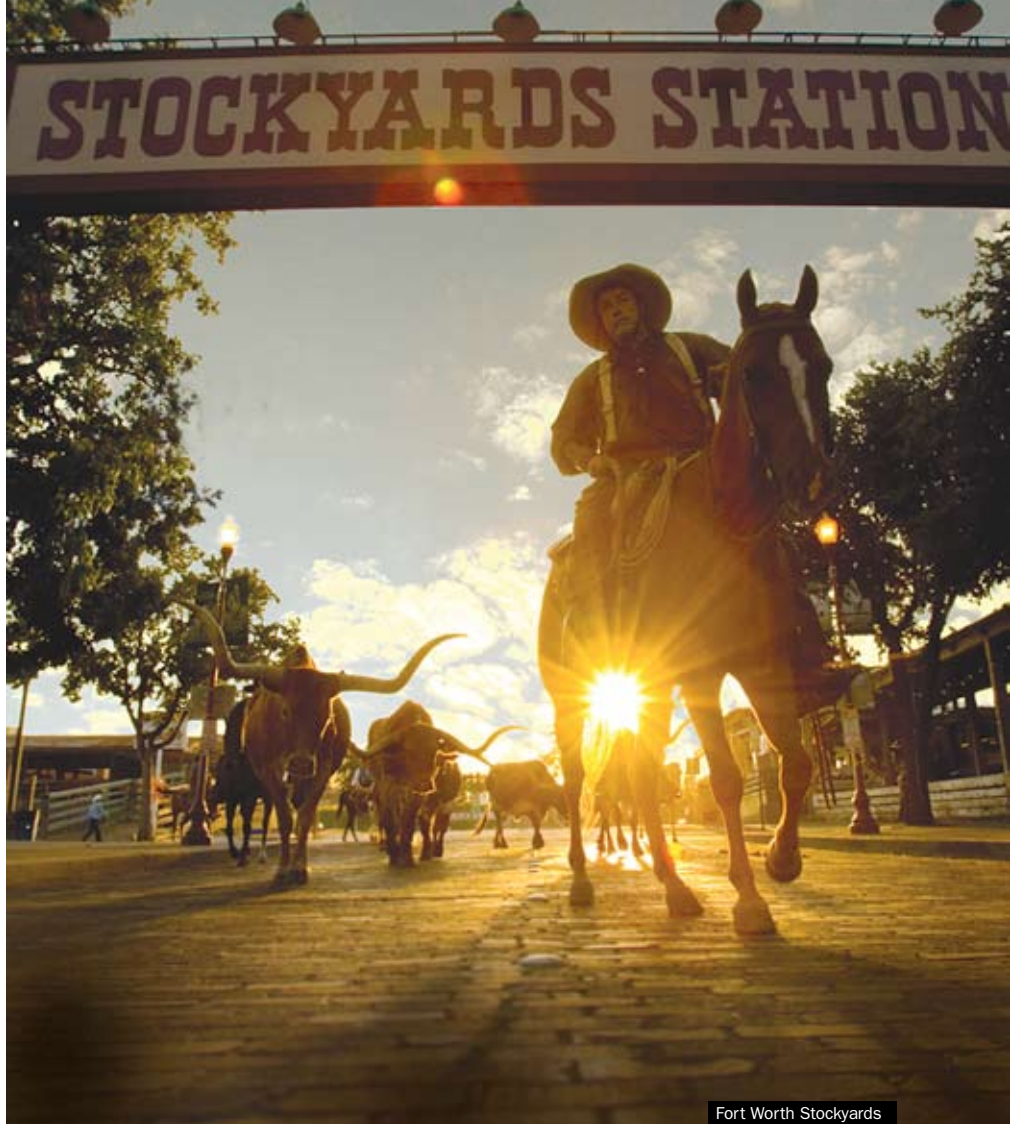


Travel

Edited by James Wilkinson
timeout.com/melbourne/travel



Firestone and Robertson



Fort Worth Stockyards

Fort Worth, Texas

Grab your Stetson and pull on your boots for a town that's taking the reins for tourism in Texas. By *James Wilkinson*

When Qantas launched direct flights to Dallas-Fort Worth last year to provide better connections to the US East Coast, it also opened up direct access to two of the great cities of Texas. While Dallas may take most of the limelight, the neighbouring city of Fort Worth is a hidden gem in the Southwest US. Established in 1849 as an outpost following the Mexican-American War, Fort Worth became a stop on the cattle trail and the centre of the ranching industry. Today it offers a unique getaway combining cowboys, culture and hip bars and restaurants.

See and do

On most weekends you can grab a beer and watch the rodeo at the **Fort Worth Stock Yards**, a short drive from downtown. The rodeo at the **Cowtown Coliseum** features bronco riding, calf roping and

mutton busting – in which kids in helmets cling to the backs of startled sheep (YouTube it, it's hilarious). *500 NE 23rd St, Fort Worth. +1 817 624 4741. www.fortworthstockyards.org*

Located in the stock yards is **Billy Bob's**, the world's largest 'honky tonk' (country music bar) holding over 4,000 people and featuring a professional bull-riding arena, concert stage (regularly featuring guests like Willie Nelson) and dance floors where the Texas Shuffle is king. *2520 Rodeo Pl, Fort Worth. +1 817 624 7117. billybobstexas.com*

The city's Cultural District is home to several world-class museums, all adjacent to each other on Camp Bowie Boulevard. The **National Cowgirl Museum** (www.cowgirl.net) tells the stories of the pioneer women of the West. **Amon Carter Museum of American Art**



Sundance Square

(www.cartermuseum.org) specialises in American photography. The **Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth** (www.themodern.org) has Warhols, Pollocks, Rothkos and a sublime architectural design by Tadao Ando. *Time Out's* pick, the **Kimbell Art Museum**, is home to Michelangelo's first work, 'The Torment of Saint Anthony' (c1488) (www.kimbellart.org).

Downtown Fort Worth's **Sundance Square** is at the heart of the action in the city and must-dos in and around the Square include the **JFK Monument**, **Sid Richardson Museum**, **Peters Brothers Hats** and the **Retro Cowboy** store. When

they are playing a home game in nearby Arlington, the **Dallas Cowboys** are the hottest sporting ticket in Texas. Catch a game at the imposing \$1.4 billion **Jerry Jones Stadium**. www.dallascowboys.com.

At **Firestone and Robertson**, take a tour of this converted warehouse and sample the boutique TX Blended Whiskey that's fast become a bartender's favourite in dens across the state. *901 W Vickery Blvd, Fort Worth. +1 817 840 9140. www.frdistilling.com*

Eat and drink

The Near Southside district has been undergoing a gentrification in



The rodeo at Cowtown Coliseum



Ellerbe Fine Foods

recent years with new bars, cafés and restaurants in converted buildings along Magnolia Avenue. Located in a former gas station, **Ellerbe Fine Foods** offers farm-to-table cuisine in a unique setting: 'patio' dining is where petrol bowlers once were. 1501 W Magnolia Ave, Fort Worth. +1 817 926 3663. www.ellerbefinefoods.com. Across the road, you'll find the best Hemingway Daiquiris in town at **The Usual** and a couple of food trucks parked out the back. 1408 W Magnolia Ave, Fort Worth. +1 817 810 0114. theusualbar.com.

Brewed is where locals in the know head for barista coffee, craft beer, a great lunch menu, an outdoor terrace and free Wi-Fi. Order a White Rascal craft brew or an espresso and a mac and cheese. 801 W Magnolia Ave, Fort Worth. +1 817 945 1545. brewedfw.com.

The best Tex Mex in Fort Worth is found at **Joe T Garcia's Mexican Restaurant**, served up in the lively patio garden that seats 1,000. 2201 N Commerce St, Fort Worth. +1 817 626 4356. www.joets.com.

Where to stay
Downtown, the **Omni Hotel Fort Worth** offers comfortable and modern guest rooms, bars and restaurants, including **Whiskey & Rye**, where the Manhattans and Whiskey Sours are made with a true Texan kick. 1300 Houston St, Fort Worth. +1 817 535 6664. www.omnihotels.com. A two-hour drive from Fort Worth outside the small town of Graham is **Wildcatter Ranch**, known for horseback riding, four-wheel ATV tours, archery and clay target shooting. 6062 Highway 16, Graham. +1 940 549 3500. www.wildcatterranch.com.

Get there
Qantas (www.qantas.com) flies daily to Dallas-Fort Worth via Sydney. Airports don't come better than **Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport's** Terminal D. On arrival, expect short lines at immigration. When you're ready to fly home, the terminal offers 30 restaurants and bars, an art tour, walking track and yoga studio. www.dfwairport.com.



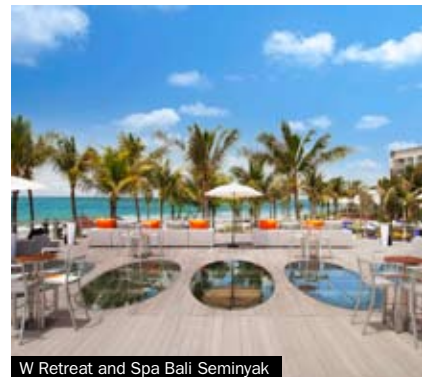
Five great... Summer beach escapes

Seeking sun, sand, surf?...

01 Waikiki, Honolulu, Hawaii
From return airfares for under a grand on **Hawaiian** to the \$7 Mai Tais at **Rum Fire** at the **Sheraton Waikiki**, the \$30 surfing lessons from **Star Beachboys** and discount clothing at the **Waikale discount outlets**, there is serious bang-for-buck on offer in Hawaii right now. See big-wave surfing on the **North Shore** and learn Hawaii's war history at **Pearl Harbor**. Stay at **The Modern** (www.themodernhonolulu.com) and get there on **Hawaiian Airlines** (www.hawaiianair.com).

02 Manly, Sydney, NSW
Manly on Sydney's North Shore has great bars and cool restaurants, alongside some of the best surf on the East Coast. Great pints are to be had at the **Four Pines Brewing Company**, while at **Miss Marley's Tequila Bar**, order their signature, a tequila tasting flight. Learn to surf at **Manly Surf School** or to see the best of what's underwater, visit the **Manly Sea Life Sanctuary**. Stay at **Novotel Manly Pacific** (www.accorhotels.com.au) and get there on **Qantas** (www.qantas.com).

03 Seminyak, Bali, Indonesia
Get spacious ocean-view rooms, restaurants, bar and nightclub at the **W Retreat and Spa Bali Seminyak**, the most happening hotel to ever open its doors on the island. It's a short hop from great restaurants and bars like **Ku De Ta**, **Potato Head**, **Sarong**, **Mama San** and **Metis**. Grab a cab or rent a bike and do lunch at **Deus Ex Machina's**



café in upcoming Canggu, or dine at Starfish Bloo and get cocktails served poolside from **Woobar**. Stay at **W Bali** (www.whotels.com) and get there on **Garuda Indonesia** (www.garuda-indonesia.com).

04 Noosa, Sunshine Coast, Qld
Noosa's golden sands and local produce draws in southerners year-round. Hot tables at the moment include **Thomas Corner Eatery** in Noosaville under former River House owner David Rayner. See a different side of Noosa on a stand-up paddle board, available from **Noosa Heads Boat Hire**, or spend the day at **Eumumdi Markets**. Stay at **Outrigger Little Hastings Street Noosa** (www.outrigger.com) and get there on **Virgin Australia** (www.virginaustralia.com).

05 Muri Beach, Rarotonga, Cook Islands
Think an even more laid back version of Fiji and the friendliest people in the South Pacific. Muri Beach is a romantic's paradise, if your idea of heaven is cocktails in hammocks, snorkelling, diving and fresh seafood. Go for cocktails at **Barefoot Bar** and order up some freshly caught fish at **Sandals Restaurant**. Stay at **Pacific Resort Rarotonga** (www.pacificresort.com) and get there on **Air New Zealand** (www.airnz.com.au).

Sydney

For more things to do this month
timeout.com/sydney



Anish Kapoor, 'Void' (1989)



Anish Kapoor, '1,000 Names' (1979-80)



Camilla



Sydney Festival

This summer in Sydney

Sydney in summer is hot to trot with music, art, dance, theatre, opera, illumination ...and fireworks from Kylie



Sydney New Year's Eve

Sydney Festival

Over the summer, Sydney is a feast of food, culture and colour and the centre of that smorgasbord is Sydney Festival. Highlights in 2013 include proto-punk opera *Semele Walk* at Sydney Town Hall, in which Vivienne Westwood's outrageous costumes collide with Handel's *Semele*, Berlin ensemble Kaleidoskop and the Sydney Philharmonic Choirs. At Parramatta's Riverside Theatres Circocolombia reinvent circus as *URBAN*, a high-voltage event of acrobatics and music. From Switzerland comes *Eraritjaritjaka*, a music, voice and movement show based on the diary entries of Nobel laureate Elias Canetti. And Ireland's Fabulous Beast return with *Rian*, a dynamic celebration of Celtic dance spiced with West African dance. Sydney's story is also reborn as *The Secret River*, an adaptation of Kate

Grenville's beloved novel of convict settlement, premiering at Sydney Theatre. Good times for gratis? Head to the Domain for Summer Sounds (Jan 12) and Symphony in the Domain (Jan 26) featuring *The Sound of Kubrick*: music from *A Clockwork Orange*, *Eyes Wide Shut* and *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Around Sydney: 1300 668 812. www.sydneyfestival.org.au. Jan 5-27.

Sydney international Art Series:

Anish Kapoor
Exclusive to Sydney, this major exhibition by London artist Anish Kapoor activates over two floors to display enormo-sculptures like 24-tonne 'Memory' (2008) that have won Kapoor his fame. "Sculpture takes a hell of a long time," he told *Time Out*. "It's only over a period of time that repetition leads to innovation. A work has one kind of

life inside the studio and another outside. [Then] it either enters the psyche or becomes just one more thing in the world." *Museum of Contemporary Art Australia*, 140 George St, Sydney 2000. 02 9245 2400. www.mca.com.au. \$15-\$20. Dec 20-Apr 1.

Sydney New Year's Eve

Showgirl and icon Kylie Minogue is the creative ambassador of SNYE. Together with pyro technician Fortunato Foti, she will bring the night's theme of 'Embrace' to sparkling life, most vividly through the Harbour of Light Parade, a flotilla of brightly lit vessels spanning Cockatoo Island in the west to Clark Island in the east. *Around Sydney*. www.sydneynewyearseve.com. Mon Dec 31.

More events? sydney.com.

Top 5 Beach boutiques

When it comes to beachwear, Sydney sashays with the best



Camilla

Vibrant, playful and oh-so-Sydney, Camilla Franks' airy kaftans in a kaleidoscope of colours and hues are perfect for floating across the beach... and then barefoot-and-beautiful into a sandy bar. 132a Warners Ave, Bondi Beach 2026. 02 9130 1430. www.camilla.com.au.



Palm Beach Couture

Fashionista Helene Esdaile runs this chic shop at the flash end of the upper northern beaches and does a roaring trade in exotic colourful accessories: hats, beads, sarongs, flats and jewellery. Shop 5, 1105 Barrenjoey Rd, Palm Beach 2108. 02 9974 4277. www.palmbeachcouture.com.au.



Triple Bull

A mecca for surfers and swimwear seekers in the south, this shop, run by ex-pro waxhead Richard Marsh, offers a huge range of apparel and accessories. Walls and floors are piled high with hip hardgoods – boards, wetsuits, flippers and more. 23 Kingsway, Cronulla 2230. 02 9544 0354. www.triplebull.com.au.



Mambo Wholesale

The kings of irreverent Sydney surfwear (and the 2000 Olympic athlete uniforms) shift their über-cool tees, shorts, bikinis and accessories here at cut price. Misbehaving dogs and lurid flowers have never cut such a rug. 400 Pittwater Rd, North Manly 2100. 02 9907 1266.



Puff n Stuff

Bondi's golden-skinned pretties things love their dirty cheap one-offs, threadbare band T-shirts, cowboy boots, floaty dresses and envy-inducing vintage items spanning the 1950s-70s. 3/96 Glenayr Ave, Bondi 2026. 02 9130 8471.

Short break: Sydney... to Blue Mountains

Climb into the clouds and taste blue-ribbon living

For a quick-fix retreat to sooth city stresses, the Blue Mountains can't be beaten for proximity, affordability and sheer beauty. This is a landscape untouched by time, where spectacular cliffs and pristine forests shelter a vibrant hive of hotels, restaurants, cafés, shops and delightful surprises.

The climb into the mountains winds through sleepy towns named for explorers Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth who conquered this path in 1813. **Restaurant Como** (134 Great Western Hwy, Blaxland 2774, 02 4739 8555) is a great place to pit-stop and taste history via a degustation or a snack. If you fancy lingering, **Storey Grange** (105 Lalor Dr, Springwood 2777, 02 4751 2672, www.storeygrange.com) offers self-contained cottages sitting bang in the National Park.

The **Norman Lindsay Gallery** is set amidst landscaped flora at nearby Faulconbridge. Once home to the saucy Australian artist and author of classic *The Magic Pudding*, it now offers exhibitions, accommodation, a café and limited-edition Lindsay prints and books for sale. 14 Norman Lindsay Cr, Faulconbridge 2776. 02 4751 1067.

To bed down hereabouts try the retro-tastic (and pet-friendly) **Fairmont Resort** (1 Sublime Point Rd, Leura 2780, 02 4785 0000, www.fairmontresort.com.au) which offers helicopter tours of the local wineries. And before you hit the heart of the mountains, visit **Bygone Beautys** (22 Grose



Leura Garage

St, Leura 2780, 02 4784 3117) where antiques and collectibles abound, and the organic café **Leura Garage** (84 Railway Pde, Leura 2780, 02 4784 3391) for their signature mufuletta sandwiches. Cruise through to **Echo Point** to see the **Three Sisters**, one of Australia's most famous rock formations created, according to Aboriginal legend, when beautiful teenage girls were turned to stone by a medicine man wanting to protect their chastity forever.

Once a mining village, Katoomba is now a boomtown of rejuvenation. The **Carrington Hotel** (15-47 Katoomba St, Katoomba 2780,



Emirates Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa

02 4782 1111, www.thecarrington.com.au) has heritage cool and Yindi Day Spa. Lunch at mod-Oz diner **Avalon** (8-18 Katoomba St, Katoomba 2780, 02 4782 5532) or have Euro fare at **Swiss Cottage**. 132 Lurline St, Katoomba 2780. 02 4782 2281.

Drive on to **Harrow Cottages** (21 Brentwood Ave, Blackheath 2785, 02 4787 8281, www.harrowcottages.com) then dinner at **Vulcans**, the best restaurant in the Mountains. 33 Govettes Leap Rd, Blackheath 2785. 02 4787 6899. Fancy a final flurry?

Emirates Wolgan Valley Resort & Spa (2600 Wolgan Rd, Wolgan Valley 2790, 02 9290 9733, www.wolganvalley.com) is a five-star resort where each suite has its own pool!

Getting there? It's an easy 90-minute drive. Simply head west from the CBD along Parramatta Rd then onto the M4 Motorway.



Heading to Sydney? Stay a few extra days and explore more great short breaks, things to do, deals and accommodation at visitnsw.com



Trafalgar Square, London



Waddesdon Manor



Edinburgh's Hogmanay Torchlight Procession



Cardiff Castle tour

Christmas in Great Britain

From sumptuously decorated countryside houses and delicious festive foods to fabulous shopping streets and Victorian-styled markets, a visit to Britain at this time of year is truly magical

For centuries, villages and towns all over Britain have celebrated winter with festivals, music and special local recipes. Although the British Christmas as we know it today has its roots in the family gathering which Queen Victoria and Prince Albert made fashionable – complete with Christmas trees and presents – this season has a heritage of wonderful occasions, not least Hogmanay in Scotland to welcome in a brand new year.

Christmas shopping

Whether you are gift shopping or looking for an outfit to dazzle during the party season, there are great style hot spots all over Britain.

In Scotland, **Princes Square** in

Glasgow is a speciality shopping centre with fashion stores and jewellers (www.princesssquare.co.uk). Come here for Belstaff and Vivienne Westwood and stay to enjoy one of the restaurants that count among Glasgow's finest dining experiences.

Near Oxford, in the heart of the English countryside, is **Bicester Village**, a stylish bargain-hunter's dream (www.bicester-village.com). Visitors from all over the world head for this retail destination, where discount stores for major fashion brands from Alexander McQueen to Yves Saint Laurent are laid out more like a collection of village stores rather than a mall, open until 8pm from Monday to Saturday.

Victoria Square in Belfast is an elegant glass-domed mall in the

heart of Northern Ireland's style district (www.victoriasquare.com), and in the Welsh capital, Cardiff, the stunning

St David's Shopping Centre is a favourite with fashionistas who want to browse the likes of Kurt Geiger and Jo Malone (www.stdavidscardiff.com). Cardiff's pedestrianised **Queen's Street** also boasts an incredible shopping selection, from charming arcades to department stores.

In London, in addition to flagship stores like **Selfridges** on Oxford Street and **Burberry** on Regent Street, there are some wonderful boutiques and market stalls all within easy walking distance of each other, in the traffic-free streets and piazza of **Covent Garden** (www.coventgardenlondonuk.com). Just off Piccadilly, **Burlington Arcade** is a trip into the past, with genteel

boutiques lining its elegant covered avenue.

Christmas markets

Stalls filled with handmade crafts and delicious seasonal food make special Yuletide markets a fun trip out even when you're just browsing and not buying. In beautiful locations around the country, Christmas markets are often accompanied by choirs singing carols and a chance to sample delights like fruit-filled mince pies and mulled wine.

In the medieval city of **York**, music and decorated wooden huts add to the magical atmosphere (Dec 8-23, www.visit-york.org) and in **Bath**, the Georgian streets around Bath Abbey and the Roman Baths are transformed into a **Christmas market** where you

can stock up on unusual gifts, sweet treats and decorations (Nov 22-Dec 9, www.bathchristmasmarket.co.uk).

In London, shoppers can take in the sights along the River Thames while they tour the **Southbank Winter Festival**. Here there is a wealth of sideshows, including dark comic cabaret, candlelit classical concerts and even opera. With choral singing by the river and dancing in the Royal Festival Hall, there is also a chance for visitors to make Christmas cards and presents, and check out the **Real Food Christmas Market and Chocolate Festival** (Nov 16-Jan 7, www.southbankcentre.co.uk).

Cool castles

Outside the cities there are markets in stunning settings that add to the excitement and expectation of the coming celebrations. With the backdrop of **Picton Castle** in Haverfordwest in west Wales, the Christmas market is a chance to have a glimpse into Christmas past and explore the rooms and castle decorated for a Victorian celebration, with a calendar of seasonal activities and a free glass of mulled wine (Nov 24-25, www.pictoncastle.co.uk). The **Caerphilly Medieval Christmas Fayre** takes over the whole of this Welsh castle town with stalls and street entertainment. As well as the tempting aroma of a hog roast, there will be dragon puppeteers, Jack the Jester and a medieval magician (Dec 8-9, www.caerphilly.gov.uk).

At the **Robert Burns Birthplace Museum** in Ayrshire, Scotland, there is an inspirational Christmas market (Nov 27, www.burnsmuseum.org.uk) and across the country, as far as the Isle of Bute, there are chances to shop outdoors under twinkling lights, warmed by festive goodies.

Romantic ice rinks

Nothing brings to mind a sweet, seasonal mood quite like a spin on the ice, hanging on to someone special! Even if you just fancy watching your friends taking a glide around, ice skating is a fun Christmas pastime that has become incredibly popular in the UK in recent years. Rinks are at their most charming during evening sessions, when atmospheric lighting completes the picturesque scene.

With the historic **Tower of London** as its setting, the ice rink in the moat of the old royal castle on the Thames is one of the favourites in the capital. Sip on a hot chocolate as you consider whether to pull on a pair of skates and take to the ice yourself (Nov 17-Jan 6, www.toweroflondonicerink.com).

In Edinburgh, Scotland, one of Europe's largest open-air rinks is in **East Princes Street Gardens** (Nov 24-Jan 4, www.edinburghchristmas.com) and in Brighton on the south coast of England, visitors can round off a day's shopping in the boutiques of the Lanes by heading for the ice rink in front of the splendid **Royal Pavilion** palace. Celebrity chef Jamie Oliver provides Fabulous Feasts, a rinkside bar-restaurant (Nov 10-Jan 20, www.royalpavilionicerink.co.uk).



Christmas celebrations in York



Tower of London ice rink



Burlington Arcade, London

Country pleasures

Many parts of Great Britain look as pretty as a Christmas card in the depths of winter, with fields and mountaintops covered in snow, and frosty lanes to wander down to see where holly and mistletoe grow wild.

At **Westonbirt Arboretum** in Gloucestershire the forest is illuminated for magical forest walks at **An Enchanted Christmas** (Nov 30-Dec 23, www.forestry.gov.uk). Revellers can follow the beautifully lit trail under the clear winter night sky, take part in craft activities suitable for all ages, and eat roasted chestnuts while carol singers serenade the gathered crowd.

Just half an hour out of London is magnificent **Waddesdon Manor** in Buckinghamshire. Visitors can gaze upon the sparkling Christmas decorations and each year there is a special theme to the decoration of the French chateau-style 19th-century manor's sumptuous rooms. This year, traditional English scenes are the inspiration, with London landmarks Big Ben, Trafalgar Square and Nelson's Column all outlined in the Oval Hall. English writers Dickens and

Shakespeare are celebrated and a feast fit for Victoria and Albert will be laid out in the White Drawing Room (www.waddesdon.org.uk).

Many traditional castles and homes become the setting for special seasonal evenings. At **Ruthin Castle Hotel** in Wales, there is a medieval Yuletide feast complete with Celtic mead to drink and a taste of Welsh culture in the entertainment laid on for guests (£44 per person, www.ruthin castle.co.uk).



A visit to Britain affords a glimpse of a Victorian Christmas

Explore the outdoors

Just because the weather is not so warm, long walks in the beautiful outdoors don't have to wait until

spring. The countryside all across Britain offers stunning winter scenery to enjoy. For those who prefer to follow expert guidance, there are organisations like **Call of the Wild** who put together group walks.

For Christmas there is a walk across the breathtaking **Brecon Beacons** mountains in south Wales, followed by a special Christmas dinner. For lots of ideas around the country, it's worth checking out www.adventurebritain.com.

Traditional Christmas

A visit to Britain affords a glimpse of the much-loved Victorian Christmas experience. The National Trust (www.nationaltrust.org.uk) cares for stately homes and parks of all sizes, many with special festive attractions. At **Vyne Hall** in Hampshire, visitors can go on country walks and dine on festive food in the Tudor Brewhouse, and in the West Country, the decorated hall and log fires at **Cotehele Hall** in Cornwall make visitors feel they have really escaped the modern world. At the Christmas craft session at **Arlington Court** in Devon there are sessions where adults can learn how to make decorations and Christmas stockings, and take home the results.

In the small, pretty Welsh capital, **Cardiff**, there is a **Victorian Christmas Tour**. By contrast, another tradition in the far north of Scotland is the **Ba' Games in Orkney** – mass rugby games where everyone joins the fun over Christmas and New Year. At www.visitbritain.com there are a wealth of these regional events around which you can choose to build your own unique winter stay.

New Year parties

Throughout the winter season nightclubs, restaurants and entire towns lay on night-time events for younger revellers.

In London and other cities, there are fireworks and entertainment on the streets as the UK welcomes in 2013.

In Scotland, the wild celebrations are based around what is called Hogmanay – the Scottish even have an extra day off to make the most of it! **Glasgow** and **Edinburgh** present spectacular **street parties** and every alehouse across the land will join in. At **Stirling Castle** there is a special concert as the bells chime in the New Year, and a firework show (www.stirlinghogmanay.co.uk).

A season of ideas at VisitBritain

From markets to walks, VisitBritain has an inspirational website to guide you to exactly the British holiday that you want. For example, did you know there's a **rooftop cinema** at London's elegant **Berkeley Hotel** in Knightsbridge? Over Christmas, guests snuggle under blankets to watch classic movies with a festive theme (www.the-berkeley.co.uk).

The **VisitBritain** website is easy to search according to your particular budget and interests. It also offers details of accommodation perfect for every kind of stay, from stunning hotels set within nature reserves to spa breaks and romantic lighthouse retreats for a winter break to remember. www.visitbritain.com





Sea kayaking at Bow Fiddle Rock, Portknockie, Scotland



Jane Austen's House Museum in Hampshire



Mountain biking in Scotland

2013: A year of culture and nature

Looking forward to 2013, Great Britain is getting ready for a year of special events, city festivals and a wealth of brilliant excuses to get out and discover the great outdoors

You'd be forgiven for thinking that Britain was taking a rest after a spectacular and busy 2012, but in 2013 the British Isles has an array of anniversaries and festivals to celebrate – and you're invited to the party.

Go wild in Scotland

The **Year of Natural Scotland 2013** is a year-long focus on making the wonderful, untamed Scottish countryside more accessible to visitors from home and abroad.

Whether you've seen the moody landscape of Glen Coe in the latest James Bond movie, 'Skyfall', or you know a bit about the country's dramatic history and the battles on its fields and waters, or you simply want to enjoy some of the best extreme sports in Britain, Scotland has a destination for you.

Throughout the coming year there are events which will highlight all you

can enjoy of Scotland's breathtaking views, thrilling sports, outdoor art and historic landscapes. There are fantastic outdoor activity centres all over the country, offering routes for climbing and mountain biking and facilities for kayaking and white water rafting. There are also fabulous spots where you can zip-wire through the trees or go up in a hot air balloon.

The Year of Natural Scotland also invites you to explore the wealth of **wildlife** – from puffin spotting and whale watching to **country rambles** that take you into the world of some of Scotland's beautiful endangered species like sea eagles and red squirrels.

Around the country there are **food and drink trails** so you can find out more about how the best meat and fish makes it from the great outdoors to the dining table, and how the varied countryside of the Highlands and islands contributes to the unique flavour of each fine whisky you

sample. With 15 Michelin-starred restaurants in Scotland, the food trails are bound to lead you somewhere wonderful...

Get culture in Derry

Derry in Northern Ireland has been honoured as the inaugural **UK City of Culture** for 2013. Local artists have been inspired, not only by the Northern Irish Troubles' impact on this old walled city, but also by the peace process of the past two decades.

Derry is now a vibrant arts hub and for 2013, visitors will be able to watch and take part in events all over the city from libraries to theatres, shops to street corners. For example, **Chinese Culture Week** (Feb 9-16) will be a city-wide week-long celebration to mark the start of the Year of the Snake. Alongside concerts and comedy shows, other highlights include **Off the Cuff** fashion evening at the Foyle Building (March 14), and **Hidden Treasures Children's Theatre**

Festival at the Waterside theatre (May 16-23).

From spring onwards there will be soccer, cycling, boxing, running and golf tournaments to watch. These include the **City of Culture Sprint Triathlon** on June 23. This athletic endurance test will take in some of the town's most beautiful features, with swimming in the River Foyle, the segment on bike taking in Craigavon and Foyle Bridges, and the running section passing over the iconic Peace Bridge, finishing in Derry city centre.

Derry is surrounded by stunning countryside and historic landmarks to visit, and is the gateway to the incredible Giant's Causeway coastline. It's well worth venturing through the area before or after your stay in the city, timing your Derry stay for other Culture 2013 highlights like **Music City** (June 21), or the **Turner Prize** – the UK's prestigious annual art award for artists aged under 50. It is being exhibited and presented outside

England for the first time ever (Oct 22-Jan 5 2014), as part of the festival.

See www.cityofculture2013.com for more information.

Glorious and green at 100

In recent years, the garden has become one of trendiest places to express personal taste. From vast gardens turned into funky meadows to clever windowboxes adding a splash of natural colour to city flats – gardening has become cool!

In spring, the **RHS Chelsea Flower Show** celebrates its 100th birthday. A quintessential date in the calendar, this is when the elegant gardens of Britain 'come to London'. The Royal Horticultural Society has hosted a flower show since Victorian times, but in 1913 the Chelsea Flower Show moved to its current location, overlooking the Thames. Just a stroll away from the ever-fashionable King's Road, and with innovative garden designs and cutting-edge sculpture on show, this is not just a sedate event for flower-lovers, but one of the hottest tickets in town – opened by the Queen (May 21-25, www.rhs.org.uk).

The RHS presents other fabulous events around the country during the summer, for those who can't make it to Chelsea. These not only provide the chance to wander through carefully manicured or bold and wild garden designs, but there are often live performances to enjoy while you're there.

The first event of the season is the **RHS Flower Show Cardiff** (April 19-21). Set in Bute Park – one of the Welsh capital's best-loved open spaces – this three-day festival of flowers features garden designs, wild landscapes, marquees and spring allotments to inspire visitors in what they can achieve back home.

Hampton Court Palace Flower Show (July 9-14) is presented in the stunning parkland around the palace that Henry VIII called home many centuries ago. Just half an hour by train from central London, Hampton Court's setting offers a perfect opportunity to enjoy the flower festival spirit with a trip into British history.

In Cheshire, near Manchester, the **RHS Flower Show Tatton Park** (July 25-28) is also set around a historic country house, Tatton Hall, with fabulous formal and natural gardens, surrounded by a vast, beautiful green space. Tatton Park is lovely to stroll around, and the show's attractions include chances to shop and dine, explore the gardens' features and enjoy special events.

Birthdays to remember

Britain's diverse cultural charms are in the spotlight throughout 2013.

It is 200 years since one of **Jane Austen's** most loved novels, 'Pride and Prejudice', was published. Austen was an internationally acclaimed writer even in her own time, yet she lived a relatively quiet life, and for her last eight years she resided at **Chawton Cottage** in Hampshire. Today this modest 17th-century home is called **Jane Austen's House Museum** (

RHS Chelsea Flower Show



St Andrews

museum.org.uk). Here you can get a feel for what life was like for the writer, even seeing the table at which she wrote some of her greatest books.

For 2013, many events will look at the place 'Pride and Prejudice' holds in British culture, and a tour in conjunction with the British Library is planned.

Austen lived for some time in Bath, too, and the spa town's Jane Austen Centre holds its annual, costumed **Jane Austen Festival** every September (Sept 13-21 for 2013, www.jane-austen.co.uk). A visit at any time in the year allows you the chance to find out more about the woman and her work... and stop off in the Regency Tea Room.

Another great British talent, composer **Benjamin Britten**, would have been 100 in 2013. His work will be featured at the **Royal Festival Hall** on the South Bank in London (www.southbankcentre.co.uk) through to May, including concerts by the **Philharmonia Orchestra** (Jan 20, Feb 21 & 22). His powerful opera, Billy Budd, will be performed at **Glyndebourne** in August. This is a quintessentially English annual festival of opera, set in the grounds of a

beautiful stately home. The audience wears evening dress, and the restaurant menus are so carefully devised that visitors start to peruse them online months in advance. It is a unique classical treat, set in the beautiful East Sussex countryside, and the offer of £30 tickets for visitors under the age of 30 is a wonderful way to ensure a wide range of music fans get to enjoy this cultural feast (May 18-August 25, glyndebourne.com).

The summer festival season is not exclusively a classical affair, of course. The **Glastonbury Festival** returns for 2013 (June 26-30), and throughout the summer there are many brilliant rock, folk and pop music festivals happening in cities and around the country, where you can enjoy good music, great food and even sleep in a tent if you want! To find out what's happening while you're here, check out the links on the VisitBritain website.

But it's not only literature and music that take centre stage. The sci-fi legend 'Dr Who' will be 50 this year! Of course, the Doctor is somewhat older than that, but it's 50 years ago that the BBC brought this intergalactic hero to

TV screens in the UK and then the world. There will be 'Dr Who' events throughout 2013, and in Cardiff Bay at the permanent **Doctor Who Experience** interactive exhibition (www.doctorwhoexperience.com) you can fly the TARDIS, come face to face with Daleks, Cybermen and Sontarans, walk through sets and see behind-the-scenes images and the costumes of all 11 Doctors.

A walk on the dark side

A rather more gruesome landmark in 2013 is the 125th anniversary of the time **Jack the Ripper** struck terror with his brutal murders in London's East End. His true identity was never discovered, and to this day, walking tours around the points where he killed his victims are still a source of grim fascination.

If you love to be spooked, the VisitBritain website is full of inspired ideas for spine-tingling days and nights out. **Berry Pomeroy Castle**, near Totnes in Devon, for example, is a 14th-century castle with two famous ghosts: the White Lady and the Blue Lady. And the **Ancient Ram Inn** in Gloucestershire is widely celebrated as 'the most haunted place in Britain'. Certainly its creaky floorboards, cold bare walls and dimly lit nooks and crannies set a fitting scene for tales of murder and child sacrifice...

600 years of St Andrews

In 2013, the **University of St Andrews** (www.st-andrews.ac.uk) celebrates its 600th anniversary. This is the place where Prince William and Kate Middleton met when they were students, but the history and tradition of Scotland's oldest university goes much further back. During the year there will be special events in this pretty coastal town to mark the anniversary (www.standrews.co.uk).

St Andrews is a byword for golfing excellence. Known as the Home of Golf, the sport was first played here some 600 years ago and the town boasts seven courses, including one of the world's finest, the **Old Course**, which has hosted The Open 28 times. Despite its fame, it's a public course and it's possible for amateurs to book a game there (www.standrews.org.uk).

Plan your trip at VisitBritain

The **VisitBritain** website features a selection of the best golf courses all over Britain's beautiful countryside – from Norfolk to County Down, from public links courses with sea views to places where soccer stars play. Search for 'golf' at www.visitbritain.com.

Whether it's sport, shopping, culture or relaxation you're looking for, the VisitBritain website is a great place to start planning your holiday for 2013.

