



From left: the spacious 'tent'; a meat feast on the firepit; the boys take part in wheelbarrow racing; the spacious interior. Below: the boys keep warm by the fire

solar-powered fairy lights come on as the sun goes down – a magical touch.

Before we even unpacked, we got the firepit and woodburner going, and cooked up delicious locally produced sausages and burgers from a pre-ordered barbecue pack. Campfire cones for pudding (with marshmallows, fruit and chocolate) were a great hit. The children played ball games in the gathering dark as the adults enjoyed a relaxing drink or three, and we finished off the evening with a spot of stargazing at the country night sky, before retiring to our comfy beds.

With plentiful supplies and the sun shining, we didn't need to leave the site all weekend, although had the weather failed us or we'd wanted more activity, there's plenty to do in the area. The seaside

town of Aldeburgh is just 10 miles away and Walberswick and Southwold are also close by, as are heritage attractions such as Framlingham Castle and Sutton Hoo. Suffolk is awash with great food

producers (the Farm Cafe & Shop at nearby Marlesford is an excellent place to stop for local ingredients, and offers great brunch options; farmcafe.co.uk). But we opted for relaxation, enjoying books, board and ball games. The children had so much fun exploring and playing outside.

On the journey home, I asked my nine-year-old, Toby, what his best bit of the weekend had been. 'Going back to the olden days with no electricity... and no computer screens.' I'll second that!

So why did I love it? It encompasses all the best bits of camping – nature, leaving technology behind, following the diurnal

rhythms – but without the inconveniences of regular camping. You simply pack up your clothes and toiletries, throw in some board games, booze and food and you're sorted – no need for lots of equipment as everything's provided. With proper beds, sofa and bathroom included, what excuse do you have for not giving it a go? **From £365 for a short midweek stay** (lanternandlarks.co.uk)

FIVE OTHER GLAMPING SPOTS TO TRY

1 DORSET DEERLAND SAFARI

You can't beat a weekend in this two-bedroom safari tent on an organic Dorset farm. Cooking is on a gas hob, lighting by candlelight and there are hot showers on site. From £242 for two nights, for up to four sharing (qualitynearthed.co.uk).

2 PEMBROKESHIRE LITTLE BARN

At this barn outside the seaside town of Newport, with a view of the Carningli Mountain, you really feel like you're getting back to nature, while enjoying comforts like a great bed and underfloor heating. From £85 per night, minimum three-night stay (canopyandstars.co.uk).

3 DERBYSHIRE MULINO PODS

We love these eco-pods on a sheep farm on the edge of the Peak District. Damson and Bluebell pods sleep two in a double bed plus one on a futon and the

newest, Lavender Pod, has a double bed, bunk beds and a futon. All have French doors onto spacious decked seating areas with barbecues. From £230 for three-night weekends in Bluebell and Damson Pods (mulinopods.co.uk).

4 WARWICKSHIRE PRINCESS FELICE'S TENT, WARWICK CASTLE

Sleeping a family in a four-poster bed and two singles, this tent is inspired by Felice, the heroine of the castle's Princess Tower. From £45.25 per person per night based on two adults and two children, including breakfast, castle entrance and entertainment (warwick-castle.com/sleepovers).

5 CHESHIRE COPPERBEECH GYPSY WAGON

This genius option includes a comfortable full-sized double bed in a traditional gypsy wagon and a full kitchen, log burner, shower, seating area and a veranda with a barbecue in a sweet little oak-framed building next door. From £170 for two nights (qualitynearthed.co.uk).

Camping FOR SOFTIES



Tamsin Burnett-Hall discovers a weekend under canvas can be five-star all the way

If you're a somewhat reluctant camper, glamping could be just the thing. The term covers varying degrees of luxury, from a simple tepee or yurt upwards. On a sunny early summer weekend, I got to experience the upper end of the scale when my friends and I booked a break with our children at the Suffolk site of Lantern & Larks, a company that currently has four rural bases (the others are in Somerset, Rutland and Lancashire).

RURAL RELAXATION

Our adventure started as we wound our way through country lanes in the early evening sunshine. A warm welcome awaited in the form of site manager (and all-round superwoman) Laura, who helped us to settle in. The first novelty was transporting our belongings in wheelbarrows – no vehicles are allowed in the glamping area – followed, inevitably, by wheelbarrow races.

Our home from home for the weekend was just that – nothing much like a tent, other than the aspect of being clad in

canvas. There are three bedrooms (a double, twin and bunk), with proper beds and soft duvets. The spacious open-plan living area has a well-equipped kitchen, generous dining table and comfy sofas in the sitting area near the wood-burning oven. Of course, there isn't every mod con – no electricity for starters – you are glamping, but there is a gas hob and running water (cold and hot, and crucially, each tent has its own proper loo and shower, so no need to trek across a field in the night). Outside there is a veranda, partially covered so you can sit out, whether sheltering from the sun or the rain. Twinkly

