

# Norwich Castle: History Reimagined [B2]

Simbolo della conquista normanna, nel corso dei secoli il castello ha svolto il ruolo di fortezza difensiva, palazzo reale e prigione. Dopo ben cinque anni di restauri, oggi è un museo all'avanguardia aperto al pubblico.

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The capital city of Norfolk, Norwich, is a [UNESCO](#) City of Literature. Located in East Anglia, England, it is one of the best-preserved medieval cities in Britain. It is also home to the magnificent Norwich Castle, which stands at the top of a large [mound](#) in the city centre, [overlooking](#) the market and Castle Quarter shops.

## CONQUEST

Norwich Castle [dates back to](#) 1067 and was built soon after the Norman invasion of Britain. Symbolic of the conquest and authority of the country's new [rulers](#), the castle served as a defensive structure, royal palace and centre for legal and financial rule. Built adjacent to the Norman cathedral, near the River Wensum, the castle changed life in Norwich forever.

## DESIGNED TO IMPRESS

The impact on the city's Anglo-Saxon population (living and dead) began before the building was complete. The castle was built over a Saxon cemetery, and houses were demolished to [make way](#) for it. Norman officials and soldiers moved into the new administrative centre, and the castle expanded into a large stone [keep](#), with outer walls, [ditches](#), [palisades](#) and bridges covering an area of 9.3 hectares. It was a symbol of Norman supremacy and [craftsmanship](#), built to impress. Caen stone was [shipped](#) from Normandy and transported at great expense by sea and river. The work was begun by William the Conqueror and completed by his sons, William Rufus and his younger brother, Henry I of England.

## COUNTY GAOL

By the end of the 12th century, Norwich had become one of the largest cities in England, similar in size to London. However, while Norwich continued to flourish, Norwich Castle ceased to be a royal residence and began to fall into disrepair. Stones were quarried from its outer walls. In the mid-14th century, the castle was used as the County Gaol. By the early 1700s, the keep was a ruin without a roof. Conditions for prisoners were terrible and in 1785 it was declared unfit for purpose. Soon afterwards, the castle was remodelled as a prison by a young Sir John Soane (who designed the Bank of England in London.) Less than thirty years later, the prison was again redesigned. The castle keep was re-faced between 1834-39, replacing the worn Norman Caen stone with English Bath stone. In 1887, the prison at the castle finally closed.

## CURIOSITIES

What use was a large dilapidated castle in the centre of Victorian Norwich? The many suggestions for its future included the possibility of converting it into a central railway station. However, with the city museum running out of space, the castle offered an ideal new home for the collection of curiosities, antiquities and natural history exhibits. After years of building works, the new Norwich Castle Museum opened its doors in October 1894.

## GENERATIONS

Over the following century, further changes were made to the castle, which included losing much of its outer structure during the development of the Castle Quarter shopping centre in the early 1990s. The historic keep, however, has survived generations of economic and social change. When the Royal Palace Reborn project began in August 2020, it aimed to reinstate the 12th-century floors and rooms so that visitors could enjoy the Norman royal palace. The works included a new medieval gallery, created in partnership with the British Museum. For the first time in nine hundred years, all five levels of the building, from basement to battlements, were made fully

accessible to the public. [www.norwichcastle.norfolk.gov.uk](http://www.norwichcastle.norfolk.gov.uk) If you want to know more about this topic, read the article Norwich Castle: Royal Palace Reborn.

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# Glossary

- **basement** = sotterranei
- **mound** = collina
- **dates back to** = risalire a
- **keep** = fortezza
- **fall into disrepair** = cadere in rovina
- **roof** = tetto
- **re-faced** = restaurare
- **running out** = esaurire
- **UNESCO** = United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
- **quarried** = estrarre
- **craftsmanship** = maestria
- **Gaol** = prigione
- **unfit for purpose** = non adatto
- **battlements** = merlature, bastioni
- **aimed** = avere l'obiettivo
- **overlooking** = dominare, con vista su
- **rulers** = governanti, dominatori
- **make way** = fare spazio
- **ditches** = fossati
- **palisades** = palizzate
- **shipped** = trasportare
- **worn** = logorata