

7 DAYS TRAVEL

A really 'short' break

ADRIAN CAFFERY and family meet more than 2,000 gnomes on a short break in Devon

OUR Devon break wasn't so much a home from home as a gnome from gnome. We had the company of more than 2,000 of the little fellas at the Gnome Reserve in a four-acre garden in the village of West Putford.

The wacky family attraction, established in 1979, is the largest of its kind and has been recognised by the Guinness Book of World Records.

After being encouraged to choose a suitably colourful pointy hat, we ventured into the shady woodland with its babbling brook.

There were gnomes catching flights at the airport, gnomes blasting off into space – and even some cheeky gnomes at the beach.

There was also a "Lottery pool" where you use rods to fish out your six numbers, although we had no luck the following Saturday.

It was a weird but wonderful place to spend an afternoon, made all the more enjoyable by the cream tea in the delightful garden.

We were staying at nearby Bideford Bay, a hilltop Parks Resort holiday village on the north Devon coast, where many of the caravans boast sea views.

The resort got a big thumbs up from Cerys, five, whom we had to drag away from the adventure playground and soft play area.

For older children there are amusements, crazy golf, an all-weather sports court and loads of activities in the indoor pool.

They can try water zorbing and kayaking, or unleash their inner James Bond with aqua jets – nifty underwater propulsion vehicles.

Bideford Bay also has a lovely outdoor pool (open in summer season) with sea views and a water flume that Cerys would have slid down all week. There's classic Saturday morning TV-style entertainment – games, dances and competitions – plus cake decorating, sand art and pottery.

The main attraction is the The Krew Club with fun-loving rabbits Sparky and Sparkle, troublesome dog Naarky and Pipsqueak the mouse.

It was Sparkle's birthday during our visit (would you believe!) and Cerys had a fantastic time at her



■ Left, Cerys on Westward Ho! beach, and, below, the pool at Bideford Bay holiday park.



party.

There are also guest appearances from the likes of Sooty and Postman Pat while for grown-ups there's dancing and stand-up comedians.

From the park, you can follow the coastal path to Clovelly, a village which you have to pay to enter and where all the residents are tenants.

The entire hillside village has been in the same family since 1738 and their aim is to preserve it as it would have been in the mid-19th century.

Its famous cobbled street, known as Up-along and Down-along, is too steep for motor vehicles and so donkeys have always been the only mode of transport.

Free from commercialisation, the pretty whitewashed cottages, shops and pubs that tumble down to the once-bustling harbour are well worth a visit. But with the cobbles and steep gradient, it's no place for high heels or pushchairs.

The author Charles Kingsley lived in Clovelly as child and

wrote Westward Ho! there in 1855.

Following the success of Westward Ho!, which was set in nearby Bideford, some local entrepreneurs seized on an opportunity to develop tourism in the area. They built a hotel on an undeveloped part of the Devon coast, three miles north of Bideford, and named it after the book.

As further development took place, the expanding settlement also acquired the name of Westward Ho! – becoming the only place in Britain to have an exclamation mark.

Today, its Blue Flag beach stretches for over three miles and is another good reason to take the kids to Bideford Bay.



NEED TO KNOW

■ **ADRIAN CAFFERY** stayed in Devon as a guest of Park Resorts. For the latest offers on chalets and caravans at Bideford Bay call 0843 309 2549 or visit park-resorts.com

■ The Gnome Reserve is open March to October (Adults £3.75, children 3-16 £3.25). Call 01409 241435 or click gnomereserve.co.uk

■ Clovelly, left, is open all year except Christmas (Adults £7, children 7-16 £4.40) – see www.clovelly.co.uk