

05: My old china

Once you've seen how much goes into making a humble cup and saucer, you'll never take such everyday items for granted again...

Head for Stoke-on-Trent's Ceramics Festival during September 16–18, and find out all about the Potteries, during a long weekend with demonstrations, talks, tours and an antiques roadshow.

There's a marvellous sense of a great industrial tradition continuing into the modern age at Stoke-on-Trent. Don't miss the Gladstone Pottery Museum, in the city's only surviving complete Victorian pottery factory: watch traditional potting skills (and have a go yourself) and browse the Potters' Market during the Festival. Sandwiched between two canals stands Britain's last steam-powered potter's mill – where flint used to be ground up for making ceramics; it's now Etruria Industrial Museum, and the original steam engine will be in fully puffing order on September 18.

Delve into the working present on a fascinating guided weekday tour round the 18th-century Spode factory. By contrast, the Wedgwood factory is sleekly modern, but the Wedgwood Visitor Centre has some wonderful old vases dating from the days of the great master, Josiah Wedgwood. Snap up bargains at dozens of factory shops, with many extra reductions during the Festival weekend.

Contact: Stoke-on-Trent visitor information: Tel: (01782) 236000 visitstoke.co.uk

Cost: Gladstone Pottery Museum: Adults: £4.95. Children: £3.50 (4-16). Concessions: £3.95. Family tickets: £14.00. Special Festival ticket: £2.50.

Etruria Industrial Museum: Adults: £2.35. Children and Concessions: £1.20 (5-16). Family tickets: £5.30.

Spode: Free admission to the museum and factory. Standard/Connoisseurs' tour: Adults: £4.50/£7.50. Children (aged 8 and over) and Concessions: £4.00/£6.50.

Wedgwood Visitor Centre (for standard or extended tour): Adults: £7.75/£9.00. Children and Concessions: £5.75/£7.00. Family tickets: £25.95/£30.45.

Pottery city

thefacts

Where could I stay?

The Old Dairy House, Trentham Park. In spacious grounds just south of Stoke-on-Trent, an ornate and highly unusual black and white house.

Cost: Bed and Breakfast per room per night: £40.00. Double: £55.00.

Tel: (01782) 641209

smoothhound.co.uk/hotels/olddairyh ♦♦♦♦ Silver Award

Shawgate Farm Guest House.

A family-run farm just outside the Peak

District National Park, and near Alton Towers. **Cost:** Bed and Breakfast per room per night. Double: from £50.00. Family rooms: from £65.00.

Tel: (01538) 266590
shawgatefarm.co.uk ♦♦♦♦

What else can I do?

For the finest collection of Staffordshire pottery to be found anywhere visit the free **Potteries Museum and Art Gallery**. In lush country a few miles to the east spend a day at **Alton Towers**,

one of England's top theme parks **altontowers.com**. And to the south of the city discover **Trentham**, the restored Italian Gardens and parkland with the UK's first monkey forest (opened this year), outdoor activities and events, lakeside walks and retail village trenthamleisure.co.uk

England's Genius Map

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Gladstone Pottery Museum

Boy at Gladstone Pottery Museum