

Get active together



Where can you go for a break away that will appeal to the whole family and get everyone into the great outdoors? **Lorna Maybery** heads for a lake resort in Lincolnshire



Words by:
Lorna Maybery
Lorna is Countryside's deputy editor who loves being in the great outdoors

KEEPING THE whole family happy while on holiday is often challenging – you need fun and adventure for the children, relaxation and cultural stimulation for the adults and plenty of activities that everyone can enjoy together.

The answer may be to find somewhere that specifically caters for families, so, with this in mind, I headed for Tattershall Lakes in Lincolnshire, a holiday park run by Away Resorts set among a series of lakes and woodland where you can self-cater in tents, static caravans or luxury lodges, depending on your budget.

The resort offers a full range of activities from jet skiing and motorboat rides to more sedate fishing or nature walks. It's a great way to encourage the kids out into the countryside, and if the unpredictable British weather lets you down, there are plenty of indoor activities, too.

Tattershall Lakes has been a holiday destination for 20 years and the accommodation is set around a series of pools in the Lincolnshire fenlands, which sit in the shadow of historic Tattershall Castle.

In the central entertainment area, there's a

definite nod to the area's rich RAF history, with a replica Spitfire set into the roof of the bar, nostalgic black and white photos of wartime pilots and ground-crew lining many of the walls, and even round tables painted with the Spitfire's iconic colourful circular markings.

Overhead the sudden roar of an aircraft engine is a reminder that there are still RAF bases nearby, including the home of Battle of Britain Memorial Flight Spitfires and Lancaster, and we watched in delight for quite some time as a Spitfire pilot practised his loop-the-loop and twists and turns in the skies above the lakes.

We couldn't actually take to the skies ourselves, but for the adventurous there's plenty of watersports, and for the outdoor lover in search of peace, the countryside is right there on the doorstep to be explored.

So with itinerary in hand, we set out to try as many activities as possible to see if they could cater for my nine-year-old son Tommy's need for fun and adventure, while also keeping us adults happy and occupied with a bit of country walking and culture. ►



GERONIMO! Taking the plunge at the Aqua Park at Tattershall Lakes

Archery lesson

Who doesn't want to be Robin Hood? The archery session lasted about 45 minutes and involved our instructor Ross taking us through the basics of putting an arrow into a bow and then trying to hit a target. He then set up some challenges and got us competing against each other to encourage accuracy. Tommy began the session unable to hit the target but by the end was firing confidently and hitting the board each time. My husband Ian and I became quite competitive as we tried to hit closest to the bull and I was thrilled when I succeeded – even though I knew it was a fluke! This was a great activity for the whole family.



what we needed to do to help him. We produced a makeshift raft that did actually float, with Tommy riding on top and Ian and I pulling him along in the pool. Success!

TAKE AIM: Tommy quickly gets the hang of using a bow, and below left, has a go at zorbing

Zorbing

We left this to Tommy as it involved climbing into a plastic ball and then rolling around and bouncing into other zorbers. With the lake as a backdrop, it made for fun and pleasant viewing as the youngsters rolled, bounced and bumped into each other. There was plenty of laughter and encouragement from the parent spectators as the children battled to see who could do the best forward roll and who would be the last kid standing after a ferocious bounce-off.



Walking

I was keen to explore the lakes, so pulled on my walking boots and set off on my own on a hike into the surrounding countryside. I discovered a track running alongside one of the largest of the lakes and I trekked along the shoreline, keeping an eye open for some of the many water birds that make the lake their home. I spotted swans and mallard ducks, and then a cacophony of honks overhead stopped me in my tracks and I watched as five Canada geese flew past low and fast.

Having walked around the lake I then entered the small woodland area next to a smaller lake set aside for fishing. Here there are bug hotels to encourage insect life and I discovered a swan quietly sitting on its nest away from it all. The nest was fenced off and a sign requested visitors to stay away so as not to disturb the bird, so I quietly moved on.

I then walked to Tattershall village and from here you can do a series of walks, including a circular

BEST OF BOTH WORLDS: You can choose to splash about on the lake, or enjoy a spot of culture at nearby Tattershall Castle – or perhaps do both!

Raft building

For an hour in the evening we had the pool to ourselves so we could embark on a spot of raft-making. Working as a family team, with the help of two very enthusiastic instructors Amy and Jade, we constructed a raft using strips of wood, rope and plastic barrels. Tommy was allocated as team leader and had to learn to tie the knots and tell us





Accommodation

We stayed in one of the resort's new Tribeca homes. These funky, brightly-coloured static caravans are designed especially for families, with a large open-plan living space, complete with fitted kitchen and large modern fridge. There are panoramic glass sliding doors so you get the outdoor feel indoors.

The sophisticated design is more reminiscent of a boutique hotel and there's plenty of space, with a large double bedroom plus en-suite and a second children's bedroom with three well-designed cabin beds, each with its own TV on the wall, so there's no arguments about who wants to watch what!

Self-catering means you can be flexible about when and where you eat. The caravan is fully-equipped but if you want to eat out there's a large restaurant and bar on-site serving food throughout the day.

route starting from the 15th century buttercross in the centre of the village. The walk follows the line of the old Horncastle canal and on to Coningsby.

Just outside the village is the Pingle Local Nature Reserve, an area of wildflower meadow, a pond and wet woodland all on the site of the old Lincoln to Skegness railway line. It's run by volunteers and is a great place for watching wildlife.

Aqua Park

Back at the resort, Tommy was very excited about the newly-opened Aqua Park, but, as my swimming isn't great, I decided watching was the best course of action for me! It's run separately to the resort by Just Wake and as well as giant inflatables, there's cable wake boarding or water skiing for the more adventurous or stand-up paddle boarding.

Fully kitted out in wetsuit, life jacket and safety helmet, he set off across wobbly walkways and threw himself on and off trampolines and swings, scrambled up inflatable climbing frames and flew down slides into the lake.

There was plenty of screaming and laughter as people constantly fell or bounced into the water and it was fun to watch, especially as the setting was so pretty, with Tattershall Castle rising up at one end of the lake.



HISTORIC VIEW: Looking down at the Holy Trinity Church from the top of Tattershall Castle



Tattershall Castle

This is where I headed after an exhausted Tommy had finished at the Aqua Park and his dad took him off to dry out. It's an easy walk from the lake, across fields to the castle, which was built in 1231 by Robert de Tateshale and then renovated by Lord Ralph, 3rd Baron Cromwell. The castle eventually fell into ruin, then in 1911 Lord Curzon of Kedleston visited the site and within 24 hours had purchased it and set about restoring it. It was opened to the public and, on Lord Curzon's death in 1925, the castle was bequeathed to the National Trust, who still care for it today.

The keep is the finest example of medieval brickwork to survive in England today. Each floor consists of a vast chamber with an impressive fireplace and three turreted rooms, one in each corner. The remaining turret in the fourth corner houses the spiral staircase that leads right up to the roof.

It's quite a climb but worth it, because from here, there are stunning views across the Lincolnshire countryside, and across to the beautiful perpendicular Holy Trinity Church. The church contains a number of fine stained glass windows and also has a plaque marking the grave of famous resident Tom Thumb. He was only 47cm tall when he died in 1620 at the age of 101.

Getting active together

So did our weekend away manage to please everyone? Well, we enjoyed plenty of family time, getting out and about and trying different things together.

Tommy had lots of fun and hardly stopped all weekend, while we grown-ups enjoyed a country walk and a spot of culture and even learned a new skill or two, so it seems everyone was catered for.

Tips for a successful family break would include: plan your itinerary so you know in advance what you're doing, but don't be a slave to it; leave time to relax and recover; choose some activities the whole family can do together, and throw yourselves whole-heartedly into the experience, as you only get out what you put in.

It was heartening to see so many children away from their computers and tablets and actually getting outside and challenging themselves. They all looked so excited and happy. And, as most parents and grandparents will tell you, if the kids are happy, they're happy! 🐾

Further information

- **Freedom to Go** - if you are new to lodge stays and holiday parks, freedomtogo.co.uk has hints and tips to help you get started and plan your next family adventure.
- **Tattershall Lakes Country Park** is located in the heart of Lincolnshire with a wide variety of accommodation ranging from glamping bell tents to caravans, luxury lodges and the Tribeca Village. Tattershall Lakes is one of six parks that Away Resorts owns in England and Wales.
- **Prices for seven nights in a Tribeca from 6 October** lead in at £309.
- To book, visit: awayresorts.co.uk