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## **Go ape in Stoke**

Britain's first Monkey Forest has just opened its doors to humans.

Based at Trentham – the multi-activity attraction which, in total, is costing in the region of £100-million to create - The Monkey Forest will cover 60 of the estate's 750 acres.

This particular corner of Stoke-on-Trent, in Staffordshire, is now 'home' to around 140 Barbary Macaques, who have been settling into their new surroundings for the past six months, and who are now happily welcoming visitors into their supervised enclosure.

Brought to Trentham from similar forests in France and Germany, which have been run by the de Turkheim family for the past 30 years, the monkeys are part of an endangered species, and are being cared for by a team of 50 workers and volunteers including qualified zoologists. Members of the public can pay to stroll through a section of the Monkey Forest (£5 adults, £3.50 children).

Full details are featured on the Trentham website [www.trenthamleisure.co.uk](http://www.trenthamleisure.co.uk).

Famed, in particular, for its gardens, which are costing an estimated £17-million to restore to their former glory, Trentham struck gold at this year's Chelsea Flower Show.

The Italian Gardens, created by Sir Charles Barry (architect of the Houses of Parliament) for the Duke of Sutherland in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, were once described as "having no rival outside of Italy". And garden designer Tom Stuart-Smith used Chelsea to show just how close Trentham has moved towards similar acclaim in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Elsewhere on the complex, 10 new, way-marked Woodland Walks have recently been opened-up for the public to enjoy entirely free of charge. And while trips across the lake are now available on board a 50-seater catamaran, another 'first' for Britain is the recently opened Barefuss-Park, which can be "enjoyed" by anyone visiting the gardens. Derived from the teachings of a Bavarian priest, Father Sebastian Kniepp, the Barefuss-Park is a 'well-being walk' – undertaken bare-foot over (and through) bark, pine cones, gravel, sand, grass and mud.

The Garden Centre and shops that have been open since last Christmas will be added to later this year with a food court area and top quality restaurant.

And work has already started to create the complex's first on-site hotel – a 120-bedroomed 3-star family hotel. This will be ready for its first guests early in 2006.

Other developments planned for Trentham include a Winery, 75 self-catering lodges, butterfly farm, fishing academy, equestrian centre and an extreme sport activity centre. And in 2008, the jewel in the crown – a deluxe hotel and spa complex matching the original Trentham Hall designed by Sir Charles Barry – will be open for business, and overlooking the Italian Gardens and lake.

The City of Stoke-on-Trent has also opened a new Tourist Information Centre at Trentham, and has further details on its website: [www.visitstoke.co.uk](http://www.visitstoke.co.uk),

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