

## Press Release

Summer 2011



### Visit the Seven Wonders of the Weald this Summer

#### Great value family days out

In 2010 the Office of National Statistics noted a 15% drop in British foreign holidays, the biggest decline since records began.

With the 'staycation' trend set to continue in 2011 the Seven wonders of the Weald is good news for visitors staying at home as this destination in Kent has some of the best attractions and hotels and self-catering accommodation in the South East which together offer enticing reasons for visitors of all ages and interests to visit the area this summer.

Combining the Kent & East Sussex Railway, Merriments Gardens, Chiddingstone Castle, Bedgebury National Pinetum and Forest, The Hop Farm, Marle Place Gardens and Gallery and Biddenden Vineyards, the Seven Wonders of the Weald offer days out to suit all tastes.

The group's new destination pass, costing just £39.95 offers savings of over £145. The pass gives a selection of free and discounted entries into attractions, giving visitors the opportunity to do seven amazing things this summer.

**Bedgebury** – three free car entries **(save £24 with a pass)**

**Biddenden Vineyards** - complimentary tea, glass of wine or apple juice per visit

**Marle Place Gardens and Gallery** - four free visits **(save £22 with a pass)**

**The Hop Farm Family Park** – Two free visits **(save £24 with a pass)**

**Kent & East Sussex Railway** – Three 2-for-1 Rover Tickets **(save £40.50 with a pass)**

**Chiddingstone Castle** – Two free visits **(save £14 with a pass)**

**Merriments** – Four free visits (**save £20 with a pass**)

The group also combines a number of carefully selected accommodation partners, including Dale Hill Hotel & Golf Club, Garden of England Cottages and Bedgebury Park Equestrian Centre and Holiday Accommodation all of whom offer accommodation close to the Seven Wonders with options for an overnight stay or short break to a long rental.

The group's other partners include The Mill Toy & Pedal Car Museum, Chart Hills Golf Club and the spa town of Royal Tunbridge Wells.

**The Hop Farm** has over 30 rides and attractions to entertain all ages and fuel young imaginations, whatever the weather. It has two areas for soft play and adventure play, a mini fun-fair, crazy golf, dray rides and an animal farm giving families plenty to do all day. Visitors can also enjoy the Magic Factory, take to the wheel in the Children's Driving School or burn some energy on the Giant Jumping Pillows. New for 2011 is Pirate Cove where children will find a treasure trove of swashbuckling adventures!

The group's newest member, **Biddenden Vineyards**, offers nostalgic days out in quintessentially English countryside. Stroll along the marked routes through the 22 acres of vines on a gentle south facing slope in a shallow sheltered valley. Explore the winery, where White, Red, Rosé and Quality Sparkling wines, ciders and apple juice are pressed and bottled, then relax in the Vineyard shop and sample the drinks yourself. Visitors can purchase many locally produce including jams, chutneys, honey and beers.

For peace and tranquility, **Marle Place Gardens and Gallery** is magical. Victorian and Edwardian features, a gazebo, rockery and Italianate scented garden blend with modern planting and planning, including a mosaic terrace. Within the yew hedged kitchen garden a restored Victorian glasshouse holds an exotic display of orchids. Summer is glorious, with the scent and abundance of midsummer shrub roses, annuals and perennials. The gardens are encircled by ancient woodland, a stream and ponds. Sculptures and land art can be seen throughout the grounds, whilst the Studio and Gallery house exhibits of work by contemporary artists.

**Chiddingstone Castle** is a must for culture and history aficionados with beautiful displays of exotic antiques and antiquities. Suitable for all ages, the collections offer a flavour of the Japanese, Buddhist and Egyptian cultures and an insight into the Stuart, Jacobean and Victorian eras. The castle hosts a variety of themed events, inspired by the collections, offering educational and entertaining activities for young and old alike. Nestled in 35 acres of beautiful grounds, with a lake, rose garden, woodland and award winning orangery, Chiddingstone Castle is ideal in the summer, where children can burn off some energy and everyone can enjoy their surroundings.

The inspirational gardens at **Merriments** are regarded as some of the finest in Europe. The careful mix of trees, shrubs, perennials and grasses provide interest and imaginative colour combinations to delight visitors. The formal gardens with water features and a fountain include a stunning bridge erected over large ponds in the style of Monet's 'Grande Allee' at Giverny in France. There is also a gravel garden, water garden, a foliage border, woodland area and a rock and scree garden. The displays and plantings are inspirational and can be recreated by purchasing some of the rare and unusual plants from the appropriately stocked nursery. To add further interest, the wild area has a bird hide and multiple feeders on display, where up to 25 species of bird can be seen feeding throughout the day.

**The Kent & East Sussex Railway** is one of the country's finest examples of a preserved rural light railway, where visitors can enjoy the sights, sounds and service of a bygone age. The vintage steam and diesel trains gently wind their way along 10 ½ miles of track travelling through unrivalled Wealden countryside and the beautiful Rother Valley. The Railway has stations at Rolvenden, Wittersham Road, Northiam, Bodiam and Tenterden and, with the Railway's popular Rover ticket, visitors can hop off and explore the different delights each destination has to offer. From the National Trust's Bodiam Castle and the new Mill Toy and Pedal Car Museum in Northiam to the quaint café's and antique shops of Tenterden, there is something for all to enjoy.

Last but not least is **Bedgebury National Pinetum and Forest**. Offering walking, cycling, mountain biking, horse riding, adventure play and orienteering for people of all ages and abilities; Bedgebury is one of South East England's premier sites for healthy outdoor activity. Home to the world's largest collection of conifers and nestled in

beautiful parkland with lakes, streams, rolling hills and wide avenues, Bedgebury is exceptionally beautiful during the summer months.

For more information about the Seven Wonders of the Weald please visit [www.sevenwonders.org.uk](http://www.sevenwonders.org.uk)

The Seven Wonders of the Weald Destination Pass can be purchased online or from: Maidstone, Ashford and Royal Tunbridge Wells Tourist Information Centres, Bedgebury National Pinetum and Forest, Merriments Gardens and Biddenden Vineyards.

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#### **Notes to Editors**

- Office of National Statistics, 2010. Available from: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/hub/index.html>