

Seven great things to see and do this month

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The Royal Academy of Arts

It's great to get out and about during the springtime, and there's so much on offer at National Lottery funded heritage attractions. Fascinating history, beautiful landscapes, quirky museums... Here are seven reasons to visit this May.

1. There are freebies to be had!

The Royal Academy's new Collection galleries are about to open and are really worth a visit. To say thanks for supporting this big increase in gallery space, the central London institution is offering a free tour with RA experts exclusively for National Lottery players.

Places are limited and [you have to book](#), so don't hang around!

Don't worry if you miss out – [there's a weekend-long free art party, 19-20 May](#).

2. You'll discover some fascinating history

Delapre Abbey recently opened to the public in Northamptonshire and has a really fascinating history.

It was the site of a War of the Roses battle before being plundered by Henry VIII during the Reformation. It then became home to the Tate family, who gave evidence against King Charles in his trial for treason. For over 200 years, the scandalous Bouverie family (Harriet Bouverie had an affair with her brother-in-law – illegal at the time) lived there.

[And that's just a taster of things to discover at Delepre Abbey.](#)

3. Can you handle the truth? Sabre tooth tigers never existed!

That's right - they're actually sabre-tooth cats. The Lapworth Museum of Geology is the place to find out more. We were lucky enough to have a [private tour by the museum's brilliant Anna Crystal](#). Anna has a passion for these fearsome beasts and also knows loads about dinosaurs.

[A worthy finalist for last year's Museum of the Year.](#)

4. Sir David Attenborough has given his seal of approval...

Yes it's the newly-restored Temperate House at Kew. Sir David Attenborough described it as 'a breathtakingly beautiful space'. We've been – it is. You should go too. He also says it's the most important botanical institute in the world.

[One for the bucket list? Make sure you visit the Temperate House](#)

5. Follow in the footsteps of mountaineer Sir Chris Bonington

Keswick Museum Manager Becks Skinner says "This exhibition is like having the front seat on the rollercoaster of Sir Chris Bonington's life.

["You'll see the incredible highs and the terrible lows that are all parts of his life story."](#)

6. See some beautiful art in a beautiful house

Kettles Yard is a brilliant little gallery in Cambridge. Once four 'tumbledown' cottages, former Tate curator Jim Ede bought them with his wife Helen in 1956 and restored them as a home for his family and his art collection. It's now a gorgeous house packed full of modern and contemporary art, and [has just reopened after a two year redevelopment](#).

7. There's a tropical ravine where you'd least expect it

'Tropical' is not a word we would usually associate with Belfast. Housed in a listed building in the city's Botanic Gardens, the ravine has just reopened after a huge, three-year, £3.8million restoration. The listed building, which dates back to 1887, houses exotic plants thought to be 150 years old.

There are loads of reasons to visit Belfast – this is another one.



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A sunny Kelmarsh Hall



is this week!



this spring

[The living grassland roof at The Sill, Northumberland National Park](#)

[Seven top heritage days out for a sunny day](#)