

The first signs of spring are always a delight. I adore the vibrant colourful hues of tulips, daffodils and crocuses which create a wash of colour over our lawns and borders and the delicate scent of narcissi wafting through the house. Recalling the games of pooh sticks I used to play at the end of my grandfather's garden near Salisbury reminded me of A A Milne's other characters, in particular Rabbit, and as it's also the Chinese Year of the Rabbit and they are particularly associated with Easter, it seemed appropriate to design my Easter table around 'rabbity' influences. The children who've visited the Easter workshops I arrange (ruddmoncrieff.com) have been designing rabbit garlands, decorative cupcake wrappers and simple jam jar arrangements with spring flowers. Here are some of my spring inspirations and an assortment of places to visit over Easter.



An Easter Table – simple and elegant with a touch of fun

Keep it simple with fine, plain tablelinen with napkins tied with a delicate floral display – you can use garden twine, raffia (natural or colour) and gently attach a luggage label. I like to weave little rabbits amongst my decorations for the younger generation.

We all like to give gifts at Easter, traditionally chocolate. Increasingly people suffer from food intolerances so here are some suggestions for alternative gifts. These work equally well as place settings which can then be taken home:

Spring candles – attach a label or an emblem full of Easter promise; **small galvanised buckets** filled with herbs and decorated with moss or grasses; **tulips** tied simply with colourful ribbons; **handmade napkins**. Although this may sound a little bizarre, large offcuts of fabric, swatches or even your loved one's old shirts can be transformed into a perfect napkin; **bags of fun** – narcissi bunches set in mini paper bags with a homemade label; **table centres** – pussy willow adorned with homemade mini glass eggs decorated with pretty flowers and colourful paints or simple ribbons and bows with a spring influence.



Let's go
OUT!

16-21 Kedleston Hall A self-guided walk around the park hunting for Easter Bunnies. When you've finished, collect your Cadbury's Egg Head prize! Quarndon, Derby DE22 5JH, nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-kedleston-hall

16-25 Heights of Abraham Tess of the Woods returns with tales and workshops over the Easter holidays. Join in our Easter Egg hunt! Matlock Bath, heightsofabraham.com

22-24 Hardwick Hall Enjoy an Easter trail around the Hall and Garden, with themed crafts and activities. A chocolate prize for all entrants. Trail starts from the Gatehouse, 11am-4pm, Doe Lea, Chesterfield S44 5QJ, nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-hardwickhall

22-25 Ilam Park Easter egg trails with prizes. Face-painting and colouring competition included. Home Farm, Ilam, Ashbourne DE6 2AZ, 12 noon-4pm, £3, peakdistrict.nationaltrust.org.uk/ilam-park

23 Treetops Hospice Entertainment and games for children of all ages. £2.50 per person including refreshments (hot cross bun and hot or cold drink). No need to book, simply turn up on the day. Derby Rd, Risley DE72 3SS, 9.30am-1.30pm, adm £2.50, treetopshospice.org.uk

23/24 Haddon Hall Easter Egg Hunt – free to enter but donations welcome for Bluebell Wood Children's Hospice, Bakewell DE45 1LA, haddonhall.co.uk

23/24 Treak Cliff Cavern Look out for the Easter Bunny while you search for Easter eggs underground in the atmospheric cavern, Hope Valley, bluejohnstone.com

25 Rosliston Forestry Centre Easter Egg Hunt (25th) plus lots more activities in April, including archery, wildlife watch, laser combat, astronomy workshops, bluebell walk, Swadlincote DE12 8JX roslistonforestrycentre.co.uk

24/25 Tropical Butterfly House, Wildlife and Falconry Centre Join the trail for your chocolate reward, N Anston, Sheffield S25 4EQ, 10am-5.30pm

