

Girl About Hampshire's 48 hours in **THE NEW FOREST**

**MY 2 NIGHT ITINERARY
FOR A GLORIOUS GOURMET (& GIN)
WEEKEND IN THE NEW FOREST**



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As beautiful short breaks in England go, there aren't many that are more quintessentially English than the New Forest.

There's many reasons why the New Forest National Park deserves its title of Number One National Park in Europe in Trip Advisor's 2022 awards.

Despite the name, there's more than forest here. Think heathland dotted with yellow gorse bushes and New Forest ponies roaming free. Ancient woodland; eerie with deep greenery and giant trees.



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There's even a coastline, with views over the Solent to the Isle of Wight where you can easily see The Needles on a clear day.

Aside from all of this though, the New Forest is a food lover's dream come true. If you know your venison from your velouté or you love to spot a celebrity chef then you've come to the right place.

My first recommendation is actually to time your visit to align with one of the fantastic foodie festivals.

There's Smoked and Uncut, which takes place at Lime Wood and The Pig at Brockenhurst, where you can listen to live music and also have dinner cooked for you by top chefs.

In July there's the Lymington Seafood festival where you'll find the top seafood producers in Hampshire.

Or come for the New Forest County Show, also in July and eat your way around the 40+ stalls in the Festival of Food. There's even Dogstival in June if you plan to bring your four-legged friends on your break.



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Friday afternoon

Check in at your accommodation; I've made some suggestions below but you are spoilt for choice here. It really depends whether you want pure luxury at somewhere like Lime Wood, fabulous food and history at the Montagu Arms, or one of the many cosy Air BnBs where you can cook some of the local produce yourself.

I would suggest choosing somewhere central such as Lyndhurst or Brockenhurst to set up base for the weekend, that way you'll be able to get to some places by foot. A car is really the best way to get around, though there is a fantastic open top bus service which runs in the summer months.

Let's choose Lyndhurst as it is commonly referred to as the 'capital of the New Forest'. Enjoy a walk up and down the high street, popping into some of the small local businesses for a browse. I personally wouldn't be able to resist an ice cream from Forest Glade as I wandered. If you'd like to learn more about the forest then there's the New Forest Heritage Centre which has free entry. Or I like to look at Meridien Modena and choose which Ferrari I'd buy if I won the lottery!

A lovely way to while away a couple of hours is to visit nearby Furzey Gardens which celebrates its centenary in 2022.

You can peruse the wonderful fairy door trail with over 40 magical doors to find. There's a suggested donation of £8 and it's one of the attractions on the Go New Forest Card which you may find worthwhile. The card costs £10 to purchase but includes 100s of discounts on accommodation, attractions, food and drink.

Friday evening

You'll have most likely heard of Angela Hartnett OBE, one of Gordon Ramsay's protégées who was a judge on Best Home Cook. Teamed with Luke Holder, she creates seasonal Italian-inspired menus for HH&Co at Lime Wood. They have their very own smokehouse here where they smoke salmon, pancetta and bresaola to name but a few. Your meal will be paired with wine from an award-winning wine list; previous winner of Tattinger Wine List of the Year.

Another Lyndhurst option for smaller budgets is La Pergola which has been run by the Passarelli family since 1997.

My own family travels here regularly for special occasions due to the hearty portions and the incredible dessert cabinet, which you must save room for.

Saturday morning

Try and time your New Forest weekend break to catch one of the farmer's markets. There's a monthly farmer's market in Ringwood on a Saturday, which is on the western border of the forest. Sample some of Hampshire's finest produce from local businesses like the New Forest Trout Farm or grab a hot sausage roll from FNK pies.

Whilst you're in Ringwood you should check out Ringwood brewery which is open from 9:30-5 on a Saturday.

They've been brewing here since 1978 and it's a popular spot to enjoy a Boondoggle or two. If you're a real beer fan then do the 2 hour brewery experience and tasting session.

If gin is more your thing then Ringwood is also home to Wyrd Spirits; a relatively new distillery which uses New Forest spring water as a base to its small batch gin. As a gin drinker myself, I can confirm that it's a delicious juniper gin, and one of the New Forest's hidden gems. Take the 90 minute tour for £20 which includes a gin and tonic, plenty of samples and a branded glass. They've also recently launched a 'distil your own gin' experience on limited dates which sounds gin-credible.



Saturday afternoon

After all that drinking (maybe bring a designated driver with you) you'll be wanting some more food to soak up the alcohol. The New Forest is home to some of the best afternoon teas in Hampshire.

You could continue the gin theme by heading back to Lime Wood and experiencing their G&Tea. The afternoon tea of sandwiches, scones and sticky eclairs will be paired with a G&T of your choice – may I suggest a local Winchester Twisted Nose?

For something less formal try Rosie Lea's in Brockenhurst. There's classic afternoon tea, more alcoholic options and my favourite savoury cheese scone with Winchester cheese, and bacon marmite jam.

In case you want to burn off some of the calories, Brockenhurst is a great starting point for a cycle. Don't worry about lugging your bike over as you can easily hire one from Cyclexperience and they even have a smartphone app so you don't get lost.

They have a 7-mile foodie trail of their own. If you prefer to walk then you can't go wrong with the Tall Trees Trail where you'll get a sneak peek at Rhinefield House, another great afternoon tea spot.





Saturday evening

Your fine-dining option for tonight is at the southern border of Hampshire at 5 star hotel Chewton Glen. In the Dining Room, many of the ingredients are sourced from their very own kitchen garden. Try the £85 tasting menu with sample dishes of Old Spot pork fritter and chocolate crémeux.

The more informal Kitchen is brought to you by local chef James Martin with highlights including crispy gin and tonic prawns and a knickerbocker glory made with local Laverstoke Farm buffalo ice cream.

Another option is to stay at the Montagu Arms Hotel and dine on delicious New Forest produce in their 3AA Rosette Terrace restaurant. You might get to try pork belly from the nearby woodland, and New Forest mushrooms with Isle of Wight black garlic. New Forest pannage pigs roam free in the Autumn to eat acorns and nuts which are poisonous to the local ponies.

Other notable fine-dining options include Le Blaireau if you like French cuisine, and the Pig at Brockenhurst with its famous 25-mile menu. Wherever you eat, look out for foods with the New Forest Marque which is the 'true sign of local produce'.



Sunday morning

If you stayed at the Montagu Arms then you'll be rising to feast on a full New Forest breakfast. The village of Beaulieu is a wonderful village to finish your weekend away in Hampshire.

I'd suggest starting with coffee (and a snack) from Pallets and taking a stroll around this 13th Century village. You can follow a marked route to Buckler's Hard; look out for the local donkeys plodding by the roadside. Buckler's Hard is an 18th Century shipbuilding hamlet where you can now look around the Maritime Museum, or catch a boat trip down the picturesque Beaulieu River.

Beaulieu is also home to my top day out in Hampshire – not just a motor museum; the Beaulieu attraction includes access to the Abbey, Palace House and gardens, monorail, Top Gear exhibition and adventure playground. The entrance ticket offers great value and there's often fairs and exhibitions to see here too such as the Artisan Christmas Fair and BBC Gardeners World Spring Fair.



Another glorious day out nearby is Exbury Gardens and Steam Railway. You'll be blown away by the colours of the rhododendrons and azaleas in late Spring, and the acers in the Autumn. Food here has recently begun to be provided by the Little Kitchen Company, local caterer and member of Hampshire Fare.

I hope you've enjoyed this inspiration on short breaks in England; eating and drinking your way around the New Forest! I've included a list of handy links below and for any personalised tips then please contact me on social media.



5 of my favourite places to stay

- >> [The Montagu Arms, Beaulieu](#)
- >> [The Bell Inn, Lyndhurst](#)
- >> [Lime Wood, Lyndhurst](#)
- >> [Bluebell Cottage, an Air BnB in Lyndhurst](#)
- >> [Studio Stays in the New Forest](#)