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APM

The OMG visitor's guide to Cambridge

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Abstract

A short list of recommendations about where to eat and drink and what to see in Cambridge, written for the OMG TC meeting held at the University Arms hotel, 27th - 31st March 1995.

OMG Document number 95-3-9

APM.1442.01

Approved
External Paper

17th March 1995

Distribution:

Supersedes:

Superseded by:

Places to eat

Most Restaurants take credit cards, except where noted. Most have some vegetarian dishes.

Brown's	Trumpington St.	461655
Reasonable, straightforward food, around £10-£15 per person. Good cocktails.		
Restaurant Twenty Two	22 Chesterton Road	351880
Expensive-but-good French restaurant. Booking essential.		
Charlie Chan's	14 Regent St.	61763
Up-market Peking Chinese restaurant, close to University Arms hotel. Upstairs section the more expensive.		
Chato Singapore Restaurant	Junction of Lensfield Rd. and Regent St.	64115
Singapore chinese food. Medium to expensive.		
7a Jesus Lane	Jesus Lane	324033
A Pizza Express (one of the better British pizza restaurant chains) in the unlikely setting of an exclusive Cambridge dining club. Reasonable pizza, around £10-£15 per person.		
Pizza Express	28 St. Andrews St.	61320
The other Pizza Express restaurant in Cambridge. Basically the same food and prices as 7a, in a less extraordinary setting. Close to the University Arms.		
L'Amandier	39 Burleigh St.	518322
New French restaurant, said to be good.		
Peking	21 Burleigh St.	354755
Peking and Sichuan-style chinese cuisine.		
La Margherita	15 Magdalene St.	315232
Good independent Italian (and Italian-run) restaurant. Around £10-£15 per person.		
Maharajah	9-13 Castle St.	358399
Reasonable Tandoori Indian restaurant. Slightly expensive.		
Castle Tandoori	71 Castle St.	312569
Another reasonable Indian restaurant, further up Castle Hill than the Maharajah.		
King's Pantry	9 King's Parade	321551
Small basement vegetarian restaurant at the end of an uninviting-looking passageway.		
Hobb's pavilion	Adjacent to University Arms	67480
Everything and anything in a wholemeal flour crêpe (pancake). Very convenient for the University Arms. No bookings. One crêpe for main course, one for dessert doesn't look much, but they're deceptively filling. Around £10-£15 per person. Credit cards not accepted.		
Standard Tandoori	52 Mill Road	322423
A reasonable Tandoori Indian restaurant, as found all over the UK.		
Sala Thong	35 Newnham Rd.	323178
Small Thai restaurant a taxi ride away from the University Arms. Rather small portions.		

Pubs

- Eagle** Bene't St.
Crick and Watson seem to have formulated the structure of DNA at one of the many bars here. Has a no-smoking room (1st on right after front door).
- Bun shop** King St.
Good pub food, traditional setting.
- Tram Depot** Dover St., off East Road
Good food, reasonable beer, rather spartan. Short walk from hotel across Parker's Piece.
- Anchor** Silver St.
Large pub close to Silver St. bridge, with a view of the river. Jazz night on Wednesday.
- Mill** Mill Lane
Small bar, but convenient for the river. Go there in good weather and drink outside.
- Free Press** Prospect Row
Rather tucked-away non-smoking pub with good real ale.
- Zebra** Maids Causeway
Jazz night on Wednesday.
- Garden House Hotel Bar** Mill Lane
Expensive, spacious hotel bar with good riverside location. No locals here!

Things to see

Cambridge is famous for its university, which had its beginnings in 1209 when a group of scholars fleeing riots in Oxford settled in the town. Oxford and Cambridge were the only two English universities for the next 600 years. There's still a certain cache to an "Oxbridge" education, and a friendly rivalry between the two ancient universities, not least as to which is the older. Cantabrigans are happy to acknowledge that a university was established in Oxford during the 12th Century, but claim that the larger part of it left Oxford and came to Cambridge in 1209, from where a group later returned to Oxford. Hence, whilst England's oldest university was established in Oxford, it now lives in Cambridge (well, that's our story, and we're sticking to it).

Unlike modern campuses, these two universities consist of autonomous colleges whose separate sites are scattered throughout the town. All students are associated with a college, and most live within its precincts. Colleges tend to have only a single entrance, guarded by suited college *Porters*. Although appearing intimidating, they will usually help a (polite) lost visitor. Colleges are private institutions, but most allow visitors outside University term, and fortunately your visit falls in the Easter vacation. Some colleges charge admission to visitors. Many Porter's lodges sell postcards and histories or guides of their colleges, although you may have to ask.

A tour of Cambridge's sights is essentially a tour of the more interesting colleges.

For more information, get hold of a reasonable guidebook. The larger bookshops (such as Heffers or Dillons) stock a good selection. The Tourist information office at the end of Bene't St., close to the Guildhall is the best source of up-to-date information on current events in Cambridge, or to arrange a guided tour.

Even if you're an atheist on a tight schedule, a visit to King's college and its chapel during the hours of daylight is essential, even if only for half an hour during lunch. The chapel is undoubtedly the finest Gothic building in Europe, and its ceiling the best example of fan-vaulting anywhere. If you have time, the chapel museum is worth a visit. To experience the spectacular acoustics of the chapel, enquire at the Porter's Lodge about attending evensong.

If you have more time, I'd recommend taking a short walking tour, which could take from 2 hours to all day, depending on the pace. If you're staying at the University Arms, start by crossing the street outside the hotel and taking a few steps inside the iron gates of Downing College opposite. Downing's foundation charter was granted by George III in 1800, and its neo-classical architecture and spacious campus plan are quite unlike any other college in the University. Retrace your steps back onto Regent Street and turn left, past the University Arms towards the centre of town along St. Andrew's St. On the right, opposite Downing Street you'll find Emmanuel college, founded in 1584 on the site of a Dominican Priory, one of the monasteries dissolved by Henry VIII in the late 1530s. As you enter the college the buildings on the left are part of the original 13th Century priory (although with later façades) while opposite you across Front Court is the chapel, designed by Christopher Wren in about 1668. In its early years Emma (as it is invariably called) had a distinctly Calvinist bias, which led to friction with the established church during the conservative backlash of the 1630s. As a consequence many Emmanuel men sailed for New England at about this time, including one John Harvard who died of consumption there in 1638, leaving half his estate and 320 books to found the "schoale at Newtowne" which bears his name and which became America's first university. That settlement's first pastor (Thomas Shepherd) was also an Emmanuel man, and in his honour the town was subsequently re-named Cambridge.

On leaving Emma, cross St. Andrew's Street, and walk the rather drab length of Downing Street opposite, which in typical Cambridge fashion mysteriously becomes Pembroke Street at some undefined point. This takes you past the very recent Holiday Inn hotel, built on the site of the former mathematical laboratory, where Maurice Wilkes built the EDSAC computer in 1947/8. Also on the right of Pembroke Street is the New Museums Site, original home of the Cavendish laboratory and site of the university's physics department until the 1970s. Amongst other notable events, Lord Rutherford first split the atom here (in 1932), Chadwick discovered the neutron, and Crick and Watson uncovered the structure of DNA. The Cambridge computer laboratory has its home here.

The brick building on your left for the last few dozen yards of Pembroke Street is Pembroke College, and as you emerge onto Trumpington Street the tower diagonally to your right is the Pitt Building, designed around 1830 and named after British Prime Minister William Pitt the younger (1759-1806), who studied at Pembroke. The Pitt Building is home to the 400-year-old Cambridge University Press, the longest-established publishing house in the world. The University Department of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics (whose slightly-mangled acronym is pronounced "DampT") is located behind the Pitt building; Professor Stephen Hawkin, author of *A Brief History of Time* has his office there.

A few yards to the left of the Pitt building, across Little St. Mary's Lane, is Peterhouse, the smallest (300-odd students) and oldest Cambridge college, established in 1280 by the Bishop of Ely. Peterhouse has been located on this site since 1284, and the present college hall was built in 1286. Charles Babbage was an undergraduate here.

If you're interested in fine arts, turn left along Trumpington Street for a few hundred yards to visit the Fitzwilliam Museum. The Fitz, as it is familiarly known, is a strange agglomeration of articles, half of which are not on show to the public (more's the pity), but if you like eclectic

collections of Grand Tour curios, this is the museum for you. Fairly normal opening hours Tuesday to Saturday, but you should note that it doesn't open on Mondays and is open only in the afternoons on a Sunday. Admissions is free to the stoney-hearted, although the museum pleads poverty and request a donation of £2 per adult.

Back on the tour, turning right along Trumpington Street, past Fitzbillie's much-loved cake shop and St. Botolph's Church (whose buildings date from the 14th century), takes you along King's Parade ('KP' to the locals). Corpus Christi College (founded in 1352) is the yellow limestone building on your right. The first quadrangle that you enter (New Court) was built in 1823-7, but hidden in the far left corner is a narrow passageway into Old Court, built between 1352 & 1377, and a very well preserved example of how a medieval college would have looked.

Leave Corpus the way you came in. Opposite you is St. Catharine's College (founded 1473). Turning right up KP takes you past the end of Bene't Street on your right, where St. Bene'ts church is the oldest building in Cambridgeshire; the tower and parts of the nave date from around 1040. As you walk up KP the magnificent façade of King's college comes into view on your left. Alan Turing was at Kings, first as an undergraduate, then as a fellow, and wrote the seminal paper *On Computable Numbers* here. Step inside to visit the chapel and college grounds.

Emerging from Kings, turn left once again, up KP and past Great St. Mary's Church on your right. You may care to climb the tower to admire the view (they charge £1.50). Opposite, on your left behind the iron railings, is the Senate-House, the building where Cambridge degrees are conferred.

King's Parade becomes the much narrower Trinity Street. On the right you pass the Cambridge University Press bookshop, where books have been sold since at least 1581, while Gonville and Caius (pronounced "Keys") college is on the left. Two hundred yards further up Trinity Street on the left is Trinity College, Cambridge's largest with around 900 students in all. Like King's, Trinity was established by a King Henry, in this case Henry VIII, whose statue stands over the main gate, holding a sceptre which on closer examination turns out to be a chair leg, the legacy of a student prank in the last century. Henry set out to establish the grandest college in either Oxford or Cambridge by merging two colleges, razing a large part of the town, diverting a few streets, and then building a grand court in the resulting open space. The result, Trinity Great Court is the open space that greets you as you step through the main gate. This is the location of the race depicted in the film *Chariots of Fire*, when undergraduates attempt to run the 380 yards round the court in the 43 seconds the clock takes to strike twelve, although the race actually takes place at midnight, not midday, and that scene was actually filmed at Eton - Trinity wanted too much money.

Twenty-eight Nobel Prize winners were educated at Trinity.

On the other side of the Great Court, diagonally opposite the gatehouse where you enter, is a flight of steps leading up to the door to the hall. If you go through this door and along the short passageway, you emerge through a second door into Nevile's court. The north cloister is where Newton is said to have stamped his foot and timed the returning echo to measure the speed of sound for the first time. The building opposite you is the Wren Library, named after its designer Christopher Wren, and built in 1676-95. It is open to the public from midday until 2pm on weekdays, and is worth a visit. The library backs onto one of the finer views of the river (called the Cam where it flows through the town, by back-derivation from the name Cambridge, but elsewhere called the Granta, amongst other things). On the other side of the

Backs is the wedding-cake-like John's New Court, begun in 1824.

Leaving Trinity the way you came in, retrace your steps a little way down Trinity Street, past Heffers (the largest bookshop in Cambridge), then turn left up Green Street. If you're looking for refreshments, the Eaden Lilley coffee shop on the right hand side two thirds of the way along the street is likely to be less crowded than the rather touristy Cambridge tea shops.

The building with the prominent clock at the end of Green Street is Sidney Sussex college chapel. One of the smaller colleges, Sidney is chiefly notable for being opposite Sainsbury's supermarket (useful for the undergraduates), having Oliver Cromwell's head buried underneath its chapel, and being the victors when, as the most frequent winners of UK's *University Challenge*, they defeated a team from Harvard in the only international edition of *College Bowl*. John Conway was a fellow of Sidney Sussex college at the time he invented the "Game of Life".

If you turn right at the end of Green Street, you are about 10 minutes walk from the University Arms, along a road which successively changes its name from Sidney Street, to St. Andrew's Street, to Regent Street - elsewhere it is also called Huntingdon Road, Castle Hill, Magdalene Street, Bridge Street and Hills Road.

Further afield

The American Military Cemetery a mile or two out of town at Madingley is the last resting place for 3,811 World War II American servicemen, with a memorial to a further 5,125 with no known grave. The easiest way to visit it is to catch the Guide Friday tour bus which stops outside the University Arms.

Twenty five minutes' drive south of Cambridge, at Duxford airfield, a World War II fighter base which now houses the largest aircraft museum in Europe.

Ely, twenty minutes' drive north of Cambridge, has a celebrated cathedral.

Newmarket, twenty minutes' drive to the east, proclaims itself the horse racing centre of the world, and has the National Horseracing museum to prove it.

There are also several fine country houses owned by the National Trust, around 30 minutes' drive from Cambridge: Ickworth, Wimpole Hall, Anglesey Abbey, Audley End.