

Oakham Castle

This weekend is the biggest in England’s heritage calendar. Across the country over 1,500 organisations will throw open their doors free-of-charge and welcome more than 3million visitors to celebrate Heritage Open Days.

Heritage Open Days celebrates England’s fantastic history, architecture and culture.

From Thursday 10 September to Sunday 13 September, buildings of every age, style and function will open free of charge, offering visitors the chance to see hidden places and try out new experiences.

There are some fantastic opportunities to explore castles, historic tunnels, tower tops, police cells, private homes, workshops and woodland walks. It is a once-a-year chance to discover the often hidden or forgotten gems right on our doorsteps and enjoy a wide range of tours, events and activities that bring local history and culture to life.

Many of the sites opening their doors this weekend have been funded by the National Lottery. Here is a selection you might like to visit:

- 42A The Old High Street in Folkestone, Kent. They will be showing films and playing audio clips as part of its Heritage Lottery Funded project 'Between the storms' which explores the heritage of Folkestone as a cross-channel port.
- W W Winter Photographers, 45 Midland Road, Derby. A 150 year-old photographic business, a recent Heritage Lottery Fund grant is enabling the company to begin investigating, conserving and cataloguing its huge collection

of glass plate negatives. Many of its newly uncovered portrait and industrial images will be on display around the premises. Find out more in the From HOD to HLF blog.

- Bletchley Park, Home of the Second World War code-breakers, visitors will be able to explore some of the iconic Codebreaking Huts and Blocks which were recently restored following a Heritage Lottery Fund grant.
- The Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Bethesda Street, Stoke-on-Trent. Visitors will discover some of the Potteries' hidden treasures through a behind the scenes tour of the ceramics store where a range of beautiful objects dating from the 17th century will be on display.
- York Minster Stoneyard, 4 Deangate, York. Visitors can discover how York Minster was built at its famous Stoneyard. See the Minster's stonemasons, carvers and joiners at work and learn about how they repair, restore and protect the cathedral's historic fabric using techniques passed down over centuries.
- St Patrick's RC Church, Felling, Gateshead. St Patrick's is a magnificent late Victorian parish church of cathedral like proportions. It has strong historical links to Irish immigration in 19th century and notable features include Frosterly marble and Caen stone.

Find more places to visit this weekend at the Heritage Open Days website and join in our Heritage Open Days discussion.