

Fascinating Westgate facts!

1 You are standing in the largest surviving medieval urban gateway in England, built around 1380.



2 The principal organiser of the famous voyage of the *Mayflower* (the ship that carried the Pilgrim Fathers to America in 1620) was held prisoner in a cell leading off this chamber.



3 When Westgate was a prison, several inmates tried to escape by jumping off the roof. Records show some were successful, most were not.



4 The two knights guarding this room are the original sculptors' sketch models of statues adorning the walls in the House of Lords chamber.

5 The room where you now stand has been a guard room, a prison, a chapel, a museum, an archive store, and a Civil Defence Command Post.

6 During World War II, Westgate's external walls were used as a billboard for the display of wartime messages.

7 After admitting responsibility for the murder of Archbishop Thomas Becket in 1170, King Henry II walked barefoot along the road beneath you, passing through the original West Gate.



8 Felt queasy on your way here? Perhaps it was because you passed over the site of the 'New Drop' gallows where public hangings took place in the early 19th century.

9 This building was one of the first in the country to be designed specifically to accommodate defensive artillery.

10 In 1450, the severed head of Thomas Cheyny, a fuller from Canterbury executed for playing a prominent role in Jack Cade's rebellion, was displayed on a spike on the battlements above your head.

11 Westgate served to keep out more than enemy soldiers: one of the ancient houses across the River Stour was allowed to accommodate '10 prostitutes' - women not permitted to work within the City!

12 This building, a Grade I listed, Scheduled Monument, is the only one of Canterbury's seven City gates still standing.

13 Curiously, the 61 steps of Westgate's spiral staircase turn in the opposite direction to that normally found in defensive structures.



14 Queen Victoria rode through the Westgate below your feet in a carriage in 1842. Several other monarchs, including Henry V, Henry VIII, Elizabeth I, James II, George V, George VI, and Princess Elizabeth (the future Elizabeth II) have also passed beneath its historic arches.



15 The world-famous JMW Turner is just one of the many artists who have painted the Westgate over the past six centuries.