

WEST SUSSEX

ARTICLE BY TRAVEL WRITER
TIM SAUNDERS

Watch out... there are elephants in West Sussex... Well, that's what we find when we visit. There's Dumbo at The Dome – a truly magnificent art deco building - and Elmer at The Connaught, both in Worthing.

Dumbo featuring Danny DeVito and Michael Keaton is a film adaptation of the 1941 animation by Walt Disney. Computer animation and special effects have added something special to this already memorable tale gripping us all for the best part despite Colin Farrell's acting. It is an emotional rollercoaster that sees little Dumbo starting out not fitting in and separated from his mother, Jumbo. By the end he finds his feet, becomes the star of the show and is eventually reunited with his mum. They live happily ever after in the jungle. Then there is a puppet adaptation of Elmer the patchwork elephant. A nice celebration for the David McKee creation, who is 30 this year. Similar to Dumbo, little Elmer complains about not fitting in but learns to like his colours and that it doesn't matter how you look - it's what's inside that counts. It's an upbeat cheerful production with plenty of songs about colours - yellow being the happiest one. The puppeteers are certainly busy operating the cast, which includes elephants, zebras, cheeky monkeys, a lion and a giraffe.

We stay in a lodge at Cottesmore Golf and Country Club, about 45 minutes from Worthing and set in 247 acres of rolling countryside. There are only seven lodges and ours has an en-suite bathroom and separate shower room. This does help us all relax, Caroline especially as she makes the most of unwinding in the bath, which is located far enough away from the other rooms that she doesn't hear the drone of the children. The accommodation is clean and comfortable and we all enjoy the open plan layout, which makes a breeze of self-catering. Linen, towels and slippers are provided. Daddy particularly, really appreciates the dishwasher. We enjoy and savour the surroundings. Caroline and I sit on the settee watching the sun go down behind the trees. I am actually able to grab a few minutes each day to read my Wal-lander thriller. The lodge should allow for a pleasant night's rest but little Henry (3) who is not well,



Nymans

cannot sleep the whole night through so our pattern of broken sleep continues. There's no chance for Caroline or I to indulge in a game of golf on the 27-hole course but that's a blessing I should think for the well maintained course.

From the lodge we walk bleary eyed to Duster Pond, gingerly crossing the golf course wary of flying golf balls... There's a gate that leads to a wonderful woodland and the clear blue skies can be seen through the tops of the trees. It's quite a long walk and it would be really enjoyable if only Henry would walk. He eventually relents and allows daddy to give him a piggy back but he's a heavy little toe-rag. When he does finally wish to use his legs we really savour the moment.

Only a few miles down the road is Nymans, a historic, originally Regency property, which was bought by German stockbroker Ludwig Messel in 1890. Picturesque landscape surrounds it. Much of the house was destroyed by fire in 1947. It's a biting cold day but we are determined to walk as far around the grounds as we can. There are plenty of stunning flowers such as Euphorbia Purpurea and Dicentra spectabilis.

Nearby at Leechpool and Owlbeech Woods we discover a playground with swings and climbing frames as well as picnic benches, which makes a good spot for lunch.

At Worthing we are blessed with good weather and enjoy a walk along the seafront and an ice cream, which makes Henry's day.

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<https://worthingtheatres.co.uk>

<http://www.cottesmoregolf.co.uk/>

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