

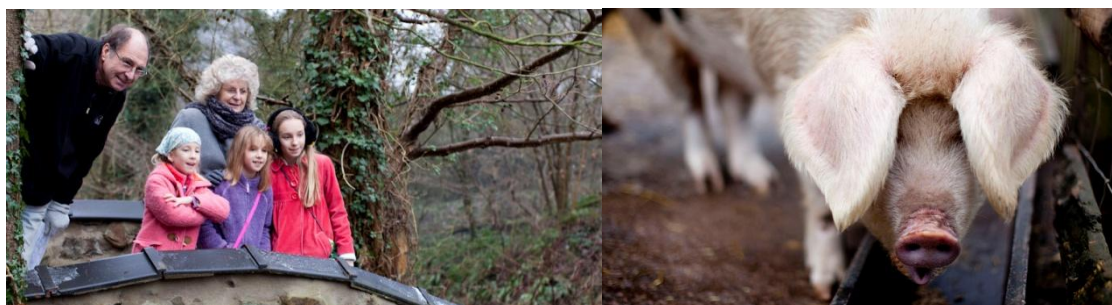
## **Family Winter Warmers**

Winter doesn't mean that you can't have a family day out to enjoy many of Gloucestershire's museums and we offer here a selection to choose from. There are others to visit too which can be seen on [www.gloucestershirerevealed.co.uk](http://www.gloucestershirerevealed.co.uk)

The **Corinium Museum** in Cirencester has lots of things to keep the children amused, with reconstructions of Roman shops and domestic rooms, dressing up boxes, plenty of interactive information through computer terminals. The museum is a great blend of hi-tech (which most kids instinctively head towards) and traditional, so you should all feel happily immersed in the history of Romano-British Cirencester and get a real sense of discovery and fun. Your ticket entitles you to an all day visit so you can explore more of Cirencester and return to the museum later if you wish.



If you are after a more rural destination in a winter landscape then the **Dean Heritage Centre** at Soudley, tucked away in the Forest of Dean should be ideal. Housed in an historic mill building with lake and remains of the waterwheels to look at it is a mixture of indoor and outdoor exhibits. There is a good sized car park and access for pushchairs is simple, with lifts to take you to upper floors. On entering the Heritage Centre you will start a Forest related journey from the Ice Age to the present day - beware the wolf as you enter and other furry creatures watching your progress, while outside, in the surrounding woods are larger exhibits so as a family you will encounter a Forester's Cottage, a Charcoal Burner's Camp, a Free Mine, Adventure Playground and to the delight of many, a couple of large Old Spot pigs. Although a popular spot the atmosphere is rustic and you feel very much away from the hustle and bustle of the modern world. It is open throughout the winter except between 24<sup>th</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup> December and you should allow for a couple of hours to see everything.



Just up the road is the **Dean Forest Railway**. During November and December trains run on weekends, although as you get closer to Christmas these become Santa Specials, where the children

will meet Father Christmas receive a present too. The trains are heated and there are refreshments both at stations and on the trains too. The museum has lots to discover from the bygone age of railways, and a popular "hands on" exhibit for children is the telephone exchange which in this modern world of smart 'phones and internet, is something your youngsters will probably not have met before. How often do we get to dial numbers on a traditional 'phone now? The museum is open whenever trains are running and doesn't require a ticket to gain entrance to it. The car park at Norchard is very big with access for pushchairs to the shops, trains and museum. Depending on whether you ride the trains in one round trip, or get off to explore, you can spend between a couple of hours to a full day here.



**Nature in Art** at Twigworth, north of Gloucester is a great way to spend a winter morning or afternoon. In a Georgian Mansion built in the 1700's the many different types of animals, birds, insects etc that are featured in pictures and sculptures should provide something different yet fun for all members of the family. Outside in the garden are more sculptures in a variety of materials to discover and also the opportunity for much of the year to see an artist at work in their own studios. The setting is family friendly and offers specific children's activities during school holidays. You will also find a very good cafe with friendly service, offering a range of tasty food. There is plenty of room to bring in pushchairs from the car park outside and Nature in Art provides a warm welcome in all ways throughout the year. It only closes between December 24<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> and on Mondays.



At **The Museum in the Park**, Stroud, there is a whole park (including lake with ducks and swans) for youngsters to get glowing cheeks, playing in and around on a cold and frosty morning. The museum plays host to temporary exhibitions, talks and drop in activities throughout the year for all ages, but a typical winter family activity is wreath and garland workshops before Christmas, which will keep

children and adults alike happily occupied in the warm and you have something you can all take home with you at the end. The museum focuses on the history of Stroud and the surrounding area, from prehistoric times up to the modern day. Most rooms have activities for children but outside the wooded grounds offer space to play, walk or try a fitness route. The museum has special opening hours in December so check the website for details, but otherwise is open throughout the winter months.



In Tewkesbury the **John Moore Countryside Museum** focuses on rural Gloucestershire and its wildlife in a 15<sup>th</sup> Century building there. Examples of farming implements sit alongside the wildlife that was so prevalent in pre mechanised days and is very difficult to spot today, so you may be showing your children some animals and birds they will have never seen before. To help families explore there are quizzes for children to take around the museum, with Moore the Mole providing you with a score at the end. A few doors further down the street is **The Merchant's House** another 15<sup>th</sup> Century building which was a home and shop, now restored to as near original condition as possible. At certain times of the year there are guided tours where the history of the building can be further discovered in different ways, such as by candle light and Tudor Christmas events. The Museum has limited opening during the winter but is open most Saturdays and school half terms.



A visit to the Bourton-on-the-Water means you can head to the **Cotswolds Motor Museum**. Your children may recognise Brum, the little car that starred in his own TV show, but there are lots of discoveries to make together, with delivery vans, sports cars and even a Formula 1 racing car to see. There is a play area for children but there is so much to see and find out on your visit that youngsters

should be kept well occupied through the entire museum. The Museum does close from December to February so if you want to count this as a “Winter Warmer” best to go before Christmas.



Finally the **Edward Jenner Museum**, in Berkeley although closed over the winter period does open its grounds in February as part of the National Garden Scheme, with the museum’s adjacent Old Cyder House offering refreshments and a small shop area. Dr Jenner’s 300 year old house is impressive and the large garden has many plants, trees and flowers. Tucked in a corner of the garden is the Grade II\* quaint thatched rustic hut that Jenner christened “The Temple of Vaccinia” where Jenner vaccinated the poor for free against smallpox.



So if you thought that a visit to Gloucestershire’s museums and tourist attractions would have to wait until Easter think again. All the museums listed above are open during the winter months for visits, some featuring seasonal events too, and can give your family a fun day out, staying warm while sharing new experiences. Most admissions are either free or less than £5 for an adult and there are discounts available for over 65s. So why not plan some Winter Warmer trips and then plan to return in the summer? A sunny winter day gives a beautiful clear light and a sprinkling of snow or frost adds to the beauty of Gloucestershire. But whatever the weather all of Gloucestershire’s museums open during the winter months will give you a warm welcome and a good value family day out.

For more information on specific opening times and to see what other museums you can visit in Gloucestershire visit [www.gloucestershirerevealed.co.uk](http://www.gloucestershirerevealed.co.uk)