

Center Parcs experience

Back in April I was lucky enough to be selected to become a wildcard for the 2013/14 Center Parcs Family Blogger club! You can enter too if you take a look at the blogger challenges [here](#).

As a family we have been so excited about our holiday to Center Parcs. We couldn't wait to get there. Here is our Center Parcs experience.....

Center Parcs experience

Center Parcs Longleat is set in a very peaceful, beautiful environment embedded in the forest. During our stay we were surrounded by nature, which means we couldn't prevent the feeling of tranquility and happiness, great for stress reduction. It is quite hilly though, so if you go be prepared for a bit of exercise too. However, there is a land train which regularly drives around the village if you prefer.

We stayed in a woodland lodge, which was very spacious, clean and had good facilities. We cooked meals quite comfortably, alternatively we could even have used the BBQ. Our lodge was amongst the trees of the forest, hence we were able to relax in the evening and watch the wildlife outside. The best part was seeing a deer with its baby right outside our lodge, the most relaxing entertainment we could have asked for.



One great thing about Center Parcs was that during our stay (apart from arrival and departure days), there were no cars in the village, which makes it fantastic for children to run around safely and ride bikes without the worry of traffic. We each hired bikes for the duration of our stay. It was very easy to hire the bikes, there were loads to choose from depending on your ability and age. There were even trailers for little ones.

At first my son was a bit wobbly on his bike, he is not quite confident on two wheels yet and hubby hasn't been on a bike for 25 yrs, so we went for a gently ride around the quiet roads until everyone settled into it, then we were off. The kids absolutely loved riding their bikes. It was great to see BB gain confidence as well as Pinky and Boo, looking very cute on their little bikes, enjoying their cycling experience that we don't normally get to do as a whole family. We even went for a bike ride after dinner, which made a lovely evening activity together.



There is so much to do at Center Parcs, with loads of activities to choose from, take a look [here](#). There are activities suitable for all ages, from toddlers through to the older adults. I would recommend you take a good look at the activities before your holiday if you go and book them in advance to be sure of a place and also budget. My children all chose to try mini jet skis and they really loved it! They all rode round on their skis in the water independently giggling away. Hubby chose to do aqua jetting. He said it was good fun being pulled along under the water. I didn't have any activities booked, but after watching everyone else having fun learning something new, my family persuaded me to choose something, so I booked a segway experience as it's something I've

never tried before. This was also great fun and I would recommend it. All our activities I will write about in a separate post.



Apart from the organised activities, there is still loads to do. The children loved the playground, especially the zip wire. They even took to standing on it at the end! We spent quite a lot of time in the playground, on the slides, climbing, swinging etc. We also had fun on the beach at the lake. The



kids loved playing in the sand and water.

The other fantastic thing to do there, is swimming. The swimming pool is amazing! It is the best pool I've been in. There are family changing rooms and don't forget to take £1 for the lockers (which you get back). There is lots to do in the pool and the toddler area is perfect for small children with slides and even a sand pit. The big pool has waves every half an hour, a lazy river to float around, there is a jacuzzi, water shutes and slides for bigger people and an outdoor pool which is just like a bath it's so warm! We had a lot of fun in that pool. We even borrowed buoyancy aids. It felt like they really have

thought of everything



We enjoyed a couple of meals out during our stay. We had a wonderful Fathers day meal at the Grand Cafe. The food was delicious and the staff were very friendly and helpful, they even came to help me serve my children, as I don't have enough hands to help 3 small children at the same time. We also had a meal at the American Diner which has a kids buffet that the children loved and also a children's play area, so they could go off and play whilst waiting. I must admit, you probably need to

budget for meals out



All in all, we had the most amazing holiday at Longleat Center Parcs. According to my son:

"Center Parcs is the best place in the world"!

Well, you can't really beat that quote can you? I asked BB to write down the 5 best things about Center Parcs, here is his answer.....

1. The jet skis
2. The swimming
3. The lodge house
4. Riding the bikes
5. The forest

My top 5 tips for your 1st stay at Center Parcs!

1. PLAN - I think the key is to plan your holiday. Check out the activities and book them before you get there. Plan your budget and meals. There are lots of great places to eat out, or there is a good shop for you to buy food to cook in your lodge too.
2. SWIMMING POOL - If you go to Center Parcs, the swimming pool is a must. It is fantastic for all

swimming abilities and ages, there is something for everyone.

3. BIKES - Hire bikes or bring your own, it is the best way to get around as the village is quite large, the roads are quiet, though you do need to be careful of other people and it is fun.
4. EXPLORE - Take a walk or ride around the village, through the forest, around the lake, it is all beautiful, quiet and relaxing. You find all sorts of interesting things when you explore the area.
5. TRY SOMETHING NEW - Center Parcs has so many fantastic opportunities to offer, I would recommend having a go at something you've never done before, it's great!

This was the best holiday we have had as a family. It gave us good quality family time together from the moment we got up to the moment we went to bed!

Here's where you can find out more about [Visiting Center Parcs](#).

[Bike riding preparation](#)

Center Parcs June blogger challenge is all about a family bike ride. I'm a Center Parcs Family Blogger and will be visiting Longleat village with my family. If you want to enter to win a place as a wildcard winner just go to the challenge page to find out how.

Center Parcs spokesperson, Sam Dowsing, has shared his tips on how you can make the most of your family bike ride. We were inspired by his tip "If your little ones are new to cycling, confidence and practice is key. I've found that concentrating on gliding, rather than peddling, helps children to balance in the early stages. Taking them to a park is a great, safe place to get them started on two wheels." This is how we got on with the challenge.....

Riding bikes is one of those essential skills I would like my children to learn. However, with multiple small children I find it very difficult to get out with them on bikes for road safety reasons, you usually need one to one. Now my children are getting older, it is starting to get easier and in preparation for our holiday to Center Parcs, where will all be going on a bike ride together as a family, I thought I should take my two 4 yr olds out on their bikes so they have a chance to get used to them. This is how they got on.

When I suggested to Pinky and Boo on the way home from school, they could go for a ride on their bikes to the park, they were so excited! As soon as we got home, they were asking for their helmets. I quickly got their bikes out and off we went.

I had a quick talk to them first, telling them they had to go slowly and stay with me whilst we are near the roads, then when we get to the park, they can go off as fast as they liked. Pinky and Boo were happy with this and I am very pleased to say, they stuck to it. They rode slowly down the road, quite cautiously, then remembered to use their breaks to stop at the end. So far so good.

The only problem we did encounter, was crossing the road. I told them they had to walk the bikes across the road, but they found this very difficult, the stabilizers kept catching on their legs. But we finally made it across the two roads and they were off.



We got to the park and they raced each other up and down the path, all very safely. It was wonderful to watch them gradually build their confidence on the bikes and get faster.



Boo kept winning their races, as Pinky was more cautious. However, they both enjoyed it, laughing

and giggling together.



After a while, they wanted to have a quick play in the playground of course. They had a go on the swings and for the first time I didn't have to push them as they finally appear to have mastered the swings by themselves! The slide was a bit hot, so they opted not to do that. They played on their train and balancing logs.



When it was time to go, they leapt straight on their bikes and raced each other to the end of the park. I must admit the walk home was a lot quicker than going!

It was lovely to see Pinky and Boo gain lots of confidence on their bikes in preparation for Center Parcs and in the future taking off the stabilizers at some point.

Outdoor fun

Half term was rather wet and miserable. We went to stay with Nana and Grandad for a few days. They have a wonderful garden to play and run around in, but there wasn't much chance to get some outdoor fun.

Luckily one day was good, so we grabbed the opportunity to have fun in the garden. The children made fairy castles in the sand, it looked more like a pile of sand with petals on top to me, but who am I to argue with their creative mind?



The children played with their babies in the garden and of course my girls can never play with just one baby, they always have to have twin babies!



Their Godmother stopped by for a catch up and spun them round, which of course is every child's most fun activity!

All in all we had a lovely time in the garden of play, fun and catching up with friends. However, the nice weather did not stay, so the next day we needed to be more creative about getting the kids out.

We decided we needed to buy daddy a fathers day present, so we went for a trip to the local garden centre. I always like visiting there as there is so much to look at and there is even an animal area, for the kids to enjoy.

After having a look at the books etc, where mummy spent some money on a fab looking book called 101 things for kids to do outside by Dawn Isaac, we headed straight for the animals. We were extremely lucky to have timed our visit perfectly, as when we walked in, two people arrived with some animals for us to stroke. Well, I say stroke, I think touch would be more accurate as these animals I don't feel are seriously stroke-able!

The children had a stroke of a snake. They were very surprised at how it felt, very silky and smooth apparently. They like the tortoise, but I wasn't too sure of the toad. The children touched him, but I didn't, he looked too slimy! Then there was a lizard which Pinky and Boo liked stroking, but BB

wouldn't, not sure why, it felt quite rough, but was actually quite cute looking.

We continued looking at all the animals. Nan bought some food to feed the ducks and the goats. I think their favourite animals were the very large rabbits and the goats.



Unfortunately half way round it started raining, but that didn't matter, we still had a great time and all for free (well, apart from the cost of the book and the fathers day present we went on to choose)!

Music Fun and Dance
