

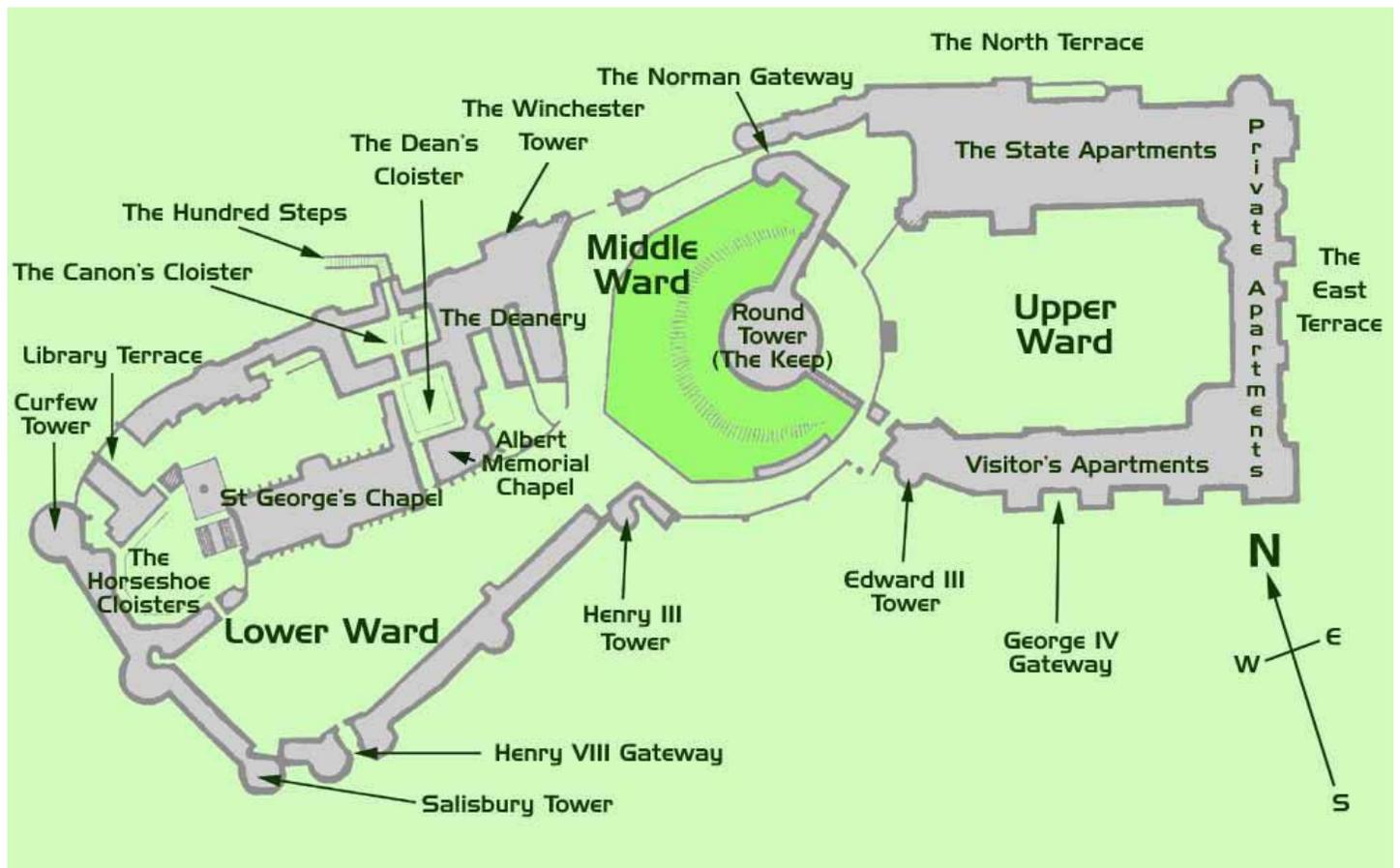
Windsor Castle

Windsor, Berkshire, SL4 1NJ

Trains:

- (1) Faster: Paddington Station terminates at Windsor Central - change of train at Slough - catch a branch line train to Windsor.
- (2) London's Waterloo station, terminates at Windsor Riverside Station (5 min. up hill)

9:30 AM – 5:15 PM (Every Day) £21



Windsor Castle is the largest inhabited castle in the world, and the oldest in continuous occupation (over 900 years). It is one of the Queen's three official residences, and is often said to be her favourite. She spends most of her private weekends at Windsor. The Royal Standard flies over the Round Tower of Windsor Castle when the Queen is in residence - at other times, the Union Jack flag flies in its place.

History

The origins of Windsor were in the **7th century Saxon settlement of Windlesora**, where the present day village of Old Windsor is located. The town of Windsor is correctly known as "New Windsor" - the word "new" being used in a strictly relative sense! Windsor Castle was first **built by William the Conqueror, following his invasion of England in 1066**. The original structure was built from timber with earth fortifications. The Castle held an obvious **strategic position on a steep hill overlooking the River Thames**, and was part of a **ring of castles around London**, with the **Tower of London, one day's march away**, at its heart.

Changing of the Guard

The Changing of the Guard is one of the highlights of a visit to Windsor. A band usually accompanies the Guards, although this is subject to weather conditions. The Guards can be watched as **they march up the High Street** and into the Castle, but to see the actual 'changing' ceremony you need to have paid to go into the Castle. The Ceremony takes place outside the Guardroom in the Lower Ward of the Castle. To watch the Guards march up the High Street takes only 10 minutes; to watch the actual ceremony inside the Castle takes about 30 minutes.

To watch the new Guards march up the High Street you need to be positioned in the **High Street at 10.50am**. Once inside the Castle, the Guards change outside the Guardroom in the **Lower Ward at 11.00am**. The sentries are changed throughout the day. The old Guards then **march back to the barracks at about 11.25am**

Saint George's Chapel

The magnificent and beautiful St George's Chapel was started in **1475** by Edward IV and was **completed fifty years later by Henry VIII**. It ranks among the finest examples of **late medieval architecture (perpendicular gothic)** in the UK. Ten monarchs are buried in the Chapel, including Henry VIII with his wife Jane Seymour. The Chapel is the **Chapel of the Most Noble Order of the Garter, Britain's highest Order of Chivalry**. The Order was founded by Edward III in 1348 and the Garter Knights are selected by the Queen. The Ceremony of the Garter is attended by the Garter Knights, the Queen and members of the Royal Family.

The State Apartments at Windsor Castle

The State Apartments are lavishly decorated formal rooms still used for state and official functions. The treasures in the Apartments include works of art by Canaletto, Holbein, Leonardo da Vinci, Rembrandt, Rubens and Van Dyck, as well as the ceilings and woodwork of the rooms themselves. Also on display is a large collection of armour, including an etched gold suit of armour made for prince Hal.

Queen Mary's Dolls' House

Mary's Dolls' House is an amazing dolls' house built on a scale of 1 to 12. It contains working lifts, running water and electricity, and took 1500 craftsmen three years to complete. Queen Mary was known as a collector of miniature objects including Fabergé animals, children's silver furniture and other examples of 'tiny craft'. This gave Princess Marie Louise an idea. She announced to her family that she would commission a dolls' house as a present for the Queen.

History

- Originally **built by William the Conqueror** in the 11th century, Windsor Castle has been a primary seat of the royal family ever since. Originally, Windsor was built at this location along the river Thames to overlook the main waterway into London. In the 12th century, the Castle complex was expanded and improved by King Henry II and became a base for King John when he was forced to hide from the population before the eventual signing of Magna Carta – at Runnymede, just near the castle.

- King Henry III heavily altered the Castle and he transformed the royal accommodation rooms into the luxurious and opulent rooms that we would today expect to exist inside a royal castle. Much of the layout of the Castle today is because of Henry's updates in the mid-13th century.

- King Edward III was born at Windsor Castle and used it primarily as his base for the rest of his reign. He is the king who established the Order of the Garter and declared Windsor as its headquarters.

- Centuries later, King Henry VI was born at Windsor (and declared Henry of Windsor) and his wife was later held hostage here by King Edward IV during the tumultuous Wars of the Roses. It was this Edward who began the construction of the present St. George's Chapel in 1475. **King Henry VII, eventual and ultimate victor of the Wars of the Roses**, completed the Chapel and began using Windsor Castle to host diplomatic events. Ultimately his son, King Henry VIII, who continue additions to the Castle and would eventually come to rest at St. George's Chapel.

- The youngest daughter of King Henry VIII, **Queen Elizabeth I, used Windsor Castle as a safe haven for crises** as it was considered the **most secure** of royal strongholds. Shakespeare makes light of the constant flow of foreign visitors in his work 'The Merry Wives of Windsor.'

- King Charles I was the one who finally turned an artistic eye to the Castle and added the much needed expansions to the complex. However, all his work was to be undone during the Civil War when the complex was seized by the Parliamentarians and totally ransacked. It is estimated that a total of 101kg – of gold and silver was taken from the Castle at this time. Charles himself would end up buried in the Chapel here – after his public execution in 1649.

- After the years of the Commonwealth under **Oliver Cromwell**, King Charles II was restored to the throne in 1660 and Windsor was the only royal residence he modernised during his 25-year reign – showing the importance of the complex at the time. It was Charles who initially brought in the idea of a French design – mimicking the grand palace of his cousin King Louis XIV of France.

- The castle fell out of royal favour during the early Hanoverian reigns but was brought back to the forefront of the royal court by King George III in the mid-18th century. George is credited with the park and gardens there today. At the end of his reign, when the King descended into madness, Windsor became his prison.

- His son, King George IV picked up the work his father had done, managing to spend double what his father did to bring the interiors of the Castle to a modern 19th century luxury design and it is a lot of his work that visitors still see today. George's niece, Queen Victoria, initially found Windsor to be 'prison-like' but she lived here with her husband and it was here that he died in 1861. **Both Victoria and her husband, Prince Albert, were eventually buried here.**

Today

Our current queen, Elizabeth II, spent the majority of her childhood here with her sister and the rooms the princesses lived in were specially reinforced during the Blitz and Windsor was considered the best place for them to stay during the bombings. Since the beginning of her reign, Queen Elizabeth has used Windsor as her principal weekend home.

St. George's Chapel is where the Queen invests new members of the Knights of the Garter, a tradition that still continues, and it is in that chapel that the Queen's son, Charles, Prince of Wales, married the Duchess of Cornwall. Every year from March/April the Queen takes up official residence here at Windsor Castle known as 'Easter Court.' During this time period, the Queen has 'Dine and Sleeps' where guests, including politicians and public figures, are invited to a banquet...and sleep over!

Middle Ward and Round Tower

The Middle Ward is in the centre of the Castle complex. The Middle Ward is based around an **artificial hill** in the centre of complex. On top of the man-made hill is the **Round Tower** – based on an original 12-th century building that stood here. The Round Tower is perhaps the most dominating feature of Windsor Castle and currently holds part of the Royal Archives. The Middle Ward is guarded by a Norman Gate house dating from the 14th century.

State Apartments

The State Apartments follow **the floor plan of the original medieval foundations** dating from King Edward III. Most of the interior dates from the Victorian era but comprises architectural styles spanning over the centuries, including the **Rococo Louis XV styled rooms**, holding classic works of art and tapestries. These are the rooms where the Queen entertains high profile guests throughout the years and includes reception and dining rooms.

St. George's Chapel

The spiritual **home of the Order of the Knights of the Garter**, St. George's Chapel dates from the 15th century and has seen centuries of royal history. There is a window here built by **King Henry VIII** for his first wife, Katherine of Aragon and he is, in fact, **buried here with his third wife, Jane Seymour**. Closer to present day, this is also where the Queen's parents – King George VI and Elizabeth, the Queen Mother – are buried.

The Home Park

The Home Park is on the edge of Windsor Great Park which spans over 4,800 acres. It borders the prestigious **Eton College** and holds some of the oldest broadleaved woodlands in all of Europe. Two working farms are contained in the parkland and it is a favourite location of the Queen who used to frequently ride her horses here.