



CYCLING OUR WAY THROUGH SUMMER HOLIDAYS

By Tim Saunders, Travel Correspondent

With a young family, the first day of the holidays is always stressful. This year though, it is perhaps even more so because we have been home schooling for weeks and therefore around each other far more than we otherwise normally would be. Then of course there is the continued threat that Covid-19 has not actually gone away. It's still there lurking. So common sense must prevail. In our family that means we have made the decision not to travel too far. Hopefully, this situation will change in time but that's our plan for the foreseeable future. That outlook brings a whole new level of planning because our three little rascals; Harriett (10), Heidi (8) and Henry (5) need entertainment. They have bags of energy. So, Caroline and I have agreed to take them out every morning and then to head back home in the early afternoon. This is especially important when cycling and kayaking because Henry is smaller than the others and only has so much energy. We have planned ahead and purchased bike and kayak racks and another tandem kayak.

We load my little 19-year-old Ford Fiesta up with two bikes on the roof, two on the boot and Henry's in the boot. 'It's like a mechanical donkey,' quips my dad. When driving you wouldn't even know that it was carrying all this weight. It does take time to load and unload but as long as you don't rush all is fine.

We head for Gosport where there is a cycle path leading to Stokes Bay. Parking by the roadside we unload and all enjoy a carefree cycle ride, with Henry leading the way. It's a glorious day with a light breeze. In time we reach Alverstoke Crescent Garden, which beckons us to sit under a large tree and have a snack. This is a lovely, well maintained garden with a water fountain. There are hollyhocks and this reminds me of part of a poem I read only the other night by Edgar A Guest.

...The garden of my boyhood days,
With hollyhocks was kept ablaze;
In all my recollections they
In friendly columns nod and sway...

'There are twenty volunteers looking after these gardens,' one of them tells us as we head out. 'Usually, throughout the year we run plant sales and there's tea and coffee but Covid has put paid to that. We even have to use our own tools at the moment.' Despite these circumstances, the garden looks vibrant and we feel all the better for our visit. It's good to see lots of people out and about enjoying the weather and chatting. Down the road we discover another little park with a symmetrical design, pagodas and a lovely pond where we spy a beautiful blue dragonfly and a smaller orange one. A perfect spot for our picnic. 'It's like being abroad,' smiles Caroline.

