

Market Harborough: Market Town Near The Loft for Relaxing Day Trips

Nestled in the heart of Leicestershire, Market Harborough is a charming market town full of history and scenic beauty, offering a peaceful escape just a short distance from The Loft. Whether you're a history enthusiast, a nature lover, or simply looking for a relaxing retreat, this picturesque town has something for everyone. From its fascinating local heritage to tranquil nature walks, Market Harborough provides the perfect backdrop for a leisurely day out.

In this article, we'll take you through what makes Market Harborough a must-visit destination, highlighting the town's unique attractions and hidden gems, like [Welland Park](#). Plus, we'll share tips on how to make the most of your day trip from [The Loft](#), ensuring you enjoy all that this delightful town has to offer.

Exploring the Rich History and Charm of Market Harborough



Market Harborough is a historic market town located in the Harborough district of Leicestershire, close to the Northamptonshire border. With a population of 24,779 as of the 2021 census, it serves as the administrative headquarters for the district. Established in the 12th century, the town has evolved from a small Saxon village called **Hæfera-beorg** to a thriving market town.

Key Highlights:

- **Population:** 24,779 (2021 Census)
- **Location:** Near the border of Northamptonshire, Leicestershire
- **Historical Significance:** Founded in the 12th century
- **Current Role:** Administrative headquarters of Harborough district
- **Transport Links:** Served by Market Harborough railway station with direct services to cities like Leicester, Nottingham, and London.

The town's proximity to the Grand Union Canal, combined with its connection to major roadways like the A6 and A14, has helped it grow into a vibrant community while retaining its historical charm. For families looking to stay in the area, there are several great options for the [best family hotels near Market Harborough](#), offering both comfort and easy access to the town's attractions. Whether you're visiting for leisure or exploring the historical sites, you'll find a range of accommodations that cater to your needs.

Historic Landmarks and Architectural Gems

Market Harborough boasts an array of historical landmarks that reflect its rich past. The towering steeple of **St Dionysius' Church**, which rises directly from the street, is one of the town's most iconic features. Built in 1300, with the church itself dating back to 1470, the church and its surroundings remain a focal point of the town's identity.

Other notable landmarks include:

- **The Old Grammar School:** Built in 1614, this charming timber building represents the town's educational history.
- **High Street:** Lined with unspoiled Georgian buildings and a blend of modern-day shops, cafes, and pubs, making it perfect for a leisurely exploration.
- **Market Squares:** Pedestrianized and surrounded by various architectural styles, offering a lively atmosphere for visitors.

These landmarks make Market Harborough a wonderful place to explore, where history and modern amenities exist side by side.

The Town's Connection to the Grand Union Canal

Another key feature of Market Harborough is its close relationship with the **Grand Union Canal**. The canal, once essential for the town's industrial development, now serves as a tranquil escape for both locals and visitors.

- **Canal Walks:** Take a peaceful stroll along the towpath, enjoying the natural beauty and historic views.
- **Boat Trips:** Visitors can explore the canal by boat for a unique perspective of the town.
- **Historical Significance:** The canal contributed to Market Harborough's industrial growth and continues to be an important part of the town's heritage.

The canal adds an element of serenity and offers a glimpse into the town's past, making it a perfect spot for nature lovers and history enthusiasts alike.

A Snapshot of Market Harborough's Past

Market Harborough's history is rich with fascinating events, from its Saxon origins to its role in the English Civil War. The town was once part of **Rockingham Forest**, a royal hunting ground used by medieval monarchs.

Noteworthy historical points:

- **1204:** Market established and has been held on Tuesdays since 1221.
- **King's Army HQ:** During the English Civil War, the town became the headquarters of the King's Army before the **Battle of Naseby**.
- **18th Century Development:** Transition from timber and thatch buildings to brick structures, shaping the town's modern architectural identity.

From its medieval roots to its involvement in key historical events, Market Harborough has a rich tapestry of history that continues to shape its identity today. The town's evolution from a Saxon village to a vibrant market town adds to its charm and makes it an intriguing destination for visitors seeking to experience history, culture, and scenic beauty.

Best Things to Do in Market Harborough

Market Harborough may be compact, but it's packed with fun; expect a visit you won't soon forget. Think charming shops, maybe a local festival, or a delicious pub lunch. This area has it all: a fascinating history, beautiful scenery, great food, and fun shopping. What more could you want? Looking for a peaceful stroll or a fun-filled adventure? This town's got you covered. Plenty to do! Here are best things to do in Market Harborough that will ensure your time here is well spent.

1. Foxton Locks: A Historic Engineering Marvel



Foxton Locks is a must-visit for history enthusiasts and nature lovers alike. This iconic lock system, consisting of ten locks, has been in operation for over 200 years, standing as a symbol of British engineering and industrial heritage. The impressive locks allow canal boats to navigate the significant elevation difference along the Grand Union Canal, a marvel of the Victorian era.

The site includes the fascinating Foxton Canal Museum, which offers engaging exhibits on the history of the locks, the inclined plane, and the industrial revolution. It's a perfect place to dive into the history of canal engineering and explore the intricacies of this waterway. Visitors can also enjoy scenic walks, lush gardens, and stop by the charming Foxton Locks Inn for a bite to eat.

Things to Do at Foxton Locks:

- **Take a Walk Along the Canal:** Stroll along the peaceful canal, enjoying the beautiful views and historic surroundings.
- **Visit the Foxton Locks Inn:** Enjoy a meal at this quaint pub while soaking in the atmosphere.
- **Picnic in the Gardens:** Relax in the tranquil gardens that surround the locks, offering the perfect spot for a peaceful picnic.
- **Experience the Foxton Inclined Plane:** Although no longer operational, the inclined plane that was once part of the canal system is a fascinating historical feature to explore.
- **Learn About Canal Engineering:** Gain insight into the challenges and triumphs of canal building and operation during the Industrial Revolution.
- **Photograph the Lock System:** Capture the beauty of the lock system, offering plenty of photo opportunities.

Why Visit Foxton Locks?

- **Historical Significance:** A landmark of industrial heritage and a place to understand the engineering marvels of the 19th century.
- **Nature and Scenic Views:** A perfect spot for a relaxing day out, offering beautiful walks along the canal and through picturesque landscapes.

2. Farndon Fields Farm Shop



Nestled in the heart of the countryside, **Farndon Fields Farm Shop** is a true gem for food lovers and those seeking the best of locally sourced produce. This award-winning farm shop is a paradise for anyone who appreciates fresh, organic ingredients, homegrown goodness, and a taste of the region's finest offerings. Whether you're on a mission to find high-quality ingredients or simply looking for a peaceful escape, Farndon Fields has something for everyone.

Why Visit?:

Farndon Fields is more than just a shop – it's a culinary experience. Here, you'll discover a wide range of organic, seasonal produce, all grown or sourced locally. From freshly picked vegetables and fruits to homemade bakery delights, every item on offer tells a story of quality and sustainability. If you're passionate about food, you have to go here. It showcases the best this region has to offer.

Things to Do:

Make your way to the cozy café for a relaxing meal made with the freshest ingredients straight from the farm shop. Whether you're enjoying a comforting lunch or sipping on a freshly brewed cup of coffee, the stunning countryside views create the perfect backdrop for your visit. Don't leave without

treating yourself to one of their signature homemade cakes or pastries – they're the perfect sweet finish to your experience.

Perfect For:

Food lovers, families, and those who appreciate sustainable, ethical shopping. Whether you're stocking up on the best local produce or simply enjoying a leisurely afternoon in a beautiful setting, Farndon Fields offers a memorable experience that connects you with the very best of the region.

3. Harborough Museum



If you're into history and Market Harborough's amazing past, plan a trip to the Harborough Museum. It's a must-see! Located in the former **R & W H Symington corset factory**, the museum offers a fascinating journey through the town's industrial past, archaeology, and local history. Preserving our history is what this museum has done since 1983. It's a place where history comes alive; engaging exhibits offer a unique and interactive experience. The past becomes present through these displays.

A highlight of the exhibit is the internationally important Hallaton Treasure. Imagine: over 5,000 Roman coins (gold and silver!), helmets, and other amazing things from the Roman occupation of Britain. Nearby Hallaton yielded some pretty amazing stuff, and you can see it all—along with other local treasures—at the museum. It's a must-see! Hidden church toys from the 1600s, archaeological finds from the area, the famous Liberty bodice, and the Symington corset company's story are all on display at the museum.

Things to Do at Harborough Museum:

- **Explore the Hallaton Treasure:** View one of the most important Iron Age discoveries in Britain, including silver coins, a Roman helmet, and a silver cup.
- **Learn About Local History:** Discover the fascinating history of the Symington corset company, the Liberty bodice, and other local industries that shaped the region.
- **See the 17th-Century Toys:** Admire a unique collection of toys, including whip-tops and tip-cats, found in the St. Dionysius Church.
- **Participate in Workshops:** Engage with seasonal workshops and interactive displays that allow you to learn about Market Harborough's past in an immersive way.
- **Discover Archaeological Finds:** Explore the fascinating range of archaeological discoveries from the local area that highlight the town's deep historical roots.
- **Enjoy Temporary Exhibitions:** The museum regularly updates its displays, offering new and exciting exhibitions that bring fresh insights into the town's rich heritage.

Why Visit Harborough Museum?

- **Rich Historical Significance:** With its impressive collection of Roman, medieval, and industrial artifacts, Harborough Museum provides a deep dive into the region's fascinating past.
- **Family-Friendly:** The museum's interactive exhibits and workshops make it an engaging destination for families, offering both education and entertainment for all ages.
- **Archaeological Wonders:** If you're interested in archaeology, the museum is home to some of the most important local discoveries, including the Hallaton Treasure.

4. St Dionysius Church



St. Dionysius Church in Market Harborough is a beautiful old building. Its architecture and stained glass are amazing. Dating back to the 13th century, this Grade I listed church has served as a central part of the town's life for centuries. Impressive stone carvings and tiny details on the church prove the

skill of medieval craftspeople. The stained-glass windows are full of stories—a colorful record of the past.

Looking for a tranquil spot? History buffs and architecture fans will love St. Dionysius Church. It's a gorgeous, peaceful place to relax and reflect. The craftsmanship is breathtaking. Notice the vibrant colors and historical details in the medieval and Victorian stained-glass windows. Escape the noise.

Things to Do at St Dionysius Church:

- **Admire the Stained-Glass Windows:** Take in the beauty of the **stunning stained-glass windows** that illuminate the church with vibrant colors and depict biblical stories and local heritage.
- **Explore the Church's Architecture:** Discover the impressive architecture, from its **13th-century stonework** to the magnificent **tower**, which offers a glimpse into the church's rich history.
- **Attend Services or Events:** Join the local congregation for one of the regular church services or take part in community events, often held in the church.
- **Take a Guided Tour:** Learn more about the church's fascinating history, the architectural elements, and its place in Market Harborough's heritage.

Why Visit St Dionysius Church?

- **Rich Historical Significance:** A perfect spot for history buffs, the church has been an integral part of Market Harborough's past and continues to serve as a vibrant place of worship and community gathering.
- **Architectural Beauty:** The church's Gothic architecture is breathtaking; its stained-glass windows are amazing. Architecture lovers should visit.
- **Peaceful Atmosphere:** Whether for a quiet moment of reflection or a peaceful retreat, the church's tranquil ambiance makes it a lovely place to pause and take in the surroundings.

5. Harborough Theatre

The Harborough Theatre has become a staple of the local cultural scene. This community spot boasts a 4.7-star Google rating and features live shows, movies, and stand-up comedy all in one place.

Looking for a fun, cultural experience? This is the place!

Originally serving as a theater for local talent, Harborough Theatre now offers a diverse lineup of performances. Love plays? Comedy your thing? Maybe you prefer the classics?. Market Harborough's best entertainment is at this venue! They show National Theatre broadcasts and movies, plus, of course, live shows.

What Makes It Special?

- **High Rating:** With **4.7 stars** from Google reviewers, it's a venue that consistently earns praise for its welcoming environment and high-quality shows.
- **Diverse Events:** Enjoy a wide variety of performances, from theater to stand-up, or relax with a classic film screening.
- **Community Focus:** The theater gives local talent the opportunity to shine, contributing to the vibrant arts scene in the town.

Things to Do at Harborough Theatre

- Watch a **live performance**—there's always something on, whether it's a comedy show or a theater production.
- **Catch a classic film** or attend one of the **cinema screenings** featuring live broadcasts from prestigious theater productions.
- **Experience the local culture** through seasonal events and productions by local talent.

6. Brampton Valley Way



The Brampton Valley Way is a scenic, traffic-free cycling and walking route that connects Market Harborough and Northampton. This picturesque trail is perfect for a relaxing countryside escape, offering a mix of history, nature, and outdoor adventure.

Why Visit?

The Brampton Valley Way follows one of the longest dismantled railway paths in the country and was officially opened for recreational use in 1993. Whether you're looking for a family-friendly day out, a peaceful stroll, or a leisurely bike ride, this route provides the ideal setting.

Things to Do on the Trail:

- **Scenic Walks & Cycling:** Enjoy a well-maintained path through rolling countryside and woodlands.

- **Explore Oxenden Tunnel:** Walk through this eerie, historical tunnel—don't forget your torch!
- **Detour to Local Attractions:** Visit nearby Kelmarsh Hall, Brixworth Country Park, and Lamport Steam Railway for even more adventure.

Perfect For:

- **Nature Lovers:** Breathe in the fresh countryside air and take in the stunning views.
- **Outdoor Enthusiasts:** Whether you're cycling, running, or walking, this trail is a fantastic way to stay active.
- **Families & History Buffs:** Kids will love the adventure of walking through tunnels, while history enthusiasts can appreciate the railway heritage.

Swap the bustling city streets for the tranquility of the Brampton Valley Way and enjoy one of the best outdoor experiences near Market Harborough

How to Get to Market Harborough from The Loft:

Directions from The Loft, Longhold Road, Rectory Farm, Clipston, Northamptonshire, LE16 9RF
Market Harborough is just a short drive away from The Loft, making it a perfect destination for a relaxing day trip. At only a 10 to 15-minute drive, you can easily escape to this picturesque town and enjoy its charm.

Here's how to get there:

- **By Car:**
 - Start from **Longhold Road**, heading out of Rectory Farm towards Clipston Road (B670).
 - The drive takes approximately 10 to 15 minutes, depending on traffic, and will bring you directly into Market Harborough.

- Once you arrive, you can easily find parking in the town's various car parks.
- **Public Transport:**
 - **By Train:**
 - From **Market Harborough Railway Station**, there are regular services to and from nearby cities, including Leicester, London, and Northampton. It's well-connected and easy to navigate from the station into the heart of Market Harborough.
 - **By Bus:**
 - Buses also run between Market Harborough and nearby areas. You can check local routes for the most convenient option.

Best Time to Visit Market Harborough:

Enjoy Every Season

There's always something to do in Market Harborough, no matter the season. Every time of year offers different things to see and do. This charming market town offers something special every season: bright autumn leaves, springtime flowers, or the cozy cheer of winter.

Spring: A Time for Blossoms and Mild Weather

Spring in Market Harborough is a magical time when the town and surrounding countryside come to life with blooming flowers and fresh greenery. The weather is mild, making it perfect for outdoor activities like walking along the canal, exploring the town's historic sites, or enjoying the local gardens. This is also when you can enjoy outdoor markets and events that start to pop up.

Summer: Lush Greenery and Outdoor Fun

Summer is an excellent time to visit if you're looking to experience the lush greenery of the countryside. Sunshine and warmth are typical here, making it perfect for enjoying Market Harborough's outdoor spaces—think scenic parks, relaxing canal walks, and even a trip to Foxton Locks. Lots of fun stuff happens outdoors in the summer! Farmers' markets, festivals, and other events liven things up.

Autumn: Vibrant Fall Colors and Crisp Air

Autumn is one of the most beautiful times of the year in Market Harborough. The surrounding countryside bursts into vibrant hues of red, orange, and gold as the leaves change color. The cooler

temperatures make it perfect for exploring on foot or by bike, and there's nothing quite like a warm drink at a cozy local café after a day of sightseeing.

Winter: Festive Charm and Cozy Ambiance

Winter brings a magical charm to Market Harborough, particularly around the Christmas season. Christmas markets sparkle with local crafts, gifts, and delicious holiday goodies; the whole town glows with festive lights. Cozy up in a traditional pub or tearoom; the cooler weather makes it ideal. Escape to Market Harborough this winter for some peace and holiday cheer!

Tips for a Great Visit to Market Harborough

A peaceful town brimming with history. Visit the local markets and immerse yourself in the beautiful countryside nearby. It's the perfect spot for a relaxing escape. Maximize your visit with these simple suggestions. A better trip is just a few steps away.

- **Wear Comfortable Shoes:** Market Harborough is perfect for walking, so comfortable footwear is a must to explore the town and surrounding areas.
- **Visit on Market Days (Wednesdays & Saturdays):** The town's markets offer fresh produce, local goods, and a lively atmosphere that shouldn't be missed.
- **Enjoy the Local Cuisine:** The town is home to cozy pubs and restaurants offering hearty, traditional meals and regional specialties.
- **Plan for All Weather:** Be prepared for varying weather by packing for all seasons, especially if you're planning to spend time outdoors.
- **Take Time to Relax:** Market Harborough has a laid-back vibe, so be sure to enjoy the calm pace by resting in local gardens or cafes.
- **Check Out the Local Shops:** Browse independent boutiques, galleries, and antique shops for unique items and souvenirs.
- **Take Advantage of Local Events:** Depending on when you visit, enjoy local festivals and cultural events for a true taste of the town's community spirit.
- **Embrace the Pace of the Town:** Slow down and enjoy the relaxed atmosphere, perfect for unwinding and exploring at your own pace.

Book Your Stay at The Loft – Luxury Countryside Retreat



Escape to The Loft, a luxurious countryside retreat located in the heart of Northamptonshire. The Loft is great for anything! Family reunions, friend trips, or even a quiet escape for yourself—it's the ideal spot to unwind and explore.

Why Choose The Loft?

- **Ideal Location:** Just 10-15 minutes from Market Harborough, offering easy access to local attractions while maintaining a peaceful, secluded atmosphere.
- **Spacious and Comfortable:** With ample space for family and friends, enjoy luxurious amenities, a fully-equipped kitchen, and cozy living spaces.
- **Stunning Countryside Views:** Relax in the serene countryside, with breathtaking views and peaceful surroundings.
- **Perfect for Relaxation:** Whether it's unwinding in the garden, exploring the local trails, or enjoying quality time together, The Loft offers the perfect environment for rest and rejuvenation.

[Book Now](#) and experience the tranquility and luxury that only The Loft can provide.

