

Travel



PEACEFUL: Hawksdale Lodge, on the edge of the Lake District National Park. Inset, Jake and Gina at the Aira Force

Trip lodged in the memory

OUR out of season break had not started well. Forgotten medication, an emergency diversion to Penrith Hospital and a major delay in getting to our destination did not a holiday mood make for me, my husband and two kids.

Fortunately we had Lorraine and Martyn Russell as our hosts.

The mark of great hoteliers is how they deal with awkward guests like us who arrive late and stressed.

Their answer was with home made cake, hot tea and a warm welcome.

Within minutes of stepping through the door of Hawksdale Lodge we were made to feel at home in this gorgeous Victorian family house on the edge of the Lake District National Park.

The lodge itself offers bed and breakfast accommodation across three bedrooms, all individually decorated to make the most of the house's original features.

We however were staying in the attached but private apartment which came with

Susan Lee finds a home from home on the edge of the Lake District

a roaring fire, squashy sofas and an excellent kitchen.

It's a peaceful location yet only a few miles off the M6. The local village of Dalston isn't too far away while the city of Carlisle is also within striking distance offering everything from a Norman castle to lively nightlife.

Day one and it was on with the walking boots.

First stop was the pretty

market town of Keswick. We parked centrally, bought a map and set out for Derwent Water, one of the most beautiful of the lakes.

We were there in October when the fells were ablaze with autumn colour, the shades reflected in the still waters of the lake.

The kids will tolerate a good walk as long as there's a good meal at the end of it so a pub lunch was in order on our return to the town.

There are plenty of hostellers from which to choose – we settled on The George, the town's oldest – and afterwards spent the afternoon wandering the shops.

The following day we struck out for Ullswater taking in the walk to Aira Force, a tumbling waterfall reached through ancient woodlands.

There is something magical about this place and we stood and watched the Force for ages, the white water cascading down over the rocks.

We had it in mind to take a cruise on an Ullswater steamer but with the light fading and our feet aching, settled for tea and scones in a café and a view of a glorious sunset.

Our last days saw us take the 40 minute drive to Birdoswald Roman Fort, part of the longest continuous stretch of Hadrian's wall still standing.

It's a fascinating place; tangible history set amid beautiful countryside while the visitor centre is worth a look too – interesting without being overwhelming.

We left the fantastic lakes and Hawksdale Lodge behind us relaxed and determined to return – this time however with the correct medication.

TRAVEL FACTS

SUSAN stayed at Hawksdale Lodge Country House Bed and Breakfast and self catering apartment, Hawksdale, nr Dalston Cumbria, CA5 7BX Tel: 07810 641892. www.hawksdalelodge.co.uk. The apartment can be

booked for a minimum three nights (although shorter stays may be available). Prices from £315 for a low season short break to £750 for a week in high season. Prices for the B&B are from £95 for a double and breakfast.



SAILING AWAY: Stena Line is your gateway to this fantastic prize

Win a romantic break for two

AS Valentine's Day approaches, ferry company Stena Line has teamed up with the Liverpool ECHO and is offering one lucky reader the opportunity to treat a loved one to a romantic getaway at Galgorm Resort & Spa in County Antrim – Northern Ireland's Premier luxury Hotel and Spa.

The prize will allow the winner and a loved one return travel with a car from Liverpool to Belfast as well as a two night stay in a superior guestroom at the exclusive 4* Galgorm Resort and Spa which includes full Irish breakfast and an evening meal in Gillie's Restaurant, use of the Thermal Spa including the Hot Tub, Outdoor Jacuzzi Pool, Heated Cabins and Relaxation Loungers.

With miles of fishing on the River Maine, on-site stables, the most picturesque of walkways and cycle routes and the world class Spa at Galgorm, you'll find plenty to while away the hours as you escape into this home away from home.

Your break will begin the moment you step onboard the Stena Line ferry as you will enjoy a complimentary lunch for two from one of the various restaurants which boast menus designed by celebrity chef Kevin Woodford. You will also enjoy complimentary champagne and chocolates to make your journey even more romantic.

During your time in Northern Ireland, make sure to visit top sights such as the superb Titanic Belfast, explore the majestic North Coast and or take one of the Belfast Sightseeing Tours and

soak up the city. The prize is valid for six months so you can choose when to take a break at your leisure.

To be in with a chance to win simply answer the following question:

Q: In which one of these counties will you be spending your romantic break?

- a) Antrim
b) Down
c) Donegal

GALGORM
RESORT & SPA
REDISCOVER YOURSELF



RELAXING: The Galgorm Resort and Spa

If you aren't the lucky winner look into your own Valentine's short break by logging onto

www.stenaline.co.uk, call 08447 70 70 70 or visit your travel agent.

Terms and conditions apply. Entrants must be over 18. Closing date for receipt of entries is February 8. Prize is valid for six months. Vehicle transport and fuel is the winner's own responsibility, as is any item, service, or cost not expressly stated to be included in the prize. Prize allows two adults return travel with car on the Liverpool – Belfast route with cabin (on night journeys only). Accommodation includes two night stay at Galgorm Hotel with breakfast and one evening meal for two with access to Thermal Spa. Prior reservation required. Prize is subject to availability and no cash alternatives are available.

Weightless and free

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underwater treasures.

The second two dives are the biggest treat though.

Tobago's Japanese Gardens, off the western end of Goat Island, is a stunning, vibrant reef, bursting with colour and swaying reeds and 'dead man's fingers', and home to the largest 'brain coral' in the world.

It's crucial not to touch anything, not only to avoid injury but also to protect the delicate marine life.

Glimmering bright blue and

yellow fish glide by, and we spot three of Tobago's dive highlights: an impressive manta ray, a giant turtle cruising along and a sleepy 5ft nurse shark taking a nap.

After feeling clumsy and constricted in the heavy gear on land, underwater feels weightless and free. Nerves give way to sheer amazement – and those hours in the classroom finally feel worth it.

The final chore is having photos taken for our Padi licences and filling in our log books. Mission complete!