



What's new in the Wye Valley and Forest of Dean for 2019

-Wye Valley & Forest of Dean Tourism appoints Travel Tonic to handle PR -



Wye Valley and the Forest of Dean Tourism has appointed specialist PR agency Travel Tonic to handle the destination's press and PR for 2019. The region covers the three counties of Gloucestershire, Monmouthshire and Herefordshire and is the only cross border tourism body in the UK spanning both England and Wales.

With the effects of Brexit uncertainty making holidaying at home even more popular for the year ahead, this diverse region is ready to shout from the rooftops about its diverse appeal and convenient transport links especially for those coming from London, M4 Corridor, Midlands, the South West and Wales.

Covering a total area of 1060 square miles, the quality of product and diversity of experiences are there to be discovered by all, from romance seeking couples to adrenalin craving families.

"This region is still very much an under discovered gem offering huge potential for visitors. Our major road links make for easy access made even smoother now the Severn bridge tolls have been lifted," commented co-chair of the tourism body, Helen O'Kane.

"Our accommodation and food offering holds its own against the most stylish of our competitors, our adventure tourism is first class and our rivers and hiking and mountain biking trails are some of the country's most striking," added O'Kane.

All this and more with pretty towns such as Coleford, Abergavenny, Ross and Monmouth and the dramatic mountains of the Brecons as a backdrop," added O'Kane.

With over 100 miles of pristine river (The Wye, The Usk and The Severn), the region also offers some of Britain's' best fishing, canoeing and even tidal river surfing on the Severn Bore.

The Forest itself occupies a rough triangle plateau of around 35 square miles and is one of England's last ancient forests and an inspiring location often appearing on our screens from Star Wars to Harry Potter and Doctor Who.

In addition, at its heart is a thriving creative community offering a wide range of handicraft courses, with experiences for those seeking a learning break such as mosaics, weaving, dry stone walling, lambing, foraging and even gin making.

Retail therapy and gourmet hunters are all well looked after, with a Michelin starred restaurant with rooms, local produce bursting forth from the area's heritage breed farmers, delis and artisan bakeries, stylish interiors shops and galleries, as well as thirst quenching tipples from award winning vineyards, cider and beer producers.

Boutique hotels, cosy B&Bs and cottages, farmstays, glampsites and campsites and even the odd treehouse, yurt or forest cabin will accommodate all tastes and budgets.

New for 2019

Even Easier Access - Abolition of the Severn Bridge Tolls

Late December 2018 saw the long-awaited abolition of the Severn Bridge tolls with the region predicting this will have a major positive impact, with visitor numbers set to increase by 15% over the following year now the cost of crossing both bridges has been removed.

Forest 100

It's a big year for the Forest of Dean as the Forestry Commission is celebrating its [centenary](#) with special events across all locations being announced soon.

Expert led events include **The Big Forest Find** which encourages all visitors to record wildlife whether you are a seasoned naturalist or budding wildlife enthusiast. The findings reported will help create important research used by the Forestry Commission's ecologists in the future.

New Sculpture and Zog Family Walking Trails

The Forest's four-mile [Sculpture Trail](#) features 16 works created by artists commissioned to interpret the Forest environment. It will soon have a new permanent structure from the Spring being added entitled *Threshold* by Natasha Rosling. This soon to be revealed artwork seeks to bring to the surface the subterranean world beneath the forest.

Also, following the success of The Highway Rat, Gruffalo Spotters and Stick Man family walking trails, the Forestry Commission has just brought Zog to Beechenhurst. Trail markers are situated through the woods where families can find familiar characters from the story learning what Zog did at dragon school, and complete interesting challenges along the way. Activity packs available for £3 from [Beechenhurst Café](#) or from the Rangers Hatch during Gloucestershire school holidays. *Zog © 2010 & TM Julia Donaldson & Axel Scheffler. Licensed by Magic Light Pictures Ltd.*

First [Five Star Bore](#) for 4 years expected in March 2019

The region is expecting its first Severn Bore to be graded five stars in size since March 2015, the perfect time to come and view this spectacle.

The Severn has the third highest tidal range in the world (up to 15.4m only the Bay of Fundy (North America) and Ungava Bay (Hudson Straits) are bigger. This creates a natural phenomenon known as the 'Severn Bore' which is a large surge wave which can be ridden by surfers.

2019 is a great year for bore riders and viewers as there are 5* bores expected during the day on Friday 22nd March (Spring equinox) and during the night on 29th and 30th September (Autumn equinox). The Bore is visible on around 20 miles of river, dissipating and reforming with the wave height reaching a peak around Minsterworth as the river narrows. A full list of advice on surfing and viewing is found here <http://www.thesevernbores.co.uk/guide/4578056535>

Borderlands Outdoors - New caving, climbing and abseiling adventures

Borderlands is an outdoors activity specialist offering bushcraft, navigation and map reading courses as well as archery. New for 2019 will be caving, climbing and abseiling at Symonds Yat with the option to do all three in a full adventure day. Plus, they will be running a special Women's Bushcraft experience day on the 8th March to celebrate International Women's Day <https://www.borderlandsoutdoor.com/product/bushcraft-for-adults-and-children/>

New Forest Photography and Shinrin-Yoku breaks at Puzzlewood

The magical 14-acre ancient woodland Puzzlewood, near Coleford will be introducing a number of new themed breaks for 2019 such as forest photography courses with [David Broadbent](#) as well as Shinrin-Yoku (forest bathing).

As the location for many high-profile films including Star Wars and Harry Potter, Puzzlewood is the perfect location to fully immerse yourself in the Japanese practice of forest bathing, harnessing the restorative powers of trees and learning from certified Forest Therapy Guide Carina Greenwood over a weekend staying on site in one of the two cottages. Carina will introduce guests to the practice's powers, explain how to perform four sensory invitations, special mindfulness and meditation techniques and lead blissful walks through pristine woodlands and enjoy foraged tea ceremonies. Forest Bathing Weekends from £100pp for a three night break based on up to four people staying in Puzzlewood Cottage or Puzzlewood Patch. Breaks start from April, more information at www.puzzlewood.net

Float in the Forest

Float in the Forest is due to open in February and will be the first ever floatation centre in the Forest of Dean offering floatation pods located so that you can start or end your floatation experience with a walk in the forest. Floatation is a relaxation therapy where you float effortlessly on the surface of warm salty water. It will be one of the only float centres in the UK where you can emerge from your float with your senses reawakened close to a natural environment. Other nature therapies such as massage can be combined with a 'float'. A single hour-long float costs from £50 - floatintheforest.co.uk.

New Foraging and Booze Trails

Many of the region's boutique hotels are gearing up to introduce new themed experiences for guests, taking advantage of their individual locations. For example, [The Angel](#) at Abergavenny is introducing foraging breaks with Adele Nozedar from [Brecon Beacons](#)

[Foraging](#) and the [Tudor Farmhouse](#) near Coleford will be launching their very own British Booze Trail, making it easy for visitors to sample the local area's best brews.

Do get in touch if you require any further information or images about the above news, or if you are interested to visiting the region over the next few months.

For further information please go to www.wyedeantourism.co.uk

-ENDS-

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Notes to Editor:

About Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Tourism

Social media handles:

#DeanWye

Instagram @deanwyetourism

Facebook @WyeValleyForestofDean

Twitter @DeanWye

Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Tourism (WVFDT) was formed in 2006 and is the official Destination Management Organisation representing the interests of almost 400 members.

Wye Valley & Forest of Dean Tourism is the destination management organisation for the "Dean Wye". The area covers the three counties of Gloucestershire, Monmouthshire and Herefordshire and is the only cross border tourism association in the UK working with tourism businesses and stakeholders in Wales and England.

Managed by a 11-strong voluntary board, supported by professional advisors, the Forestry Commission and the AONB, it is funded by member subscriptions, the Forest of Dean District Council, Monmouthshire Council (via VisitWales), the Forestry Commission, and grant funding for specific projects.

Tourism in the [Forest of Dean](#) and [Monmouthshire](#) contributes £141.5 million and £158.1 million respectively to the local economies. WVFDT members include tourist attractions, accommodation providers, outdoor activities, pubs & restaurants, food producers, events and services. The Association delivers four key functions:

1. To represent the local tourism industry at local and national level
2. To promote and raise the profile of the Wye Valley and Forest of Dean
3. To support members to improve and market their businesses
4. To enable member businesses to work together

Any business interested in being part of Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Tourism should visit www.wyedeantourism.co.uk or contact membership@wyedeantourism.co.uk.