

PRESS RELEASE

3 November 2008



Huskies at Lapland UK

Chiddingstone Castle

Top 10 Winter Days Out in the Heart of Kent

As winter approaches there is still plenty to do at many of the attractions around the Heart of Kent so wrap up warm and have some winter fun by visiting some of the suggestions below.

Lapland UK

For the ultimate Christmas experience, Lapland UK at Bewl Water Estate in Lamberhurst offers a green alternative to flying to Lapland. The snow covered village has a real ice rink, toy factory, gingerbread house, a log cabin restaurant offering a two course meal which is included in the ticket price as are gifts and a personalised private audience for your family with Father Christmas in his snowy woodland home.

www.laplanduk.co.uk or tel 0871 221 9627 Date: 12 November - 24 December. Tickets to the four hour experience are £55-£85 pp including parking.

Leeds Castle

From 1 December to 4 January Leeds Castle will become a fairytale winter wonderland. The rooms in the Castle will be transformed into scenes from The Nutcracker Suite, complete with vignette performances by young dancers. Visitors can also book evening tours which include a magical walk through the illuminated wood garden and a tour of the Castle where dancers come to life in each room. Delicious festive treats are also included.

Date: 1 December – 4 January decorated Castle. Evening tours 15, 16, 17 and 22 December 4pm – 6pm Pre-booking is required by calling 01622 767794 Tickets: Adults - £15 Children - £10. Please visit www.leeds-castle.com for more information.

Tonbridge

On 30 November families can enjoy an evening of festive fun at the Tonbridge Christmas Festival. The town will be illuminated as the Christmas lights are switched on followed by a Christmas procession down the High Street before a beautiful display of fireworks explodes over Tonbridge Castle. On 29 November from 10am to 4pm the Watergate will be bustling with shoppers buying their Christmas presents early from stall holders selling seasonal gifts and local produce whilst Tonbridge Philharmonic Choir perform throughout the day.

Festival date: 30 November. For more information please call 01732 876322 or visit www.tmbc.gov.uk

Watergate date: 29 November, 10am – 4pm. For more information please visit www.tmbc.gov.uk

Hever Castle

This December Hever Castle will be beautifully decorated with traditional Christmas trees and seasonal decorations, and as night falls the grounds will be lit up with hundreds of lights so visitors can enjoy a romantic evening stroll. There is even a chance to experience the grounds on an exciting Husky dog ride, unique to Hever Castle! Gift shop open.

Date: 4 - 21 December: decorated Castle. Advance booking for Husky rides. Date: 6 – 21 December at weekends between 11am - 3.30pm; £10 per two person ride, minimum age of eight years for children.

Please visit www.hevercastle.co.uk for more information about other evenings at the Castle.

Royal Tunbridge Wells

On weekends all through December The Pantiles in Tunbridge Wells will be filled with shoppers taking advantage of the boutique shops, numerous cafés and the sparkling Christmas markets. Each week visitors will be entertained with new attractions including Father Christmas visits and Christmas carols sung by the Tunbridge Wells Orpheus Male Voice Choir.

Dates: Markets 6-7 December 10am -4pm; 13-14 December 10am -5pm and 10am-4pm; 20-21 December 10am-4pm.

Events: 7 December - TW Orpheus Male Voice Choir 12-2pm. 13 December – Nick Weller Band 12-12:45pm, 2-2:45pm. Bath Square: Gracie Spoon entertainer – 12:15 - 12:45pm, 3:30 – 4pm. Mr Mistletoe 1:30 – 2:40pm. Outside TIC: Mr Mistletoe 12 – 12:45pm, Gracie Spoon 2 - 2:30 pm. Corn Exchange: Christmas Kids Craft 11am –1pm 2-4pm. 14 December – Second Wind Orchestra 12-1pm 2-4pm. 20 December - Corn Exchange: Santa Claus visits 10am-4pm. 21 December - Rozak Singers – Carols 2-2:40pm 3:15-4pm.

Please visit www.visitheartofkent.com for more details.

Chiddingstone Castle near Sevenoaks

From 10am until 3pm the Great Hall and White Rose Room of Chiddingstone Castle will be filled with stalls displaying unique gifts including home and garden accessories, jewellery, clothing, artwork and local produce. When you have finished shopping, it is well worth taking a look at the fascinating Egyptian and Japanese collections on display in the Castle's rooms which are being especially opened for visitors to the Christmas Fair. Graysons Restaurants will be serving light lunches and snacks from the Castle's café during the day and Chiddingstone School Choir will be singing carols.

Date: 13 November. 10am – 3pm. Admission: £2.50 pp including admission to Castle and exhibitions.

The Hop Farm, Paddock Wood

The Hop Farm will be transformed into a twinkling winter wonderland with exciting treats for families from 29 November to 23 December. Children can feed their favourite reindeer and meet Father Christmas in his grotto. New for this year the Hop Farm has a beautifully restored carousel and England's first ever magic factory.

Date: 29-30 November; 6-7 December; 13-14 December; 20-23 December. Open 10am – 5pm daily. Tickets: Advance Child and senior £7, Gate – £9. Family (2 adults 2 children) advance – £25, Gate - £33. Family (2 adults 3 children) Advance £30, Gate £38. Visit to Santa including quality gift £5.

Please visit www.thehopfarm.co.uk for more information

The Kent and East Sussex Railway

For those who want to do a little something different this year why not head down to Tenterden Station and enjoy a unique Christmas themed train ride. Guests are greeted by a traditional steam train seasonally decorated that takes them on an hour's train ride. On board there will be drinks and chocolate for the children and port or sherry with a mince pie for grown-ups whilst Father Christmas meets every child with a special present, all included in the ticket price. Once back at the station guests can make full use of the free Victorian Carousel, ideal for smaller children, and the delicious food on offer.

Dates and price: 6-7 and 13-14 December £10.50 standard £13.50 first class; 20-24 December £15.00 standard £18.50 first class. Time: 6-7 December trains leave every 45 minutes between 11:30am – 4:00pm; 13-14 and 20-24 December trains leave every 45 minutes between 10:45am – 4:45pm. There will be a gift shop open on the days of Santa Specials.

For more information please visit www.kesr.org or call 01580 765155. Tickets can be bought from Tenterden station or by calling 01580 765155

The Museum of Kent Life

The Cobtree Christmas Fayre is an exciting new free event for this year taking place at The Museum of Kent Life on 29 and 30 November. Families can enjoy free entry to the museum and a wide variety of Christmas stalls. Children can visit Father Christmas in his grotto and see the museum's very own living nativity in a farmyard. There will also be a wreath making class.

Date: 29 – 30 November. Tickets: free but there is a charge of £3 for carpark. To book the wreath making please call Claire Geddes, Learning & Access Officer on 01622 621246. To book a Father Christmas visit please call Kirsty Vernon, Marketing & Events Officer on 01622 62124, visits cost £7 and must be prepaid. There will be photographs of children with Father Christmas which can be purchased on the day. For more information please visit www.kentmuseum.co.uk

Bedgebury National Pinetum and Forest

This year on 6 December Bedgebury has an arts and crafts day for children from the ages of 4 to 12. Children can enjoy an afternoon of fresh air as they hunt on the forest floor in the Pinetum for treasures of the forest to use to make Christmas cards.

Date: 6 December 10am-12noon: 4-6 years, 1pm-3pm: 7-12 years. Tickets: child - £5. Please call 01580 879820 for more details.

The Heart of Kent tourism partnership has been promoting Kent to tourists as a short stay destination and providing days out and attraction information to the residents of Kent for the past twenty years. Their website offers a free one stop shop to the county www.visitheartofkent.com

Editor's Notes

1. Other small villages throughout Kent also host their own fireworks night. For more information please visit www.visitheartofkent.com
2. The Heart of Kent consortium was created in 1988 as a tourism marketing partnership between Maidstone Borough Council, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and Sevenoaks District Council. Ashford Borough Council joined the consortium in 2002.
3. The five local authorities work together to market and promote the five Heart of Kent towns and the surrounding countryside to visitors. As well as producing the Heart of Kent website, the consortium publishes an annual Holiday Guide, available through the website and from the tourist information centres, and works closely with other tourism enterprises in Kent and the South East of England on numerous other marketing activities for the area. The consortium also supports a network of Tourist Information Centres to meet the needs of visitors once they have arrived in the Heart of Kent area.