



NEWS

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Hidden Britain
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Rural tourism scheme recognised by national tourist agency

Hidden Britain, a project to help rural communities to boost the local area through small-scale tourism projects, is celebrating a new partnership with national tourist agency Visit Britain. The scheme now has a partner page on enjoyengland.com and the facility on its own new website, hidden-britain.co.uk, to enable visitors to find quality assured accommodation before they set off.

The project, run by the Arthur Rank Centre, was piloted in Cumbria as a way of regenerating small rural areas suffering the after effects of foot-and-mouth. It is now proving to be a very effective way to draw more visitors to less well-known areas of the countryside all around Britain, and Visit Britain has welcomed it as a way to boost tourism in smaller destinations.

David Long, national administrator for Hidden Britain, said: "This is a small scheme that relies on the rural community and the local churches to get the local projects underway, so this recognition by the national tourist board is a milestone. The many beautiful, undiscovered parts of Britain offer visitors an authentic experience of country life, as well as comfortable accommodation and good food. Through our partnership with Visit Britain people can be assured they will be well looked after when they venture off the tourist trail."

Tom Wright, chief executive of national tourism agency, Visit Britain says: “With 9 national parks, more than 3,000 miles of coastline, and a patchwork of stunning landscapes and beaches, as well as parks, rivers and canals the length and breadth of the country, Britons are spoilt for choice right here in their own country. Hidden Britain provides the inspiration to escape from the city and take time out on a rural escape.”

The scheme, piloted in Cumbria in 2002 and rolled out nationally in 2006, now has 27 locations for visitors to discover in Cumbria, Bedfordshire, Warwickshire, Oxfordshire, Surrey, Kent, Hampshire, East Sussex and the Isle of Wight.

The first step to discovering Hidden Britain is to visit www.hidden-britain.co.uk
<<http://www.hidden-britain.co.uk>>.

Ends

Notes for Editors

1. Hidden Britain is a regeneration project to develop community owned and led tourism initiatives, run by the Arthur Rank Centre (www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk <<http://www.arthurrankcentre.org.uk>>). It aims to encourage tourism, discover lesser-known areas of the countryside and provide a different and more meaningful experience for the visitor.
2. The initiative has 27 existing centres in the North West, East of England, the West Midlands and the South East, with many more fledgling projects under development.
3. £10.8 billion spent on overnight holidays and day trips in the countryside and on the coast every year.
4. Research shows that Britons make 36 million overnight holiday trips to English villages, the countryside and seaside as well as 151 million day trips.
5. 39% of known accommodation capacity in England is in the countryside - some 25,000 establishments. Most rural holidaymakers stay in self-catering accommodation, with 32 per cent using touring caravans and camping, 17 per cent static caravans and more than a quarter choosing rented accommodation.

(Source of 3-5: Visit Britain)