

Off The Beaten Track – Robertson Street, Hastings

It's leaning towards the end of February and I am delighted to report that this new year I have been enjoying the company of a little fury friend called Harry. Harry is with us for a holiday and is pretty much the cutest little dog you'll see. I didn't grow up with dogs but they were never far away so I have an appreciation but no experience of a hound's life.

Living in the town I worried that Harry might feel like he'd got a raw deal but I was so wrong. We are out on the beach every morning at 7am and I am seeing a side to coastal living that normally would have passed me by.

Like most beaches around the country Hastings will only allow you to take dogs on the beach in the winter months. As someone with a small child I confess I'm happy with rule, dog poo is surprisingly hard to spot on shingle! As it's February I am free to wander and Harry is very happy discovering the washed up cuttle fish and the odd shoe.

Having a dog in Hastings also doesn't stop you from having a social life, in fact it seems to be enhancing mine. Not only am I now making friends with fellow dog walkers on the West Hill but it feels almost compulsory to have a pup when visiting an Old Town boozier. Walk into most pubs and you'll find a dog at the bar, probably on a bar stool and so many places have a jar of dog treats for their favourite customers.

Harry joins me as I explore Robertson Street and the flurry of exciting new places popping up around the narrow streets. The American Ground, Trinity Triangle, Clarentment, White Rock Quarter. The names of this area go on and I'm never sure what to use when. It all starts on Robertson Street where half of the road has been pedestrianised to encourage strolling shoppers. There are established traders like Trinity Wholefoods and incredible architecture with Hastings Library, The Printworks and Trinity Church to be enjoyed. There are several new exciting restaurants like Rustico serving authentic, stone baked pizza and the cool Observer Building hosting an endless stream of events.

Borough Wine, Beer and Books opened last year and marks a change of fortune in this neck of the woods. Serving house red, white and rose on tap in refillable bottles they are also selling books and are launching a programme of monthly events in their basement all adding to the night time economy in this area.

With Hastings Pier reopening in Spring 2016 and the greatly anticipated Source Park now open on the door step of Robertson Street footfall seems to be increasing. It's the main thorough fare from Hastings Train Station and offers a scenic stroll to the front.

Being with Harry I make a bee line for Collared, a doggy haven of designer leads and canine friendly pic n' mix. We stock up for his stay and head to Wow & Flutter, a tiny shoe box of a record shop, where we chat to the owners about events in the town. This little corner feels like a back alley in London with graffiti shutters and undesirables lurking around. It's been given a lick of paint with the reimagined Rock House and the investment of The Printworks to transform their lower floors into a new bar.

My top tip for visiting this area is don't come on a Monday. It's easy to get the wrong day and feel like this whole corner of town is shut down. Come later on in the week and you'll discover gems that will keep you busy from morning to late into the night. Hopefully with the increase in numbers walking through this area, it might feel a bit more happening on a more regular basis but maybe the locals like it this way?

Shop

Borough Wine, Beers & Books - <https://boroughwines.co.uk/shops/>

Collared - <http://www.collareddog.co.uk/>

Trinity Wholefoods - <https://www.facebook.com/Trinity-Wholefoods-111663112199085/?fref=ts>

Dyke & Dean - <http://www.dykeanddean.com/>

Eat

Rustico - <http://www.rusticoitaliano.co.uk/>

Nazar - <http://nazarbarbequerestaurant.co.uk/>

Bullet Café - <http://bulletcoffeehouse.co.uk/>

Stay

The Printworks - <http://www.theprintworkshastings.co.uk/>

The White Rock Hotel - <http://www.thewhiterockhotel.com/>

Useful links

Observer Building – <http://observerbuildinghastings.co.uk/>

Rock House - <http://www.rockhouse.org.uk/>

Walking dogs in Hastings -

https://www.hastings.gov.uk/community_living/places_spaces_facilities/allotments_parks_beaches/beaches/beaches_info/#dogs