A Guide to the New Forest
Your guide to great family adventures in the New Forest

New Forest Activities 2017
# A Guide to the New Forest

## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to get here</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where to stay in the New Forest</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating out in the New Forest</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wildlife</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trees</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attractions</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Towns of the New Forest</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Near the New Forest</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting Married in the New Forest</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact Information</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

www.newforestactivities.co.uk
There are many wild and beautiful places crammed into this small island of ours...but one of the most beautiful is the New Forest, a National Park in the South of England.

It has vast open spaces, leafy woodland and winding waterways. Its population is huge and varied - from rare wildlife species in the undergrowth to the bustling settlements of Lymington and Lyndhurst. It has a rich history too, and the Forest is full of ghosts...some of whom appear to visitors at regular intervals.

This guide will tell you everything you need to know about visiting the Forest, with some interesting facts along the way!

Sam, Rich and the New Forest Activities Team
How to get here

The New Forest is easily accessible from London and other parts of the UK. The train takes just 90 minutes from the London Waterloo to Brockenhurst, and stopping services serve other New Forest stations, such as Beaulieu Road and Ashurst. Services to Lymington Town and Lymington Pier are available from Brockenhurst. There are also National Express coach services from London, Bristol and Bath.

If driving, the M3 from London will take you as far as Southampton at which point, you take the M27 towards Bournemouth. The A31 will take you right through the Forest. The New Forest is also close to Southampton Airport and ferry services from the Isle of Wight to Portsmouth, Lymington and Southampton.

Once you get to the Forest, there are a number of ways of getting around without having to drive – there are cycle hire shops, local buses and even electric cars! But there are also a number of places to hire cars, including the vintage models of Icon Classic Car. They stock everything from Minis to 4x4s, so everything to get you around the Forest in style. www.iconclassiccar.co.uk

www.newforestactivities.co.uk
Where to stay in and around the Forest

There are a number of great accommodation options around the New Forest. Whether you’re looking for a cosy cottage with a log fire, or a family-run B&B you’ll find it here.

**Happy Days RV, Poole (1)**
Happy Days Retro Vacations hire beautiful vintage American Airstream caravans. Situated in East Dorset just 9 miles from the New Forest, their silver ladies from a bygone time make a fantastic base for exploring the area. [www.happydaysrv.co.uk](http://www.happydaysrv.co.uk)

**Holidays by the Water, Mudeford (2)**
If you are looking for an adrenaline-fuelled, action packed, fun-filled family holiday, or just a relaxing break by the sea, then book a stay with Holidays by the Water’s, award winning holiday home, and experience all the joys that Dorset has to offer. [www.holidaysbythewater.co.uk](http://www.holidaysbythewater.co.uk)

**Hyde Farm B&B, Fordingbridge (3)**
A truly special Bed and Breakfast experience, stay in our recently built detached cottage situated within the grounds of the Farmhouse where you will find both quality and luxury as well as peace and privacy, ideal for couples looking to spend some special time together. [www.hydefarmandb.co.uk](http://www.hydefarmandb.co.uk)

**Iona Holiday Flat, Boscombe (4)**
Iona is a self-catering holiday studio apartment for one or two people and it is an ideal destination for beach lovers, as it’s only a short stroll to Bournemouth’s award winning blue flag beaches - 100 metres away to be exact. The property is situated on the ground floor of an Art Deco Marine building and benefits from sea and pier views. [www.ionaholidayflat.co.uk](http://www.ionaholidayflat.co.uk)
Where to stay in and around the Forest

Kingswood Cottage, Ashurst (5)
A pretty and tranquil B&B set against the backdrop of the New Forest. Established for over 20 years, and with a resident Labrador, you’re assured of a warm welcome. www.kingswoodcottage.co.uk

Leygreen Farmhouse, Beaulieu (6)
A restored 19th Century farmhouse on the beautiful Beaulieu Estate is now a premium B&B, which welcomes guests from all around the country. www.leygreenfarmhouse.co.uk

Lyndhurst House B&B, Lyndhurst (7)
Lyndhurst House Bed and Breakfast is just two minutes’ level walk from the village of Lyndhurst. Whether you’re here for a short break, or on business, we look forward to welcoming you and will ensure that you have a memorable stay in the New Forest. www.lyndhursthousebandb.co.uk

Meadowbank Holidays, Christchurch (8)
Meadowbank Holidays offer high quality holiday caravans for hire and spacious touring caravan pitches on a lovely riverside park in Christchurch. Ranked excellent on Tripadvisor. www.meadowbank-holidays.co.uk
Where to stay in and around the Forest

**New Forest B&B, Brockenhurst (9)**
Cottage Lodge New Forest B&B has been awarded five gold stars by the AA and outstanding by Trip Advisor. It is set in the heart of the New Forest village of Brockenhurst. All en-suite rooms are individually designed. Dinner available. Warm welcome. Near shops, pubs, restaurants and open forest. [www.cottagelodge.co.uk](http://www.cottagelodge.co.uk)

**Silk and Lace Cottages, Lymington (10)**
Award winning 4*Gold and 5* Holiday Cottages with everything you could want. 3 Mins to The New Forest, Ferry, Sea, River, Quay, High Street and Restaurants. Silk Cottage sleeps 4, Lace Cottage sleeps 2/4 – all en suite. Quiet, comfortable and well-maintained. Spinney B&B, Lymington - The Spinney B&B is in the heart of the New Forest, midway between Brockenhurst & Lymington. Offering Double/Twin & Family ensuite rooms. [www.silkcottage.com](http://www.silkcottage.com)

**Squirrels Annexe, Sway (11)**
A comfortable ground floor, self contained 1 bedroom annexe with its own small private garden. Situated up a quiet private lane but within easy reach of Lymington, the forest and coast. Small well-behaved dogs by arrangement. Perfect for couples looking for a relaxing break. [www.newforestselfcatering.com](http://www.newforestselfcatering.com)

**Temple Lodge Guesthouse, Lyndhurst (12)**
A family-run B&B that has been awarded 4 stars for excellence and is “highly commended” by the AA. It is a few minutes’ walk from the village of Lyndhurst and close to the open forest. [www.templelodge-guesthouse.com](http://www.templelodge-guesthouse.com)
Where to stay in and around the Forest

**Camping in the Forest**

Fresh air, beautiful scenery and the sights and smells of the woodland to inspire you- relax and unwind with the people that mean the most. There are many activities to do when in the forest, from sailing through the trees on a Go Ape adventure to cycling and walking through the forest paths, keeping an eye out for wildlife as you travel.

Camping in the Forest have a wide selection of campsites across the UK, including 10 within the New Forest. The Campsites are all set amongst the idyllic woodlands of the Forestry commission – in places where you can truly find yourself.

Hurry and reserve your perfect pitch today. Prices from £10*, per pitch, per night and great family deals to take advantage of!

To book a campsite pitch, call +44 (0)24 7642 3008 or visit www.campingintheforest.co.uk

*2016 price relates to 2 adults, per pitch per night during low season at Denny & Matley Wood.
Eating out in the New Forest

There are so many dining options in the New Forest that you’ll find it hard to choose where to go! With many restaurants serving freshly grown, local produce you can be assured that the food on your plate is good quality and ethical. There is a wide choice of cuisines and everything from a la carte dining to fish and chips on the beach.

For the top end dining experience, head to Beaulieu for their Michelin-starred restaurant at the Montagu Arms Hotel. Alternatively, Milford-on-Sea is a hub of fine restaurants, with its own Food Week and Dining Bus. Lymington is also full of places to eat, with every type of food from Taiwanese to traditional British. You’re bound to find plenty of exciting options!

Of course, it’s also worth a trip to a New Forest pub, all of which are full of character. The food varies from standard pub menus to high-end gastro delights, and you may be sitting in a building that has existed since the 17th century!

One interesting pub is The Red Shoot, Ringwood. Nestled in the heart of the New Forest, with its own micro-brewery on site, this is a popular destination for both beer enthusiasts and families, thanks to its childrens’ play area. www.redshoot.co.uk

Another popular pub is the White Hart at Cadnam, which is currently undergoing refurbishment to restore it to its traditional roots.

While you’re in the New Forest, it’s also a great idea to visit the tearooms. You’ll find them in the pretty town of Lyndhurst, near some interesting shops, and also scattered around the Forest. After a long day’s walking, a cup of tea and a scone is the perfect pick-me-up. So, enjoy your New Forest dining experience – it’s something the area is rightly proud of.
The New Forest was first established as a hunting ground in 1079 by William the Conqueror and has been patronized by royalty ever since. Just 21 years after the Forest’s birth, it saw a royal death, with William’s son William Rufus being killed by an arrow while out hunting. It was reported as an accident, but the King was hugely unpopular thanks to his harsh methods, and no-one mourned him very much. In fact, the descendants of William I didn’t have much luck in the New Forest, which some believed was justice for the harshness with which he created the Forest. It was described poetically, if not necessarily accurately, around 500 years later: “But this wicked act did not long go unpunished, for his Sons felt the smart thereof; Richard being blasted with a pestilent Air; Rufus shot through with an Arrow; and Henry his Grand-child, by Robert his eldest son, as he pursued his Game, was hanged among the boughs, and so dyed”.

The grisly events of 1100 didn’t stop successive kings – Henry VIII among them – using the Forest as their own personal hunting ground, for stags and other wildlife. The Forest dwindled into decline during the era of the Stuart Kings, with the wood being used for shipbuilding and not replanted. At one stage, there was even a proposal to remove the iconic New Forest deer! Then it suffered the Great Storm of 1703, which saw 4000 Oaks lost.

The New Forest Act of 1877 did a lot to protect the Forest, giving rights back to the “Commoners” of the area, to graze their animals on the open heathland. In the 20th century, it would suffer the damage of the Second World War, coupled with the introduction of roads and cars, cutting through the open countryside. But in 2005 it became a protected National Park. And so the Forest has been restored to its former glory, now mostly owned by the Queen.
Wildlife

The New Forest wildlife is varied and interesting, with a number of different habitats sharing the same space. There’s woodland, open heathland and bogs and they all provide the environment needed to sustain life in its many forms.

Woodland

One of the most obvious animals you’ll find in the wooded areas is the New Forest Pony. Known for their friendly nature, they are free to roam the woods and graze as they wish. They are owned by the commoners of the Forest, whose legal right to let their ponies graze in the Forest originated when the Forest itself did, in 1079. So they may appear to be wild at first, but they are all owned by someone! Every year, they are rounded up and accounted for and then can be bought or sold at auctions.

The ponies are a very specific breed, and only foals with two purebred parents can now be counted as purebreds themselves. There are some fanciful tales about the origins of the horses – that their ancestors were in the Spanish Armada and swam ashore after their ships sank – but sadly they are unlikely to be true. It is quite likely that they are descended from the horses brought over by William the Conqueror, hence his generosity in allowing them to graze on his land. But wherever they came from, they are flourishing now, with thousands of the gentle creatures around the Forest. They have right of way over traffic, so watch out for them when driving, and remember not to try and feed them!

The other large animal that roams the woods is the deer. There are five species of deer in the Forest – the red deer and roe deer are native to Britain and are quite common around both the woodland and the heathland. The fallow deer is also common, with its “Bambi”-like appearance and the impressive antlers of the males. The other two species are rarer – the sika deer and the muntjac deer and, as with all deer, they are shy and prefer to keep their distance from humans. Like the ponies, they wander between the woodland and the heathland (and occasionally the roads too!)

Other woodland creatures include badgers, squirrels and foxes, who forage for food around the trees. So look out for them if you’re picnicking nearby! Also look out for woodpeckers, blue tits, redstarts and even bats, who make their homes in the hollow trees.

www.newforestactivities.co.uk
Wildlife

Heathland
The open heathland is home to an interesting mix of species. Rabbits graze there daily, in their hundreds, and there are a number of birds who frequent the heather-covered plains, including the rare Dartford Warbler. The sandy heath is also appealing to reptiles, with the sand lizard making its home there. The sand lizard is very rare in the UK and only survives now because of a careful breeding programme. Another native reptile is the adder, Britain’s only venomous snake, and they enjoy the sunshine that appears more regularly in the New Forest than it does elsewhere in the UK! Adder bites are rare, and it’s even rarer that they are harmful to humans, but medical attention should always be sought if you’ve been bitten! The Forest also contains grass snakes and smooth snakes, but neither are venomous.

Wetlands
The third major type of habitat in the Forest is the common bog, although they have been designated as “Wetlands of International Importance”, which sounds far grander than “bog”! There you’ll find all kinds of plants and insects, with dragonflies and damselflies flitting about. Birds love the wetlands too, with curlews, snipe and redshanks circling above. Around the streams of the Forest, you’ll also find the glorious Kingfisher, showing off his colours as he hunts for food. Fish too are abundant, with 20 different species to be found in the streams and rivers of the Forest. There is enough wildlife in the area to keep even the most ardent animal-spotter happy!
Trees

As you’d expect, the Forest has a number of different types of trees, all grown naturally and without any interference from humans (although there was a great deal of deforestation during the building of the Royal Navy). There are the kind of English trees you’d expect – oak, ash, yew, beech – and some more unusual species, such as the Japanese Cedar.

Thanks to the enlightened 20th century way of thinking (i.e. the 1990 Town and Country Planning Act), a lot of the trees in the Forest are now protected, and it is a criminal offence to fell them. Hopefully, this will go some way towards repairing the damage done by the shipbuilding. Standing in the middle of the Forest it certainly doesn’t feel like it’s short on greenery, with trees spouting out oxygen in every direction!

There are also a few individual oaks that are not just protected but famous. One is the Eagle Oak, so called because it was where a gamekeeper hid as he shot the last known sea eagle in the British Isles. As you can guess, this was in the slightly less enlightened 19th century! The Eagle Oak sits within the Knightwood enclosure and is not far from the A35, south west of Lyndhurst.

Another pair of well-known trees are the Adam and Eve Oaks in Minstead. The Adam Oak is a contender for largest tree in the Forest, and grows behind a hedgerow. Eve is slightly smaller and further back, with some branches that seem to be dying. They are said to be the oldest trees in the Forest, hence being named after the first man and woman.

Adam’s competitor for the tallest tree title is the Knightwood Oak, near the Eagle Oak. It’s 7.4m in girth and over 400 years old. On Victorian maps it appeared as “the Queen of the Forest” and it’s a great example of sustainable forestry – instead of felling the tree, the top has been cut off and used, allowing for fresh growth. This practice, known as “pollarding”, keeps the tree healthy while still providing wood for building and firewood. Many of the older oaks in the Forest are pollards, and it certainly helps to keep the trees healthy!
Nature isn’t the only draw of the Forest – there are many interesting places to visit too. The most famous has to be the Beaulieu Motor Museum, which houses an internationally renowned collection of vintage cars. They often hold special exhibitions, focusing on themes like James Bond cars or sustainable transport. These are always worth seeing, especially for aspiring 007s!

One of the permanent, and most popular, exhibits is the Top Gear Enormodrome. Remember the amphibious cars that sank hopelessly when they were on the water? Well, after they were dragged out of the English Channel, they found a new home at Beaulieu, along with the boys’ home-made motorhomes and even a rocket that Richard Hammond made out of a Reliant Robin! Your mind will boggle as you take in the shoddy workmanship and bad planning that made these vehicles, in true Top Gear style, “ambitious but rubbish”.

Of course, Beaulieu is not just a motor museum. It’s also home to Beaulieu Abbey, one of the most haunted places in Britain. As you wander the ruins of a formerly prosperous abbey, you might well encounter Brother Augustus, still lighting his incense and chanting his ghostly prayers. The abbey was largely destroyed during the Reformation, but remains a serene place to visit, with wall hangings depicting how it looked at the height of its power. The 13th century Abbey church is also home to the series of concerts known as “Music at Beaulieu”. Music at Beaulieu arranges around 12 concerts a year, providing high quality music at an affordable price, and is a platform for emerging as well as established artists. All profits go to annual Awards for musicians in the New Forest and to other charitable causes related to music and the church.
In an area of such rich history, you’d expect a few sites of historical interest and you won’t be disappointed. As well as the abbey, there is the Rufus Stone (where William II was said to have died) and a Roman Villa and medieval bridge, both at Fordingbridge.

Also at Fordingbridge is Breamore House, a manor house completed in 1583 and home to an impressive collection of art, as well as period furniture and a very rare carpet, dating from the reign of James I. The same family have now owned it for nine generations and are very committed to preserving the house. The village of Breamore is also worth a visit itself, as it looks much like it did in the 17th century and feels like stepping back in time.

Another great place to visit is Exbury Gardens. Famous for the miniature railway that takes visitors on a mile-long journey around the grounds, it is a riot of colour and beauty with different flowers blooming according to the time of year. There are sculptures of animals, made out of moss and metal, along with lakes and rock gardens. For horticulture enthusiasts, there’s a lot to see too, with a number of rare breeds of plant and hybrids specially created for the gardens. The hybrid rhododendrons are particularly interesting, and rhododendron fans all over the world flock there to see them.

But there’s plenty for everyone, plant enthusiast or not. All you need to be able to appreciate beauty, and a calm atmosphere once described as “Heaven with the gates open.”
Furzey Gardens, near Minstead, is another impressive garden with 10 acres of informal greenery. One of the most striking features is the massed bank of azaleas which bloom in the late spring. Some of the varieties of azalea are endemic to Furzey, having been tended there for centuries. There is also a well preserved cottage that was built in 1560 out of ships’ timbers. Both the beams and the floorboards come from the Tudor shipbuilding yards at Lymington and may well have been part of a ship at one point! For children visiting Furzey, there is a play area and tree houses and they can look out for the “fairy doors” – tiny 1-inch doors carved into the trees around the gardens.

Other great places to go include the New Forest Museum, which tells the story of the Forest through interactive exhibits, film and even tapestry. The centrepiece is the Family Fun Tree, where you can discover more about the insects and animals of the Forest and match them with their tracks and even with their poo! There’s also a museum at Buckler’s Hard, the shipbuilding village where the world-conquering British Navy of the 19th century was built. The Maritime Museum tells you about this rich history and more – there’s even a reconstruction of a 17th century cottage to show you how these shipbuilders lived. A unique glimpse into an important industry of the past.

But that’s not all the Forest has to offer in terms of museums – there are the Sammy Miller Motorcycle Museum and the St Barbe Gallery and Museum among others. Whether your passion is vintage motorcycles or lively kids’ events, there is plenty of culture to be found in the area. You might find it hard to choose just which one to visit!
Activities

The scope of what you can do in the Forest is almost boundless. You can start off gently, with a walk through the woodlands and just take it all in – the beautiful vistas, the hum of the wildlife and the tranquillity of your surroundings. In fact, with 100 miles of pathways to explore, you could spend a week doing nothing but wandering around!

There are picnic benches and toilets strategically placed along the way, so you can spend your whole day in there. But if you fancy something more focused, you could try a mystery walk around one of the towns of the Forest. The downloadable guides give you a mystery to solve or a spy mission to complete, and as you wend your way around the picturesque towns you’ll learn a lot as well!

But there’s much more. How about kayaking on the Beaulieu River? Suitable for everyone, whether you have kayaking experience or not, as you’ll learn everything you need to know during the lesson. More advanced kayakers can try their hand at sea kayaking – taking the boat out onto the open waters of the Solent to experience the coastline in a whole new way. It’s an extreme sport, but it’s also a great adrenaline rush!
Equally exciting is Battlefield Live! A more eco-friendly alternative to paintball, it uses lasers rather than paint to shoot your opponents and so preserves the trees of the Forest as well as avoiding those nasty welts you get with paintball! Play in teams or every man (or woman) for himself – you’ll find that even dormant competitive streaks will get awoken by the thrill of running around the woods trying to shoot your enemy. Just don’t take it all too seriously – all may be fair in love and war, but this isn’t real war.

For more civilized past-times, why not try a spot of archery? An ancient skill for both leisure and warfare, it makes a great activity to do with the whole family. It requires patience and concentration to get it exactly right, but it’s a great feeling when you hit the bullseye! Other activities that you can do in the Forest include team building days, swinging through the trees, or guided walks. There’s something for every level of fitness, whether you have one day to spend here or a whole week.
There are lots of towns and villages to visit in the New Forest. We’ve picked a few that might be of interest:

**Major towns**

**Brockenhurst**
For many people, this is the starting point of their New Forest Adventure, as the rail station is on the main line from London Waterloo. It’s deep in the heart of the Forest and is home to a picturesque stream that flows over the road, locally known as “The Splash”. There are also ancient churches to visit as well as number of independent shops.

**Lyndhurst**
Just north of Brockenhurst lies Lyndhurst, with its Elizabethan panelled shops and tearooms. It’s where you’ll find the New Forest Museum, as well as the church of St Michael and All Angels with its imposing spire dominating the skyline. A lively and interesting town surrounded by greenery.

**Lymington**
Further south, the market town of Lymington sits at the edge of the Forest. It’s one of the major cultural centres of the region, with concerts being held regularly at the Bandstand and modern art exhibitions at the Coastal Gallery. There are also two stunning marinas, filled with yachts from around the world.

**New Milton**
A town that first appeared in the Doomsday Book, New Milton is still full of life. It has a weekly market and a full calendar of town events, including the prestigious New Forest Marathon. It’s close to the coast and has a mix of modern architecture and older styles, along with all the supermarkets you need if self-catering.

**Fordingbridge**
The town of Fordingbridge is a treat for history enthusiasts, with its medieval bridge and the Fordingbridge Museum. It’s on the north-west edge of the Forest, and sits on the beautiful River Avon. There is a riverside playground for children along with sports field and memorial gardens.
Town of the New Forest

Ringwood
Home to the famous Ringwood Brewery, where you can sample such ales as Boon Diggle and Old Thumper, Ringwood is a historic market town, situated just down the river from Fordingbridge. It has its own football team – Ringwood FC – and the UK’s largest slot-racing centre, the Millstream Model Centre & Raceway.

Waterside towns

Barton on Sea
One of the best beaches in the vicinity of the Forest. There’s a clifftop golf course as well as a glorious stretch of shingled beach. Barton on Sea is famous for the fossils that have been found there, some dating back to 40 million years ago! The cliffs have some erosion problems so are cordoned off in some places, but there is still plenty of space to admire the views over to the Isle of Wight.

Milford on Sea
Just down the coast from Barton on Sea is Milford on Sea, with more beautiful beach vistas. It’s notable for its foodie focus, hosting a “food week” every year where you can sample delights from all the local restaurants. If you fancy trying an unusual way of dining, there’s also the Milford on Sea “Great Dining Bus” where each course takes place at a different restaurant, with bus trips in between!

Hythe
A bustling marina on the eastern edge of the Forest, Hythe is the place to go for sea views and bird watching. You can also see the cottage where Lawrence of Arabia once lodged, albeit under a false name! There are also two markets, selling local produce and crafts.
Interesting villages

Ashurst
A small village with its own train station, Ashurst lies between the A35 and Bartley Water. It is home to the New Forest Wildlife Park, where otters, deer and even wolves roam around freely. There is camping nearby and it’s a scenic part of the Forest.

Beaulieu
Home to both the Motor Museum and the Abbey, Beaulieu itself is worth a visit for its quaint cottages and narrow streets. It feels a little like a step back in time. It’s frequented by New Forest ponies who often wander up and down the High Street, to the amusement of passers-by!

Burley
During the 1950s, a “white witch” called Sybil Leek lived in this village, carrying her pet jackdaw on her shoulder wherever she went. She may have gone, but there’s still a sense of magic that hangs around this woodland village. Her picture still remains, in the gift shop that bears the name she gave it - “A Coven of Witches”.

Minstead
Minstead is the very model of a traditional English village, centred around a village green and a village shop. There’s also a pub, a village hall and a parish church, which contains the grave of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. It’s close to the Rufus Stone, which marks the spot where William Rufus died.

Sway
The setting for the novel “Children of the New Forest”, Sway is now home to a modern art gallery as well as “Peterson’s Folly”, a 66-metre tall tower constructed by Andrew Thomas Turton Peterson in the late 19th century. It was originally intended to have a light at the top, but this was deemed dangerous thanks to Sway’s proximity to the shipping lanes of the Solent. So it remains as a tribute to one man’s ambition and eccentricity!
Near the New Forest

From your base among the trees, you will find plenty to do within a few miles. But if you fancy exploring further, there are some great towns and cities around Hampshire which are well worth a visit.

**Southampton**
The most obvious and sprawling of the Hampshire settlements, this city is full of life. There’s a wealth of shopping opportunities, from the expansive West Quay shopping centre to the alternative shops of the Bargate. Behind the Bargate Centre, you’ll find the St Mary’s district - home to Southampton FC, who have seen their fortunes hugely revived in recent years. If you’re there in football season, why not pop along and join in the “Saints” cheers? On the way, you might spot the Joiners’ Arms, a small pub and music venue that has seen early gigs from bands such as Coldplay and Oasis. In fact, the Gallagher brothers had a fight on the stage there!

Back in the centre of town, you’ll find a huge IKEA adjacent to the lively Leisure World, with its cinema, restaurants and nightclubs. Leisure World is just a few minutes’ walk from Southampton Central station, so easily accessible from the Forest (although the change of pace may come as a shock!) Southampton also has an expansive Common, the Mayflower theatre and Southampton Guildhall, another favourite for up and coming bands.

**Winchester**
A few miles and a world away from the buzz of Southampton is the genteel Winchester. Once the capital of Wessex, Winchester is full of history – the most obvious example being the 1000-year old Cathedral in its centre. A mixed-up masterpiece of architecture, it’s a good place for quiet reflection or for enjoying a soaring concert. Winchester is also home to the Great Hall, with its Round Table, and the ancient Buttercross. For the best possible views over the city, climb St Giles’ Hill at the bottom of the High Street. From there, you can enjoy a picnic and a glorious vista of the green-roofed Guildhall and the statue of King Alfred.
Near the New Forest

**Basingstoke**
Another busy town that has been much maligned over the years, Basingstoke actually has a lot to offer. There’s the Anvil Theatre there, and the huge shopping centre of Festival Place. True, it does have more than its fair share of roundabouts, but it’s a modern city with lots for kids to do, including a splash park, soft play and bowling. It’s also surrounded by beautiful countryside and interesting villages, which contrast sharply with the high rises of the town centre.

**Bournemouth**
Bournemouth is perhaps the archetypal English seaside town, with golden beaches and an iconic pier. There’s a cliff railway and seaside amusements and on a sunny day, the beach is covered in sunseekers taking advantage of the warm water. But once the sun goes down, the fun doesn’t stop, with a number of lively nightclubs and bars all over the city. It’s a busy student town, but there is fun for all ages, with shows on at The Pavilion and the Bournemouth International Centre. Ideal for a great night out or a lazy day by the seaside eating ice cream!

**Portsmouth**
A drive along the M27 from the Forest will land you in Portsmouth, birthplace of Charles Dickens and home to the Portsmouth Historical Dockyard. Attractions at the dockyard include the newly restored Mary Rose, the sunken flagship of Henry VIII and its interactive museum. Or you can walk the deck of HMS Victory and see the spot where Nelson died. After that, you can pick up some designer bargains at the Gunwharf Quays outlet village or enjoy the high street shopping of the Cascades. Portsmouth also contains the Blue Reef Aquarium, filled with sharks, rays and penguins. It even has its own family of otters!
Near the New Forest

Paultons Park
Near the edge of the Forest lies the famous amusement park of Paultons. Sharply divided between the quaint original features of the 1980s and the new developments, there is so much to do that you will struggle to fit it into one day. The newest feature is Peppa Pig World – a pastel shaded pre-schooler paradise that includes gentle rides like Daddy Pig’s Car Ride and swirling hot air balloons. Everything is themed, with a play area that has “muddy puddles” wet play (no real mud, thankfully!) and frequent appearances from Peppa herself, along with George and Suzie Sheep. The older part of the park has the dinosaur walk through the woods, which still excites dino-enthusiasts everywhere, and the tropical birds in the gardens. A park that manages to be both modern and old-fashioned, in a charming way.

Isle of Wight
Another place that deserves more than a day’s exploration, the Isle of Wight has miles of golden beaches, a theme park on the edge of a cliff (Blackgang Chine) and a zoo with rare white tigers. There’s even a garlic farm, where you can sample their unique garlic ice-cream (worth tasting at least once!). The middle of the island is leafy and beautiful and makes a lovely drive. Ferries to the island go from Southampton and Lymington.

www.newforestactivities.co.uk
Getting married in the New Forest

The most important day of your life should take place somewhere perfect. And that’s why so many brides and grooms choose the New Forest – it’s a beautiful and historical backdrop, with gorgeous views of leafy hills and plains. There are a number of venues where you can get married, catering for both church and civil weddings.

Should you want a church wedding, there are some lovely historical churches to choose from, including the impressive St Michael and All Angels in Lyndhurst, and the more intimate Christ Church in Emery Down. Getting married in a Church of England church does come with some restrictions and priority is given to regular worshippers at the church, but they all make stunning places to get married.

If you’re looking for a civil venue, the New Forest has an abundance of those as well. There are lavish hotels, like Stanwell House in Lymington, or there are unusual venues like the Carpenter’s Barn at the New Forest Outdoor Centre. You can even get married at Exbury Gardens or Beaulieu! There really is something for every kind of taste.

So, once the venue is chosen, how about the dress? There are several wedding dress suppliers around the area, one of the most popular being New Forest Brides in Lymington. And for even more choice and variety, head to the shopping centres of Southampton and Bournemouth, where you’ll find so many bridal stores that one of them is bound to have the perfect gown in it.

There are so many other things to think about, but you can find people to help with them all in the New Forest – caterers, wedding car hire and entertainers. If you’re looking for a photographer, Joanne Coulter comes highly recommended. She is based in Beaulieu and has ten years’ worth of professional photography experience, so she is sure to capture your day in a way that’ll make you smile. Joanne’s company is New Forest Photography.

And, of course, you need a DJ that will make your wedding party one to remember! Look no further than Mal Williams of ProDisco. He has vast amounts of experience as both a wedding DJ and a radio presenter and can provide you with not only a rocking soundtrack, but also a dazzling light display. Your guests will have an awesome time.
Getting married in the New Forest

With all that organised, it’s time to enjoy your stag or hen weekend which you shouldn’t have to even think about until you get there (what are bridesmaids and best men for?) But should they be short of ideas, it wouldn’t hurt to mention to them exactly what kind of party you’d like – whether it’s active (canoeing, climbing, Battlefield games), relaxing (a nice cottage, a pub and a spa) or wild (clubbing, drinking, dancing) you’ll find it all either in the Forest or close by. With both the tranquillity of the Forest itself and the liveliness of Southampton and Bournemouth nearby, there’s a stag or hen option to suit everyone.

So, plan your perfect New Forest wedding and enjoy your day!