



Penshurst Place

**i** For further information

The Tourist Information Centre is also the ideal place for further information on travel, events, what to see and do in the area, and can provide details on a wide range of hotel, B&B, guesthouse and self-catering accommodation, as well as details on camping in the area.

**Looking for accommodation?**

Go to [www.visittunbridgewells.com/accommodation](http://www.visittunbridgewells.com/accommodation) and have a browse



For your convenience and peace of mind, all accommodation listed indicates whether it has been inspected and awarded a grading by an accreditation scheme.

**Royal Tunbridge Wells Tourist Information Centre**

The Corn Exchange  
The Pantiles  
Royal Tunbridge Wells  
Kent TN2 5TE



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This brochure can be made available in large print and on audio.

Telephone: 01892 554229



Photography: Chris Parker, Mike Bartlett, David Hodgkinson, David Staines, Darryl Curcher, Peter Smith Jigsaw and Explore Kent



**How to get here**

Royal Tunbridge Wells is 20 minutes drive from the M25 and M20 motorways and can be reached in less than an hour from the Channel Tunnel terminal at Folkestone and in just over one hour from the Channel ports at Dover. Gatwick airport is 40 minutes and Heathrow airport one hour away by car.

Royal Tunbridge Wells is less than an hour by train from London Charing Cross, Gatwick Airport and Ashford International rail stations. Regular direct train services operate to Tunbridge Wells from London and from Hastings. Please call 03457 484950 for further details or visit [nationalrail.co.uk](http://nationalrail.co.uk)

**Accessibility**

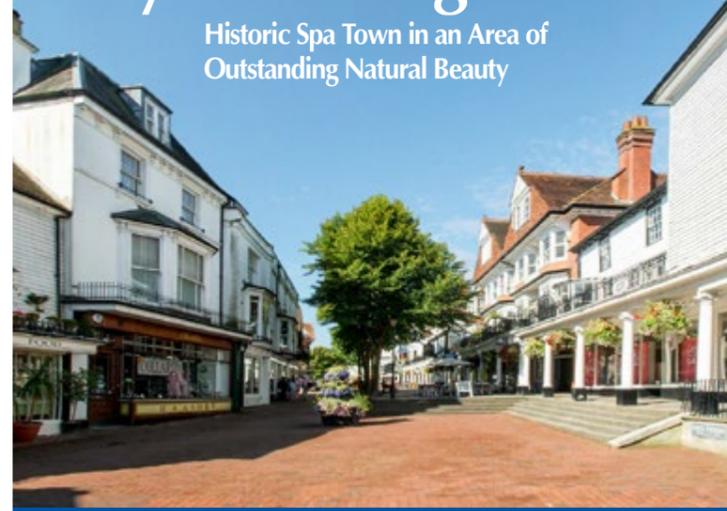
Information on accessibility issues in the borough is available from the Royal Tunbridge Wells Tourist Information Centre, tel: 01892 515675, or by visiting [www.disabledgo.com](http://www.disabledgo.com).

The Tourist Information Centre has level access. RADAR keys are also available.

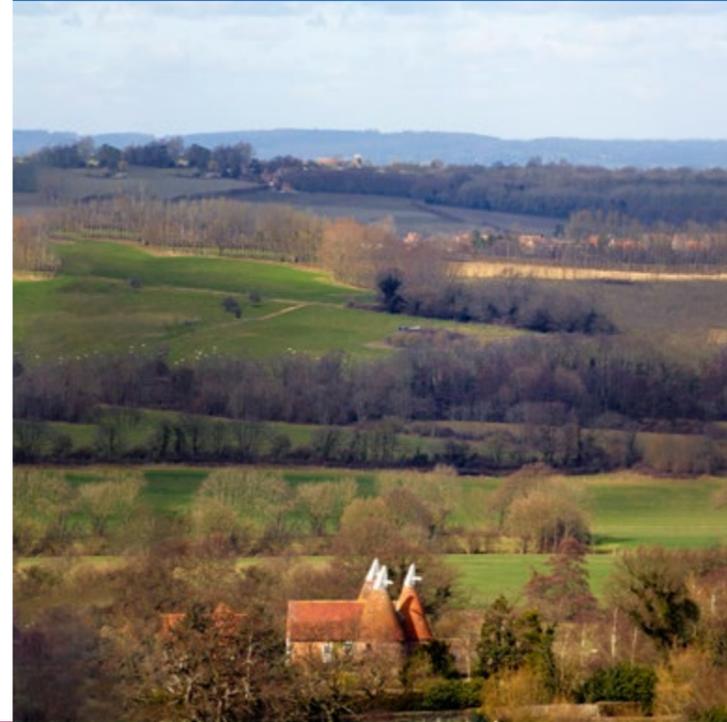
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In and around  
**Royal Tunbridge Wells**

Historic Spa Town in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

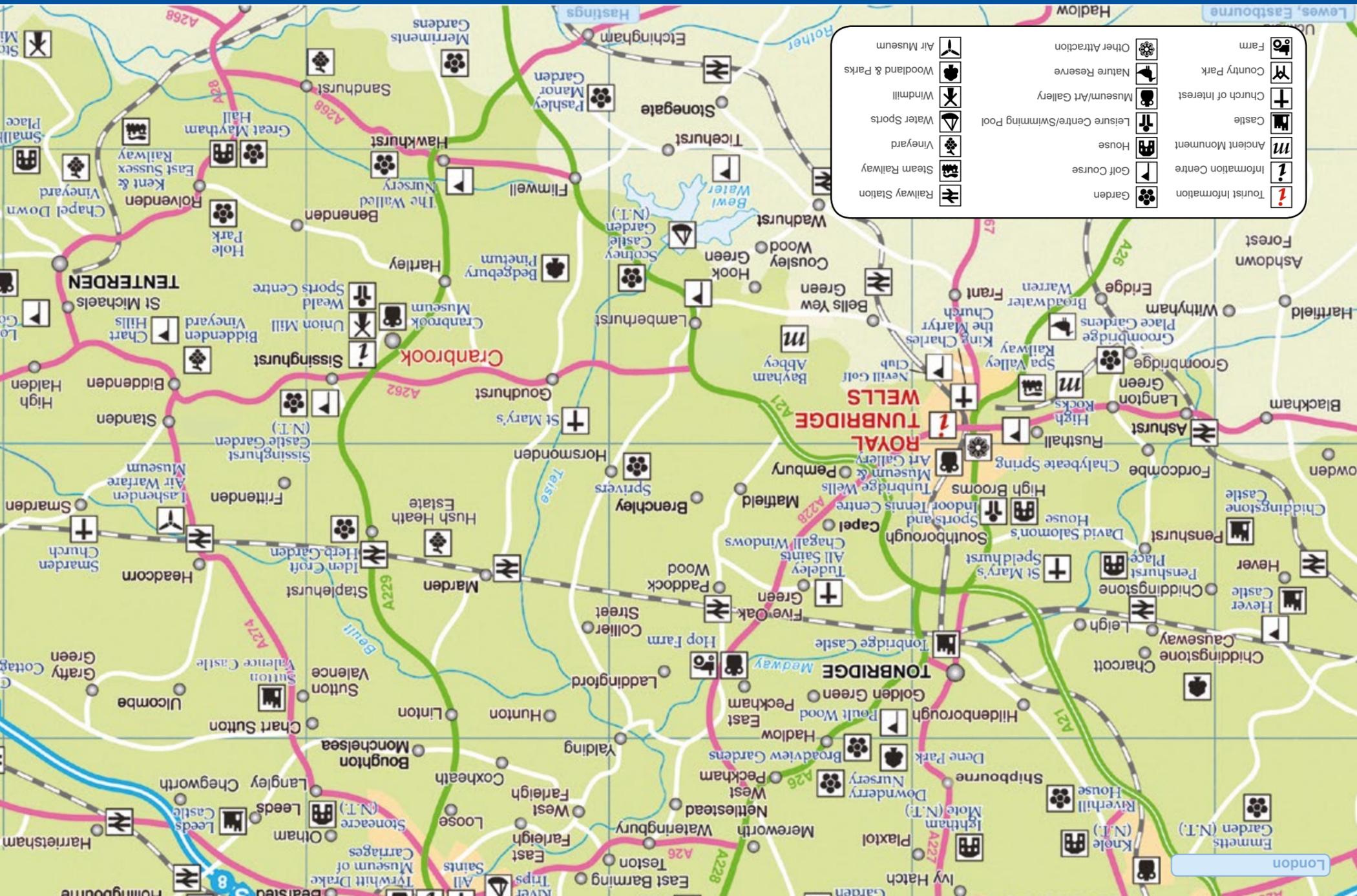


**Walks | Historic Houses | Gardens  
Boutique Shopping | Restaurants**



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# Town & country at its best

## The town

Royal Tunbridge Wells lies at the heart of one of the most scenic stretches of countryside in England surrounded by the unspoilt beauty of the Weald.

Retaining much of the charm of its Georgian heyday – Royal Tunbridge Wells and the surrounding area today remains a favoured destination for those who want to enjoy elegant surroundings and easy access to the countryside within an hour's drive or train ride from the hustle and bustle of London.



The Chalybeate Spring

**The Pantiles**, the famous white colonnaded walkway, once the central meeting place for visiting gentry, is the historic heart of Royal Tunbridge Wells and today is buzzing with shops and cafés. This is also the site of the original **Chalybeate Spring**, discovered in 1606. Its reputation for health giving properties was the reason for the growth of the town as a fashionable place to visit and be seen. The town's historic past

is very much reflected in its architecture

– from Regency villas and large Victorian houses, many designed by Decimus Burton, to pretty clapboard cottages. Evidence of these can be found in the 'village' area situated behind the old High Street, in Mount Ephraim and in Calverley Park and Calverley Park Crescent.

The collections at **Tunbridge Wells Museum and Art Gallery** on Mount Pleasant also reveal some of the past, including one of the most impressive collections of Tunbridge ware in the world – locally made marquetry first made in the 1700s. The adjacent Art Gallery hosts a programme of regularly changing and varied exhibitions.

At the centre of the town **The Common** has been a place of diversion for residents and visitors alike for several hundred years. Its large open green spaces have unusually survived the test of time and nowadays is a lovely place to walk and for children to play, especially on the popular and unusual outcrop of sandstone rock, known locally as **Wellington Rocks**. Nearby **High Rocks** is another fascinating sandstone Scheduled Ancient Monument which is a must-see.

## Guided walks & Heritage Walking Trail

Guided Walking Tours of the Pantiles and the old High Street are conducted by accredited Blue Badge Guides and are very popular. The tours are an excellent way of learning more about the colourful history of Royal Tunbridge Wells and its many famous visitors. For further details, including bespoke tours and bookings, please contact the Tourist Information Centre in Royal Tunbridge Wells.

The **Heritage Walking Trail** links together a series of special plaques commemorating famous residents and visitors to Royal Tunbridge Wells over the past four centuries. It is a wonderful way of discovering more about the historic buildings and streets of the town and its famous visitors, such as Princess (later Queen) Victoria, William Makepeace Thackeray and EM Forster. Copies of the Trail are available from the Tourist Information Centre in Royal Tunbridge Wells or on the [visittunbridgewells.com](http://visittunbridgewells.com) website.

## Shopping

Royal Tunbridge Wells offers one of the most unique shopping experiences in south east England with its unrivalled combination of small specialist shops, designer boutiques and big high street names.

**The Pantiles** is home to a variety of delightful shops, galleries and lovely cafés. Many of the shops in **Chapel Place** and in the old **High Street** still retain their original Victorian frontages and now sell designer clothing, home furnishings, gifts and jewellery.

**Mount Pleasant** leads into the 'modern' part of the town and to **Calverley Road**, a busy, partly pedestrianised area which has most major high street names to hand. The main entrance to **Royal Victoria Place** shopping centre is also found here.



Cranbrook

## Food & drink

Royal Tunbridge Wells has developed a reputation as one of the best places to find good food and drink in the south east. The town and its surrounding area boasts a wide range of excellent traditional English pubs, brasseries and fine restaurants, serving local produce. Visitors can also find local produce to buy at the Saturday Farmers Markets.

## Events & entertainment

The **Assembly Hall Theatre**, **Trinity Theatre** and **The Forum** in Royal Tunbridge Wells offer a wide range of entertainment from opera and ballet to comedy, music and drama, and alongside these are many smaller venues. A number of music events take place in the area throughout the year such as Jazz on the Pantiles and the Bedgebury Pinetum open air concerts alongside lively local gigs.

## Around Royal Tunbridge Wells

Royal Tunbridge Wells lies in the unspoilt beauty of the Weald, designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The landscape is a patchwork of rolling hills, ancient woods and open heaths, home to hop gardens, orchards and vineyards, covering this part of the Garden of England in beautiful blossom in spring, cool verdure in summer and vibrant colours in autumn.

The many small towns and villages in the area still retain the true flavour of the English countryside – take time to visit **Goudhurst**, **Lamberhurst**, **Matfield**, **Brenchley**, **Hawkhurst** and **Benenden**. **Cranbrook**, known as the Capital of the Weald, was once the bustling centre of the region's medieval cloth industry. Today the original, and still working, **Union Mill** stands as testament to this important part of the region's past as it overlooks this pretty country town. The **Cranbrook Museum** nearby reveals more about the local area's history, trade and industry.



## Castles & historic houses

There are more castles, historic houses and gardens concentrated in this area than any other in England, making Tunbridge Wells the perfect base for a short break for history and garden lovers alike, as well as for those who just want to relax and unwind.

**Penshurst Place**, home of the Sidney family for 450 years; **Hever Castle**, the childhood home of Anne Boleyn, second wife of King Henry VIII; and **Leeds Castle**, known as 'the loveliest castle in the world', are all splendid examples of fine historical buildings set in spectacular grounds and gardens and within easy reach of Royal Tunbridge Wells. The fairytale castles at **Bodiam** and **Tonbridge**, both strongholds against invading armies, still stand guard over the River Rother and the River Medway.

**Chartwell**, once the country home of Sir Winston Churchill; **Knole**, the largest private house in England and **Ightham Mote**, an enchanting 650 year old moated manor house, are now all owned by the National Trust and full of fascinating historical treasures. **Chiddingstone Castle** contains the intriguing antique collections of its last private owner.

## Gardens

Come and see how the area lives up to its reputation as the Garden of England. It not only has more than its fair share of the country's top gardens, but also has many gardens which have remained more of a secret.

**Sissinghurst Castle Garden** and **Scotney Castle Garden** (surely one of the most romantic gardens in the world), both provide a profusion of colour in the spring

and summer months.

**Groombridge Place Gardens** has much to offer from award winning formal terraced gardens and topiary to the fantasy wilderness of the Enchanted Forest.

**Bedgebury National Pinetum and Forest** is the home to the national collection of conifer trees occupying over 300 acres.

**Hole Park Garden** and **Merriments** are just two of the 'secret' gardens tucked away in the beautiful countryside, both peaceful and colourful.

**Pashley Manor Gardens**, with its display of over 30,000 tulips, combines the colour and tranquillity of the garden with the beauty of modern sculpture and art.

The world-renowned gardens at **Great Dixter**, **Sheffield Park** and **Wakehurst Place** are also within easy driving distance of Royal Tunbridge Wells.

## More places to visit

The reservoir at **Bowl Water Country Park** is the largest area of inland water in the South East, with 21 km of shoreline, and **Ashdown Forest**, the setting and inspiration for AA Milne's Winnie the Pooh books, both are perfect for walking and exploring.

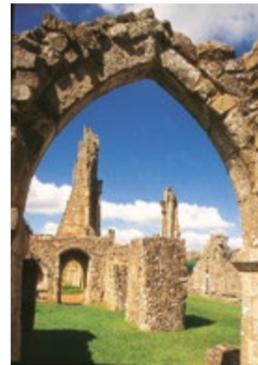
For a fun-filled day out for the family, why not hop on the **Spa Valley Railway** and travel by steam train between Royal Tunbridge Wells and Eridge, stopping at High Rocks and Groombridge on the way.



Spa Valley Railway

**Bedgebury National Pinetum and Forest** offers off-road cycling and bridle tracks, as well as a network of scenic walking routes, an imaginative adventure play area, and Go Ape, a tree top adventure course, all set amongst the 2000 acres of Bedgebury Forest.

The striking remains of **Bayham Abbey**, dating from 1208, stand in a beautiful and peaceful setting alongside the River Teise next to a Georgian gothic house.



Bayham Abbey

## Vineyards

Vineyards are becoming more of a feature of the Kent landscape as English wines develop a name for themselves internationally. The 'terroir' is ideal for sparkling wines. Tours and wine tastings are available throughout the year at nearby **Biddenden**, **Sandhurst**, **Hush Heath** and **Chapel Down vineyards**.

## Churches

The area is dotted with many intriguing and unusual churches: **King Charles the Martyr Church** in Chapel Place in Royal Tunbridge Wells; **St Dunstan's** in Cranbrook, known locally as the 'Cathedral of the Weald'; **St Mary's** at Speldhurst with its stunning stained glass windows by William Morris and Sir Edward Burne Jones; and **All Saints' Church** in Tudeley with its magnificent windows designed by Marc Chagall, are just four examples – all well worth a visit.

Find out more about places to stay, eat, and visit as well as what's on in the area at [www.visittunbridgewells.com](http://www.visittunbridgewells.com)



Walking at Sissinghurst

## Walking

The area around Royal Tunbridge Wells has an extensive network of footpaths and bridleways. Long distance routes include the **Tunbridge Wells Circular**, the **Weald Way**, the **North Downs Way**, the **Pilgrims Way** and the **Sussex Border Path**. There are many delightful shorter walks in the woodlands and country parks that are scattered around the Weald.

## Golf

There are a number of golf courses in the area. The 9-hole **Tunbridge Wells Golf Club** and the 18-hole **Nevill Golf Club** both welcome visitors and are within 10 minutes' drive of Royal Tunbridge Wells. In the picturesque village of **Lamberhurst** visitors are welcomed at the 18-hole parkland golf course that straddles the River Teise.

There are also 18 and 9 hole courses at **Hever Castle**; 18 holes at **Cranbrook Golf Club** and 9 holes at **Hawkhurst Golf Club**. Contact the Tourist Information Centre for more details.



Cycling at Bedgebury

## Cycling

From strenuous mountain biking to family friendly routes, Tunbridge Wells offers a wealth of natural beauty to enhance any bike ride. **Bedgebury National Pinetum & Forest** has tracks for family rides and mountain biking enthusiasts of all ages and abilities. **Bowl Water Country Park** provides another great background for mountain biking around the lake shore. Details of other National Cycle Routes through the Wealden countryside can be found at [explorekent.org](http://explorekent.org)

