

Family days out

Spellbinding tales of pillaging Vikings and bejewelled princesses come to life on family outings in England. Meet mischievous monkeys, hide in mazes, dig up fossils or ride a broomstick at Hogwarts. There's plenty to capture any child's imagination.



> Beatrix Potter World ©VisitBritain Rod Edwards



> Warwick Castle ©Britainonview



> Warner Bros. Studio Tour ©Warner Bros.

1 Eden Project, Cornwall

Explore England's own tropical jungle and encounter hot, dry climates in the Eden Project's two state-of-the-art domes. In the steamy Rainforest Biome, peer up at bunches of bananas, spot cocoa pods or discover the plant that gives us chewing gum. Kids can enjoy daily live storytelling in the Mediterranean Biome, where the zesty scent of lemon trees mingles with the heady aroma of perfumed herbs.

www.edenproject.com

2 The World of Beatrix Potter Attraction, Lake District

In the heart of the Lake District, enter the enchanting world of author Beatrix Potter through captivating recreations of each tale. Children can meet their favourite characters in Mrs Tiggy-winkle's kitchen, Jemima Puddle-duck's woodland glade or Mr McGregor's greenhouse. Outdoors, the Peter Rabbit garden entices curious tots with its kaleidoscopic array of purple-podded peas, Bulls Blood beetroot and bright red gooseberries.

www.hop-skip-jump.com

3 Warner Bros Studio Tour – The Making of Harry Potter, Hertfordshire

Relive the magic of the Harry Potter films on this revealing behind-the-scenes tour at Leavesden, 32km northwest of London. Aficionados can step into the Great Hall itself, wander among Diagon Alley's familiar shopfronts, gaze at Harry's Nimbus 2000 and peek into a painstakingly created 1:24-scale Hogwarts model. There's also a chance to fly a broomstick or uncover special effects and animatronics secrets. Advance booking essential.

www.wbstudiotour.com



> Chatsworth House ©VisitBritain Martin Brent



> The Eden Project ©The Ewan

4 Chatsworth House, Peak District

There may be over 30 exquisite rooms to explore inside this stately home, but younger visitors make a beeline for the farmyard, adventure playground and gardens. Kids can pet guinea pigs, lambs or goats, watch cows being milked, hitch a trailer ride or burn off energy in the climbing forest. The Little Explorers Garden Trail encompasses a vast maze, human sundial and balancing rock. Open from mid-March to mid-December.

www.chatsworth.org

5 Warwick Castle, Warwickshire

A castle has stood on this site since 1068. Be a knight for the day and scale the 14th-century defensive towers or learn how to become a princess in the Princess Tower. Witness the mighty trebuchet in action and imagine life inside the besieged castle during the English Civil War. Daring guests can delve into the dark depths of the Castle Dungeon, home to the castle's scariest residents.

www.warwick-castle.com

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> Jorvik Viking Festival ©Allan Harris



> Old Trafford ©VisitBritain Pawel Libera



> Longleat Safari Park ©alljengi

6 JORVIK Viking Centre, York

Hop aboard a time capsule and travel back 1,000 years to the lively Viking city of Jorvik. Passengers wind through a bustling marketplace and amber worker's house, listen to a couple bickering in Old Norse and smell Viking home cooking. The centre is situated on the site of a five-year archaeological excavation. Watch out for the rummaging rat!

www.jorvik-viking-centre.org

7 Hadrian's Wall, Cumbria and Northumberland

Step into the shoes of a Roman army officer at the Empire's northern frontier, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. March along a stretch of the undulating stone wall or try out an ancient bathhouse in one of the well-preserved forts. The Roman Army Museum is crammed with artefacts from shields and swords to coins and combs. In summer, live ongoing excavations take place at nearby military outpost Vindolanda.

www.visithadrianswall.co.uk

8 The Deep, Hull

This shimmering aluminium-clad aquarium is home to a whopping 3,500 fish. Plunge to the murky depths of the Twilight Zone, populated by ethereal wolf eels and moon jellyfish. Climb a ladder into the Lagoon of Light and come face-to-face with a vivid rainbow of tropical fish and coral. Circling sharks and rays hover overhead in a heart-stopping viewing tunnel before an underwater lift whisks visitors back to the surface.

www.thedeep.co.uk



> The Deep, Hull ©VisitBritain Pawel Libera



> Hadrian's Wall ©VisitBritain Rod Edwards

9 Old Trafford Museum and Stadium Tour, Manchester

A mecca for football fans, Old Trafford hosted its first match in 1910. Visitors can follow in the boots of Manchester United legends on this behind-the-scenes tour. Feel the adrenalin in the players' dressing room and sense the match-day atmosphere as the team emerges from the tunnel to a crowd of 76,000. The museum displays trophies and recounts the stories behind this successful club.

www.manutd.com

10 Beamish, The Living Museum of the North, County Durham

This open-air working museum immerses visitors into life in North East England during Georgian, Victorian and Edwardian times. Ride an historic tram through a cobbled Edwardian street, experience life mining underground in an early 1900s colliery, attend the pit village school or tuck into beef-dripping fried fish and chips. Costumed characters and craftsmen provide a lively insight into the region's history.

www.beamish.org.uk

11 Longleat Safari & Adventure Park, Wiltshire

The drive-through safari at 16th-century Longleat House takes in over 100 species including lions, rhinos and zebras. Inquisitive monkeys run riot over car roofs and sinewy cheetahs race at up to 100kph. Kids can hand-feed giraffes, cruise past Gorilla Island or play hide and seek in the enormous hedge maze. Hands-on shows allow guests to tickle a tarantula or stroke a snake. Closed for parts of January to March.

www.longleat.co.uk

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› Charmouth Beach ©Andrew Urquhart



› Beamish, The Living Museum of the North ©VisitBritain



› Camel Estuary, Cornwall ©shirokazan

12 Tower of London

London's mighty royal fortress is steeped in tales of execution, imprisonment and mystery. Join a Yeoman Warder, or 'Beefeater', tour for an animated introduction before picking up a family trail for the Medieval Palace or dazzling Crown Jewels (all 23,578 of them). Humans weren't the only captives here – for over 600 years, the Royal Menagerie housed exotic creatures from alligators and anacondas to polar bears and pelicans.

www.hrp.org.uk/TowerOfLondon

13 Fossil hunting on the Jurassic Coast, Dorset and Devon

The crumbling cliffs and sweeping beaches of England's first natural UNESCO World Heritage Site are a geological treasure trove, encompassing the Triassic, Jurassic and Cretaceous periods. One of the prime fossil-hunting spots is Charmouth, where the rapidly eroding cliffs spill fossilised marine life onto the beach, particularly after winter storms. The informative visitor centre runs guided fossil walks and rockpool rambles all year.

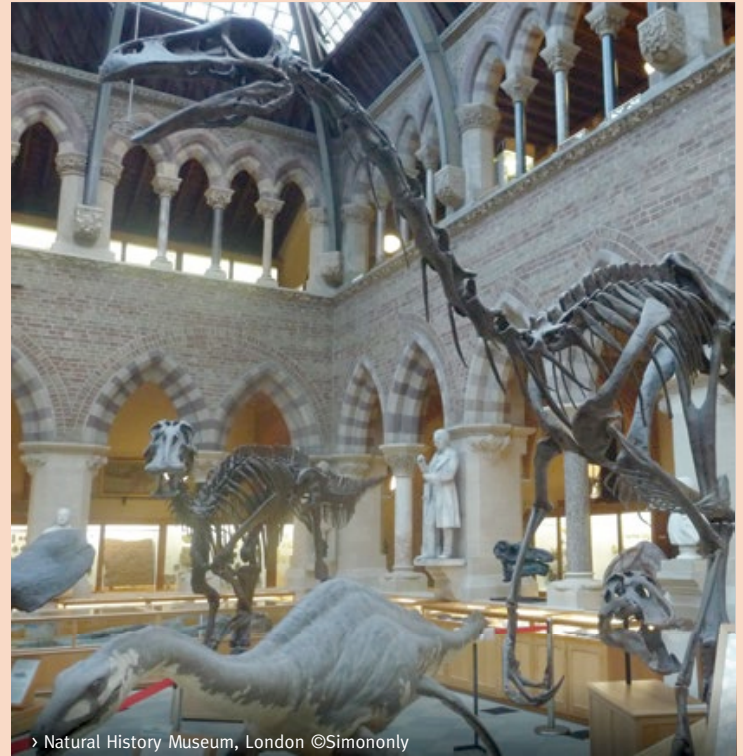
www.jurassiccoast.org

14 Science and Natural History Museums, London

Rubbing shoulders in London's South Kensington, these two magnificent free museums are full of attention-grabbing exhibits. Kids love experimenting with the Thermal Imaging Camera and Light Table in the Science Museum's interactive Launchpad gallery. The Natural History Museum's star attraction is the Dinosaurs gallery, displaying 100s of specimens including four eerily life-like animatronic dinosaurs.

www.sciencemuseum.org.uk

www.nhm.ac.uk



› Natural History Museum, London ©Simononly



› Holy Island Lindisfarne ©VisitBritain

Hidden Gems

15 The Camel Trail, Cornwall

This picturesque 28km trail runs along a traffic-free former railway line from Poley's Bridge to Padstow via Wadebridge and Bodmin. Hire bikes for relaxing family-friendly pedalling beneath the gently bowing branches of the wooded Camel Valley, which opens onto the gorgeously expansive Camel Estuary. The path hugs the coastline as far as pretty Padstow, where a tantalising plateful of Rick Stein's fish and chips awaits.

www.visitcornwall.com

16 The Holy Island of Lindisfarne, Northumberland

Accessible only by tidal causeway, tiny Lindisfarne was home to St Cuthbert and became an easy target for marauding Vikings. Visitors can wander amid the ruins of serene Lindisfarne Priory, ransacked by Henry VIII in 1537. Explore the 16th-century castle, glimpse grey seal colonies and puffins on boat trips to the Farne Islands, and munch on fresh crab sandwiches, a local speciality. It's essential to check tide tables in advance.

www.visitnorthumberland.com