

Awe-inspiring Cheddar Gorge

# Beauty and the beasts

Stunning countryside and the roar of lions await caravanners visiting four Club 'dens' in Somerset and Wiltshire. Don Jolly is your guide

**DON'T FORGET**  
You can book your pitch online at [caravanclub.co.uk/searchandbook](http://caravanclub.co.uk/searchandbook) or by calling our Advance Booking Service on 01342 327490. Please call Affiliated Sites directly.



**T**here is no doubt, Somerset is a beautiful county. Wherever you go, the rolling landscape encourages you to explore farther and discover the real gems, including the picturesque cities, towns and villages, that hide within its folds. What better, then, to find that all four of this month's sites are either in, or on the edge of, designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

About 10 miles from Bath, in the northern Mendip Hills, and around half a

mile from Chew Valley Lake at Bishop Sutton, Bath Chew Valley is an Affiliated Site for adults only. The smallest of our site quartet, it has 45 pitches and, despite often being full, is a quiet place, where towing vehicles are banished to the car park near the entrance. Staff move your caravan to its pitch by tractor and do all the levelling and connections for you. If you have a motorhome, car hire is available, so you don't have to keep moving your vehicle.

There's a real garden feel to the site, with plenty of shrubs and flowers among the lawns >>

## THIS MONTH'S FEATURED SITES

**BATH CHEW VALLEY AS**  
See p96 of the *Sites Directory & Handbook 2013/14*

**CHEDDAR**  
See p99 of the *Directory*

**LONGLEAT**  
See p107 of the *Directory*

**WINCANTON RACECOURSE**  
See p117 of the *Directory*



Bath Chew Valley AS

## FOR THE FAMILY



### Go Weston

Weston-super-Mare boasts all the features of a traditional seaside resort, including a sandy beach, donkey rides and a pier. There's also a summer-long sand sculpture festival.

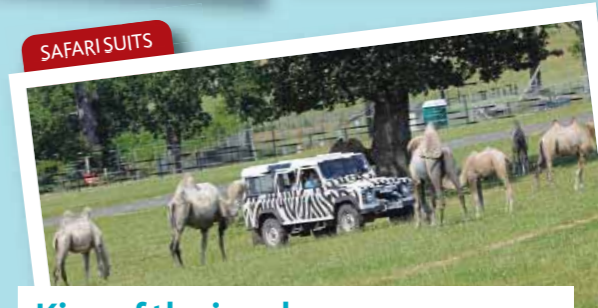
[W weston-super-mare.com](http://weston-super-mare.com)  
Nearest featured site Bath Chew Valley



### Wonderful Wookey

Originally known for its caves, Wookey Hole has developed into a theme park featuring life-size dinosaurs, Pirate Island Adventure Golf and a Victorian penny arcade. You can also meet the Wookey Witch!

[T 01749 672243](tel:01749672243)  
[W wookey.co.uk](http://wookey.co.uk)  
Nearest featured site Cheddar



### King of the jungle

This Club site sits on the Longleat Estate so you would be remiss not to visit Longleat Safari Adventure Park. Imagine you're in the African veld as you drive close to wild animals, including lions, giraffes and rhinos.

[T 01985 844400](tel:01985844400) [W longleat.co.uk](http://wlongleat.co.uk)  
Nearest featured site Longleat

### Terry good

Fans of Terry Pratchett's Discworld books must visit the Discworld Emporium in Wincanton's High Street. Crazy artefacts associated with the books can be found here – you can even own a piece of Ankh-Morpork unreal estate!

[T 01963 824686](tel:01963824686)  
[W discworldemporium.com](http://discworldemporium.com)  
Nearest featured site Wincanton Racecourse



## FOOD + DRINK



### Cider rules

Cider goes with Somerset, and **The Original Cider Company** at Clutton Hill Farm is well worth a visit. You can also enjoy a pint amid the pleasant surroundings of the nearby **Hunters Rest Inn**.

T 01275 333154 (The Original Cider Company)  
 W huntersrest.co.uk  
 Nearest featured site Bath Chew Valley

### Gorging on cheddar

Cheddar cheese was first made in the village that shares its name back in the 12th century. And you can still see it being made there, before it's matured in local caves. To taste and buy some, visit the village's **Cheddar Gorge Cheese Company**.

T 01934 742810  
 W cheddargorgecheese.co.uk  
 Nearest featured site Cheddar

#### THE BIG CHEESE



### Spread your wings

The **Spread Eagle Inn**, on the Stourhead estate at Stourton, is just a short stroll from the famous gardens. It serves breakfast, lunch and dinner daily, with tea, coffee and snacks also available. Drinks are served from 10am-11pm.

T 01747 849587  
 W spreadeagle.com  
 Nearest featured sites Longleat/Wincanton Racecourse

### Racing certainty

About three miles from Wincanton Racecourse, **The Montague Inn** at Shepton Montague is a real find. There is an excellent choice of beers and ciders plus a seasonal menu using locally-sourced ingredients.



T 01749 813213  
 W themontagueinn.co.uk  
 Nearest featured site Wincanton Racecourse



Longleat House and (main image) one of its magnificent residents



“Where else in Britain can you be woken by the roar of lions?”

plus a pond healthily stocked with fish. Such tranquillity can be difficult to drag yourself away from!

Amenities are top class, with a heated washroom block housing luxury individual cubicles, each with a toilet, washbasin and shower. Also on hand are a laundry and library, plus Wi-Fi and recycling facilities.

Bishop Sutton, a short walk along the lane, has a grocery shop and, across the road, a pub, the **Red Lion**, which serves excellent food. Site reception has details of several other pubs within a short drive.

You can walk or cycle from the site to Chew Valley Lake and then through the country park to a waterside café.

#### CRACKING CHEDDAR, GROMIT!

Nine miles away, The Club site at Cheddar lies on the southern edge of the Mendips, with all the village's attractions within a comfortable walking distance. The site's narrow entrance means access is a little tight, but there are plans to widen it in due



Wells Cathedral

course. In the meantime, visitors are requested to leave before noon on their departure day and arrive after 1pm, to avoid congestion.

Once you're in, it's a user-friendly site with lovely smooth pitches, of which 19 out of 65 are grassy. For a small site, it has plenty to offer and is very popular, so advance booking is advised.

If you're eating out, the village has a good choice of restaurants and cafés, useful if you've had a busy day walking or cycling. For fans of hiking, the Mendips are on the doorstep, while cyclists can explore the National Cycle Network route 26, or the

Strawberry Line Heritage Trail, which follows the course of an old railway track. This line used to carry strawberries up to Yatton, about 10 miles away. Ultimately, this cycle route will link Clevedon on the coast with Cranmore near Shepton Mallet.

Cheddar is handily placed for the coast, too, with Weston-super-Mare and Burnham-on-Sea both about a dozen miles away. Inland attractions include England's smallest city, Wells, which boasts a wonderful cathedral and bishop's palace, and is close to mystical Glastonbury.

While three of our site quartet are actually in Somerset, Longleat is across the county border (just) on the West Wiltshire Downs. The largest of our selection, with 165 pitches, it is in the grounds of the Longleat Estate, close to the famous safari



Longleat Club site

park. As well as listening to birdsong, where else in Britain can you be woken by the roar of lions? This certainly puts an unusual stamp on your caravan holiday, as does a drive through the safari park itself.

Caravan Club members are entitled to a 35% discount on entry to the safari park, house and other attractions if they book in advance online at [longleat.co.uk/caravanclub](http://longleat.co.uk/caravanclub) (a Club membership card will need to be produced on arrival). Free entry to the house is available to members of the Historic Houses Association. There are also fishing lakes on the estate, not far from the house, but for these you will need a licence from the estate office. Carp is the main catch and a day ticket costs £10.

For food shopping, there's an Asda superstore about three miles away, towards Frome. If you prefer to eat out, the popular Bath Arms at Crockerton has an excellent menu. Or, during opening hours, you can use the restaurants on the estate, on production of your site booking receipt.

The Club site at Wincanton Racecourse, 20 miles from Longleat, off the A303, is ideal for overnighters heading to or >>



Cheddar Club site

## OUTDOOR FUN

#### CHEW ON THIS!



### Hide and peek

Chew Valley Lake is great for birdwatching, with more than 270 species recorded there, including wildfowl, lapwing, reed warbler and even osprey. There are six hides, though five require a permit (£3 per day).

W cvlbirding.co.uk  
 Nearest featured site Bath Chew Valley

### Cycling

The **Strawberry Line** is a delightful traffic-free route into Cheddar. It will eventually run from Clevedon to Shepton Mallet.

W sustrans.org.uk



### Gully travels

Three miles long and 450ft deep, **Cheddar Gorge** is England's largest gorge. You lose the place's grandeur if you drive through – it's better to cycle. Best of all, walk the three-mile waymarked path round the gorge's rim for some great views.

T 01934 742343  
 W cheddargorge.co.uk  
 Nearest featured site Cheddar

### Enchanted gardens

A magnificent lakeside garden at the heart of the **Stourhead** estate has been described as a 'living work of art'. Classical temples, mystical grottoes and exotic trees make for an enchanting wander.

T 01747 841152  
 W nationaltrust.co.uk  
 Nearest featured sites Longleat/Wincanton Racecourse



# CULTURE



## Bathe in Bath's glory

Beautiful **Bath** has some of the finest architectural treasures in Europe, including the Roman baths and the abbey. Exceptional Georgian edifices include the Royal Crescent, the Circus, the Assembly Rooms, shop-lined Pulteney Bridge and the Theatre Royal.

T 0906 711 2000 W [visitbath.co.uk](http://visitbath.co.uk)  
Nearest featured site Bath Chew Valley

## Magical mystery tor

Rich with legends, evoking King Arthur and even Christ, Glastonbury is a mystical place. The ruins of **Glastonbury Abbey** are thought to be the country's oldest Christian foundation. Nearby Glastonbury Tor offers extensive views over the Somerset Levels.

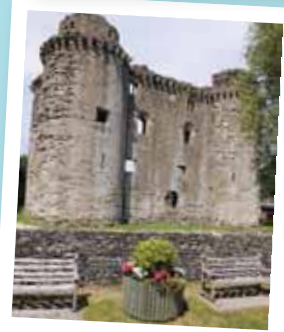
T 01458 832267  
W [glastonburyabbey.com](http://glastonburyabbey.com)  
Nearest featured site Cheddar



## Mind the moat

Built in the 14th century, the moated **Nunney Castle** suffered serious damage during a Parliamentary bombardment in the Civil War and soon surrendered. One of Somerset's most impressive castles, it is in the care of English Heritage.

W [english-heritage.org.uk](http://english-heritage.org.uk)  
Nearest featured site Longleat



## Power houses

The **Fleet Air Arm Museum** and **Haynes International Motor Museum** are musts. The first tells the story of the Royal Navy's flying division; the latter has more than 400 cars and motorcycles in 10 halls.

T 01935 840565 (Fleet Air Arm Museum);  
01963 440804 (Haynes Motor Museum)  
W [fleetairarm.com](http://fleetairarm.com); [haynesmotormuseum.com](http://haynesmotormuseum.com)  
Nearest featured site Wincanton Racecourse



A day at the races!

Wincanton Racecourse Club site



from Devon and Cornwall. Normally, pitching is right beside the track, but on race days all caravans must be moved from the barrier so punters can see where their bets are going. Even if you're not a gambling fan, it's great to capture the excitement of a race meeting, free for caravanners on site. Five fixtures in the spring, out of an annual calendar of 17 jump meetings, coincide with the site's opening dates.

Site facilities are in a spectator stand, including the reception office and its small shop. A bar is part of this area, but only opens on race days. Otherwise, it serves as the site's TV room and, occasionally, for quiz nights.

The racecourse is located at one of the higher points in the area and, as a result, your stay could be breezy. The plus side is that there are good views – in the distance

you can spot Alfred's Tower, a folly on the Stourhead estate.

Other attractions nearby include museums close to the A303, which will please boys who like big toys. Look out for the Fleet Air Arm Museum and Haynes International Motor Museum, the latter nearing completion of a major rebuild. Or, if you fancy a trip into Dorset, the attractive and historic towns of Shaftesbury and Sherborne are only about half an hour's drive away from Wincanton Racecourse. ■

## MEMBERS' VIEW

**John and Chris Maloney**, from Wetherby in Yorkshire, think the countryside around Bath Chew Valley is stunning. "After a long drive it's nice to have your caravan pitched for you, too," said John.



Brother and sister, **John Share and Pat Strawson**, were relaxing with their other halves at Longleat. They loved the location of the site, enthusing, "We also enjoy having easy access to the estate grounds."



**Dale and Wendy Percival**, from Sutton-in-Ashfield, were spending nine nights at Cheddar with their German shepherd dogs, Kratos and Lara. Enjoying their first visit to Somerset, they particularly liked the area's National Trust properties, as well as the coast at Burnham-on-Sea.



To read even more member views, see our fantastic online forum at [caravanclub.co.uk/together](http://caravanclub.co.uk/together)

