



Tunbridge Wells

A spa heritage town in the heart of the Kent countryside, endorsed by a royal seal of approval in the 17th century

WHY GO?

As well as its spa town heritage, a visit to Royal Tunbridge Wells will reveal refined Regency villas sitting alongside cute clapboard cottages, and wonderfully fusty antique shops next to designer boutiques. Or, if you tire of the pretty cobbled streets, you'll find Tunbridge Wells is hemmed in by a wealth of green spaces to remind you that the town has still got its reputation of 'Garden of England' to think about.

GETTING THERE

It takes less than an hour to reach Tunbridge Wells from London by rail and services are frequent. Coach services also run from London, taking around 90 minutes.

GETTING AROUND

Tunbridge Wells is small enough for you to negotiate by foot, no matter what your pace.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO

■ The Pantiles

The Pantiles, a pretty colonnaded catwalk built around the spring to which the town owes its existence, remains a pleasant place for all to stroll through while exploring the specialist shops. But in its Georgian heyday, 'The Walks' as it was then

known, adhered to strict etiquette: gentry on the upper walks, the less distinguished on the lower walks. You'll find the original chalybeate spring in a nook around which the Bath House was built in 1804 – the water is served (during summer months) by a traditional 'dipper'.

■ Tunbridge Wells Museum and Art Gallery

🌐 www.tunbridgewellsmuseum.org

Seek out the notable collection of Tunbridge Ware, a distinctive style of marquetry woodwork, made from the 1600s to the 1920s and very likely sold to the many on their way to visit town for the spring water. Expect to see collections of fine art, archaeology and even old toys and games.

Admission free

■ Tunbridge Wells Common

🌐 www.twcommons.org

Taking up around half on the local map, (with Rusthall Common included), Tunbridge Wells Common blankets over 250 acres in beautiful green. Historically, the Commons were developed as lowland heath, and until the end of the 19th century, it would have had almost no tree cover except for those trees deliberately planted, often to mark royal visits. The unusual stone outcropping known as the Wellington Rocks however, have stood for quite awhile longer. And if you're lucky, you might spot the odd nightingale, thrush or jackdaw too.

Admission free

■ Tunbridge Wells shopping

🌐 www.visittunbridgewells.com/site/shopping

There's the usual spread of designer and boutique shops, but there's also as many as 40 antiques shops in and around town, many found in The Pantiles area. There's also a smattering of enchanting old bookshops selling age-old

volumes and beautiful leather bound classics, some for as little as 10p. Or, if you're after some proper country produce, farmers' markets take place in Civic Way outside the Town Hall and Museum buildings on the second and fourth Saturdays in the month, or the first and third Saturdays in the Pantiles. Late night shopping in town is on Thursdays until 8pm.

GOOD PLACE TO EAT AND DRINK

■ The Ragged Trousers

☎ 01892 542 715

By the time you've ambled through town and all its bourgeoisie trimmings, you might want a break from all quaint window-displays and eyebrow-raising price tags. Take refuge in the Ragged Trousers, offering a cosy and relaxed resistance to the town's genteel atmosphere. Main meals between £5-£15.

GOOD PLACE TO STAY

■ The Royal Wells Hotel

☎ 01892 511 188

🌐 www.royalwells.co.uk

The Royal Wells, near The Pantiles, was a young Queen Victoria's favourite, still proudly bearing the Royal coat of arms atop the hotel's façade today. Rooms are plush and the connecting Beau Nash pub, dedicated to the celebrated dandy and once resident leader of fashion, is both fitting and welcoming. **Double room B&B £110**

USEFUL WEBSITE

🌐 www.visittunbridgewells.com

