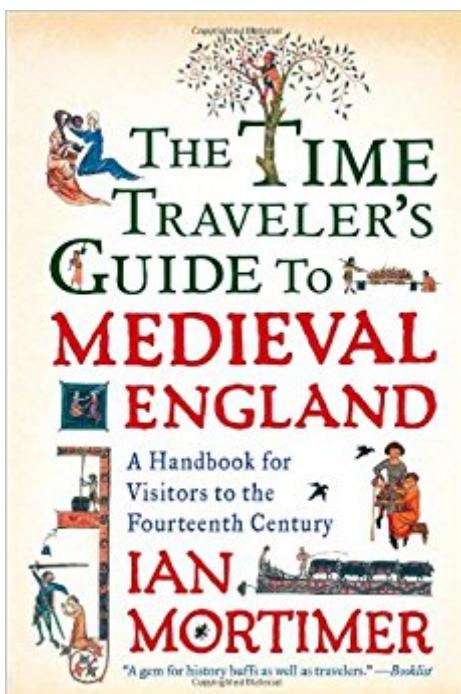


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# The Time Traveler's Guide To Medieval England: A Handbook For Visitors To The Fourteenth Century



## Synopsis

Now in paperback, a literary time machine that takes readers into the sights, smells, and tastes of the fourteenth century—•a book that is revolutionary in its concept and startling in its portrayal of humanity. The past is a foreign country. This is your guidebook. A time machine has just transported you back into the fourteenth century. What do you see? How do you dress? How do you earn a living and how much are you paid? What sort of food will you be offered by a peasant or a monk or a lord? And more important, where will you stay? The Time Traveler's Guide to Medieval England is not your typical look at a historical period. This radical new approach shows us that the past is not just something to be studied; it is also something to be lived. Through the use of daily chronicles, letters, household accounts, and poems of the day, Mortimer transports you back in time, providing answers to questions typically ignored by traditional historians. You will learn how to greet people on the street, what to use as toilet paper, why a physician might want to taste your blood, and how to know whether you are coming down with leprosy. The result is the most astonishing social history book you're ever likely to read: revolutionary in its concept, informative and entertaining in its detail, and startling for its portrayal of humanity in an age of violence, exuberance, and fear.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In this compelling volume, Medieval history expert Mortimer (The Fears of Henry IV) transports readers to jolly, squalid old England for a thorough survey of everyday 14th century life. Going beyond the "nasty, brutish and short" of it, Mortimer's immersive visitor's-guide approach to popular

history gives readers a seamless sense of being there. The population is young—"Half of the population is aged twenty-one or less"—but incredibly diverse. The idea that social classes were distinct and few—fighters, prayers, and farmers—gets exploded in Mortimer's examination society and the Medieval character, including everything from humor and juggling to mariners to doctors. Mortimer even argues, convincingly, over relative standards of hygiene ("to regard a medieval kitchen as 'dirty' because it has not been wiped down with modern detergent is to apply our own standards inappropriately"). He also looks at the role of period's four greatest writers of the time, and reveals the horrors of contemporary medicine (with terrifying descriptions of the plague) and law (the outskirts of every town were decorated with the hanged corpses of minor criminals). Mortimer's tongue-in-cheek visitor's guide is an impressive accomplishment, turning 600 years of history transparent to give 21st century audiences a clear view on Medieval life. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

“In this compelling volume, Mortimer transports his readers. . . . Gives readers a seamless sense of being there. . . . An impressive accomplishment, turning 600 years of history transparent to give 21st-century readers a clear view of medieval life.” Publishers Weekly  
“Mortimer addresses every aspect of medieval life, from the mundane to the bizarre. . . . Travel guides are designed to deliver helpful information about faraway places, but this one gets to the heart of a different time zone.” The Washington Post  
“Chock-full of surprises, this is exceptional social history, compellingly told; there should be a travel book like this for every century. Start reading, and you won’t want to stop.” Library Journal  
“The endlessly inventive Ian Mortimer is the most remarkable medieval historian of our time.” --The Times (UK)

Some history books can be remarkably dry and boring, but not this one. Ian Mortimer has taken the world as it was in the fourteenth century and you, the reader, and brought the two together so that you're enmeshed in that world as it was, walking the streets, meeting the locals, testing out their food and beds... As a writer who is in the midst of writing a book with some medieval characters, Mr. Mortimer's book has been a remarkable addition to my ability to ensure historical inaccuracies are avoided. Mr. Mortimer has created a history book which can be read and enjoyed by just about anyone, not only did I learn a lot about the time period, but I got a distinct and well-rounded idea of what it was like to be there, living the life of a visitor to England during that time period. Thoroughly

entertaining, filled with great information, and highly recommended for history lovers.

Love this book! So many details about life in medieval times that you wouldn't find in a textbook of boring dates and names. He really fleshes out what life, landscape, and relationships looked like through the eyes of people at that time. Cultural differences highlighted between contemporary and modern perspectives.

This book was a really fun read, and I learned a lot, but not in a way that I felt like I was being lectured to, or information was being shoved down my throat.

I bought this book for my wife who has a degree in English, teaches English, and writes fantasy books. She really liked this book and as she was reading it she was constantly updating me on trivia of life in Medieval England. Apparently Mr. Mortimer has really done some fine research (with sources), has a very pleasant writing style, and gives the kind of history about the kinds of things that were never talked about in her Medieval history classes. She found it fascinating and read it cover to cover in a couple sittings. She liked it so much she even blogged about it. If you are writing a novel taking place in Medieval times, you should read this book. If you are studying Medieval history and want to add context to your studies beyond all the religious writings that make up the most of the written record, you should read this book.

Affords the reader with deep insights into the growth of England and its people. The Medieval period (1300-1400) in England displays a huge shift in English culture which I was never aware of. I have been very interested in all aspects of England and Mr. Mortimer describes in detail such matters as dress, wages, food, and all matters how these people survived and thrived in a harsh environment.

I recently read two books back-to-back about the Middle Ages; this one (*The Time Traveler's Guide to Medieval England*) and "Manners, Custom, and Dress During the Middle Ages and During the Renaissance Period". Even though I recommend reading both books, as a novice to medieval studies, I surprisingly found the "Manners, Custom, and Dress" book to be an overall more enjoyable read than this one, since the flow of information and simpler language used made it easier to comprehend what was being described. About the enjoyable aspects of the "*The Time Traveler's Guide*": This book has an interesting approach. It transports you back into time as if you had stepped into a time machine and landed in 14th century England. As a result, rather than the

book "narrating" about people, places and things, it explains what you are experiencing first hand with your own senses of sight, hearing, smell, etc. In addition to basics such as food, clothing, and housing, this book went into more obscure areas too, such as how people dealt with Mother Nature's calling, before indoor plumbing and sewer systems had been invented. This is one subject hardly dealt with in other books, but one I had always wondered about. The not-so-enjoyable aspects: (1) the sections on law, legal issues, justice, etc. were dull (except for the part on punishments/torture, which made my eyes pop out and my stomach queasy); (2) the fashion section was hard to understand because the author used the medieval names for the articles of clothing being described. As a result, I had no idea what the people were wearing because the names of Medieval clothing were foreign to me; (3) there was a considerable amount of academic and historical terms throughout, which I didn't understand. If I had had a more thorough background in medieval politics, customs and society, the book would have been a more enjoyable--and understandable--read; and (4) the story sometimes did not follow chronological (logical?) order, jumping from one year or time-period to another, and this, I felt, confused the story-line. ("Why is the author mentioning this, now?", I would ask.) In conclusion, while I experienced a few pitfalls during my "travels" in this book, I still think this book is most definitely worthwhile to read to start you on the learning process about medieval England, letting you travel back in time in the comfort of your own home. (You should take note that the Kindle edition has no illustrations, which would have helped tremendously in the fashion section, for example.)

I love reading histories but histories are stories about the past painted in broad strokes. They depict major events and the larger than life characters responsible for them. I always felt there was something missing in these stories and Mortimer's books, this one and his sequel about the Elizabethan era, give me a hint of what is absent from virtually all histories. What's missing is the mortar that hold the stones of history together, the taste of what real life at the time was like and what the achievements of history took to accomplish. Mortimer's books do not tell a single story of life in medieval England though there are many anecdotal tales for illustration but he really does convey the essential qualities of life in this time. The author's work may more properly be considered a reference work for the study of this era but it really helps a reader of this era to understand the realities of details that histories would either ignore or gloss over. I will now be in a position of knowing what it means when a medieval king decides to move an army into the field; I will understand what is involved in traveling between medieval towns or countries; I will know what injury or illness means to a person of this era. Mortimer has put this time in perspective for me as a

reader.

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