

LOCAL AREA GUIDE

Loose



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Loose is a little residential Kentish village with a population of about two thousand (in 2011). It's very close to the town of Maidstone.

The village is chocolate boxy in places with lots of pretty houses in a charming setting along the Loose River, which has a sweet little riverside path.

Maidstone is the largest town in Kent, the county dotingly known as the Garden of England for its skill in gardening hops and fruit-growing.

Loose is in an idyllic spot with beautiful countryside. The Loose valley, with which the village is loosely connected, is mostly a Conservation Area. Another huge attraction, albeit not a pastoral one, is its proximity to London, the south-east coast of England, and the rest of Europe across the English Channel. Four motorways are within a few miles of Loose.

In the Second World War, the skies above Maidstone were arguably the centre stage in the great Battle of Britain of 1940.



"Artist Mildred Ratcliffe (1899–1988) lived her later years in Loose at 1, Mill Street, in 1959. She painted several of the buildings in the village."

History of Loose

As is often the case when it comes to place names, it's all about location, location, location.

Way back in Saxon times there was the word Hlosan which meant lost or disappeared (like the Saxons). The village of Loose has long been so-called after the river that runs through it. The nearby course of the River Loose flows underground until it surfaces at the neighbouring village of Langley, just before proceeding through Loose village.

The spot was probably just a house or two, or maybe even a hamlet, before the Industrial Revolution came along and put it properly on the map. The reason, once again, was the river! It turns out that Loose Stream, as it was then called, was favourable to milling. Indeed, it's reckoned up to seven mills, mainly for the paper and wool trades, were built around there.

With the mills came more people and the few dwellings grew up to be the charming village it is today, albeit with a few more houses than the milling days. There was a track, then a road, and then a tram track, to the bustling metropolis of Maidstone.



"Novelist Ernest Elmore (aka John Bude), noted for 'The Baboon and The Fiddle' and 'The Snuffly Snorty Dog', lived in Loose in the 1930s."

Property Types in Loose

People like to live in and around Loose not just because it's beside a lovely river, but the quality of housing is good. Loose is also a convenient and well-connected location by both road and rail for commuting into Maidstone centre, Chatham beyond that, Sevenoaks to the west and London to the north-west. It has two great pubs as well!

Generally, property in Loose is much sought after. It's a lovely setting for families, with easy access to the surrounding Kent countryside. There are some great primary and secondary schools within easy reach.

There's one main postcode for Loose – ME15.

The average value of property in the ME15 area at the time of writing is about £345,000. Detached houses average £540,000, semi-detached around £335,000, terraced houses about £270,000 and flats are in the region of £205,000.

*All information correct as of December 2021



"British illustrator Ralph Steadman lives in Old Loose Court, just outside the parish."

Schools and Colleges in and Around Loose

There are lots of Ofsted-rated 'Good' pre-schools, primary and secondary schools in and around Loose. Independent schools and further education establishments are also well represented, the main draws of the latter being North Kent College and the University of Kent.

Nursery & Pre-Schools

Five Acre Wood School, Ofsted Outstanding
Loose Infant/Primary School, Ofsted Outstanding

Primary Schools

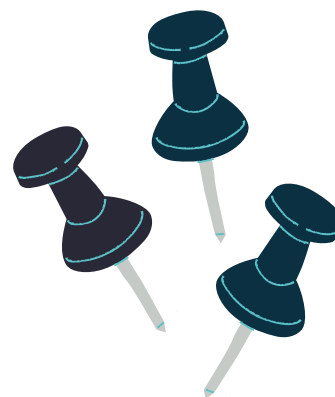
Broughton Monchelsea Primary School, Ofsted Good
Hunton Church of England Primary School, Ofsted Good
Molehill Primary Academy, Ofsted Good
Oaks Primary Academy, Ofsted Outstanding
Tree Tops Primary Academy, Ofsted Good

Secondary Schools

Aylesford School, Ofsted Good
Cornwallis Academy, Ofsted Good
Maidstone Grammar School for Girls, Ofsted Outstanding
New Line Learning Academy, Ofsted Good
Valley Park School, Ofsted Good

Independent Schools

Shernold School
MEPA Academy
OneSchool UK Maidstone Campus
St Helens Montessori School
Sutton Vallance School



Local Further Education

Hadlow College
MidKent College, Ofsted Good
North Kent College, Ofsted Good
University of Creative Arts (Canterbury)
University of Kent, Ofsted Good



Things to Do in and Around Loose

Canterbury Cathedral

Canterbury Cathedral was founded in 597. A few hundred years later, it witnessed the slaughter of archbishop Thomas Becket by the knights of King Henry II in 1170. They'd ridden all the way from France to do the dirty deed, apparently. From then on, the cathedral became a place to pilgrimage for healing which gave us that incredible book - Geoffrey Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. Give yourself at least a couple of hours here!

Cobtree Manor Park

This is where Maidstone Zoo used to be. Instead, now there's a charming arboretum to saunter through, including a find-your-own-way trail taking about an hour. Look out for the fort-themed adventure play area with equipment to clamber over, swing and slide on. Parents, remember to let the children have a go!

Kent Life

To the north of Loose, this little heritage farm park will go down a treat with the children. There are lots of farm animals and tractor rides to keep them busy, but the icing on the cake has got to be the enlightening tootle down memory lane that is The Vintage Village. Find yourself in wartime cottages, and a blacksmith's forge and a hopper's hut.

Kentish Lady Riverboat

The elegant Kentish Lady Riverboat - embark at Maidstone - is a great excuse to get on the River Medway and relax with some riverine views. Choose a one-hour trip, a three-hour lunch or a supper cruise. Some excursions stop at Allington Castle too. Trips operate in spring and summer only but you can hire some smaller self-steer boats at other times.



Things to Do in and Around Loose

Leeds Castle

This attraction is worth the trip from Loose. This pretty castle on a lake has nothing to do with West Yorkshire and more to do with a constructive Saxon gentleman called Led who built the first version in around the ninth century. It is a bit strange looking for a castle and from some aspects it could pass as a big house pretending to be a castle. There's a maze here, an aviary, and the world's only dog collar museum!

Leybourne Lakes Country Park

These lakes are wildlife and fishing lakes in some old gravel pits. Birders love Leybourne Lakes, as do canoeists and kayakers! Great for walkers too, you can take a stroll through the adjoining wood. The local Parkrun takes place here every Saturday at about nine o'clock and there's often a catering van in the little car park serving refreshments.

Maidstone Museum

This is a fascinating place, full of curiosities. Maidstone Museum is reputedly one of the most significant museums in south-east England. Look out for the Greek pottery offering vessel called a kernos that's 4,000 years old; one of the chairs Napoleon used to sit on in St Helena; Anglo-Saxon and, oddly, Egyptian artefacts; and a stunning Lady Godiva statue by John Thomas. There is a huge ceramic collection here too.



Top 3 Things to Do With Children in and Around Loose

Buttercups Sanctuary for Goats

When Bob and Valerie Hitch took two unwanted goats into their care over thirty years ago, they had no idea it was the start of a paradise for the cloven-hoofed. At the last count, they had 137. This is a wonderful place to take the children. You can feed the goats, brush 'n' groom them and go walking with them. The suggested minimum age is 12 – your children that is, not the goats.

Kent Owl Academy

This family-run home to owls is a great place for your children to get up close and personal with these awesome birds of prey. Having an owl perching on your hand is an unmissable experience, unless you forget to put your glove on! Understandably the minimum age is six. Group sessions, animal assisted therapy and phobia assistance are also available. The Academy is based in Kent Life Heritage Farm Park.

The Maze and Underground Grotto

This is a fun way to spook and overexcite the children. This maze at Leeds Castle is made up of over two thousand yew trees. It's a bit problematic to find your way through as it's created as a circle in a square! If – and when – you get to the middle of the circle, or square, you escape to the free world via an underground grotto full of creepy, gruesome matter!



Shopping and Leisure in Loose

Shopping

There's a post office and mini mart in Loose. In nearby Maidstone, there's a pedestrianised shopping street called Week Street. There's an outdoor shopping centre in Fremlin Walk and an indoor one, off King Street. There are some big shops next to the river on St. Peter's Wharf. Shopping hotspots include Gabriel's Hill, Royal Star Arcade, Pudding Lane and Union Street. Market wise, try Maidstone Market at Lockmeadow and there's a Farmer's Market in Jubilee Square on the fourth Friday of every month. The town's supermarkets include Kent International Food Centre, Letsco, Lidl, Morrisons, Sainsbury's, Tesco and Waitrose. On the A229 Loose Road (between Maidstone and Loose) there's a Co-op and Argos.

Restaurants

Loose has its own A & Z Fisheries, The Curious Eatery and the Spice Lounge (Indian). There are lots of great places to eat in nearby Maidstone. Hot favourites include Miller and Carter and Buenos Aires Nights for steaks; Khan Spice and Shamrat for Indian; Fifi's Brasserie, St Leonard's and Frederic for European; Fish on the Green and Franks for fish; Narai Thai Palace and Thai Orchid for Thai; Vesuvius, La Villetta and La Taberna for Italian; Gem of Kent for Mediterranean; Alim-Et for Turkish, and 7 Miles Korean for Asian barbeques. For some café delights, try The Living Cafe, Meet Me Café, Old Boat Café, Café de Paris, Esquires Coffee and Café Beck.

Pubs

In and around Loose, good pubs include the Walnut Tree on Loose Road, Cock Inn on Heath Road, the Bull Inn on Linton Hill, The Chequers Inn on Old Loose Hill, The Good Intent on The Green, and the Woolpack Inn on Benover Road.



Shopping and Leisure in Loose

Cinema and Theatre

There are two main big entertainment venues in nearby Maidstone. The first is the versatile Hazlitt Theatre on Earl Street that offers more than just cinema, with dance, comedy, drama, and family shows. The Hazlitt also hosts the Maidstone Film Society if you're looking for something intriguing. The second is the Odeon Luxe in the Lockmeadow Entertainment Centre on Barker Road.

Gym and Health

Located in nearby Maidstone is the Maidstone Leisure Centre at Mote Park. It has a gym, five swimming pools, workout rooms, six badminton courts and two 5-a-side pitches. There's David Lloyd Sports and Health Club in the Lockmeadow Entertainment Centre and a PureGym in The Mall. For some stretching and relaxing, try Heavenly Fitness for yoga, pilates, and pole dancing or The Maidstone Iyengar Yoga Centre on Gabriels Hill.

Golf Clubs

The 18-hole Weald of Kent Golf Course is probably the nearest to Loose. The nearest golf clubs to Maidstone are Cobtree Manor Park Golf Course in the Cobtree estate, Tudor Park Golf and Country Club on Ashford Road, the young (1995) Kings Hill Golf Club in West Malling, and the Patrick Dawson – who did The Belfry – designed The Ridge Golf Club.

Other Entertainment

There are three main skateparks in nearby Maidstone. The closest to the centre of town is the concrete Mote Park Skatepark in Mote Park. Then there's the metal-frame-and-timber-on-tarmac Whatman Park Skatepark on Buckland Lane and the concrete South Park Skatepark on Armstrong Road. Anyone for tennis? Closest to the centre of Maidstone are the Maidstone Tennis Academy on St Peters Street, Penenden Heath Tennis Academy on Coulters Close and South Eastern Tennis on Haywain Close. For boating, try the Maidstone Invicta Rowing Club on James Whatman Way. For tenpin bowling, visit either Hollywood Bowl in the Lockmeadow Entertainment Centre or AMF Bowling in King Street.



Travel Connections

Only about thirty-five miles south-east of London and perfectly positioned for excursions to Europe by train or ferry, Loose is well connected when it comes to transport. The main road through Loose is the A229. Nearby Maidstone has three railway stations and easy access to four motorways. The joys of Maidstone, Chatham, Tonbridge, Sevenoaks and Royal Tunbridge Wells are only a few miles away. The nearest big airports are London Southend Airport, London City Airport and London Gatwick.



Maidstone Barracks, Maidstone East and Maidstone West railway stations are all in the nearby town. Direct trains to London Victoria take about an hour. Trains to London Blackfriars and London Bridge take just over an hour. Nearer to home, there are direct connections to Paddock Wood (20 minutes), Tonbridge (30 minutes), Otford (20 minutes). Ashford International (for Eurostar) is 30 minutes away. Dover Priory for the ferries to Europe is just over an hour away.



Loose is on the main A229 road and only a few minutes south of Maidstone. The A229 runs through Maidstone, feeding into the M20 (that runs between the London Orbital M25 and Ashford, Folkestone and Dover to the south east) and then the M2 (that runs roughly Rochester to Faversham). The M26 is only about 20 miles away and feeds into the southern loop of the M25 and destinations westward around London.



The nearest big airports to Maidstone are London City Airport (about 35 miles), London Gatwick (about 40 miles) and London Southend Airport (about 50 miles).



The Arriva number 5 and 89 buses pass through Loose. The nearest hub for bus routes is in nearby Maidstone, which has around twenty bus routes. Main routes beyond the Maidstone area, from Maidstone, include the 155 (to Rochester and Chatham), the 101 (to Chatham and Gillingham), the 6/6A/6X (to Royal Tunbridge Wells), the 7 (to Hadlow, Tonbridge and Royal Tunbridge Wells), the 59 (to Ulcombe and Grafty Green) and the 334 (to Sittingbourne and Sheerness).



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BOOK A VALUATION!



Myself and my boyfriend recently exchanged contracts through Knight Edmonds and honestly could not thank everyone there enough for everything they have done for us through the whole process and always keeping us up to date. I especially cannot thank Sandra and Sam enough as they have dealt with me constantly calling them for months and always got the answers I needed and it never felt like I was bothering them 😊 We honestly couldn't have asked for a better estate agents to buy our first home with! Thankyou all so much!!

Karis & Charlie

All staff were excellent - very knowledgeable and gave the perfect advice about price. When issues arose, they were responsive and helpful and service was excellent throughout our sale and purchase. Would highly recommend!

Steve Perring

From the attitude of Alex at the initial meeting concerning introducing our property onto the market we were confident that we would get first class treatment from a team of people who are passionate about what they do, which is to efficiently sell houses. We have had contact with several members of the team during the sale process and we were always treated with respect and given the advice we requested as speedily as possible. We have already passed the company contact information to a long-term friend who is looking to make a move in the next few months and based on our own experience would not hesitate to recommend them again if asked

Mary Thomas

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