

# A day in this village is like 'stepping into a fairytale'

What makes Lavenham the perfect place for a day trip or weekend getaway? **Danielle Lett** finds out

Online searches for days out and holidays in and around Lavenham surged this week after the village and its farmers' market featured on BBC One's *The Farmers' Country Showdown*.

Part of the county's clutch of Wool Towns, it is without doubt one of the prettiest places to visit in Suffolk (often described as 'England's finest medieval village') and is known the world over for its fine Tudor buildings.

Home to over 300 listed properties, Instagrammable Lavenham boasts a proud heritage that can be seen at every turn. The Guildhall, which was constructed in 1529, overlooks the market square, and was built as a meeting place for the local Catholic guild. The Little Hall is a 14th century hall house that in the 20th century was the home of the Gayer-Anderson twins who used it to display their wares and collectables they gathered on their travels. Open to the public, it now acts as a museum. And who could forget the 14th century De Vere House – a luxury B&B which fantasy fans may recognise as it was the filming location for Godric's Hollow in the Harry Potter franchise?

One place that particularly stands out though is The Crooked House. Aptly-named, the wonky wonder can trace its roots back to 1395, and has been described as 'one of the world's most photographed homes'. Owners Alex and Oli Khalil-Martin took on its custodianship during lockdown and have since turned it into an events, antiques and interiors business.

"The Crooked House is a house unlike any other – coming here is like stepping into a fairytale – quite apt given this place inspired the world-famous nursery rhyme, 'There was a Crooked Man,'" say Alex and Oli, otherwise known as 'the Crooked Men'.

This year, the duo are putting on a number of events in the hopes to draw more people to the picture perfect village, including 'The Night of the Crooked Man' (complete with flaming torches), a Coronation banquet for King

Charles III, as well as their ever-popular Halloween and Christmas dinners.

"This looks set to be a magical year, and all of our events and activity here at The Crooked House support the restoration and preservation of this 628 year-old Suffolk icon – helping secure its future for generations to come.

"People come from all over the world to see The Crooked House and Lavenham, and we feel so fortunate to live in such a beautiful and friendly place. There's a real community here, guaranteeing a warm welcome for everyone who visits."

Another fantastic historic building is luxury hotel, restaurant and spa, The Swan. Exposed beams, cosy nooks, and fireplaces fill this hotel, giving it an authentic feel from a far bygone era.

The hotel's boutique Weavers' House Spa is a little more contemporary, equipped with facilities such as a double room for couples, two relaxation suites, an aromatic steam room, a hot stone sauna and an outdoor vitality pool.

"Lavenham offers, and is surrounded by, an eclectic mix of culture, history and shopping. It's a top destination for Suffolk and provides you with plenty to explore and admire, and once you've worked up an appetite, you are well and truly spoilt for choice, with a range of tearooms and restaurants where you to indulge in fine quality food and great conversation," says David Scott, CEO of The Hotel Folk (which operates The Swan at Lavenham).

The Swan prides itself on offering food to suit every taste and budget. Whether you're looking for lunch, afternoon tea, dinner, or just a quick drink, there's plenty to choose from including the Airmen's Bar, which is decked out in authentic USAF memorabilia from the servicemen who were once stationed at RAF Lavenham.

"I am hopeful that 2023 will be the year that the underlying apprehension of the past few years can be put to one side and



The Swan at Lavenham

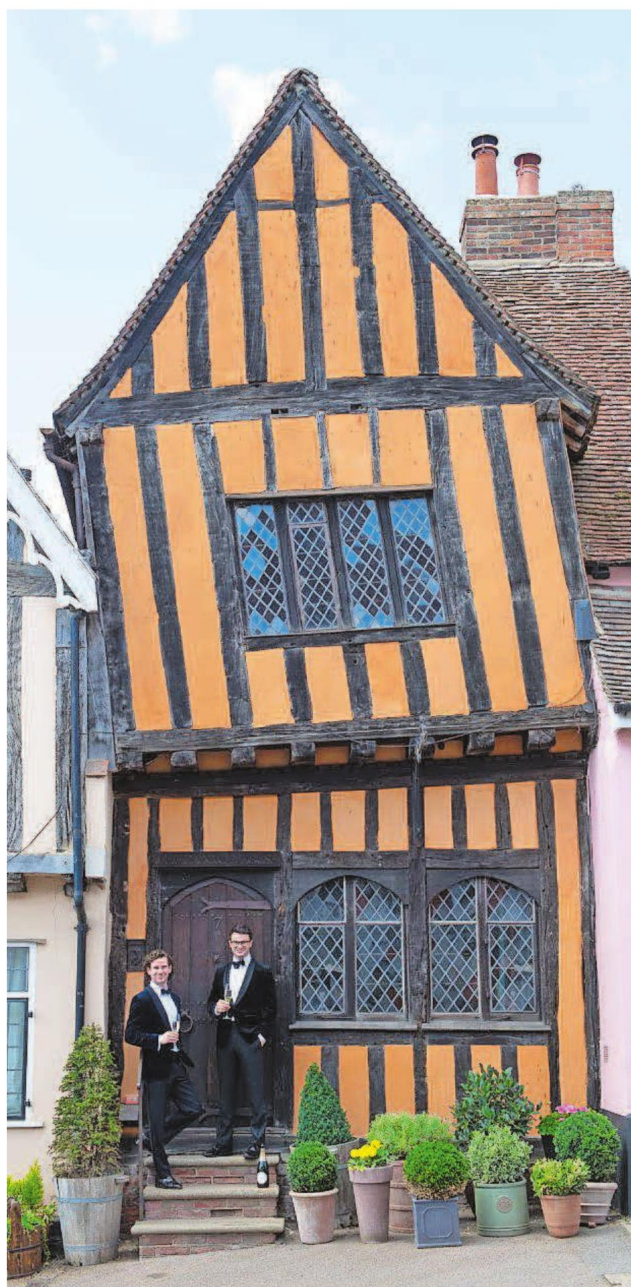


Inside The Swan at Lavenham

Picture: THE SWAN AT LAVENHAM



Picture: THE SWAN AT LAVENHAM



Alex and Oli Khalil-Martin outside The Crooked House in Lavenham

Picture: SIMON BUCK/THE CROOKED HOUSE LAVENHAM

we can fully enjoy what our local area has to offer," adds David.

If you're a true foodie, there's no better way to spend a day in Lavenham than by visiting the award-winning farmers' market, which takes place every fourth Sunday of the month.

Established by Suffolk Market Events founder Justine Paul, *right*, Lavenham Farmers' Market has been going strong for 15 years, and has won a number of accolades from prestigious bodies including the Suffolk Food & Drinks Awards, the Countryside Alliance and Radio 4. It also took home 'Best Farmers Market in the UK' at the National FRA Awards.

Stallholders at the market (which takes place in the car park and adjoining field at Lavenham Village Hall) are all based within 30-50 miles, and the stalls are all manned by the producer, maker, brewer or baker so customers can discuss all the products with the actual person that makes them.

"It's been a wonderful year for Lavenham Farmers' Market. Winning the national award was

amazing and justified all the many hours of hard work to ensure the market is a success and we were delighted to be chosen by the BBC to feature in The Farmers Country Showdown. We are now looking forward to 2023 - with over 35 stalls at the market

there is always something for every visitor,' explains Justine.

Other places worth stopping off at include The Parlour, an ice cream parlour specialising in delicious and inventive ice creams and sorbets... and recently awarded two gongs for its hot chocolate.

Also be sure to visit one of the village's many tea rooms, including Tatum's Teahouse, and Lavenham Blue. For a quick tippie, there are also plenty of watering holes to wet your whistle, such as The Angel, and

The Greyhound.

As for shopping, Lavenham boasts multiple art galleries including Lion House Gallery and artist Paul Evans' Lavenham Contemporary Gallery, dedicated doggy shop Hollibels, the award-winning

Lavenham Butchers, much-loved bakery Sparling and Faiers, homeware (and award-winning fudge maker) store Posy, remarkable lifestyle emporium Marshbeck, jewellers, fashion shops, a wine store and more.

If you want to make the most of Lavenham, whether you stop off for a day or longer, be sure to embark upon one of the guided walking tours on offer. There is also an audio tour available from the pharmacy, which gives a fascinating insight into Lavenham's heritage.



# I need a new home...

**Twinkle, female tortoiseshell cat, approximately 12 years old**



Twinkle  
Picture:  
RSPCA

Twinkle came into the centre after her previous owner could no longer care for her.

Twinkle is a sweet-natured and affectionate girl who's favourite past times consist of attention and napping!

After a blood test here at the centre, Twinkle was found to have hyperthyroidism which she is now taking on-going medication for. The branch are able to help with funding towards the medication if purchased through us. As a result from her thyroid issue, Twinkle also has

kidney disease which is being supported with renal food which again can be purchased through the centre. Due to her age, Twinkle can be a little stiff on her back legs so is also on an arthritic pain killer which again can be purchased with the help of the centre.

Twinkle is looking for a calm

and warm home where she can relax and live out her days in comfort like she deserves.

Do you have room in your home for this super affectionate senior?

For more information on Twinkle, or any other pet in our care please email [info@rspca-suffolkcentral.org.uk](mailto:info@rspca-suffolkcentral.org.uk) or call 0300 999 7321.

## ask the vet

**Nina Downing, PDSA veterinary nurse**



*As it's Veganuary, I was wondering if my dog, Bruce, can have a vegan diet?*

If you're vegetarian or vegan, it can be a real moral dilemma as to what to feed your dog. Dogs are omnivores, which means they eat both meat and plant-based foods, however, it's much more difficult to provide them with a properly balanced diet when you're not using any animal products at all. So, if you want to try a vegan or veggie diet for Bruce, we advise choosing a commercially-produced food that's been designed by expert veterinary nutritionists and has been properly trialled to ensure it provides everything he needs to stay healthy - if you're not sure if this is the case, ask the manufacturer. Never try to make dog food at home without advice from a specialist veterinary nutritionist, and if Bruce has any other dietary requirements, speak to your vet before changing his diet.

*My guinea pigs, Suzy and Sooty, live outside in their cage. Should I bring them inside during the cold January weather?*

Pets who are used to living outside may find the warmth in our homes quite a stark contrast, so a halfway house such as a shed or car-free garage, protected from draughts, rain and snow, is ideal if possible. If there is no option

but to keep hutches and runs outside, drape a blanket or piece of carpet over the open mesh door of their living quarters to keep out strong winds, driving rain or snow. You will need to make sure that there's plenty of fresh air for your pets though. You can also insulate outside walls with newspapers covered with plastic sheeting but make sure this doesn't obstruct the ventilation. Pet-safe microwavable heat pads are available to help keep hutches warm.

*Can I still walk my dog, Rupert, should there be snow and ice?*

Yes, you can still take your dog out for a walk in the snow - it's important for them to stay active even in colder weather. However, snow and ice can build up on dogs' paws and cause them discomfort - prepare paws by keeping hair between pads trimmed, so there's less hair for snow to gather on. When you get home from your snowy walk, check Rupert's paws and soak off any snow in warm water - it's also a good idea to rinse off any grit or salt they may have picked up on their feet. Remember to be really careful when out walking in freezing conditions; frozen ponds and lakes can be enticing for an excited dog, but they can easily fall through the ice and get into serious trouble in the freezing water. To ensure your dog is safe, keep them on a lead.

**Nina Downing is a veterinary nurse at the PDSA, answering questions on pet-related concerns**

