

Coventry & Warwickshire

ISSUE 415 AUGUST 2021

# What's On

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### inside:

#### BARD OUTDOORS

RSC's The Comedy Of Errors  
continues in the Garden Theatre



#### FRISKY & MANNISH

musical 'info-tainment' from  
Edinburgh Fringe favourites



#### SUMMER FUN

fearless jousting and special  
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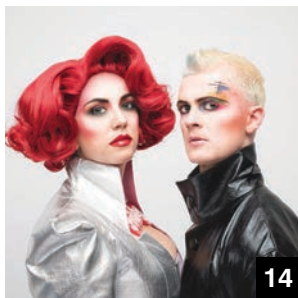
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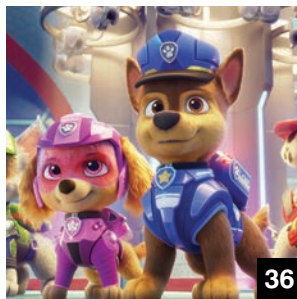
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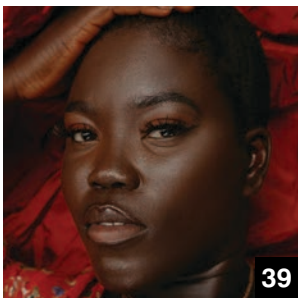
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### What's On

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## World premieres at the Belgrade this autumn and winter season

Unique digital project SeaView and Karla Marie Sweet's This Little Relic - a metaplay about producing Ira Aldridge's The Black Doctor - will both world-premiere at the Coventry Belgrade Theatre this autumn.

The season also includes brand-new musical The Ruff Tuff Cream Puff Estate Agency - a Belgrade co-production with Cardboard Citizens - and a number of old favourites, among which are Dirty Dancing (pictured), The Play That Goes Wrong and, for the festive season, A Christmas Carol, starring Harry Potter and Game Of Thrones actor David Bradley.

Another world premiere - Kerbs - is programmed for the spring season. Michael Southan's play tells the story of Lucy and David, whose much-needed holiday is plagued by problems, not least among which is Lucy's constantly interfering mother. To check out the whole programme of shows and to book tickets, visit [belgrade.co.uk](http://belgrade.co.uk)

## School life in Coventry inspires new play

An LGBTQIA+ play written by Tom Wright is slated to premiere in February next year. I Ain't Dumb is inspired by Tom's experience in Coventry during his time at school. It follows the story of an English class that pride themselves on diversity and inclusion - until a sudden culture war takes place. Exploring the themes of race, sexuality, police brutality, sexual assault and gang violence, the production will be presented as part of Coventry's UK City of Culture 2021 programme.



## Return of Worcester's Open Studios weekend

The doors to art studios across Worcestershire will be open to the public over this month's bank holiday weekend. Visitors to studios, galleries and shared spaces will be able to view artwork, talk to

the artist(s), and purchase affordable, locally made pieces.

The Worcestershire Open Studios event runs from Saturday 28 to Monday 30 August. A full list of participating artists and where to find them is available at [worcestershireopenstudios.org.uk](http://worcestershireopenstudios.org.uk)

## Picnic and proms at Three Counties Showground

Tickets are now on sale for this month's Three Counties Showground Proms Spectacular (28 August) in Malvern. The event features a Spitfire display accompanied by well-known British war themes, followed by a spectacular fireworks presentation and a selection of classic Proms music, including the 1812 Overture, the Hornpipe, Land Of Hope & Glory, Jerusalem and Rule, Britannia!. To purchase tickets, visit [belevents.ticketsrv.co.uk](http://belevents.ticketsrv.co.uk)

## Cathedral's Undercroft to host Confetti exhibition

Worcester Cathedral is hosting an exhibition by artist Jess Pritchard this August Bank Holiday.

Jess' Confetti series features hand-drawn images of petals and explores the way in which people's personality traits make them unique. The exhibition is on display in the cathedral's brand-new Undercroft from Friday 27 to Monday 30 August (during cathedral visiting times)... For more information, visit [pritchard.co.uk](http://pritchard.co.uk)

## Hip-hop festival to launch pioneering Coventry event

Birmingham Hippodrome's annual B-Side Hip-Hop Festival will this month launch Coventry City of Culture's pioneering CVX Festival.

It will be the first time that the Hippodrome event has expanded into another city. Running on Saturday 14 & Sunday 15 August at Gosford Street and Grove Street car parks, 'CVX x B-Side feat OneWave' will bring together 'extraordinary artists and breathtaking acts' from across all four elements of Hip-Hop: breakin', graffiti, DJing and MCing.

Alongside the dance battles, OneWave will present a line-up of emerging and highly respected hip-hop and grime artists, curated by Coventry's own Jay1.

To find out more about the event, visit [birminghamhippodrome.com](http://birminghamhippodrome.com)





## New dates for Harris & Baker

A rescheduled tour featuring broadcasting legends 'Whispering' Bob Harris and Danny Baker will visit the Midlands next year. Harris & Baker's Backstage Pass stops off at Birmingham Town Hall on 29 March and the Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, on 17 April. Commenting on the news, Danny Baker said: After decades of freewheeling access to all of the major names and noises of popular culture, Bob & I will be cutting loose about our extraordinary time in and around the music industry." For more information, visit [Harrisandbaker.com](http://Harrisandbaker.com)



## Print makers come together at Compton Verney

Warwickshire's Compton Verney Art Gallery & Park is next month adding a new event to its autumn-season line-up.

The Print Fair (Saturday 18 & Sunday 19 September) will see some of the region's finest print makers exhibiting a selection of beautiful, unique and available-to-purchase works of art. The event will also include demonstrations, workshops and the chance for visitors to meet the makers. For more information, visit [comptonverney.org.uk](http://comptonverney.org.uk)



## Fun-packed weekend set to launch Daimler Powerhouse

Coventry's purpose-built Daimler Powerhouse Creation Centre opens this month, with creative company Imagineer leading a three-day celebration to mark the occasion. Once home to Britain's first car factory, the

Daimler building has been transformed into a creative hub.

To find out what's happening and when across the three days of entertainment (28 - 30 August), visit [imagineer-productions.co.uk](http://imagineer-productions.co.uk)

## Elephant alert in Worcester



A public art trail featuring a rainbow herd of elephant sculptures will remain on show in Worcester until Sunday 5 September.

Featuring 66 individually designed sculptures and two interactive digital art installations, Worcester's Big Parade has been coordinated by the Wild In Art organisation and is raising funds for the city's St Richard's Hospice.

## Our Future Moves at Transport Museum

Coventry & Warwickshire's world-leading transport innovation is being showcased via a year of activities. Our Future Moves runs until next summer and features a series of events and presentations, including a currently-on-display interactive exhibition at Coventry Transport Museum.

Exploring how pioneering developments in transport and technology could affect the environment and the way people live, the exhibition - also titled Our Future Moves - is available to view until 31 October.





## The Magician's Elephant gets autumn premiere

The Royal Shakespeare Company's world stage premiere of *The Magician's Elephant* will take place on Thursday 14 October, with the show then running in Stratford-upon-Avon until New Year's Day. The *Magician's Elephant* was originally intended to be the RSC's Christmas show for 2020/21 but had to be postponed due to Covid. For more information about the show and to book tickets, visit [rsc.org.uk](http://rsc.org.uk)

## Play set to bring Eliot's Middlemarch to life

International arts organisation Dash Arts will bring to life the world of George Eliot's *Middlemarch* in a brand-new production as part of Coventry's year as UK City of Culture. Part-theatre production and part-interactive mystery game, *The Great Middlemarch* Mystery puts a modern twist on Eliot's iconic novel. It will be presented between four historic venues in central Coventry. Tickets go on sale at [coventry2021.co.uk](http://coventry2021.co.uk) in January.

## Titanic summer fun

Major exhibition *Titanic: Honour & Glory* will continue to show at Worcester City Art Gallery & Museum until next month, with lots of family activities planned for the school summer holiday. Bringing to life the history of the legendary ocean liner, the exhibition gathers together an unrivalled collection of genuine and rare artefacts from the *Titanic* and her sister ships. Summertime attractions include drop-in *Titanic*-themed Wednesday workshops and a *Monsters Of The Deep* trail around the museum. To find out more about what's happening this month, visit [museums.worcestershire.org.uk](http://museums.worcestershire.org.uk)



## Castle unveils plans for Halloween and Christmas

With Halloween arriving the month after next and Christmas following on not too far behind it, Warwick Castle is inviting Midlandsers to sign up for two sure-to-be-fun events. The venue is hosting *The Haunted Castle* from 23 to 31 October, a Halloween experience 'brimming with spooky tales and

family-friendly frights'.

Then, for the festive season, the popular visitor attraction is presenting *Christmas At The Castle* (27 November - 3 January), offering visitors the chance to enjoy some yuletide magic as seen in the popular Channel Four TV show of the same name. To find out more, visit [warwick-castle.com](http://warwick-castle.com)

## Severn Valley Railway's festive favourite returns

Following sell-outs in 2019 and 2020, Severn Valley Railway's festive-season *Steam In Lights* will again return this Christmas. Featuring a ride on a steam train covered by thousands of lights, and the chance to enjoy 'amazing displays of magical creatures and mystical auroras only seen from the train', the event runs on selected dates from Friday 19 November until Thursday 23 December. For more information and to purchase tickets, visit the website: [svr.digitickets.co.uk](http://svr.digitickets.co.uk)

## Welsh National Opera back at the Hippodrome

Welsh National Opera will be making a welcome return to Birmingham Hippodrome in the autumn. The popular company, which has been a regular visitor to the venue for many years, will be performing two much-loved operas: *Madame Butterfly* (19 & 20 October) and *The Barber of Seville* (21 & 22 October). For more information and to purchase tickets, visit [birminghamhippodrome.com](http://birminghamhippodrome.com)

## Three Lions unveiled at Primrose Hill Park

A new mural has been unveiled in Coventry which recognises and celebrates the strength and resilience of the stars of England's Euro 2020 campaign.

The 'Three Lions' artwork has been created by artist Jonny Martin at Primrose Park in the Hillfields area of the city as part of UK City of Culture.

Coventry City of Culture Trust commissioned Jonny to create the artwork, which has been fabricated onto vinyl and will be installed at Primrose Park for the next 12 months.





# B:Music Jazz



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# MATERIAL GAINS

## The RSC's Costume Workshop - the largest in-house costume-making department in British theatre - has been given a much-needed makeover...

The restoration and redevelopment of the Royal Shakespeare Company's (RSC) Costume Workshop has now been completed - and all being well, guided tours of the Stratford-upon-Avon venue will begin next year.

Financed through a mix of public and private support, the major project has completely transformed the Company's in-house costume-making department - the largest of any British theatre.

The RSC's 30-strong team of costume makers have recently moved back into the workshop, which sees the restored Grade II listed buildings now sitting alongside newly created spaces.

"The team create amazing costumes every year but were doing so in conditions that were not fit for purpose," says RSC Artistic Director Gregory Doran. "We make, repair and recycle hundreds of costume pieces each

year, which are seen by audiences around the world. Costumes have been made on this site continuously since at least the 1940s, and the workshop now has the costume-making facilities to secure the legacy of our costume-making skills and the heritage buildings that house them."

One performer who's very happy to see the improvements is RSC Associate Artist Dame Harriet Walter: "Much as I loved visiting the rabbit warren where costumes and armour and everything else was made in the old days, I realise it was pretty much a Dickensian sweatshop, and it was more fun to visit rarely than to work in permanently. "The RSC costume laboratory has produced all kinds of magic, and I can remember nearly every RSC costume I have worn on stage and many that I viewed from the auditorium. It is testament to the skill contained here that these costumes have

endured and not fallen apart after all the wear and tear we have given them. Playing Cleopatra, I needed to be free to move around, to feel skittish and sexy and then transform into a grieving shadow and emerge from that grief with a final triumphant throned image. The costumes did most of that work for me."

To celebrate the opening of the new workshop, the National Lottery Heritage Fund - one of the financial supporters of the restoration and redevelopment project - is running a programme of engagement activity called Threads until the end of 2021. A special event - **Threads Costume Day - on Friday 20 August** will celebrate RSC costume-making heritage through a series of free pop-up performances, workshops and family-friendly activities taking place across Stratford.

## Costume workshop stats and facts...

- An RSC costume can be on stage for well over 100 performances and needs to be made to withstand the rigours of the stage.
- Over 50 detailed measurements are taken of each actor's body to make each bespoke pattern and costume.
- Half of the costumes are 'broken down' to look worn. Common tools used include a cheese grater, sandpaper, Stanley Knife, blow-torch, emulsion-based paints and fabric paints.
- Every single costume item is labelled with the name of the production, the character and the actor playing the part. In an average year, 10,000 items are labelled.
- The costume props team produces

breastplates, gauntlets, belts and weaponry made from plastic, leather or metal, and unusual materials. The average leather breastplate takes 70 hours to make from start to finish.

- The costume props team also makes unusual items such as wings, dogs' tails, snake puppets and pigs' heads.
- The RSC is one of the few theatres to have its own in-house Armoury. As well as supplying swords, daggers and shields, the Armoury also makes trick weapons such as blood knives.
- During an average year, the dye team uses over 60 kilos of dye powder and 800 kilos of salt.

- Costumes from previous RSC productions have been hired out from the Company's costume store, appearing in films and television programmes including Shakespeare In Love, Gladiator, Braveheart, Merlin and Dr Who.

- The costume store, where most costume items go after a production ends, contains over 30,000 pieces. The costumes are re-used by the costume workshop, and most are available for hire externally, including for film and television.

**For further information on the Royal Shakespeare Company, future events and productions, visit: [rsc.org.uk](http://rsc.org.uk)**

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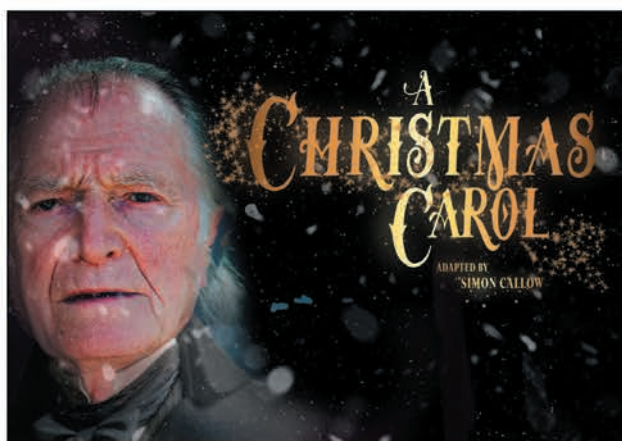
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## REVIEW: The Rooftop Restaurant

### The RST's third-floor dining area fuses classy cool with spectacular views...

The long-awaited return of live performances by the Royal Shakespeare Company - in the newly constructed Garden Theatre in Swan Gardens - has also prompted the reopening of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre's well-regarded eatery.

The Rooftop Restaurant, located on the third floor of the venue, gives new meaning to being seated in the gods, but in a good way. The curved restaurant oozes classy cool, with an easy-going ambience and panoramic views over Bancroft Gardens and the River Avon. It's just the spot for a cocktail or pre-theatre meal, with the latter its speciality and initially its only option on show days, with a set menu coming in at £23 or £27 for two or three courses respectively.

The summer menu, designed by head chef Matthew Jennings, is initially limited to four starters, four mains and five desserts, but the quality-over-quantity adage rings true with a selection of inventive dishes and an accent on superior - and for the most part locally sourced - ingredients.

But if the constituent parts are local, then the inspiration comes from further afield, with a Mediterranean-bent to much of the menu. This was conveniently complemented by the glorious sunny weather that coincided with our visit.

The sunshine made our choice of starters even easier. I opted for a colourful dish of soft Italian burrata served with red, yellow and green heirloom tomatoes, red onion, capers, basil and focaccia croutons, topped off with fresh and zesty salsa verde. It was a gloriously tasty combination that wouldn't have been out of place on the table of a Venetian merchant, that 'pound of flesh' notwithstanding.

The cheery lightness of my opening act was more than matched by my companion's dish of smoked salmon served on a salad of watercress, cucumber and radish, with shallot and dill dressing and crème fraîche. The hint of lime in the latter got an instant thumbs-up and note for future kitchen experimentation.

Our main dishes continued the Mediterranean theme (seems it's not just football where Italy can't be beat), with my pork Milanese a winner on the eyes as well as the palate. The breaded meat was presented as medallions rather than one cutlet, and served with chunks of chorizo, on a delicious bed of tomato ragu, rocket and new potatoes. Back of the net!

My companion chose the one vegetarian option, a colourful pasta dish of zingy lemon and soft herb strozzapreti with edamame beans, artichokes, tenderstem broccoli (a late substitute for the advertised asparagus) and red peppers in a creamy sauce of ricotta cheese, which, she happily reported, was neither too rich nor 'heavy'.

If only the same could be said of my dessert, which was as rich as its 'millionaire's shortcake' moniker would suggest.

Beautifully presented, the deconstructed version of the familiar bakery staple came decorated with biscuit, chocolate, honeycomb and salted caramel sauce, but the main element - a sizeable slab of brownie-style cake with Belgian chocolate ganache - was rather more heavy than heavenly.

And as if to confirm we should've stopped after two courses, my friend was underwhelmed by her lemon meringue pie, which featured disappointingly soft pastry and what appeared to be slightly underbaked meringue. On the plus side, she rated the accompanying smooth, icicle-free raspberry sorbet as one of the best she'd ever tasted.

We both made a note to order the strawberry Cranachan next time, which most of our fellow diners seemed to be having. It looked wonderful as it was delivered to tables by the friendly, efficient staff. Let them know you're seeing a show and they'll ensure you get to your seat on time, but for the record I'd recommend giving yourself around 75 minutes for two courses or 90 minutes (no extra time) for all three. Either way, you'll score a dramatic winner at this excellent venue. *Steve Adams*

Food:    
 Service:      
 Ambience:       
 Overall value       
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## Independent cafe & bar opens in Warwick

A brand-new venue serving crêpes, Belgian waffles and American-style pancakes, burgers, charcuterie boards and ice cream has opened in Warwick. Located on Smith Street, Revive prepares food fresh on the premises - using locally sourced ingredients - and boasts a menu featuring plenty of vegetarian and vegan options. The venue also includes a games room, where customers can play darts, ping-pong, table football and pool.

## Pink emporium Tonight Josephine comes to the Midlands

The Adventure Bar group has officially launched its newest bar in Birmingham - Tonight Josephine.

Already a hit in London, the pink emporium - located in the city centre on Stephenson Street - boasts extravagant bottomless brunches, a lavish cocktail menu and Instagram-worthy interiors.

Venue highlights include a nostalgic trip back to the noughties courtesy of an event dedicated to Britney Spears. The It's Britney Brunch features 'divalicious live performances, epic lip-sync battles, an hour of bottomless prosecco or beer, food and outrageous giveaways'.

Other brunches include Mamma Mia and Burlesque. There's also an afternoon tea offering, which features 'bottomless Pornstar Martinis alongside delicious lip-smacking treats - from mouthwatering macarons to scrumptious sweets'.



## Coventry Belgrade Theatre unveils renovated café & bar

Coventry's Belgrade Theatre has unveiled its newly refurbished café & bar.

The Belgrade Café and Nineteen 58 is open for takeaways and outdoor dining from 8am to 5pm Monday to Saturday.

A menu of locally sourced food includes

nachos, loaded fries and loaded salad, with toppings including guacamole, tomato salsa, salsa verde, coleslaw and sour cream. A variety of soft and alcoholic drinks is also available. NHS workers can enjoy a 25% discount by showing a valid NHS ID when paying.

## New pizzeria & burger restaurant opens in Bromsgrove

A brand-new independent restaurant serving slices, buns and beers has opened in Bromsgrove.

Run by the owners of The Old Crown, Kanteen and Rico Libre - who bring 15-plus years of hospitality experience to the new venture - MELT is described as 'embracing the surrounding community by using locally sourced ingredients and drinks from local breweries, making for some tasty collaborations with other independent brands'.

The menu includes sourdough pizzas, 'banging' burgers, house-made stuffed doughnuts, ice-cold beers and 'plenty of prosecco'.

For more information and to book a table, visit: [melt-bromsgrove.co.uk](http://melt-bromsgrove.co.uk)



# CULTURED COVENTRY

With its year as City of Culture well under way, we take a look at what Coventry has planned to keep you entertained during August...



## Frisky & Mannish

**WHERE:** Coventry Assembly Festival Garden  
**WHEN:** Fri 30 July to Sat 7 August

Known for their forensic examinations of pop songs, Edinburgh Fringe favourites Frisky & Mannish regularly share their popular brand of musical 'info-tainment' with television viewers and radio listeners. Their latest show offers fans a first-ever chance to join them in their PopLab, take 'a peek down the microscope at all their latest research projects', and find out if the popular pair have managed to discover an effective vaccine for 'the contagious virus sweeping through the pop world'...



## Grace Petrie

**WHERE:** Coventry Assembly Festival Garden  
**WHEN:** Mon 9 August at 7pm

Back in the days of Jeremy Corbyn leading the Labour Party, singer-songwriter Grace Petrie was described by the Huffington Post as 'the musical soul of Corbynmania'. Warm, witty and widely admired for her unique take on life, love and politics, Grace has made a big impact on the alternative and folk scenes since entering the fray with her first album fifteen years ago. Her career has included tours with comedians Robin Ince, Josie Long and Hannah Gadsby.



## Beneath The Trees

**WHERE:** Naul's Mill Park, CV1 4AR  
**WHEN:** Sat 28 August, 12noon - 8pm

Coventry city centre's Edwardian park provides the perfect backdrop for this one-day celebration of all things green - an event which its organisers are describing as an 'urban village fete'. Attractions include 'music, food, dancing, performance and storytelling for the whole family'. There are numerous workshops available too, as well as the chance to meet members of local eco-organisations, who will be on hand to talk about some of the green projects currently taking place in the city.

## Comedy Club 4 Kids

**WHERE:** Coventry Assembly Festival Garden  
**WHEN:** Sun 8 August - Sat 4 September

Aimed at children aged six and older, this long-running event features international stand-ups and top-quality sketch artists presenting 60 minutes of fun and laughter for youngsters to enjoy. Comedy Club 4 Kids explains: "Like a panto, there will be some jokes aimed at the younger members of the audience, some that fly right over their heads, and some that require quite a bit of audience participation."



## Generate Festival of Community Performance

**WHERE:** Blue Coat School  
**WHEN:** Sat 31 July - Mon 30 August

Taking place across five consecutive weekends, Generate provides a platform for local amateur, community, student and grassroots performance groups to showcase their talents. Each group has prepared a performance responding to the theme of 'Freedom'. The festival is inspired by the Royal Shakespeare Company's community performance programme, The Dell.



## Flock Together

**WHERE:** Charterhouse Fields, London Road  
**WHEN:** Sat 14 August, 12noon

A birdwatching collective for people of colour, Flock Together's stated mission is to challenge the underrepresentation of people of colour in nature, while simultaneously 'reclaiming green spaces for those historically marginalised groups - one walk at a time'.

The walks are designed to be accessible, 'full of birds' and 'something for locals young and old to take pride in'.

Flock Together founders Ollie Olanipekun and Nadeem Perera will be leading the walk.



## The Bubble Show

**WHERE:** Coventry Assembly Festival Garden  
**WHEN:** Sat 14 August - Sun 5 September

Now here's a family show that should have your youngsters positively bubbling over with excitement and enthusiasm. Well, always assuming they like bubbles, that is! Actor, storyteller and Guinness world record holder The Highland Joker is the man making the magic - and the bubble art - happen, presenting an internationally award-winning show that comes complete with bouncy bubbles, bubbles inside bubbles, smoke bubbles, square bubbles, giant bubbles and even fire bubbles! Bubbletastic!



## Lunchtime Organ Music

**WHERE:** Coventry Cathedral  
**WHEN:** Every Monday until 18 October

Running since the spring - and well into the autumn - these 30-minute lunchtime recitals feature ancient and modern organ music played - by both emerging and already celebrated organists - on the cathedral's magnificent 5,000-pipe organ. The recitals provide a relaxing and different way in which to spend part of a lunch hour. Donations are gratefully received, as the cathedral is currently attempting to fundraise £1million in order to have the organ refurbished.



## Confetti (Work In Progress)

**WHERE:** Coventry Assembly Festival Garden  
**WHEN:** Thurs 26 - Sat 28 August

This production may not be the finished article quite yet, but performer Will Jackson has plenty of form when it comes to providing high-quality entertainment - so work-in-progress or not, Confetti is definitely a show worth checking out. Hailed by Attitude Magazine as a 'rising comic star', Will here presents a queer rom-com about the unlucky-in-love Felix's adventures at his best pal's wedding.



## Open Air Screening: The Italian Job

**WHERE:** Coventry Cathedral Ruins  
**WHEN:** Sat 7 August, 7pm

The Ruins provide a delightful backdrop against which to enjoy this classic crime caper - a movie which has a surprising connection to Coventry: the Minis' manoeuvres through the tunnels of Turin were actually filmed in huge sewer pipes in Stoke Aldermoor! Organisers CineCov and MotoFest Coventry will be inviting fans to step back in time with a spectacular stunt that promises to 'blow the bloody doors off'.



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## Festival previews from around the region



### Lakefest

Eastnor Castle Deer Park, Herefordshire,  
Thurs 12 - Sun 15 August

Priding itself on putting family first, Lakefest evolved from a giant music and cider festival at Croft Farm Waterpark, Tewkesbury, back in 2011, when performers included The Wurzels and entertainment came in the form of skittles and welly wanging.

Although expansion has led to a relocation to the beautiful Eastnor Castle, the event retains its friendly West Country vibe.

Alongside an always-impressive line-up of music acts, the four-day get-together also features fairground rides and a good selection of family-friendly activities.

**Line-up includes:** Tom Jones, Seasick Steve (pictured), Scouting For Girls, Razorlight, Ash, The Magic Numbers, New Model Army, Stereo Mc's, T'Pau, Vengaboys, Mad Dog Mcrea, Seb Fontaine and Sol Brothers

### Shrewsbury Folk Festival

Greenhouse West Midland Showground,  
Fri 27 - Mon 30 August

A highlight of any folk fan's calendar, this four-day fest brings together centuries of musical tradition in one picturesque setting. Steeped in history, the border town of Shrewsbury makes an ideal backdrop for the festival's mash-up of modern and medieval and everything in between, where grassroots cultures collide in dynamic fusion styles. This year's festival celebrates British-based folk bands and features three open-air stages - The Cuckoo, The Skylark and the Purity Village - meaning that the festival can accommodate everyone at a safe social distance.

Sadly there's no dance tent, though.

**Line-up includes:** Kate Rusby (pictured), Oysterband, Show Of Hands, Afro Celt Sound System, Seth Lakeman, The Christians, Dervish, Lindisfarne and The Young'uns and Calan



### Moseley Folk & Arts Festival

Moseley Park, Birmingham,  
Fri 3 - Sun 5 September



Tucked away behind Birmingham's busy streets, the beautiful Moseley Park is a hidden gem, transformed each year into an enchanting escape by one of the Midlands' best-loved music festivals.

Traditional folk & low-fi acoustic sets blend seamlessly with dreamy electropop, psychedelia and indie favourites against a magical backdrop of bright hippie colours, lush foliage and a beautiful lake.

The event also boasts a rich programme of arts & crafts, comedy & cabaret, poetry & literature and talks & debates.

**Line-up includes:** The Waterboys, Frank Turner, Richard Hawley, Passenger (pictured), Jade Bird, The Wonder Stuff, Gruff Rhys, Peat & Disel, Dana Gavanski and The Nightingales

### Witcombe Festival

Brockworth, Gloucestershire,  
Fri 27 - Sun 29 August

Taking place on a beautiful site in Gloucestershire, and one of the fastest-growing festivals in the UK, Witcombe has previously featured, among many other talented artists, Dizzee Rascal, Plan B and Faithless.

The festival came into being back in 2012, when founder Joe Pointon started making his own organic cider and suddenly found himself with way too much for one man to drink! The rest, as they say, is history...

Now attracting in excess of 22,000 people, Witcombe has enjoyed a rebrand but remains fully committed to providing excellent ciders and an impressive line-up of musical talent.

**Line-up includes:** Basement Jaxx, John Newman, Andy C, Tinie, Annie Mac (pictured), DJ Luck and MC Neat, DJ Ez, Joel Corry, Artful Dodger and Raye





“ We want to provide support in a way that means emerging artists can see their careers blossoming in Birmingham and the West Midlands, without feeling they need to set their sights on London. ”



# Leading the way...

**The newly formed West Midlands Music Board is aiming to help the region's music sector recover, grow and prosper. What's On chatted to its chair - B:Music CEO Nick Reed - about the challenges that lie ahead...**

Already backed by local venues, labels, promoters, producers and festivals - and championed by artists including Lady Leshurr, Tony Iommi and Joan Armatrading - the West Midlands Music Board (WMMB) aims to lead the region's music sector through the post-lockdown period of recovery and towards growth and prosperity.

"It's about providing a unified voice for music in the region," explains Nick Reed, who, as chair of WMMB, speaks for the high-profile industry insiders who make up the board. "We've got an incredible music history in the West Midlands, and it's one that's never been represented before. We're known for so many musical genres: from being the birthplace of Heavy Metal and Two-Tone, to an emerging Grime scene. We're really leading the field, but we've never before been able to articulate that in one place. The thing that makes music in the West Midlands so unique is the diversity. But there's this unique characteristic of Birmingham in particular that means it seems to live in the shadow of other cities. But in spite of that, there's a great emerging music scene. There's this work ethic and range of talent that continually fights against being an underestimated region."

Nurturing talented individuals - and giving them the platform and opportunity to succeed right here in the West Midlands - is one of the main goals of the WMMB.

"We want to provide support in a way that means emerging artists can see their careers blossoming in Birmingham and the West Midlands, without feeling they need to set their sights on London. This means we need to be at the table where decisions are made in the region, making sure the support services, night transport, funding and artist-management opportunities are available.

"There's a pro-London attitude in music, and we need to change that. We need to show

that we can provide the training, support and infrastructure to nurture talent right here in the region where these artists grew up. I want to see music at the heart of strategy, policy and investment for the region."

**“ We’re such a representative team of people, working with everyone from those at grassroots level to venues who see millions of people at their gigs each year. ”**

Nick hopes that the nationwide 'levelling-up' agenda will provide a helping hand: "The government responded, albeit belatedly, to the pandemic crisis with the Cultural Recovery Fund, which *did* recognise the value of the entertainment and arts sectors. We hope that kind of attitude will extend into this period of lockdown-easing and nationwide recovery. At the start of the pandemic last year, I can remember that there was this very quick coming together of all people from the sector. We all came together in the same space and behind the same message, which was that we needed and deserved support. The music industry started to represent itself better, and that dialogue has become more effective at a national level. But now that also needs to translate into dialogues at a regional level.

"If we look back in a year's time, I want to see that WMMB has made a difference.

What's amazing about this board is the broad range of skill sets we have available from everyone involved. We have everything from independent producers and promoters, and leading broadcasters in British Asian music, to representatives from the likes of the O2, the NEC Group and MADE Festival. We're such a representative team of people, working with everyone from those at grassroots level to venues who see millions of people at their gigs each year. There's a huge number of people who work in our industry beyond the artists themselves - whether that's technicians, other freelancers, musicians, and more - who've had to find other work. There's been plenty of challenges for the sector during the pandemic, which is what has prompted this board to come together."

Whilst there's been streaming and other online opportunities for artists and venues over the last year or so, there's an overwhelming desire for live music to make a return.

"There are great things happening regionally, with Coventry City of Culture 2021 and the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games. Live music will have its part to play in that. Music will really bring people back together after this period. People need to be together and to interact with others."

It's this hunger to get back out there that makes Nick so optimistic about the future of live music in the West Midlands: "We absolutely can't wait to resume full-capacity gigs and concerts. There may still be challenges for us - particularly with advisory rather than mandatory advice from the government, which makes a lot of things unclear - but our community of musicians and venues is ready to go. Our diaries at B:Music are looking pretty full all the way through the autumn and into next year. There are plenty of exciting things coming up."

# Omid Djalili

Talking about The Good Times





**Omid Djalili's energetic, silly and often provocative stand-up has seen him become one of the biggest names on the UK comedy circuit. His latest show, The Good Times, is currently touring the country, stopping off at numerous Midlands venues along the way. We recently caught up with the award-winning British-Iranian actor/comedian to find out more...**

**Tell us about The Good Times?**

The Good Times tour is about the reinvention, the rebirth and the recalibration of my stand-up comedy for the new normal. Hopefully it'll be a joyous explosion of comedy that splatters an excited audience like Jackson Pollock when he's had too much to drink.

**And what's been good for you in the past 16 months?**

Everything is good when you walk with Jesus.

**For somebody who's never seen you 'live on stage' before, how would you describe your act?**

Exquisitely crafted satire you can eat in-between meals without ruining your appetite.

**How do you develop a stand-up show?**

Stand-up comedians are an ancient and deeply secretive society. Asking me to divulge its secrets is like asking the government where the £37billion for track & trace went. Or how an App can cost that much? I downloaded Angry Birds the other day - it was free.

**You often joke about the 'culture of comedy' and the difference you find in audience reactions as you tour your shows... what would you say about those subjects in terms of Midlandsers?**

Midlanders? What a Netflix sci-fi show that was, starring Berm Ingham & Dudley Studley. Not something I expected to like. But I loved it.

**Is there anyone who has consistently influenced your material?**

I'm currently being influenced by world events and comment on them. Over the years, I've been breaking away from the Middle Eastern pigeonhole that you people (journalists) have unfairly put me in. I'm a citizen of the world, and I will not be defined by cultural stereotypes. I have a specific viewpoint which many call 'Djalili-esque', and I think my material reflects that now. Would you like a carpet? Visit my website. I also sell fried

chicken, mayonnaise, motorcycle insurance and viagra, very fine price.

**Who made you laugh most growing up?**

My father. Before visiting the Bahá'í world centre in Haifa when I was 18, my dad told me that if I met an important person called Mr Furutan, just to say my name was Omid and not mention that I was a Djalili. Apparently Mr Furutan was his Sunday school teacher in Iran in the 1940s. I met Mr Furutan. He asked me my name. I said my name was Omid. He did a double-take and looked at me very carefully and said, "Djalili?" I said yes. He said, "are you Ahmad's son?" I said yes. He said, "are you naughty like your dad?" I said yes. He laughed and gave me a little slap. "Good. Keep it up. He's hilarious."

**Away from stand-up, you have an impressive acting CV, having worked with some major Hollywood names. Who's been the most fun to work with and why?**

Of all the great actors I've played alongside I would say Russell Crowe was the least litigious. Johnny Depp's lawyers are less aggressive than Brad Pitt's, and with Robert Redford I didn't stand a chance after I called his film, The Legend Of Bagger Vance, the most boring film of all time. I'm not legally allowed to mention Mike Myers, but on the upside, Sarah Jessica Parker has now revoked the restraining order she placed on me in 2010 after the lavish compliments I made about her choice of Manolo Blahniks at the Cannes Film Festival.

**What's the funniest joke you've heard another comedian tell that you wish had been yours?**

Colin Quinn's observation in his Netflix special on the fact that in America the political system is still only the Democrats and the Republicans: "America. Two parties. Still. All these years later. Still two parties. There's 350 million people and there's still

two parties. There are 15 genders, but still two parties."

**You've previously said that you like to find something to make you happy before you fall asleep. Along those lines, what do you think are the key ingredients to living a happy life?**

Good food. A happy family and a problem-solving mindset.

**QUICKFIRE QUESTIONS:**

**Best heckle you've ever received?**

"No one likes you. You should've known that from school."

**Worst moment on stage?**

I'm hoping it's yet to come. The sooner the better. Then I'll have an answer to this question. When it happens, I'll get back to you.

**Favourite place to perform?**

Slightly to the left of the centre of the stage.

**Which fellow comedian would you pay to see?**

None of them. They're all bloody awful. Except Boothby Graffoe. It's not even a question of *would* I pay to see him. He's my support act, so I actually *do* pay to see him. Every night. And I pay way more for the privilege than the audience.

.....

**Omid Djalili visits The Place, Telford, Wed 22 September; Huntingdon Hall, Worcester, Fri 22 October; Palace Theatre, Redditch, Fri 11 November; The Roses Theatre, Tewkesbury, Thurs 2 December; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sat 22 January; Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry, Thurs 17 February; Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Sat 21 May**

# Ready to rock?





## Are you ready to rock? Hit musical School Of Rock comes to Wolverhampton's Grand Theatre next month as part of its first-ever UK tour. What's On recently caught up with the show's associate director, Midlands-born Christopher Key, to find out what audiences can expect...

The highlight of school music lessons for this writer was the communal singing of Beatles songs - and while you can't beat a bit of the Fab Four, the idea of studying the works of rock behemoths like Led Zeppelin, Black Sabbath and AC/DC would have been incredible.

Not so at Horace Green prep school, the setting for School Of Rock The Musical, Andrew Lloyd Webber's adaptation of hit 2003 movie School Of Rock.

The plot of the show revolves around Dewey Finn, an unfulfilled but passionate guitarist who poses as a substitute teacher and is inspired to form a rock band from the class that has been assigned to him.

As the Wolverhampton Grand Theatre prepares to welcome the show in September, Christopher Key, the production's associate director, sees the hit musical as a welcome tonic at a time when, all being well, the UK will be adapting to a post-Covid normality.

"It's a celebration of music," Christopher told What's On a couple of days before England faced Italy in the final of Euro 2020, "a real feelgood musical, a great cast, and one of those shows that you can't help but leave either humming the tunes or knowing that you've had a great night at the theatre."

As a football fan, Stourport-born Christopher has noticed how the return of supporters has boosted morale after almost 18 months of mostly empty stadiums. He's confident that this enthusiasm will also spread to theatregoers.

"Looking at the Euros, you can see it's been a relief for a lot of people - that opportunity to celebrate sport again. When, finally, our regions can open fully and people can start seeing the standard of show that they could see in the West End, I think it's going to be

great for everyone."

While the School Of Rock movie was sprinkled with classic rock anthems, the musical includes 14 tunes by Lloyd Webber (with lyrics by Glenn Slater), as well as original songs from the film. However, Christopher notes that there was a conscious decision to remain faithful to the screen version: "You don't want to move too far from what people are used to. I think the original creators, Laurence Connor as director, Andrew Lloyd Webber and writer Julian Fellowes - it's quite a departure for Julian from Downton Abbey to School Of Rock! - were very loyal to the movie. Andrew complemented that story with a number of new songs, because the only real song that you know from the film is Teacher's Pet, which the band play at the end, and it's in our show. Andrew's written a great score for the rest of the show, where he's really back to his rock roots."

While Dewey might be the protagonist of the drama, Christopher feels that the young musicians in the cast will leave a lasting impression on audiences: "The joy of the show is that the kids play these instruments live, so when you watch this small boy picking up a guitar that's almost as big as he is, and then playing it to an extremely high standard, it's quite remarkable.

"The power of music, and particularly music amongst children, is something that Andrew's so passionate about; for the arts to be free and readily available within schools and encourage children to pick up an instrument."

According to Christopher, School Of Rock The Musical appears to have been an inspiration for quite a few youngsters who have sat in the audience: "Since it opened in 2016, we've heard about so many children who've seen it

and picked up an instrument since, and I think some of those children are probably now going to be touring the UK in the show."

Following the announcement by the government that theatres would be allowed to reopen without restrictions this summer, Christopher is aware of the Covid-shaped shadow that remains a potential threat: "We won't be worrying about social distancing when we're staging the show, but of course off stage we'll continue to test and social distance as much as possible. We've got 48 children in the room who we'll make sure are not all congregated together, so there's going to be a logistical operation in place to make sure we are as safe as possible."

For anyone who's only aware of School Of Rock on the big screen and needs any persuading to check out the musical adaptation, Christopher has an important message...

"If you love the film, you're going to love the stage show, because it's very true to the story, but it adds that extra dimension. It focuses a lot more on the children's stories - it's the one bit that we don't get to see in the movie. What goes on in the kids' homes? What is it that makes them frustrated? What is it that Dewey Finn needs to get out of them? There's another layer to this production - it's the film *and more* - so I'd encourage anyone to come along and witness it."

.....

**School Of Rock plays Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Tuesday 21 to Saturday 25 September; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Tuesday 19 - Saturday 23 October; The Alexandra, Birmingham, Monday 31 January - Saturday 5 February**



## Priscilla Queen Of The Desert

Birmingham Hippodrome, Mon 30 August - Sat 4 September

Based on the movie of the same name, Priscilla the stage show has wowed both West End and Broadway audiences, picking up a coveted Olivier and an equally prestigious Tony Award along the accolade-

strewn way. At its heartland is an uplifting story of the friendship shared by three pals, who hop aboard a battered old bus and head off across Australia in search of love and romance. The hit show is co-produced by Jason Donovan and comes complete with a dazzling array of costumes and a glorious selection of dancefloor favourites.

## Looking Dead Good

Malvern Theatres, Mon 30 August - Sat 4 September; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Mon 7 - Sat 12 February

Bestselling crime writer Peter James has scored major successes on stage as well as in print, with adaptations of his books having played to appreciative audiences at venues across the UK. This latest offering features Detective Superintendent Roy Grace, the Brighton-based policeman who's headed up murder investigations in a number of James's most popular novels. On this occasion, Grace is called in when a man who finds a USB memory stick on a train inadvertently becomes a witness to a vicious murder... EastEnders stalwart Adam Woodyatt (Ian Beale) and Emmerdale & Coronation Street actress Gaynor Faye star.



## Hungry

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Sun 1, Wed 4, Fri 6 & Sun 8 August



Telling a story about food, love, class and grief 'in a world where there's little left to savour', Hungry features in Paines Plough theatre company's Roundabout festival - an initiative bringing together new plays and community-led activities as part of Coventry's City of Culture celebrations. Focusing on the characters of Lori - a professional chef - and Bex - who waits tables to make ends meet - the play covers challenging subject matter that includes eating disorders and the death of a parent. Containing strong language, it's been deemed suitable for audience members aged 12-plus.

## Grease The Musical

Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Mon 30 August - Sat 4 September; The Alexandra, Birmingham, Tues 2 - Sat 6 November

Dust off your leather jackets, pull on your bobby-socks and get ready for the most fun-filled high-octane rock'n'roll party of them all. Grease is the original high-school musical, featuring all the unforgettable songs from the hit movie, including You're The One That I Want, Grease Is The Word, Summer Nights, Hopelessly Devoted To You, Sandy and Greased Lightnin'.

The cast includes singer Peter Andre (pictured), who plays Teen Angel and Vince Fontaine in selected performances.







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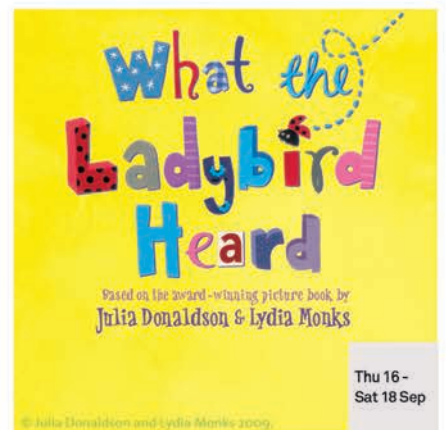


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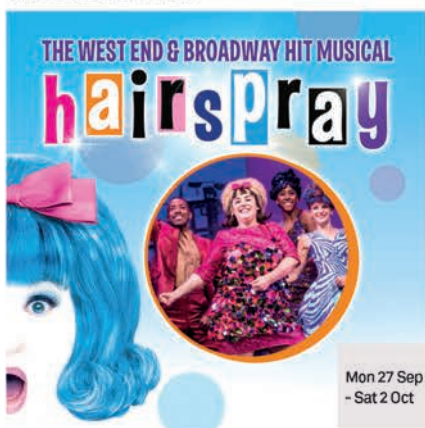
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## Rock Of Ages

The Alexandra, Birmingham, Thurs 19 - Sat 21 August; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Tues 2 - Sat 6 November; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Tues 29 March - Sat 2 April

Cinema-goers who caught the 2012 movie version of Rock Of Ages, starring Tom Cruise, Alec Baldwin, Russell Brand and Catherine Zeta-Jones, will know exactly what to expect from this feelgood musical. For those who didn't and therefore don't, it focuses on the romance between a small-town girl and a big-city rocker, and is packed to its proverbial rafters with classic 1980s numbers. So if you're someone for whom the decade of Glasnost, yuppies, Miami Vice and mullet hair-dos took place against a soundtrack of pounding rock anthems, this is the show for you. Songs include We Built This City, Here I Go Again, I Want To Know What Love Is and The Final Countdown.

## The Cat And The Canary

NEW DATE: The Alexandra, Birmingham, Mon 4 - Sat 9 October

Erstwhile sex symbol, former Mrs Peter Sellers and one-time 'Bond girl' Britt Ekland heads the cast of this famous murder-mystery, a story that's been adapted for the cinema on three separate occasions, most famously with Bob Hope taking top billing. When the descendants of the late Mr West gather at a remote mansion to find out who will inherit his fortune, events take an unexpected and deadly turn... Presented by the Classic Theatre Company.



## Blackadder II

Crescent Theatre, Birmingham, Wed 25 August - Sat 4 September

The Crescent Theatre Company present a stage production based on the much-loved 1980s television comedy show starring Rowan Atkinson and written by Richard Curtis and Ben Elton. Blackadder lasted for four series, but it's the second season - first screened in 1985 and set in Elizabethan England - which is widely considered to be the best, offering the Crescent ensemble plenty of high-quality humour to sink their teeth into.



## Coppelia: A Mystery

New Vic Theatre, Newcastle-under-Lyme, until Sat 7 August

On a wintry Victorian street, a young girl is determined to discover the curious secret of the mysterious Doctor Coppelius' magical toyshop... Inviting its audiences on a journey 'across an enchanting Victorian world, from outdoors and indoors and back again', this hour-long production was originally scheduled to show at the New Vic late last year.



## The Comedy Of Errors

The Place, Telford, Shropshire, Thurs 26 August

Zany funsters Oddsocks make a welcome return with Shakespeare's much-loved 'laughter-fest'. And actually, by comparison with a number of the bard's other comedies, this one really does have the capacity to tickle a modern-day audience's collective funnybone. As indeed do Oddsocks, who've been touring the Midlands and beyond for 30 years. "Our inclusive approach means that varied communities across the UK are able to engage with theatre," say the company's founders and husband-and-wife team, Andy Barrow and Elli Mackenzie. "We aim to tell good stories in a fun, informative way, gently challenging people's perceptions and the way in which they react to theatre."

## Avenue Q

The Old Joint Stock Theatre, Birmingham, until Sat 21 August

This Tony Award-winning musical focuses on subjects including dating, racism, being gay and finding your purpose in life. At the centre of the story is Princeton, a bright-eyed college graduate with a tiny bank balance who, as he sets out on a voyage of self-discovery, finds himself being easily distracted by a busty blonde and a plethora of weird and wonderful friends.

## The Woman In Black

Malvern Theatres, Mon 9 - Sat 14 August; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Mon 16 - Sat 21 August

Adapted by Stephen Mallatratt from Susan Hill's same-titled book, The Woman In Black is a classic ghost story first performed in 1989.

It has since become one of the West End's most successful plays. Solicitor Arthur Kipp believes that his family have somehow been cursed by a mysterious woman in black. In an attempt to tell his story, and to exorcise the evil curse which he's convinced hangs over him, he hires a young actor to assist him in recounting his experiences...





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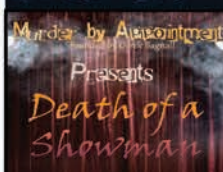
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## The Comedy Of Errors

Lydia & Manfred Gorvy Garden Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, until Sun 26 September

This brand new Royal Shakespeare Company production of one of the bard's most popular offerings is being presented in the RSC's new garden theatre.

Shakespeare's forerunner to modern farce, Comedy is a superbly crafted catalogue of mistaken identity, adulterous liaisons and slapstick humour. Two sets of identical twins are separated during infancy. When their paths cross again later in life, all manner of confusions ensue. Matters are then further complicated by the involvement of an irate courtesan, an insistent jeweller and a mad exorcist!

Read our 5 star review at [whatsonlive.co.uk](http://whatsonlive.co.uk)

## Tell Me On A Sunday

Birmingham Hippodrome, Tues 24 - Sat 28 August

One of the minor constellations in Andrew Lloyd Webber's firmament of shows, Tell Me On A Sunday has some real gems hidden in its score, the most memorable among which is the plaintive Take That Look Off Your Face. Charting the course of an optimistic English girl as she arrives in New York seeking love and success, the show combines British wit with American sass, running a gamut of emotions in the process. Jodie Prenger makes a welcome return, having previously starred in the show five years ago. Read our interview with Jodie at [whatsonlive.co.uk](http://whatsonlive.co.uk)



## Romeo & Juliette

Albany Theatre, Coventry, Thurs 5 - Fri 6 August

Emerge Production House is the company serving up this bilingual, reimagined and modernised version of Shakespeare's tragic love story. The play's set-up envisages a situation in which every country around the world has adopted Brexit-like policies and closed their borders. It's a volatile and unpredictable time, not least for the English

and French, who stand on the brink of taking their conflict onto the battlefield. At a summit between the two countries' leaders, the son of the British prime minister and daughter of the French ambassador meet for the first time, and love soon blossoms amid the talk of war...

## Charlie & Stan

Malvern Theatres, Mon 16 - Sat 21 August

A little-known fact about silent-era Hollywood movie star Charlie Chaplin and his fellow Englishman, Stan Laurel - who found fame as one half of a legendary double-act with Oliver Hardy - is that they were both members of the famous Fred Karno music-hall troupe that set sail for New York in 1910. Stan, who understudied Charlie on arrival in the US, returned home shortly afterwards - his big break alongside Hardy lay several years ahead of him. Chaplin, by contrast, had become a global name within five years of setting foot on American soil... The award-winning Told By An Idiot here reveal the fascinating story of two of Britain's greatest ever comedians... a potentially brilliant double-act that sadly never saw the light of day...



## Riverdance

The Alexandra, Birmingham, Tues 31 August - 2 September; Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent, Tues 26 - Thurs 28 October



When a show's been seen by millions of people across thousands of performances, it's fair to say it's one mother of a hit. Such are the statistics behind the mesmerising Riverdance, Michael Flatley's breathtaking dance extravaganza that's been wowing audiences around the globe for nearly three decades.

Riverdance started out as a seven-minute interval piece at the Eurovision Song Contest in 1994. Within a couple of years, it had become the brand-new craze, not only bringing traditional dance to a contemporary audience but also inspiring slick'n'sexy spin-off shows such as Spirit Of The Dance and Lord Of The Dance. If it's been a while since you last sampled its delights or, perish the thought, you've never before witnessed its magnificence, this is the perfect time to find out what all the fuss has been about this last quarter century.





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SATURDAY 28TH AUGUST  
**JOHN NEWMAN**



**DJ EZ ANDYC**

**JOEL  
CORRY**

Darkzy & Window Kid, DJ Q,  
Rampage Sound, Samantha Harvey

Emerald, Dr Meaker, Ragga Twins & DJ Virtue, Vince Freeman, Amy Lauren,  
Beaver and Foghorns, Bro, Cptn Cav & Ash 3.5, Dante Miller, Della Dread,  
DJ Seasonal, Frazor Lepford, The Filthy Casuals, Vipzz & DJ Rad



SUNDAY 29TH AUGUST  
**TINIE**  
**ANNIE MAC** **RAYE**

DUKE, HEARTLESS CREW & D DOUBLE E  
NATHAN EVANS, RVBY, SEANI B, THE CUBAN BROTHERS

Alex Nash, ChillsNTA, DJ Esson & Multiple Skillz, DJ Eye, Ellie Sax, Issy Winstanley,  
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## Dragons And Mythical Beasts

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Thurs 5 - Sat 7 August; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Thurs 1 - Sat 3 September

From the creators of West End favourite Dinosaur World Live comes this brand-new puppet extravaganza featuring a veritable smorgasbord of magnificent and mythical monsters, including a unicorn and a griffin. But wait, there's more... the colossal Stone Troll, the mysterious Indrik and the Japanese Baku are also present and correct, as indeed is the somewhat unpleasant Tooth Fairy. And as the title of the show makes clear, there's a dragon in attendance, too - although word has it he's busy enjoying a well-earned kip, so wake him up at your peril...

## Zog

Birmingham Town Hall, Tues 24 - Sun 29 August

With previous shows including Tiddler And Other Terrific Tales and Tabby McTat, it's fair to say that Freckle Productions know a thing or two about presenting stage adaptations of Julia Donaldson & Axel Scheffler stories... Zog is at Madam Dragon's school and is determined to win himself a gold star. He's so determined, in fact, that he tries a little bit too hard and finds himself bumping, burning and roaring his way through years one, two and three...



## The Dinosaur Show

Blue Orange Theatre, Birmingham, Wed 4 - Sun 29 August

Fun, facts, laughter, puppetry and a bonanza of big beasts all feature on the magical menu being promised by the producers of this 60-minute-long immersive world premiere. Children aged four-plus are invited to join Hunter and Shelly as they step back 200 million years on their mission to

rediscover the lost land of the dinosaurs. Great family fun seems a certainty... but be sure to stay mindful while you and your kids are enjoying yourselves - rumour has it there may be a T-Rex on the loose...

## Stones And Bones

Teenage Amphitheatre, Telford Town Park, Shropshire, Sun 15 August

"Our new show is a marvellous mix of history and mystery," explain Squashbox Theatre, as they invite audiences to join them on a journey to "a land of fiery volcanoes, strange prehistoric creatures, myths, legends, giants and druids'...

Or, as it's otherwise referred to - Ancient Cornwall.

Squashbox are always good value, and look set to deliver yet another dose of high-quality family entertainment with this latest touring show. Expect 'thrills and spills, songs and slapstick, lots of laughs, plenty of puppets, tall tales, crazy characters, erupting volcanoes, and maybe even the odd glimpse of a dinosaur or two...'

## Horrible Histories

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Thurs 26 August; Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, Sat 28 - Sun 30 August

If you love the Horrible Histories series - and why the heck wouldn't you?! - then this two-for-one presentation is a show well worth catching. Featuring both Gorgeous Georgians and Vile Victorians, the production asks such searching questions as: Are you ready to swing with a Georgian king? Can you see eye

to eye with Admiral Nelson? And does the Duke of Wellington get the boot? All will be revealed in a show that advertises itself as 'a horrible history of Britain, with all the nasty bits left in!'.



## Spy School 2021

The REP, Birmingham, Mon 2 - Fri 6 August

If your youngsters have shown any interest in James Bond and Her Majesty's Secret Service, then you should definitely make it your mission to get them enrolled in this week-long immersive theatre adventure.

Spy School is this month returning for a sixth year, operating in line with Covid restrictions and focusing as usual on saving the world! And with strange signs appearing across the globe and a mysterious villain on the loose, this year's field operatives will certainly have their work cut out for them! The event is suitable for children aged between seven and 12.



## Outdoor theatre across the region this summer

### A Dog's Tale

Mikron Theatre Company explore the extraordinary world of heroic hounds, pampered pedigrees and naughty nobblers through the halls and history of Crufts.

**Showing at:** Raphael's Restaurant, Evesham, Sat 7 August; Bishampton Village Hall, Pershore, Sun 8 August; The Folly, Napton on the Hill, Warwickshire, Thurs 19 August; Calcutt Boats, Southam, Fri 20 August; Rowington Village Hall, Rowington, Warwickshire, Tues 24 August; Tontine Gardens, Stourport on Severn, Sun 29 August; Bantock House Museum & Park, Wolverhampton, Wed 1 September; St Thomas & St Andrews, Stafford, Fri 3 September



### A Midsummer Night's Dream

Shakespeare's tale of tangled lovers, warring fairies and hapless human-beings takes its place in Heartbreak Productions' summertime line-up of shows. This particular production sees the company focusing on the importance of the environment and the need to make sensible use of the earth's resources. The costumes and sets are all made from recycled materials.

**Showing at:** Warley Woods, Smethwick, Wed 4 August; Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Thurs 2 September

### A Midsummer Night's Dream

Set in a forest, Shakespeare's best-loved comedy is a perfect play for the great outdoors... Lysander and Demetrius both fancy Hermia, Helena's sitting on the shelf, Titania and Oberon are up to no good, and mischief-making Puck's got his fairy finger in more pies than Mr Kipling. Add in a group of rude

mechanicals, and the recipe for success is guaranteed...

Presented by Quantum Theatre.

**Showing at:** Bowring Park, Wellington, Wed 11 August; Beacon Park, Lichfield, Sun 22 August

### Alice In Wonderland

Attic Theatre in association with Tread The Boards Theatre Company present a 'faithful' retelling of Lewis Carroll's classic tale using music, song and dance.

**Showing at:** Wethele Manor, Coventry, Sun 1 - Tues 3 August; Cox's Yard, Coventry, Wed 4, 11 & 18 August plus Wed 1 Sept; The Swan Theatre, Worcester, Sat 7 Aug; Aston Hall, Birmingham, Fri 6 Aug; Snitterfield Sports Club, Coventry, Sun 8 Aug; Talton Mill, Coventry, Thurs 12 & Fri 13 Aug; Castle Bromwich Gardens, Birmingham, Sun 22 Aug; Tiddington Home Guard Club, Coventry, Tues 24 - Mon 30 Aug; Stoneleigh Abbey, Nr Coventry, Fri 3 - Sun 5 Sept

### Atalanta Forever

Join Atalanta FC as they tackle new football skills, master the offside rule and kick back at the doubters...

New show presented by Mikron Theatre.

**Showing at:** The Wharf Inn, Southam, Warwickshire, Sun 15 August; The Two Boats Inn, Southam, Warwickshire, Sat 21 August; Camp House Inn, Nr Worcester, Sun 22 August; The Bridge House, Solihull, Wed 25 August; Springfield Park, Kidderminster, Tues 31 August; The Navigation Inn, Stafford, Thurs 2 September

### The Comedy Of Errors

Shakespeare's fairytale farce of everyday miracles and mistaken identity is here presented by the RSC...

**Showing at:** Lydia & Manfred Gorvy Garden Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, until Sun 26 September

### The Further Adventures Of Doctor Dolittle

Award-winning theatre troupe Illyria presents a brand-new musical adventure featuring Jip

the Dog, Dab Dab the Duck, Gub Gub the Pig and Polynesia the Parrot.

**Showing at:** Sunnycroft, Wellington, Sun 29 August; Hanbury Hall, Droitwich, Mon 30 August

### HMS Pinafore

Gilbert & Sullivan's comic opera cheerfully mocks the British class system, the concept of patriotism, and the Royal Navy. Presented by Illyria.

**Showing at:** Church Stretton Festival, South Shropshire, Sat 31 July

### The Jungle Book

Immersion Theatre's adaptation of Rudyard Kipling's family favourite is being hailed the company's 'wildest show to date'. Expect original music and plenty of opportunities for audience participation.

**Showing at:** Alderford Lake, Whitchurch, Shropshire, Fri 27 August



### Little Red And The Big Bad Wolf

Join Little Red as she sets off through the forest to visit Grandma, aiming at every step to outsmart the hungry wolf who'd very much like to make her his next meal... Presented by Folksy Theatre.

**Showing at:** Biddulph Grange Gardens, Staffordshire, Sat 7 August; St John's House Garden, Warwick, Sat 14 August

### Little Red Riding Hood & The Three Funky Pigs

Theatre2U puts a modern spin on two classic fairytales... A show packed with fun and songs for all the family to enjoy.

**Showing at:** Beacon Park, Lichfield, Sun 8 August

### Macbeth

Supernatural magic and unbridled ambition combine in Shakespeare's no-holds-barred examination of the dreadful consequences of one man's insatiable lust for power.

Presented by all-male theatre company The Lord Chamberlain's Men.

**Showing at:** Shrewsbury Castle, Tues 3 August; Alderford Lake, Nr Whitchurch, Shropshire, Tues 17 August; Haden Hill House, Cradley Heath, Sat 21 August; Bantock House & Gardens, Wolverhampton, Fri 27 August

### Merry Wives Of Windsor

Three Inch Fools fuse live music and 'vibrant' storytelling in a fast-paced presentation of Shakespeare's raucous farce.

**Showing at:** Shrewsbury Castle, Thurs 5 Aug

### Robin Hood

Join Three Inch Fools for a brand-new version of the famous Sherwood Forest folktale.

**Showing at:** Coventry Cathedral, Wed 25 August

### Romeo & Juliet

The world's best-known love story gets the Three Inch Fools treatment. Performed with live musical accompaniment and numerous costume changes along the way.

**Showing at:** Acton Scott Historic Working Farm, Church Stretton, Shropshire, Thurs 4 August

### Mr Stink

Leamington-based Heartbreak Productions presents its version of David Walliams' bestselling children's book. Packed with fun and humour, this touching tale not only delivers a heart-warming message but also provides plenty of great family entertainment.

**Showing at:** Shugborough Estate, Stafford, Wed 4 August; Bosworth Battlefield, Nuneaton, Thurs 5 August; Bowring Park, Wellington, Tues 10 August; Castle Bromwich Hall Gardens, Thurs 12 August; Coventry



Cathedral Ruins, Tues 24 August; Attingham Park, Shrewsbury, Thurs 26 August; Kingsbury Water Park, Sutton Coldfield, Fri 3 September; Tamworth Assembly Rooms, Sat 4 September; The Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Sun 5 September

### The Tale Of Peter Rabbit And Benjamin Bunny

Renowned for touring new adaptations of classic texts, London-based Quantum Theatre bring to life Beatrix Potter's much-loved tale of two mischievous rabbits and their adventures in Mr McGregor's garden.

**Showing at:** The Wolseley Centre, Wolseley Bridge, Stafford, Sat 7 August; Bowring Park, Wellington, Shropshire, Wed 11 August; Beacon Park, Lichfield, Sun 22 August



### The Tempest

Folksy Theatre's multimedia adaptation of Shakespeare's final play fuses live performance, music and puppetry. Expect an evening of shipwrecks and supernatural magic.

**Showing at:** Biddulph Grange Gardens, Staffordshire, Fri 13 August; The Dorothy Clive Garden, Market Drayton, North Shropshire, Sat 14 August; Martineau Gardens, Edgbaston, Birmingham, Tues 17 August; Wightwick Manor Gardens, Wolverhampton, Thurs 19 - Fri 20 August

### Three Men In A Boat

Join in the fun as Giles Shenton expertly takes the helm and pilots you through the ridiculous tale of men behaving badly while messing about in boats!

**Showing at:** Beacon Park, Lichfield, Sun 8 August

### The Three Musketeers

Described as a 'swashbuckling adventure of epic proportions', Immersion Theatre's action-packed adaptation of Alexandre Dumas' classic tale combines 'excitement, danger and comedy'.

**Showing at:** Shrewsbury Castle, Sun 1 August; Alderford Lake, Whitchurch, North Shropshire, Mon 2 August; Birmingham Botanical Gardens, Wed 11 August

### Treasure Island

Quantum Theatre's swashbuckling new adaptation of the classic pirate tale promises an action-packed adventure for the whole family.

**Showing at:** Shrewsbury Castle, Tues 10 - Wed 11 August; Forge Mill Needle Museum, Worcestershire, Sat 28 August

### She Stoops To Conquer

Held in high regard for their outdoor renditions of classic comedies, Rain Or Shine Theatre Company here present Oliver Goldsmith's much-loved masterpiece.

**Showing at:** Honeybourne Village Hall, Evesham, Wed 4 August; Severn Valley Country Park, Bridgnorth, Shropshire, Fri 13 August; The Elms Hotel & Spa, Worcester, Thur 26 August; Evesham Golf Club, Worcestershire, Sun 29 August; Wenlock Priory, Shropshire, Fri 3 September; Stokesay Castle, Craven Arms, South Shropshire, Sat 4 September; The Dodington Lodge Hotel Lawn, Whitchurch, Shropshire, Sun 5 September

### Wonder With Grimm

An evening of 'enchanted' storytelling full of magic, puppetry and music, this Heartbreak Productions show takes audiences into the fantastical world of the Brothers Grimm - complete with altered endings and modern twists.

**Showing at:** Coventry Cathedral Ruins, Fri 6 August; Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Fri 3 September



### The Three Musketeers

Get set for some serious swashing of bucklers as three of literature's finest rapier-thrusting heroes comically cavort in the great outdoors this month, courtesy of the always-amusing Morgan & West.

**Showing at:** Coventry Assembly Festival Garden, Fri 13 - Sat 15 August; Sat 4 & Sun 5 September

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# Comedy And Capers

Seven shows to tickle your funny bone this autumn and beyond...



## Austentatious

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Fri 8 October

Austentatious once again visits the region, and Midlands theatre-goers are certain to welcome its return. Splendidly lighthearted and delightfully throwaway, the show has garnered plenty of praise since hitting the big time at the Edinburgh Fringe in 2012. The long-form improvisation sees its performers utilising audience suggestions in order to develop a play that not only pays homage to Jane Austen but also generates plenty of laughter along the way. No two shows are ever the same, with previous 'lost' masterpieces including Double o Darcy, Game Of Scones, The Wickham Man, Mansfield Shark and Strictly Come Darcy.

## Spontaneous Potter

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sun 10 October; The Glee Club, Birmingham, Mon 17 January

The Spontaneous Players are back with another evening of improvisation inspired by the wizarding world of Harry Potter. Building their show around a suggestion from the audience of a fanfiction title, the company are old hands at creating Harry magic. Previous improvised comedy plays include: Harry Potter And The Chamber Of Commerce; Harry Potter And The Neville Wears Prada; Harry Potter And The Rise Of The Planet Of The Snapes; and Harry Potter And The Struggle For A Decent Mortgage In This Economy.



## Cluedo

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Tues 15 - Sat 19 March; Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury Mon 11 - Sat 16 April; The Alexandra, Birmingham, Mon 2 - Sat 7 July; Malvern Theatres, Mon 20 - Sat 25 June; Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, Mon 11 - Sat 16 July 2022

Miss Scarlett, Professor Plum, Mrs Peacock, Reverend Green, Mrs White and Colonel Mustard are all present and correct in this fun theatrical endeavour based on the hugely popular boardgame of the same name (and the hit 1985 movie, Clue). The show's action unfolds at Boddy Manor, to where each of the characters has been invited, separately from one another, by Lord Boddy. Assembling at the manor on a dark and stormy night, it isn't long before confusion about their invitation gives way to unbridled fear and hysteria, as the dead bodies begin to mount up... Mark Bell, the director of the award-winning The Play That Goes Wrong and A Comedy About A Bank Robbery, is the man at the helm for this UK premiere.

## The Play What I Wrote

Birmingham Repertory Theatre, Sat 27 November 2021 - Sat 1 January 2022

This world-famous celebration of Morecambe & Wise was co-written by Birmingham Rep Artistic Director Sean Foley and debuted in Liverpool in 2001. Later that same year it hit the West End, with none other than Kenneth Branagh in the director's chair. Taking its inspiration from Eric & Ernie but paying homage to comedy double-acts in general, the production is probably best known for featuring surprise celebrity guests. The London run included appearances by, among others, Ralph Fiennes, Ewan McGregor and Bob Geldof. Its later Broadway run saw Kevin Kline, Alan Alda, Jeff Goldblum, Daniel Radcliffe and Roger Moore treading the boards.





## Bumper Blyton

Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, Sun 27 March

Marketed as 'Enid Blyton for grown-ups!', this brand-new show is an improvised parody inspired by the legendary writer and her bestselling children's books. As such, it's chock full of innuendo, features lashings of puns and boasts no small amount of ginger beer. There are cheeky tongue sandwiches to sample too, not to mention the definite possibility of lips being wrapped around a nice spotted dick... Presented by the brilliant improvisers behind hit stage production *Austentatious*, the show is performed 'on the hoof' and comes complete with vintage costume, music and songs.



## Crimes in Egypt

Stafford Gatehouse Theatre, Tues 7 September and Royal Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, Thurs 16 September

The award-winning New Old Friends theatre company's previous on-stage successes include the much-loved *Falcon's Malteser* and the Agatha Christie, Noel Coward and PG Wodehouse-inspired *Crimes On The Coast*. So if you caught either of those critically acclaimed productions, you'll no doubt be looking forward with eager anticipation to *Crimes In Egypt*.

This latest comedy adventure features Belgian 'detective extraordinaire' Artemis Arinae, who finds himself investigating a gruesome murder or several while taking a holiday cruise on the river Nile. Along the way, a versatile cast of four brings to life all manner of quirky and curious characters, from lascivious lawyers and crooked captains to fastidious physicians and feuding femme fatales.

Expect a fast-paced and funny evening of absorbing theatre and dastardly crime.

## The Play That Goes Wrong

Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, Mon 13 - Sat 18 September: Birmingham Hippodrome, Tues 26 - 30 October 2021

Mischief Theatre Company's much-loved show makes a welcome return to the region. For those not in the know, the play focuses on the Cornley Polytechnic Drama Society's attempt to put on a 1920s-set murder-mystery. The only trouble is, the bumbling thespians are more than a little accident-prone - so much so that it can't even be guaranteed they'll reach the curtain call!...





## Films released in August...



TOP FAMILY PICK

### Paw Patrol: The Movie

CERT U (88 mins)

With the voices of **Iain Armitage, Will Brisbin, Ron Pardo, Marsai Martin, Yara Shahidi, Kim Kardashian West, Daw Shepard, Jimmy Kimmel, Tyler Perry**  
Directed by **Cal Brunker**

Fans of pre-school television show Paw Patrol should brace themselves for a bumper

helping of their favourite marvellous muts this month, when this much-anticipated movie version hits the big screen. The ever-popular TV show focuses on the character of a young boy named Ryder, who leads a crew of search & rescue dogs as they endeavour to keep safe the shoreside community of Adventure Bay and the

surrounding areas. But all is not well in Adventure City, where the evil Humdinger has become mayor and is determined to wreak havoc on the bustling metropolis. Armed with exciting new gadgets and gear, it falls to Paw Patrol - ably assisted by a savvy dachshund named Liberty - to save the day.

**Released Fri 13 August**

### The Green Knight

CERT 15 (125 mins)

Starring **Dev Patel, Alicia Vikander, Joel Edgerton, Sarita Choudhury, Sean Harris, Katie Dickie** Directed by **David Lowery**

Slumdog Millionaire star Dev Patel heads the cast in this cinematic version of late-14th century poem Sir Gawain And The Green Knight.

Marketed as an epic medieval fantasy, the movie follows King Arthur's headstrong nephew, Gawain, as he heads off in search of a gigantic and emerald-in-colour tree-like creature - the Green Knight of the title - who has issued a bizarre challenge to all the knights of the kingdom... Director David Lowery previously helmed The Old Man And The Gun, Robert Redford's final film before announcing his retirement.

**Released Fri 6 August**



### Minamata

CERT 15 (115 mins)

Starring **Akiko Iwase, Johnny Depp, Katherine Jenkins, Bill Nighy, Minami, Tadanobu Asano**  
Directed by **Andrew Levitas**

The Minamata of the title is a town on Japan's south-western coast, where the Chisso corporation's dumping of mercury waste into the water not only poisoned the fish but also the people who subsequently ate them, causing terrible disfigurements. US wartime and Life magazine photojournalist W Eugene Smith determined to capture on camera the suffering of the town's blighted citizens. Most famous among

the photos he took is 1971's Tomoko Uemura In Her Bath, a black-and-white image showing a mother cradling her severely deformed daughter in a traditional Japanese bath house.

Johnny Depp takes the lead role of Smith, presenting him during his declining years as a washed-up creative ripe for redemption. Depp does a good job of it, too.

While the movie never hits the greatest of heights, it has more than enough muscle and style to ensure that its real-life story of toxic-chemical pollution lives long in the memory.

**Released Fri 6 August**





## Free Guy CERT 15 (115 mins)

Starring **Ryan Reynolds, Jodie Comer, Taika Waititi, Lil Rel Howery, Joe Keery, Utkarsh Ambudkar** Directed by **Shawn Levy**

Killing Eve star Jodie Comer joins Deadpool's Ryan Reynolds in this sci-fi action comedy about a bank teller named Guy who

discovers he's actually a non-player character in an open-world video game. Not content with a bit-part, he decides to become a hero in his very own story, and soon finds himself in a race against time to save the world...

**Released Fri 13 August**

## The Courier CERT 12 (112 mins)

Starring **Benedict Cumberbatch, Merab Ninidze, Rachel Brosnahan, Vladimir Chuprikov, James Schofield** Directed by **Dominic Cooke**

The Courier is based on the fascinating real-life story of how a British businessman played his part in helping to avert the dreaded nuclear-war outcome of the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Benedict Cumberbatch plays engineer Greville Maynard Wynne, whose regular trips to Eastern Europe saw him being recruited by MI6 to transport top-secret information to London from Soviet agent Oleg Penkovsky. Cumberbatch gives a solid and impressively nifty performance as the out-of-his-depth Brit, in a movie that very much holds its own when it comes to period spy thrillers.

**Released Fri 13 August**



## Reminiscence CERT tbc (148 mins)

Starring **Rebecca Ferguson, Hugh Jackman, Thandiwe Newton, Natalie Martinez, Angela Sarafyan, Cliff Curtis** Directed by **Lisa Joy**



Writer Lisa Joy's feature directorial debut is a science-fiction thriller set in a near-future Miami and starring Hugh Jackman as Nick Bannister, a hard-as-nails war veteran who specialises in providing clients with the chance to access lost memories.

Life suddenly takes an unexpected turn for Nick when he meets a woman named Mae (Rebecca Ferguson), and a passionate love affair ensues.

But when Mae is implicated, by a client's memories, in a series of violent crimes, Nick finds himself having to delve deep into the past to find out the truth about his mysterious new lover...

**Released Wed 18 August**

## Candyman CERT 15

Starring **Yahya Abdul-Mateen II, Teyonah Parris, Nathan Stewart-Jarrett, Colman Domingo, Kyle Kaminsky** Directed by **Nia DaCosta**

This supernatural slasher pic is a direct sequel to the 1992 movie of the same name, and the fourth film in the Candyman franchise.

With his painting career on the brink of stalling, visual artist Anthony McCoy embarks on a dangerous exploration of a word-of-mouth ghost story about a supernatural killer with a hook for a hand. The Candyman can easily be summoned by those who dare to repeat his name five times into a mirror - but is Anthony about to unleash dark forces that will lead to an unravelling of his own sanity?...

**Released Fri 27 August**



## The Nest CERT 12a (107 mins)

Starring **Jude Law, Carrie Coon, Oona Roche, Charlie Shotwell, Tanya Allen, Tattiawna Jones** Directed by **Sean Durkin**

Jude Law and Carrie Coon both impress in this slow-burn 1980s-set movie from director Sean Durkin, whose debut feature - 2011's psychodrama, Martha Marcy May Marlene - scored a massive hit at Sundance.

Law plays Rory, a British commodities broker who convinces his American wife, Alison (Coon), that a move to the UK would enhance their financial clout. Alison is unsure but agrees to take the plunge, relocating the family to a country mansion in Surrey. But as time moves on, she finds herself increasingly concerned that her money-focused husband may have bitten off more than he can chew...

**Released Fri 27 August**







## Mary Newcomb: Nature's Canvas

Compton Verney Art Gallery & Park, Warwickshire, until Sun 5 September

The most extensive-ever survey of Mary Newcomb's work, *Nature's Canvas* shows at Compton Verney 99 years after the artist's birth. Self-taught and, for the main part, living in rural East Anglia, Mary was also a natural scientist, a farmer and a writer, with her written output being closely aligned with her art. Focusing, in her beautifully subtle paintings, on the rituals of the unfolding seasons and the countryside around her, she was

eager for people to take time to stop and appreciate the natural world.

"In our haste," she once wrote in her diary, "in this century, we may not give time to pause and look - and may pass on our way unheeding."

The exhibition features more than 50 of Mary's works, presented alongside extracts from her writing and works by artists who inspired her.

## Living Memory Project: The Black Country

The New Art Gallery, Walsall, until Sun 26 September

"To talk on record, to tell our life's story and give meaning to one's personal and treasured photographs is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," says Geoff Broadway, director of the Living Memory Project. The exhibition follows on from a four-year engagement with residents of Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton which has seen everyday life stories and personal photographic collections being recorded, archived and celebrated.

"The experience can be at once emotional, cathartic, enlightening and ultimately life-affirming," continues Geoff. "To share these stories and photographs with others - online, in print, and through exhibitions - is to make the personal public, and to invite empathy, understanding and connection. These private stories and treasured images become part of our collective, cultural memory."

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## The Viewer And The Viewed

The Barber Institute of Fine Arts, Birmingham, until Sun 19 September

The development in the 18th and 19th centuries of Britain's tourist industry, allied to the opening up of national landscape for people other than just landowners to enjoy, led to an increase in popularity of paintings featuring picturesque views.

This summertime show, which includes works by Gainsborough and Turner,

invites viewers to explore some of the landscape paintings of the period from a socio-political perspective.

The exhibition takes a look at how compositional elements of the featured paintings either reinforced or, at times, questioned who was given access to the land and, consequently, to political power.

## Fantasy Or Reality? Wolverhampton Art Gallery, until Sun 26 September

The connections between fantasy and art are explored in this sure-to-be-popular exhibition, which takes its inspiration from another current installation at the art gallery (Fantasy Kingdom, showing at the venue until early next month).

Witches, spirits, knights, dragons, deities

and demons abound in a display that features a wide selection of artwork, the genesis of which can be found in folkloric tales, fantasy writing and the famous legend of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table.



## UKBFTOG: We Are Here

Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham, until Mon 30 August

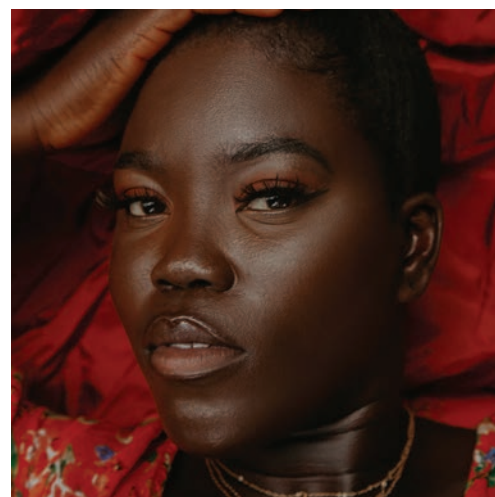
Black female identity, Black Lives Matter protests and isolation & freedom during lockdown are just three of the subjects under consideration in this touring exhibition by UK Black Female Photographers (UKBFTOG).

Featuring work by both emerging and established creatives, the exhibition is built around the theme of 'a colourful celebration of life'.

The UKBFTOG community has been nurtured by Gemella Binns, who decided four years ago to put out a social-media call to other black female photographers, inviting them to get in touch. The group now has more than 300 members.

"The photography industry is dominated by men," says Gemella, "so it was extremely difficult to find other individuals like myself who could relate to the experiences of black women."

"Being the only black female photographer in a room of your peers can feel very lonely and intimidating, but we no longer have to feel like this because of the UKBFTOG community."



## Schrecker 3 Generations Exhibition: A Retrospective Art Show

Granary Art Gallery, Weston Park, Shropshire, Mon 2 - Tues 31 August

Work by three generations of a family of artists is brought together in this retrospective.

Oil paintings, drawings, giclees and greetings cards by the late Dorie Schrecker - to whom the exhibition is dedicated - are presented alongside sculpture by her son, Jeremy.

Oil paintings and photographs by the son of Dorie's first husband Bruno are also included, as is a small selection of portrait photographs by 91-year-old Bruno himself.







# FUN 4 KIDS

## FOUR GREAT REASONS TO VISIT IRONBRIDGE THIS SUMMER

If you're looking for ways to keep your youngsters entertained over the school summer holidays, then check out what's on offer at four of Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust's family-friendly venues...

### BLISTS HILL VICTORIAN TOWN

Set over 52 acres, Blists Hill is the biggest of the Trust's 10 attractions and is very much an interactive experience. There's a general drapers, a blacksmiths, a pharmacy (also home to a particularly gruesome dentist's room!), a bank and a pub, not to mention a fried fish dealer, a baker, a sweet shop, a funfair, a funicular train and a clay mine ride!

A new addition for 2021 is the **Madeley Wood Company Outdoor Adventure** - an open-air woodland space where youngsters can let off steam. Inspired by the area's rich mining past, the outdoor adventure features wheelchair-accessible multi-level themed buildings, immersive play areas, a toddler zone with a faux mine-cart track, play buildings, a slide and a miniature zip-line. Elevated walkways above the woodland floor, a log-style basket swing, a seesaw and a lookout tower with a coal chute slide also feature.

In addition to the themed day-to-day activities taking place in the Town, Blists Hill also hosts an eclectic programme of weekend events throughout the year.

Coming up in August is: Steam Weekend (7 & 8 August); Victorian Dog Show (14 to 22 August) and Dress Like A Victorian Weekend (28 to 30 August).

### ENGINUITY

The Trust's science & engineering centre has been given a 'massive refresh'. Packed with new interactive exhibits that respond to movement, and featuring heaps of table-top experiments, the family-friendly attraction also boasts a brand-new sensory room themed around the subject of 'industry'. There's also a new storytelling space, where you can learn more about the history of the area, while a new interactive wall reveals the history and personal stories of people who worked in the Gorge in bygone eras. Budding architects can follow in the footsteps of Abraham Darby by creating their very own replica of the famous Iron Bridge, while an early-years activity area features a huge floor map of the Gorge, to assist younger visitors in building bridges and structures.

Enginuity's ever-popular water feature and steam loco still form part of the immersive family offer.

### JACKFIELD TILE MUSEUM

Available to enjoy this month, Tile Decorating Workshops have been a staple of Jackfield's activity programme for many a year. Visitors of all ages can take inspiration from their favourite artist, or use one of the many templates provided, to create a work of art using the Victorian tube lining technique - a bit like icing a cake. Add a glaze and leave at the museum to be fired. Finished works can then either be collected or posted. Tiles cost between £5 and £20 each.

A tour around Jackfield's galleries is a must. As well as items produced by some of the

very best designers, the museum also boasts numerous set-ups, including a recreated pub, a tube station and a church, each showcasing fine examples of tiles in situ.

### COALPORT CHINA MUSEUM

There's a new interactive trail to enjoy at Coalport this summer. Magic Teacups aims to encourage young children to engage with the site's historically important exhibitions. To help them do so, the information being presented to them is delivered in the form of rhyme or song, using language specifically aimed at children aged seven and younger. Coalport also features a new family gallery, complete with a roleplay Victorian corner, where little ones can play with a period washing set - including a washboard and a Victorian-style kettle.

A range of activities linked to the site's collections is also available in the gallery. Children can create their very own Broseley Dragon out of paper, design a light box and, at certain times, make models out of clay.

The six other museums in the Trust's portfolio are: **Coalbrookdale Museum of Iron, Museum of the Gorge, Darby Houses, Tar Tunnel, The Ironbridge Toll House and Broseley Pipe Works.**

Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust offers a great-value Annual Passport Ticket, allowing multiple return visits to each of the museums during a 12-month period. Single-entry tickets are also available.

**For further information on all of the Trust's venues, visit: [Ironbridge.org.uk](https://www.ironbridge.org.uk)**





WARWICK  
CASTLE

& KNIGHT'S VILLAGE

# BIGGEST SUMMER IN HISTORY



BOOK ONLINE





## Lego Ninjago

Legoland Discovery Centre, Birmingham,  
until Sun 5 September

Celebrating 10 years of Lego Ninjago, Legoland Discovery Centre Birmingham is this month hosting an exclusive AR digital experience, giving

children the chance to enter Ninjago and complete exciting challenges alongside their favourite characters.

Other Ninjago attractions at the venue include a special 4D cinema experience, the chance to build your own Ninjago creation, and meet-and-greets with Ninjago hero Lloyd.



## Dino Summer

National Forest Adventure Farm, Staffordshire,  
until Wed 1 September

Dinosaurs are once again taking over the National Forest Adventure Farm this school summer holiday. The dino-themed family event

sees interactive dinosaurs, from triceratops to T-Rex, roaming the land, with the farm's famous maize maze also following the dino theme. And as a special bonus, little ones can even learn how to train a jurassic creature - although keeping one at home as a pet afterwards may prove to be more than a little tricky!

## BBC Gardeners' World Live

NEC, Birmingham,  
Thurs 26 - Sun 29 August

For the first time ever, BBC Gardeners' World Live steps outdoors for a 'special edition'. Highlights include show gardens, the BBC Good Food Market, live entertainment, and appearances by numerous special guests, including Monty Don and Adam Frost.



## Battle Proms

Ragley Hall, Warwickshire,  
Sat 7 August

Taking place on the lakeside at Ragley, Battle Proms brings together music, Spitfires, cannons, cavalry and fireworks. Led by Douglas Coombes MBE and compered by BBC presenter Pam Rhodes, New English Concert Orchestra will perform a full two-hour programme of classical music. There's also a spectacular freefall demonstration by The Red Devils, a dazzling Spitfire display, and groundshaking live fire from more than 200 cannons to enjoy. The night ends with a firework display and a singalong, providing festival-goers with the opportunity to wrap their vocal chords around time-honoured Proms favourites Jerusalem, Land Of Hope And Glory, and Rule, Britannia!.







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Birmingham science museum

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## War Of The Roses Live

Warwick Castle, until Sun 5 September

Perilous stunt riders, fearless jousting and state-of-the-art special-effects bring the iconic history of the War of the Roses to life this month at Warwick Castle.

It's the year 1455, and rival houses the House of Lancaster and the House of York are set to clash for the coveted prize of the throne of England... Featuring horseback battles and sword fighting, this action-packed live show is sure to entertain the whole family. The big question is, though... which house will you side with?



## Summer Family Activities

British Motor Museum, Gaydon, Warwickshire, until Thurs 2 September

The British Motor Museum is inviting visitors to explore the subject of nature this school summer holiday.

With many car designers and engineers having taken their inspiration from the natural world, the venue has devised a special 'nature trail' aimed at allowing families to explore all manner

of fun facts. Along the way, visitors may well encounter Annie and Alex, two enthusiastic costumed explainers who'll be on hand with plenty of fascinating information about cars which have been involved in jungle adventures or travelled to exciting parts of the world. Visitors can also check out Factor Us In, a new exhibition telling stories not only about the motor industry itself but also about the people who've worked and lived around it.

## Ta Very Much!

Black Country Living Museum, Dudley, until Sun 5 September

This entertaining and educational event sees the Black Country Living Museum paying tribute to individuals from history who made an impact on society.

From big changes brought about by reformers and philanthropists, through to smaller acts of kindness in people's everyday lives, the event is a celebration of the way in which Black Country communities have come together to support each other across the centuries.



## The Wonderful Water Show

Thinktank Science Museum, Birmingham, until Tues 31 August

Available to enjoy on Monday to Friday throughout the summer holiday, Thinktank's Science Garden offers families the chance to submerge themselves in the subject of 'water'. From blowing bubbles to mixing things up - and making plenty of splashes along the way - this H<sub>2</sub>O-happy drop-in show is suitable for all ages.





# THE GREAT BRITISH STAYCATION

July and August



A poster for 'BBC Gardeners' World Live Special Edition'. It features three hosts (a woman and two men) standing in front of a garden. The poster is framed by a border of colorful flowers. A pink banner in the top right corner says 'Book early to avoid disappointment!'. A blue circle on the left says 'Adapted outdoor layout!'. A wooden sign on the right says 'Featuring the good food Market'. The text 'BBC Gardeners' World Live Special Edition' is prominently displayed. Below it, it says 'Sponsored by: LEXUS'. At the bottom, it says '26 - 29 August Birmingham NEC'.

10% off\* Thu, Fri and Sun tickets, quote WHATSON | [bbcgardenersworldlive.com](http://bbcgardenersworldlive.com)

Book in confidence knowing that, should the event be unable to go ahead, tickets can be transferred to a future BBC Gardeners' World event or refunded.

\*10% off advance adult/over 65s standard tickets. Offers not valid on Saturday tickets or with any other offer. Ends 03/08/21. £3.50 transaction fee per e-ticket order and £4.50 per postal ticket order.

\*\*Refunds exclude the transaction fee and See Tickets Refund Protection cost. Details correct at time of print. The Gardeners' World logo is a trademark of the BBC. © BBC. The Good Food trade mark is used under licence from Immediate Media Company London Limited. Organised by Immediate Live (trading name of River Street Events Ltd).





## Victorian Dog Show

Blists Hill Victorian Town, Ironbridge,  
Sat 14 - Sun 22 August

Visitors of the four-legged and barking variety are in the spotlight at Blists Hill this month, as the popular Victorian Town hosts a week of dog-themed activities for furry friends and their

families to enjoy.

Visiting dogs can take part in an assault course, enter a mini dog show - complete with the chance to win a prize - and participate in plenty of other canine-related fun across the site. Indeed, there could well be so much going on that paws-ing to catch their breath may not be an option...

## Historic Rally Festival

Weston Park, Shropshire,  
Sun 22 August

Weston Park plays host to the first Historic Rally Festival of its kind in the UK this summer.

Famous rallying stages will return to the park featuring Group B rally cars. The fastest, most powerful rally cars ever built, Group Bs were banned from competitive racing in 1986.

The demonstration drive will see 80 specially selected vehicles taking on the famous stages around the 1,000-acre estate, including the ever-popular water splash.



## Staffordshire County Show

Staffordshire County Showground,  
Wed 25 & Thurs 26 August

This two-day agricultural show includes competitions for livestock & horses, 400-plus trade stands, and a 'country pursuits' area featuring everything from falconry displays to a ferret roadshow. Although agriculture is very much at the heart of the event, there's plenty else available to enjoy too, including a motorcycle display team, showjumping, a craft show and live music.



## BRICKLIVE Fantasy Kingdom

Wolverhampton Art Gallery, until Sun 5  
September

Medieval characters and mythical inhabitants abound in this fun family show recounting the gripping tale of a gallant quest. Featuring life-size models created by brick artists - using in



excess of 500,000 toy bricks - and an accompanying audio story, the journey starts in a grand castle, moves through an enchanted woodland and finally deposits visitors in the lair of a none-too-friendly dragon... The chance to build your own model and decipher magical runes further adds to the show's considerable appeal.







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and do at  
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Marvel at our  
Battery Electric  
Milk Floats and  
Bread Vans



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on August 29th and 30th**

**EVENT DAY ADMISSION PRICES**

Adults £7.00 Child (5-16 years) £3.50 Family £18.00 (2 Adults + 2 Children)

Pre-booking is recommended at [www.wythall.org.uk/booking](http://www.wythall.org.uk/booking)

**Free bus service  
from Wythall  
Station at 11am  
and 12 noon,  
connecting with  
trains from  
Birmingham  
and Stratford**

**ADMISSION PRICES: Adults £5.00 Child (5-16 years) £2.50 Family £12.00 (2 Adults + 2 Children)**

**Transport Museum Wythall, Chapel Lane, Wythall, Worcestershire B47 6JA**

★ We're just off M42 Junction 3, near to Becketts Farm ★

Website: [www.wythall.org.uk](http://www.wythall.org.uk)

Email: [enquiries@wythall.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@wythall.org.uk)

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## Woodland Tribe

Compton Verney Art Gallery & Park, Warwickshire,  
Wed 11 - Sun 15 and Wed 18 - Sun 22 August

Kids can get hands-on with adventure play in Compton Verney's woodland this month.

The UK 'masters of constructive play', Woodland Tribe, will be helping families to co-create structures and play-spaces using real tools, coordinating the sessions with the aim of encouraging children's imaginations to run wild.



## The Great Exhibition

Lichfield Cathedral, Staffordshire,  
Thurs 19 - Mon 30 August

Making a welcome return to the cathedral, The Great Exhibition this year explores ways in which science has shaped the past and is likely to

influence the future.

The exhibition has been created by award-winning art company Luxmuralis and features internal son-et-lumiere. The multisensory experience will transport visitors through elements, molecules, DNA and the greatest discoveries of humanity.

## Geronimo Festival

Arley Hall, Northwich, Cheshire,  
Fri 20 - Mon 23 August

Described by one national newspaper as 'Glastonbury for kids', Geronimo Festival features a wide selection of activities and attractions for youngsters of all ages to enjoy, from tree climbing to graffiti workshops.

Special guests include TV's Dr Ranj and Sam & Mark, with musical entertainment provided by Craig Charles, Bez and Clint Boon. If you fancy the full weekend experience, camping and glamping options are both available.



## Science Week

Park Hall Farm, Oswestry,  
Shropshire, Mon 16 - Sun 22 August

Grandolph the Wizard has plenty of fun experiments under his hat - and he'll be sharing a good few of them with sure-to-be-awestruck youngsters during Park Hall Farm's educational and entertaining Science Week event.

The chance for families to conduct their very own experiments in the science lab also features, as does the opportunity to join a rocket-making class - surely a perfect pastime for kids with an eye on the heavens.

And given that Science Week tickets include admission to the farm as well, visitors can also spend some of their day meeting and greeting the farm animals and exploring the on-site play areas.



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## Summer Of Fun'n'Flight

RAF Museum, Cosford, until Mon 30 August

The sky's the limit with this action-packed programme of summertime entertainment at RAF Museum Cosford.

High-flying attractions include a climbing wall, trampolines and bungee trampolines. Each item will be available for 10 days before being replaced by the next one. This means that

families who fancy stopping off at the venue more than once during the month can plan their return visit(s) in a way that ensures they have a brand-new experience to sample.

Budding explorers can have a go at caving in a different and unexpected way too, by virtue of the Cavebus, while other attractions at the venue include a nine-hole miniature golf course, a flight simulator and a virtual reality zone.

## Legendary Joust

Kenilworth Castle, Warwickshire, Sat 7 & Sun 8 August

The legendary knights of Kenilworth Castle here compete for honour and glory in a weekend of serious jousting! Visitors can also explore the encampment, listen to medieval music, meet the castle's jester and learn about cookery and crafts from centuries ago.



## Pirate Summer

Tudor World Museum, Stratford-upon-Avon, until September

Visitors to Tudor World Museum can certainly expect a swash-buckling experience at the venue this month, courtesy of a whole host of pirate-themed activities. Not only will each young pirate be given a treasure map to help them find all the contraband before the other pirates, they will also receive some booty and an official pirate certificate at the end of their quest.

And that's not all... Visitors can explore the exhibits too, not to mention try on hats, lie in a bed, write with a quill and sample some of Elizabethan England's most frightful aromas!



## The Great British Staycation

Severn Valley Railway, until Sun 5 September

You can sample an old-style summer holiday when you visit the Severn Valley Railway this month.

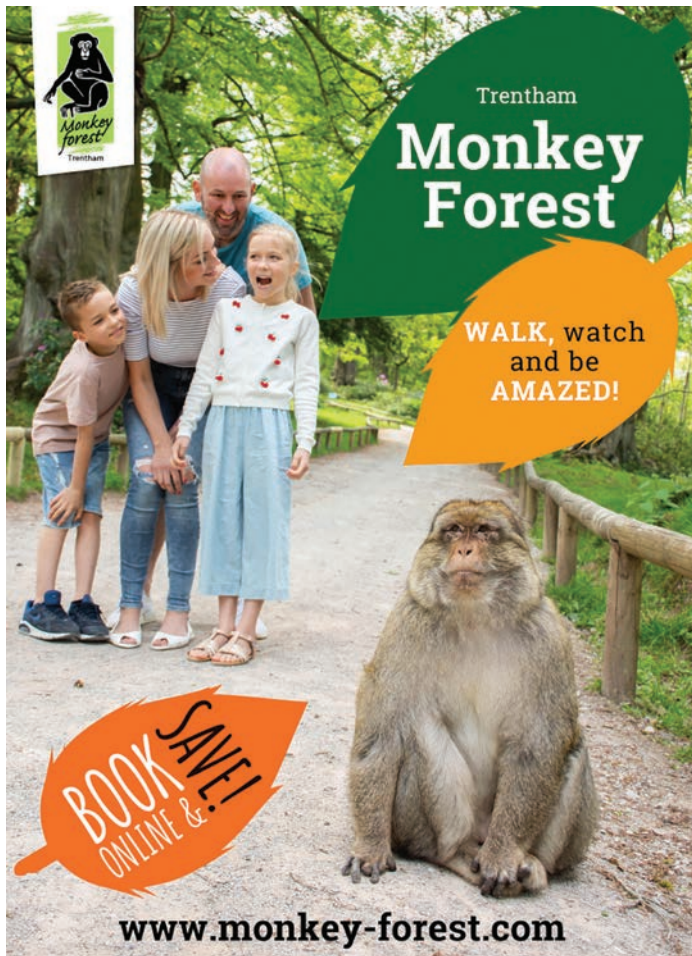
Start your journey at Kidderminster or Bridgnorth and step back in time for a full day

of family fun.

Attractions include a huge indoor beach, donkey rides, Punch & Judy shows, crazy golf and interactive summer stage shows.

The Engine House will be open throughout the month for visitors to explore, providing a fantastic opportunity to check out the railway's reserve collection of full-size steam locomotives at close quarters.





Trentham

# Monkey Forest

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[www.monkey-forest.com](http://www.monkey-forest.com)



**BRITISH MOTOR MUSEUM**

22 July - 2 Sept

Family activities exploring nature in the collection this summer

Austin Ant

Jacob, 6.  
Future car designer

[britishmotormuseum.co.uk](http://britishmotormuseum.co.uk)  
J12 M40, Gaydon, Warwickshire, CV35 0BJ



**WARWICK CASTLE**  
& KNIGHT'S VILLAGE

**BOOK ONLINE**

**BIGGEST SUMMER IN HISTORY**

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## National Sea Life Centre

The Water's Edge, Brindleyplace, Birmingham, B1 2HL  
Website: [visitsealife.com/birmingham](http://visitsealife.com/birmingham)

As well as featuring more than 2,000 creatures - including a colony of gentoo penguins, black-tip reef sharks and a giant green sea turtle - National Sea Life Centre Birmingham is now also home to a world-class rescue facility. As part of a pioneering education & conservation project, the centre welcomed the UK's first ever sea otters, Ozzy and Olain, early last year. Other Sea Life Centre highlights include the 4D cinema, the zebra shark in Shark Lagoon and the Clownfish Kingdom tunnel.

The centre also boasts the UK's only 360° Ocean Tunnel, in which visitors can marvel at hundreds of underwater creatures swimming both overhead and underneath, as they enjoy the truly unique experience of 'walking through the sea'!

**PRICES:** £20.65 advanced booking, £18 parent & toddler ticket

## West Midland Safari & Leisure Park

Spring Grove, Bewdley, Worcestershire, DY12 1LF  
Website: [wmssp.co.uk](http://wmssp.co.uk) Tel: 01299 402114

West Midland Safari & Leisure Park offers a great opportunity to enjoy seeing wild animals roaming freely - and to do so from the safety of your own car! The 100-acre venue is home to a variety of exotic and unusual species, many of which you're sure to encounter during the course of the four-mile drive-through safari. An adventure theme park - Land Of The Living Dinosaurs - and an Ice Age attraction also feature.

**PRICES:** Adults £25, concessions £22, children £20, under-threes go free

**NEW FOR 2021:** The park has opened eight exclusive safari lodges and two premium cottages, designed to provide visitors with 'an immersive overnight wildlife experience like no other'. For more information, head to [safari-lodges.co.uk](http://safari-lodges.co.uk)



## National Forest Adventure Farm

Tatenhill, Burton-upon-Trent, Staffordshire, DE13 9SJ  
adventurefarm.co.uk Tel: 01283 533933

This family-run attraction boasts 40 acres of safe outdoor space to explore. Visitors can take a stroll around the outdoor paddocks and barns, get up-close and personal with a range of animals, or hop on board a tractor for a ride around the site. There are plenty of animal demonstrations to check out, too - everything from pony grooming to egg collecting - as well as a host of other attractions to enjoy, among which are pedal go-karts, crazy golf, water splash-out and a JCB Big Dig Zone.

**PRICES:** £14.99, under-tuos go free, senior citizens £11.99

**SUMMER EVENTS:** Dino Summer is back at the venue, complete with meet & greets, dino training and plenty more. Check out page 43 for more information.





## Trentham Monkey Forest

Trentham Estate, Stone Rd, Tittensor, Stoke-on-Trent, ST12 9HR  
Website: [monkey-forest.com](http://monkey-forest.com) Tel: 01782 659 845

Home to 140 Barbary macaques, Trentham Monkey Forest provides an enjoyable day out for all the family. From an easily accessible pathway around the forest, visitors can watch this endangered breed going about their business, just as they would in the wild.

Check out the feeding talks that take place on an hourly basis - and keep an eye out for the nine new babies who've been born at the site this summer.

An adventure play area, meadow walk (seasonal), hidden trail and 'jungle shop' also feature, while those wanting a bite to eat can head to the Banana Cafe.

There are also on-site picnic areas for visitors wishing to take along their own food.

**PRICES:** Adults £9, children £7, under-threes go free

**NEW FOR 2021:** A brand-new interactive monkey-themed play area for little ones, featuring monkey bars, a climbing wall and balance beams.



## Hatton Adventure World

Dark Lane, Hatton, Warwick, CV35 8XA  
Website: [adventure.hattonworld.com](http://adventure.hattonworld.com) Tel: 01926 843411

An array of indoor and outdoor activities awaits visitors to this popular 100-acre Warwickshire attraction. Youngsters are sure to enjoy participating in the venue's nature trail, watching Zoobee's Family Theatre, or cheering the contestants in Hatton's Sheep Racing Grand National. For older visitors, Laser Combat and the nearby Tulleys Escape Rooms & Games are sure to be a hit. If you fancy a retail fix, then check out Hatton Shopping Village, featuring a wealth of independent shops, a cafe, a bar and plenty of outdoor seating.

**PRICES:** £16.95, under-twos go free

**SUMMER EVENTS:** The attraction is hosting Dinosaurs Alive for the first time this summer, providing children with the chance to enjoy a dinosaur show.

54 [whatsonlive.co.uk](http://whatsonlive.co.uk)

## Avoncroft Museum of Historic Buildings

Stoke Heath, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, B60 4JR  
Website: [avoncroft.org.uk](http://avoncroft.org.uk) Tel: 01527 831363 / 831886

Spread over 19 acres of Worcestershire countryside, England's first open-air museum covers in excess of 700 years of Midlands history. The site includes a collection of 20-plus historic buildings, ranging in date from Worcester Cathedral's 14th century Guesten Hall roof, to a post-Second World War Birmingham prefab.

Visitors to Avoncroft can also enjoy a wildflower meadow, period gardens and a traditional cider & perry orchard.

If checking out the aforementioned attractions works up an appetite, the museum also boasts an award-winning tearoom, complete with a selection of cakes and light lunches made with fresh, local produce (some of which comes from the venue's very own period gardens).

**PRICES:** Adults £10, children (aged five to 17) £6, concessions £8

**SUMMER EVENTS:** Avoncroft has a variety of events running throughout the summer holidays, including a Vintage Seaside (Mon 16 - Sun 22 Aug) and a Games & Models Week (Mon 23 - Sun 31 Aug)







## Alton Towers

Alton, Staffordshire, ST10 4DB Website: [altontowers.com](http://altontowers.com)  
Tel: 01538 704096

A theme park, waterpark and hotel complex rolled into one, Alton Towers features some of the country's best-known white-knuckle rides - including the UK's first wooden rollercoaster in over 20 years. Thrill-seekers can scream their way into Oblivion, brave the 14 loops of The Smiler and speed to 100kph on Rita.

There's also an impressive selection of rides and attractions for younger visitors to enjoy. These include Peter Rabbit Hippity Hop, Go Jetters Vroomsters Zoom Ride and Octonauts Rollercoaster Adventure. Youngsters wanting a more serene experience should check out the In The Night Garden Magical Boat Ride. Regular children's shows also feature at the venue throughout the day.

**PRICES:** £34 advanced day pass, £16.50 advanced waterpark day pass

**NEW FOR 2021:** Guests can experience a nostalgic spin-back to the 1980s with the arrival of Mixtape, Roller Disco and Funk'n'Fly, which make up the Retro Squad. The trio of rides will give guests a blast from the past as they bounce, slide, fly and enjoy funkythrills.

## Magic Alley

Unit 23a Bell Court Shopping Centre, Stratford-upon-Avon, CV37 6EX  
Website: [magicalleystratford.com](http://magicalleystratford.com) Tel: 01789 290969

Magic Alley is two visitor destinations in one - a large retail emporium and a 'magical attraction' called The Enchanted Manor. The emporium sells everything from magic spells and steampunk figurines to incense, candles, puzzles, quirky books, board games and curious gifts. There are fairies and fairy houses, unicorns and dragons, vintage toys & games and Harry Potter wands. In The Enchanted Manor, meanwhile, visitors can explore the magical world of dragons, fairies, wizards, time travel and pirates. And who knows, you may even meet the odd unicorn...

**PRICES:** It's free to browse and shop in the emporium, and £8 to experience The Enchanted Treasure Trail.

**NEW FOR 2021:** Solve magical riddles and puzzles as you move through all the different themed rooms, finding treasure along the Enchanted Treasure Trail. The trail is available to enjoy until next month.



## Warwick Castle

Warwick, Warwickshire, CV34 6AH  
website: [warwick-castle.com](http://warwick-castle.com) Tel: 01926 406610

Boasting history tours, detailed exhibits, programmed activities and 64 acres of landscaped garden, Warwick Castle offers a winning combination of attractions that makes for a thoroughly enjoyable family day out. Highlights include the Horrible Histories Maze, the medieval rebuchet, and the Falconer's Quest birds of prey show. Brand-new for 2021 is Zog And The Quest For The Golden Star.

**PRICES:** £20 one-day entry, £18 parent & toddler ticket (online only)

**SUMMER EVENTS:** Live-action show Wars Of The Roses can be enjoyed throughout the school summer holiday. Head to page 45 to find out more.





STAFFORD UPON AVON'S  
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## Severn Valley Railway

Kidderminster: Station Dr, Kidderminster, DY10 1QX  
Bridgnorth: 2 Hollybush Rd, Bridgnorth, WV16 4AX  
Tel: 01299 401776 Website: [svr.co.uk](http://svr.co.uk)

Operating mainly steam-hauled passenger trains between Bridgnorth, Bewdley and Kidderminster, this much-loved railway transports visitors on a journey of about 16 miles along the beautiful Severn Valley. The journey includes a stop-off at the Engine House Visitor Centre at Highley, where visitors can check out massive locomotives, enjoy themed exhibitions of unique railway vehicles and meet Gordon the Blue Engine. Those starting their journey at Bridgnorth will also have the option of stop-offs at Bewdley and Kidderminster, the latter of which boasts a railway museum.

**PRICES:** Reserved table for one or two people, £50. Family compartment - any family combination up to six people, including children aged four to 15 - £100.

**SUMMER EVENTS:** Families can enjoy a trip to the Great British Staycation over the summer holidays (see page 51 for more information). Grown-ups can sample the special Gin Train and Wine Train events taking place across the summer.



## British Motor Museum

Banbury Road, Gaydon, Warwickshire, CV35 0BJ  
Website: [britishmotormuseum.co.uk](http://britishmotormuseum.co.uk) Tel: 01926 641188

Home to the world's largest collection of historic British vehicles, the British Motor Museum tells the stories of the people and places behind the cars. Themed trails, touch-screen exhibits, an interactive zone, costumed guided tours, and a varied programme of themed activities make for an inspiring day out.

**PRICES:** Adults £14.50, children £9, under-fives go free

**NEW FOR 2021:** Discover the fascinating stories of West Midlands' motor-industry communities in the new exhibition, Factor Us In. The display takes a look at the impact which factories had on the surrounding landscapes, people and businesses.

## Transport Museum Wythall

Chapel Lane, Wythall, Worcestershire, B47 6JA  
Website: [wythall.org.uk](http://wythall.org.uk) Tel: 01564 826471

With an extensive collection of vehicles from yesteryear, Transport Museum Wythall provides visitors with the chance to learn all about the history of public transport across the West Midlands. The museum is home to over 90 buses from Birmingham, Walsall, West Bromwich and Wolverhampton, and more than 30 electric milk floats and bread vans from operators such as the Co-op, Midland Counties and Birmingham and Handsworth Dairies. You can also take a trip on the free vintage bus service - open-top on sunny days - and there's a miniature railway to ride on, too.

**PRICES:** Tickets start at £5 for adults and £2.50 for children







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## Bear Grylls Adventure

Birmingham International Railway Station, Exhibition Way, Marston Green, B40 1PA Website: [beargryllsadventure.com](http://beargryllsadventure.com)  
Tel: 0121 725 2616

Celebrity adventurer Bear Grylls has certainly pulled out all the stops with this popular visitor attraction.

Activities include high ropes, indoor archery, indoor climbing, escape rooms and a Royal Marines-inspired assault course.

For the 'more courageous' (as if some of the above didn't require courage!), The Fear Zone challenges you to 'sharpen your mind and find your inner strength' by navigating the area in complete darkness.

Alternatively, try venturing to the depths of the deep blue sea with Shark Drive. The site's tropical tank allows adventurers to get up-close and personal with black tip reef sharks and cownose rays.

Fancy experiencing the thrill of free-falling at 12,000ft without having to jump out of a plane? Then iFly is for you. The weightless adventure takes place in a wind tunnel and comprises two one-minute flights to get the adrenaline pumping.

**PRICES:** Activities start from £20pp with online advance tickets

## Alderford Aquapark

Tilstock Road, Whitchurch, SY13 3JQ  
Website: [alderford.com](http://alderford.com) Tel: 01948 665914

Fifty-minute sessions spent climbing, jumping and bouncing at Alderford's inflatable playground on the lake is a fun way to keep kids and adrenaline-junkies entertained during the school summer holiday.

Suitable for children aged seven-plus, the aqua park features four islands, accommodates 80 people at any given time, and is manned by a lifeguard.

If inflatables aren't your thing but you still want to take to the water, the venue hires out paddleboards, kayaks and canoes. Alternatively, you can take along your own. Wild swimming is also permitted on the lake.

**PRICES:** Chill Out & Paddle tickets start at £8. Paddleboard, kayak and canoe hire starts from £20, wild swimming at £5.50pp. Aquapark admission is £20.50pp.



## Jump In

Henley Way, Arlington Way, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY1 4YQ & Tachbrook Park, Hermes CI, Royal Leamington Spa, CV34 6NW  
Website: [gojumpin.com](http://gojumpin.com)

Although trampolines are undoubtedly the name of the game, there's plenty more to put a spring in your step at Jump In.

Why not start with the basketball court, where sports stars can reach for a slam dunk? If teamwork is more your thing, then the dodgeball court is a great place to dip and dive.

While tricks and flips are welcome, there's also plenty of space for burgeoning bouncers to practise their moves. And there's even a toddler area for tiny tots to join in the fun.

**PRICES:** Open jump sessions begin at £12.70pp

**SUMMER EVENTS:** Jump In is hosting a number of events in its Summer Jumpcation: jumpers can expect a daily Tik Tok Takeover hour; there's Tots Superfest, filled with toddler fun every Monday to Saturday morning; and a new Friday Night takeover - Jumpbiza - features 'the latest tunes and summer slushes to devour'.

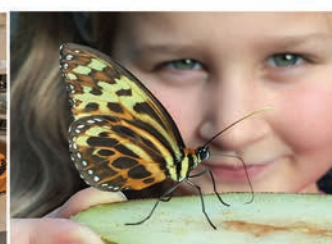


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## Legoland Discovery Centre

Utilita Arena Birmingham, King Edwards Road, Birmingham, B1 2AA  
Website: [legolanddiscoverycentre.com/birmingham](http://legolanddiscoverycentre.com/birmingham)

Legoland Discovery Centre is a great place to share creative play time with your little ones.

The venue houses a city builder area, a duplo farm, two rides - Kingdom's Quest and Merlin's Apprentice Ride - and a 4D cinema. Perhaps the most impressive attraction at the centre, though, is Lego Miniland. Built from more than 1.5 million Lego bricks, Miniland is a replica of Birmingham. The model includes Lego constructions of the Library of Birmingham, Bullring, the BT Tower and The Mailbox. It also features interactive elements, with children able to entertain themselves by racing boats along the canal. Alternatively, they can get stuck into a game of football at the 'mish-mash' of Aston Villa's and Birmingham City's stadiums.

**PRICES:** £20.65 online off-peak, £22.95 online peak, parent & toddler £14 (online only)

**SUMMER EVENTS:** Enter the world of Ninjago and 'complete exciting challenges alongside your favourite characters' as part of a brand-new AR experience. There will be chances to meet Lego Ninjago hero Lloyd, and also to build your very own Ninja creation from Lego.



## Coventry Music Museum

80 Walsgrave Road, Coventry, CV2 4ED  
Website: [covmm.co.uk](http://covmm.co.uk) Tel: 07971171441

If you love music, revel in nostalgia and enjoy perusing all manner of memorabilia, a visit to the Coventry Music Museum is an absolute must.

Recounting the story of the city's musical heritage, the museum pays homage to the era of music hall, 1950s rock'n'roll, the 1960s Beat scene, the 2-Tone days of The Specials, The Selecter and Madness, the 1980s successes of Hazel O'Connor, The Primitives and King, and the Bhangra magic of the 1990s.

The museum's collection of memorabilia includes the Lennon Bench - commemorating the famous Acorns For Peace event - the actual car from The Specials' 1981 Ghost Town video, and a selection of items connected to the city's 21st-century hitmakers, Stereo Nation and The Enemy.

**PRICES:** £24, concession £2, children £1

**NEW FOR 2021:** New exhibition Ghost Town 2 Host Town celebrates 40 years of iconic Specials song Ghost Town and explores Coventry's influence on global music.

## Sarehole Mill

Sarehole Mill, Cole Bank Road, Hall Green, B13 0BD  
Website: [birminghammuseums.org.uk/sarehole](http://birminghammuseums.org.uk/sarehole)

Dating back to the mid-18th century, Sarehole Mill is one of only two working water mills in Birmingham.

The mill has connections with Matthew Boulton, who leased it between 1756 and 1761, using it as a 'flattening mill' in which to produce sheet metal for button manufacturing.

More famously, the mill is associated with Lord Of The Rings author JRR Tolkien, who lived nearby during his childhood. Later in life, Tolkien revealed that the mill and its rural surroundings had inspired his writings about Middle Earth.

Sarehole Mill is now home to a modern-day bakery serving freshly baked treats.

**PRICES:** Adults £6.60, children £3.30, under-threes go free

**SUMMER EVENTS:** The Wine Events Company is hosting two pizza & wine evenings (Sat 7 Aug & Sat 4 Sept) featuring five wines expertly paired with stonebaked pizzas baked on site.

If history is more your thing, enjoy a guided two-mile walk (Thurs 5, Sun 15, Sun 22 Aug), introducing the scenery that inspired Tolkien when he lived near Sarehole Mill as a child.







Image credit: Daniel Renyard Photography



# Shrewsbury

## A town of flowers, history, and so much more...

Nestled amongst the breathtaking Shropshire Hills and within the loop of the River Severn, the picturesque town of Shrewsbury is often referred to as the Town of Flowers. This is due not only to the award-winning floral blooms which adorn streets and shop facias during the spring and summer months, but also to the famous Shrewsbury Flower Show. The annual two-day event has taken place in the town's Quarry Park for more than 130 years - albeit with breaks during World War Two and the recent pandemic.

Packed to its medieval rafters with history, featuring a wealth of independent retailers, restaurants and pubs, and boasting an impressive programme of events & activities, Shrewsbury is a fantastic destination for families to visit this school summer holiday.

Here's just a taste of what the county town has on offer...

Wander up the Wyle Cop - a fairly steep street leading into the centre of the town - and you'll find yourself marvelling at the overhanging timber-framed Tudor buildings which house some of Shrewsbury's most notable independent retailers - as well as one of its oldest pubs. A popular watering hole with locals, The Nag's Head is worth popping into just to see the remains of Gibbons Mansion at the rear. Dating back to 1570, the house features in the 1984 version of *A Christmas Carol*, filmed in Shrewsbury and starring American Oscar winner George C Scott.

A little further along the Cop, to your left, you'll find Henry Tudor House (HTH). One of the town's oldest half-timbered buildings, it's documented that Henry VII sought refuge there while on his way to the Battle of Bosworth in 1485. HTH is now a popular restaurant, bar & live-music venue, hosting well-known comedians and musicians. Pop by and see the imposing art works commissioned by the current owners, Graham and Claire. The sight of Freddie

Mercury, George Michael and David Bowie dressed in Tudor attire is something to behold!

Venture along the top of the Cop and the High Street and you'll arrive at The Square - an open space dominated by the Old Market Hall, which now houses an intimate council-run cafe bar and cosy cinema. Flanked by coffee shops, restaurants and retailers, The Square is a popular meeting place which regularly hosts local maker markets and events. It's here that you'll find the Tourist Information Centre, housed on the ground floor of Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery, a destination widely admired for its collection of fine art, ceramics and natural history. Unlocking The Severn, a major exhibition exploring the underwater world of the River Severn, shows at the venue until the end of August.



If in need of a beverage or a bite to eat at this point, then check out STOP Cafe, sited at the rear of the Museum & Art Gallery's ground floor. One of the town's many wonderful coffee shops, STOP serves delicious cakes and reasonably priced light lunches.

Nearby, quirkily named alleyways - known locally as 'shuts' - harbour secrets of bygone years. One of the most infamous shuts is Grope Lane, which apparently got its name due to the fact that prostitutes used to frequent it.

Just five minutes' walk away from The Square is Shrewsbury Market Hall. Don't be deceived by the underwhelming 1960s facade of this mighty building, because inside, a veritable cornucopia of food and retail delights awaits. From authentic Indian street food, delicious Chinese tea & dumplings, seafood specialities, tasty Thai dishes and a bar featuring a rotating menu of 140 gins, craft beers, wines and spirits, through to unusual and quirky gift, craft and speciality stores, Shrewsbury Market Hall is a must-visit destination.

A stone's throw away from the market is the Quarry Park, a recreational hub near to the town centre. A favourite with families, dog walkers, runners and cyclists, the lime-tree-lined park also houses The Dingle Garden, a showcase of ornamental flowers, rockeries and water features which also includes the stone statue of Sabrina, the Goddess of the River Severn, donated to the people of Shrewsbury by the Earl of Bradford in 1879.

Sabrina is also the name given to the boat that takes visitors along the Severn. Operating daily between 10am and 4pm, Sabrina sails from the Welsh Bridge to the English Bridge, along the way taking in views of The Quarry, the statue of Hercules, Kingsland Bridge, Shrewsbury School, the Old Brewery and Town Walls. The boat docks right outside three bars/eateries: The Armoury, The Riverbank and Hickory's Smokehouse - all of which are popular with diners. If you fancy sitting in a pub garden, then head back into The Quarry and over the Kingsland Bridge to The Boathouse, one of two town-centre pubs with views up the River Severn. The Crown in Coleham, a 15-minute walk along the footpath, is the other.

Head back into town via Claremont Hill, where you'll find popular purveyor of sweet treats, Planet Doughnut. Forget that well-known brand you find in supermarkets and service stations - nothing comes close to the



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market hall  
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## Shrewsbury: A Town Of Flowers...

mouthwatering offerings available at this quickly expanding Shrewsbury-based business.

Meander up nearby Pride Hill and you'll arrive at Shrewsbury Library, to the left, and the town's castle, to the right. Perched on a slight hill overlooking the railway station and River Severn, the Grade I sandstone building is home to the Soldiers of Shropshire Museum, which houses a collection of uniforms, weapons, medals and silverware. Within its manicured grounds stands Laura's Tower. Built by Thomas Telford in 1790 as a summer house for the daughter of Sir William Pulteney MP, this Grade II listed building affords panoramic views across Shrewsbury, the winding River Severn and the countryside beyond. Sadly, the spectacular red brick building is now only open to the public one day a year, as part of the nationwide Heritage Open Day Festival in September.


Next, make your way to St Mary's Place, where you'll find the town's only completely medieval church. Boasting one of the largest spires in England, St Mary's is home to a

world-renowned collection of stained glass (pictured). No longer used for worship, the venue is now a popular visitor attraction and comes complete not only with interpretation panels but also informed and enthusiastic stewards, on hand to share their expansive knowledge of its wealth of history. You'll also find the independently run River View Cafe on site, serving locally sourced produce. This is another highly recommended destination for refuelling.



At the rear of St Mary's lies The Parade Shopping Centre. This Grade II listed building, with its Georgian facade and main entrance flanked by four hugely impressive stone pillars, was once Shrewsbury's infirmary. Now housing more of the town's independent and specialist retailers, it's definitely worth a visit, if only to get a peek of the River Severn and beyond from the rear of the building.

Out of St Mary's, head across the road to St Alkmund's Place, home to another of Shrewsbury's five churches. To your right, you'll find the Bear Steps Gallery and tea rooms - both fine examples of the town's timber-framed buildings. Local legend has it that this area was home to one of Shrewsbury's bear pits. Allow yourself time to soak up the history before maybe indulging in a tipple at one of the nearby traditional pubs: The Three Fishes on Fish Street; The Bull on Butcher Row; or The Wheatsheaf on the corner of High Street. If you fancy a cocktail, check out Libertines or House Of The Rising Sun.



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## Shrewsbury: A Town Of Flowers...

### Fancy a retail fix?

Shrewsbury is full of wonderful independent places to shop - you're almost certain to find something to tempt you to part with your cash. One of the best places to start is Wyle Cop. Here, you'll find one-off clothing brands at Ella Ecu and Oberon, recycled cashmere accessories at Turtle Doves, and beautiful gifts at Lovely Little World. Check out White Lotus Living and Number 8 (St Mary's Street) for interiors big and small, and Wyld Home for faux flowers and foliage. The latter also stocks a mean line in kitsch cushions.



Every day is Christmas Day at Christmas Perks, with festive decorations on sale all year round. You can also pick up Shrewsbury-related momentos, including baubles, magnets, local prints and paintings.

Wyle Blue World is a unique retail space selling gifts and homewares from around the globe. At the back of the shop is a 'secret garden', where you can kick back and indulge in blueBAR gin and sharing platters.

At the corner of Fish Street is Work Shop. Here you can pick up bespoke gifts ranging from reasonably priced contemporary jewellery and prints, to candles and homewares.

And of course, there's always Shrewsbury Market Hall.

### Shrewsbury's Most Famous Son

It's said that Charles Darwin's liberal upbringing - together with his education at Shrewsbury School - helped nurture his inquisitive mind and sow the seeds for his famous book, *On The Origin Of Species*.

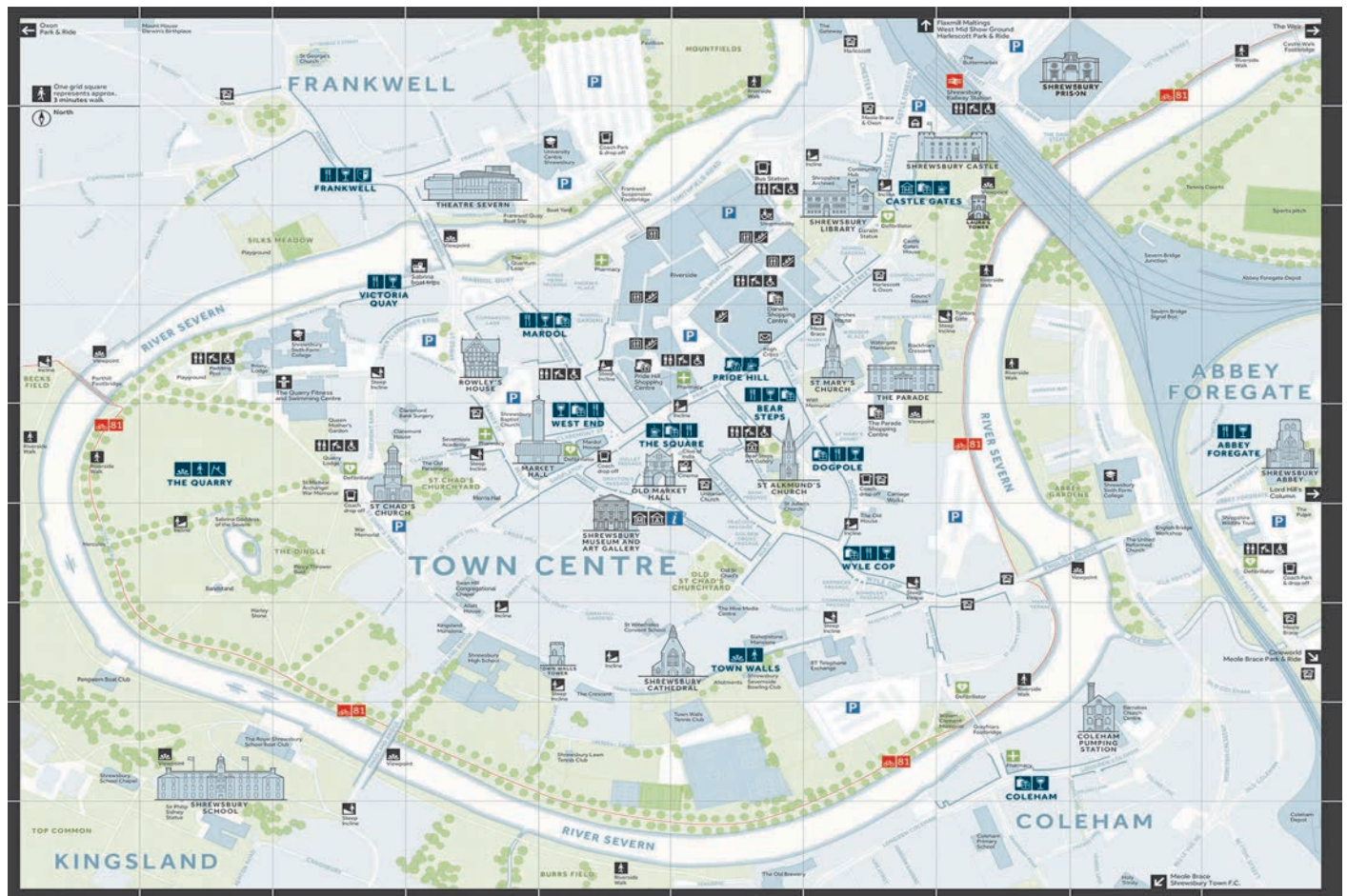
A bronze statue of Darwin takes centre stage

outside the imposing facade of Shrewsbury Library on Castle Gates. Built in 1550, the premises was originally home to Shrewsbury School - where Charles would have spent his formative years - before transforming to its current use in 1882.



Today, the life and work of the world-famous naturalist is celebrated with the annual Darwin Shrewsbury Festival and a visitor trail around the town. The latter highlights buildings and locations that played a pivotal role in Darwin's early life. The town's main shopping centre, a boutique hotel (Darwin's Hotel) and a restaurant/bar (Darwin's Kitchen) also pay homage to Shrewsbury's most famous son. Quantum Leap - a must-see 40ft-high sculpture at Mardol Quay - was unveiled as part of the town's Darwin Bicentenary celebrations in 2009.

Find out more at [originalshrewsbury.co.uk](http://originalshrewsbury.co.uk)





As we welcome the world.  
We look at Coventry's influence on  
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Be inspired to create your own Alfresco Style haven at the **Garden Centre**. Take a stroll down Bull Pen Alley and find an array of hidden gems in **Haystore Antiques, Vintage & Interiors.** A sweet treat awaits in Cart Horse Lane, where you'll find **The Sweet Shop.**

And that's just the start there is so much more to explore, with **bespoke jewellers, ladies fashion, gifts, childrenswear** and a **bike shop** to name just a few.

Good food too - **Alfie's Cafe** is the perfect place to relax and treat yourself to a bite to eat. All set in majestic rural tranquility this is most definitely **Not on the High Street.**

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