

National Trust Press Release

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For immediate release

Summer of Play at Calke Abbey

The school holidays can only mean one thing at National Trust Calke Abbey – Summer of Play has returned, jam-packed with more activities, games, and fun in the great outdoors than ever before.

Sponsored by Starling Bank, expect fun-filled family days out and exciting adventures, with plenty to entertain the kids all summer long.

The Kitchen Garden has been mowed and transformed once again into the Garden of Imagination, with nine exciting zones to discover. Charge into Adventure Avenue and tackle the giant obstacle course, try showjumping in the Hobby Horse Championships or channel your inner performer in The Musical Magic Theatre.

After a morning or afternoon of exploring, refuel with a well-deserved ice cream from the Snack and Relax area and then enjoy a time out in the quiet Zen Zone. Here you can cool off in the shade, cloud watch, borrow a book from the reading corner or try the sensory barefoot walk.

Senior Visitor Experience Officer, Alannah Rasen says: ‘The Garden of Imagination is back and bigger than ever before this summer, packed full of every flavour of play imaginable. With plenty to get stuck into, we look forward to welcoming families to the Garden of Imagination again and again, as they find new ways to have fun and create wonderful memories together.’

Revisit another day to play at Calke Explore. Gear up at the cycle hire facility, with a range of bikes to choose from, including trailers for little ones or four-legged friends. Then pedal onto the close-by Tramway Trail and soak up the sights of summer through woodland, farmland, pasture and parts of the old historic horse-drawn tramway that linked Ticknall to Ashby.

But the cycling adventures don’t end there! Little ones can put their cycling skills to the test on a balance bike course, set up in the overflow car park at Calke Explore.

Alannah continues: ‘The cycle hire team will bring a new course every Thursday in August, challenging little ones to have a go at weaving through slalom poles, balancing over bridges and tackling ramps. Learning to ride a bike is often a rite of passage for many children. We hope this balance bike course will help little ones build their confidence on two wheels until they’re ready to progress to a bike with pedals.’

The natural play area inside the woodland of Calke Explore is a firm family favourite, and with cover amongst the trees, it's the perfect outdoor activity no matter the weather. Spend the afternoon climbing, swinging and spinning amongst nature.

There's something new to discover at every National Trust Summer of Play, so if you're looking to switch things up, why not head over to our neighbouring properties, Foremark and Staunton Harold?

Channel your inner performer at Foremark, with circus skills workshops lead by Circus Sensible on select Wednesdays. Learn from the experts and master juggling, plate spinning, diabolo, and other circus tricks. Or sit back, relax and enjoy live music from local musicians on select Saturdays and Sundays.

Enjoy a summer in the great outdoors at Staunton Harold, with games for the whole family to enjoy. Challenge friends and family to badminton, giant Jenga, skittles or sports day races and then cool down with an ice cream from the café.

-Ends-

Images:

Image 1: Child playing in the beehive inside the Garden of Imagination © National Trust/Rod Kirkpatrick

Image 2: Children playing with the natural play equipment at Calke Explore © National Trust/Rod Kirkpatrick

Image 3: Putting on a show in The Musical Magic Theatre © National Trust/Rod Kirkpatrick

Image 4: Cycling along the Tramway Trail © National Trust/Steve Franklin

Image 5: Challenge your family to a game of hoopla this summer © National Trust/Rod Kirkpatrick

Image 6: Create your own den inside the Garden of Imagination © National Trust/Rod Kirkpatrick

Image 7: Jump amongst the trees at Calke Explore © National Trust/Rod Kirkpatrick

Image 8: Family enjoying a picnic © National Trust/Rod Kirkpatrick

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Notes to editors

About the National Trust

The National Trust is an independent conservation charity founded in 1895 by three people: Octavia Hill, Sir Robert Hunter and Hardwicke Rawnsley, who saw the importance of the nation's heritage and open spaces and wanted to preserve them for everyone to enjoy. Today, across England, Wales and Northern Ireland, we continue to look after places so people and nature can thrive.

We care for more than 250,000 hectares of countryside, 780 miles of coastline, 1 million collection items and 500 historic properties, gardens and nature reserves. In 2022/23 we received 24 million visitors to our pay for entry sites. The National Trust is for everyone - we were founded for the benefit of the whole nation, and our 5.7 million members, funders and donors, and tens of thousands of volunteers support our work to care for nature, beauty, history for everyone, for ever.

About Calke Abbey

With peeling paintwork and overgrown courtyards, Calke Abbey tells the story of the dramatic decline of a country house estate. The house and stables are little restored, with many abandoned areas vividly portraying a period in the 20th century when numerous country houses did not survive to tell their story.

The Calke estate spans more than 600 acres and is managed with a dedicated approach to conservation. It contains such features as a [walled garden](#), with a flower garden and kitchen garden. The ancient deer park of the Calke Abbey Estate is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest and national nature reserve.