

November 2019

Enjoy a Springtime break in the Hampshire area of the South Downs National Park (East Hampshire)

Planning an early Spring break away can help you get through the winter months and frenzy of the festive season. A truly delightful place to escape in the early Spring is the **Hampshire area of the South Downs National Park**. Enjoy the delights of the early months of 2020 in some of the country's most breathtaking scenery.

Blow the cobwebs away by getting a **fresh air fix** in an area much loved by famous writers such as **Jane Austen** and the eighteenth century ecologist and author **Gilbert White**. The area inspired White's life-long investigation of the natural world and his world-famous writings. The 300th anniversary of his birth is celebrated in 2020 - something very meaningful in these days of climate change awareness!

Sample the area's many **walks, literary trails and cycle rides** amongst stunning countryside – forests and woodland, hills, valleys, country parks and open countryside are all yours during your stay! <https://www.visit-hampshire.co.uk/things-to-do/activities-and-sport/walking-and-hiking>

Celebrate one of the first signs of spring – the coming of snowdrops – during a special **Snowdrop Weekend at Gilbert White's House** (15 and 16 February, admission half price with garden tours throughout the weekend <http://www.gilbertwhiteshouse.org.uk>) and **2 Snowdrop Open Days at the former home of Jane Austen's brother, Chawton House**. (16 and 23 Feb 11am – 4pm, £5, children under 16 free, includes garden visit to explore snowdrops on the South Lawn and Wilderness as well as access to the walled garden and grounds. Tickets to the house additional admission price of £5. Light lunches, tea, coffee and cakes will be available to purchase in the tearoom) <https://chawtonhouse.org/>

Still in Chawton, **Jane Austen's House Museum**, the house where Jane Austen lived and wrote, has lots to tempt everyone this spring (www.jane-austens-house-museum.org.uk). For **Valentine's Day**, wander round the house and gardens and then indulge in a **Valentine's Day Cream Tea** at Cassandra's Cup café opposite the house (14 Feb, booking required <https://cassandrascup.co.uk/>).

Discover more about Jane's garden at the Museum and how it's evolved over the past 71 years in a talk by gardener and historian Carol Chernega (15 Feb, booking required). There's **February Half Term fun for all the family** (17 – 21 Feb) with a trail around the house, dressing up in bonnets and top hats and a chance to write with a quill! There's also **storytelling for young visitors** (18 Feb 10.45am – 11.15am for under 5s, 11.45am – 12.15pm over 5s). All half-term

activities are free with museum admission, but must be booked due to limited space. **8th March marks International Women's Day** – join Jane Austen's House Museum in celebrating strong women the world over with discounted admission and a cream tea at Cassandra's Cup (booking required for the tea <https://cassandrascup.co.uk/>). **To mark the first day of spring, why not stroll through Jane Austen's village of Chawton** and learn about her love of nature, where she lived and its surroundings, and the importance of the countryside and village life in shaping her writing. Throughout the walk, short readings from her letters and novels will bring her world to life (all abilities welcome, 20 March, 10.30 am - 12pm, booking required). Back at **Jane Austen's House Museum enjoy some family-friendly activities over the Easter holidays** with an **Easter egg trail, family walks and a Young People's Writing Workshop** (4-19 April, with writing workshop 4 April, 11am – 1pm, for young people aged 16-25, family walks 8 and 15 April, 10.30am – 12pm. Booking required for workshop and family walks). **May sees another guided village walk in Jane's footsteps** (2 May, 10.30am – 12pm, booking required), a **Spring Flowers Workshop** teaching you how to put together a hand-tied bouquet of spring blooms (3 May 10am – 1pm, booking required) and more **family fun for May Half Term** including a **Bank holiday Family Walk** to celebrate National Walking Month (25 – 29 May, family walk 25 May, 10.30am – 12pm, booking required). There's also another chance to enjoy a **cream tea treat, this time for Mother's Day** – bring Mum to Jane Austen's House and enjoy a treat in the café opposite – Cassandra's Cup. (22 May, booking essential through Cassandra's Cup for the cream tea <https://cassandrascup.co.uk/>). <https://www.jane-austens-house-museum.org.uk/whats-on>

National Trust property Hinton Ampner, a quintessentially English country house set in undulating gardens, comes into its own in spring. From late March, thousands of fragrant **narcissi** and eye-popping **tulips** burst into bloom. Look out for frilly candy-pink tulip variety Huis Ten Bosch and deep-red Lasting Love. You'll also find discover early spring camellias and magnolias. In the nearby woods are carpets of scented **bluebells** in late April. A large new cut flower border in the kitchen garden will provide beautiful floral colour all year round, and arrangements of tulips, peonies, roses and irises in the house. Cut flowers were a favourite of former owner Ralph Dutton. <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/hinton-ampner/features/spring-at-hinton->

At another delightful **National Trust house and garden, Uppark, near Petersfield**, there is much to see in Spring. The garden gives visitors a real spring treat, with thousands of scented narcissi littering the lawn, driveway and café frontage, so you can enjoy the delights of spring as you tuck into home-made cake from Uppark's café. Visitors can also enjoy **Guided Tours of the Servants quarters** (8 Jan – 14 Feb between 11am and 3pm, free but admission applies) <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/uppark-house-and-garden>

Another wonderful sign that Spring is here is the **birth of some very special lambs at Butser Ancient Farm – a rare breed native to the Isle of Man - Manx Loughtan**, that can have up to 6 horns! <http://www.butserancientfarm.co.uk>

There's plenty for **lovers of food and drink** to enjoy here in the Hampshire South Downs. Treat yourself to a truly unforgettable **chocolate-making experience with a workshop** run by award-winning artisan chocolate makers **Chocolate Craft** in Alresford, near Alton, (see website for dates and details <https://chocolatecraft.co.uk/>) And the historic market town of **Alresford, near Alton**, is hosting its annual – and now famous – **Watercress Festival**, celebrating its locally-

grown produce. Join in the huge street festival with over 80 stalls showcasing the very best local food and drink producers, craftsmen as well as items for the house and garden. Enjoy music, dance, watercress-inspired cookery demonstrations by well-known chefs and the World Watercress Eating Championships! (17 May, free event, <https://www.watercressfestival.org/>). Join an in-depth **tour of the state of the art winery at Hattingley Valley Vineyard** to find out all about production processes involved in making their award-winning sparkling wine. Then enjoy a tasting from their current range. Some dates also offer a visit to their vineyard. (Dates throughout the year, excluding harvest mid-Sept to end-Oct, winery tour and tasting £17.50 pp, vineyard plus tour and tasting £22.50 pp)

<https://www.hattingleyvalley.com/> **To visit the vineyards of Hampshire (including Hattingley) in style** and without driving worries you can book onto **a private tour with Hampshire Tours**, who offer group visits for up to 6 people. Trips include 4 wineries with tours and tastings and pick-ups from selected locations. (£500 for up to 6 people, for more information visit <https://www.hampshiretours.net/home>) For something a bit different enjoy a **vegan and vegetarian Wine Tasting at the Sustainability Centre** (8 Feb, 10am – 4pm, £85) and discover the difference between sustainable, vegan, vegetarian, biodynamic and organic wines. <https://www.sustainability-centre.org/adult-courses.html>

Relive the splendour and glamour of steam hauled fine dining on the **Watercress Line** steam railway, Alresford, near Alton and enjoy a **traditional Sunday lunch on the Countryman**, step back in time to 1950's ocean liner glamour on the **Watercress Belle for a 4-course silver service Saturday night dinner** or brush up your sleuthing skills on a **Murder Mystery train** whilst enjoying a 3-course evening meal. (For dates, more information and availability visit

<https://www.watercressline.co.uk/section.php/6/1/dining-trains>) **For real ale lovers** there's great treat in store – the **Real Ale Train** (or RAT) gives you the chance to sample local ales from a restored bar carriage pulled by a steam locomotive. For more information and dates for 2019 visit <https://www.watercressline.co.uk/product.php/121/real-ale-train-rat>

There is a wealth of **interesting and unusual workshops** for those keen to learn a new (or ancient) skill – many inspired by nature. For example, at **Gilbert White's House** make your own medicinal remedies from garden herbs during a hands-on, introductory half-day workshop **'Teas and Tinctures'** (27 May, 10am – 1pm, £25, including light lunch, tea and coffee) https://gilbertwhiteshouse.org.uk/teas-tinctures-herbal-course/?event_date=2020-05-27 More nature-inspired workshops can be found at the **Sustainability Centre**. **Make a willow garden sculpture** (10 Jan, 10am – 4pm, £75), or **learn to make your home more healthy, eco-friendly and economical** in an **Eco-refurbishment** day (18 Jan, 10am – 4pm, £50). Indulge in a day or weekend of **making natural cosmetics** from kitchen store-cupboard staples, herb gardens and hedgerows (1 or 2 Feb 10am – 4pm, £65 one day, £120 both days), **weave a willow frame basket** to gather eggs or produce, using sustainable, locally grown willow. (6 Feb, 10am – 5pm, £75). or **make willow obelisks** (20 Feb, 2pm – 5pm, £35). More spring-time workshops include **Hand-sewn book-making** (22 Feb, 10am – 4pm, £55), **Kitchen Gardening weekends** (7/6 March, 20/21 June, 9.30am - 5.30pm, £240), **spoon carving** (21 March, 10am – 4pm, £65), **pendant carving** (28 or 29 March, 9.30am – 4.30pm, £75), **clay oven building** (4 April, 9.30am – 4pm, £100 including a pizza meal cooked in a completed cob oven), **trug making** (8-9 April, 10am – 5pm, £140), **woodland folklore** (14 April, 10am – 4pm, £60), **Blacksmithing** (25 and 26 April, 10am – 4.30pm), **Foraging, Fire and Folklore** (20 May, 6pm – 8pm, £20) and more besides. For full course information visit <https://www.sustainability-centre.org/adult-courses.html>

Chawton House will be hosting a **Modern Calligraphy for Beginners – Dip Pen** course – allowing you to learn the basic strokes in a friendly group workshop, with wonderful Jane Austen quotes to use as inspiration if you wish. (13 Feb, 10.30am - 2.30pm, £65 including light refreshments)
<https://chawtonhouse.org/whats-on/modern-calligraphy-workshop-dip-pen-2-2/>

If you enjoy **festivals, exhibitions and other events**, look no further than this area, where there is much on offer this coming spring.

At **Gilbert White's House you can Travel Around the World** with the famous eighteenth century ecologist in this special exhibition celebrating 300 years of his life and work since his birth. (3 – 28 Jan, Admission applies). **To celebrate National Storytelling Week** there will be a **storytelling session with writer, author, storyteller and creator of story-based events, DD Storyteller**. 2 one-hour sessions will include interactive traditional tales and a chance to make woodland animal masks (8 Feb, £8 per child including 1 free accompanying adult. Sessions 1pm and 2.30pm). And you can enjoy the House's annual **Nature Festival**, bigger and better than ever before with talks, walks and stands for all the family, showcasing the natural world around us and the biodiversity of the South Downs (and how to protect it!) (24 May, Admission applies). <https://gilbertwhiteshouse.org.uk/>

For guests of glamping site **Adhurst Yurts** there will be a **micro Festival with basketry and other outdoor skills** led by experienced instructors and in addition delicious venison from the woods! (May Bank Holiday Weekend 9 and 10 May) <https://www.adhurst.co.uk/> Another nature and sustainability-inspired Festival is the **South Downs Green Fair at the Sustainability Centre** – a fantastic family day out and a truly eye-opening event that is also Zero Waste. Enjoy demonstrations for greener ways of living, sales of eco-products, local, Fair Trade and organic wares, organic food and drink. There is also free children's entertainment including bushcraft, circus skills, outdoor cooking and storytelling as well as talks, walks, demonstrations and live music. (10 May 10am – 5pm, £10, child £3.50) <https://www.sustainability-centre.org/south-downs-green-fair.html>

Butser Ancient Farm celebrates Spring with the **Celtic Festival of Imbolc**. Come and join in an afternoon of festivities including **storytelling, poetry, singing, firelighting and a light, warming vegan meal**, all included in the price (1 Feb, 1pm – 4pm, £15). Or enjoy a **Stargazing Evening** at the Farm **as part of the South Downs National Park Dark Skies at Night Festival** (21 Feb, 7.30pm – 9.30pm, £8, Children £4 under 3s free). **During February Half Term explore ancient worlds at Butser** with bygone skills to be learnt, demonstrations, a themed trail around the ancient buildings and hot chocolate beside a roaring fire. (17 – 21 Feb, 10am – 4pm, £9 adult, £8 concessions, £5 child, £24 family ticket). Over the Easter holidays you can also celebrate the **ancient festival of Eostre**, with a springtime trail to discover more about Eostre, the ancient goddess of Spring. Over the Easter weekend **meet the Saxons from Herigeas Hundas** (10 – 13 April) with demonstrations, traditional crafts, cooking and DIY archaeology experiments, from mini mosaic making to wattling and more. **Butser's Roman 1X Legion** will be in residence in the Roman Villa with fighting and marching demonstrations, archery, Roman cooking, crafts, games etc. (18/19 April, 10am – 4pm, £9, £8 concession, £5 child, £24 family). And the famous **Celtic festival of Beltain** takes place in early May, celebrating the beginning of summer with music, dancing, axe throwing, warrior training, storytelling, ancient crafts, re-enactors and much more. And at dusk there's the fabulous and symbolic **Burning of the Wickerman** (2 May, 4.30pm – 9.30pm, early bird tickets until 1 Apr - £20, child £15, under 3s free, full price £28, child £23, under 3s free . Booking link

<http://www.butserancientfarm.co.uk/beltain-festival/>), other events information
<http://www.butserancientfarm.co.uk/>

The Rural Life Centre, near Petersfield, will be hosting a **Wellies and Walkies Charity Dog Walking event** in aid of Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice. This countryside museum will be the registration and end point for the fun event with walks staggered and starting between 10am and 11am (15 March, £10 per pooch). Then, still at the centre, the **Tilford Gardening Club will be holding their Spring Flower Show** (5 April, 10 am – 5pm). And you can **experience the many sights and sounds of a World War 2 village in Tilford, A Village at War**. The museum will be alive with civilian and military personnel, with music, military demonstrations, re-enactments and much more (9 and 10 May) <https://rural-life.org.uk/>

The Watercress Line steam railway, Alresford near Alton, will be holding its **Day Out With Thomas event this Spring**.

Meet **Thomas the Tank Engine and friends** over 10 days. Experience a ride on a real steam engine and shake hands with The Fat Controller. Enjoy children's entertainment and vintage fairground rides (10 – 19 April inclusive. All activities and rides included in ticket price – see website for details) www.watercressline.co.uk

Old Thorns has lots of **tribute concerts** on offer this spring. Enjoy 2 hours of non-stop Beatles music from **The Upbeat Beatles** (7 Feb), or celebrate Valentine's night in style with **Michael Buble in The Buble Reborn Show** (14 Feb), or go back to the iconic 90s with **Take That tribute band Could It Be Magic** (Feb 28) or the **Ultra 90s** (20 March). Spend the evening with **The Dolly Parton Experience** (6 March). relive the arrival of **Ultimate Girl Power** (3 April) or **The Spice Girl Experience** (1 May) or **Movie the Night Away** with a night devoted to a non-stop, all singing, all dancing tribute to 4 generations of the greatest movies ever! (15 May) (Doors open for each show at 6.30pm, dinner served at 7.30pm prompt, finishes 12.30 am, £39.95 to include 3-course meal, tribute act, DJ and disco). Why not make the most of the experience by booking an **Overnight Tribute Package?** (Prices from £115 per person to include B&B and tribute ticket) <https://www.oldthorns.com/events-tributes/tribute-nights/> Or indulge in **a relaxing spa break at the secluded lakeside resort of Champneys Forest Mere**. New levels of relaxation have been introduced thanks largely to the new cutting-edge Thermal Poolside Suite. You can also enjoy a range of special wellness or fitness overnight retreats including the **Janet Thomson Placebo Diet** (12 Jan) and **Chill Out Yoga** (17 Jan) as well as skills days including **Front Crawl with Art of Swimming** (29 Feb) and **Learn or improve your Breaststroke with Art of Swimming** (1 March). Or you can really kick-start your fitness with a **4 night Bootcamp** (27 Jan or 16 March for 4 nights) <https://www.champneys.com/spa-resorts/champneys-forest-mere/>

You can enjoy a springtime glamping break at the **multi-award winning Two Hoots adult only campsite**, set in the heart of the countryside. Choose from one of their cosy shepherd's huts complete with all mod-cons or glamping eco-pods – both close to woodland walks with carpets of snowdrops or bluebells. Make the most of springtime discounts (only available when booking through the website) on huts and pods (see website for details). <http://www.twohootscampsite.co.uk/>

There's plenty of other accommodation to choose from for your break – including a great choice of **B&Bs, hotels, pubs with rooms, farmhouses, and luxury glamping in shepherds huts, yurts, eco-pods, safari tents or lodges**. For further information on accommodation and things to do and visit in this corner of the world go to

<http://www.easthants.gov.uk/visit-east-hampshire> or email the Tourist Information Centre in Petersfield: petersfieldinfo@btconnect.com

Ends

For further press information please contact Rachel Shimell on 02380 732981 or email: rachel.shimell@gmail.com

Notes to Editors:

The South Downs National Park

The South Downs National Park's landscapes cover 1,600km² of breathtaking views and hidden gems – rolling hills, glorious heathland, river valleys, ancient woodland, thriving villages and market towns, and the iconic white cliffs of the Heritage Coast. A rich tapestry of wildlife, landscapes, tranquillity and visitor attractions weave together a story of people and place in harmony. www.southdowns.gov.uk/

East Hampshire

The area of the South Downs that spills into East Hampshire - around Chawton where Jane Austen lived – has quite a different feel from the rest of the new National Park. Hidden away between the cathedral cities of Winchester and Chichester, its steep wooded hills and hidden valleys of watercress farms, lavender fields, vineyards, hop gardens and trout-filled streams, together with its picture-perfect villages and peaceful market towns, make it undoubtedly one of the loveliest parts of rural England. www.easthants.gov.uk/tourism