The distinctive outline of Rye can be seen in the distance. It rises above the level green pastures, stretching from the sea to the far hills which formed the shoreline before the marsh was drained.

Once surrounded by sea, this fortified hilltop town played an important role in the defence of the south coast of England. These days, the river no longer harbours warships and is home to the local fishing fleet.

Meandering for over one and a half miles from Rye to the coast, the river forms part of the picturesque scenery visible from several vantage points in and around the citadel of Rye.

Rye survived frequent French attacks but in 1377 all but the stone buildings were burned, and the church bells stolen in one raid. Many of the half timbered houses now seen in the town date from the rebuilding after this event.

The Rye Museum has two sites, the Ypres Tower (early 14th century) and the East Street site. The Tower has had many roles in its history from a fortification to protect the town, to a private dwelling, a prison and a mortuary. It is the oldest building, except for St Mary’s church, open to the public in Rye. The balcony offers wonderful views of Romney Marsh, and the surrounding countryside.

St Mary’s church tower (usually open to the public) offers the best viewpoint to show the terracotta roofs of the many timbered houses. These ancient buildings, cobbled streets and secret passages, once the haunt of smugglers and highwaymen, regularly attract film crews in search of historical settings for period productions.

For centuries Rye was an island with only one land connection at high tide to the mainland through the Landgate.
How far?
50 minutes' ride. Drop off and pick up point –
Train Station Car Park

What’s there?
An ancient town with a fascinating history –
lots of battles, smuggling and literary and artistic connections.
Plenty to see and do. http://www.ryesussex.co.uk/
Lamb House – where writer Henry James (‘The Turn of the Screw’) lived. Free entry to members of the National Trust.
http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/lamb-house/
Rye Museum at Ypres Tower – an early 14th century tower which has been used for defence, private home, prison, mortuary and now museum—a must see.
Art galleries – check out John Fewster’s photography at the Swann Gallery in Mermaid Street – unusual views of Rye.
http://www.particularview.com
Rye Parish Church of St Mary in Church Square is worth a visit – it has a long and rather grisly history as well as some beautiful stained glass windows, one by the Arts & Crafts designer Sir Edward Burne-Jones.
The harbour – old net sheds are now shops, or you can walk along the river and look at the boats.

When can I go there?
Depending on demand, usually once or twice a term.

You can also jump on a minibus going to Polegate or Eastbourne and catch the train to Rye. Please remember the minibus may not be at Polegate or Eastbourne when you come back, so allow for taxi fare back to the Castle.

Who do I ask if I want a special trip?
E-mail: minibus@bisc.queensu.ac.uk

Ye Olde Mermaid Inn

Whether you are after a light lunch or a substantial supper, you will find Rye crammed with places to satisfy every possible taste and craving. The sea may have shrunk away but seafood is high up on the list of specialities for many of their restaurants. Just stroll down the little streets and try somewhere you like the look of.

If you go to Rye in February you will catch the Rye Scallops festival and throughout the year their restaurants are using local produce in any number of foodie events throughout the town.

Rye is home to numerous independent retro and vintage shops, and takes pride in the fact that there are no chain stores in town.

Pick up some retro kitchenware or model Dinky toys down on Rye’s Strand Quay.

Invest in a traditional Sussex wedding gift – a quirky Sussex Pig from the exquisite 200 year old Rye Pottery, the sole remaining pottery continuing the town’s tradition dating from the 12th century.

Also, don’t miss the Rye Heritage Centre for its ‘What the Butler Saw’ collection of vintage pier models, dating from the 1930s, used at the launch party for the film Sweeney Todd.

Discover English wildlife in a mosaic of coastal habitats - shingle, saltmarsh, saline lagoons, coastal grazing marsh, freshwater gravel pits and reedbeds. Explore its changing coastline and military history, or simply enjoy a walk beside the sea.

Enjoy amazing wildlife along many miles of path with five birdwatching hides.

The area also contains considerable historic interest with military fortifications from the 16th, 19th and 20th centuries, a lifeboat disaster and evidence of man’s early and continuing efforts to defend the land from the sea. This flat, open and historic landscape, with its low level of development, proximity to the sea and network of footpaths is popular with visitors. It can provide a very special experience. There is a good network of footpaths that enables much of the Nature Reserve to be visited from access points in Rye Town, Winchelsea Beach and Rye Harbour.

Ye Olde Mermaid Inn

Rye Harbour Nature Reserve

YE OLDE MERMAID INN

EAT & DRINK & ENJOY

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