

# Attractions

Inspiring days out for groups



New

## 'Tours with tea' spill the beans on Wrest Park's *Bridgerton* role

Fans of *Bridgerton* can now take a limited-edition guided tour to discover where some of its scenes were filmed at Wrest Park, one of our most beautiful sites.



The French-style mansion and 90-acre landscaped grounds at the Bedfordshire site make the perfect backdrop for key scenes in the Regency drama, which follows the lives of the Bridgerton siblings as they attempt to find love.

continued on page 2

### In this issue



**Page 4** The new siege experience at Dover Castle



**Page 6** New entrance building and exhibition at Grime's Graves



**Page 7** A 2000-year-old mosaic unearthed at Wroxeter Roman City

### Thank you for your support

We're looking forward to welcoming you and your groups to the sites in our care.

Heritage is for everybody, and we are here for heritage. Thank you for helping us share it with millions more people for generations to come.



Cover, main image Wrest Park

Cover, inset image Filming for the third series in Wrest's stunning interiors ©Netflix

This page, clockwise from left The exterior of the orangery; visitors at Wrest Park; The pavilion at Wrest Park

On the tour, devotees of 'the Ton' will instantly recognise the setting of the bee-sting scene between Kate and Anthony in series two, which set every heart a-flutter.

Wrest Park's orangery stands in for the Aubrey Hall orangery, where Prudence and Lord Featherington are 'caught' together. And for season three, filming moved inside Wrest Park's 1830s mansion, where its elegant period style makes a superb fit as the Fullers' family home.

The Wrest estate was home to one of the leading aristocratic families in the country, the de Greys, for more than 600 years. Each generation left its mark, and the expansive grounds still showcase three centuries of English landscape design, with woodland, waterways, flower gardens and an array of statues and buildings.

*Bridgerton* isn't Wrest's only on-screen role – you might have spotted it in *Downton Abbey: A New Era* (2022), *The Crown* and *Antiques Roadshow*.

Our special 90-minute tours, for groups of up to 25, take in *Bridgerton* and other filming locations. Hurry to book, as they're only available on Wednesdays and Saturdays between 5 February and 29 March 2025. Tours start at 11.30am. Group members can steal the scene by striking a pose in Georgian costumes as they are shown around the grounds and house, and catch up on the latest society gossip over afternoon tea served in the mansion's lovely dining room.



### Visit the *Bridgerton* family residence

Ranger's House in Blackheath, London, also stars in the Netflix series as the façade of the Bridgertons' family home – although the incredible wisteria was added for filming. A visit is every bit as fascinating as the Netflix drama.

As well as lovely Georgian interiors to explore, the house is home to the sumptuous Wernher Collection, which features over 700 world-class artworks from medieval sculptures and ornate jewellery to Dutch Old Masters and French tapestries. Combine with a visit to nearby Eltham Palace and Gardens, whose art deco interiors featured in *The Crown*, another Netflix hit.

# Back to the Bronze Age at Beeston



Standing high above the Cheshire Plain, Beeston Castle and Woodland Park boasts stunning panoramic views reaching from the Pennines to the Welsh mountains.

It's little wonder, therefore, that our Bronze Age ancestors set up home here 4,000 years ago.

To reveal their daily lives to visitors, we asked for volunteers to help us reconstruct a Bronze Age roundhouse in 2019. Two of the original volunteers – husband and wife Mike and Chris Blackham – take up the story.

Chris says: 'We saw a leaflet asking for volunteers to construct the roundhouse and decided it might be a fun thing to do. It was! We've been involved with its construction and maintenance ever since.'

'Mike can turn his hand to almost any DIY task and I'm an avid crafter, with sewing and knitting being my main 'fix'. So we were happy to help take the vision for the roundhouse to the next stage by replicating everyday

articles that could have been found at Beeston then. They include our new working loom made by Mike, which has created a lot of interest.

'Meeting visitors is really enjoyable and rewarding – for example, showing them how we have dyed natural fibres from our small roundhouse garden. We were delighted when one visitor, a thatcher from Somerset, couldn't believe that the roof had been constructed by volunteers. He said it should last at least 25 years.'

'I've found that by talking about what I know and calmly admitting things I don't, visitors go away wanting to know more. I don't know how many people lived in the roundhouses, how many animals they had or exactly what they had for dinner. But I can give a good guess.'



**Clockwise from top** The roundhouse at Beeston; Mike and Chris Blackham demonstrate the loom; Beeston Castle with its wonderful views

'Beeston's team of volunteers are constantly working on improving and adding to the items we have. At the moment we're decorating a replica bed with authentic designs, building a wooden storage chest and improving our knowledge of natural dyes to use on our new loom.'

Mike says: 'It took quite some time to research and make sure my loom design worked. Going back to basics by using tools of the period also took longer, but the results are far more rewarding and impressive. I'm more than happy to leave the weaving to others as I'm afraid my skills lie elsewhere. So I'm now helping to make a new back door for the roundhouse.'

**Find out more about volunteering with English Heritage at:**  
[www.english-heritage.org.uk/support-us/volunteer](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/support-us/volunteer)



## Explore Beeston

As well as viewing the roundhouse, loom and weaving demonstrations, your group members can explore the castle exhibition and amble through the 40-acre woodland park before enjoying drinks and snacks from the Sandstone Café.

# Siege experience transforms group visits

Now  
open

Our new Dover Castle Under Siege experience means there's now easily enough to fill a whole day for groups at Dover Castle. It joins the other major stand-alone attractions at the castle, including Henry II's mighty medieval Great Tower and the immersive installations in underground tunnels that tell the castle's stories from the Second World War.





Each area is largely undercover, making the castle a perfect year-round, weatherproof option for a full day out in Kent.

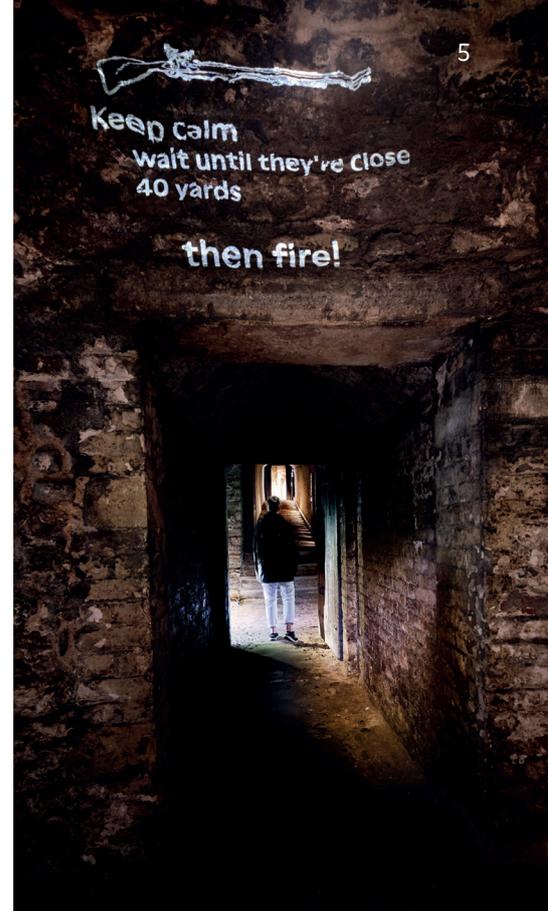
You'll find the new siege experience is close to the original entrance to the castle, which is now the entrance and exit for group members arriving by coach. The attraction reveals how the castle withstood two epic sieges in 1216 and 1217 against French invaders and English rebel forces during a 'forgotten' civil war.

One highlight is a state-of-the-art digital model showing the castle as it likely looked in 1216, revealing now-lost features like walls and towers. Visual displays, cinematic film, illustrated wall panels and imaginative activities tell the stories of the conflict and its key players. In a bid to overthrow King John, rebel barons offered the English throne to Prince Louis of France. Louis and his army swept through southern England, but Dover Castle refused to surrender. Standing firm under attack, it became a thorn in Louis's side, and his invasion eventually failed.

Underground, a labyrinth of tunnels provided protection and a supply route for the besieged castle troops. After extensive conservation, we installed ambient lighting and new audio-visual installations to enjoy as your group members walk through the atmospheric tunnels. They emerge at a new area at the Northern Spur to take in long-lost panoramic castle views.

The experience is already proving popular with visitors. Neil McCollum, Head of Historic Properties in Kent says: 'We're delighted with the initial visitor feedback, and the interactive elements are really engaging them in discovering more about life at the castle eight centuries ago.'

Neil advises GTOs to allow six hours to take in the castle's 'big three' attractions, which are all essential viewing. He says: 'There are two tours to take in the Secret Wartime Tunnels – the Underground Hospital with its operating theatre and wards, and the Dunkirk Experience where the evacuation of troops stranded on French beaches was masterminded. These take the



**Main image** Take a seat to enjoy newly revealed castle views

**Top left and right** Exhibitions above and below ground set the historical scene

best part of two hours alone. Add on Henry II's Great Tower with its kitchens, state rooms and rooftop views and the average dwell time is around 4.5 hours. We anticipate that increasing to six hours to allow time to enjoy the siege experience as well.'

**For more inspiration, watch our one-minute video here:** [www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/dover-castle/dover-castle-under-siege](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/dover-castle/dover-castle-under-siege)

Coming soon



## Art at Witley Court

If you've been thinking of taking your group to see the striking ruined mansion and stunning grounds at Witley Court and Gardens in Worcestershire, 2025's shaping up to be the perfect year to do it.

It was one of the grandest stately homes in Victorian and Edwardian England before a disastrous fire turned it into an empty shell in 1937.

But with restored gardens and haunting remains, there's still plenty to see and do.

We've commissioned artist Keith Harrison to produce a new artwork called, *Fountain | 1937*. His work will highlight the working-class labour that funded the immense wealth of the Earl of Dudley, the 19th-century owner of Witley Court.

# A stairway to heaven

In the dead of night, medieval monks at Furness Abbey in Cumbria left their communal dormitory to descend to the church below to sing Matins – the first of eight services that punctuated their day.

Their journey took place in darkness between midnight and 2am, via the wooden staircase used only for the nightly ritual. Separate to the 'day staircase' the route took them past a statue of St Christopher, strategically placed to be the first thing they saw each day. It was thought to provide protection against a 'bad' death – one with an unconfessed mortal sin leading to hell in the afterlife.

Now, 900 years since it was first built and 500 years since it was destroyed during Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries, we've reinstated a timber stairway

on the site of the lost original. It allows visitors to see the previously inaccessible monks' dormitory for the first time, with the bonus of striking views over the atmospheric abbey ruins. We've also made site-wide improvements to make the abbey ruins more accessible for your group members, with better wheelchair access, new ramps and wider and more level paths.

There's more for your group to explore, including the ruins of much of the east end and west tower of the church, the ornately decorated chapter house and the cloister

buildings. There's also an exhibition in the visitor centre which includes stone carvings and effigies.

Founded in 1127, Furness Abbey was once a major landowner and the largest and wealthiest monastery in north west England. By the late 18th century, its red sandstone ruins attracted the attention of antiquarians, authors and artists. They included artist JMW Turner, who sat nearby to sketch the abbey, gothic novelist Ann Radcliffe and poet William Wordsworth, whose *Guide to the Lakes* is said to have turned the abbey into a popular tourist destination.

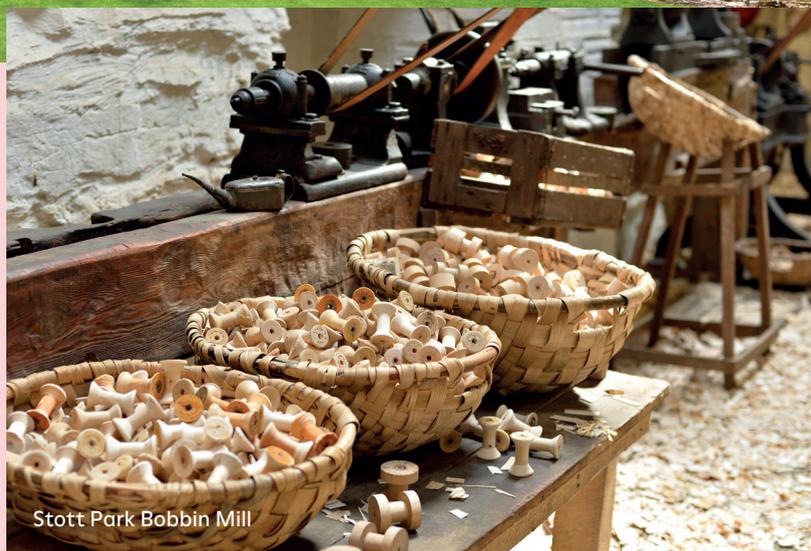


The exhibition at Furness Abbey



## Visit Stott Park Bobbin Mill

Combine your visit with a pre-booked guided tour of Stott Park Bobbin Mill, available Mondays and Tuesdays, just thirty minutes from the abbey. On the shores of Lake Windermere, Stott Park is the only working survivor of the hundred-plus mills in the Lake District which once supplied vital wooden bobbins to the Lancashire textile industry. Group members can watch the journey from tree to bobbin on the original belt-driven machinery, view the exhibition and buy a souvenir bobbin to take home.



Stott Park Bobbin Mill

# Going underground at Grime's Graves

Grime's Graves may be a little off the beaten track, but new improvements to its strange lunar-like landscape and below ground experience make it well worth a detour for groups with a sense of adventure.

The stunning new entrance building and exhibition provide a dramatic starting point for a journey back 4,500 years to discover how Neolithic civil engineers created and worked in England's oldest human-made underground space. We've also made access easier with a new staircase, so fitter group members can descend nine metres down one of the site's 430 mineshafts created around 2,500 BC.

Using tools made from deer antlers, the miners carved out this labyrinth of tunnels in search of jet-black flint, formed millions of years ago on what was then an ocean bed. Much prized for its durability and flexibility, the flint was used to make fine

specialised tools, weapons and ceremonial objects.

A film and audio guide (voiced by Time Team archaeologist Phil Harding) explains the process of flint mining and knapping and paints a picture of life and work here thousands of years ago.

'It wasn't until 1868-70, when one of the pits was excavated, that this was even identified as a Neolithic flint mine,' explains Properties Historian Jennifer Wexler. 'To this day, most of the pits remain untouched, so we only have a tantalising glimpse into a place full of hidden history. The mines are a feat of great engineering skill, showing sophisticated geological knowledge of the earth at a

time when Neolithic people were transforming their world on a massive scale.'

The new exhibition reveals more of the secrets and ingenuity of this ancient industrial mining hub, and groups can see some of the objects recently excavated – including an axe, sickle and circular knife. We've also added a multi-sensory virtual underground tour so group members can explore the depths.

Above ground, a new trail through the unique landscape helps your groups discover the rare plants and fauna that make this a 96-acre Site of Special Scientific Interest. Wild flowers put on an impressive display from April to July.

**Grime's Graves gets its name from the Anglo-Saxon god Grim, also known as Woden.**

**Top image** Explore a mineshaft

**Left** The new entrance and exhibition space





# Surprise discovery at England's 'Pompeii'

A rare 2000-year-old mosaic recently unearthed at Wroxeter Roman City in Shropshire has stunned archaeologists with its beautiful depiction of dolphins and fish in striking white, red, blue and yellow tiles.

It dates to the early second century, soon after Wroxeter was established. A team of 30 archaeologists, including students and volunteers, made the surprise find during an exploratory dig last summer in search of the city's main Civic Temple. Their excavations revealed a large monumental building, and a shrine or mausoleum which may have honoured an important individual in Wroxeter's earliest history.

One of the best-preserved examples of a Roman city in Britain, Wroxeter was established in the 90s AD, and was once as large as Pompeii. It contained over two hundred houses as well as a civic bath house, marketplace, county hall and judicial centre.

Today, a small number of ruined buildings are all that remain above ground, including the public baths and Old Work, an impressive seven metres high basilica wall which is the largest piece of free-standing Roman wall in the country.

Our Senior Properties Curator Win Scutt said: 'We never suspected we would find a beautiful and intact mosaic, which had lain hidden for thousands of years. This discovery, alongside a large number of small finds such as coins and pottery, will go a long way in helping us date the various phases of the city and indicate the kinds of activities that were taking place. It's always an astonishing moment when you uncover a fragment of beauty hiding just below the ground.'

The excavated area has now been reburied for its protection and preservation, but your group can visit the ruins, explore a reconstructed Roman town house and discover more of the site's history at the museum, which contains fascinating artefacts like figurines of deities, water pipes, glass perfume bottles and amulets.

**Coach parking is available and you can pre-book a guided tour for your group.**



**Top image** The impressive seven metre high basilica wall

**Left** Aquatic mosaic  
© Paul Bedford, Heritage Innovation

## Inspired to book? Find out how

For more information and booking details for the properties featured in this issue of Attractions, please visit:

[www.english-heritage.org.uk/traveltrade](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/traveltrade)

Click through to Planning Resources to download our **Group Visits Guide 2022–24** and **Trade Admission Prices and Site Opening Times booklet**.

Advance booking no less than 7 days ahead is required for all group visits.

## Contact us

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