



TIM SAUNDERS & FAMILY VISIT

Houghton Lodge and Gardens, Stockbridge

For parents, going away for just 24 hours can feel more of an ordeal than a holiday. However, on the build up to our night away at Houghton Lodge and Gardens in Stockbridge, the children are very excited, enjoying imagining what it will be like. We haven't been away for sometime and so the whole idea really does appeal to them. We only need to take a change of clothes, dinner and breakfast as all bedding and towels are provided. Leaving home at just past 2pm we arrive under an hour later and stay in two lodges: Cox's Orange Pippin and Barnack Beauty; both named after varieties of apple. We discover that apple trees are truly celebrated at this RHS partner garden with a variety throughout the 14-acre site.

There's a cosy feel to the luxury accommodation that is tastefully decorated with antique furniture and paintings. It's all on one level and user-friendly for all abilities including wheelchair users, who are sure to love the showers complete with underfloor heating. Each lodge caters for two guests. There's a connecting door between each allowing the children a little independence.

This part of Hampshire is a walker's delight and staying at Houghton allows guests to stroll around the grounds and discover some really beautiful countryside. The children discover a beautiful maze, Herbert, the alpaca and some sheep. We see the Oriental garden in progress; you can imagine how delightful this will be when completed. During our spring visit bluebells and daffodils are

everywhere. There are many varieties of these trumpeted delights, which really lift the spirits as they sway in the breeze.

In the morning when I pull up the blinds a couple of blue tits greet me. What a lovely start to the day. This brief time away even inspires my creativity; I write a poem (submitted to a competition so cannot publish yet) and sketch the jar of fresh daffodils on the table.

We leave at 10am, park down a side street and rediscover the quaint market town of Stockbridge. Probably the best known and longest established business in town is The Wykeham Gallery run by Gerald Dodson. Walking around the gallery inspires Henry because on our return home he insists on painting three 5" x 7" canvases of scenes that he has seen over the course of the weekend.

Is 24 hours away worth the effort? Yes, it certainly is.

For more information visit:
www.houghtonlodge.co.uk

Watch videos at www.travelwriter.biz

Having published The Hampshire Collection of poems and short stories Tim is now commencing work on The Staffordshire Collection. Readers are invited to submit their unpublished poetry (upto 30 lines) and short stories (upto 1,000 words) to tsaunderspubs@gmail.com