

## English Guide

**Norwich Castle was built by the Normans as a Royal Palace 900 years ago. Now a museum and art gallery, it has outstanding collections of art, archaeology and natural history.**

### **An Introduction to the History of Norwich Castle**

When the Normans came to England and defeated the Anglo-Saxons in 1066 (the 'Norman Conquest'), the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk were two of the most highly populated areas in England. The Normans destroyed at least ninety-eight Anglo-Saxon homes to make room for the first 'castle' in 1067 - this was a wooden fort. Soldiers lived here to keep law and order, and to stop any rebellions by the Anglo-Saxons against the Norman King, William the Conqueror.

When it was built, the artificial hill or 'motte' that the castle sat on was the largest in the country. The large stone building (or 'keep') that you see today was just one part of the castle grounds, which originally covered about 93,000m<sup>2</sup>. In the grounds were houses, industrial areas and fields for animals. The building of the stone keep was begun in about 1094 by William II (son of William the Conqueror) and finished in 1121 by the next king, his brother Henry I. The keep was built from limestone that was moved from Caen in France at huge expense. The limestone was brought up the river on boats.

The castle keep was designed as a royal palace but no Norman king ever lived in it. The only time Henry I is known to have stayed at Norwich Castle was for Christmas 1121. The castle was used instead as a centre of Norman rule for the city and surrounding area.

### **Norwich Castle as a Prison**

Around 1345 the Castle became a prison and was used as a jail for over 500 years. In 1792-93 a new purpose-built prison designed by Sir John Soane was constructed inside and around the castle keep. It soon became too small and crowded and was replaced by a third jail in 1822-27. This was designed by architect William Wilkins to reduce overcrowding and allow different kinds of prisoners to be kept apart. The last jail was converted into the museum and galleries that you see today.

### **A 'face-lift' for the castle**

Over time the Normandy limestone was worn away by the weather and, in 1834, the outside of the keep was re-covered with limestone from Bath by Anthony Salvin. He tried to keep to the same look as the original castle keep; one of the ways he did this was by cutting lines into the limestone so that it looked like the original stone blocks that the castle was built with. This changed the look of the building into what we see today.

## The Castle as a Museum

In 1883 the County Prison moved to Mousehold Heath in Norwich (where it is today). The buildings of the prison were converted into the museum, which opened in 1894; since becoming a museum Norwich Castle has been through many changes and continues to be updated today. The museum's collections of objects are recognized by the Government as being of outstanding national importance.

## Making the Castle Mall Shopping Centre

In the early 1990s an area around the castle was excavated to provide room for the Castle Mall Shopping Centre. Archeologists were involved in the dig and the excavations became the biggest of their kind in Europe. Many interesting objects from Norwich's history were uncovered, some of which can be found on display in the castle keep today.

## 2019-2021 Norwich Castle Keep Re-development

As part of the Castle Keep: Gateway to Medieval England project, the Castle Keep will be returned to its medieval splendour. During the building work (approximately autumn 2019 to 2021), the Castle Keep will be closed.

## What can you see in the museum?

### *Castle Keep*

Learn about medieval life in the castle and how the conditions for prisoners changed over time. **Please note:** the Castle Keep will be closed autumn 2019 until 2021.

### *Boudica and the Iceni*

Discover how Boudica, the great warrior queen of the Iceni, nearly succeeded in removing the Roman invaders from Britain.

### *Colman Art Galleries*

View the largest collection of landscape paintings by the Norwich School of Artists, who found inspiration in the broad skies, flat countryside and varied coastline of the Norfolk landscape.

### *Teapot Gallery*

Discover the largest collection of British teapots in the world.

### *Decorative Arts*

See locally made treasures such as silver, glass, textiles and Lowestoft Porcelain.

### *Natural History*

The Bird Gallery has examples of nearly every species found in Britain. Most of these date from the 19<sup>th</sup> century when collecting birds was the accepted way to study them. Learn how the Victorians preserved animals (taxidermy) to study them for

science and see a small part of the collection of 24,000 butterflies Margaret Fountaine donated to the collection.

### *Egyptian Gallery*

Many of the artefacts on display come from ancient Egyptian tombs and range from 2,500-4,500 years old. See the mummy of Ankh Hor, which was presented to the castle in 1928 by King George V. **Please note:** during the Castle Keep redevelopment, the Egyptian Gallery will be closed and key artefacts will be moved to another gallery.

### *Anglo-Saxon and Viking Gallery*

Discover how East Anglia became a separate kingdom under Anglo-Saxon rule and the new language, culture and style of dress they brought to Britain. It is one of the most important collections of this date in England.

### **Please be aware.....**

You can take photographs in some galleries but **not** using a **flash**.  
Food and drink should not be taken into the galleries.

### **Facilities**

#### Shop at the Castle

Norwich Castle Museum shop has a wonderful range of gifts, books, cards, crafts and souvenirs. **Please note:** during the Castle Keep redevelopment, there will be a pop-up shop available instead.

#### Café at the Castle

Our café offers a selection of teas, coffees and light meals. **Please note:** during the Castle Keep redevelopment, there will be a pop-up café available instead.

Please feel free to ask a member of staff for more information or help. We will always do our best to make you feel welcome. Enjoy your visit-and do come again soon!

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