

Sunday Times  
Sunday, October 14th, 2018

# Margate travel guide: Great British Break

It's retro, arty and hip — with chippies and a theme park, too



Magic circle: Dreamland has new rides as well as vintage favourites

## Why?

The creatives have moved into Margate, bringing an arty renaissance to a once drab town. Tracey Emin recently announced that she would be opening a studio and, improbable as it sounds, the indie band the Libertines are planning a hotel; neither project has an opening date as yet. You can still get your two penn'orth in the classic arcades, but there's also buckets and spades of new-wave charm: modern galleries, edgy cafes, upmarket restaurants and a revamped retro theme park. All workable in autumn, too.

## What you do

Start with the art. There's a reason JMW Turner loved Margate, and it wasn't just because of his affair with the widow whose guesthouse once stood where **Turner Contemporary** is sited. The area had, he said, the "loveliest skies in all Europe", depicted in more than 100 of his works. See these dramatic scenes for yourself from the panoramic windows of the white-box gallery, which dominates the skyline. Current exhibits include work by Cornelia Parker and, from Friday, Patrick Heron and Akram Zaatari. You'll have to wait until January to see Turner's masterpieces, with 20 of his paintings going on show (free; [turnercontemporary.org](http://turnercontemporary.org)).



The Turner Contemporary

You'll have worked up an appetite, so cross the road to **Peter's Fish Factory**. Even in autumn the queue often snakes out front, but you'll get cracking fish and chips for about a fiver. Then walk the narrow streets of the **Old Town**, lined with cosy cafes, vintage shops and modern homewares. Try **Ramsay & Williams** for ice cream and antiques, the **Greedy Cow** for real hot chocolate ([thegreedycow.co.uk](http://thegreedycow.co.uk)) and **Môr** for stylish designs ([mormargate.com](http://mormargate.com)). Next, head to **Haeckels**, a beauty store and treatment room opposite the derelict lido. The products are made with seaweed plucked from the beach ([haeckels.co.uk](http://haeckels.co.uk)).

Margate's famous tidal pools are rather bracing at this time of year. There's one on **Margate Sands**, but the local favourite is at **Walpole Bay**, a mile east. Built in 1937, it's the largest saltwater pool in the UK.

The **Dreamland** theme park is the spot for thrill-seekers. Opened in 1921, it fell into disrepair, but was brought back to life in 2015, only to go into administration. It's now back, more revived and retro than ever, with new rides and the 1920s wooden rollercoaster fully restored (from £5; rides close in November; [dreamland.co.uk](http://dreamland.co.uk)). Finish the day with a round of indoor crazy golf at the **Flamingo Arcade**, just along the promenade (£7; [lostislandgolf.co.uk](http://lostislandgolf.co.uk)).

"Cecil", an Iron Age man whose remains were found at the nearby Fort Hill burial site, can be seen at the **Margate Museum** (£2; open Wednesdays and weekends; [margatemuseum.org](http://margatemuseum.org)). Or take the five-mile walk along the **Thanet Coastal Path** from Margate to Broadstairs and get the Loop bus back (£2.20).



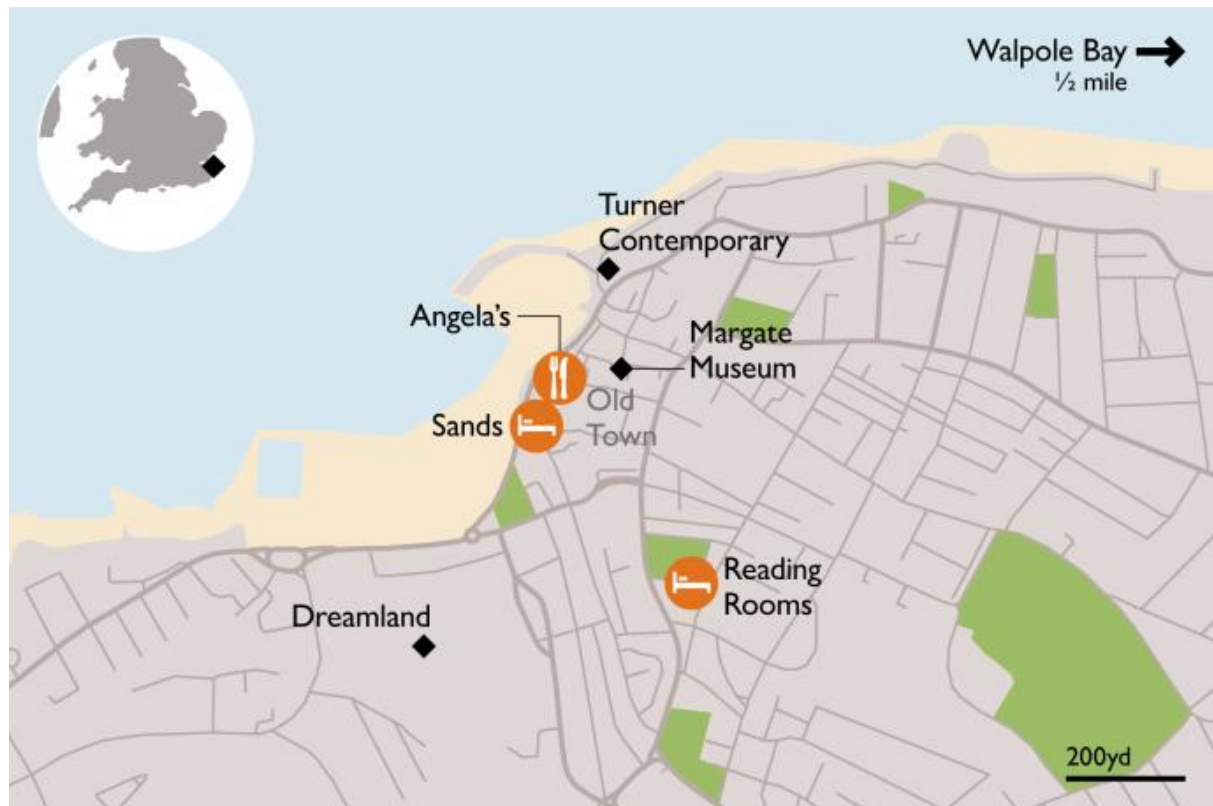
Walpole Bay tidal pool

### Where you eat

Book ahead for a table at **Angela's**, in the Old Town. Don't be fooled by the simple exterior: it serves top-notch seafood dishes such as halibut and peppers in shellfish sauce ([angelasofmargate.com](http://angelasofmargate.com); mains from £12). For lunch, try the beetroot tart or mac and Kentish cheese at **BeBeached**, on the Harbour Arm (mains from £8; [bebeached.co.uk](http://bebeached.co.uk)).

### Where you stay

The decor at the **Sands** hotel could do with a little sprucing up, but you can't argue with the setting or the spectacular sea views. It's worth paying a bit more for room 16, on the top floor — from the private balcony, we could see the entire expanse of Margate Sands. There's a roof terrace, too (doubles from £120, B&B; [sandshotelmargate.co.uk](http://sandshotelmargate.co.uk)). Or try the **Reading Rooms**, a restored Georgian townhouse turned B&B, with three elegant rooms each covering an entire floor. It has bags of original features and the beach is five minutes away (doubles from £170, B&B; [thereadingroomsmargate.co.uk](http://thereadingroomsmargate.co.uk)).



*Kate Leahy was a guest of the Sands hotel*