10 Reasons To Visit Levens Hall and Gardens in 2023

Levens Hall and Gardens, voted the number one garden to visit in England for two years running[1], and one of the most searched for online, has reopened for the 2023 season, ready to thrill visitors from across the world.

The appeal of the historic house transcends both house and garden, thanks to unique features in both. The addition of what is now a much-loved global celebration – World Topiary Day – has added a new facet to an attraction open until early October, offering much to see and do. Here are just 10 things that make it stand out.

1. The World's Oldest Topiary Garden

Founded in 1694, the Levens Topiary Garden, designed by Monsieur Guillaume Beaumont for Colonel James Grahme, is one of Britain's most impressive heritage and horticultural gems in England and an official Guinness World Record Holder. With over 100 topiary pieces, cut into geometric, abstract and themed shapes, which depict objects and characters including the Great Umbrella Tree, the Toppling Wedding Cake, and Queen Elizabeth I and her Maids of Honour, the gardens at Levens Hall are a truly unique and magical place to explore.

2. World Topiary Day

In 2023, World Topiary Day will take place on a Sunday for the very first time - May 14. Levens Hall and Gardens' event, now in its third year, has become a worldwide celebration of all things topiary. Although the Lake District attraction is at the event's heart, other gardens taking part this year include the Palace of Versailles in France, Longwood Gardens in the USA and the Monumental Garden of Valsanzibio in Italy.

Visitors on this special day will pay no more than usual for admission but can take part in 'Talking Topiary' tours led by the 11th head gardener, Chris Crowder, at 11am, 1pm and 3pm. These will help visitors learn more about the amazing topiary pieces within the Topiary Garden.

The European Boxwood and Topiary Society (EBTS) will also be on hand to give some table-top topiary demonstrations, imparting lots of knowledge about topiary and how best to get started, or keep specimens in tip-top condition.

3. A Place For Mindfulness

With 10 acres of gardens to explore, it's not difficult to find a calm and quiet spot for some rest and relaxation but some brilliant mindfulness can be enjoyed in the Fountain Garden, where several benches can be found and where visitors can watch the sunlight, or cloud reflections, dancing on the water.

4. Earliest English Patchwork and Elizabethan Interiors

Levens Hall is the largest Elizabethan house in Cumbria and its interior furnishings are not to be missed. These include the oldest English patchwork in existence, which dates back to 1708 and was crafted by the wife of the Hall's 17th century owner, Colonel James Grahme, and his daughters.

Admire the unique Spanish leather wall coverings, wonderfully ornate plasterwork and fine oak panelling on your visit, not to mention the fine collection of clocks, which were a passion of past owners.

5. Levens Kitchen

Offering a place to relax with a coffee and a slice of cake, visitors can feast on an exciting brunch menu or re-fuel with a delicious seasonal lunch at the award-winning Levens Kitchen, accessible without paying admission to the Hall and Gardens.

6. A Family-Friendly Day Out

Levens is a fantastic place for children to learn about nature and let off some steam, whether that is through exploring the acres of gardens and parkland, or attempting one of the special activities, such as the Levens Hall quiz – following clues in each room to find out about its history and how it has changed. For children under-12, there's hours of fun to be had at the playground, whilst family fun for all can be enjoyed by heading to the Willow Labyrinth, which grows throughout the summer months, with the challenge being to find the hare in the centre.

7. Tours

One of the best ways to learn more about the fascinating history of Levens Hall is by booking on to a tour. This provides the opportunity to learn more about the Elizabethan house and its 13th century Pele Tower, built as a defence against Scottish raiders. Visitors can hear all about the estate's first occupants, the de Redman family, who owned Levens Hall in 1170, and discover how it continues to be a family home to this day; passing through to the current owners, the Bagot Family, in the late 19th century.

8. Herbaceous borders

Garden enthusiasts can delight at the magnificent herbaceous borders, said to be amongst the finest in England. 30,000 bedding plants, all grown on-site, put on a glorious visual and sensory display that is not to be missed, especially in the summer months.

9. Links to the Duke of Wellington

Levens Hall is home to a selection of fascinating artefacts belonging to the Duke of Wellington and his adversary, Napoleon, which can be discovered on a Wellington Trail. When the Duke's niece married into the Bagot family, he gifted the couple various items, all of which are fascinating to view, bringing to life some of the history we've all read about at school!

10. Levens Park

With the glorious Levens Park just across the road, there is every opportunity to extend a visit to Levens Hall and Gardens, by taking a short or extended stroll by the River Kent, spotting a variety of wildlife, including the black fallow deer herd and rare-breed Bagot goats. This could be a way to burn off the calories consumed in Levens Kitchen, or a way to work up the appetite before arriving there!

To find out more about a visit to Levens Hall and Gardens in 2023 or to pre-book tickets, head to www.levenshall.co.uk

ENDS

Press calls: Jane Hunt, Catapult PR, 0333 2424062 – jane@catapultpr.co.uk

Editors notes

Levens Hall and Gardens opens on April 2, 2023, Sunday to Friday (closed Saturdays) to October 6, 2023. Gardens opening hours are 10am to 5pm, with last entry at 4pm. Tours of the Hall run from 10am (subject to availability on the day) with general admission from 11am until 3.30pm (last entry 3pm.)

Levens Kitchen opens every day, from 10am to 5pm to October 6, 2023 and then closing one hour earlier thereafter, through to December 23, 2023. The Potting Shed Gift Shop is also open daily from 10am to 5pm, Sunday to Friday, and 10.30am to 3pm on Saturdays, until October 6, 2023 and then closing two hours earlier thereafter, through to December 23, 2023.

Adult entrance costs £14.50 for House and Gardens admission. A child's ticket is priced at £5 and a family ticket at £36. Gardens-only tickets are priced at £10.50, £4 and £26, respectively. Tickets for the House and Gardens can be purchased online, in advance or on arrival at the entrance kiosk.

[1] https://www.levens.org.uk/news/2022/2/26/levens-hall-takes-1st-place-in-top-10-gardens-to-visit-in-the-uk-feature