

News Release

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Fall in love with the Heart of Kent

Valentine's Day is romantic and exciting, a time to feel special and loved, and with the 14th of February just around the corner, it's time to put your heart into planning something really special for the love of your life. So what could be better than a weekend break at a beautiful country hotel in stunning countryside within easy reach of a whole host of fine restaurants, cosy pubs, historic castles and fascinating towns and villages? and if you are thinking of choosing an engagement ring or special piece of jewellery then consider visiting one of the many jewellers around the Heart of Kent including the Queen's jewellers G Collins and Sons Ltd in the High Street of Royal Tunbridge Wells where you will find the Queen's personal jeweller and crown jeweller Harry Collins.

You'll find all the ingredients for this delicious romantic recipe in the Heart of Kent, an area that includes the towns and surrounding villages of Ashford, Maidstone, Tunbridge Wells, Sevenoaks and Tonbridge, all of which are close to London and Channel connections to Europe, and Gatwick and Heathrow airports. So

for an unforgettable Valentine's experience, why not fall head over heels in love with the Heart of Kent?

www.visitheartofkent.co.uk

Accommodation

Whether you're looking for a cosy country pub or a beautiful stately house hotel, you're really spoiled for choice in this area of Kent.

Set back from the tree-lined lanes of Kent, the manor house at **Chilston Park** is a unique Grade 1 listed property. Over the years, it has been a home to eminent politicians, writers, Lords and Viscounts. Today it is a luxury hotel, set within 22 acres of rural parkland in the heart of the Garden of England.

But perhaps the most remarkable aspect of this luxury four red star hotel is the antiques and history that surround it. It has many interesting artefacts that date as far back as the 17th century manor house, and many of the 53 bedrooms feature original fireplaces, four-poster beds and antiques. The two Rosette restaurant is still located in the original dining room and serves an array of fine local cuisine.

With its origins dating back to the Norman Conquest, **Eastwell Manor** near Ashford has many interesting features - carved panelled rooms, massive baronial stone fireplaces, all in a quiet and tranquil atmosphere. The Manor features 23 tastefully decorated and furnished en-suite rooms and suites, offering space, elegance and sumptuous comfort. Each room is individually designed and furnished in a classical style yet has all the modern day facilities that you would expect from a first class family run country house hotel.

Brandshatch Place Hotel in Fawkham, near Sevenoaks, is an elegant Georgian Mansion built in 1906 situated in a picturesque country setting, with beautifully furnished rooms. The hotel restaurant, which has been awarded two AA rosettes for exceptional cuisine, offers an assortment of original English dishes, which can be enjoyed in the restaurant, or in one of the private dining rooms. The hotel boasts an impressive Spa with treatment rooms, a relaxation room and amber lounge, as well as hydrotherapy pool, Jacuzzi, sauna and steam rooms. Relax with your partner and enjoy the range of treatments on offer or

indulge in the array of refreshments from the Spa Brasserie or alternatively you can also order from the hotel a la carte menu.

Elvey Farm is at the end of a twisting, winding little lane, nestled amongst 75 acres of farmland in the prettiest countryside in Kent. As far as the eye can see, there are fields, orchards and hills, with Pluckley's church spire in the distance. So whether you're sipping champagne on the veranda outside your suite or exploring Pluckley's charming village square and shops, you'll be surrounded by the quietest, the most idyllic countryside in Kent.

There's been a guesthouse here since the 1980s, but Elvey Farm has been around much longer. The Hall House was built in the Middle Ages, and the stable block, which is part of the guesthouse, has been at the heart of the farm for centuries. Elvey's accommodation has been renovated to the highest standards. Expect stylish contemporary bathrooms in the stable block, fully renovated rooms with every comfort, and friendly, personal service. At breakfast you'll feast on fresh eggs, sausages and crispy bacon from local farms, and Kentish Ground Coffee from Pluckley's very own tea and coffee factory. And in the evenings, you can sample wine or cider from Kent's vineyards.

Boys Hall is one of the most beautiful 17th century buildings in Willesborough, Ashford and retains many of its original features. The Hall was originally built in 1616 by the Boys family who had previously been known as De Bois, having originally landed in England from France at the time of the Norman Conquest. Over time their name was Anglicised through Boyce to Boys. Boys Hall has over three acres of landscaped gardens, and is a perfect setting for a romantic Valentine's escape. So why not spend a romantic evening in truly beautiful surroundings this Valentine's Day? You'll arrive to a glass of pink champagne, enjoy a three course dinner in the relaxing dining room - and a rose will be given to that special someone.

Ashdown Park Hotel and Country Club is a beautiful country house hotel within easy reach of Royal Tunbridge Wells by car. Set in the heart of the Ashdown Forest, this hotel is perfect for a romantic getaway with luxurious accommodation, including some rooms with four foster beds and spa baths. The

idyllic location makes this hotel perfect for taking romantic walks through the beautiful Ashdown forest or visiting the nearby historic spa town of Royal Tunbridge Wells with its theatres, restaurants and attractive shopping streets including the picturesque Pantiles. The hotel boasts excellent food, extensive gardens and parkland in addition to superb leisure facilities including a swimming pool, tennis courts and spa.

Food

From fine dining to pub lunches the Heart of Kent caters for every taste and occasion.

Gavin Gregg Restaurant has been serving Sevenoaks for over nine years, and proprietors, Gavin and Lucinda Gregg, are proud of making Gavin Gregg Restaurant the foremost restaurant in the area, a feat recognised by their award of two AA rosettes for the last four years.

Head Chef Gavin Gregg along with chefs Charlie Cain, Chris Brennan and Adam Barrett have created inspiring and exciting menus combining traditional dishes with a hint of international panache. You can also enjoy an extensive wine list, which complements every dish.

In a listed building dating back to the 16th Century, Gavin Gregg Restaurant still retains many of its intimate and original features but the interior has been transformed into a truly impressive and elegant eating establishment.

The Mulberry Tree is a contemporary country restaurant and bar with a relaxed, informal atmosphere, excellent food, wine and service. It is set in the beautiful Kent countryside, only four miles from Staplehurst. The restaurant has been named Kent Restaurant of the Year 2008, was featured in the 2009 *Michelin Guide*, has been awarded two AA Rosettes and has been voted *The Good Food Guide* Readers' Favourite Restaurant for the South East of England.

The cuisine style is 'modern British & European' using seasonal and local produce that is sourced from local suppliers from within The Weald of Kent.

Also, utilising the land that surrounds the restaurant, a kitchen garden has been developed to grow fruit,

vegetables and herbs, together with a small herd of Kentish Middle White pigs! There are future plans to develop an orchard and utilise a natural pond to rear ducks.

There is an extensive wine list that includes many New World wines from smaller vineyards, together with the more well-known names, including English wines from Biddenden Vineyard. The majority of the wine list is served by the glass and there is a full selection of beers, both draught and bottled available, together with locally sourced, organic soft drinks.

Thackeray's in Royal Tunbridge Wells is a most attractive restaurant found on a green close to the centre of the town. The Grade II-listed building has ancient floorboards and low ceilings and the cosy intimate dining rooms are tastefully decorated. There are special events on Valentines Day.

Richard Phillips, chef and co-proprietor creates an intelligent Modern French menu which sparkles with flavour. The meticulous preparation and presentation reflects the elegant atmosphere and surroundings to provide the ultimate romantic dining experience.

The Beacon also in Royal Tunbridge Wells is perfect for a romantic dinner with excellent cuisine and a wonderful backdrop of one of the best views in Southeast England. The house dates from 1895 and was built as the country home of Sir Walter Harris, a former Lieutenant of the City of London. It has a wealth of architectural features including some particularly fine stained glass windows and an oak-panelled bar. There are also three hotel rooms which have a four star rating.

The Chapel Down Winery near Tenterden is the largest producer of English wines and also home to a fabulous new restaurant. **Richard Phillips at Chapel Down** offers a joyous combination of contemporary British food and fine wines. Using only the finest Kentish and local produce, freshness is guaranteed and Richard's creations are complemented by a carefully selected range of superb wines from the winery.

Biddenden in Kent is home to the **West House**, a small, family-run restaurant. Housed in a heavily beamed 15th century weaver's cottage, The West House holds a Michelin Star for its superb food created by owner and chef Graham Garrett. The passion of Graham's cooking is centred on the best local

produce, with clean, strong flavours. It's a style that sings, and has been described as 'ruthlessly seasonal'.

Romantic excursions

Valentine's Day arrives just as nature is beginning to stir from its winter's sleep. The snowdrops are out, every bird is singing to attract a mate, and there is nowhere better for romantic country walks on crisp, frosty days than the Heart of Kent. Why not visit **Scotney Castle** with its beautiful atmospheric ruins and stunning grounds or explore **Leeds Castle** which is magnificently set on two islands on the River Len and has been home to royalty, lords and ladies for more than 900 years.

For more information about the Heart of Kent region visit www.visitheartofkent.com where you can also find event information and book accommodation online.

Images requests and press enquiries to Caroline Edmunds at Pennington PR on 01892 616647.