



— Tim Saunders Travel Writer

HAMPSHIRE FUN DAYS OUT

Days out are a good way of spending time together, experiencing something new but also keeping the children occupied, taking some of the strain away from their addled parents.

With this in mind a day trip to the Isle of Wight sounds like just the ticket. It can take close to an hour to get there from Southampton, which does eat into a day trip. We were excited to discover that Hover Travel flies passengers from Southsea to Ryde in just 10 minutes. We've never been on a hovercraft. It's a very similar experience to travelling by ferry but considerably quicker.

When all passengers are seated the craft rises slightly and rotates speeding off towards Ryde on the Isle of Wight. It's a fascinating mode of transport and if you don't look out of the window you don't even realise that you're above the water. Little Henry (3) is mesmerised by the fact that he's actually inside this craft that until now he'd only experienced by watching Grampy Rabbit's Hovercraft on Peppa Pig.

We board the number 9 bus to Wootton Station, serviced by the Isle of Wight Steam Railway, which operates four stations on the island.

We travel to Havenstreet, about 10 minutes away. Sitting in our third class carriage we are transported back in time and imagine what life was like then. Ah, no mobile phones. The puff of the steam, the whistle, the guards in their uniforms... There's such passion that has long since evaporated on the mainline electric trains. This service is run and kept alive mainly by enthusiastic passionate volunteers.

We visit Haven Falconry, a short stroll across from the

station and in the field ahead there is a display. Red kites are flying overhead. We see Scops Owls which are called Transformers because they can shrink to half their size or even double their size if they feel threatened. But it's the Great Grey Owl that captures our attention as he turns his head 360 degrees. A lovely, wise creature, much like Daddy, I insist.

We visit the railway shop and museum where there are train sets. At the Train Story Discovery Centre we learn about the history of the Isle of Wight Steam Railway and how it was started by a group of teenage enthusiasts wishing to save the steam trains. What an achievement.

For more information visit:

www.hovertravel.co.uk

www.iwsteamrailway.co.uk

www.haven-falconry.co.uk

www.theatreroyalwinchester.co.uk

Watch the videos:

www.travelwriter.biz

