

Press release

April 2010



### **Relaunch of the Seven Wonders of the Weald**

The successful tourism partnership, *The Seven Wonders of the Weald*, has undergone a recent transformation, incorporating new members for the 2010 season. The group has also launched the best value family pass in Kent and Sussex offering discounts and free entry to attractions for only £35 for a whole year.

The new Wonders include Bodiam Castle, The Kent & East Sussex Railway, Chiddingstone Castle, Merriments Gardens and The Hop Farm 'World of Activities' who join existing Wonders Bedgebury National Pinetum & Forest and Marle Place Gardens and Gallery.

In order to provide a complete package the Seven Wonders Group has also affiliated some complementary partners including: Royal Tunbridge Wells, Dale Hill Hotel and Golf Club, Chart Hills Golf Club, the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Garden of England Cottages.

This new partnership is designed to enhance the High Weald's position as a top tourist destination.

The group has something for all ages and encourages new visitors into the area, offering them a selection of varied and entertaining days out at the main attractions plus a choice of carefully vetted accommodation and hospitality providers.

If history and ancient buildings are of interest there is medieval **Bodiam Castle** – one of the most famous and evocative castles in Britain with its brooding walls rising dramatically above the moat. Much of the exterior is complete and the ramparts dominate the surrounding countryside. There is also an excellent café which uses local produce.

**Chiddingstone Castle** is home to a fascinating collection of antiques and artefacts sourced from Japan and Egypt, Buddhism, and the Jacobean and Stuart periods. Visitors can explore the castle and 35 acres of grounds, comprising a lake, rose garden, award winning orangery and surrounding woodland.

**The Hop Farm 'World of Activities'** is one of Kent's favourite family attractions with over 30 rides, including a restored Victorian carousel, a museum, maze and the new Treejumpers Extreme Zone which provides adventurous activities for all the family including zip wires, archery, climbing walls and bushcraft. Many of the features are indoors so children can have a great time regardless of the weather.

For those who love gardens, and enjoy the peace and tranquillity they bring, there is **Merriments Garden**, which covers four acres comprising extensive, stunning, colour themed, herbaceous borders linked by paths and grassy areas. The unique combinations of themed areas offer a surprise around every corner. Nature lovers can visit the wild area where they can observe a variety of birds from the sanctuary of the bird hide. Visitors inspired by the gardens can purchase many of the plants from Merriments nursery. The shop and wild bird centre provide everything a garden lover needs.

**Marle Place Gardens and Gallery** is a wonderful quirky garden with beautifully restored Victorian and Edwardian features. 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. There are also Victorian glasshouses with beautiful orchids to admire and pretty water features and sculptures throughout the gardens. There is an art gallery featuring local and contemporary artists. There is also a barn where you can get self service refreshments.

For really active families **Bedgebury National Pinetum & Forest** has brilliant, and sometimes challenging, cycle trails through the forest, Go Ape, and a huge play area covering a square kilometre in addition to the stunningly beautiful Pinetum that houses the National Conifer Collection.

All the attractions are set in beautiful Wealden countryside and because they are so close to each other you can avoid the frustration of long journeys and traffic queues.

**The new Seven Wonders of the Weald pass is amazing value at only £35 and entitles visitors to all the following:**

1. **Bedgebury** – Five free family visits (in one car)
2. **Bodiam Castle** – up to three children free with each paying adult
3. **Chiddingstone Castle** – One free child entry with each paying adult
4. **The Hop farm ‘World of Activities’** – One free child with every full paying adult
5. **Kent & East Sussex Railway** – Up to three children free with each paying adult
6. **Marle Place Gardens and Gallery** – Two free family visits (up to 2 adults and 3 children)
7. **Merriments Gardens** – Two free family visits (up to 2 adults and 3 children)

For more information please visit [www.sevenwonders.org.uk](http://www.sevenwonders.org.uk)

For images or to receive an **invitation to the launch press day on Wednesday 12 May 2010** please contact Caroline Edmunds on 01892 616647 or email

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