

ELLIE SEYMOUR



SECRET SUSSEX

AN UNUSUAL GUIDE



JONGLEZ PUBLISHING

CONTENTS

Burgess Hill to Seaford

GREEN CIRCLE PUBLIC ART TRAIL	12
MUSEUM OF GARDENING	14
CLAYTON TUNNEL NORTH PORTAL	16
BROWNE BURIAL GROUND	18
DARK SKY SITES	20
QUEEN VICTORIA JUBILEE PLANTATION	22
MY LITTLE FARM	24
MERIDIAN LINE MARKERS	26
FIRE + WILD OUTDOOR DINING EXPERIENCES	28
PROTESTANT MARTYRS' PRISON STEPS	30
THE ROUND HOUSE	32
LEWES RAILWAY LAND NATURE RESERVE	34
REMINDEES OF THE LEWES AVALANCHE	36
GLYNDEBOURNE OPERA HOUSE BACKSTAGE TOURS	38
GLYNDEBOURNE PUGS	40
THE LAVENDER LINE	42
BOW BELLS MILESTONES	44
FARLEYS HOUSE AND GALLERY	46
SURREALIST PICNIC	48
DUNCAN GRANT'S STUDIO	50
THE BLOOMSBURY MURALS	52
LONG MAN OF WILMINGTON	54
LULLINGTON CHURCH	56
SHERLOCK HOLMES' FICTIONAL HOME	58
THE CABLE HUT	60
SECRET SPOTS FOR FOSSIL HUNTING	62
TIDE MILLS ABANDONED VILLAGE	64
THE RAMPION TELESCOPES	66
HO CHI MINH FOUNDATION STONE	68
SUSSEX DOLPHIN PROJECT	70

Chichester to Petworth

THORNEY ISLAND CIRCULAR WALK	74
RACTON MONUMENT	76

LORDINGTON LAVENDER WEEK	78
KINGLEY VALE NATURE RESERVE TRAIL	80
PEREGRINE FALCONS OF CHICHESTER CATHEDRAL	82
CASS SCULPTURE FOUNDATION COLLECTION	84
MARC CHAGALL WINDOW	86
GOODWOOD AERODROME CAFÉ ROOFTOP	88
THE GOODWOOD MEMORIAL GARDEN	90
BLAKE'S COTTAGE	92
CLIMPING BEACH	94
FORD MATERIALS RECYCLING FACILITY TOURS	96
REMNANTS OF A JAMES BOND FILM SET	98
MILL LANE TREE TUNNEL	100
THE TRUNDLE	102
ST ROCHE'S ARBORETUM	104
SURREALIST TREES	106
BEEDING TOLL HOUSE	108
CHALK STONES TRAIL	110
THE POTAGER	112
THE TOWER ROOM	114
PETWORTH COTTAGE MUSEUM	116
BEDHAM CHURCH SCHOOL RUINS	118
THE WEY AND ARUN CANAL	120

Crawley to Crowborough

CUCKFIELD BUNKER	124
WINGS MUSEUM	126
OUSE VALLEY VIADUCT	128
MILLENNIUM SEED BANK	130
ARDINGLY ZERO STATION	132
SKYGLADE	134
OWL'S HOUSE	136
QUEEN VICTORIA HOSPITAL COLLECTION	138
JOHN MASON NEALE'S GRAVE	140

CONTENTS

HAMMERWOOD PARK	142
ERIDGE ROCKS	144
SAXONBURY TOWER	146

Eastbourne to Rye

THE ITALIAN GARDEN	150
COASTAL CULTURE TRAIL	152
LITTLE CHELSEA	154
ROYAL HIPPODROME THEATRE BACKSTAGE TOURS	156
PEVENSEY GAOL COURTHOUSE MUSEUM	158
PETER THE SHEEP'S GRAVE	160
RELICS OF THE ROYAL OBSERVATORY GREENWICH	162
HANDLING BIRDS OF PREY	164
THE SUGARLOAF	166
JOHN 'MAD JACK' FULLER'S MAUSOLEUM	168
LITTLE ROAR GILL	170
AMSTERDAM SHIPWRECK	172
BOTTLE ALLEY LIGHT SHOW	174
SOURCE PARK	176
TRUE CRIME MUSEUM	178
FLOWER MAKERS' MUSEUM	180
FAT TUESDAY	182
AG HENDY HOUSE	184
RYE TOWN MODEL SOUND AND LIGHT SHOW	186
RYE WATER HOUSE	188
REMAINS OF JOHN 'BUTCHER' BREADS	190

Horsham to Worthing

WILLIAMS & CO PHARMACY	194
DOLLS' HOUSE MUSEUM	196
LEONARDSLEE WALLABIES	198
KNEPP WILDLAND	200

SUSSEX PRAIRIE GARDEN	202
THE GREEN KNIGHT OF WOODS MILL	204
LANCING COLLEGE CHAPEL	206
DOWN'S LINK	210
SHOREHAM AIRSHOW DISASTER MEMORIAL	212
ART DECO TERMINAL BUILDING AT BRIGHTON CITY AIRPORT	214
HOUSEBOATS OF SHOREHAM	216
SHOREHAM BEACH BOARDWALK	218
SHOREHAM HARBOUR LIFEBOAT STATION TOUR	220
HELP OUR KELP FORESTS	222
ART DECO INTERIOR OF THE DOME CINEMA	224
FORAGED BY FERN	226
SISTINE CHAPEL REPLICA CEILING	228
MANOR ROAD GARAGE	230
STORRINGTON'S STORK SIGN	232
UNUSUAL BARS, CAFÉS AND RESTAURANTS	234
HIDDEN VINEYARDS	242
ALPHABETICAL INDEX	248

DARK SKY SITES

5

Seeing stars in Sussex

South Downs National Park

East and West Sussex

southdowns.gov.uk/communicating-south-downs/dark-night-skies/

south-downs-dark-sky-discovery-sites/



Light pollution from streetlights, neon signs and industrial lighting makes it hard to get a good clear view of the night sky. But in recent years, several places around the UK have been recognised as great places to stargaze without the light pollution.

The South Downs National Park in Sussex is one of these landscapes. It was awarded International Dark Sky Reserve status in 2016 by the US-based International Dark Sky Association, along with the Brecon Beacons National Park in Wales, and Exmoor National Park in Devon.

Meanwhile, a similar initiative run by the UK Dark Sky Discovery partnership – a network of astronomy and open space organisations which aims to encourage people to stargaze – recognises various Dark Sky Discovery Sites within these reserves, of which there are plenty in the South Downs National Park.

In Sussex, these include Ditchling Beacon, Devil's Dyke, Birling Gap and Bignor Hill. These places are recognised as great spots for seeing stars in the night sky with either the naked eye or a good pair of binoculars. They also have excellent public access.

Gaining either Dark Sky Reserve or Dark Sky Site status involves a lengthy and rigorous application process. It requires the ability to demonstrate local authority commitment to lighting policies, public education and community involvement.

Dark Skies Festival

To help encourage and introduce people to stargazing in Sussex, every year the South Downs National Park and other venues around the county take part in the Dark Skies Festival. This runs for two weeks and includes events, talks and activities aimed at anyone wanting to enjoy or learn more about the night sky.

To find out more, visit darkskiesnationalparks.org.uk

Stargazers keen to take their interest in astronomy to another level will appreciate a visit to the Observatory Science Centre for the chance to see the night sky through a 26-inch telescope, originally used when the building was the Royal Observatory Greenwich headquarters. See page 162 for further information.

FIRE + WILD OUTDOOR DINING EXPERIENCES

9

Secret suppers in the forest

*In the woods near Lewes,
East Sussex
fireandwild.co.uk*



Sussex is abundant in great restaurants offering innovative tasting menus, but none as exciting as Fire + Wild, a dining and events company – with a twist.

Every few months, they transform a secret woodland location close to their base in Lewes, East Sussex, into the magical setting for an epic intimate outdoor banquet, inspired by the seasons.

Adding to the intrigue, dinner guests do not find out the exact location of their feast until the day. Instead, they are given instructions to gather at a specific meeting place. From here, they follow a Fire + Wild team member through the forest where their table awaits, and the experience begins.

A five-course tasting menu is served at each ‘wild dining’ event, which is cooked over fire for guests to watch. Each dish is created using ingredients which are hunted, foraged and harvested from the surrounding landscape; for example, this might include organic meat, fresh line-caught fish, wild greens, berries and fungi.

Each dish is paired with wild cocktails and local wines and other infusions designed to complement the flavours of the food.

‘The part I get most excited about is the storytelling’, says chef, hunter and forager Mark Andrews, who set up Fire + Wild in 2017. ‘I love the challenge and creative process that comes with designing the menu, linking the courses together and connecting it all with the habitat or a particular season. Of course, the real reward comes from watching the excitement on guests’ faces as the experience unfolds.’

Mark set up the company after several chaotic years working in London. At this point, he decided it was time for a new start and to return to his rural roots for a simpler way of life. Once he had left London, he spent the next few years exploring the wild parts of Scotland, Sweden and France on remote camping and canoe trips, while foraging for food, hunting and cooking over fire.

As well as their outdoor dining experiences, they also organise guided foraging walks, wild camping trips and workshops on cooking with fire and making cocktails with foraged ingredients.

In keeping with their values, Fire + Wild also donate five per cent of their profits to The Woodland Trust each year, and they have a low impact, zero-waste policy.

SURREALIST PICNIC

19

An eccentric summer garden party

Farleys House and Gallery
 Muddles Green, Chiddingly, East Sussex, BN8 6HW
 01825 872856
farleyshouseandgallery.co.uk/event/surrealist-picnic/
 Every August bank holiday Sunday, 4pm–8pm



Farleys House and Gallery sits in the pretty village of Muddles Green. It was once the country home of the Surrealist movement artist Roland Penrose and his wife, *Vogue* war photographer Lee Miller. When they moved here in 1949, they began filling it with art created by locals and friends, including Pablo Picasso, Man Ray, Max Ernst, Paul Éluard and Joan Miró – all of whom were known to have visited Farleys at some point. This led to its nickname as the ‘house of the Surrealists’, and you can learn more about its heritage on a tour (see page 46).

Farleys also celebrates its Surrealist heritage with an annual themed summer garden party, known as the ‘Surrealist picnic’. This takes place in the sculpture garden on the Sunday of the August bank holiday weekend, no matter what the weather.

This flamboyant gathering offers fans of the avant-garde Surrealist movement the chance to live out their creative fantasies, such as dressing up in ‘surreal’ costumes and feasting on a ‘surreal’ picnic. Pink cauliflower and blue pasta salad, a one-thousand-year-old egg, or a Casanova cocktail, anyone?

If you are yet to hone your Surrealist cooking skills, themed snacks are available during the event. These include cakes and ice lollies made from Lee Miller’s recipes by local producers and cooks, such as Seven Sisters Spices.

This dreamlike summery soiree plays out against a backdrop of live jazz and alongside some bizarre dance performances. Previous years’ line-ups include music from local bands The Hot Club of Jevington and Jonathan Bailey’s Quartet, and performances by Found Dances and Sonia Sonalisa.

Get surreal ...

The celebration of Farleys’ Surrealist heritage does not stop at tours or summer garden parties. Various Surrealist-themed creative workshops are held at the house throughout the year. These include a one-day photography workshop in which beginners are shown how to develop a Surrealist eye in the style of Lee Miller, and cookery workshops which involve recreating Lee’s Surrealist recipes in her kitchen using produce and herbs from the garden at Farleys House. For more information, see: farleyshouseandgallery.co.uk/workshops

Surrealism elsewhere in Sussex

Roland Penrose and Lee Miller were not the only fans of the avant-garde to live in Sussex. The late owner of West Dean Gardens in West Sussex, Edward James, also made a significant contribution to the movement. See page 104 and page 106 for more details.

SUSSEX DOLPHIN PROJECT

Yes, dolphins, porpoises, sharks and whales are found off the Eastern English Channel!

Newhaven, BN9 9BY
Or Brighton Marina, BN2 5WA
sussexdolphinproject.org

Despite the large numbers of mammal species that visit the Sussex waters, it's surprising how few residents or visitors are aware that dolphins, porpoises, sharks and whales are found off the Eastern English Channel, a region stretching from Dorset to East Sussex and along the Kent coast towards Essex.



Sussex Dolphin Project runs boat trips off the Sussex coast with the aim of educating the public about the types of marine mammals and raising awareness of the threats faced by these charismatic sea creatures. The charity works to encourage positive action in support of marine conservation efforts. All money raised by Sussex Dolphin Project is ploughed back into funding their research and community work.

The project was launched in 2018 as part of the World Cetacean Alliance (WCA), the world's largest marine conservation partnership, which champions the protection of marine habitats through community engagement. Its objective is to identify individual dolphins and pods, to better understand their behaviour, movement, prey species and breeding sites. They work to record data that can then be used to protect our marine environment and ultimately safeguard Sussex marine mammals.

It currently runs four fun and informative public boat trips (departing from Brighton Marina and Newhaven) that teach guests about marine mammals and the areas in which they can be spotted.

From Brighton Marina, there are two options:

- a weekly sunset boat trip to spot seabirds and take in a unique view of Brighton's seafront as the sun sets behind the West Pier and i360;
- a three-hour wildlife sailing experience, the project's longest and most luxurious tour on a crewed yacht with a chance to take the helm.

From Newhaven, there are also two choices:

- a 90-minute Seven Sisters trip from Seaford Bay to learn how to identify Sussex cetaceans and harbour porpoises, watch seabird colonies at Splash Point, learn about the history of Cuckmere Haven, view the iconic Seven Sisters cliffs from a different perspective and see the famous lighthouses at Beachy Head;

- a two-hour RHIB ride to the Rampion Wind Farm 13 km off the coast to learn about the dolphins and the wind farm itself, while floating among its towering turbines.

As well as boat trips, the project organises talks in schools and plans beach clean-ups, among other awareness projects and education campaigns. In essence, they seek to encourage human behaviour change that will lead to increasingly sustainable practices and inspire future generations of ocean conservationists.



LORDINGTON LAVENDER WEEK 3

A magnificent little-known bloom

Lordington Lavender Farm

Farm Lane, Lordington, Chichester, West Sussex, PO18 9DX

07793 499327

lordingtonlavender.co.uk

Second week of July each year, 10am–4pm



For seven days in the height of summer, a hidden corner of the South Downs near Chichester turns a hazy sweep of violet-blue when thousands of lavender plants burst into brilliant bloom.

A wander through the perfumed rows is a sight – and experience – to behold; one that transports us sensorily to the lavender fields of Provence in the south of France.

Lordington Lavender Farm was set up in 2002 by a local dairy farmer, Andrew Elms, and forms part of his family's 750-acre arable farm. He started growing lavender as a passion project having sold his 180-strong herd of dairy cows.

The lavender field consists of four acres filled with 26,500 plants of Maillette lavender, a French variety known for its high-quality oil, which the Lordington team harvests every year.

They originally used it to make oil but now have an entire range of products. The plants are harvested by machine then stored in an airtight trailer. Steam is then pumped in through the bottom of the trailer for six hours. It exits through a chimney into a condenser, where it evaporates, leaving the oil behind.

As well as the idyllic setting for a fragrant walk and a photography shoot, the rows of lavender blooms act as a natural haven for wildlife all year. At least 12 red-listed species of birds, including skylarks and barn owls, have been found on the farm. Swarms of endangered bumblebees and dozens of species of butterfly have also been spotted here. The dense woody stems make perfect nests for field mice and voles, and hide hares and their leverets.

The lavender field was in fact created as an experiment in diversification, and particularly as a way to encourage wildlife and birds, which is why it is grown without fertilisers and pesticides.

'I actually chose to grow lavender to help the endangered bumble bee,' says Andrew. 'I belong to the Guild of Conservation Producers whose aim is to farm in harmony with nature and provide a wide range of habitats for the flora and fauna of the farm. It's been a success as the thousands of bees will testify,' he adds.

'We also grow it with conservation of habitat and the environment very much in mind which is why we grow it without pesticides and fertilisers.'

Secret nights on the lavender farm

On select evenings during Lordington Lavender Week, the farm becomes the glorious setting for a sunset cocktail and barbecue. Visit lordingtonlavender.co.uk for more details.

MARC CHAGALL WINDOW

⑦

Modernism meets ancient religion

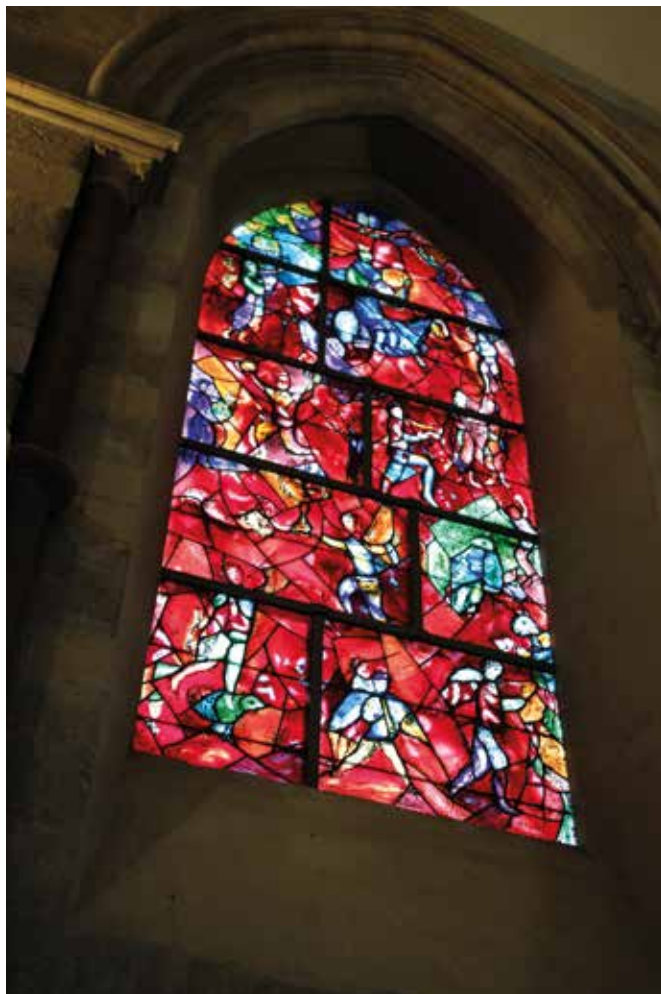
Chichester Cathedral

The Royal Chantry, Cathedral Cloisters, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 1PX
01243 782595

chichestercathedral.org

Monday to Saturday 7.15am–6.30pm, Sunday 7.15am–5pm

Admission free



Generally speaking, stained glass windows within religious settings all tend to look the same, each depicting a biblical scene in a similarly traditional style. However, Chichester Cathedral is home to a window which stands out for its vibrant colour scheme and Modernist approach.

Set in the north-east corner next to the Chapel of St John the Baptist, the striking and colour-rich window is an interpretation of Psalm 150 by the Russian-French artist Marc Chagall, well-known for his brilliant use of colour and lively, imaginative decorative stained-glass artworks which often combine elements of Cubism and Fauvism with his folkish style.

The window was commissioned by Walter Hussey, Dean of Chichester, who was inspired by windows which Chagall had created for the synagogue of the Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem, and which were on show during a special exhibition at The Louvre in Paris in 1960.

The hospital windows and this one at Chichester Cathedral are the only glass pieces by Chagall which are predominantly created in red; his preferred colour was blue.

On close inspection, you can see all the musical instruments mentioned in the psalm: from the Jewish harp played by King David at the top, to the strings (bottom left) and the trumpet (bottom right). There is also a reference to literature: a creature on the extreme right (fourth section down) is holding a book, while two figures (centre left) hold aloft the seven-branched candlestick.

A number of animals and birds appear in the window, perhaps representing members of God's kingdom who join in the praise.

Marc Chagall grew up in the Jewish communities of Eastern Europe, in a world which was destroyed by the Nazis only to blossom afresh in the free air of the Western democracies. He drew his inspiration from Jewish religious life, especially the mystical Hasidic sects that flourished in his hometown of Vitebsk (Belarus).

The only other stained-glass work by Chagall in England can be found in All Saints Church near Tonbridge in Kent. It consists of a collection of 12 windows in which angels and asses, saints and butterflies collide in a kaleidoscope of colour.

Another curiosity of Chichester Cathedral

Every year in Chichester from around May to July, adult and young peregrine falcons can be seen swooping in and out of their nest in the spire. See page 82 for details.

BEDHAM CHURCH SCHOOL RUINS

23

The ghostly shell of an abandoned architectural gem

Wakestone Lane, Pulborough, West Sussex, RH20 1JR



Nestled amid enchanting woodland not far from the village of Petworth is what looks like an abandoned church-like building.

If you approach it heading east along the A272 and turning right towards Bedham on Wakehurst Lane, the first sight of it through the trees makes for an eerie yet alluring discovery.

Used as a school as well as a church (at the same time), this abandoned architectural gem is also a reminder of the long-forgotten but once thriving hamlet of Bedham, home to a farm and a number of little cottages.

If you venture inside its crumbling walls, leaves crunching underfoot, you will see a plaque which reads: 'For the worship of Almighty God, in gratitude for many blessings. This building was erected by William Townley Mitford of Pitshill in 1880'.

At its peak, the curious building was used regularly by the community. During the week, it was the village schoolhouse. On Sunday, the school-related paraphernalia was tidied away and the chairs turned to face east ready for the Sunday service.

As a school, it is thought that around 60 pupils from the local area were taught here by three teachers. It is also thought that adults and children took lessons at the same time, in classes separated by a curtain.

In 1925, its use as a school ceased, as children moved to larger schools being built in the area. It was used as a chapel for a few decades longer until it closed in 1959.

A forgotten community for artists

Country cottages in England could be bought for as little as £100 in the early 1900s, so Bedham became popular with artists of limited means who wanted to escape the city. One of these artists was the leading composer of his time, Edward Elgar, who was enticed down from London by his friend, the author Ford Madox Ford. Elgar lived in a cottage called Brinkwells for four years. It is here that he is said to have composed his last four great works: the *Violin Sonata in E minor*, the *String Quartet in E minor*, the *Quintet in A minor for piano and string quartet*, and the *Cello Concerto in E minor*. The works are said to have been inspired by a strange local legend relating to the nearby woods. This is where a curious clump of trees is said to be the remains of Spanish monks who engaged in sacrilegious ceremonies and were struck by lightning.

OUSE VALLEY VIADUCT

③

A Victorian masterpiece

*Borde Hill Lane
Haywards Heath, East Sussex, RH17 6QP*



Travelling by train through the Ouse Valley over the Ouse Valley viaduct is a magical stage of the journey between London and Brighton. It feels like the train slows down – even though it does not – as the trackside trees give way to sweeping views across the valley lowlands carved out by the river Ouse. It is a breathtaking experience that sees most commuters looking up from their books and iPhones to drink it in.

Arguably though, it is the viaduct itself underneath which is the star of the show, which you cannot see from the train.

Not only is it an incredible feat of engineering, it is also a magnificent architectural piece of art. The Victorians were well known for their wildly ambitious infrastructure projects, of which this is a great example. Built 180 years ago and spanning 450 metres, it consists of 37 symmetrical hollow piers, or arches. When you look through them all at once – you have to climb up into one of the arches to do so – the bridge looks as though it goes on and on forever. Although it is easy to assume this design feature was the result of deliberate engineering ingenuity, it was actually the result of a cost-saving exercise.

Even so, 11 million bricks were still used to construct this gargantuan infrastructure project. What is equally remarkable is that all of them were brought over from Holland by barge and transported along the river Ouse. Looking up at it from the ground, at over 30 metres in the air, is an arresting sight – one that is particularly mesmerising when one of the four or five trains an hour thunder overhead.

The Ouse Valley Viaduct was designed by lead engineer John Rastrick, together with the architect of the Brighton to London railway, David Mocatta, who added a stone cornice with balustrade along the top of the viaduct and erected eight classical pavilions, four at each end.

It has not always looked so impressive though. In 1996, it underwent a £6.5 million renovation project which took three years to complete. This saw a number of improvements which required precise detailing. For example, harder-wearing limestone was imported from Bordeaux to ensure the closest match with the existing Caen stone in the balustrades and pavilions. Some of the piers had to be reconstructed using handmade bricks made in a number of different sizes to match the Victorian brickwork, then set in a sand, cement and lime mortar; stainless steel anchoring was also used to firmly attach the new stone to the old.

SAXONBURY TOWER

12

A fairy-tale folly in a medieval deer park

Eridge Park

Rotherfield, Crowborough, East Sussex, TN3 9HT



Britain is awash with follies, those whimsical architectural features built to add interest to many an English country estate garden. They were hugely popular in the 18th century and designed in complete contrast to the strict social hierarchies of country house life. Outside in the garden, there was a different world where the rules could be relaxed.

Follies, as a result, are often unusual and unconventional in design. They might resemble Roman temples, ruined Gothic abbeys, Egyptian pyramids (see page 168), or fairy-tale-like towers, like this one close to Tunbridge Wells in East Sussex, which looks like it has been plucked out of a Disney film set or a Bavarian castle and then added to the Sussex woodland landscape.

The Saxonbury Tower was built in 1928 on the Eridge Park Estate, home to the Marquess of Abergavenny and his family. Built as an observation tower, it marks the southernmost and highest point of the estate and is distinctive for its tapered design, conical roof and arrow slits – all features which give it its fairy-tale quality.

Walking towards it through the atmospheric fern-filled woodland of oak, beech and birch trees, you half expect a handsome prince to gallop past on horseback at any moment, on his way to rescue Rapunzel who emerges to let down her hair.

Although you cannot go inside the tower, it is nice to imagine pushing open the castle-like wooden door and climbing the sandstone spiral staircase five floors to the top to take in the views.

The Eridge Park Estate is itself steeped in history, reputedly being the oldest enclosed Deer Park in England. It is listed in the Domesday Book under the name of Reredfelle and was in the ownership of Odo, the brother of William the Conqueror. It is also thought that visitors to the park included Henry VIII as well as Queen Elizabeth, who stayed at Eridge Park for six days in 1573.

The village of Eridge is home to several other curiosities. These include the Eridge Rocks, 10-metre-high boulders once completely covered by foliage and abandoned but now restored and open as a nature reserve (see page 144 for more information), and the Eridge Folly, a mysterious underground cave near a fishing lake off Sham Farm Road, thought to have once been a sand mine.

HANDLING BIRDS OF PREY

8

An unusual activity in a magical setting

East Sussex Falconry
 Herstmonceux Castle, Halley Road, Herstmonceux, East Sussex, BN27 1RN
 01323 485529
eastsussexfalconry.co.uk
 Daily throughout the year



The 15th century Herstmonceux Castle with its Elizabethan grounds and 300 acres of surrounding parkland is the unlikely location for a Canadian university, as well as the former Royal Observatory in Greenwich (see page 162). It is also the setting for a bizarre but exhilarating activity that reflects its late-medieval heritage: falconry.

Falconry sessions at Herstmonceux are organised by East Sussex Falconry, a family business set up and run by head falconer Gerard Sulter and his wife, Gemma.

Gerard's interest in birds of prey began at the age of ten, when he became intrigued by golden eagles. 'Around this time, I was so into birds of prey that I actually told my next-door neighbours that I was building an aviary for my pet golden eagle', says Gerard.

Although Gerard concocted the story, it was the start of his life-long interest, which he went on to research enthusiastically, finding out as much as he could about birds of prey and how to become a falconer.

East Sussex Falconry hosts various half or full-day experiences, each offering the chance to handle, feed, fly and learn about birds of prey – from Harris hawks and kestrels to peregrine falcons and even vultures.

Perhaps the most magical experience might be the chance to spend an hour holding and flying barn owls. 'This is our most popular experience', says Gerard. Alternatively, purists and the less sentimental might be more interested in taking part in the company's overlooked but more authentic experience: the hawk-falcon hunting day, which celebrates the tradition of falconry as a sport, using birds of prey to hunt small animals like voles and mice, which is not demonstrated during any other of East Sussex Falconry's experiences, except for this one.

Behind the scenes at Herstmonceux Castle

As home to an international university, Herstmonceux Castle is not freely open to the public except on the odd day for public tours. Its gardens and grounds are open for visitors to explore all year, though. For more information, visit herstmonceux-castle.com/events-experiences.

LEONARDSLEE WALLABIES

③

A secret mob

Leonardslee Gardens

*Brighton Road, Lower Beeding, Horsham, East Sussex, RH13 6PP
0871 873 3389*

leonardsleegardens.co.uk

Daily 10am–6pm in spring/summer, 10am–4pm in autumn/winter

Leonardslee Lakes and Gardens near the market town of Horsham is home to two distinguishing features. The first is the incredible world created entirely in miniature found inside the Dolls' House Museum (see page 196). The second is a colony of wallabies, some of them albino, who are the descendants of the original animals brought here in 1889 by the previous owner of Leonardslee Lakes and Gardens, Sir Edmund Loder.

Loder is often described as an eccentric naturalist, of which there were many in the Victorian era.

The wallabies have roamed the estate ever since and are thought to be Bennett's wallabies – also better-known as red-necked wallabies. They are a species native to the Australian island of Tasmania. Their thick coats make them able to withstand the British weather, which is why Loder and other naturalists at the time chose to import them.

Other colonies can be found in Scotland, the Isle of Man, Lambay

Island off the east coast of Ireland and the Peak District in Staffordshire.

There are two ways to see the wallabies at Leonardslee. For a guaranteed glimpse, you will find around 10 or so wallabies hopping around inside an enclosure known as the Wallaby Park, tucked behind the main house. This is where breeding pairs are kept, and anyone is free to visit at any time of year.

Outside the enclosure, there is thought to be an unknown number of wallabies living semi-wild across the estate within gated areas. These are often spotted around the lakes and mostly in the middle section of the gardens. Random sightings in the local area have even been reported by surprised residents.

The breeding pairs are entertaining to watch, especially in early spring when mothers carry their babies in their pouches, and in May and June when the babies start learning to walk around. In summer, males perform boxing-style bouts with each other as a way of competing for mates.

This colony of wallabies and their Australian bushland heritage inspired the new Australia Garden at Leonardslee.

The garden was designed by the landscape architect John Weyer, who lived in Australia as a development officer for the University of Tasmania. It features lots of eucalyptus trees with their open canopies, ferns and lots of lush low-lying plants. Elsewhere, Leonardslee is a treasure trove of rare and unusual specimens, with around 10 champion trees and huge magnolias collected by Sir Edmund Loder in the 19th century.



SISTINE CHAPEL REPLICA CEILING 17

Away from the Vatican City crowds

English Martyrs Catholic Church
 Goring Way, Goring-by-Sea, Worthing, East Sussex, BN12 4UH
 01903 506890
 english-martyrs.co.uk
 April to October
 Free but donations welcome



English Martyrs Catholic Church in the quiet Sussex borough of Goring has a unique claim to fame: it is home to the only hand-painted copy of the world-famous ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican City, Rome. A trip to Goring to see it is also the chance for tourist-trap-phobes to pretend they are looking at Michelangelo's 16th century masterpiece without competing with the crowds.

What is also remarkable is how ordinary the English Martyrs Catholic Church looks from the outside. Set in a single-storey modern-brick building, you would be forgiven for driving straight past it without realising. There is little to indicate that it is a church, let alone the surprise waiting inside. Walk through the door, however, and look up above the simple wooden pews, laid out in bold yellows, greens, pinks and blues: you can see God dividing the land and waters, making the sun and earth, reaching out a powerful finger to spark life into Adam.

This version of the Sistine Chapel ceiling was hand-painted by local parishioner and sign writer Gary Bevans. He never went to art college but was nevertheless inspired to recreate Michelangelo's version after he went on a pilgrimage to Rome and was transfixed by the wonder of the chapel. He started it in 1987 and finished five years later.

Bevans tackled it by mapping the 30-metre painting on a grid. Then he fixed plywood panels to the ceiling, primed them in white and copied his drawing onto them, sometimes working by candlelight through the night to get it done. Sussex's Sistine is two-thirds the size of the original, and its proportions are exact, which makes it a mathematical feat as well as an artistic one.

Quirks to spot include the last supper oil painting, which has a parishioner standing at the back holding a chain of the incense burner, the priest's dog that died, Mary standing on the left and a small child with one of the apostles.

The ceiling is free to view but donations are welcome – these allow the church to help its parishioners by running programmes like groups for toddlers and lonely people.

While you are here, do not miss a vibrant stained-glass window at the south end of the church, which stands out from the rest with its modern design. It is made using glass recovered from a convent church in Littlehampton. It was designed by Annie Goodman, an architectural designer and historian, but made by her son, Jeremy Goodman, a professional glassmaker.

ELLIE SEYMOUR

SECRET SUSSEX

AN UNUSUAL GUIDE



Discover the setting for secret feasts in the forest, peek inside a glamorous Vogue war photographer's surreal Sussex home, wander through a forgotten village by the sea, stumble on a fairy-tale folly and a tomb shaped like a pyramid, uncover a hidden Bond-movie location, hunt out little-known Sussex wineries, track down Sherlock Holmes' fictional country cottage, take a safari through an African-inspired landscape, tour Led Zeppelin's former mansion, find the traces of the remnants of a rare WW2-era secret radio station, lose yourself in a museum about murder and true crime, and hang out with a mob of wallabies ...

Sussex is filled with well-hidden treasures to discover that take you off the beaten path. Secret Sussex is the ultimate travel guide to Sussex unknown, designed for lifelong locals, curious visitors and armchair travellers alike, looking to move away from the tourist crowds in search of the unique, unusual and overlooked.

The city of Brighton is not covered in these pages since another guide is specifically dedicated to it: see *Secret Brighton – An unusual guide* from the same publisher.

JONGLEZ PUBLISHING

256 PAGES

£ 16.99

€ 18.95

US \$ 21.95

ISBN: 978-2-36195-785-8



9 782361 957858

info@jonglezpublishing.com

www.jonglezpublishing.com

