 2007, the number had reduced to just four: St. Andrew's School, [Eastbourne College](#), [St Bede's Preparatory School](#) and [Moira House Girls' School](#).

Eastbourne has 6 state secondary schools, 17 state primary schools, 1 primary special school, and 2 secondary special schools. Parts of the [University of Brighton](#) are based in the Meads area of the town. There are several language colleges and schools, with students coming mainly from Europe.^[61]

Religious Life

See also: [List of demolished places of worship in East Sussex](#)

As well as the medieval parish church of St Mary in Old Town, another remarkable church building in Eastbourne is the redbrick St Saviour's and St Peter's. Originally consecrated under the former name in 1872, it was designed by [George Edmund Street](#)^[98] but merged with St Peter's in 1971 when the latter was made redundant and demolished. The Catholic Church of Our Lady of Ransom is a generously proportioned building with a tall Gothic interior^[99]. One of the windows commemorates the exiled Polish-Lithuanian nobleman, Prince Lev Sapieha, who lived in the town^[100], and there is much other artwork in the building. The recently-formed [Personal Ordinariate](#) of Anglicans reconciled to the Catholic Church meets at St Agnes, another Victorian Gothic building.^[101] The tall flint tower of St Michael's at Ocklynge is one of Eastbourne's landmarks. The church was consecrated in 1902^[102] and built on the site of the mission hall where the nonsense writer [Lewis Carroll](#) (the clergyman CL Dodgson) is known to have preached during his holidays in the town. All Souls, in Italian style, is a finely proportioned building with an Evangelical church tradition.^{[103][104]} There is a Greek Orthodox Church converted from a 19th-century Calvinistic chapel.^[105]^[106] The Strict Baptist Chapel in Grove Road is an interesting building, despite its rather grim street frontage. The United Reformed Church in Upperton Road has tall rogue Gothic windows set in red brick walls. Several other denominations have similarly interesting church buildings^[107], including some of 20th century design, such as the Baptist Church in Eldon Road. The copyrights of many well-known hymns used in the English-speaking world are handled by Kingway's Thankyou Music of Eastbourne.^[108] There is a tradition

of Judaism in Eastbourne,^{[109][110]} and a Jewish rest home. The Islamic community uses a small mosque that was formerly the Seaboard social club.^[111]

Transport



[Eastbourne railway station](#)

Eastbourne is connected by road to London by the [A22](#), and to [Brighton and Hove](#) and [Hastings](#) by the nearby [A27](#). The car is the most used form of transport in the town, with only 6% of journeys taken by bus; the local council transport plan aims to reduce the amount of car usage.^[112] Bus services within Eastbourne have been provided by [Stagecoach Group](#) under the name [Stagecoach in Eastbourne](#) since November 2008, when the company acquired [Eastbourne Buses](#), a service [run by the local council](#), and subsequently the independent company [Cavendish Motor Services](#).^[113] Eastbourne Buses had been formed in 1903 by the County Borough of Eastbourne, who were the first local authority in the world authorised to run motor buses.^[114] As well as local journeys within the town, Stagecoach also runs routes to [Polegate](#), [Hailsham](#), [Tunbridge Wells](#), [Uckfield](#) and [East Grinstead](#) at various frequencies, while the two routes to [Hastings](#) via [Bexhill](#) are run by [Stagecoach South East](#) from Hastings. The other main operator into Eastbourne is [Brighton & Hove](#), owned by [Go-Ahead Group](#), which runs frequent services seven days a week from Brighton via [Seaford](#) and [Newhaven](#). Limited numbers of additional buses are run by the [Cuckmere Community Bus](#) service, and a regular [National Express](#) coach service operates daily from London's [Victoria Coach Station](#).

The main [railway station](#) is situated in the town centre and is served by [Southern](#). The present station (the town's third), designed by F.D. Bannister, dates from 1886.^[116] It was originally on what was termed the *Eastbourne Branch*^[115] from [Polegate](#). There was a rarely-used triangular junction between Polegate and the now-closed *Stone Cross* which allowed trains to bypass the Branch; the track has now been lifted. Also on the erstwhile Branch is [Hampden Park railway station](#) to the north of the town. Regular services along the coast have invariably served Eastbourne. All trains, because of the layout, have to pass through Hampden Park once in each direction. This has the effect of making the Hampden Park level crossing very busy. Indeed, it is thought to be the busiest in the country.^[116] Regular services are to London Victoria, [Gatwick Airport](#), [Hastings](#) and [Ashford International](#) and a commuter service to Brighton. Trains leave from London Victoria to Eastbourne with a journey time of 1hr 36mins.^[117] A miniature tramway once ran a mile across "the Crumbles" (then undeveloped) from near Princes Park/Wartling Road towards Langney Point. It opened in 1954 but ceased operation in 1970, relocating to [Seaton](#) in Devon after the owners had fallen out with the council;^[118] it is now the [Seaton Tramway](#).

Notable people

See also: [Eastbourne Blue Plaques](#) and [Category:People from Eastbourne](#)

Eastbourne can claim some notable regular visitors. [Karl Marx](#)^[116] and [Frederick Engels](#) were often in the area; the latter's ashes were scattered from Beachy Head at his request.^[119] "Darwin's Bulldog" [Thomas Henry Huxley](#) spent the last few years of his life in Eastbourne.^[120] Notable residents include [Charles Webb](#), writer of *The Graduate*, who moved to Eastbourne with his wife in 2006, where they are housed by social services.^[121] The pianist [Russ Conway](#) was a resident for many years^[122] as was [Henry Allingham](#), briefly the world's oldest man when he died in 2009 aged 113. [Percy Sillitoe](#), director of [MI5](#), also lived in the town

in the 1950s.^[123] The novelist and children's writer [Annie Keary](#) died in the town in 1879.^[124] Several bands have formed in Eastbourne, including [Toploader](#),^[125] [Easyworld](#),^[126] [The Divided](#)^[127] and [The Mobiles](#).^[128]

Various notable scholars have passed through the Eastbourne education system. [Aleister Crowley](#), [occultist](#) and [mystic](#) attended Eastbourne College and later edited a chess column for the *Eastbourne Gazette*.^[129] Polar explorer [Lawrence Oates](#) attended South Lynn School in Mill Gap Road.^[130] [George Mallory](#), the noted mountaineer, attended Glengorse Preparatory School in Chesterfield Road between 1896–1900.^[131] Count [László Almásy](#), the basis of the lead character of [The English Patient](#), was educated by a private tutor at Berrow, and was a member of the pioneering Eastbourne Flying Club.^[132] [Douglas Bader](#), who became a successful Second World War fighter pilot despite having lost both legs in a flying accident, attended Temple Grove Preparatory School in Compton Place Road.^[133] The philosopher [A. J. Ayer](#) was a pupil at [Ascham St. Vincent's School](#) in Carlisle Road.^[134] In addition to Orwell, Connolly, Beaton, Maxwell and Longhurst listed on the [St Cyprian's School](#) blue plaque, the writers [Alaric Jacob](#), [E. H. W. Meyerstein](#) and [Alan Hyman](#) also attended that school. The biographer and historian [Philip Ziegler](#) was a pupil as was the music historian [Dyneley Hussey](#) and politician, historian and diarist [Alan Clark](#). Other politicians were [Richard Wood](#) who had lost both legs in the war, and [David Ormsby-Gore](#) later ambassador to the USA. Artists [Cedric Morris](#) and [David Kindersley](#) also attended the school as did military figures such as [General Sir Lashmer Whistler](#) and [Major General Robert Foot](#) VC. Pupils with sporting connections include the amateur jockey [Anthony Mildmay](#) and [Seymour de Lotbiniere](#) Director of Outside Broadcasts at the BBC. [Jagaddipendra Narayan](#) was a reigning [Maharaja](#) of [Cooch Behar](#) while at the school. Other former pupils include the war-blinded life peer [Lord Fraser](#) and the submarine commander [Rupert Lonsdale](#).^[135] Modern celebrities who studied in the town include [Prunella Scales](#)^[136] and [Eddie Izzard](#).^[137]

In 1993, following a suggestion to Eastbourne Borough Council by Eastbourne Civic Society (now Eastbourne Society), a joint project was set up to erect blue plaques on buildings associated with famous people. The principles for selection are broadly those already established by [English Heritage](#) for such plaques in London. The first was erected in November 1994 in Milnthorpe Road at the former home of Sir [Ernest Shackleton](#), the Antarctic explorer.^[138]

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- [Eastbourne](#) at the [Open Directory Project](#)
- [Eastbourne Borough Council](#) Official site
- [Visit Eastbourne](#) Official tourism site