

SURREY'S HIDDEN GEMS

Cheryl Markosky explores the unknown of this popular county



Like enjoying an off-the-beaten-path holiday, it can be worth hunting for homes in less obvious Surrey towns and villages, and in off-lying rural spaces.

Andrea Hewitt of Garrington Property Finders suggests that even though it's not the sort of place you easily stumble upon, the village of Chiddingfold is pretty, with a huge village green, little row of shops, church and pond.

Andrea says Chiddingfold offers "that warm, fuzzy English feeling". However, you're not far from the capital – it's only 48 minutes by train to Waterloo from nearby Haslemere.

The historic town of Farnham has retained its charm, with Georgian houses, character cottages, two- to four-bedroom terraces, wide open spaces and an absence of large housing schemes, says Strutt & Parker's Richard Banes-Walker.

There are excellent boutique shops, Sainsbury's, Waitrose, leisure centre, and state and private schools, such as St Nicholas, Frensham Heights, Edgeborough Prep, Charterhouse, South Farnham, and Lord Wandsworth and Wellington Colleges.

Connections are first-rate, with access to the A31/A3, M3/M25 and the south coast. Heathrow, Gatwick and Southampton airports are less than an hour away; as are trains to Waterloo costing £24 return.

You can also watch films, hear talks and enjoy theatre productions at The Maltings, and explore Alice Holt Forest on the edge of Farnham.

"House prices stay solid, as there's a lack of supply and plenty of demand – so many people want to move here and not many people leave," adds Richard.

If you're moving out of London, you might want to consider the frontiers of Reigate, which is more affordable than Godalming or Cranleigh, according to Mark Crampton of Middleton Advisers.

Upsizing is less painful, as families wanting to move to a bigger house only have to pay between £750,000 and £2 million. "Also, the

town feels leafier than Redhill and is north of Gatwick, so you're not affected by the flight path."

Reigate Grammar School has a new library, there are good tennis and rugby clubs, and hipsters will like Maison du Velo – a coffee/bike shop "where men hang around in Lycra drinking cappuccino and getting massages", Mark adds.

You can catch a train on the spur line, which takes 40 minutes to get to London Bridge, or drive to Redhill, a 30-minute run to Victoria.

Savills' Ian Compton tips Ranmore Common in the Surrey Hills – the property equivalent of a tucked away vacation site – where cyclists, equestrian aficionados and golfers flock.

It's not a village as such, with no shops or a High Street, so most people don't know about this secret sector. Another plus is nearby Denbies Wine Estate where you can sample and purchase fine English wines.

"Families come out of London for the lifestyle," notes Ian, who's selling a portion of converted Ranmore Manor for just under £1.5 million. Ranmore homes range from £1.25-£7.5 million, depending on size and condition.

Foxtons' Greg Nickson recommends veering away from the Surrey Hill villages and heading north-west of Guildford, where you'd be hard pressed to beat part of a converted Georgian mansion in the grounds of Edward III's former deer hunting park.

"Driving up Cobbett Hill Road in Normandy, most people have no idea what lies behind the ornate gates – over 40 acres of communal grounds opening up to reveal the glorious 18th-century mansion of Henley Park."

Greg's marketing a three-bedroom home over four floors with views of Surrey countryside for £835,000 – a sum Londoners can only dream of when thinking of upsizing to a larger place.

Older homes and conversions aren't the only properties to be found in daring places. New homes can also be discovered in out-of-the-way locations, points out Brett Reeves, sales manager of Bewley Homes.

LOBSWOOD HOUSE, FARNHAM

£1,350,000

Once the summer retreat of JM Barrie, creator of 'Peter Pan', on the edge of Bourne Wood with six bedrooms, four bathrooms and 1.4 acres.

www.struttandparker.com



SUNHAVEN MANOR, RANMORE COMMON

£1,495,000

Major portion of the wing of a grand Victorian house, with four bedrooms, orangery, balcony and views of the North Downs Way.

www.savills.com



NURSERY GARDENS, TONGHAM

FROM £385,000

Three- and four-bed houses on a peaceful road close to independent shops in a well-connected village with its own cricket club.

www.bewley.co.uk



COBBETT HILL ROAD, GUILDFORD
 £835,000
 Become the lord of your own manor – or part of it, with a three-bed home in a former manor house set in communal parkland.
www.foxtons.co.uk



HIGHFIELD, LINGFIELD
 FROM £725,000
 Twenty Arts-and-Crafts homes on the edge of a village known for horse racing, Tudor buildings and a station taking commuters to Victoria and London Bridge.
www.millgatehomes.co.uk

LONGHURST PARK, CRANLEIGH
 FROM £474,950
 Pick up a three-bed semi for the price of a small London flat in a thriving village in the Surrey Hills that's only 32 minutes to Waterloo from nearby Guildford.
www.crestnicholson.com

"Our hidden gem is Nursery Gardens, situated down a tree-lined road in Tongham, where there's a mini-mart with post office, village bakery, curry house, and fish and chip shop."

Tongham is also home to the Hogs Back Brewery – an award-winning producer of fine English ales and lagers. In addition, there's a 19th-century church – the only one in Surrey with a separate belfry – and paths and bridleways for the adventurous.

The average price paid for a home in Tongham is £502,387, compared to the equivalent in Guildford at £864,702 and Farnham at £791,577, according to Zoopla.

"You get just as good access to road and rail links, but Tongham offers more house for your money than trendier Farnham or Guildford," Brett remarks.

Tongham also benefits from being located only 1.8 miles from Aldershot, which offers a direct service into London Waterloo that takes only 46 minutes. There's a direct run from Farnham, too, but it takes 52 minutes.

Discovering these entirely new Surrey neighbourhoods can be equally exciting for the venturesome buyer. It might take some vision, but if you're an early adopter it could reap benefits, as you're there before prices start to rise.

Octagon Developments has just been given the green light by Woking Council to construct a new flagship development called Broadoaks Park at West Byfleet.

It consists of 125 private properties – 115 are new and 10 refurbished from listed buildings. Broadoaks will also have 54 affordable homes, 75 assisted living apartments for over-60s, an 80-bed care home and an office block.

Octagon CEO Tim Banks explains: "The ex-Ministry of Defence site was derelict for the past 11 years. It's taken nearly five years to get planning permission, and it's very significant to create a new community."

Tim adds that there's "something for everyone" on site in this aspirational place with reasonable prices – a two-bed lodge starts at £480,000. "People are moving less and staying longer, so they want a community."

Broadoaks Park isn't gated and has plenty of open space – including a play park for children and playing fields. Tim envisages young people and downsizers living here.

"Downsizers can eventually move to the care home, while their children live in nearby homes. This frees up homes for others," he adds.

And like every bold outing, finding a home far from the madding crowd could pay off in terms of finance and lifestyle. A hidden gem is likely to be the jewel in Surrey's crown. 🏠



BROADOAKS, WEST BYFLEET
 FROM £480,000
 Octagon Developments starts building a new community in January with homes for all – and fast 30-minute trains to London Waterloo.
www.broadoakspark.co.uk



SUTTON POINT, SUTTON
 FROM £280,000
 Family-friendly apartments in CNM Estate's first phase, with fast trains to Victoria in 25 minutes and Blackfriars in 33 minutes.
www.suttonpoint.co.uk