

travel

Well-kept secret

EMMA, the Duchess of Rutland, glides into the dining room with a beguiling smile. "Excuse me, I'm a little late," she says with a disarming frankness. "Been mucking out the horses with the children."

KEN BENNETT discovers the piece of Hidden England that is Lincolnshire

There are picture-postcard, honey-stoned villages, oozing history alongside their pots of tangy homemade chutneys. Twinkling pristine towns to spend a dreamy afternoon musing over tea and crumpets.

Then, of course, there are legendary pubs, hotels and castles – just like Beaver – where you luxuriate in cosy rooms and immerse yourself in fine dining with a distinctly local flavour. Because, alongside its burgeoning heritage, Lincoln's fair county is all about food; and lots of it. It produces one-fifth of the nation's needs and hosts the area's distinctly different tastes of Lincoln Red beef, stuffed chine, plum bread, Lincolnshire sausages, Lincolnshire Poacher cheese, fresh ostrich and an extraordinary selection of fresh vegetables.

Hone in on Lincoln itself and you'll find an enthralling, highly walkable destination city, steeped in English heritage and vibrant modern waterfront. The imposing gothic Cathedral, one of the three largest in Britain, takes centre stage and featured in the Da Vinci Code. And the remains of Lincoln Castle, built by William the Conqueror, are home to one of the four surviving copies of Magna Carta.

There are events to tempt visitors most of the year, with winter dominated by the legendary Christmas Market. Alternatively, glide to the land of pies, just a crust's crimp away, in Melton Mowbray, across the border into Leicestershire.

Here you can feast your eyes on castles of another kind: giant, contented pork pies with a sublime melt-in-the-mouth taste.

With exquisite ease, master pie maker, Stephen Hallam, pictured, produces pie you want to nurture rather than eat at a demonstration at Dickinson & Morris' Ye Olde Pork Pie Shoppe.

Back in Lincolnshire, The Olde Barn Hotel in Grantham in features tapas of the local kind: fish balls, red beef faggots and curried roast parsnips. Different, but tasty, and the toasted plumb bread, apple and cream for a



IMPOSING – Lincoln Cathedral takes centre stage

LINCOLN FACTFILE

Ken travelled to England's East Midlands as a guest of the Coach Tourism Council, which promotes excursions, short breaks and holidays by coach on behalf of 150 coach tour operators who offer departures across the UK.

Visit: www.coachtourismcouncil.co.uk to find a national or regional operator. Many operators feature tours to the region, combining a seaside break at Skegness. He stayed at The Ramada, Grantham, just off the A1, which offers a choice of 89 en-suite bedrooms. Call: (01476) 593 000 or: www.ramadagrantham.co.uk. He tried a selection of Lincolnshire tapas at The Olde Barn Hotel Marston, Grantham. Tel: (01400) 250 909, www.theoldebarnhotel.co.uk. Belvoir Castle features in the Hidden England project, with exciting happenings in the castle and grounds (www.belvoircastle.com). And he dined at the Manners Arms on the Belvoir Estate at Knapton. Tel: (01476) 879 222, www.mannersarms.com.



For the latest Reader Travel offers, call (0191) 2016000, visit www.newmarket.travel /nec or visit Front Reception, Groat Market, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 1ED

Ibiza
from **£39.99**
one way inc. taxes
Jet2.com
Low fares from Newcastle

gardens

Titchmarsh's top potting tips

Now is the time you need to be planning your summer containers, whether you are going for uniform colours and types of pots, annuals or permanent plantings.

which look particularly striking covered with frost or snow." Group containers together, which allows you to match flowering and foliage plants and move seasonal flowering plants into the group as they reach their prime. Remove them once they start to fade. Standing pots together also reduces moisture loss, as the leaves form layers, which trap moisture underneath, creating a more humid area for all the plants. If you are adding annuals to your permanent scheme, think carefully about colour. You need to work out what you like and be brave enough to go for it.



GROW AHEAD – Alan Titchmarsh offers advice

Gardening guru Alan Titchmarsh prefers permanent plantings in pots on his own patio. "I have agapanthus in pots, olives in large tubs, lots of clipped box orbs and domes and cones, 16 tubs of camellias – because I'm on chalky soil – planted in ericaceous compost. I tend to go for perennials and evergreens in pots generally, although I love popping tulips and daffodils in pots as well."

Indeed, year-round and displays can be a less labour and, ultimately, a cheaper way of keeping interest going on your patio, and Alan is the first to offer some advice about them in his latest book Container Gardening, one of his new series of practical guides.

An all-year-round display, he says, will need to contain evergreen plants to form a framework that other plants can be built around. "Flowering bulbs will give a burst of colour from midwinter through to mid-spring. In summer, you can use bedding plants, climbers, summer bulbs, shrubs and perennials. In autumn, fill pots with perennials, late bulbs and corms, and plants for autumn colour or berries. "Over winter, opt for winter-flowering shrubs, hellebores and structural plants,

Colours generally regarded as working well together are those which are opposite on the colour spectrum – orange works well with purple, red with green. If you have purples and darker colours you need a sunny spot because they disappear in shade, whereas white and pale blue and pale pink will stand out in shade. But a lot of flowering plants don't like a lot of shade," he says. Vibrant colours such as reds, oranges, yellows and reddish purples look good in pots, which have warm colours such as terracotta. To create a more peaceful, sedate atmosphere, use relaxing colours. Combine them with a beefy foliage plant, such as hostas, for a wonderful contrast. For permanent plantings in pots, Alan recommends using a loam-based compost. Choose pots as big as possible, which will hold more compost and won't dry out as quickly.

■ The How To Garden series, by Alan Titchmarsh, is published by Ebury on April 2, priced £6.99.

Evening Chronicle Competition

WIN THE HOLIDAY OF A LIFETIME IN QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA

Your Chronicle is sending one of our readers on the holiday of a lifetime, offering you the chance to escape to sunnier climes, on a luxury fortnight holiday to Queensland, Australia, thanks to Emirates Airline and Tourism Queensland.

One lucky winner and their guest will travel to Brisbane via Dubai with award-winning Emirates, which operates a daily flight from Newcastle Airport.

Over 14 days, you will experience the stunning beaches and great climate of Southern Queensland before heading north to tropical Cairns and the world-famous Great Barrier Reef.

The lucky winner will travel along the Sunshine Coast with two nights at the Sebel Resort Maroochydore, two nights at the Hyatt Regency Coolom and two nights at the Noosa Blue Resort, before heading to stunning Fraser Island for two nights at the award-winning Kingfisher Bay Resort. Next is a flight to Cairns, staying five nights at the beautiful Coconut Grove in Port Douglas before ending this truly amazing holiday of a lifetime with an exhilarating ten-minute scenic flight with Quicksilver Helicopters out to join the Quicksilver Cruise of the Outer Barrier Reef.

- For more information about Queensland: www.experiencequeensland.com
- For more information on Emirates: www.emirates.com/uk
- For full itinerary details and prize terms and conditions visit www.chroniclelive.co.uk/competitions

FOR YOUR CHANCE TO WIN this holiday of a lifetime collect any 20 tokens published in your Evening Chronicle. Tokens are being printed daily from Wednesday, March 18 until Saturday, April 11. Send along with your answer to the question below and the completed entry coupon to Evening Chronicle Australia Competition, PO Box 358, Newcastle, NE99 1BT. If you have missed the entry coupon in paper, it can be downloaded from www.chroniclelive.co.uk/competitions. Entries must arrive by Friday, April 17.

QUESTION: What is the capital of Australia?

The first correct entry drawn at random on Monday, April 20, will receive the prize as offered. Winners will be contacted directly within 48 hours of the draw and details will be updated monthly at www.chroniclelive.co.uk/winners. Standard Trinity Mirror plc rules apply, available at www.chroniclelive.co.uk/legal. Competition open to residents within the circulation area of the Evening Chronicle. A full postcode list and footprint of the circulation can be found at www.chroniclelive.co.uk/legal or available from Freepost NEA1676, Promotions, Groat Market, Newcastle, NE1 1BR.



Made in Tyneside. For you

Evening Chronicle Promotion

SAVE ££s on GREAT EASTER DAYS OUT

BEAMISH WILD
BEAMISH BIRDS OF PREY CENTRE
Beamish, County Durham, DH9 0YB. Tel: 01207 233 733. www.beamishwild.co.uk
FREE CHILD ADMISSION - SAVE £4.50
Terms and Conditions: This voucher entitles the holder to one free child admission with every full-paying adult. Not valid in conjunction with any other offer or promotion. Management reserve the right to refuse admission. Photocopies not accepted. Valid until April 30, 2009

BEDE'S WORLD
Church Bank, Jarrow, NE32 3DY. Tel. 0191 4892106. www.bedesworld.co.uk
Two for One Entry - save up to £5.50
This voucher entitles one free entry to Bede's World with one full adult admission is purchased. Admits one person only. Not to be used in conjunction with any offer. No photocopies allowed. Please check opening times before you visit. Valid until April 30, 2009

POT A DOODLE DO
Borewell, Scremeston, Berwick Upon Tweed, TD15 2RJ. Tel: 01289 307107. www.potadoodle.co.uk
FREE TEA OR COFFEE
Relax in the Café bistro while the children decorate their Easter eggs. This voucher entitles the holder to a free tea or coffee. Not valid with any other offer or discount. Photocopies not accepted. Valid until April 30, 2009

Alnwick Castle
ALNWICK CASTLE
Alnwick, Northumberland, NE66 1NQ. Tel. 01665 510777 www.alnwickcastle.com
Free Child Admission - Save £4.95
Visit the beautiful medieval fortress of Alnwick Castle and explore the history of Northumberland. Terms and Conditions: This voucher entitles the holder to one free child admission with every full paying adult. Not valid in conjunction with any other offer or promotion. Management reserve the right to refuse admission. Photocopies not accepted. Valid until April 30, 2009