

Cake on arrival and a generous slice of history in the Borders

Hundreds of years ago, Cumbria was a savage land home to bloodthirsty raiders and clashing rulers. Now its colourful history makes it an intriguing destination for a holiday, as **Jade Beecroft** discovered.

IT would be hard to imagine a warmer welcome than the one we received at Hawksdale Lodge.

After a long drive up the M6 we were delighted when owners Lorraine and Martin Russell greeted us with home-made sticky lemon cake and fresh coffee at their inviting kitchen table.

The couple and their children took on the Victorian

manor house, set in the majestic Cumbrian hills near Carlisle, four years ago and have transformed it into a luxurious and peaceful retreat.

As well as offering B&B from rooms in their home, there is also a separate two-bedroom apartment where we were soon comfortably settled in front of a warm hearth.

Lorraine and Martin were meticulous in their attention to detail and nothing was left to chance.

The apartment's kitchen was stocked with fresh eggs laid by the family's hens and more home baking, fresh flowers brightened the bedrooms, the log basket by the wood burner was full and the bookcase packed with local guide books and maps.



Main picture, Jade Beecroft with partner Neil in their Hawksdale Lodge apartment. Above, Jade at Hadrian's Wall and, below, Carlisle Castle.

Although the apartment is self-catering, Lorraine also treated us to more of her fabulous cooking with a hearty breakfast – an option for all guests – in preparation for our first day out and about in the surrounding countryside.

Hawksdale Lodge is ideally situated for exploring, with the Lake District a short drive to the south, Carlisle and Had-

rian's Wall 30 minutes to the north, Scotland also within easy reach and a number of beautiful walks from the doorstep.

We made a beeline for the 900-year-old Carlisle Castle, which has the rather dubious honour of having been under siege more times than any other English fort due to its location close to the border with Scotland.

The castle has been at the centre of a number of wars and invasions throughout history, including the second Jacobite uprising, and Mary Queen of Scots was once imprisoned within its walls.

Today, visitors can explore its keep and dungeons and enjoy two exhibitions – one outlining its history and the other looking at the military. Part of the castle is still used as a military base today.

Another must for history buffs is the Tullie House Museum in Carlisle. This is a brilliant example of how a museum can really capture the imagination with interactive exhibits.

As well as boasting a collection of modern graffiti-inspired artwork, the museum also takes its visitors back through time to see the wars and uprisings that shaped Carlisle, how the Border Reivers terrorised generations of farming communities, and how the city was once home to an important Roman settlement.

There is even an opportunity to find out who you would have been in Roman society by answering a number of questions at different points around the museum.

Finally, no self-respecting Derbeian would take a trip to Cumbria without sampling some of the ales that claim to rival those brewed in our own fair city.

We took a tour of Jennings Brewery, in Cockermouth, which produces a number of different beers including Cocker Hoop and Sneek Lifter.

The brewery has been running in Cockermouth since 1874 and the tour was particularly fascinating because



the staff were clearly passionate about its beers and its history.

We were shown how the ales are brewed in huge vats using Lakeland water from the brewery's own well, and told how different tastes are achieved by mixing different hops as well as other ingredients including, in one case, raisins.

We were also interested to learn about Jennings' links with brewing much closer to home. During the floods in Cockermouth in 2009, the brewery was completely deluged and its beers had to be

brewed in Burton instead.

But such was the Cumbrian locals' dislike of the arrangement that the company had to transport Lakeland water down to Staffordshire to make the beer.

And, of course, no trip to Cumbria would have been complete without some stunning walks. We rambled along a section of Hadrian's Wall with a guide book provided by the ever-helpful Lorraine and enjoyed an evening stroll in the countryside around Hawksdale Lodge accompanied by the family's enthusiastic spaniel, Kit.

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