

Ping! fever is hitting the nation this summer

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Why has the sound of table tennis balls bouncing on tables, happy voices and shrieks of laughter become a familiar sound in city centres nationwide this summer? It's all down to Ping!; the sensational public street festival which has taken the nation by storm once again!

By placing 1,000 tables in the streets of 19 towns and cities, Ping! offers members of the general public the opportunity to pick up a bat and ball and enjoy the game and they have done so in their thousands; the free-to-use tables prove just too irresistible to pass by and as a result they're used around the clock!

As well as popular thoroughfares such as shopping malls, parks and high streets; tables have appeared in a number of unusual settings including the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford, Exeter City FC and the outdoor pool in Cambridge; each city putting their own unique spin on the Ping! experience. As well as free play, highlights include a consecutive rally with a flip flop record attempt in Newquay, Pizza and Pong in Middlesbrough and a Name your Weapon competition in Nottingham where all manner of crazy items served as ping pong bats; buckets, shoes, cheese graters, bananas and wellie boots!

Some of the nation's top players past and present have got involved with the project. The legendary Desmond Douglas, England's most successful player of all time joined the crowds supporting Ping! Nottingham's Table Tennis Day event, along with 2014 Commonwealth medallists Kelly Sibley and Sam Walker, all sharing their passion for the sport and accepting the challenge from eager members of the public.

Current World Ping Pong Champion Andrew Baggaley has visited Ping! Oxford and Ping! Milton Keynes, lending a hand at the tables and inspiring the public to have a go. Andrew says 'I just want people to come and play our fantastic sport and hopefully Ping! encourages people to come to the tables'. Meanwhile Olympian Paul Drinkhall, current England number one, supported Ping! Croydon with an appearance at the Centrale shopping centre tournament and on Monday 20th July helped to launch two new tables at the East Village in Olympic Park where he and other athletes stayed during the London 2012 games, now home to over 5000 residents.

In Plymouth, an empty shop premises has been converted into a 'Ping Pong Parlour' and has seen a staggering 11,218 visits since the opening on 13th June. Feedback has been ecstatic: 'Ping! has been awesome so far and it was just what I needed to liven up a mooch around town' – Joe, and from Mrs Chalmers – 'this should be available to everyone in every town. Get off your computers and get active!'

From Jayne – 'really good fun to have this in town, brilliant for youth and families', Amy – 'I don't like sport but this is fun!' Liam would 'like to see more of this to bring the community together' while little Naomi says 'it makes me feel happy inside!'

Mrs Mercer hopes Ping! 'will encourage more people to play table tennis', which is the main aim of the project according to Keely Armit from Table Tennis England who manage the project; 'Sport England fund this fantastic project each summer which aims to show people from all walks of life how much fun Ping Pong can be and, act as the catalyst for them to play Table Tennis on a more regular basis. Many of the tables remain in situ after the Ping! summer festivals have ended and, the remainder get donated into local community spaces and groups including pubs, parks, National Trust sites, leisure centres, church groups and shopping centres so people can continue to play socially. If they want to get a bit more serious, we point people in the direction of their local table tennis club who always welcome new members with open arms!'

As with the #thisgirlcan campaign which is currently featuring young table tennis player Lauren James; 'this is my spin class', Ping! delivers the message that anyone can play irrespective of gender, age or ability such is the inclusive nature of the sport.

The nineteen Ping! areas include Brighton & Hove, Bristol, Birmingham, Cambridge, Chelmsford, Cornwall, Croydon, Exeter, Nottingham, Leicester, Liverpool, Milton Keynes, Oxford, Plymouth, Sheffield, Leeds,

Middlesbrough, London and Tower Hamlets.

[To find your nearest Ping! table click here](#)

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