

# MARGATE

## NO BIGGING UP REQUIRED

**T**he once-glorious and affluent seaside resort of Margate fell on hard times when the package holiday boom took off in the mid-20th century, with many of its famous attractions quickly falling into disrepair; but since the opening of Turner Contemporary on the seafront, the fortunes of 'Merry Margate' have been restored. There's a new generation of residents and visitors energising the harbour town with ideas, capitalising on its retro heritage, almost kitsch, appeal.

Having missed out on the gentrification that transformed many of the other coastal resorts, Margate is quickly catching up. Once down-at-heel Victorian and Georgian buildings now rival the smartest squares in London, tired B&Bs have been renovated and repurposed as stylish places to stay; boarded-up shops are now independent boutiques; eclectic attractions are abundant, as are wacky stores, funky art galleries and numerous award-winning restaurants – one listed in the 2018 Michelin Guide.

Since it was given a splash of colour, the 19th century stone Harbour Arm has become home to seaside bars, eateries, a seafood shack and an artist's studio. Opposite the Harbour Arm is Margate's Old Town, commonly referred to as the 'creative quarter'. It's a pretty network of quaint cobbled courtyards and streets crammed with numerous art workspaces, residential studios and galleries. There's an eclectic range of trendy cafes and bespoke bars. Sassy retro boutiques are aplenty, as are legendary vintage shops which rival, if not outdo, those in the UK's biggest cities.

A few of the best are found on the High Street, like The Proper Coffee House, for a flat-white wake-up call; across the road is Lydia's Studio Shop and Café (No 60) – a jeweller with a past in catering. Further down the road, overlooking the beach, is The Buoy and Oyster restaurant (No 44); then there's Fez (No 40), a colourful micro pub. Around the corner on Market Street is Ramsay & Williams (No 6), a beautiful antique shop; nearby is The Lifeboat (No 1) a traditional English pub.

On Market Street there's Kate & George by the







Sea for stylish ladies clothing (No 2); and a little further on is the Lombard Street Gallery (2 Lombard St) showcasing the work of a diverse range of local artists.

For divine coffee with a backstory to each roast visit The Storeroom (Unit 1D Print Works, Union Row); and for lunch head to Margate's Old Town Deli (26 Hawley St), ask Corina for her blue salad – it's crammed with homegrown goodness.

King Street rocks with playful boutiques like Madame Popoff Vintage (No 4); for quirky there's the irresistible Breuer & Dawson (No 7); Paraphernalia Antiques and Vintage (No 8) is a treasure trove for taxidermy and religious artefacts; and at Peony's (No 12) you'll find vintage inspired acrylic jewellery. Added to the mix is Hantverk & Found Gallery (No 18), a seafood café and commissioning art gallery.

The seafront has the Sunset Rock Shop (11 Marine Dr), the embodiment of bucket and spade; on The Parade is Rat Race (No 15) is a contemporary designer menswear store; The Margate Coffee Shed (No 12-13) for hand-crafted coffee and gorgeous views; Peter's Fish Factory (12 The Parade) for traditional fish and chips; on the Harbour Arm is Mannings Seafood Stall; and around the corner is Albion Stores (27 Fort Rd), a luxurious boutique filled with a carefully curated selection of contemporary clothes; and half a block away is The Kentish Pantry (1 Duke St) is a wonderful bistro focused on Kent produce.



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Margate's taken back her street cred as an artistic destination, now the appeal is growing.

On Market Place is The Curious Cup Cake Café (No 4-5), a cosy café filled with locals; across the square is a gorgeous collection of retro vintage clothes at Just Jane Vintage (No 7); and S H Cuttings (No 19) a family jewellers.

Broad Street has Eclectic Art (No 6) – a gallery displaying works by local artists; Handsome Freaks (No 10) for on-trend vintage and designer apparel; The Lightkeeper (No 8), a quirky light fittings shop; and Little Bit (No 1-3) for designer wrapping paper, tatty jewellery and bizarre gifts – each with a story to tell.

All this before you've even thought of going to one of the beaches, Turner Contemporary or the iconic Dreamland amusement park that's been reimagined for the 21st century. Forget Brighton, it's time to visit Margate.

Where to stay: Set on what was once one of the most prestigious squares in town, The Reading Rooms is a restored Georgian townhouse converted to a boutique B&B. Minimalist in style, each room takes up a whole floor, with its own dramatic views, character, immense La Maison bed, roll-top bath en-suite and fluffy robes. A delicious locally-sourced breakfast is served to your room – just the thing to wake up to. [www.thereadingroomsmargate.co.uk](http://www.thereadingroomsmargate.co.uk)



Artists, writers and musicians have long been inspired by Margate's skies, chalk rock pools, surrounding cliff edges and unspoilt sandy bays. No more famously than William Turner, the romantic 17th century artist who specialised in imaginative landscapes and turbulent, often violent, marine paintings. He first came to Margate aged 11, when his parents sent him to a school in Love Lane, in the Old Town. When he was 21 Turner returned to sketch Margate and from the 1820s became a regular visitor. More than 100 of Turner's works, including some of his most famous seascapes, were inspired by the regions coast. Margate was the starting point for his visits to Europe, and his love of the sea stayed with him all his life. AC

[www.visitthanet.co.uk](http://www.visitthanet.co.uk)

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