

Property

Revealed: the ultimate London commuter towns

We crunched the numbers to find the best place to live according to your priorities, including value for money, commute time, quality of life and access to great schools. By Arabella Youens and Isabelle Fraser

Commuting is back on the agenda, as more of us are called back into the office more often. But choosing where to live for convenience and great quality of life is as tricky as ever.

We have done the maths, creating an interactive list of the best commuter towns. It draws on analysis by Savills estate agents of 50 of the most popular commuter towns with direct rail links to central London. We then ranked them by six factors to find the best commuter towns overall; see right for the methodology we used.

The same towns kept cropping up – especially Slough, Maidenhead and Woking. Many readers expressed surprise at how often the former – probably most famous for having a starring role in *The Office* – was so high on the list. But Slough, and the other high-ranking towns, have the ultimate mix of all aspects we measured, representing the sweet spots of all six factors.

Towns in Essex were also high on the list, due to their more affordable house prices and quick trains that offer better value for money.

The analysis proves that the best places to live for commuters often require compromise and an understanding of what is most important to the individual and their family.

The towns that stud the river Medway in Kent, including Rochester, Gillingham, Chatham and Sittingbourne, all ranked very high because of their lower house prices and large share of great schools, in part because the county is one of the few in the South East to have the grammar system. The big downside for commuters is that the journey times are some of the longest, those moving to these towns must decide if they can face long train journeys in exchange for all the upsides of the area.

More traditional commuter belt towns, such as Tunbridge Wells and Guildford were low on the list, at 38

HOW WE DID IT

We rated these towns individually according to six criteria, to find the overall top 10 commuter towns near London.

TRAVEL TIME
Travel time to a London terminal, assuming arrival at 8.30am (for towns with multiple connections, we used the shortest time).

SEASON TICKET
Annual cost of a rail season ticket, including Zones 1-6 Travelcard.

FLEXI TICKET
Monthly cost of a Flexi ticket, for travel between two stations on eight out of the following 24 days. Useful

for those who mostly work from home.

SCHOOLS
Secondary schools within three miles of the station that hold an Ofsted good or outstanding rating.

HOUSE PRICE
Second-hand house price. The average price for a house within one mile of the town centre. This excludes the price of new-build developments.

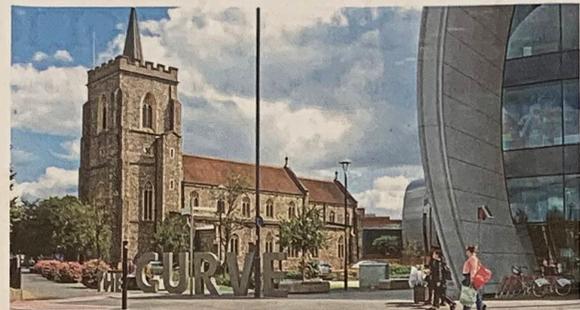
SATISFACTION RATING
This uses statistical analysis from the Office for National Statistics, which takes into account numerous factors affecting wellbeing. These include health, career satisfaction, trust in local government and sense of community.

and 39 respectively out of our top 50. Other perennial favourites, such as Sevenoaks, came in the middle of the overall list because while their scores for quality of life and great schools were high, the costs of commuting and property were unaffordable.

We've printed our overall top 10 here, but for a more tailored approach, use

our interactive tool online to choose your priorities – as many or as few as you want. Our calculator will order them according to the filters you suggest, showing the 10 best matches.

Use our interactive tool to choose your ultimate commuter town at telegraph.co.uk/commuter-top10

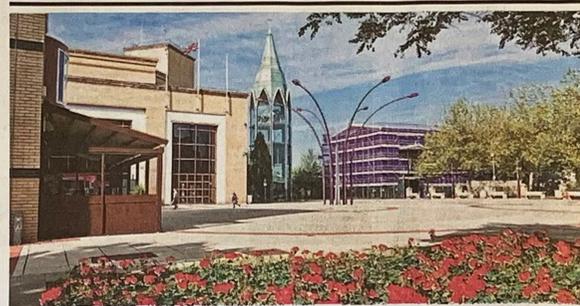


1. Slough, Berkshire

STATION	London Paddington
TRAVEL TIME	28 mins
FLEXI TICKET	£134
SEASON TICKET	£3,904
GOOD SCHOOLS	20
AVERAGE HOUSE PRICE	£372,300
SATISFACTION RATING	7.35

Slough used to be a subject of mockery, but it has recently overcome that reputation for three clear reasons: fast access to London, high employment and excellent schools. The town, which is home of the Mars Bar, and the invention of the zebra crossing and the wheelie bin, is just 28 minutes from central London. It is on the Elizabeth Line, due to open by next spring. There has been a surfeit of employment opportunities, and it is also a centre for academic excellence (coming first in our ranking) with 20 schools rated outstanding or good.

18
Minutes it will take to get from Slough to London Paddington when the Elizabeth Line opens



2. Basildon, Essex

STATION	London Fenchurch Street
TRAVEL TIME	36 mins
FLEXI TICKET	£123
SEASON TICKET	£4,612
GOOD SCHOOLS	5
AVERAGE HOUSE PRICE	£298,726
SATISFACTION RATING	7.63

Laughed at a decade ago for building a Hollywood-style welcome sign as part of a campaign to upgrade its image, this Essex town has long been a favourite with those commuting into the city (in 36 minutes, via three stations) while taking advantage of considerably lower house prices than its more rural neighbours. The East Square 10-screen cinema is set to open this summer. In the meantime, the Festival of the Sea, dubbed 'Flea Vegas' by locals (it was once slated as a location for a casino), is a centre of social gatherings.

1948
Basildon was created as a new town after the Second World War



3. Laindon, Essex

STATION	London Fenchurch Street
TRAVEL TIME	34 mins
FLEXI TICKET	£123
SEASON TICKET	£4,612
GOOD SCHOOLS	5
AVERAGE HOUSE PRICE	£338,737
SATISFACTION RATING	7.63

Laindon, which is to the west of Basildon, scored highly in many of our factors to find the ultimate commuter town. It has fast and relatively affordable access to central London, and five schools rated outstanding or good. But the town centre has suffered from people heading elsewhere to shop, and a £50m plan to regenerate the centre and replace the former High Road shopping centre has been mired in years of delays. However, it has great access to green space nearby, including the 60 acres of Northlands Park.

4
Number of trains an hour from Laindon that go to London



4. Maidenhead, Berkshire

STATION	London Paddington
TRAVEL TIME	20 mins
FLEXI TICKET	£178
SEASON TICKET	£4,436
GOOD SCHOOLS	11
AVERAGE HOUSE PRICE	£535,122
SATISFACTION RATING	7.5

Maidenhead is a clear winner of the Elizabeth Line. When services beyond Paddington begin by next spring, the journey from Maidenhead to central London will be much quicker than it currently is. The downside is that many have cottoned on to this early and, as a result, house prices have soared. The town, which sits on the River Thames, is popular with young professionals, families and retirees. It makes for a strong community spirit but puts yet more pressure on the housing market.

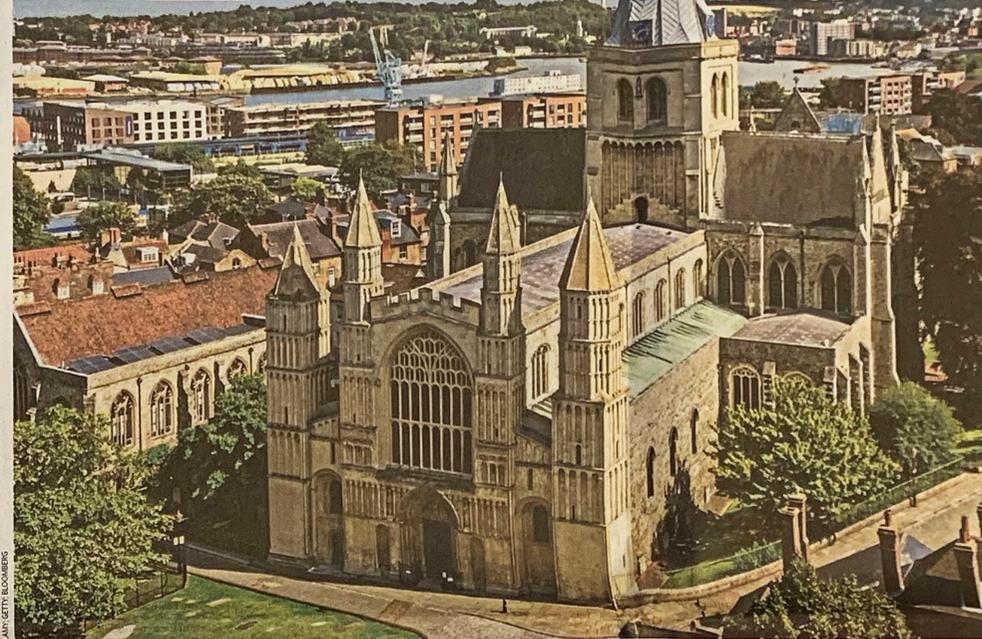
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OUR OVERALL TOP TEN

5. Rochester, Kent

STATION	London St Pancras Int.
TRAVEL TIME	34 mins
FLEXI TICKET	£277
SEASON TICKET	£5,444
GOOD SCHOOLS	15
AVERAGE HOUSE PRICE	£291,149
SATISFACTION RATING	7.47

With its Norman castle, ancient cathedral and views over the River Medway, this is one of north Kent's prettiest towns, with plenty of period properties in the Roman centre. While its wealth suffered when the naval dockyard closed and it struggled to find a new economic foothold, today it's regarded as the jewel in Medway's crown. The cobbled high street has a varied array of shops, cafes, restaurants and markets, as well as an annual festival celebrating Charles Dickens.



6. Chatham, Kent

STATION	London St Pancras Int.
TRAVEL TIME	38 mins
FLEXI TICKET	£280
SEASON TICKET	£5,444
GOOD SCHOOLS	16
AVERAGE HOUSE PRICE	£270,449
SATISFACTION RATING	7.47

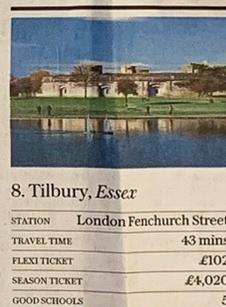
While the centre and the surrounding area is often regarded as run down – with associated crime rates – more loyal fans point to the Chatham Dockyard and Dockside, with its cinema and restaurants, as signs that it is starting to improve. It's also something of a haven of academia: there are no fewer than 16 schools rated outstanding or good within a three-mile radius of the town centre, putting this Kentish town on a par with Cambridge and Brighton. For downtime, it's also home to Buckmore Park Kart circuit, an outdoor go-karting circuit.



7. Woking, Surrey

STATION	London Waterloo
TRAVEL TIME	29 mins
FLEXI TICKET	£171
SEASON TICKET	£4,564
GOOD SCHOOLS	6
AVERAGE HOUSE PRICE	£523,896
SATISFACTION RATING	7.95

This town came top for life satisfaction in 2021, with golf courses aplenty, lots of green space and fast trains to London Waterloo. The area is also undergoing a large programme of regeneration, focused on the central Victoria Square. The New Victoria Theatre attracts West End productions and there is a plethora of high street shops and restaurants (including, of course, the infamous branch of Pizza Express). As a place it is useful, practical and accessible, but the town isn't going to win any architectural prizes.



8. Tilbury, Essex

STATION	London Fenchurch Street
TRAVEL TIME	43 mins
FLEXI TICKET	£102
SEASON TICKET	£4,020
GOOD SCHOOLS	5
AVERAGE HOUSE PRICE	£268,328
SATISFACTION RATING	7.42



10. Grays, Essex

STATION	London Fenchurch Street
TRAVEL TIME	39 mins
FLEXI TICKET	£102
SEASON TICKET	£4,020
GOOD SCHOOLS	5
AVERAGE HOUSE PRICE	£328,489
SATISFACTION RATING	7.42

Houses are more affordable here than in many other commuter towns, and flexi season tickets, for those mostly working from home, are the cheapest of all the locations on our list. However, congestion is a problem, and traffic around the town can get backed up for miles, although you can be at Lakeside shopping centre or the M25 very quickly. Change in the town could be afoot with plans announced last year to transform Grays with a £25m injection, creating a new beach destination and maritime activity centre.

BEST OF THE REST

BEST FOR SEASON TICKET COST



1. Epsom, Surrey

STATION	London Waterloo
TRAVEL TIME	37 mins
FLEXI TICKET	£116
SEASON TICKET	£3,188
GOOD SCHOOLS	6
AVERAGE HOUSE PRICE	£545,520
SATISFACTION RATING	7.35

The home of the Derby offers the cheapest annual season ticket of all our commuter towns, at £3,188 for a 37-min journey into central London. It ticks off a number of suburban must-haves: tree-lined streets of detached and semi-detached houses with gardens, a selection of good schools, and the necessary shops and services including a covered shopping mall, and various markets. The 600 acres of the racecourse are open to the public and there's plenty more green space including Epsom Common and Horton Country Park.

- Rest of the top 10
- 2. Staines
 - 3. Redhill
 - 4. Slough
 - 5. Brentwood
 - 6. Chafford Hundred
 - 7. Tilbury
 - 8. Grays
 - 9. Maidenhead
 - 10. Hatfield

BEST FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSE PRICES



1. Peterborough, Cambridgeshire

STATION	London Kings Cross
TRAVEL TIME	51 mins
FLEXI TICKET	£673
SEASON TICKET	£9,500
GOOD SCHOOLS	12
AVERAGE HOUSE PRICE	£220,488
SATISFACTION RATING	7.21

Peterborough has the cheapest house prices of the commuter towns on our list. But you will have to pay more for the 51-minute journey into London, which is the most expensive; an annual season ticket costs £9,500. However, it fares better for schools: there are 12 rated outstanding or good within a three-mile radius. Like others on the list, it is to benefit from a regeneration package. Announced in 2020, the £200m plan aims to provide new houses as well as culture and retail attractions in the heart of the city. For those in search of nature, the Fens are on the town's doorstep.

- Rest of the top 10
- 2. Sittingbourne
 - 3. Banbury
 - 4. Chatham
 - 6. Ashford
 - 7. Luton
 - 8. Southend
 - 9. Gillingham
 - 10. Basingstoke

BEST FOR SCHOOLS

- 1. Slough (see left)
- 2. Chatham
- 3. Cambridge
- 4. Brighton
- 5. Rochester
- 6. Gillingham
- 7. St Albans
- 8. Luton
- 9. Bedford
- 10. Peterborough

BEST FOR TRAVEL TIME

- 1. Maidenhead (see left)
- 2. St Albans
- 3. Gravesend
- 4. Stevenage
- 5. Hatfield
- 6. Reading
- 7. Slough
- 8. Woking
- 9. Welwyn Garden City
- 10. Shenfield

BEST FOR QUALITY OF LIFE

- 1. Woking (see left)
- 2. Cambridge
- 3. Haywards Heath
- 4. Sevenoaks
- 5. Lewes
- 6. Benfleet
- 7. Colchester
- 8. Basildon
- 9. Laindon
- 10. Didcot

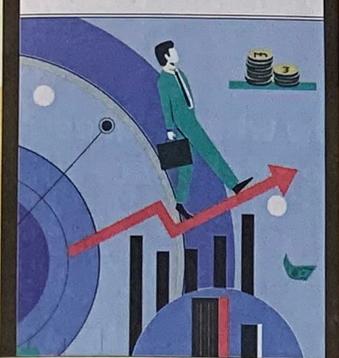
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