

Explore James Bond's Kent

Sharpen your wits, pick up the clues and follow James Bond across Kent for an exhilarating adventure.

Surprised that this tranquil county extends such a racy invitation? Author Ian Fleming had a holiday home here and when he wrote 'the spy story to end all spy stories' he drew inspiration locally – even the 007 tag came from the number of the London to Dover coach, now a National Express service. Track down locations behind some of the most famous Bond novels and films: it's your licence to thrill.

The name is Fleming. Ian Fleming

Ian Lancaster Fleming (1908-64), writer, journalist, naval intelligence commander, spy and traveller, was also a bon viveur and sportsman – and he loved to escape to Kent to indulge his passions. Come with him, first to Royal St George's Golf Club, Sandwich, many-times host to the British Open Golf Championship. From the 1930s, Fleming liked nothing more than to spend weekends on the links while staying at the now-demolished Guilford Hotel, Sandwich Bay. After the war, he often motored down from London in his Ford Thunderbird on a Friday, in time for 9 or 18 holes before tea and, of course, a dry martini in the clubhouse – 'Shaken, not stirred'.

Tee off for a treat and relive the classic match between Bond and Auric Goldfinger, played on a beautiful day in May with larks singing over 'the greatest seaside golf-course in the world': Royal St Mark's in Goldfinger was none other than Fleming's real-life club and it has changed little since his time. It was also to be the stage for the author's final curtain call. Elected captain for the club 1964/5, he was present for a committee meeting on August 11, 1964, and suffered a heart attack. He died in Canterbury the following day.

After browsing the historic charms of Sandwich so familiar to Fleming, head south along the coast to St Margaret's. This one-time little fishing village became a seaside resort of the rich and renowned from late Victorian times. Fleming would stay in the Granville Hotel, the same place to which Bond and Gala Brand repair in Moonraker after they have escaped the cliff-fall. Following several drinks, they enjoy 'delicious fried soles and Welsh rarebits and coffee.' These days a block of flats occupies the site of the Granville at the end of Granville Road, but why not lunch on fresh seafood at The Coastguard pub and restaurant in the spectacular setting of St Margaret's Bay?

Then stroll to the north end of the shingle beach and pick out the white house with green shutters: Fleming's former weekend and holiday home, White Cliffs, which he bought in 1952 from his friend, Noel Coward. Throughout the next decade, during which he wrote his Bond blockbusters, Fleming and his wife Ann visited White Cliffs and entertained famous pals like Somerset Maugham and Evelyn Waugh. Fleming loved to gaze through his telescope at shipping in the Channel – the very stretch where the evil Drax flees in his submarine after the Moonraker rocket has been launched.

Our expedition now ventures inland for an unexpected turn of events. Fleming owned 1960-62 the old Palace at Bekesbourne, below Canterbury, and nearby are two very different sources of inspiration. Higham Park (not open to visitors) on the edge of Bridge was once home to the flamboyant motor-racing driver Count Louis Zborowski, who designed and built cars fitted with aero engines – he named three Chitty Bang Bang. Zborowski was killed, aged just 29, racing at Monza in 1924. But Fleming, a

later visitor to Higham Park, was so fired by the romance of the cars that he wrote the children's tale, *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* (published 1964) for his son Caspar. No doubt Bond, a sophisticated motorhead, would have appreciated the vehicle's magical technology.

Travel a short distance south from Bridge to Pett Bottom and we're fully back in 007 territory. The Duck Inn was one of Fleming's favourite 'locals' – find his preferred seat, marked with a plaque, in the picturesque gardens. In *You Only Live Twice* it is revealed that James Bond spent his early years, under the guardianship of an aunt, in a small cottage beside 'the attractive Duck Inn' at the 'quaintly named hamlet of Pett Bottom.' That very cottage is now part of the pub. Relax over a drink or lunch and let your imagination picture the youth that became the iconic special agent.

Bond famously journeys through East Kent to and from London, in both *Moonraker* and *Goldfinger*. Relive the routes on your very own 007 short break!

On the Moonraker trail

First up, Bond's forays to the Moonraker rocket plant on the Kent coast between Dover and Deal. Will he stop Drax launching the deadly missile on London? You may not have a 4 1/2-litre supercharged Bentley like 007, but your mission evokes plenty of intrigue: in Maidstone, where Gala Brand pinches Drax's black notebook from his pocket as he drives through the traffic; past Leeds Castle and the chilling moment when the villain forces a supercharged straight-eight red Alfa Romeo off the road; up Charing Hill, where Krebs cuts the ropes on a lorry carrying rolls of newsprint, so that they thud down onto Bond's following Bentley to make it crash.

Krebs then sits back to savour 'the spring woods full of bluebells and celandines on the way to Chilham.' It was a route Fleming knew well and loved. Roll on to Canterbury and maybe The Duck Inn at Pett Bottom for a pit stop, then to Dover with its 'wonderful cardboard castle!' Fleming enjoyed eating at the Royal Café on Dover's Bench Street and he sends Bond here – the name is changed to the Café Royal – for scrambled eggs and bacon. The real-life café has been converted into the entrance hall of the YMCA training centre, but there's no mistaking Dover's ferry terminal and port, used in the film *Diamonds Are Forever*; nor the landscapes leaping towards the Channel where *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* flies off to rescue the Potts children.

Finally, we come to a 'panorama full of colour and excitement and romance': the stretch of coast between Dover and Deal where the Moonraker research establishment is located, probably around Kingsdown. Check out The Swingate Inn, Swingate, perhaps Fleming's prompt for The World Without Want inn. And follow Bond crunching across the shingle beach with Gala Brand beneath the towering white cliffs of St Margaret's Bay. The 'corner of England where Caesar had first landed two thousand years before', embracing Walmer, Deal, Sandwich and Margate, now takes us into the world of *Goldfinger*.

On the Goldfinger trail

A change of novel also brings a quick change of car – Bond drives an Aston Martin DB III to escape London this time. Set course for Sandwich and his encounter on the links with jeweller, goldsmith and golf cheat Auric Goldfinger (if combining both trails into a circular tour, reverse the order of places that follows.)

The Historic Dockyard Chatham, film location for *Diamonds Are Forever* and *The World Is Not Enough* is worth an early detour between London and the 'dainty teleworld of Herne Bay'. Then make for 'Goldfinger-land-Reculver', the base from which the novel's baddie runs his gold smuggling business. While Bond doesn't wish to hang about, you might investigate Reculver Towers and Roman Fort before

pushing on to the 'quiet little port' of Ramsgate. Bond planned an early lunch before he was off to Sandwich, and the cafés and pubs sprinkled along Ramsgate's waterfront give you lots of choice for a scrumptious snack, too.

Then here we are again at Sandwich for the golf game at Royal St Mark's aka Royal St George's. If you don't fancy a round you can still view the venue for the Bond-Goldfinger clash from the public footpath that runs across the course from the town to the sea. And there are plenty of welcoming local hostelries where you can stay and refresh. Do you want that drink shaken or stirred?

For more 007 adventures and Ian Fleming connections in Kent, see www.visitkent.co.uk