

TRAVEL

staycations on the rise



Staycation hotspots like Blackpool are set for a big year

A RECORD two thirds of us are planning a break at home this summer, according to a new survey.

The annual Holiday Index from budget hotel chain Travelodge claims 2013 could see two thirds (65%) of Britons take summer holidays at home.

The Travelodge Holiday Index also says a third (33%) of Britons like to holiday at home to preserve UK heritage and support British tourism.

It predicts the top three staycation locations for summer breaks this year will be London, Edinburgh and the Lake District.

Travelodge has released 200,000 rooms, across 510 UK locations, priced at between £19 and £21 for family rooms for two adults and two children for stays between July 1 and September 30, if booked online. For seaside breaks, it has more than 25 hotels in locations like Brighton, Blackpool, Scarborough, Bournemouth, Newquay and Torquay.

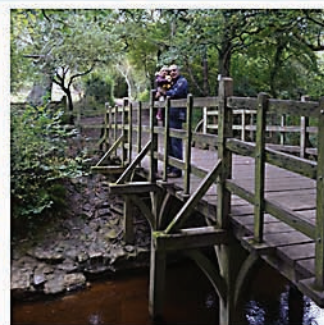
THOSE wanting a short break in Britain before the school holidays could be spoilt for choice.

Leading groups and individual hotels have two and three-night short break deals on offer for the next six weeks and beyond.

At Jurys Inn (www.jurysinn.com) the summer sale offers 20% off on stays between July 19 and September 8.

But the big saving is that Jury's Inn links with local attractions, to provide some cheap days out.

One of the bedrooms at Little Boy Court Oast, Kent; a monster at Leeds Castle; Poohsticks Bridge and the Caffery's oust viewed from the exterior



Special brew

The Garden of England quenches **ADRIAN CAFFERY'S** thirst for a family holiday home with a difference

AFTER a tiring day running around after my two-year-old I felt justified in enjoying a couple of beers.

Not only were the drinks justified, but they were highly appropriate because our Kent holiday home for the week was a converted oast house.

A 19th century invention, oasts were designed for drying hops as part of the brewing process.

Our house, called Little Boy Court Oast, was especially delightful because of its rural setting.

The well-equipped, oak-floored kitchen/diner was in the original roundel, as was the master bedroom, with its high ceiling up towards the cowl.

A sympathetic extension housed the second bedroom, bathroom and sitting room.

We were two miles from the small town of Headcorn and well-placed to enjoy some of Kent's many tourist attractions.

Chief among them was Leeds Castle, the scene of my energy-sapping day with our daughter.

She loved the toddlers' play area but her eyes almost popped out of her head when she spotted the impressive adventure playground, a scale model of the castle.

Just as much fun was the spiralling maze of 2,400 yew trees. Once you've reached the centre,

you escape through an underworld grotto complete with a giant ogre.

The stunning, moated castle is mostly 19th century but dates back to Norman times and was the private property of six English queens, including Henry VIII's first wife, Catherine of Aragon.

We enjoyed another afternoon at the National Trust's Sissinghurst Castle and Gardens, a 20th century creation set in the remains of a large Elizabethan house and tower.

Lunch was taken en route at the atmospheric Three Chimneys in Biddenden, a timbered Elizabethan inn with roaring open fire that was named Best Dining Pub in Kent in 2010.

Too soon it was time to leave Kent but the South-East still had one more magical experience up its sleeve for our Cerys.

Venturing into neighbouring Sussex, we stopped off at the inspiration for Hundred Acre Wood, home to AA Milne's Pooh Bear, Tigger, Piglet, Eeyore and friends.

Ashdown Forest was the real-life setting for AA Milne's famous tales.

There's even Pooh Sticks Bridge but be warned that if you want to play (the rules are nailed to the side) you'll have to take your own twigs.

The game is so popular that nearby trees are constantly stripped of their branches – and that's a lot of "bother", as Pooh might say.

Sissinghurst Castle, and children's favourite Winnie the Pooh, right

TIP OF THE WEEK

KEEP a couple of plastic bags in a suitcase compartment. They're handy for ensuring dirty shoes and smelly socks don't contaminate the rest of your luggage.



TRAVEL FILE

ADRIAN CAFFERY stayed at the four-star VisitEngland graded Little Boy Court Oast courtesy of Freedom Holiday Homes.

A week's stay costs from £399 in winter to £599 in peak summer. Short breaks are available from £299. Call 01580 720770 or click freedomholidayhomes.co.uk

Admission to Leeds Castle is £21 adults, £18.50 concessions and £13.50 children, aged 4-15, and is valid all year round for repeat visits. See www.leeds-castle.com

Winnie the Pooh and friends were based on AA Milne's son's toys