PUBLIC MARKETING - FULL PAGE EXPRESS ARTICLE ON TW FEBRUARY 2015

Sanctuary on the Solent



TONY BANKS enjoys the delights of the Hampshire coast for the perfect country escape

THE GENTLE clunk of the lanyards against the masts, the waves softly washing up on the beach. The wind rustling gently through the trees. That was all you could hear. Apart from the ducks of course. There are always the ducks at Woods Cottage. Two battalions of them, in fact. They met us in a pincer movement as we arrived in deepest Hampshire on Hayling Island on the Friday night.

Like a well-drilled commando unit they received us as we pulled in off the tree lined driveway and the grounds opened out before us.

And they simply never left us. All weekend as we wandered around the grounds of Woods Cottage there they were in little platoons, seen out of the corner of the eye as they crossed a path heading off on some mysterious secret mission.

But if you are looking for the perfect country escape, Woods Cottage is it. The ducks are just one of the many bonuses.

The 19th-century renovated cottage is set in 50 acres of woodland, and owner Chris Snell and his wife Alice have converted and refurbished it to become not only a snug hideaway right on the Solent but also a wedding venue.

The giant marquee was up in the grounds while we were there, and so far this year the Snells have catered for 20 weddings. The bride usually stays in the cottage with her entourage the night before her big day. A more tranquil setting would be hard to find.

But we were not there to get married. We had done that already. No, Myself and my wife Jane and teenagers Chris and Lorna plus my mother Mary were after a bit of peace and quiet, a bit of downtime as they call it.

Woods Cottage is on the eastern seaboard of Hayling Island. It has even got its own Anglo-Saxon fortress buried deep within those woods, which also have pheasants wandering around, and a little clutch of pigs.

It is perfect for walks and little exploring trips, which those of you with teenagers will know are vital. On the shore are the remains of an old Victorian bottle dump, which yielded a host of interesting little bottles and pieces of china. There are also the remnants of the old brickworks that stood there.

You could spend the weekend here but we wanted to explore the area. Hayling Island is sandwiched between the more fashionable West Wittering and Bracklesham Bay on one side, and Portsmouth with its historic Royal Naval Dockyard and new shopping complex on the other. But don't forget, its wide, flat beach is where the sport of windsurfing first began. Or so the locals claim.

A rainy Saturday morning, though, presented a quandary until we spotted the Roman palace at Fishbourne, just outside Chichester.

Lunch on the Saturday beforehand was taken at the excellent Ship Inn at Langstone, which is the last pub you pass as you go across the bridge on to the island. Right on the water's edge, it is a beautiful setting.

SHORE FEELS GOOD: Langstone near Hayling Island

● GETTING THERE

Premier Cottages (023 9246 1978/ premier-cottages.co.uk) offers seven nights at Woods Cottage, Thurnebury, from £840 (sleeps eight).





SNUG: The tranquil setting of Woods Cottage above, and the classy interior of the 19th-century house, left

EXPRESS traveloffer



Classical Spain

Selected departures from March to November 2015

Andalucia is one of the most beautiful corners of Europe, where the excesses of modern life do not seem to have taken root and travellers are welcomed as honoured guests. Immortalised by the writings of Ernest Hemingway and beloved by Orson Welles, rich with the legacies of the Moors and Romans, its charm and serenity will captivate you.

Price includes
- Return flights to Malaga from London Gatwick, Bristol, East Midlands, Leeds/Bradford, Birmingham, Luton, Manchester, Newcastle, Southampton, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Belfast International or Dublin
- Six nights bed and breakfast at excellent quality three and four-star hotels, staying in Seville, Granada and Mijas
- Experience unspoiled Andalucia
- Guided tour of Seville
- Guided tour of the stunning Alhambra in Granada
- Visit to Cordoba, home to the Mezquita
- Visit to Ronda - one of the most spectacularly situated cities in Spain
- Services of an experienced tour manager

Call 0871 988 8331 to request a brochure

To read more about this offer visit www.expriviera.co.uk

ABTA

GUERNSEY BARGAIN BREAKS from only £149
GREAT CHOICE OF HOTELS
PRICES INCLUDE TRAVEL, HOTEL & B/D
DAILY DEPARTURES ALL YEAR ROUND
BY AIR with FREE car hire
BY FERRY with your own CAR
islandgetaways.co.uk
01983 72 11 11

LAKE GARDA VENICE & VERONA from £599
NO HIDDEN EXTRAS
THE PRICE YOU SEE IS THE PRICE YOU PAY!
FREE luxury guided tours in both VENICE & VERONA
ITALIAN GETAWAYS
CALL 01983 72 11 11

European Grand Prix Weekends
by Coach or Air
Including hotel, tickets & transfers
4 days from £399
0844 846 5876
www.leger-formula1.co.uk
Leger Holidays

EVIDENCE BASE No:
0054