



The campsite is set in picturesque fields

# LANTERN & LARKS

**THE LOWDOWN** Set in gorgeous green fields and private farmland, these six luxury tents at Sweffling Hall, Suffolk, offer amazing views and are perfect if you like your creature comforts while being outdoors. Each has three bedrooms (with super comfy beds), a large kitchen, dining area, toilet, shower and a fantastic wood burner stove that heats the tent brilliantly on a cool night.

**WHY THE KIDS WILL LOVE IT** As soon as we arrived and were given wheelbarrows to transport our bags to our tent, we knew the kids were going to have a fun weekend. They were given free wildlife packs so they could follow the on-site trails and tick off flora and fauna while exploring the fields and forest. And be sure to pick up some

Mystical fire powder from the honesty shop. You throw it on your fire and coloured flames magically appear. The kids were entranced!

**WHY THE GROWN-UPS WILL LOVE IT** Each tent also has a terrace with outdoor seating and a fire pit/barbecue, and you can pre-order various food packs for your stay, so you don't need to worry about doing a supermarket shop. The barbecue pack contains burgers, sausages, ribs, marinated chicken and baps, while the dessert pack boasts marshmallows, chocolate, pineapple, bananas and ice cream cones. There's also an award-winning pub within walking distance, The Sweffling White Horse. It sells locally brewed ales and makes delicious pies too.



The tents are comfy and spacious

**OUT AND ABOUT** We drove 25 minutes to Southwold, a lovely little coastal town with a beautiful sandy beach and lots to keep you all amused, from cream teas on the boating lake to unusual and unique amusements on the pier. Orford is close, too – we visited Orford castle and its quaint village. Don't miss The Pump Street bakery, which sells gorgeous cakes and biscuits.

**NEED TO KNOW** Book at Lanternandlarks.co.uk or call 01638 778198. From £480 for a three-night stay.

# CHATEAU DE GURAT

**THE LOWDOWN** Set in 14 acres of meadows and woodland in south west France, Chateau de Gurat has six child-friendly cottages and a host of activities to keep them busy.

**WHY THE KIDS WILL LOVE IT** So many reasons! There's a heated pool, a toddler pool, swings, a trampoline, a toy-filled barn with flat-screen TV, farm animals to feed and a sandpit in the shade (and deckchairs for exhausted mums and dads!). And it's all enclosed so your little ones can run around safely. A firm favourite is also Nelly the bread lady, who visits most mornings to sell chocolate croissants and other goodies. Delicious!

**WHY THE GROWN-UPS WILL LOVE IT** As there are only six cottages, the atmosphere is very calm and peaceful, and the surroundings are so idyllic you can't help but feel relaxed. It's self-catering but the lovely owners Nicki and David are more than happy to prepare home-cooked meals every night, which is a godsend for tired parents. They also provide everything you could possibly need



With only six cottages, this is ideal for a tranquil stay



There are swings and a trampoline for the kids

such as cots, stair gates, high chairs, push chairs, potties and monitors, so you can pack light and not worry about anything. There's a wine tasting night and a pizza night for adults too, and they provide a babysitting service if you fancy a night out. We can't recommend this place enough!

**OUT AND ABOUT** We enjoyed two day trips – one to Aubeterre-sur-Dronne, where we did a tour of an underground church and had a delicious lunch in the village square, and one to Brantome, which has a great food market and is one of the prettiest towns we've ever visited.

**NEED TO KNOW** From £813 for a two-bed cottage for a week, book at Gurat.co.uk. Airports within 90 minutes drive are Bordeaux, Poitiers, Bergerac and Limoges.

# WARWICK CASTLE KNIGHT'S VILLAGE

**THE LOWDOWN** What could be more exciting after a day of myth and magic at a medieval castle than a sleepover in a wooden lodge in the Knight's Village? After you've tired your little ones out exploring the castle's stately rooms – and the creepy dungeon if you're feeling brave – you can make yourselves comfy in your cosy chalet, which has a private bathroom and can sleep up to seven people.

**WHY THE KIDS WILL LOVE IT** There's so much to see and do, from the daily birds of prey displays to the *Horrible Histories* maze, which our children loved. As they raced around collecting stamps from the different areas, they learned about different historical events along the way. And later, back in the village, they even got to try their hand at archery and sword fighting!

**WHY THE GROWN-UPS WILL LOVE IT** The fun continues at the evening feast in the grand Banquet Hall, which is entertaining for all the family. Your kids will not get bored as they cheer on the swordsmen in their staged duel. You'll also be served a breakfast fit for a king in the morning. Look out for the open-air concert nights at the castle, too – JLS and Jessie J are among the acts who've played there.



Warwick Castle is steeped in history



Jessie performed at the castle

**OUT AND ABOUT** If you've not had your fill of castles, you can also visit the ruins of Kenilworth Castle five miles away. We also took a stroll round the picturesque centre of Warwick and along the River Avon.

**NEED TO KNOW** An overnight stay in a two-bedroom lodge costs from £40 per person, including two days' entry to the castle, breakfast and evening entertainment in the Knight's Village. To book, visit Warwick-castle.com/sleepovers. The all-you-can-eat medieval dinner costs £18.95 per adult, £9.95 per child.



Complete your visit with a stay in a Knight's Lodge

# Family favourites

Treat your brood to one of these fab breaks...

# PAULTONS PARK LOST KINGDOM

**THE LOWDOWN** Ever wondered what it was like when dinosaurs roamed the planet? Well you can get a pretty good idea at this fun prehistoric world that will transport you back millions of years. You'll find rollercoasters, a play park and walking animatronic dinosaurs in the Jurassic landscape.

**WHY THE KIDS WILL LOVE IT** Your little ones will have the time of their lives riding around in their own jeep in search of Velociraptors and getting up close to a towering T-Rex and other fierce species. Smaller kids can ride in a giant dinosaur egg on Boulder Dash and enjoy the Little Explorers climbing frames. Paultons is also home to Peppa Pig World, where you'll find themed rides, adventure playgrounds and a water splash park.

**WHY THE GROWN-UPS WILL LOVE IT** The Velociraptor rollercoaster will keep adults entertained as it mimics the speed and agility of its namesake, while the Flight Of The Pterosaur ride gives an amazing aerial view of the park while soaring at high speed. And there's always the chance to spot one or two of your fave celebs – Holly Willoughby and Michelle Heaton have both visited with their families.

**OUT AND ABOUT** Paultons Park is on the edge of the New Forest, so there are acres of beautiful countryside to explore right on the doorstep. Winchester is a 25-minute drive



Kids will love the dino-themed park



Holly tried the rides



Hugh and Michelle have visited

away – a picturesque city to walk around and a good place to find a bite to eat. We stayed at the Holiday Inn there, which is a convenient base for a visit to this region.

**NEED TO KNOW** See Paultonspark.co.uk for tickets, from £25.75, or Paultonsbreaks.com for an overnight stay at Holiday Inn Winchester for a family of four with two days' park entry, from £247.

WORDS: Vanessa Chandler, Sarah Loving, Rhona Mercer, Charlotte North PHOTOS: Getty Images