

Best follies in East Anglia | Things to do

- For a day out with a difference, visit a 'folly', variously described as any odd, intriguing, ornamental and architecturally fascinating structure built mainly to be seen, often at great expense with no real intention of being habitable or indeed useful.

They exist all over Europe and even in the United States, but no place has as many as Britain, which even has a society dedicated to documenting and celebrating these arches, towers, gazebos, grottos, obelisks, gatehouses and other intriguing edifices: The [Folly Fellowship](#), which was founded in 1988.

It states that follies are not easy to define, but they know one when they see it and have provided a [useful map](#) which includes both traditional and non-traditional



British follies, one of the most famous of which is the instantly recognisable [Dunmore Pineapple](#) in Falkirk, Scotland, managed by The Landmark Trust. If you want somewhere unique to say, it can be rented as holiday lets.

East Anglia has numerous fascinating, quirky and unusual follies. Here are some suggestions to look out for, which you can mix with fun family days out, walks and breaks.

Suffolk - fancy the water tank room?

Suffolk has its own iconic folly converted to holiday accommodation, the quirky [House in the Clouds](#) situated in **Thorpeness**. Standing at 70 feet tall, this famous landmark was originally built in 1927 to act as a water storage facility for Thorpeness' water supply. It now offers holiday lets with five bedrooms, two bathrooms and the room at the top, which once housed the water tank.

Bedfordshire - Oriental fads of the past

In Bedfordshire a great place to head for a family day out and folly hunting is English Heritage's [Wrest Park](#), once owned by the the county's most influential family, the Grey's, in the mid-1700s.

The beautiful park has many architecturally interesting buildings to enjoy, a number of which have been noted as follies. In particular look out for **Archer Pavilion**, said to be the finest building in the county, designed by Thomas Archer as a banqueting house between 1709 and 1711. Also look out for the **Chinese Temple** originally designed in 1760 and rebuilt in the 1940s, the **Chinese Bridge** rebuilt in 1876, and the **East and West Half House**, both built as garden seats in 1726.

Another fun family day out in the county is the [Woburn Estate](#), famous for its abbey, safari and deer park and gardens. First designed in 1802, the gardens include intriguing architectural oddities, many originally designed by Humphry Repton commissioned by the Duke of Bedford to create 'points of interest'.



Recently restored to an award-winning standard, its gardens offer much to admire. Look out for the **folly rockery and pavilion**, which were brought together in the restoration. Similarly the **Folly and Children's Garden** are worth visiting and offer a fascinating sense of social history and clever landscaping design. The folly was once used as a place for nannies to read stories to their charges, whilst the gardens offer a fantastic sensory experience.

Cambridgeshire - sham ruined castle

Meanwhile in Cambridgeshire make your way to the [Wimpole Estate](#), for the county's most famous folly, the majestic **gothic style folly tower** overlooking the Capability Brown designed landscape. The sham ruined castle tower was designed in 1751 by Sanderson Miller, but not built until 1774 when it became part of Capability Brown's landscaping.

The folly stands in part of Wimpole's three mile woodland belt, affording a picturesque view for the many walkers who enjoy this [walking route](#), an ideal opportunity to enjoy a relaxing and healthy stroll amongst beautiful landscape whilst also admiring this intriguing building.

Another unique structure is **Hodson's Folly** in Cambridge, which stands near the foot bridge between Coe Fen and Sheep's Green. The 19th century folly is thought to have been erected by college butler John Hodson, to keep an eye on his daughter who would regularly swim in the river here. The folly is owned by Cambridge City Council in partnership with Cambridge Past Present and Future who have been working on restoring the neglected structure.

Essex - the most terrifying tower in Britain

Those hunting for traditional follies in Essex should have no problems finding one, especially if they were looking for the grade 2 listed Victorian **Bull's Tower** in Pentlow near Braintree. Standing at over 70 feet tall, it is an impressive sight built in a rectory garden by Reverend Bull in 1859 to commemorate his parents. It is said to be 'the most terrifying tower in Britain' by those who have attempted to climb it. You can read one visitor's [experience here](#).

Hertfordshire - mock ruins made from Norman castle

Whilst in Hertfordshire folly hunters should head to the **castle folly** in the grounds of [Hatfield House](#) and the **castle folly** at [Benington Lordship Gardens](#) near Stevenage.

Hatfield House and its beautiful gardens are open to the public until September 30. Visitors can enjoy a choice of [three walks around the grounds](#), one of which leads to the castle folly built in the 1780s. The wall either side of it dates back to 1633.

Benington Lordship Gardens has a heritage known to go back as far as the Saxon era when it was a fortified site. Within its grounds visitors can find a **Victorian folly gateway** leading through to the gardens, built in the 1830s using the rubble of a Norman castle.

This mock ruin is an intriguing and impressive site, set amongst a beautiful garden landscape offering photogenic views. The folly continues in to the courtyard with the remains of a large dining room and a curtain wall running alongside the house.

Norfolk - gazebo with tree-top views

Norfolk enjoys a good selection of follies, such as the gazebo situated in [Sheringham Park](#). Visitors enjoying the stirring coastal walk should not miss the opportunity to climb the **gazebo** which affords a tree-top view of the North Norfolk coast, said to be the best view in Norfolk and of the rich history, nature and wildlife of the area.

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