

Taking a trip to the 18th century at Derby Museums

A land of forests and folk tales, castles and commerce, the East Midlands ispacked with exciting National Lottery-funded heritage. Whether you want to visit a millennia-old fortress or spot an osprey, here are seven ways to explore the region.

Bring your binoculars

Stretch your legs (or dust off your bike) for a trip to famous nature reserve Rutland Water, nestled in 4,200 acres of rolling countryside. Don’t forget to bring your binoculars as you might spot ospreys – or perhaps the church spire from the sunken village, flooded in the 1970s to help create this beautiful spot where the manmade meets nature.

Ride a white swan

The whole family will love a visit to Wicksteed Park in Kettering, which first opened in 1921. The beautiful amusement park is home to traditional – and very modern - playground rides, boats and swan pedaloes on the lake and of course the famous zipwire, one of the longest in the UK.

Look for Robin Hood

Sherwood Forest is said to have once been home to the legendary Robin Hood and his Merry Men: look hard and you will find the thousand-year-old Major Oak, thought to be a favourite hiding place of the outlaw. Enjoy a hearty lunch at the café, before heading off on your adventures.

One thousand years of history

Built by William the Conqueror on the site of a Roman fortress, Lincoln Castle has seen battles, siege and civil war, and you can even imagine life behind bars in the Victorian prison. Those with a head for heights should venture up to the Medieval Wall Walk, a third of a mile long and offering beautiful views of Lincoln Cathedral and the countryside beyond.

Richard III, revealed

Uncover the incredible story of the Battle of Bosworth where Henry Tudor defeated Richard III, last of the Plantagenet kings. Learn about medieval warfare, perhaps meet a knight or two or take a guided walk in the footsteps of the doomed king. Don’t forget that you can also visit Richard III’s tomb at Leicester Cathedral.

Discover Derbyshire’s museums

In 2020, Derby Silk Mill: Museum of Making will open, celebrating the world's first factory and makers past, present and future. Until then there's plenty to see, including Joseph Wright's magnificent paintings at Derby Museum and Art Gallery, recently saved thanks to Lottery funding.

Time for a swift half

After a busy day, why not give the Heckington Windmill in Sleaford, Lincolnshire a whirl? Lottery money helped bring the 1830s eight-sailed windmill back to life – the only working windmill of its kind. Pop into the tea rooms, or if you’re after something stronger, try a pint of the Rolling Stone pale ale or malty stout Windy Miller, made at the windmill’s own brewery.