

TIME TRAVELLING IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE

By Rebecca Gardner

Whether you want to run around a real life castle or bring the Tudors alive for a school project, Families Gloucestershire shows you the best places to travel back in time. From the Roman cities of Gloucester and Cirencester to the Tudor battlefields of Tewkesbury, history always makes a great family day out.

If you've seen Charles II as a rapper, Historical Masterchef or even the French Revolution told in the style of a weather report, you've probably got a Horrible Histories fan in your household. This BBC series has proven a runaway success with both children and adults and may be one of the reasons why history is suddenly very cool.

As well as history CBBC style, children are learning history on school trips in increasingly imaginative and interactive ways. With many local museums recently renovated, partly due to the Heritage Lottery Fund, there are great opportunities to enjoy a family trip through time. **Cirencester's Corinium Museum** re-opened a few years ago and **Gloucester City Museum** re-opens this month with great new interactive attractions.

Cheltenham Museum and **Chedworth Roman Villa** are also both being extensively refurbished.

Before they go to school, history for pre-schoolers may be as simple as exploring a castle dressed as a knight or a princess. In Gloucestershire we have the perfect castle for all ages; a real one – no Disney characters here. **Berkeley Castle**, occupied by the same family for 900 years, is in a tranquil setting with stunning gardens (including lawns with running space) and even a butterfly farm. Rather than an ancient ruin, Berkeley is a complete castle with many rooms to explore from the Great Hall to the Tower Room. Entry to the castle, grounds and butterfly house are all priced separately; choose the mix that's best for your family. Well-thought out activity sheets help everyone enjoy their stay wherever they explore. Pre-schoolers just visiting the gardens can spot the painted wooden butterflies amongst the trees. Castle visitors have the option of a simpler counting worksheet or the full quiz sheet, involving more reading and detective work; all rewarded with a prize. Finally there's a choice of the tearoom in the castle or picnic area set in the walled gardens below the pear trees – more helpful open space for very young historians.

Another local attraction that always thinks of its pre-school visitors is the **Gloucester City Museum**, officially re-opening on the 3rd Sept, after being closed for nearly a year's redevelopment. Sarah Orton, Lifelong Learning and Access Officer, says that the new museum is suitable for every age 'from babies to one hundred', where visitors 'can engage all the senses and immerse yourself in the museum, including the medieval streets with some authentic smells and voices to overhear behind the Roman walls.' Sarah suggests the new 'Museum Tots' sessions, starting in September, for younger visitors. 'Paint, listen to story time and look around our galleries. Sessions are free, operating on a drop in basis,' says Sarah. In fact, it's free entry for everyone at both the **Gloucester City Museum** and the **Gloucester Folk Museum**, a rarity in the county. Just pop in on your next shopping trip, without the need to see everything in one go.

The **Gloucester City Museum** covers the timeline from pre-historic times to the Romans and ends with Medieval Gloucester. The Romans, in particular, were a significant part of Gloucestershire's story. Cirencester was once the largest Roman city outside of London and it's **Corinium museum** has a wealth of interactive activities, games and exhibits, showing the life of the city, particularly during the Roman era and onto other centuries. Another important Roman attraction is **Chedworth Roman Villa**, another place under renovation, with a new access and interpretation centre due to open in spring 2012. Although not all of the rooms featuring the villa's

famous mosaic floors are open, there is still a full program of drop-in events at half-term for their Family Learning Week.

With **Chedworth** being one of the county's National Trust properties, Family Learning Week is a free event if you're a member; joining a national heritage organisation is worth considering for a year of historical adventures. For **Hailes Abbey** (a great picnic spot), **St Briavels Castle** and **Goodrich Castle** (just over the border at Ross on Wye) try English Heritage. For **Berkeley Castle** and other properties such as **Painswick Roccoo Gardens**, try the Historical Houses Association.

To advance through the centuries to medieval and Tudor times, head to Tewkesbury. Just standing amongst the half-timbered buildings of the High Street starts your journey, then continue in one of two museums. **The John Moore Countryside Museum** includes a restored 15th century Merchant's House, showing work and home life for a Tudor family. Across the road, the **Out of the Hat Heritage and Visitor Centre** is set in a restored 17th century house with interactive media players, telling Tewkesbury's story through the eyes of Bartholomew Read, former resident of the building.

Out of the Hat also looks at War or the Roses; the battle of Tewkesbury in 1471 being one of the most significant battles. It is now re-enacted every year, described as 'Europe's largest free annual medieval re-enactment'. The Tewkesbury Medieval Festival in July sees more than 2000 'troops' clashing and also offers a chance to see the court of Edward II and the soldiers' camp. Such re-enactments are becoming more popular; a chance to really experience the noise, costumes and sometimes food from a different time. For other local re-enactments, look out for jousting at **Sudeley Castle** and visiting Roman legions at **Chedworth**. For the October half-term, **Berkeley Castle** offer the chance to meet Edward II and his

prisoner in the castle, John Maltravers. They each try and persuade their young audience on whether Edward II should be imprisoned or released. Children can meet the characters afterwards and see the cell where Edward was said to be murdered – a real life Horrible Histories tale.

Back to Tudor times and the **Gloucester Folk Museum** picks up the timeline from the City Museum from the Tudors through to a 'Retro gallery' featuring items from the 1950's and 1960's. This may be a little too close to comfort for some grandparents and parents seeing very familiar items! Another great free museum, the 400-year-old **Folk Museum** is a delight of uneven floors and nooks and crannies to explore with everything from Victorian toys to an Anderson shelter in the museum's garden. On the first Saturday of half-term, the Folk Museum holds its annual 'Apple Day' with a chance to see a horse working the apple mill, along with other crafts, activities and music to celebrate the apple harvest.

Another choice in Gloucester is the **Gloucester Waterways Museum**, looking at canal and river life. Children can climb on the boats, dress up as canal children and race boats through the locks on interactive exhibits. Combine a visit with a boat trip – even a cream tea cruise.

Away from the region's big cities and towns, other museums and heritage centres feature local natural history and cottage industries from textiles to mining. Being more out of



town, they also offer outside play space as well as the museum itself. At **The Museum in the Park in Stroud**, the museum offers exactly what it says – a museum in a 17th century wool merchants house, set in beautiful Stratford Park letting you add on a picnic by the lake or a dip in the pool. It's eclectic exhibitions cover all aspects of Stroud life – particularly textiles (think dressing up!) and from September an exhibition of moving toys and automata designed by local toymaker Rodney Peppe.

At the **Dean Heritage Centre**, the museum's exhibits on forest life includes local animals – some preserved examples inside and others very much alive outside. Paths stretch up into the forest and back down to the all-wooden adventure playground. At half-term the museum the Heritage centre will be hosting a week linked to The Big Draw with other autumn events including a Pirate weekend and a Halloween celebration.

If you're still hungry for history, there are yet more smaller specialist museums from the home of **Edward Jenner in Berkeley** to the **Holst Birthplace Museum** in Cheltenham.

September, in particular, is a great month to visit many of these attractions, particularly during **Heritage Open Days weekend (9th - 12th Sept)** where many museums offer free entry on at least one day. The list includes Chedworth, the Corinium Museum and the Dean Heritage Centre. Other places open areas usually closed to the public such as the 'pin factory' at Gloucester Folk museum. Cirencester Primary School are hosting their own show, featuring the archaeological dig nearby.

TOP TIME-TRAVELLING TIPS:

- Check opening times – small museums may not open every day, although may have extended holiday hours.
- Look out for half-term events. See listings overleaf for more details.
- Pick somewhere with gardens or a play area for younger children. Have a plan B is always useful for when their attention starts to wander.
- Wear your dressing up with pride; there's nothing like a crown or cloak to get you in a mediaeval mood.
- Check rules on picnics – there may be a designated area to protect precious artefacts or carefully tended lawns!
- Consider joining a national association for free entry and other discounts.

MUSEUM INFORMATION

- Berkeley Castle www.berkeleycastle.com
- Chedworth Roman Museum www.nationaltrust.org.uk/chedworth
- Corinium Museum www.coriniummuseum.co.uk
- Dean Heritage Centre www.deanheritagecentre.com
- Edward Jenner Museum www.jennermuseum.com
- Gloucester City Museum and Gloucester Folk Museum www.gloucester.gov.uk/museums
- Gloucester Waterways Museum www.gloucesterwaterwaysmuseum.org.uk
- Holst Birthplace Museum www.holstmuseum.org.uk
- John Moore Countryside Museum www.johnmooremuseum.org
- Museum in the Park www.museuminthepark.org.uk
- Out of the Hat www.outofthehat.org.uk
- Sudeley Castle www.sudeleycastle.org.uk
- Heritage Open Days – Event Information www.heritageopendays.org.uk
- National Trust www.nationaltrust.org.uk
- English Heritage www.english-heritage.org.uk
- Historical Houses Association www.hha.org.uk

Imaginative history lessons are all very well, but have you just been asked to come up with a Victorian mop cap for next week? A Roman toga? A WWII evacuee outfit? Don't panic! Go online for our top tips on creating authentic costumes with very basic starting materials. With the help of Sarah Orton from the Gloucester City and Folk Museums, we can help with all your costume concerns. www.familiesgloucestershire.co.uk

Call us: 0791 809 0081
Libbear Barton Holidays
 Luxurious & High Quality Celebration Venues

Award winning 5 star self catering accommodation in Devon!

We provide a range of award winning beautiful self catering properties that are **baby, toddler, family friendly and luxurious**. Onsite, there is a heated indoor swimming pool (heated to a baby friendly 29°C), sauna, games room, a soft play area, an adventure playground, well equipped gym, delightful woodlands, fields, meadows and orchard.

Set in forty acres of the beautiful rolling hills of rural North Devon, Libbear Barton is a country estate, consisting of a gorgeous Georgian Farmhouse and three separate cosy cottages, with a brand new functions suite where groups can meet, eat and mingle together - perfect for your family and friends to celebrate a special occasion altogether and yet have the space friends and families need and crave from time to time!

The Farmhouse sleeps up to 14 in seven bedrooms, and has 3 reception rooms, whilst each cottage can accommodate 8/9. Each cottage is individually furnished and have their own character. Toad Hall offers open plan living, Badgers House provides huge rooms, Moleys Place is perfect for snuggling on the sofa in front of the log fire! Whilst the Farmhouse, well, you'll feel like you are in heaven! They all have open log fires or wood burners - perfect for snuggling up, toasting marshmallows during those Autumn evenings, after your swim, woodland walk and super homemade meal!

Open all year round, Libbear Barton is privately owned and run by a welcoming family friendly team. They know just what parents need for a relaxing break and are there to help without being in your way - perfect!

Libbear Barton is close to the North Devon family attractions and only 30 minutes from some of the most loveliest beaches on the Cornwall & North Devon coast.

We look forward to welcoming you and your family to your wonderful relaxing break.

www.FamilyFriendlyDevon.co.uk

"WOW! We've stayed at several family friendly places but this is by far the best!"



FREE CHILD ADMISSION

WITH ADULT PURCHASE.

TERMS & CONDITIONS:
 Offer valid for one free child admission when a full price adult ticket is purchased. Voucher must be presented on arrival. This offer is not valid with any other offer. One voucher per car. Damaged or photocopied vouchers will not be accepted. Voucher is only valid as specified and has no cash value. Not valid for amusement ride tickets or wristbands. Amusement rides are charged extra in all cases. Voucher must be presented on arrival before 3.00pm.

VALID UNTIL:
 Valid until 4 November 2011
 Excluding bank holidays and 17 September 2011

wmsp.co.uk
 Ref: WMSF Families 11