

Windsor: The Largest Inhabited Castle In The World

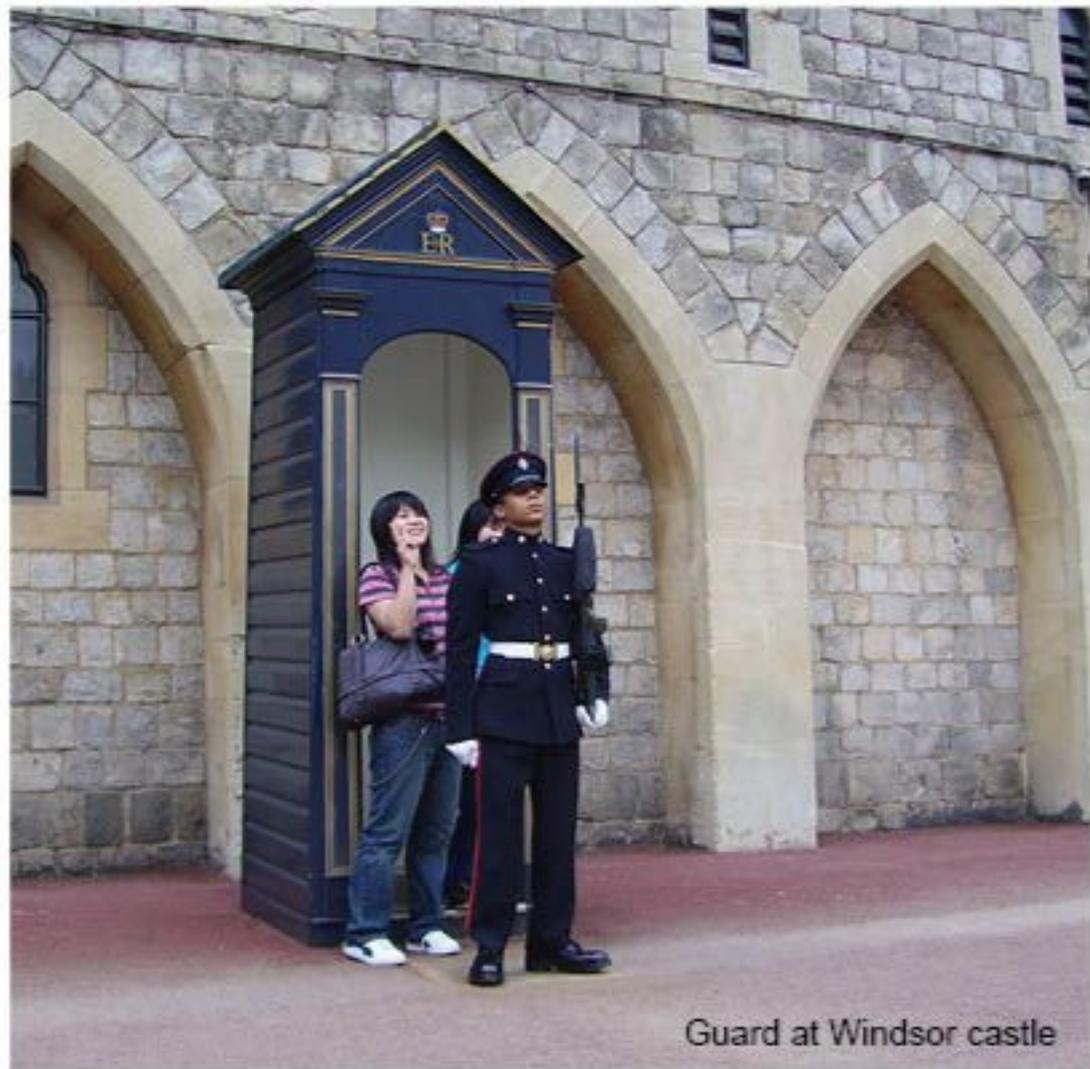
By: Karen Dabrowska



In continuing as a royal palace Windsor Castle is an almost unique survivor. In the words of A.L. Rowse: "The kings have departed from the palace-monastery of the Escorial; the Emperors have gone from the Hofburg and Schonbrunn, from Kremlin and Winter Palace; the Louvre and Versailles are museums, the Tuileries no more."

It is in fact the largest inhabited castle in the world, a massive 480,000 square feet. Since its construction 900 years ago in 1070 by William the Conqueror it has been the official residence of Britain's kings and queen. The Royal Standard flies over the

Round Tower of Windsor Castle when the Queen is in residence - at other times, the Union Jack flag flies in its place. Samuel Pepys proclaimed the Castle to be "the most romantique castle that is in the world". That was in 1666 and nothing has changed.



Guard at Windsor castle

Defensive towers



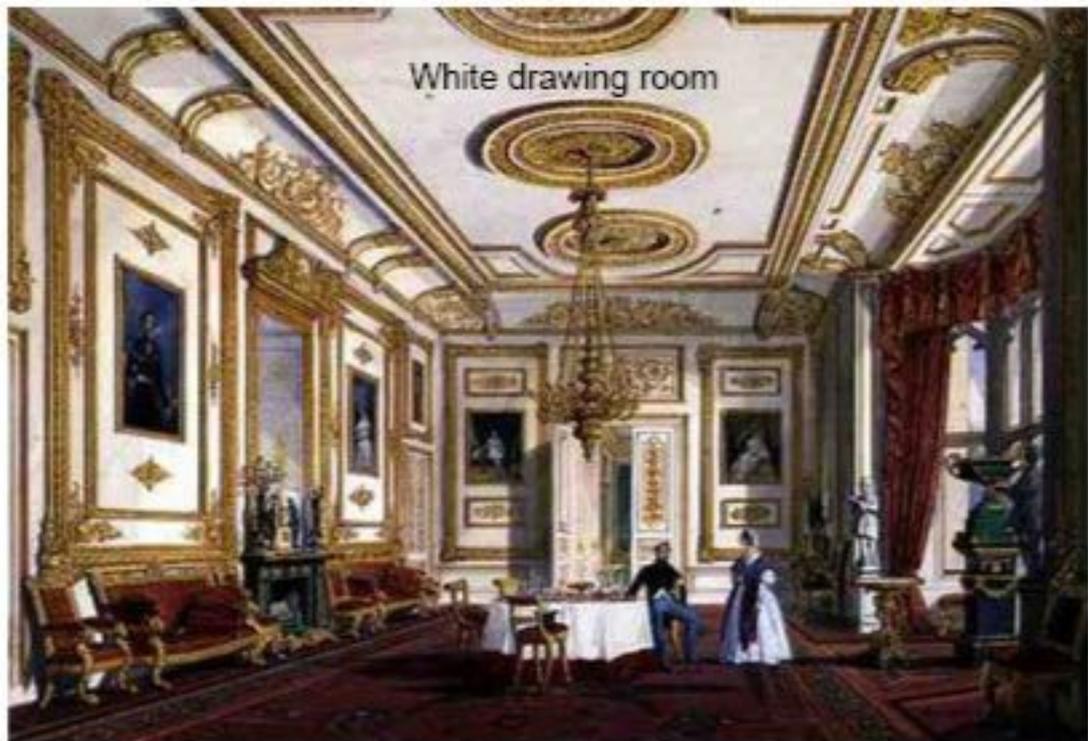
William the Conqueror chose the site with great care; high above the river Thames on the edge of the Saxon hunting grounds. The castle was part of a ring of castles around London, with the Tower of London, one day's march away, at its heart.

Successive monarchs have put their own stamp on the castle: Henry II replaced the wooden stockade in 1165 with a stone round tower and built the outer walls to the north, east and south; Charles II gave the state

apartments a baroque makeover; George IV swept in with his preference for Gothic style; Queen Victoria left the beautiful Albert Memorial Chapel.

The castle largely escaped the bombings of WWII, but in 1992 a shocking fire sparked in the Queen's private chapel and tore through the building destroying or damaging more than 100 rooms. Thankfully the rooms were being rewired at the time and most artistic treasures had been removed. The marvellous

White drawing room



East entrance





Pomp and ceremony

restoration took five years and that devastating night is now a mere memory.

Visitors can explore the magnificent State Apartments which are lavishly furnished with

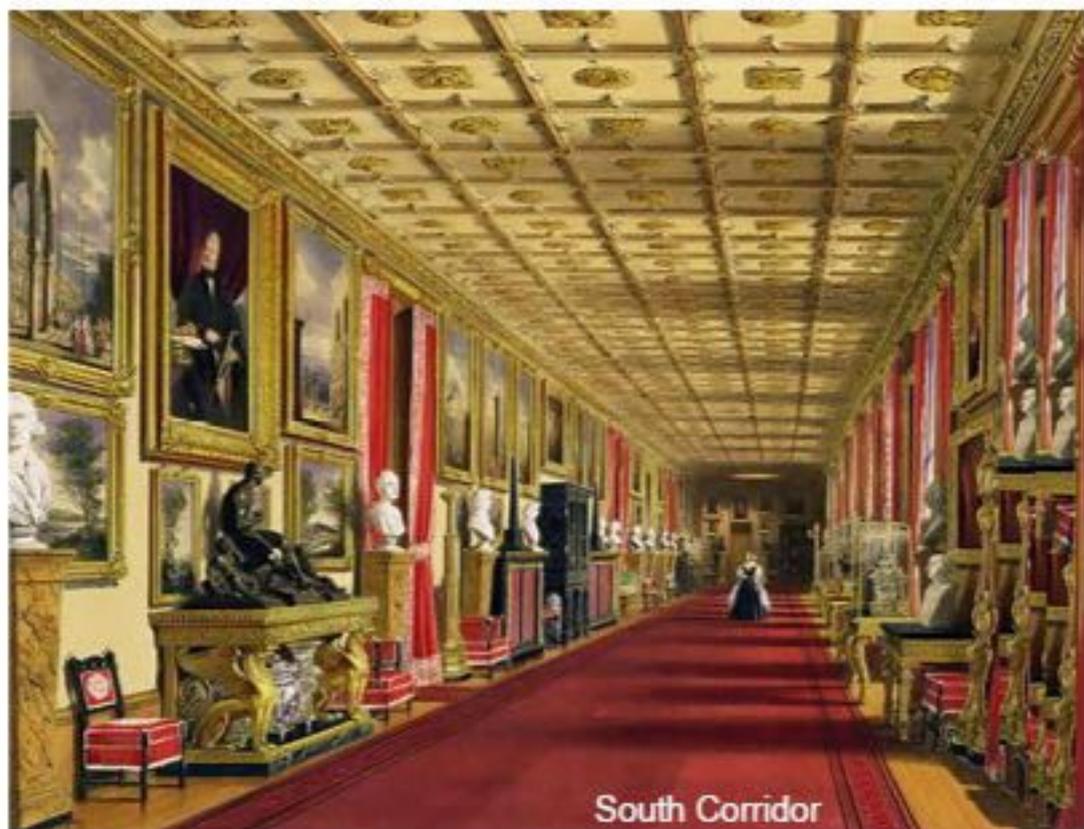
treasures from the Royal Collection, including masterpieces by Rubens, Holbein, Brueghel and Van Dyck.

The Changing of the Guard is one of the highlights of a visit to

Windsor. A band usually accompanies the Guards, although this is subject to weather conditions. The Guards can be watched as they march up the High Street and into the Castle, but to see the actual 'changing' ceremony visitors have to be inside the castle. The Ceremony takes place outside the Guardroom in the Lower Ward. To watch the Guards march up the High Street takes only 10 minutes; to watch

the actual ceremony inside the Castle takes about 30 minutes.

The castle's unique treasure is the Queen Mary's Dolls' House. It is an amazing work of architecture built on a scale of 1 to 12 with working lifts, running water and electricity which took 1500 craftsmen three years to complete. The idea of creating a dolls' house for the Queen was that of the King's cousin, Princess Marie



South Corridor

Bedroom



Louise.

After returning home from a visit to the King and Queen at Windsor Castle, during which they had shown her much kindness, Princess Marie Louise found her mother and her sister assembling a collection of miniature furniture for Queen Mary.

Queen Mary was known as a collector of miniature objects including Fabergé animals, children's silver furniture and other examples of 'tiny craft'. This gave Princess Marie Louise an idea. She announced to her family that

she would commission a dolls' house as a present for the Queen.

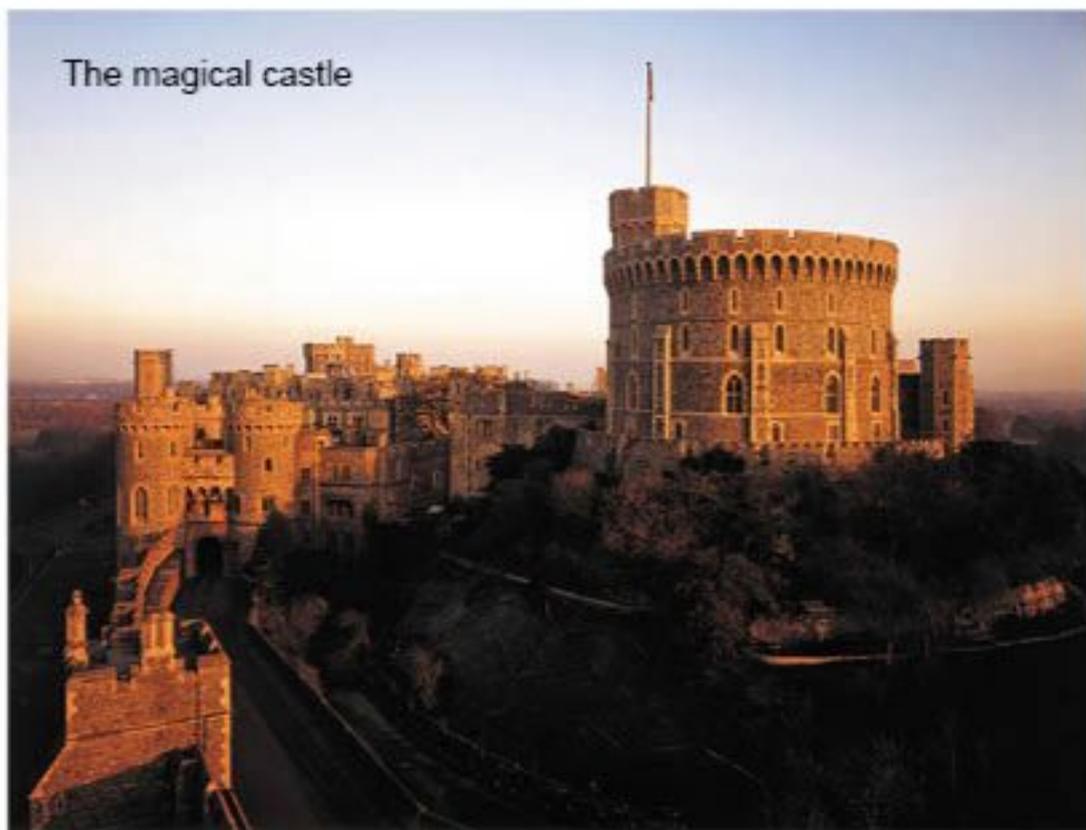
The castle is surrounded by some beautiful gardens and the picturesque English countryside. St George's Chapel, inside the grounds, is a fine example of gothic architecture. The building of the chapel started 1475 by Edward IV and was completed fifty years later by Henry VIII. Ten monarchs are buried in the Chapel, including Henry VIII with his wife Jane Seymour. The Chapel is the Chapel of the Most Noble Order of the Garter, Britain's highest Order of Chivalry. The Order was founded

by Edward III in 1348 and the Garter Knights are selected by the Queen.

Windsor is just 30 minutes by train from London's Paddington or Waterloo stations and makes an ideal day out which can be combined with a visit to Eton College, one of

the most exclusive schools in the country that has educated many former British Prime Ministers as well as members of the Royal family. Ticket holders get a free self-guided audio tour that lasts around 2 hours and is full of interesting facts and anecdotes about the castle.

The magical castle



 Tourists flock to Windsor



Unique architecture

