

# COUNTDOWN TO CHRISTMAS IN THE CITY



© Peter Livesey

From the Christmas Light Switch On and arrival of Santa, to services at the Cathedral and festival parades and markets, the **countdown to Christmas in Canterbury starts here** with our essential guide to what's going on, when and where...

**O**f all the places to spend time in Kent this Christmas, Canterbury has it all: great shopping, great coffee shops, pubs, bars and places to eat; great accommodation for that short stay or long weekend; and great Christmas days and nights out, Christmas IS Canterbury!

Canterbury will be shining brightly this Christmas after city centre businesses voted in favour of a Business Improvement District (BID) which will, among a range of projects, also fund the city's festive lights. Last year Canterbury made national headlines when the city council was unable to pay for Christmas illuminations, leaving most of the centre's streets in darkness.

But this year the city centre will be strewn with lights paid for by BID and the city council's waste contractor, Serco, is donating the tree. The light switch on will be on the 20th November in St Georges Street and will include a guest presenter and local musicians to celebrate the return of Christmas illuminations to Canterbury.

Bob Jones, Interim Chief Executive of Canterbury Connected BID said businesses voted strongly for the BID, which is also investing in the promotion of the city this Christmas.

"We are really excited to be bringing Christmas back to the city centre after last year's disappointment. This is Canterbury, the centre of the global Anglican

communion and Christmas is so important here," he said.

Paying for the Christmas lights is one of several initiatives that the Canterbury BID will deliver in the next five years to improve the city centre.

Mr Jones said: "We want the lights to get better year-on-year and to invest in the city centre over the next five years to make it even more special for everyone."

He added that the BID had also pledged to introduce additional cleaning, street ambassadors and floral displays in the summer and to invest in the MyCanterbury online platform and marketing the city.

- The big switch on will take place on 20th November in St Georges Street.



## DIARY DATE

- Santa's grotto at Whitefriars shopping centre will be open from 10am to 5pm, seven days a week until 23rd December.
- The market will be open from 10am to 6pm, Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm on Saturdays and 11am to 5pm on Sundays until 28th December.

# CHRISTMAS SHOPPING

## ST DUNSTANS: Gateway to the city

Positioned leading up to the Westgate Towers and on the route into the city from the West Station and the University of Kent, St Dunstons is fast becoming a destination in its own right. Named after the 11th century parish church, itself one of the city's most interesting features, St Dunstons has some of the city's oldest buildings, a growing reputation for food and drink and a range of local and national businesses from the city centre's only independent butcher, Hedgers, to Sainsbury's.

Look for local quirky gifts at some of the independent shops in the street, drop in to the Bishops Finger for a restoring pint or sample the fine dining in Chapmans, the Refectory Kitchen and Café des Amis. St Dunstons has something for everyone. (And on your way in to the city, why not drop in to Lenleys in Roper Place, the city's leading independent furniture store?)

## ST PETER'S STREET: Canterbury's 'boho' heart

St Peter's Street is without doubt the centre of alternative Canterbury with a range of

independent businesses offering everything from perfume at Equivalenza and crystals at Pure Magick, to specialist shops like Whatever Comics and the Oxfam bookshop.

One of the city's most exciting quarters, this street also boasts four pubs (The Cricketers, Lady Luck, Black Griffin and the Carpenters Arms) and an international food offering from France (Café St Pierre), northern Italy (The Bull) and Turkey (Istanbul).

Running from the King's Bridge to the Westgate Towers it is the place for anyone wanting something 'different'... make sure that St Peter's Street is part of your next Canterbury night out when the pubs, restaurants and takeaways come alive and the joint is jumping!

## CANTERBURY HIGH STREET, THE PARADE AND ST GEORGE'S: The city's crossroads

This is where the old city meets the new, where long-standing independent businesses like Nasons sit cheek by jowl with their national counterparts Debenhams, Marks & Spencer and W H Smith. When you come to Canterbury this

is where you really see what the city has to offer in a setting that is unique in England: modern businesses, both local and national, within a medieval setting leading into the more contemporary St George's Street, home to Canterbury market throughout December. Nowhere is the 'bustle' of our ancient city more evident, and the range of shops means Christmas shopping has never been easier or more interesting.

## WHITEFRIARS: Global brands right here, right now

The city's newest shopping opportunity, Whitefriars, celebrated 10 years in Canterbury last year and has become the 'go to' destination in East Kent for the brands everyone aspires to. Fenwick anchors the offer and, as the city's premier department store, offers its own unique shopping experience; but there is so much more: Primark, Boots, Next, Zara, H&M... the list goes on.

With events throughout the Christmas period – including the arrival of Father Christmas and the longstanding City Carol Concert at 6pm on Christmas Eve – Whitefriars offers a great Christmas shopping



5th December, 7.30pm Canterbury Cathedral Girls' Choir

day out for the whole family. It is also the place for the final 'food fest' for your perfect Christmas Dinner with the city centre's largest Food Halls at Tesco and M&S.

### THE KING'S MILE: The independent heart of the city

The King's Mile runs in to the city from Northgate, the Borough and into Palace Street, Orange Street, Sun Street and Guildhall Street. Bordering the Cathedral and Kings School, the range of businesses is amazing: the city's only Japanese restaurant, Tamago; our finest independent chocolatier, Madame Oiseau; the city's only exotic pet shop, Canterbury Exotics; a bike specialist, Bike Tart; a children's activity centre, Espressions; the city centre's finest lighting specialist, Light House; plus jewellers like Ortwin Thyssen and Justin Richardson...

It is fabulous and well worth taking the time to explore beyond Posillipo (another great restaurant) at Mint Yard Gate. Take time, poke about, pop in for a chat and get to know so many 'hidden gems'. It is almost like finding buried treasure!

### THE CATHEDRAL QUARTER: The ancient city

If you want 'Christmassy'? We've got 'Christmassy'! From Sun Street up to the

end of Burgate, including the Buttermarket, Mercery Lane, Butchery Lane, Canterbury Lane, Iron Bar Lane and Burgate Lane, this is the very soul of the city: clustered around the Cathedral, dominated by Christ Church Gate, there are so many great businesses it is difficult to know where to start!

Gifts (Cathedral Shop, Laura Ashley, The Thai House), clothes (Cobbles for boys and Peppermint for girls), holidays (Trailfinders), fragrances, lotions and potions (Crabtree & Evelyn), home furnishings (Queen Bee Home); it is another cornucopia of choice!

And, of course, even more independent coffee shops for that reviving caffeine fix at Burgate Coffee House, Susan's Café or Café Turquoise and amazing restaurants and pubs in Butchery Lane: The Shakespeare, Café Mauresque, Club Burrito...

### THE CASTLE QUARTER: Where the city takes care of business

Starting in St Margaret's Street, the Castle Quarter takes in Castle Street, Watling Street, Stour Street and the surrounding area. Just off the High Street, St Margaret's Street has some of the key destinations for shoppers at Christmas, including Tiny Tim's Tearoom for that special afternoon treat, CJs for an all-day snack and one of our two branches of Waterstones.

But go beyond and among the estate

agents, property companies and legal firms there are a range of great businesses tucked away: two galleries in Castle Street – Stark Gallery and Lilford Framing – County Music, Pinnocchio's Italian restaurant (one of our best), The Foundry Brew Pub in Whitehorse Lane, Canterbury Wholefoods in Jewry Lane and so many more.

Parking is usually available in the Castle Street multi-storey – so what better way to find these undiscovered pearls than to start your visit there and explore to your heart's content?

### MYCANTERBURY: Where it all comes together...

We LOVE LOCAL and we know you do too. And we also know that you look for deals and offers online. So what better way to combine the two than to download the FREE MyCanterbury app to discover great deals and offers right here in YOUR city?

The MyCanterbury app is your essential guide to shopping, experiencing, eating, drinking and going out in our city this Christmas. Free to download, it has a directory for you to search for what you want, information of what's on and where this Christmas, and some great deals and offers to make sure you get the best value possible from shopping and having fun in a truly great city. [www.mytownmycity.co.uk/](http://www.mytownmycity.co.uk/)

“Canterbury is the perfect place to capture the magic of Christmas.”

## CHRISTMAS EVENTS

Whitefriars shopping centre is gearing up for Christmas with the arrival of Santa and a festive market. More than 35 stalls will be selling their wares from 20th November, with local farmers, producers and artisans among the stallholders.

Santa will arrive at the shopping centre on 22nd November, joined by a band of festive helpers who will be handing out balloons and sweets.

Julie Holness, the centre's Marketing Manager, said: "Canterbury is well known as being a city of real beauty, making it the perfect place to capture the magic of Christmas.

"Our Christmas programme has always proved to be popular with our customers and we are very much looking forward to providing them with some truly memorable festive treats this year."

## CHRISTMAS AT THE CATHEDRAL

A life-size crib, "heavenly" choral music and a hugely-popular community carol services will form part of the Christmas celebrations at Canterbury Cathedral this year. Around 4,000 people from all over the world are expected to attend the Cathedral's carol services on 23rd and 24th December.

These events have become so popular that the Christmas Eve service is now ticketed and even the Archbishop has to apply to attend it!

In the precincts of the Cathedral there

From 28th November The Marlowe Theatre's pantomime Aladdin



will be brightly-lit Christmas trees and a life-size nativity scene, which has been designed and made by Cathedral staff and a band of "sewing ladies".

A Cathedral spokesman said: "There is no better time to visit Canterbury than December as the Cathedral prepares itself for one of the most important events in the Christian calendar."

From 30th November to the end of December the Cathedral will host events ranging from the 3rd Battalion Princess of Wales Royal Regiment Carol Service, the Demelza House Celebration of Christmas event and carol services for numerous schools, colleges and universities. See Cathedral Diary Dates on page 47.

## THE ST NICHOLAS' FESTIVAL PARADE

One of the most popular events in the city's calendar is the annual St Nicholas Festival parade, which sees hundreds of children and musicians helping to spread festive cheer and raise money for charity.

Since it was set up in 2005 the lively festival has raised more than £55,000 for charities that support young people and helped to welcome Christmas.

Led by St Nicholas, the procession will leave Westgate Towers at midday on 6th December before winding its way through the city to the cathedral where a service takes place and celebrations continue.

This year's chosen charities are Beanstalk, which provides volunteers to help primary school children with their reading



and Porchlight, a charity that supports vulnerable and homeless people in Kent.

## CHRISTMAS CULTURE

- The Marlowe Theatre's pantomime Aladdin will burst onto the stage on 28th November and run until 11th January. Starring former EastEnders star Scott Maslen and Mister Maker from CBeebies, the show is being billed as a West End-style production by the theatre.

Away from the panto fun baritone Geoffrey Horton and Irish tenor James Kinsella will perform a Christmas concert at the theatre on 14th December.

- Meanwhile the Gulbenkian at the University of Kent is staging a slapstick version of A Christmas Carol and screenings of National Lampoons Christmas Vacation and Alice's Adventures in Wonderland ballet during December.

- On 29th and 30th November the galleries at The Beany House of Art and Knowledge in High Street will host a Christmas fair selling quality arts and heritage craft gifts while its Learning Lab will be running Christmas craft activities for families.