Beautiful Country Pubs

North Downs & Surrey
The Vintage Inns of North Downs & Surrey Collection

From the rural retreats of Banstead and Coulsdon to the waterside beauty of Chessington, the six hostelries that make up the Vintage Inns North Downs & Surrey Collection are unique places to visit – yet all have much in common!

If you’re planning a day’s walking, exploring by car, or simply visiting a local attraction in and around rural Surrey and the rolling downs, then you might like to visit us for a morning coffee or refreshing drink, a light lunch, or even a hearty evening meal to round off your outing. Most have pleasant walks from the door and many have country parks, heritage attractions and picturesque hamlets nearby to wonder at.

Each of our inns is a sympathetic restoration of an existing village pub ranging from 150 to over 400 years-old. They have their own character and charm, but all offer carefully restored period features, log burning fires and a select team of friendly staff. The Vintage Inns of North Downs & Surrey offer a warm welcome and respite on a cold winter’s day and the ideal spot to enjoy sunshine, a cold drink and beautiful rural views on balmy summer evenings.

All our Inns serve a full menu of traditional British favourites seven days a week, plus appetising blackboard specials, and a selection of succulent roasts on a Sunday. At the bar you’ll be tempted by a fine range of real cask conditioned ales (including popular local brews) and a number of regularly changing guest beers. Vintage Inns also pride themselves on an excellent choice of wines with varieties of all the popular grapes on offer and a flavour and price to suit every taste, occasion and pocket. Eat, drink and be merry!

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The Vintage Inns
of North Downs & Surrey
This traditional country pub is situated on the outskirts of the picturesque Surrey town of Banstead, which is on the North Downs and protected by the Green Belt.

The Mint Inn first became an ale house in 1871, although Mint Farm on which it stands probably dates back to 1325 when it was known as Farnycroft. It was put up for auction in the late 19th century as a general shop and stables – and the original horse trough with hand pump still stands in the car park today.

Although a flourishing town, Banstead retains its original hamlet feel with an annual village fair and active community hall. The old village well remains and All Saints Church dates back to the 12th century, while Nork Park nearby has the remains of the Coleman family mansion (as in Colman’s Mustard). Indeed, the abundance of leafy roads and surrounding lush countryside makes it feel much further away from the capital than it is.

Ruffet and Big Wood comprise two rectangular sections of pleasant woodland joined at one corner, while Banstead Wood to the south is a larger area of ancient deciduous woodland that was once a deer park and had a hunting lodge for royalty.

Banstead Downs has four Saxon burial mounds and was also well known for horse riding and hunting during the 17th and 18th century, but over the last 20 years it has been cleared and grazed with sheep, and now offers spectacular views across London. The other Downs in the area are at Epsom, three miles away, which is home to the racecourse that holds the famous Derby race.

If you go down to the woods today...

- The position of The Mint leads visitors to explore the surrounding woodlands and from the car park a series of footpaths lead to Ruffet and Big Wood plus Banstead Wood.
- From here, it is also possible to join up with the scenic and more challenging London Loop walkway north of Woodmansterne.
- No unwelcome surprises at The Mint, just consistently good food, wines, ales, service, amenities and conviviality.

For details on more attractions around Banstead, plus other ideas for days out in the area, visit www.vintageinn.co.uk/themintbanstead
The Fox
Coulsdon Common, Caterham, Surrey, CR3 5QS
Tel. 01883 340737

This magnificent country inn lies on Coulsdon Common which is a unique resource, managed for the enjoyment of the public and for the conservation of wildlife and historic landscape. It’s one of seven picturesque city commons located in the urban fringe of North Surrey and South London.

Although most accounts of the pub’s history come from the Victorian era, The Fox alehouse has been recorded at the same site from as far back as 1720 and it has always been the village inn with a strong, local heritage. Opposite is a recently refurbished drinking fountain for canine members of the family.

The rolling downland that surrounds Coulsdon affords plenty of recreational options including a former wartime air base that is now Kenley Aerodrome and used by glider planes and hang gliders. This probably explains the plaque inside The Fox to commemorate the presence of the local RAF Linguist Association during the 1950s.

Coulsdon Common is a 51 hectare mix of ancient woodland and grassland that supports trees and shrubs, bluebells, orchids and greater yellow rattle, as well as a variety of birds and insects. And the many routes that make up its circular walks offer interesting anecdotes along the way – like the two small observatories close to Kenley that are operated by the Croydon Astronomical Society.

Between Coulsdon Common and Farthing Downs (offering a long ridge walk with fine views) comes Happy Valley and Devilsden Wood, while the Downlands Circular Walk and Socratic Trail also pass through this idyllic area where rare plants thrive – and you’d scarcely believe you’re in Greater London.

A common thread...

• The Common marks the start and also the end of a circular walk called the London Loop, which follows the extensive green belt that skirts the area.

• Section 5 (Hamsey Green to Coulsdon South) is particularly attractive and features four commons in succession – Riddlesdown, Kenley, Coulsdon and Farthing Downs.

• Whenever you’re down our way, be sure to stop off at The Fox for a crafty half of real ale, or stay a while for fine dining and the warmest of welcomes.

For details on more attractions around Coulsdon, plus other ideas for days out in the area, visit www.vintageinn.co.uk/thefoxcoulsdoncommon
This quaint country inn nestles in historic Horley on the meandering River Mole, conveniently just north of Gatwick Airport and the market town of Crawley – and is reputed to be the second oldest pub in the UK.

Ye Olde Six Bells has been an important venue in Horley since 849AD and we have a Norman lord to thanks for its continued existence, who refreshed himself after the long services at St Bartholomew’s Church next door. Indeed, the pub gets its name from the number of bells originally hanging there, while documents show it as an eating and ale house, welcoming guests attending the monthly court sessions at Court Lodge Manor. Today guests come regularly because they want to!

An original map of the manor also shows that Horley consisted of three hamlets around a huge open common – one around St Bartholomew’s and the inn, another by the River Mole and the third in Horley Row where some of the town’s oldest buildings can still be seen – e.g. behind the Victorian frontage of the Old Mill House on Mill Lane is a 13th century corn mill that would have been part of the community living on the River Mole at Hookwood Common.

The Mole enters Surrey to the south of Horley and has the most diverse fish population of any river in England, so coarse and fly fishing plus waterside walks are obvious favourite pastimes. But the local countryside has a story to tell too with East Horley Circular Walk taking you in the ancient footsteps of Saxon swineherds and also through fields dotted with stout red pillboxes from the Second World War.

Ringing the changes …

• The East Horley Circular Walk starts close by at Riverside Garden Park and takes you past an 18th century barn still in use today and alongside the scenic Burstow Stream.

• If pedal power is more your thing, Horley is also on the National Cycle Route with route 21 running through the town.

• Follow the church bells back, for they act as a timely reminder of the pub’s long standing tradition as an eating and ale house of fine standing.

For details on more attractions around Horley, plus other ideas for days out in the area, visit www.vintageinn.co.uk/yeoldesixbellshorley
This amenable inn with its own gardens is just to the south of the riverside town of Chessington and is right off the picturesque Epsom Common.

Dating back to the mid 1800s it’s always been a pub restaurant, but today it looks over pleasant fields and there’s a map in the lobby showing ramblers all the local footpaths, giving access to the numerous walks and trails in the area. Indeed, the 15 mile Thames Down Link connects the Thames Path and London Loop at nearby Kingston to the north, via the attractive River Hogsmill that runs through Chessington. Epsom Common also leads south to the renowned North Downs Way.

The Hogsmill Local Nature Reserve is situated in the north of the borough and can be accessed on foot or by bicycle from numerous points, but Horton Country Park conveniently links with Epsom Common and offers 400 glorious acres to explore in four distinct areas – a nature reserve plus farm, golf and equestrian centres. Ashtead Common is also close and offers scheduled ancient monuments like a Roman villa, and is a Site of Special Scientific Interest because of the ancient trees, rare invertebrates and breeding birds that live in it.

Less than a mile from the pub is Chessington World of Adventures, which is historically a zoo but began operating as a theme park in 1987. It contains a neo-gothic Victorian mansion house (now part of the park as a haunted house) but the main attraction is the Dragon’s Fury roller coaster. For a more sedate day out, however, the animals are still there and many can be seen from the Safari Skyway, which is an elevated monorail around the zoo. Two world class racecourses at Epsom and Sandown are also nearby.

For details on more attractions around Chessington, plus other ideas for days out in the area, visit www.vintageinn.co.uk/theshyhorsechessington
The Harrow
309 Farleigh Road, Warlingham, CR6 9EL
Tel. 01883 627565

This attractive village inn lies on the picturesque country road between Warlingham and Farleigh. The former is a large hamlet centred on a triangular village green on the south eastern boundary of London and the latter is another unspoilt village, mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086.

Dating back to the early 18th century, The Harrow began life as a manor called Aynescombes, but in the late 18th century received its licence, becoming The Harrow Inn, and nearly a century later a single storey extension was added – making it the building that is so regularly frequented today for the best food, ales and wines around.

Warlingham is very self contained, has an unhurried way of life, and is surrounded by pretty woodland, while Farleigh is tucked away and has a lovely old church (St Mary the Virgin) that dates back to 1083AD and is one of the earliest churches in Surrey still in use. There are also two fine golf clubs within a mile of the inn.

Local attractions include the National Trust property of Chartwell, which was the family home of Winston Churchill and features an unrivalled collection of his paintings and photographs, beautiful rose and water gardens, plus countryside walks with stunning views over the Weald.

Fairfield Hall is synonymous with spectacular classical music and concerts and is home to Croydon’s resident professional orchestra, while hundreds of thousands of visitors flock to Biggin Hill Airport and the former World War II fighter station for their great mix of flying displays and ground attractions that is fun and entertainment for all the family.

For details on more attractions around Warlingham, plus other ideas for days out in the area, visit www.vintageinn.co.uk/theharrowwarlingham

No need to play the field...

• Just opposite The Harrow is Littlepark Wood which offers a series of footpaths for easy strolls towards Farleigh village and further on to Biggin Hill.

• A link to the scenic London Loop Walkway can also be made in Farleigh.

• Don’t ever tread a lonely furrow, because there’s always a warm welcome and inviting atmosphere at The Harrow.
This distinctive looking inn is on the High Street in the suburban commuter town of Orpington in the leafy London borough of Bromley, close to the M25.

It’s an ideal place to stop for a relaxing drink before or after daily shopping or a long journey, while the rustic-style restaurant harks back to the Middle Ages when Green Street on which it stands meant the green or grassy hamlet.

Indeed, Orpington has a long and interesting history with Stone Age tools found in several areas including Goddington Park, Priory Gardens and Crofton Villa, the Roman bath house at nearby Fordcroft suggesting strategic importance. The remains of 10 rooms can still be seen today along with a touch table of interesting artefacts.

High Elms Country Park to the west is on a ridge of the North Downs and contains a 250 acre mix of nature conservation, unspoiled woodland, formal gardens, wildflower meadows, nature trails and a picnic site, while the other 150 acres is a golf course. The Priory meanwhile, is a fine example of a medieval ‘hall’ house built in 1290 and now houses a museum and public library, whilst its gardens form an eye catching public park with a natural pond that is the starting place of the River Cray.

Slightly further south is Biggin Hill Airport which is famous for its activities during the Battle of Britain and today still hosts the largest air show in Europe. The old chapel is open to the public and its entrance is guarded by grand replicas of a Hawker Hurricane and Supermarine Spitfire.

By royal appointment...

- The location of the pub is ideal for some gentle exercise after enjoying a meal as just across the traffic island is a footpath leading onto High Elms Country Park.

- For the more adventurous there are links from the park to the London Loop and also the Darent Valley Path to the south.

- No need to book at The Royal Oak, just pitch up before or after your leisure activities for quaffable ales, rewarding food or even a decent glass of wine.

For details on more attractions around Orpington, plus other ideas for days out in the area, visit www.vintageinn.co.uk/theroyaloakorpington