

VISIT A RUSTIC EMPORIUM
Le Chien et Moi,
Nottingham



Set in the city's north-western area of independent shops is this eclectic homeware store featuring a collection of curios. Owners Pip and Andrew Bolton source each item in order to create a unique selection of old and new, all with a sense of tradition and a nod to nostalgia. On polished parquet floors, old shop cabinets and wooden workbenches are used to display the wide range of products that are a mix of beautiful and utilitarian, including hand-printed cards, furniture, mirrors and textiles. Vintage framed butterfly specimen cases sit alongside glass-bottled fragrances by Royall Lyme in wax-sealed boxes, and lotions, enamelware and soaps by Baileys in Herefordshire. Also spare some time to make a fuss of Mulberry the basset hound – the friendly 'chien' that inspired the shop name. *60 Derby Road; open Tues-Sat, 10.30am-5.30pm (0115 979 9199; lechienetmoi.com).*



SEEK OUT A GREEN SPACE
Bute Park, Cardiff

Watch spring unfurl inside the Welsh capital's Grade I-listed, inner-city park and arboretum, where more than 3,000 trees, including hundreds of varieties, cover the 146 acres and become a kaleidoscope of different greens at this time of year. Branches arch gracefully over the banks of the River Taff, creating interesting reflections in the water below, while tall oaks and limes line the pathways and avenues. Some of the ornamental species such as maples, cherries and magnolias form part of the post-1950 arboretum collection and are offset by the dramatic backdrop of Cardiff Castle. Here, you can also see the highest number of 'champion trees' (the tallest or broadest examples of their species) in any UK public park. The woodland attracts a lot of wildlife, including the lesser spotted woodpecker and purple hairstreak butterflies, while dragonflies, kingfishers and otters also visit. Winter coppicing is encouraging the return of wild flowers to these areas.

Don't leave without fuelling up in the vintage-style Pettigrew Tea Rooms at the southern end of the park. If the weather is warm enough, sit outside on the terrace and enjoy a slice of homemade Raspberry Bakewell cake with a cup of rosebud or lavender grey tea as you gaze at the arboreal attractions. *Open daily, 7.30am to 30 minutes before sunset (bute-park.com).*



BE A CITY NATURALIST
The forager
*Experienced gatherer
Andy Hamilton*
shares his top tips*

BIRCH (*Betula*)
The sap of the tree can be harvested to be made into wine. Go to a park and choose those with trunks over 30cm in diameter. If pieces of wood protrude from the bark, it has already been tapped, so find another one. Drill a hole a few centimetres deep and place a straw, with the other end inside a jar, into the cavity.

DANDELION (*Taraxacum officinale*)
This weed can be found growing in numerous urban areas and, though not yet in flower, can result in a delicious side dish. Dig up its white roots to slow-roast for two hours at 100°C until dark brown.

NETTLE (*Urtica dioica*)
The new growth is less barbed than older leaves, so now is the ideal time to forage for this plant, which contains calcium, iron and magnesium. It is still wise to wear gloves, though, selecting the smaller foliage for soup or pesto.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY GETTY; ISTOCKPHOTO.COM; DIANA STANTON/PGAMY CLOUD; MAIN ILLUSTRATION BY JOANNA KERR; ILLUSTRATION BY JO BIRD. *VISIT THEOTHERANDYHAMILTON.COM FOR INFORMATION ABOUT FORAGING AND THE EVENTS ANDY HAMILTON RUNS

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SAVOUR NATURE'S FLAVOURS
Condiments

England Preserves, London (englandpreserves.co.uk)

Piccalilli and pork pie have always been the perfect partners, while Pear, Date & Ale Chutney instantly cheers up a plain cheeseboard. Handmade by Bermondsey-based Sky Cracknell and Kai Knutsen, along with a range of jams, both accompaniments are made with many locally sourced and regional ingredients, including beer from a neighbouring brewery, and Aspall's Suffolk cider vinegar, which contributes to the Piccalilli's piquancy. See the website for stockist information. [t](#)