



The joys of Surrey, clockwise from main image: vineyards of Denbies Wine Estate; garden at Polesden Lacey; Loseley House

# A county of golden moments

From its award-winning wines to glorious gardens, Surrey is going for gold

**S**urrey, on the western fringes of London, has long been appreciated for its beautiful landscapes and historic buildings. But in this county of surprises, there is much more to see, do, taste and enjoy.

If you are looking for a gold-medal day out, try Denbies Wine Estate, the largest single vineyard in England and the home of the best-selling English wine, Surrey Gold, a medium-dry white.

Denbies has several other gold medal-winning wines to its name, despite having only been a vineyard since the Eighties. However, the Romans planted vines nearby nearly 2,000 years ago, and the chalky soil and mild climate –

similar to that of the Champagne area in France – is the key to its success.

Now, visitors can book onto the Indoor Wine Experience and Outdoor Vineyard Train, which guide you through the working winery from grape press to fermentation tanks – and include the all-important tasting session.

Another medal-winning attraction is Painshill Park, near Cobham. This 18th-century park was awarded a Plant Heritage Gold award for its John Bartram Heritage Collection at last year's Royal Horticultural Society's Hampton Court Palace Flower Show.

The collection is based on plants sent as seed from North America to the Hon Charles Hamilton, who created the park between 1738 and 1773. Hamilton received his first box of seeds in 1748 and several of the trees still growing at Painshill originate from those seeds.

The park was designed as a romantic

landscape with naturalistic planting, and this can still be seen today, as can the restored follies – the crystal grotto, abbey, Chinese bridge, Turkish tent, gothic temple and ruined mausoleum which appear almost from nowhere as you explore the 160-acre site.

Nearby is the RHS Garden Wisley, one of the world's top 10 gardens with the largest collection of plants in the UK. Every spring it is swathed in gold – thousands of daffodils – but it is a wonderful garden to visit at any time of the year.

Queen Elizabeth opened its cathedral-like Bicentenary Glasshouse last summer, and now visitors can enjoy exotic plants from the world's wet tropical zone, wet temperate zone and dry temperate zone.

Children will also love the root zone – an interactive area where they can learn about the vital role of roots, soil and the

creatures which live underground. Just off the A3 near Guildford is Loseley Park and House, where the Field of the Cloth of Gold is painted on panels in the Great Hall. This illustrates the historic meeting between Henry VIII and Francis I of France.

Loseley House was built in the 1560s for Queen Elizabeth I to stay in and, as well as the house being fascinating, one of the highlights of the estate is the restored walled garden which is based on a design by the legendary Edwardian plantswoman Gertrude Jekyll.

There are more beautiful gardens at the National Trust's Polesden Lacey, at Great Bookham, near Dorking. The small winter/early-spring garden is particularly lovely, as is the walled rose garden, whose swathes of fragrant lavender come into their own in the summer. You can also hire croquet sets to play on the lawn.

King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, the late Queen Mother, spent part of their 1923 honeymoon in the Regency

house, which has a stunning Gold Room – the drawing room – which was restored after a fire in 1960 with more than 2,000 books of 24ct gold leaf.

However, Polesden Lacey is not just a stuffy stately home. The Hon Mrs Ronald Greville, who gifted it to the National Trust, was a celebrated Edwardian hostess and her spirit of fun lives on.

A few miles away is Brooklands, where the golden age of British motorsport played out. The first purpose-built motor racing circuit in the world, it became a centre of engineering excellence.

Its Twenties and Thirties heydays are celebrated today: the old clubhouse is an evocative museum, and the hangars house historic cars and aeroplanes. There is even a prototype Concorde which you can walk through.

Also on the site is the new Mercedes-Benz World, which has a production-line simulator ride, an interactive problem-solving laboratory, restaurant, cafés,

shops and children's play area. Adult visitors can also put the company's finest cars through their paces on the 2.5km handling circuit.

If you would prefer something more tranquil, try Oatlands Park Hotel, an historic country house hotel set in 10 acres of parkland and dating back to 1538 and the reign of Henry VIII.

It's ideally placed for you to visit the capital then return to relative tranquillity. You'll have only golden memories of the luxurious and stunningly decorated accommodation, and you could spend a golden afternoon taking afternoon tea on the Lawn Terrace.

● **INFORMATION:** [www.visitsurrey.com](http://www.visitsurrey.com);  
Denbies Wine Estate: [www.denbiesvineyard.co.uk](http://www.denbiesvineyard.co.uk);  
Painshill Park: [www.painshill.co.uk](http://www.painshill.co.uk); Wisley: [www.rhs.org.uk](http://www.rhs.org.uk); Loseley Park: [www.loseley-park.com](http://www.loseley-park.com);  
Polesden Lacey: [www.nationaltrust.org.uk/southeast](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/southeast); Mercedes-Benz World: [www.mercedes-benzworld.co.uk](http://www.mercedes-benzworld.co.uk); Oatlands Park Hotel: [www.oatlandsparkhotel.com](http://www.oatlandsparkhotel.com)

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England's largest vineyard



**Mercedes-Benz World**  
Excitement & thrills



**Winkworth Arboretum (NT)**  
Showering year-round colour



**Oatlands Park Hotel**  
Historic country house hotel



**Painshill Park**  
Gardens & lakes



**Polesden Lacey (NT)**  
Regency villa & gardens



**RHS Garden Wisley**  
A garden for all seasons



**Loseley Park**  
Elizabethan house & gardens

Open all year and with easy access, Surrey offers a variety of great things to do. Visit our website for more information.

