

Visit Dean Wye
Press Release
Bluebell of the Year
28 March 2023

Visit Dean Wye asks Visitors and Locals to Turn Wildflower Detective and Discover the *Ultimate Bluebell 2023*

Ultimate Bluebell 2023 Photography Competition Launches, Celebrating the Beauty of Fairy Flowers, Witches Thimbles and Cuckoo's Boots

www.visitdeanwye.co.uk/bluebells

The Forest of Dean and Wye Valley are the number one area in the UK to enjoy the colour-popping beauty of bluebells, the iconic violet flower that carpets woodlands, fields and hedgerows from April to early May*.

To celebrate this stunning display of wildflower beauty, [Visit Dean Wye](http://www.visitdeanwye.co.uk) is thrilled to announce the launch of the world's first ***Ultimate bluebell 2023*** competition.

Ultimate bluebell 2023 is open to photographers of all levels, from amateurs to professionals, and invites them to capture the beauty and essence of the bluebell in all its glory. The competition is free to enter prizes include, a one to one photography session with professional photographer David Broadbent, a stay with one of our amazing accommodation providers, along with several runner-up prizes and honourable mentions.

Ultimate bluebell 2023 showcases the incredible beauty of the bluebell and promotes the importance of preserving our natural environment. With its delicate petals and stunning hues, the bluebell is a true symbol of springtime.

The competition is open from 1 April until 31 May 2023. All entries will be judged by a panel of photographers and nature enthusiasts, who will select the winning photographs based on creativity, technical skill, and the ability to capture the essence of the bluebell.

Head judge is [Ed Drewitt](#), the naturalist, wildlife detective and zoologist. He says: "*The bluebell is an icon of spring, a sign of the forest bursting into life, and we want to celebrate its beauty by finding the perfect specimen, the Ultimate bluebell'. We want to inspire people to get out and capture its beauty in their own unique way.*"

"More than just their exquisite shape and colour, many insects reap the benefits of bluebells which flower earlier than many other plants. Woodland butterflies, bees and hoverflies all feed on their nectar. Bees can 'steal' the nectar from bluebells by biting a hole in the bottom of the flower, reaching the nectar without the need to pollinate the flower."

How to Enter

1. Find some bluebells, it doesn't matter if they're the Spanish or British variety, we love them all. See our [guide](#) to where to find.

2. Get creative with styling, take a wide photograph of a sea of bluebells, try and capture an enchanting glow with shafts of light breaking through the trees or take a close up photograph of the stem with its multitude of bluebell cups.
3. Upload to Instagram and share with the #UltimateBluebell23 hashtag
4. By entering the competition you grant Forest of Dean and Wye Valley Tourism permission to use your photograph in promotional material.
5. Competition closes on 31 May and the winners will be announced on Facebook facebook.com/VisitDeanWye and Instagram instagram.com/VisitDeanWye

How to tell a Spanish from a British Bluebell

The British variety (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) has flowers that are usually deep violet-blue in colour, bell-shaped with six petals and up-turned tips. The flowers nod or droop to one side of the flowering stem (known as an inflorescence) and have creamy white-coloured pollen. Some flowers can be white or pink. Up to 20 flowers can grow in one inflorescence.

The Spanish bluebell (*Hyacinthoides hispanica*) is very similar but grows upright, with the flowers all around the stem, not drooping to one side like the British bluebell. Hybrid bluebell (*Hyacinthoides x massartiana*) is a mix of the British and Spanish bluebell. |

Warning

Do not pick or remove bluebells as they are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981). This means digging up the plant or bulb in the countryside is prohibited and landowners are prohibited from removing bluebells from their land to sell.

Be careful where you roam, respect the landscape and other people, ensure you are not trespassing and you always follow the [Countryside Code](#).

Where to see Bluebells in the Dean Wye

Looking for ideas on where to see the best displays of bluebells? Below is a guide to some of the best places to see them:

Bradley Hill and Soudley Ponds

This whole section of forest is swathed in bluebells come spring. You will find displays all around [Soudley Ponds](#) including from [The Dean Heritage Centre](#) where you can discover a magical walk through beautiful woodlands. Towards the south, between the ponds and [Wenchford](#), is an area known as Bradley Hill. Take time to admire the carpet of blue under the coppice of old oak and beech trees as you reach the old Roman Road (sometimes known as the 'Golden Mile') between Soudley and Blackpool Bridge and you'll be rewarded with a lagoon of bluebells.

Bigswear and Cadora Woods

Renowned for their bluebell woods this section of the Wye Valley takes in the [Offa's Dyke Footpath](#) north of Bigswear Bridge travelling towards [Redbrook](#). Enjoy steep bluebell covered views down towards Redbrook.

St Briavels

Built in the early 12th century, St Briavels Castle was an important royal fort on the frontier with Wales before becoming a crossbow bolt factory in the reign of Edward I. Now a [youth hostel](#), it makes a fantastic starting point for walks in the surrounding woodland which becomes a riot of blue from the end of April.

[Tintern and the Wye Valley Walk](#)

The woods around Tintern are ancient and rich with wildflowers. In April the scent of wild garlic fills the air and at the end of the month the bluebells cover the forest floor. The [Wye Valley Walk from Eagle's Nest](#) for many miles is excellent for bluebells, as are [Chepstow Park Wood](#) and Fedw Wood. Before heading down to Tintern be sure to explore Coed Beddick, the woodland that overlooks the village.

[Beechenhurst](#)

In the heart of the Forest of Dean, Beechenhurst makes the perfect base for exploring. Surrounded by unspoilt woodland, and the start of the famous Sculpture Trail, Beechenhurst is just the spot to set up a picnic and enjoy the blankets of blue all about you.

[Speech House Woods](#)

The perfect place to enjoy a cream team with a view; [Speech House Hotel](#) is nestled in beautiful woodland. Take your tea as you overlook the ancient forest, bursting with spring colours, at its borders. [The Cyril Hart Arboretum](#) and Speech House Woodland next door are also perfect spots for bluebell walks.

[Cannop Ponds](#)

Enjoy the blooms on foot or on two wheels along the cycle trail from Speech House to the beautiful Cannop Ponds. Wander along the water's edge surrounded with trees sheltering a carpet of bluebells. Follow our [Easy Walk around Cannop](#) taking in some of the surrounding woods which will burst into life with succulent bluebells.

[Symonds Yat Rock](#)

Though worth the walk all-year-round, Symonds Yat Rock in spring is something to behold. With the canopy still budding, you can look down into the Wye Valley and spot bluebell woods for miles around. Take the [footpath towards Biblins Bridge and on to Monmouth](#) for rich displays.

[Lydney Park Estate Spring Gardens](#)

As well as boasting gorgeous gardens, Lydney Park Estate has evidence of settlements dating back to 100BC and extensive ruins of a Roman camp including a Roman temple. Over time many impressive, exotic and rare trees have been planted in the deer park by successive generations of owners while the rich earth of the eight-acre woodland garden provides one of the most spectacular shows of bluebells around. Only open for a short period during spring of each year.

[May Hill](#)

Visible from many points around the Forest of Dean, May Hill is a well-known landmark with a distinctive clump of trees on its peak. Commanding views from the brow of the hill reveal swathes of bluebells on its slopes. Why not go there on May Day to watch the sunrise and the morris men dance?

Coppett Hill

Near Goodrich along the River Wye this hilltop is blanketed with beautiful bluebells in spring and offers expansive views of the surrounding countryside.

*Depending on the weather.

Ends