

Meeting of Minds @ Cambridge Festival

20,21,22 March 2026

v1.1, 2026-02-25. Organisers: Alexis Mather, Peter Zipp.

Invitation

On the coincidence of 2026 Spring Equinox and a fantastic programme at the Cambridge Festival¹ we invite like minds to visit the University and the town from Friday 20 March to 22 March. The highlight (and a daytrip option for those who can't commit to a whole weekend) is an open day at Cambridge University's West Site on Saturday 21st March. The West Site hosts Cambridge's prestigious Cavendish Laboratory - 34 Nobel Prizes and counting - and many other science-oriented departments.

Expressions of Interest by Friday 27 February, please

Because of the short timeframe we have ², we'd like to move quickly to a rough idea of how well-attended this would be.

Even just a little bit interested? [Join our Signal group here!](#) (No commitment required)

Programme

Friday March 20th, Spring Equinox

6pm: assemble in a pub from 6pm. Celebrate equinox like good pagans, plan dinners.

8pm: group dinner or split dining, depending on participant count.

Saturday March 21st, Cambridge Festival West Site open day

West Cambridge Innovation Site ("West Site") encompasses several new buildings (including Cavendish Lab) that are focused on sciences, and innovation in several areas.

See last page for the university's own description of the day on West Site. Note that while it is family-oriented, there are many talks/activities that will be of interest to all.

Note also that the Cambridge Festival is taking place at the Biomedical Campus (themes as you'd expect, other side of Cambridge) and in the centre (humanities talks/events). There will be an additional/adjunct programme for those interested, to follow.

9am: Early arrivers meet for coffee at Café West from 9am.

10am: Meet at West Site by 10am. Informal meet/greet, disperse to talks/events

12:30pm: All (incl late arrivers) meet at Café West or other for lunch (or bring packed/offsite lunch).

¹ a university-led festival of ideas and open doors, see festival.cam.ac.uk/events for online listings, and see the [full PDF programme](#) (pages 22-26 relate to the West Site on 21st March)

² The Cambridge Festival Programme was only published on 16 February, we've done best we could.

2pm-3:15pm (Not fixed³) Depart West Site for central Cambridge. 40min walk⁴/12-15m taxi/Bus sched TBD

5pm-6:30 pm : accumulate in a Cambridge pub TBD.

7pm latest ⁵: group dinner (may require deposit, TBD)

9pm onwards: Cambridge revelry for any/all.

Sunday March 22nd

The festival programme is fairly quiet on Sunday, but the university museums (not Whipple though, a gem!) are open in the afternoon (at least).

10:30am: brunch, location/booking TBD

1pm: Alexis gives Cambridge walking tour

2pm: museums, punting, shopping, close

Notes:

The plan can (will?) change

The above is just a proposal; while the university's open day(s) will not move, the ordering of our activities (e.g. city walk, additional museum visits, punting) can move, based on feedback received.

Cost of participation

At present, there is no set price/cost as the Cambridge events are all free, and there is no current intention to rent a space for our use. Depending on numbers, it may become more efficient to ask for an up-front payment (£30-£50?) to help with making reservations/booking space. Most/all of this amount will effectively be a pre-payment/deposit for meal(s).

Hotels, Food, Transport

- Hotels: Preliminary research (booking.com) indicates that single bedrooms are available from £50, and up to £120-£150 per night.
- Food: restaurant food in Cambridge is average-good. Prices are fairly high compared to continental Europe (e.g. ~£15 for a restaurant/pub burger).
- Transport: Links are quite good via road (West site is next M11 Junction 13) and Rail + bus, or Rail + taxi options exist. Details on these to follow soon.

³ depending on what talks/places they want to attend in town before closing

⁴ those wishing to make a pilgrimage to Wittgenstein's grave and/or his last home should do so here, allowing for an additional ~30 mins of walking

⁵ We want to give time to day-trippers to get away without missing out

Festival Newspaper's Words on West Site Family Day

Also taking place on Saturday, 21 March is our Cambridge West Family Day. All day departments on the Cambridge West site will be opening their doors for experiments, games, workshops and more! Please note: times vary from department to department so do check when you are planning your day!

DEPARTMENT OF MATERIAL SCIENCE AND METALLURGY (9.30am–4.30pm)

Discover the world of Materials Science through interactive displays and activities. See how new materials help save energy, learn how windows can generate electricity and make a metal wire change shape without touching it!

DEPARTMENT OF CHEMICAL ENGINEERING AND BIOTECHNOLOGY (10am–2pm)

Turn berries into power and learn how light and chemistry come together to make electricity. Become a detective with colour in this interactive demo using student-built spectrometers to reveal what's hidden in everyday liquids, and step 100 years into the future to see today's Cambridge research imagined as the discoveries of tomorrow and so much more.

CAVENDISH LABORATORY – Physics Festival (10am–4pm)

Hosted at the brand-new Ray Dolby Centre. Learn about the history of the Cavendish, enjoy physics demonstrations, experiment with a camera obscura overlooking Cambridge, marvel at the cosmos at a planetarium session and see how physicists are using light to detect disease faster, cheaper, and more effectively than ever before.

(See <https://www.phy.cam.ac.uk/event/cambridge-festival-at-the-cavendish-laboratory/> for talks)

BRITISH ANTARCTIC SURVEY (10am–4pm)

Inviting everyone down for a day exploring the ice. Step into our icy world and find out how scientists, engineers and innovators are uncovering the secrets of our frozen poles. From the bottom of the oceans to the edge of space, our research helps guard the future of our planet.

CAMBRIDGE VET SCHOOL (10am–4pm)

Inviting all future vets to get insight into life at the Veterinary Hospital and what it's like to work there and study Veterinary Medicine at Cambridge. Hands-on activities for all the family plus talks with animal health themes.

DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTER SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (10.30am–4pm)

A range of fantastic events from stopping an evil hacker from destroying the internet and finding a missing science professor to robot wars and virtual tours.

INSTITUTE FOR MANUFACTURING (1pm–5pm)

Discover some of the secrets of the manufacturing process. Put on a VR headset and travel through a real cocoa supply chain, learn about the aerodynamics of airplanes, take part in a fun paper-airplane competition, see some of the latest science-based products from local companies and win a prize for thinking of the most original ways to use them and more.

INSTITUTE OF ASTRONOMY (2pm–6pm)

Opening its doors for an afternoon of hands-on activities, demonstrations, talks and displays around the wooded site. Meet the scientists and the telescopes and learn more about astronomy and the research they do.

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