

DEALS OF THE WEEK

WILTSHIRE: Pear Tree, Purton (01793 772 100) offers two-night garden break for £182.50 pp until Oct 31, incl four-course dinner each night, B&B and tickets to Abbey House Gardens, Malmesbury.

BELGIAN GRAND PRIX: www.seafrance.com (0871 222 2500) offers three nights' camping at official site near circuit of Spa-Francorchamps and ferry



crossings for Grand Prix (Aug 26-28), from £66 (two sharing).

NEWMARKET: Jockey Club (01638 663 101) offers two-night midweek all-inclusive breaks, incl three-course dinner and private tour of racing landmarks, from £535, weekends from £602 on either Aug 5-7 or Aug 16-18.

NORTH CORNWALL: Hoseasons (0844 847 1100) offers four nights' room-only at villa sleeping eight in Hengar Manor Park from Aug 22 for total £595, saving £204.

DEVON: Wow House (0800 171 2156) offers converted Rock Mill, mentioned in Domesday Book, in August, sleeping 10, from £540 per week.

AVIEMORE: Superbreak (0871 222 3055) offers B&B at Macdonald Aviemore Highland Resort in Cairngorms National Park from £39.50 pp (two sharing) until end Sept.

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON: Superbreak (0871 222 3055) offers two nights' B&B from £84.50, incl dinner first night, based on two sharing at weekends in Aug/Sept.

LEGOLAND WINDSOR: Superbreak (0871 222 3055) offers B&B at three-star Holiday Inn Express, Slough, and two days' entry to theme park for family of four for £228.40, valid any day of the week in Aug/Sept.

COWES WEEK: Wightlink (0871 376 0013) offers four nights' self-catering from Aug 8 in rustic lodge at Gurnard Pines, in 55 acres of woodland, from £774, or £129 per person, incl return Wightlink car ferry crossings ex-Portsmouth/Lymington.

PHANTOM OF OPERA: Superbreak (0871 222 3055) offers B&B at four-star Holiday Inn London Kensington on Oct 2 and arena seat ticket from £199, or two-night package from £349 based on four-star Millennium Bailey's Hotel in Kensington (Sept 30/Oct 1).



KEW FAMILY PACKAGE: Chiswick Moran Hotel (020 8996 5200) offers two nights' B&B in exec family room for family of four from £299 until Sept 4, incl free in-room movies, two-course dinner in Napa restaurant, and entry to Kew Gardens.

BRUGES: Great Escapes (0845 330 2089) offers three nights for price of two (from £132), saving £56, at three-star Leonardo Hotel on arrivals until Aug 9 and then Aug 16-Oct 31. Package incl Dover-Calais ferry crossings (four sharing), with Eurostar an option.

CORNWALL: Polurrian Bay Hotel (01326 240 421) on Lizard Peninsula offers five-night stays until Sept 4 from £150 per room per night, based on two adults staying with two under-12s in same room. Leisure facilities incl indoor/outdoor pools, tennis and movie theatre.

TRAVEL

HELEN LONG and daughter have a fabulous time in the Lake District

Relaxing in style at Lakes retreat

BEFORE setting off for a relaxing break in the Lake District, I was impressed to note that our first port of call, the Broadoaks Country House Hotel in Troutbeck, offered to mark out a helicopter landing spot for guests opting to arrive by that mode of transport.

I wasn't too concerned that my daughter and I didn't have access to a helicopter and was more than happy to make the two-and-a-half-hour journey by road from Tyneside.

We took the precaution of printing off driving directions for the journey and set off happily on a glorious summer's day.

All went well for the first two hours and 20 minutes and then, as often happens, we fell at the last hurdle and spent half an hour trailing up and down the A592 looking for an elusive "slight left-hand turn". We finally arrived at our destination wishing we had been able to hitch a lift in a helicopter.

However, as soon as we pulled into the drive of Broadoaks, all our frustrations melted away in the serene surroundings.

The hotel dates back to 1836 and is set in stunning landscaped gardens with views across to Windermere and Langdale Pikes. It is, in fact, very easy to access from the A591 and ideally situated midway between Windermere and Ambleside.

Our suite, the Redwood, was a recently-refurbished two-bedroom suite in the old coach house building. It had its own garden with lily pad pond – a peaceful haven for relaxing with a cup of coffee.

The suite itself was the height of luxury. The master bedroom is dominated by a king-size, hand-carved four-poster bed from which you can watch the Bang and Olufsen TV. There is also a walk-in wardrobe, so no danger of falling over empty suitcases which can be neatly hidden away.

The second bedroom has a standard double bed and flat-screen TV, and the shared bathroom has a huge double corner spa bath with overhead power shower. The organic toiletries from Bath House in nearby Ambleside were another delight.

Tearing ourselves away from such bliss, we headed out to Windermere town, an easy three-mile drive away. It is a mile and a half above the big and bustling Bowness on Windermere, which sits on the lake itself and is home to Beatrix Potter World, a museum dedicated to the work of the famous children's author who lived for many years in Near Sawrey on the other side of the lake.

We lunched in the delightful Lighthouse Cafe before a stroll through the quaint town brought us to the library where we stumbled upon an exhibition, From Auschwitz to Ambleside, which commemorates the arrival of 300 child Holocaust survivors 65 years ago.

Back at the hotel we indulged in pre-dinner drinks and canapés in the music room, built in 1905, before dinner in the Oaks Restaurant.

This was superb from start to finish, served with quiet efficiency in sumptuous surroundings. My daughter began with asparagus in garlic sauce with poached duck's egg on brioche toast, while I opted for the goat's cheese stumpie on home-made crumpet. Both dishes were the perfect size to whet the appetite, delicious and attractively presented.

A brief interlude followed for lemon sorbet to cleanse the palate before my daughter's main course of steak in red wine jus and my cottage pie on onion mash with roasted root vegetables. Again both were perfect in their presentation and taste and just enough to leave room for our choice of dessert.

After a reasonable rest the desserts duly arrived and more than lived up to expectations.



LUXURY • The Oak bedroom at the Broadoaks Country House Hotel, which dates to 1836

My daughter's sticky toffee pudding was tangy and tasty and my summer fruits pudding was moistly delicious.

The next day dawned bright and sunny as we bade a fond farewell to Broadoaks and headed back to Lake Windermere for a car ferry crossing to visit Hill Top, home to Beatrix Potter for 38 years.

The National Trust now owns the property bought by Miss Potter in 1905 and everything inside belonged to her. Every room contains a reference to one of her famous Tales and the books are strategically placed throughout the house for visitors to spot the inspiration for her illustrations.

It was a fascinating insight into the life of this much-loved author and a walk through her beloved cottage garden offered more opportunities to spot the settings for her stories.

Next stop was Hawkesmere, a beautiful town full of charming houses and quiet back streets.

We next called in at Rydal Mount just outside

Grasmere, Wordsworth's family home from 1813 until his death in 1850. The house now belongs to descendants of the poet and contains many family portraits, personal possessions and first editions of his work.

After another lakeside stroll, this time along the shore of Grasmere, we headed for our second resting place, the Brown Horse Inn at Winster, just outside Bowness.

This little gem is slightly off the beaten track along narrow country lanes, but is well worth the effort. We were warmly welcomed to the refurbished 1850s coaching inn and shown to our comfortable room with its superb views over the nearby fells.

Owners Steve and Karen have created a first class restaurant in the bar which retains a rustic charm with exposed brickwork and beams and an eclectic mix of tables and chairs. The food for the inn is supplied from Steve and Karen's free-range farms and vegetable gardens in the surrounding fields, making the Brown Horse virtually self-sufficient. They even have their



STUNNING • The patio terrace of the splendid Broadoaks Country House Hotel, which has views across to Windermere and Langdale Pikes



own micro-brewery in the old stable block, producing three beers and two lagers. I sampled the Lakes Beer, a German-style light lager, and it was very good.

Despite being a little out of town, the restaurant filled up fast, but the service was efficient and friendly. When we got our food, we understood why we had so much company. My chicken liver parfait starter came with red onion marmalade and brioche toast and was simply divine and my daughter's grilled green lip mussels with parmesan and garlic herb crust were equally well-received.

For my main meal I chose lamb with vegetables in mint gravy while my daughter chose wild mushroom tarte with artichoke and sunblushed tomato salad. Both were wonderful, the freshness of the ingredients adding to the richness of the flavours.

Fairly full, but not wanting the experience to end, we opted for lemon sorbet and Eton Mess for dessert. The puddings didn't disappoint and were as delicious as the rest of the meal. The

friendliness of the staff made this an evening to remember and we would certainly make the effort to return for a meal if the opportunity arose.

And so our mini break drew to a very happy close. The next morning we made a brief trip into Grasmere where we visited the Wordsworth family graves at St Oswald's Church before heading home, relaxed and content.

Fact file

BROADOAKS Country House Hotel: Dinner, bed and breakfast, from £90 per person per night. Bed and breakfast from £60pppn. Stays over a Saturday are restricted to a minimum of two nights.

Brown Horse: One night dinner, bed and breakfast: £72.50pp.

Three-night special offer: £172.50pp for three nights with dinner each night.

Restaurant prices range from £3.50-£9.95 for starters and £9.95-£22.95 for main courses.

World of Beatrix Potter: Open 10am-5.50pm. Admission prices: adults £6.75, children £3.50, senior citizens £5.75, family ticket £18.

Hill Top Farm: Open 10am-5pm. Closed Friday. Admission by timed ticket: adult £7, child £3.50, family £17.50.

Rydal Mount: Open 9.30am-5pm. Admission prices: adults £6.50, concessions £5.50. Garden Only: adults £4, child 5-15 £3. Family ticket £15.50.

Dove Cottage: Open 9.30am-5.30pm. Admission prices: adults £7.50, child £4.50 family ticket, £17.20.

Windermere Cruises: adult fares from £7 to £17.50, child fares from £3.50 to £8.65, family tickets from £19.25 to £47.

Holehird Gardens: Open all year dawn to dusk. Admission and parking: free, but donations welcome.

7 TO DO



STUNNING Enjoy the views at Lake Windermere

- Visit the World Of Beatrix Potter at Bowness-on-Windermere, which takes you on an interactive tour of the life and work of the children's author.
- Take a lakeside stroll around the shore of Lake Windermere for some stunning views of the surrounding hills or visit the tourist information centre for some more ambitious hill walks.
- Take the car ferry across the lake to visit Hill Top in Near Sawrey, home to Beatrix Potter for

- 38 years and the inspiration for many of her famous tales.
- Visit Rydal Mount house and gardens, between Ambleside and Grasmere, home of poet William Wordsworth...
- Or visit Wordsworth's earlier home, Dove Cottage, and the Wordsworth Museum just outside Grasmere.
- Take a Windermere Lake Cruise between Bowness, Ambleside and Lakeside.
- Visit Holehird Gardens, a 17-acre hillside garden with a small woodland walk and water features run by The Lakeland Horticultural Society.

HEAVEN & HELL

PETER Mann is an author and journalist living in Thornaby who writes about the region's non-league football scene. He also writes about Newcastle United and Gateshead for the Toon Talk magazine and is looking to start a magazine entitled Spirit of the North. Peter writes books and is to have Rising from the Ashes, the fall and rise of Whitley Bay FC published soon. He is also working on the biography of Steve Wraith, and Durham Wasps' ice-hockey team. Visit www.petermann.tk



What was your best holiday?
That's an easy one. My partner, her parents and I stayed in a cottage in Rothbury for a week. Company was good, and the weather was great. We took in Alnwick, Holy Island and Bamburgh, Craggside and Simonside.

What was the best hotel you've stayed in?
I've never really stayed in a hotel, always been in a holiday cottage. The only hotel which springs to mind was when I went for a job interview in the capital and I stayed overnight. It was OK, but lonely.

What do you need for the perfect holiday?
Good company. I like good food and a relaxing atmosphere, culture, history and architecture.

What was your worst holiday?
I can't say I have experienced a bad holiday, though I know people who have.

What was your worst experience on holiday?
Embarrassing moments from when I was younger. I was at Haggerston Castle with my brother, a mate and his parents. I jumped into the pool. I can't swim!

What do you hate about holidays?
I don't go for wild party nights. Rude/bad customer service and hospitality is a no-go area. Some things can be tolerated but if it's constant, it becomes annoying.

Sunday Sun Reader Travel

The PHANTOM of the OPERA

Phantom of the Opera at the Albert Hall

Cameron Mackintosh is delighted to present a unique staging of Andrew Lloyd Webber's The Phantom of the Opera at the Royal Albert Hall this autumn to celebrate the shows 25th anniversary

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