

GETAWAY



Holgates Caravan Park in Silverdale, also right. Above, the pool. Below, John's caravan and awning

GRUMPY old unreconstructed 1970s dinosaurs like Jeremy Clarkson famously hate towing caravans on the grounds you can't drive one at 100mph as they don't tend to come with their own internal combustion engine. But right now, Jezza, there's no business like tow business: their popularity has never been so high and it's not hard to see why. Whisper it, but caravans are in serious danger of becoming cool. More and more people are deciding that a home away from home on wheels is the way to go. Jamie Oliver, Gwyneth Paltrow, Rio Ferdinand and Wayne Rooney are among the famous names to have sprinkled a little stardust on what was once the sole preserve of the retired elderly. So it was with a sense anticipation that the Scheerhout family borrowed

Far from being a geriatric pastime, **JOHN SCHEERHOUT** finds that taking a caravan on holiday is a great way for a family to be together

a Coachman Amara towing caravan for the Whit break. But would it be able to accommodate two adults and three young kids? With a few quick manoeuvres, the living room sofas converted into a sturdy double bed for Mrs S and I. The kitchen-dining area was transformed into a second bed for our ten-year-old daughter while our son, aged eight, and two-year-old daughter slept in bunks tucked away at the rear of the caravan. Don't get me wrong. We weren't swinging any cats in there. But the layout was thoughtful and the design as simple as it was ingenious. The younger kids especially liked their bunks, which had their own

windows and curtains that they liked to draw when they were up to no good. The kitchen area consisted of an oven and hob, a sink with a fold down work surface and a good sized fridge. At the rear, next to the bunks, was the bathroom, which included a WC, sink and shower. When you're living in a tiny space like that, details matter: like the many cupboards just above head height around the caravan had spring loaded doors which you could flip up with one hand without them crashing back down on you. A huge awning virtually doubled the space at our disposal. At the risk of stating the blindingly

obvious, though, the best bit about a towing caravan is that you can, well, take it anywhere that has a road and go exploring. And surely there cannot be many better spots than Holgates Caravan Park, in Silverdale, right at the edge of the Lake District. We spent eight glorious early summer days at Silverdale, which is perched on a secluded hillside on a quiet promontory overlooking the River Kent where it flows from the south Lakes. The supposed myth of the Great British Summer just evaporated in the heat. Shorts and bathing costumes had been packed in hope rather than expectation. So had waterproofs and jumpers, which were not required.

We played pitch and putt. When it was too hot, we swam in the fantastic in-door pool on site. There was also a sauna and gym. The kids loved to freewheel on their bikes down the hill to the site shop to spend their pocket money. The site was immaculate and the shower blocks always spotless. There was a bar, restaurant and even a bowling alley to keep us and lots of other young families on the site entertained. We went for walks to nearby Arnside and the beautiful village of Silverdale just in Lancashire, filling our lungs with the smell of the wild garlic growing all around us. Much as we enjoyed Holgates, of course we wanted to venture out. We visited Grizedale forest where the kids loved Go Ape (<https://goape.co.uk/days-out/grizedale>), spending an hour strapped into a harness, climbing in the tree canopy and then

launching themselves along a zip wire. Another delightful day trip saw us sailing along Windermere (www.windermere-lakecruises.co.uk) from Bowness to Lakeside before taking a steam train to Haverthwaite (www.lakesiderailways.co.uk). Our youngest would have loved World of Beatrix Potter in back in Bowness had she not slept through the entire visit. Whatever we'd done during the day, every night Mrs S and I conspired to 'lose' the kids so we could enjoy a rare moment of peace with a cold beer inside the caravan and watch the sun set. Sad to report we didn't lose them often enough. Our caravan had been loaned to us by the family run Glossop Caravans which reports many more families are turning to them. Ours would have cost £15,266 new but, well maintained, it should last decades which makes the proposition much more cost-effective. It turns out you don't have to be old, retired or grumpy to enjoy a caravan.

NEED TO KNOW

- Hints on caravanning and motorhome holidays can be found at www.freedomtogo.co.uk. For Glossop Caravans telephone 01457868011 or log onto www.glossopcaravans.co.uk.
- Holgates Caravan Park is on 01524 701508 or log onto www.holgates.co.uk/silverdale. Fully serviced caravan pitches from £36/night based on two adults sharing. Each child is an extra £4.50/night. Coachman Caravans is on 01482 839737 or log onto www.coachman.co.uk

