

HERTS BIG WEEKEND

Saturday 1st & Sunday 2nd April 2017

2017 will mark the second Big Weekend for Hertfordshire. To make the weekend as much of a success as last year we need your support. The Big Weekend is open to all Hertfordshire tourism businesses to participate and we hope you can join us as we celebrate all that is great about the county on one special weekend in April.

What is Big Weekend?

The Big Weekend is all about celebrating Hertfordshire's tourism offer. It gives local residents the opportunity to win free tickets to the array of places to visit and things to do on their doorstep. They can then recommend them to their friends and family. In 2017 Big Weekend will take place on 1st and 2nd April. Big Weekend is a signature event in English Tourism Week and supports the Family Holiday Association.

Why should I get involved?

Big Weekend is a tried and tested campaign that reaps benefits for tourism businesses. We know that many residents do not visit the places on their doorsteps – Big Weekend gives them the opportunity to do this, for FREE. Residents will be given the opportunity to explore attractions that they might not have otherwise visited and to discover hidden gems. Big Weekend also instils a sense of pride in their home county and will inspire them to share their enthusiasm with visitors, friends and family. The word of mouth recommendation is priceless.

The first ever Herts Big Weekend in 2016 was a huge success. Nearly 50 tourism businesses donated hundreds of tickets and experiences to Herts Big Weekend, and there were over 13,000 applications for the free tickets in the online ballot.

How are tickets allocated?

Big Weekend has a dedicated web platform – www.hertsbigweekend.co.uk Tickets are allocated via the website through a ballot system. Tickets are only available to people living in Hertfordshire (the system works via postcodes) and only to residents over the age of 18. Residents can apply for up to 2 tickets per attraction.

The ballot will be open between 9th February and 3rd March 2017. The system randomly selects winners for attractions from those who have applied. If residents are successful for one attraction, they will be removed from the ballot for any other attractions they have applied for – they can only win tickets for one attraction. Everyone who enters the ballot will receive an email, notifying them whether they have been successful or not. If successful, they will be sent an email with a link to their ticket, which they must download, print and take along to the attraction with them.

How many tickets should I offer?

The number of tickets you offer is optional but we have provided guidelines for tickets based on annual footfall. You should bear in mind that, on average, for smaller attractions only about half of ticket holders turn up, so not all tickets will be used. You may wish to offer more than you expect to be

redeemed to ensure a good turnout. There is a minimum of 10 tickets per attraction required to participate.

The following is a guide based on visitor numbers but the minimum number is 10 tickets:

over 100,000 = 500 tickets

over 50,000 = 250 tickets

over 20,000 = 150 tickets

over 10,000 = 100 tickets

over 5,000 = 50 tickets

under 5,000 = 20 tickets

Do I have to offer tickets for both days?

You can offer tickets for just the 1st April or the 2nd April, or both. You also have the opportunity to offer tickets on a completely different date if the Big Weekend is not suitable. It is your choice how you want to manage the promotion.

My venue is free entry, can I still take part?

Yes. If your venue is already free to participate in Big Weekend you can offer something extra, whether this be a guided tour, special event, free refreshments or a meaningful gift to make the offer more attractive. The more special or unique the offer, the more attractive your venue will be to residents.

My venue will not be open for the season in time – can I still take part?

Yes – depending on your operation you might invite a small number of people to a special preopening “preview” or you can offer tickets valid for a date once you are open (but still in the early part of your season).

What is the timeframe?

Businesses can sign up and offer tickets via the Big Weekend website until 14th December 2016. The ballot will go live in February 2017. Residents will have 3 weeks to enter the ballot. Tickets will be issued in March. Big Weekend is on 1st and 2nd April.

What will happen on the weekend?

Once the draw has taken place, you will be able to log back in to access and download the ticket allocations. Ballot winners will arrive at your venue with a printed ticket. You will be responsible for the visitor experience on the day, which would include the redemption of tickets and briefing your staff before the event to ensure a suitable welcome.

What redemption rate should I expect on the weekend?

Our experience is that there is an average redemption rate of around 60%. This alters depending on the type of attraction. The weather is also a big factor in determining redemption!

How can I promote Big Weekend through my marketing channels?

Participating attractions will be supplied with a marketing tool kit that will include sample copy, social media guidelines and logos. Postcards and posters will be supplied, if there is space to display them.

Why is Big Weekend so early in the season?

Big Weekend is a signature event in English Tourism Week (27th March – 2nd April 2017). English Tourism Week always takes place before the Easter holiday weekend, which for 2017 falls 14th – 17th April.

Why should I offer additional tickets for the Family Holiday Association?

For many families, the expense of purchasing admission tickets makes it impossible for them to go out as a family, even with the two free tickets received through the Big Weekend ballot. Some don't have internet access, and many families need additional support to organise and plan a day out. The FHA would like to work with Hertfordshire attractions again in 2016 to help struggling families in the county. The families supported very rarely, if ever, get the chance for a day out so the Big Weekend is a wonderful opportunity for them to create happy memories. The grassroots network of teachers, social workers, health visitors, and other charities refer families to the FHA so you can be confident that tickets go to those who need them most.

How can I get involved?

To register your business (or assign yourself to an existing business if you took part last year), and to allocate tickets to the ballot go to <http://www.hertsbigweekend/attraction-register>.

Once the tickets are added the process is complete and you can log out. You can return to edit the details for your attraction or the details of your tickets up until the cut off point for going live. We will send you updates to let you know when this will be.

If you require further information about Big Weekend contact the Visit Herts team on:

Call: 01227 821904

Email: ana.crouch@visitherts.co.uk