



Little Paddock in the New Forest

Our travel editor, David Powell, highlights some of the treasures you can find on a short break in the New Forest ...

Introduction

The New Forest is undoubtedly one of the treasures of Southern England. This unique area, with picturesque villages, bustling market towns and winding country lanes, is a perfect and relaxing environment for a short break. William the Conqueror created the New Forest as a deer hunting area in 1079 and today the 219 square miles of National Park is made up of a well cared for mixture of forest, pasture and heathland.

The environmental impact of tourism has to be carefully balanced and the whole forest has a 40 mph speed limit with lots of designated car parking areas. Subsequently a car journey through the New Forest becomes a delightful, stress-free, animal spotting drive with plenty of opportunities to see the famous ponies at close quarters and perhaps a few deer. As you would imagine, the New Forest is a paradise for walkers and cyclists alike with miles of splendid walks and traffic free cycle routes. This area has many attractions including award-winning gardens, museums and historic houses. More information on things to see and do here is available at www.thenewforest.co.uk

Beaulieu

Not only is Beaulieu a charming village, it is of course home to the famous National Motor Museum founded by the present Lord Montagu. It had been far too long since I last visited and I was looking forward to spending the day at one of the UK's leading tourist attractions where over 350,000 visitors pass through the gates every year. The Beaulieu Estate includes the Palace House and Gardens and Beaulieu Abbey. The Palace House has magnificent rooms and history comes alive with Victorian costumed guides giving an insight into the workings of a Victorian household.

After a trip on the high level Monorail around the grounds and a ride on the replica 1912 London bus, I was keen to view the treasures of the National Motor Museum. There are over 250 cars on show, from the early vintage models, family cars of the 30's and 40's, through to classic cars of the 70's and 80's. Historic F1 and rally cars and Donald Campbell's Bluebird are all on show. All the vehicles are in a fabulous condition, even down to Del Boy's faithful 3 wheeler and the flying Ford Anglia seen in Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets. I was amazed to come across a couple of 'bubble cars' and even an orange on wheels! There's now also two great exhibitions - James Bond, with genuine cars from some of the films and World of Top Gear, not to be missed!

Exbury Gardens and Steam Railway

Exbury and Lepe are situated on the south-east fringe of the New Forest and Exbury is dominated by the world famous gardens created in the 1920's by Lionel de Rothschild. My visit to Exbury Gardens started with the beautiful 2 mile drive called Summer Lane and I was able to pull in a couple of times to look at the ponies and admire the views.

Exbury is a spectacular woodland garden with a famous collection of rhododendron's, azaleas, camellias, rare trees and plants. Also on site is a plant centre, gift shop and tea rooms with plenty of free parking. I must say, for me the steam train was the highlight of my visit. A fantastic ride through the gardens in immaculate carriages pulled by a wonderfully preserved locomotive - great fun! You can see the train on my video review on www.ashford247.co.uk.

Little Paddock

My short break was made complete with a stay at an exclusive, luxurious getaway at the edge of the New Forest near Ringwood. Owned and run by Brett and Sue Jones, Little Paddock is a perfect location for a well earned break or special occasion. Brett and Sue's attention to detail and customer service is amazing. Sue told me that they have many guests returning year after year and after



Love In The Mist Woodland Lodge at Little Paddock

experiencing a short break here myself I could easily appreciate why. Little Paddock is essentially made up of three accommodation components. There's the award winning 4 star bed and breakfast, the 4 star luxury self-catering woodland lodges and the entirely separate Caravan CL site. Near the lodges and main house there's a heated swimming pool, sauna, hot tub and short tennis court available.

Woodland Lodges. The stunning woodland lodges are uniquely hidden within their own little glen. They are exclusively for adults and sleep two. Each lodge has been carefully designed internally by Brett and Sue to a high standard and have been given lovely names such as 'Forget Me Not', 'Mistletoe Mansion', 'Bramble Lodge' and the ever popular 'Love In The Mist'. Lodges have all mod-cons including WiFi, wet rooms, comfortable bedrooms, lounge/diners and a fully equipped kitchen. With adequate heating provided they can also be booked during the winter months for a romantic break away. I found the private Village Green tucked away to the rear of 'Honeysuckle Lodge' provided with a BBQ and garden seating. I also came across a small deer who looked at me for a brief moment before heading off into the nearby woodland, wonderful!

Bed and Breakfast. The B&B accommodation consists of 3 luxurious bedrooms available for guests with each room having a seasonal theme to the décor. My room was called Autumn - peaceful, relaxing with en-suite, bedroom and comfortable separate lounge area. I had seen the Visit England Breakfast Award plaque near the newly refurbished lounge area and couldn't wait to try a full English! I wasn't disappointed, with Sue's homemade bread on the side, the breakfast was in a class of its own!

The New Forest's picturesque villages and wonderful scenery left me with memories of a special atmosphere and a sense of timelessness ... not to mention of course Brett's breakfast!

David Powell - travel & features editor

INFORMATION

David Powell stayed as a guest of Little Paddock. A 3 night break in July in a self catering woodland lodge starts from £135pp (two people sharing) or £292.50pp for a week (two sharing). Breakfast available at a supplement.

Three Bed and Breakfast rooms in the main house are also available from £85pp (two sharing) for a 2 night break

Call 01425 470889 or visit www.little-paddock.com

Exbury Gardens www.exbury.co.uk

Beaulieu National Motor Museum, Palace, Gardens & Abbey
www.beaulieu.co.uk

David has produced a video review see: www.ashford247.co.uk