

## KEN BENNETT TAKES A COACH TRIP THROUGH LINCOLNSHIRE



“I’ve been mucking out the horses with the children.”

Not your average aristo, our Emma. Very much a smiling, highly industrious hands-on girl. We are taking lunch of sublime pheasant and lordly sticky toffee pudding at Belvoir Castle, the wonderful home she shares with her husband, their four children and a heritage stretching back a thousand years.

From the noble heights of Belvoir – it’s French for beautiful view and they pronounce it Beaver here – you could, at one time, look out 38 miles in any direction and you’d still be viewing the Rutland estate.

We had arrived in unhurried style by coach, toddling over the border from Lincolnshire, which was our base for a three-day visit to appropriately titled Hidden England. Coaches here are the new train: restful havens where you chat to fellow travellers over a cup of coffee, safe in the knowledge the cavern-sized boot has more than enough room for any amount of luggage.

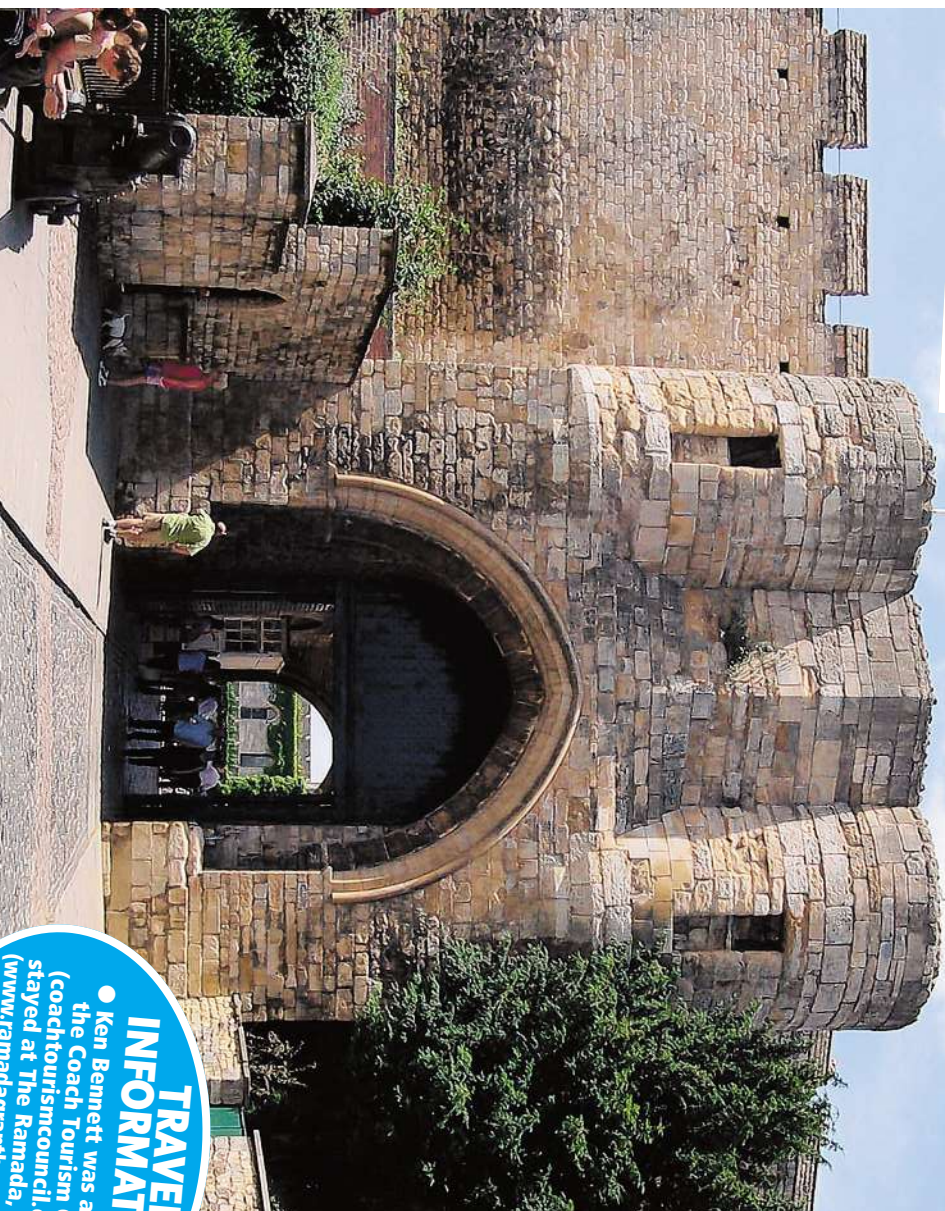
The Coach Tourism Council promotes short breaks and holidays on behalf of 150 operators. Many operators feature tours to the region, combining a seaside break at Skegness. Lincolnshire itself is one of those truly marvellous English counties just aching to be discovered.

Despite being at the heart of Britain’s iron-smoothed flatlands folded neatly at the side of the A1, the untramelled miles of beautifully manicured fields hold rare secrets. There are picture-postcard, honey-stoned villages, oozing history alongside their pots of homemade chutneys, and pristine towns to spend a dreamy afternoon musing over tea and crumpets.

Then, of course, there are legendary pubs, hotels and castles – just like Belvoir – where you luxuriate in cosy rooms and immerse yourself in fine dining with a distinctly exclusive local flavour. Belvoir Castle features in the Hidden England project ([www.belvoircastle.com](http://www.belvoircastle.com)). You can dine in fine style at the Manners Arms on the Belvoir Estate at Knapton (01476 879222. [www.mannersarms.com](http://www.mannersarms.com))

Alongside its burgeoning heritage, Lincoln’s fair county is all about food – and lots of it. It produces one fifth of the nation’s needs and hosts the area’s distinctly different tastes of Lincoln Red beef, stuffed chine, plumbread, Lincolnshire sausages, Lincolnshire Poacher cheese, fresh ostrich and an extraordinary selection of fresh vegetables.

Home in on Lincoln itself and you’ll find an enthralling, highly walkable city, steeped in heritage with a vibrant modern waterfront. The imposing gothic cathedral – one of the three largest in Britain – takes centre stage and featured in the Da Vinci Code. And the remains of Lincoln Castle, built by William the Conqueror, are home to one of the four surviving



Journey back in time... Lincoln Castle and (inset) the city’s Bailgate

**TRAVEL INFORMATION**

• Ken Bennett was a guest of the Coach Tourism Council ([coachtourismcouncil.co.uk](http://coachtourismcouncil.co.uk)). He stayed at The Ramada, Grantham ([www.ramadagrantham.co.uk](http://www.ramadagrantham.co.uk), 01476 593000), with dinner plus B&B from £75 per couple (Sunday offer)

# Hidden Gem of England

copies of the Magna Carta.

There are events to tempt visitors most of the year, with winter dominated by a Christmas market.

Alternatively, glide to the land of pies in Melton Mowbray across the border into

Leicestershire. Here you can feast your eyes on castles of another kind: giant, contented, hand-raised pork pies with a

sublime melt-in-the-mouth taste.

With exquisite ease, master pie maker Stephen Hallam produces a round beauty you simply want to nurture rather than eat at a

demonstration at Dickinson & Morris Ye Olde Pork Pie Shoppe, the oldest pork pie bakery in town (01664 562341. [www.porkpie.co.uk](http://www.porkpie.co.uk)).

Back in Lincolnshire, The Olde Barn Hotel in Grantham features tapas of the local kind: fish balls, red beef faggots and curried roast parsnips (01400 250909,

[www.theoldebarnhotel.co.uk](http://www.theoldebarnhotel.co.uk)).

That set us up for a guided walk through Stamford, a lovely old town that won favour with Sir Walter Scott and, more recently, featured in the movie *Pride and Prejudice*.

The Georgian stone town, one of the finest in England, and its St George’s Square stood in for the village of Merlyton, home of the Bennetts. You may recall the scene where the redcoats marched down the street. It is a town that is frequently seen in period films.

## late deals

**YORK** Superbreak (0871 222 3055) two nights’ B&B at three-star Burrn Hall Hotel for £79, incl full breakfast and one dinner

**CUMBRIA**  
[www.holidaylets.net](http://www.holidaylets.net) (0207 108 1131) three nights’ self-catering in cottage sleeping five outside Cartmel for £180 from May 1

**DUBAI** keyzholidays (0207 963 6697) three nights’ B&B at five-star Miramar Al Agah resort from £365 May 15-June 15 if booked by April 30, incl Qatar Airways flights

**EGYPT** Sovereign (0871 664 0227) seven nights’ B&B at five-star Hyatt Regency Sharm El Sheikh ex-Manchester June 5 from £679

**MEXICO** Sovereign (0871 664 0227) seven nights’ all-inclusive at five-star Riviera Cancun ex-Manchester May 13 from £1,099

**WESTERN US TOUR**  
 Jetsetave (0871 664 0293) 10-day tour from May 4 for £795, incl Virgin flights ex-Gatwick, and visits to San Francisco, Las Vegas, Yosemite and Lake Tahoe

**US BY TRAIN** Great Rail Journeys (01904 521 980) 21-day US coast to coast itinerary from £2,790, May-October, incl return flights, rail and coach travel, 19 nights’ accom, excursions, tour manager

**HALF TERM FRANCE CAMPING** Keycamp (0844 406 0319) seven nights’ self-catering in mobile home from May 28 at Berry Riviere for £617 per family, with extensive children’s facilities and Paris a 90-minute drive away. Price includes return Channel crossings

## CRUISE OFFERS

**SOLOS IN WESTERN MED** Gills Cruise Centre (0845 460 6078) 14 nights Solos Cruise on P&O’s Oriana ex-Southampton May 9 from £999, to Barcelona, St Raphael, Civitavecchia, Naples, Palermo, Valencia, Gibraltar

**NORDIC SHORT BREAK** Holland America (0845 351 0557) four-night fly-cruise from £419 ex-Copenhagen on Eurodam to Oslo, Amsterdam and back to Dover. Balcony staterooms from £499, incl single flight London-Copenhagen



Master pie maker Stephen Hallam