

PRESS RELEASE



Bluebells in Scotney Castle Woods

19 January 2009

Leap into the New Year with a recession busting Seven Wonders of the Weald annual pass

The Seven Wonders of the Weald offers fantastic value with an amazing array of things to do all year from swinging in the trees with Go Ape at Bedgebury National Pinetum and Forest to listening to piano recitals at the lovely Finchcocks in Goudhurst. Best of all you can enjoy all seven attractions for an amazing £25 with a family annual pass which offers free and discounted entry all year. Passes are available at local Tourist Information Centres and from some of the attractions including Bewl Water, Bedgebury National Pinetum and Forest and from 3 April at Marle Place Gardens.

The Seven Wonders of the Weald www.sevenwonders.org.uk include some of the best gardens, lakes and stately homes in Kent and Sussex and all only ten minutes apart from one another. Although some attractions are closed in winter there is always plenty to do at Lamberhurst Vineyard, Bewl Water and Bedgebury National Pinetum and Forest which are open all year.

Bewl Water, which has the South East's largest lake, offers a range of activities including walking, riding and cycling around its 13 mile perimeter with plenty of opportunities to spot a variety of wildlife. (riding and cycling permitted between May and October) The lake itself is perfect to learn or perfect your fly fishing, sailing, canoeing, windsurfing or rowing skills. Families with children can discover the adventure playground in a woodland fortress full of tempting swings, slides, and rope assault courses. Young children will love the teddy bear's cottage and the colourful new play equipment in front of the visitor centre. There is a café, picnic area and the website has details of special events from dragon boat racing to garden and classic car shows. *Please visit www.bewl.co.uk for more information.*

Bedgebury National Pinetum and Forest offers a peaceful setting with lakes, trees and the largest conifer collection on one site in the world. The Forest itself has plenty of excitement on offer with the Go Ape Assault course plus dedicated routes for walkers, cyclists and horse riders. There are twelve children's adventure play sites located throughout the forest dedicated to the plant hunters of old. New for 2009 are half price Wednesdays (for anyone without a pass) when entry is just £3.50 per car until the end of March (excluding February half term). There are also discounts on cycle hire and refreshments in the cafe. <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/bedgebury> for more information.

Marle Place Gardens and gallery are open from 3 April until 5 October 2009 between 10am and 5pm on Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday, or by appointment. The gardens are a haven for horticulturists, wildlife enthusiasts and art lovers. The formal gardens, encircled by natural woodland, comprise an array of unusual plants, flowers and trees that delight all year round. In spring the gardens bloom with everything from daffodil to magnolia and the fruit trees in the kitchen garden are also full of blossom. The woodland walks are scented with bluebells and alive with birds. Spring bulbs including Narcissus and Fritillaria add a shock of colour and perfume amongst the gardens green borders. The gardens have won awards for gardening for wildlife and nature lovers will not be disappointed by the bird and insect life that thrives here. Delightful features not to be missed are the allium garden, the Edwardian rockery and the unusual art pieces found throughout the grounds. Contemporary artwork is also on display in the gallery. www.mareplace.co.uk for more information

Scotney Castle is a romantic site with a 14th century castle ruin surrounded by a lake and lovely gardens which include an unusual heather-thatched ice house. The Hussey House in the grounds has also recently been opened to the public. In spring, Scotney's grounds boast one of the finest displays of bluebells in Kent. Daffodils and primroses bring colour to the lawns and there is a superb display of rhododendrons and azaleas in spring. Scotney's

famous Kalmia Latifolia produces a wonderful scent when it flowers in late spring. The moat offers wonderful reflections of the ruined castle. The Estate is open all year round for walks and the house and gardens open from Mid March. Please visit

www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-scotneycastlegarden for more information.

At **Lamberhurst Vineyard** you are sure to find something special for everyone. The Swan pub and bistro provides delicious home cooked food in a charming setting, with indoor and outdoor seating. There is an adventure playground and pets corner to entertain the children. At the award winning farm shop you can purchase home made treats, fresh local produce and delicious spring wines to awaken the taste buds. Lamberhurst Vineyard's beauty salon provides a range of rejuvenating spa treatments. Please visit www.lamberhurstvineyard.net for more information.

Sissinghurst Castle Garden was created with the desire to reflect intimacy and privacy, the garden is divided into separate enclosures thus creating the white, rose, and cottage garden and nuttery. The subtly coloured and informal planting schemes reflect the romantic flair of its creator Vita Sackville – West. The different displays and vast array of plants and flowers make Sissinghurst a garden for all seasons; however it is particularly worth seeing in spring. Newly opened bulbs pierce through the green foliage, and the varying garden rooms are a shower of sweetly scented blossom, particularly the white garden, which stands out beautifully against the mellow brick walls of the manor house. The Elizabethan tower is the perfect way to look out across the weald and see the splashes of colour appearing throughout the countryside. Please visit www.nationaltrust.org.uk/sissinghurst for more information.

Finchcocks is the ideal day out for music lovers as the grade 2 listed manor house is home to a wonderful collection of over 100 period keyboards including pianos, harpsichords and organs. In spring Finchcocks holds an annual garden fair which takes place on 24 and 25 May this year. There will be a range of stalls displaying unique items for and from the garden. Delightful music will add atmosphere in both the house and the formal garden as visitors enjoy browsing the garden products and musical instruments on display. Please visit www.finchcocks.co.uk for more information.

The pass gives families huge savings as follows and all for £25:

- 2 free family visits to Marle Place Gardens and Gallery
- 5 free entries to Bedgebury National Pinetum & Forest
- 5 free entries to Bewl Water
- 2-for-1 admission or 50% off a family pass at Sissinghurst Castle Garden
- 2-for-1 admission or 50% off a family pass at Scotney Castle
- 50% discount on admission to Finchcocks for five visits and a free Cream Tea for every adult presenting a valid Pass
- Glass of wine with every £10 spent in the Bistro at Lamberhurst Vineyard

The Pass can be bought in person at Tunbridge Wells Tourist Office in The Pantiles, at Cranbrook Information Centre, at Bewl Water, at Marle Place Gardens, at Bedgebury Forest & Pinetum; over the phone at the Tunbridge Wells Tourist Office on 01892 515675 (50p admin charge); by post from: Seven Wonders Pass Promotion, c/o The Friends of Bedgebury Pinetum, Bedgebury, Park Lane, Goudhurst, Kent TN17 2SL (make cheque payable to 'Seven Wonders of the Weald') or online at www.sevenwonders.org.uk