



Oxford notes

The beautiful city of Oxford, described as the 'city of dreaming spires' has a long and colourful history waiting for you to discover. With a bustling city centre, fantastic shops, ancient pubs and an eclectic collection of restaurants, Oxford is a great place to stay and visit. It is also crammed full of impressive architecture, with the university colleges, libraries and numerous museums adding to the attractions.

The city's history is fascinating. The Romans made Oxford a pottery centre and the Oxenford, the original Saxon crossing point, gave the city its name. Alfred the Great (who burnt the cakes) developed the fortified city against the invading Danes. Richard the Lionheart (the good king in the legend of Robin Hood) was born there in 1157. During the English Civil War (1642 - 1651) Oxford became the Royalist capital of England. Charles I set up home at Christ Church, his wife Henrietta Maria kept court at the neighbouring Merton College and the Eagle and Child Tavern in St Giles served as the Exchequer.

The University of Oxford, the oldest English-speaking university in the world, is made up of over 40 fiercely independent colleges and halls, catering to 16,000 students from 130 countries in residence. It includes 40 Nobel prize-winners and 25 British Prime Ministers among its graduates.

For more general visitor information – about some of the sites in and around Oxford visit the official tourism website at <http://www.visitoxfordandoxfordshire.com/>

To get a plan of a walking tour of Oxford – with information on all the sights, download the useful guide at

<http://www.visitoxfordandoxfordshire.com/official-tours/default.aspx>

ATTRACTIONS

THE BODLEIAN LIBRARY

The Bodleian Library is the largest university library in the UK holding over nine million printed items. In its reading rooms, generations of famous scholars have studied through the ages among them 5 Kings, 40 Nobel Prize winners, 25 British Prime Ministers and writers including Oscar Wilde, CS Lewis and JRR Tolkien.

Here you can also visit the The Divinity School and see the Radcliffe Camera - Oxford's most famous building.

For more information about opening times and admission prices visit the website at <http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/about/visitors>

RADCLIFFE CAMERA

The Radcliffe Camera, a large circular building with a lofty dome, was built by James Gibbs between 1737 and 1749 with money bequeathed by John Radcliffe (1650-1714), the famous physician, and was designed to house a library endowed by Radcliffe. In 1860 the Trustees of Dr Radcliffe's will transferred all works on natural sciences to premises in the University Museum, where they formed the nucleus of what is now the Radcliffe Science Library, in South Parks Road.

The Camera itself was first lent to the Bodleian Curators and later, in 1927, the Trustees presented the freehold to the University. The exterior stonework has been cleaned and partly refaced at the expense of the Historic Buildings Appeal. The Camera now contains two reading rooms, mainly used by undergraduates. Beneath the lawn to the north is an underground bookstore, built in 1912, connected with the Camera, and, by a subway, with the Old Library.

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD COLLEGES

Oxford University is a unique and historic institution, the oldest university in the English-speaking world, having over nine centuries' continuous existence. There are 38 autonomous colleges, which together form a federation making up the University of Oxford.

Please remember that colleges are places of residence, work and study, and you are asked not to enter staircases, college rooms and areas marked as private.

Perhaps the most famous college is Christ Church whose Great Hall inspired Hogwarts Hall in the Harry Potter movie and whose meadow is grazed by rare breed cattle. But Magdalen, whose tower dominates the High Street, is equally famous. Everyone has their favourite college: St Hilda's overlooks the river, St Edmund Hall has an atmospheric crypt; Jesus' wisteria is second to none; Brasenose's gardens are stunning; Merton's library is so old that even its ghost is said to have no feet - indicating the floor level has risen; St John's has a rockery and its own Keeper of the Groves; Queen's embraces medieval cottages...and so on. Most are open to visitors in the afternoon. Some are free while others charge a small fee.

For more information about opening times and admission prices click here <http://www.visitoxfordandoxfordshire.com/thedms.aspx?dms=11&browsetype=V&groupid=8&catid=56&itemtype=173&areaid=433&nd=All&z=11&ba=A>

MUSEUMS

ASHMOLEAN MUSEUM

Founded in 1683, the Ashmolean is the most important museum of art and archaeology in the heart of Britain. The collections span the civilisations of east and west, charting the aspirations of mankind from the Neolithic era to the present day. Among its treasures are the world's largest group of Raphael drawings, the most important collection of pre-Dynastic Egyptian material in Europe, the only great Minoan collection in Britain, the greatest Anglo-Saxon collections beyond the British Museum, and the foremost collection of modern Chinese art in the Western world.

The admission is free.

For more information about opening times visit the website at <http://www.ashmolean.org/>

THE PITT RIVERS MUSEUM

The Pitt Rivers Museum displays archaeological and ethnographic objects from all parts of the world. It is a magical place, full of old Victorian-style display cabinets and hand written labels which add greatly to the dramatic atmosphere of the huge and diverse collection. Objects vary from a magnificent Tahitian mourner's costume, collected during Captain Cook's Second Voyage in 1773-74; through a wide range of handwoven textiles and looms, sculpture from all over the world in wood, pottery, metal and stone; and every visiting school-child's favourite – the shrunken heads!

The admission is free.

For more information about opening times visit the website at <http://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/>