



Forest of Dean & Wye Valley gears up for a February Half Term for Families to Find their Freedom

- kids cookery classes, stone carving, llama trekking and Shaun the Sheep trail -



[The Forest of Dean & Wye Valley](https://www.wyedeantourism.co.uk) has hit the ground running in 2020 with a packed programme of activities and events planned for the February half term. With the days already getting longer there is plenty of choice for families looking to 'find their freedom' and get outside exploring one of Britain's largest forests, as well as miles of picturesque riverside tracks and panoramic viewpoints overlooking as many as seven different counties in some locations.

In addition to outside fun, kids can take part in a cookery class, or the whole family can get crafty with stone carving workshops, or head in to the ancient woodlands of Puzzlewood, which will soon be taking a starring role in *The Secret Garden* remake (released in April). The region has a wide choice of hotels, cabins and cottages with availability during the half term.

Check out the highlights below or to find out more of what's on in the Forest of Dean & Wye Valley head to www.wyedeantourism.co.uk.

Get outside...

Karma Llama trekking at Briery Hill Llamas – Newent, Gloucestershire

The whole family can try a new experience and discover the relaxing benefits of llama trekking at Briery Hill which is now home to 26 llamas. The llamas are gentle and calm animals that are sociable, well accustomed to visitors and happy to walk at a gentle pace through the woodlands and fields.

Bespoke camelid enrichment experiences are also available for those with limited mobility and learning disabilities, that involve interacting with the llamas in the expansive garden area of Briery Hill House, a grade 11 listed property, circa 1690. Due to the animals' calming nature, this experience is also highly beneficial for mental health and wellbeing.

Details: Advance booking is essential for treks which are available from £35 per person for a 90-minute session. Not suitable for children under 8 years old. To find out more visit www.brieryhillllamas.co.uk or call 01989 720 517.

Half price adrenaline at the National Diving & Activity Centre – Chepstow, Gloucestershire

Brave adrenaline seekers can test themselves this half term and enjoy 50% discounts (between 17th – 21st February) at the National Diving and Activity Centre on both the zipwire and the giant 3G

swing. Choose between a ride along a 700m wire above the flooded quarry, or the g-force inducing swing which launches willing participants 75m over the steep quarry edges.

To take advantage of the discount use the promotional code HALFTERMFUN when booking online, the zipwire is available for £9.50 per person throughout the half term and the giant swing is available for £9.50 per person on Tuesday 18th and Thursday 20th. The activities are not suitable for children under 12. To book and find out more visit www.ndac.co.uk or call 01291 630046.

Shaun the Sheep walking trail and family cycling at Beechenhurst – Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire

Make the most of the half term by joining Shaun the Sheep on an adventure at Beechenhurst in the heart of the Forest of Dean with a 1.3-mile interactive activity trail that is suitable for all ages from toddlers upwards. Eager explorers can download the app and pick up an activity pack to tackle a series of puzzles along the trail to help Shaun charge up the communicator so that the alien, Lu-La can phone home.

Beechenhurst is also an ideal spot to join on to the looping 11-mile Family Cycle Trail that is suitable for all ages and abilities and follows old mining railway tracks past local beauty spots such as Cannop Ponds and Mallards Pike. Alternatively, rent a bike at nearby Pedalabikeaway to pick up the trail or head off on the Verderer's mountain bike trail for tricky challenges and thrilling downhill sections.

Details: Go to www.forestryengland.uk/beechnhurst to download the free app and pick up an activity pack at the café, priced at £3.50 or to hire bikes visit pedalabikeaway.co.uk, half a day's bike hire is priced from £15 for an adult bike or £10 for a children's bike.

Clearwell Caves & Puzzlewood both reopening 15th February – Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire

After a busy December playing host to Father Christmas and his elves, Clearwell Caves will reopen on 15th February to welcome families back to the ancient iron ore caves where explorers can head 100ft below ground to discover the harsh reality that children faced when sent down the mines during the industrial age.

Alternatively, opt to stay above ground with the reopening of the ancient woodland that is Puzzlewood on the same day (less than a mile from Clearwell). With over 200 steps set in 14 acres of woodland, the intricate pathways will soon feature in the remake of *The Secret Garden* which will be released in the UK in April. Download the Puzzlewood app to take part in an interactive treasure hunt, monkey around the outdoor play area, refuel in the café and try not to get lost in the indoor maze.

Details: Entry to Clearwell Caves is £25 for a family of four or £8 per adult and £6 per child (ages four to 16). Entry to Puzzlewood is £25 for a family of four or £7 per adult and £6 per child (ages three to 16). Not suitable for pushchairs or those with mobility issues. Find out more via clearwellcaves.com and puzzlewood.net

Paintballing and laser tag fun with HS Activities and Battlesports Glos – Herefordshire & Gloucestershire

Open year round, HS Activities has a five-acre site in Herefordshire that is perfectly set up for a day of competitive fun with friends and family. Employ stealth and cunning to outwit the enemy in capture the flag, attack the fortress, hunt the colonel and various other games throughout the day.

Alternatively, for a quicker fix head to Battlesports Glos in Gloucestershire for pay and play laser tag sessions running between the 19th and 21st February, these quick hour-long sessions are the perfect tonic for burning off excess energy during the half term break.

Details: Paintballing at HS Activities is available from £22 per person including lunch, 12 games and 200 paintballs, pre-booking is essential, to find out more visit hsactivities.co.uk. Pay and Play laser tag is running multiple times per day between 19-21 February at Battlesports Glos and is available from £10 per person for a one hour session, to find out more visit www.battlesportsglos.com.

Get indoors...

Kids Cookery Classes at Harts Barn Cookery School – Longhope, Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire

Give the children a chance to develop new skills, get messy and relieve grownups of making lunch with Harts Barn's Cookery Day for Kids. The class is suitable for complete beginners and will teach children all they need to know to create a delicious lunch to be enjoyed in the Apple Barn before spending the afternoon baking and decorating cupcakes to take home.

Children are also invited to take part in a pasta making class where they can get hands on creating pasta shapes with coloured pasta or learn how to prepare and cook simple meals.

Details: There are three kids cookery classes during February half term; Kids Cookery Day on 18th February, 10am-3pm, £45 per person, Simple Meals on 21st February, 10am-12:30pm, £30 per person and Pasta Making, 1:30-4pm, £30 per person. Children under seven will need to be accompanied by an adult carer. Find out more and book via www.hartsbarncookeryschool.co.uk

Stone carving, pottery painting, puppet shows and more at Taurus Crafts – Lydney, Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire

Every day between Saturday 15th and Sunday 23rd February, Taurus Crafts in Lydney will be hosting a variety of craft activities and performances for all ages to get involved with. Get creative and decorate a pebble to leave somewhere around the grounds or local area to gift a stranger, learn basic stone masonry skills in a stone carving workshop, paint a pot, enjoy a special puppet performance of King Arthur and the Snow Tiger and prepare to be wowed in a magic show.

Details: All workshops and shows take place between 15th and 23rd February. Pebble painting is available from £1 on 16th, Stone carving is £15 per person and on 17th and 21st, paint your own pot is available from £6 per piece on 15th, 16th, 22nd and 23rd, Lullaby Lessa's Puppet show is free on 17th and the magic show is £1 per child and £2 per adult on the 19th. To view the full line up and to find out more visit www.camphillvillagetrust.org.uk/shops-cafes/taurus-crafts or call 01594 844841.

Accommodation

Teddy bear making, fencing, archery, and more at Whitemead Holiday Park – Parkend, Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire

Lying on the outskirts of a small village within the Forest of Dean, Whitemead is a community within itself surrounded by woodland with a range of log cabins, glamping pods, apartments and camping pitches with a swimming pool on site and live entertainment during the evenings. Whitemead has a packed roster of activities this half term that are open to both guests and the general public, including a roaming reptile show, a teddy bear making workshop, fencing classes, circus skills and more.

Details: The site is filling up fast for half term with three-night stays on the weekends either side still available from £270 based on a family of four sharing a glamping Mega Pod between 21-24 February. Teddy bear making is £17pp on 15th and 22nd, fencing is £10pp on 19th and the reptile show is £6pp on 18th. To find out more and view the full range of activities visit www.whitemead.co.uk or call 03301 230374.

Stay in the heart of the forest at The Speech House Hotel - Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire

This 17th century hunting-lodge-turned-hotel is ideally located for a half term adventure this February. The hotel has family rooms available and a restaurant that recently been awarded an AA Rosette, it also backs on to the Cyril Hart Arboretum which is home to over 200 species of trees and leads directly to forest highlights such as New Fancy viewpoint which offers panoramic views as well as the Forest of Dean Sculpture Trail, a 1 ½ mile loop that takes in 17 sculptures hidden within the forest. The family dog is also welcome with dog friendly rooms and restaurant.

Details: Family rooms have midweek availability between 16-21 February available from £121 per night based on a family of four sharing on an accommodation only basis. To book and find out more visit thespeechhouse.co.uk or call 01594 823658.

Groups or individual cottages in the Wye Valley with Welsh Marches Cottages – Devauden, Monmouthshire

Set on a working farm in rural Monmouthshire, these three holiday cottages (sleeping 2-6) can be booked individually or together and are the ideal place for friends and family to get together this half term. The extensive living areas provide uninterrupted views of the Glyn Valley and there is plenty of space for families to relax, cook and eat around the huge bespoke table. The three cottages are close to rock climbing and canoeing facilities in the Wye Valley and are also at the heart of a network of walking and cycling paths. Plus, the owner is a qualified shiatsu practitioner and an expert in guided walking.

Details: A 7-night stay between 15-22 February for up to six people in The Sugar Loaf cottage is available from £1,350 on an accommodation only basis, or all three cottages can be rented for £2,560 and suitable for up to ten people. To book and find out more visit www.welshmarches.co.uk or call 07850 758201.

Log cabins, hot tubs and the forest on your doorstep with Forest Holidays – Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire

Conveniently located within a short walk of the Symonds Yat Rock viewpoint above the River Wye, these cabins will make for a memorable half term holiday. Spend days exploring the natural playground that surrounds the site, with walking paths and cycle trails right out of the gate or join the resident Forest Ranger to track down local wildlife before returning to cosy cabins kitted out with wood burners, barbeques and private hot tubs.

Details: A four-night midweek break between 17-21 February is available from £845 based on a family of four sharing a Silver Birch cabin on an accommodation only basis. To book and find out more visit www.forestholidays.co.uk/locations/gloucestershire/forest-of-dean or call 03330 110 495.

To find out more about what's happening in the region visit: www.wyedeantourism.co.uk

ENDS

For more media information including images, contact Fiona Reece or Ryan Baker at Travel Tonic on fiona@traveltonic.co.uk / ryan@traveltonic.co.uk / 01452 346116

Notes to Editors:

Forest of Dean & Wye Valley Tourism was formed in 2006 and is the official Destination Management Organisation representing the interests of almost 300 tourism related businesses spread across Gloucestershire, Monmouthshire and Herefordshire and is the only cross-border tourism association in the UK, spanning Wales and England.

The region covers over 1,000 square miles and is home to one of England's largest and more ancient forests as well as the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Within this unique landscape of forested hillsides, limestone gorge scenery, waterfalls, rocky outcrops and unspoilt villages, are some of Britain's best fishing and canoeing opportunities, not to mention tidal surfing on the Severn Bore, a natural phenomenon coinciding with the full moon.

Above the Severn estuary rises the triangle plateau of the Forest of Dean, regularly taking a starring role in major blockbusters including Star Wars, Harry Potter and in 2020, The Secret Garden. With over 20 million trees it's the perfect place to forest bathe, explore new heights from tree top trails, or maybe spot a deer or two.