## **Norwich** Castle

## **Over 950 Years of History**

Norwich Castle Keep is one of the finest surviving secular Norman buildings in Europe. At a time when most buildings were small, wooden structures, the stone Keep towered above the city – a striking reminder of the power and rule of the Norman kings. From the 14th to the 19th century, the Keep was used as a county gaol. In 1894 it opened as a civic museum. Now Norfolk's principal museum, the Castle boasts the best collections anywhere of work by the Norwich School of Artists, Norwich silver, Lowestoft porcelain and ceramic teapots, alongside archaeology and natural history collections of national and international importance. Following a major development project between 2020 and 2025, with substantial support from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, Norwich Castle and its Keep have been reborn, modifying the Victorian arrangements and creating a twenty-first-century museum worthy of its nationally significant collections.

Rebels inside the wooden motteand-bailey castle withstand a siege attempt.



1067 1075

William I (William the Conqueror) orders over 98 Saxon homes to be demolished, with tall castle earthworks and deep defensive ditches built in their place.



William II dies, and work on the stone keep is continued by his brother, Henry I.

1094 1100

1066

Work begins on the stone keep you see today, overseen by William (Rufus) II. This includes much larger earthworks to support its huge weight. Limestone is shipped from France at a cost of over three times its original value.



The Castle and its keep serve as a royal residence as well as a centre for legal and financial rule over the region.



1121-1300s

1121

The stone keep is completed. It was intended as a royal palace, not a fortified stronghold. Henry I is thought to have stayed at the Castle during a crown wearing ceremony at Christmas.



A new cell block designed by renowned architect, Sir John Soane, is built within the Keep. The Norman keep is just a roofless shell.

1792-93

1345

The Castle's role as a legal centre takes over, and it is used as a prison for around 500 years, until the end of the 19th century.



The keep is completely refaced with bright Bath stone, replacing the flint and the Caen stone facing on the lower part. Architect Anthony Salvin faithfully recreates the original ornate arcading which makes Norwich Castle such a spectacular example of Romanesque architecture.



1822-28 1834-39

The prison is remodelled by local architect William Wilkins, following the latest thinking on prison design. The cell blocks are arranged like spokes of a wheel, with the gaoler's house in the centre overlooking the whole prison.



John Gurney, Mayor of Norwich, donates £5,000 to help move the Norfolk & Norwich Museum from St Andrew's Street to the Castle.

1885-86

1884



The museum is opened on 23 October by the Duke and Duchess of York, later King George V and Queen Mary.



1887 1894

Plans are approved for a new

prison at Mousehold Heath

on the outskirts of Norwich.

Architect Edward Boardman submits his plans for converting the gaol to a museum. Excavation and building work begins



The central Rotunda is introduced with the infilling of an open courtyard and garden to unify the museum and provide new facilities.

**1950** A large development programme sees the construction of two new art galleries. 1969



An initial grant is given by The National Lottery Heritage Fund to develop plans to return the Keep to its medieval form and create new visitor facilities within the



2016

2017

2018

1999-2001

New designs show how the

Castle Keep, reception, café and shop will be transformed.

A major repair and improvement programme is undertaken by Purcell Miller Tritton. The museum is formally re-opened by Queen Elizabeth II.



Stage 2 funding granted by The National Lottery Heritage Fund gives the green light to the project.

2018-19

2020

2025

Archaeological excavations and surveys uncover

more about the medieval

foundations.

Work begins on site to restore the Castle Keep to its former medieval glory. Tower crane erected.

2024

July sees the opening of the new museum entrance with its light-filled atrium and upgraded visitor facilities, including a new shop, café and learning space.





Norwich Castle reopens as a true people's palace, with reinstated medieval floors and rooms; a spectacular Gallery of Medieval Life in partnership with the British Museum; new interacive and multisensory experience; and enhanced accessibility.

