

Welcome to Ramsgate

We hope you enjoy this trail that follows in the footsteps of Vincent van Gogh when he stayed in Ramsgate during 1876. The trail has been created using extracts from Vincent's letters to his brother Theo, and is approximately 1.6 miles long (2.6kms). If you prefer to avoid the steps (see stage 7), it is 1.9 miles (3.2kms).

If you would like to try the longer Vincent van Gogh Trail (6.1 miles or 9.8kms one-way), the details are on the back of this leaflet.

For further information on the longer walk (The Contra Trail) please go to:
www.visitramsgate.co.uk/walking
 or scan the QR code.



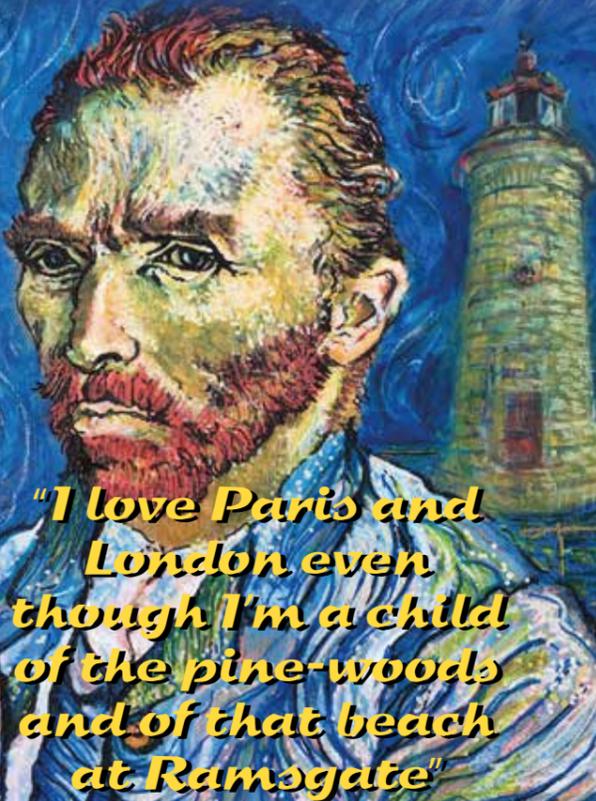
'Now let me tell you about a walk we took yesterday. It was to an inlet of the sea, and the road to it led through the fields of young wheat and along hedgerows of hawthorn etc. When we got there we had on our left a high, steep wall of sand and stone, as high as a two-storey house, on top of which stood old, gnarled hawthorn bushes. Their black or grey, lichen-covered stems and branches had all been bent to the same side by the wind, also a few elder bushes. The ground we walked on was completely covered with large grey stones, chalk and shells. To the right the sea, as calm as a pond, reflecting the delicate grey sky where the sun was setting. It was ebb tide and the water was very low.'

Letter to Theo, 28th Apr 1876

Following in the footsteps of Vincent van Gogh



RAMSGATE



Painting by Lesley Gray

"I love Paris and London even though I'm a child of the pine-woods and of that beach at Ramsgate"

Letter to Theo, Sep 1876

The Vincent van Gogh Trail



LOCATION KEY

1. Spencer Square cafe
2. Vincent van Gogh bust
3. 11 Spencer Square
4. 6 Royal Road
5. The Churchill Tavern
6. West Cliff
7. Jacob's Ladder
8. Ramsgate Lighthouse
9. Look out to sea
10. Inner Harbour
11. Ramsgate Main Sands

RAMSGATE



Royal Harbour Multi Storey Car Park in Leopold St CT11 9HL (check evening closing times) 394 spaces.
 Marina Esplanade Car Parks 1 and 2, CT11 8NA 164 and 24 spaces respectively.
 East Pier Yard CT11 8LS 21 spaces.

*Artwork & Sketches included 'View of Royal Road' pencil, pen and ink on paper, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam, (Vincent van Gogh Foundation) www.vangoghmuseum.nl
 For the full suite of Vincent van Gogh's letters, visit www.vangoghletters.org

Follow in Vincent's Footsteps

Photo: Diane Harvey-White

1

Start at Spencer Square cafe and head left out of the cafe to check out the information board.



Vincent van Gogh bust, sculpted by Anthony Padgett and installed in 2019. Anthony produced 7 differently finished busts and gifted them to various towns across England and Europe where Vincent's story was created. Our bust is bronze so will eventually turn green. Visit Anthony Padgett's website for more info.

2



11 Spencer Square is where Vincent lived (Blue Plaque attached). According to a letter from Vincent's mother to Theo, Vincent sent her a sketch of the house but this has never been found. This is where he looked out from his bedroom window to the rear of the property and described...

3



'How much I'd like you to be able to look through the school window. The house stands on a square (all the houses around it are the same, which is often the case here). In the middle of the square a large green, closed in by an iron fence and surrounded by lilac bushes'

Letter to Theo, 21st Apr 1876

'That same night I looked out of the window of my room onto the roofs of the houses one sees from there and the tops of the elms, dark against the night sky. Above those roofs, one single star, but a nice, big friendly one'

Letter to Theo, 31st May 1876

5



The Churchill Tavern (formerly the Van Gogh Pub from 1961 -1983). This Grade II listed, early 19th Century building, features in both of Vincent's sketches. Many of the buildings would have been present when Vincent was here including the pub but back then it was the Paragon Hotel and in a letter to Theo, he described the houses...

'The houses on the sea-front are mostly built of yellow brick in the style of those in Nassaulaan in The Hague (but taller), and have gardens full of cedars and other dark evergreen shrubs.'

Letter to Theo, 17th Apr 1876

4

6 Royal Road (Blue Plaque attached) is where Vincent worked as a teaching assistant at Mr Stokes School for Boys, overlooking Spencer Square.

'Herewith a little drawing of the view from the school window where the boys stand and watch their parents going back to the station after a visit. Many a boy will never forget the view from that window. You should have seen it this week when we had rainy days, especially in the twilight when the street-lamps are being lit and their light is reflected in the wet street.'

Letter to Theo, 31st May 1876



6

As you walk along The Paragon towards Jacob's Ladder (steps to harbour), to your left, you will notice a row of tall Georgian houses at Nelson Crescent which Vincent describes...

'After eating we went for a walk by the sea, it's beautiful there. The houses on the sea are mostly built of yellow brick in a simple Gothic style.'

Letter to Theo, 17th Apr 1876

7

Jacob's Ladder, the Grade II listed steps were built in 1826 by John Shaw so Vincent van Gogh would have used them to walk to the harbour and look out to sea. From the top of the steps, you can see the harbour and both pier arms as described in Vincent's letters to Theo. Go down the Jacob's Ladder steps (or use the slope) and head towards the Grade II listed lighthouse which was completed in 1842, also by John Shaw and is made from Cornish granite.

8



Note the lighthouse inscription 'Perfugium Miseris' which translates as 'refuge for the unfortunate' which Vincent would surely have approved of. From here, if you head past the lighthouse to a circle of paving stones, stand in the octagon and sing 'Starry Starry Night'! You might be surprised by the resonance!

9

Look out to sea towards the stone jetties which Vincent describes in his letters to Theo. He once witnessed the lifeboat being pulled by a steamboat returning after a failed rescue attempt of a ship stranded on the infamous Goodwin Sands.

'We saw the lifeboat being pulled by a steamboat, coming back from a ship that had been stranded on a sandbank a long way off; but they hadn't brought anything back.'

Letter to Theo, 1st May 1876

'There's a harbour full of all kinds of ships, closed in by stone jetties running into the sea on which one can walk. And further out one sees the sea in its natural state, and that's beautiful'

Letter to Theo, 17 Apr 1876

'It's already Saturday evening again; the weather's beautiful today: the sea is very calm and it's low tide at the moment, the sky is a delicate whitish blue with a haze in the distance. Early this morning it was also beautiful, everything was clear, where now it's more or less hazy. This town has something very singular, one notices the sea in everything; but you know this special quality, too.'

Letter to Theo, 6th May 1876

10

These days, the inner harbour is mainly yachts, cruisers and houseboats but occasionally they are joined by a visiting tall ship.

'We go to the beach often; this morning I helped the boys build a sand-castle like those we made in the garden at Zundert.'

Letter to Theo, 21st Apr 1876

11

Vincent enjoyed walking to the beach with the boys and building sandcastles on Ramsgate Main Sands. Whilst you're there, why not build yourself a castle as Vincent did many years before!

'These are really happy days, the ones I'm spending here'

Letter to Theo, 6th May 1876

