

HERTS BIG WEEKEND™

Saturday 24th & Sunday 25th March 2018

2018 will mark the third Big Weekend for Hertfordshire. To make the weekend as much a success as last year we need your support! The Big Weekend is open to all Herts tourism businesses to participate and we hope you can join us as we celebrate all that is great about our county on one special weekend in March.

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 2018 Big Weekend will take place on 24th and 25th March. The Big Weekend is a signature event in English Tourism Week.

Why should I get involved?

The 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 – this event 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. The 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. This word of mouth recommendation is priceless.

The second Herts Big Weekend in 2017 was a huge success. 52 tourism businesses donated more than 1,339 pairs of tickets and experiences to Herts Big Weekend, and there were over 19,000 applications for the free tickets in the online ballot.

How are tickets allocated?

The 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 1 pair of tickets per attraction.

The ballot will be open between 8th February and 11th March 2018. 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 ticket pairs 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 24th March or the 25th March, or for 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 enter, participate in the Big Weekend by offering something extra, whether this be a guided tour, a behind the scene tour, a special event, 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 pre-opening “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 12th January 2018. The ballot will go live in February 2018. Residents will have over 4 weeks to enter the ballot. Tickets will be issued in March. The Big Weekend is on the 24th March and the 25th March.

What will happen on the weekend?

Once the draw has taken place, you will be able to log back in to the website 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 50%. This alters depending on the type of attraction. The weather is also a big factor in determining redemption!

How can I promote the 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. The more businesses can spread the word the better!

Why is the Big Weekend so early in the season?

The Big Weekend is a signature event in English Tourism Week (17th – 25th March 2018). English Tourism Week always takes place before the Easter holiday weekend, which for 2018 falls 30th March – 2nd April.

How can I get involved?

To register your business and to allocate tickets to the ballot go to:

www.hertsbigweekend.co.uk/attraction-register.

Once the tickets you are offering 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 your tourism business took part last year, please check through your details and allocate your tickets for 2018 by going to www.hertsbigweekend.co.uk/attraction-account/

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

Call: 01227 812900

Email: gaelle.degrange@gotoplaces.co.uk