

**B**oasting charm, culture, and the very best of the coast and surrounding rolling South Downs countryside, the historic Roman city of Chichester not only constantly tops the best places to live in Britain lists but has both class and a heart.

Indeed, *Chichi* – as it's known locally – has so much to offer, including an elegant harbour, the country's only yew forest and the dreamy dunes of The Witterings nearby, that it has been described as 'sunshine in bricks and mortar' by *The Guardian*, and praised for keeping residents 'young at heart in historic surroundings' by *The Times*. In fact, the harbour city has been showered with accolades from *The Times*' Best Place to Live 2023, the happiest in the Happy at Home survey the year before, and now the safest by Alliance Security, who praised Chichester for its 'rich history and vibrant community' as well as low crime rates. Throw in a pretty market centre bursting with High Street favourites – there's even a Co-op in a Grade-II listed building – independent stores and boutiques and a farmers' market in East Street on the first and third Friday of the month and what's not to love?

The influence of the Romans is literally everywhere. From the city walls, which are the most intact Roman walls in southern England, to the remain of the baths in The Novium Museum and an amphitheatre in a city park through to the quadrant streets converging on the Grade I-listed 15th-century Market Cross, where farmers could once sell their eggs and vegetables toll-free and sheltered from the elements, it's like walking through history in the city the Romans called *Noviomagus* or new marketplace.

But Chichester doesn't rest on its historic laurels – there is a strong modern cultural scene. The Chichester Festival Theatre, whose first artistic director was Sir Laurence Olivier, is now under the guidance of Justin Audibert from London's Unicorn Theatre and shows everything from comedy to Shakespeare.

If it's a Hamilton or a Hepworth you're longing to see, step inside the internationally recognised Pallant House Gallery, which is a celebration of British art housed in one of the most important 18th-century townhouses in England. Take a look at a Damien Hirst,



PHOTO: CHICHESTER CATHEDRAL

Chichester Cathedral has a packed year of events to celebrate its 950th anniversary

browse the book shop or drink in the arty atmosphere in the café. [pallant.org.uk](http://pallant.org.uk)

And for entertainment of a different kind, why not head to one of the local vineyards as the area has the perfect terroir for creating Sussex wine? Make a romantic toast this Valentine's on a tour of Tinwood Estates where you can explore the vineyard and taste award-winning English sparkling wines. A grape-to-glass journey includes three glasses of Tinwood Sussex Sparkling wine as you are guided through the flavours, smells, and food pairings of each wine for £21. Indulge in a three-course Valentine's Day dinner on either Friday, February 14, or Saturday, February 15, with a glass of Tinwood Rosé on arrival for £65 per person. [tinwoodestate.com](http://tinwoodestate.com)

Goodwood Estate is a short drive from Chichester and hosts The Festival of Speed, one of the largest motorsport events in the world, which roars into gear from July 10-13 while Qatar Goodwood Festival, the horseracing event previously known as Glorious Goodwood, is hot to trot from July 29. Dog-lovers will adore Goodwoof, the ultimate doggy festival which celebrates everything we love about our canine

companions, which is on May 17-18, while vintage car and fashion enthusiasts can get revved up for Goodwood Revival. The three-day festival, from September 12-14, celebrates the halcyon days of motor racing with the accompanying glamour of the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. [goodwood.com](http://goodwood.com)

Even more visitors are due to flock to Chichester this year as the cathedral – the only one in the country with a surviving detached medieval bell tower – celebrates its 950th anniversary. Visitors will be able to see the cathedral's Chagall stained-glass window, and neighbouring, secret Bishop's Palace Gardens along with an exhibition exploring nine centuries of Sussex history revealing stories of 'resilience, rebellion and reformation.' Running from Valentine's Day until November 15, the exhibition features artefacts and treasures from across the Diocese since the cathedral was built in 1075. It includes medieval bishops' rings, a 12th-century reliquary, and a Bible carried into the trenches during World War I. Other events taking place as part of Chichester950 include a concert marking the 60th anniversary of Leonard Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms* on Saturday, May 17, a candlelit gala concert with the Cathedral Choir on Saturday, October 11, and a concluding immersive light and sound installation show from October 24-31. [chichester950.org.uk](http://chichester950.org.uk)

Away from the city, families can enjoy the harbour, watersports at the nearby beaches, and walking in the Downs. There are plenty of schools to choose from – with Great Ballard School, a top independent, taking in pupils from nursery until sixth form (see page 59).

For a breath of fresh air, the surrounding countryside offers up a hiking trial through Kingley Vale National Nature Reserve that is so beautiful it is said to have inspired the hymn *Jerusalem* (see page 62). >



PHOTO: CHRIS JONSON

Pallant House Gallery



PHOTO: TINWOOD ESTATE

Tinwood Lodges

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## MUST DO

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### CHICHESTER CATHEDRAL

Celebrate 950 years of this stunning cathedral at *Together in Unity* on Saturday, May 17, which features a new choral composition specially commissioned for the anniversary. *TrinityFest on the Green* on Sunday June 15 offers a vibrant celebration marking the Feast of the Holy Trinity, to which the cathedral is dedicated.

The whole family will find the *Religion, Rebellion and Reformation* exhibition fascinating where they can see a soldier's Bible from World War I and the SS Mendi Memorial Stick commemorating lives lost in wartime. Visitors can also learn about Reverend Arthur Wagner, who was a Brighton philanthropist committed to uplifting the lot of the city's poor communities.

[chichester950.org.uk](http://chichester950.org.uk)



PHOTO: CHICHESTER CATHEDRAL

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## MUST SEE

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### KINGLEY VALE NATURE PARK

Marvel at the grove of ancient yew trees at Kingley Vale which are said to be among the oldest living things in Britain. Spot red

kites, buzzards, and green woodpeckers soaring above the grove, and fill your lungs with fresh, country air as you explore the National Nature Reserve. The terrain can be

steep and bumpy so isn't recommended for wheelchairs. Work up an appetite or quench your thirst afterwards at the nearby Horse & Groom pub. ●