



— TIM SAUNDERS & FAMILY VISIT —

Army Air Flying Museum

The war in Ukraine is making all aspects of our lives challenging but that's a small price to pay for freedom. We would all do well to remember that during continuing strike action. As civilians, my family and I are blissfully unaware of the role the military plays in maintaining freedom and during our trip to the Army Air Flying Museum at Stockbridge, Hampshire we learn a thing or two and have some fun at the same time. If only some world leaders learnt from history, the world would be a safer, happier place.

The whole idea of embracing air travel was initially for surveillance, to give the gunners on the ground better information about the location of the enemy. That was the early twentieth century and technological progress was rapid. It wasn't long before those in command were contemplating the benefits of adding firepower. Interestingly, last century gliders, rather than propelled planes, played a major part in transporting troops, tanks and supplies. But it wasn't until the 1950s when the helicopter actually became viable. Before then it was considered unreliable and too expensive.

The Army Air Flying Museum is full of gliders and helicopters, it's like a Beaulieu for aviation buffs. Interesting displays really do help us learn and tug at the heart strings of sentimentality. We love the 1940s house. Each room has been beautifully designed. So homely. The posters remind Caroline of how her late dad and aunt were evacuees. They were only six years old. Neither of us realised there were 80,000 such displaced children. There's even something characterful about the air raid shelter and vegetable patch.

The highlight of the children's day though is discovering that they can sit in a helicopter. Now you can't do that everyday. As it's lunchtime the other visitors are in the onsite café, which allows Harriett (12), Heidi (10) and Henry (7) to make the most of this time. "I'm on a mission to Russia," shouts Henry, dressed in his army camouflage jacket and helmet. He's quite at home in the pilot's seat with all the controls, shouting orders, which can be heard throughout the museum... "Look, I can move the blades," he says, jiggling the joystick and smiling at this achievement. Harriett and Heidi are his passengers and thoroughly enjoy this role play. This is excellent for their development and understanding but also creates a precious memory. It gives Caroline and I chance to stroll around and look at some of the exhibits, unhindered...

Some of the engines that power the helicopters are on display, too. The Apache helicopter is powered by two massive Rolls Royce turbo engines while others make do with a single, smaller engine. Henry is drawn to the make your own engine display and gets all the parts in the right order, which is more than I can do!

Another exhibit is a Top Trumps type game that instantly appeals to Heidi and Henry. This is very well timed because they've only really just discovered Top Trumps and love it. This is another excellent way of learning for them.

For more information visit:
armyflying.com

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