



Cerys Caffery and Owen Caffery admire the waterfall from inside the artists' Grotto at Rydal Hall



**The Welsh Marches Express**  
Steam to Cardiff  
Sunday 27th November 2016

Departs Birmingham Int. 07:30, Birmingham New St. 07:55, Barnt Green 08:15, Droitwich Spa 08:25 (times approx.)  
Travel by steam train to Cardiff. Our vintage train will be hauled by historic loco No. 70013 Oliver Cromwell for a journey to remember through Worcestershire and the Malvern Hills and then along the Welsh Marches line. A stop in Cardiff will provide chance to explore the Capital of Wales with its shops, castle and restaurants plus Cardiff Bay, with the Dr Who exhibition, just a short bus ride away.

**Our price includes:**  
• **Standard £109pp/£332 family** – a reserved seat usually at a table for four  
• **First £159pp/£486 family** – morning coffee & Danish pastry, afternoon tea – a selection of sandwiches, scones, jam and cream  
• **Premier £249pp/£760 family** – full English breakfast and a four course dinner silver served at your seat.

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14a Tuesday Market Place, King's Lynn, Norfolk, PE30 1TN

**ADRIAN CAFFERY** explores Beatrix Potter's legacy on an action-packed short break in the Lake District

WANT the fun of a trampoline and a high ropes course without the fear of bouncing or falling to the ground?

The answer to your prayers lies at a UK first attraction in the Lake District.

Treetop Nets, near Windermere, is a mix of giant trampolines, bridges, walkways, slides and tunnels all made from ropes and nets traditionally used in trawling.

And it's suspended between trees, nine metres up.

The course was designed and built by Frenchman Cedric Chauvaud, a renowned sailor and rope expert who has helped researchers gain access to the highest canopies of the Amazon rainforest.

Having already created several treetop playgrounds in France, he brought a team of seven former sailors and fishermen to the Lake District to hand-sew the nets.

There's no need for a harness because you are completely surrounded by a three metre high wall of netting. So, while I bounced around like Tigger, my young daughter was a very happy Roo.

If this sounds a little tame for adrenaline junkies, they can get their fix at Treetop Trek, an adjacent Go Ape!-style high-ropes course with a series of rope bridges, daredevil leaps and zip wires.

Both Treetop attractions are at Brockhole, the Lake District Visitor Centre, where you can take your pick from boat trips, pony rides, trails, biking, archery, mini golf, an adventure playground or simply splashing around on the edge of Lake Windermere.

Our weekend in the Lakes got off to a frustrating start when delays on the M6 meant we didn't arrive at our holiday home, booked with The Good Life Cottage Company, until after night-fall.

But those pesky jams turned out to be a blessing in disguise because when we drew back the bedroom curtains in the morning we had a glorious surprise.

Holly Tree Cottage, in the village of Chapel Stile, a few miles north-west of Ambleside, has superb views across a mountain

valley towards Lingmoor and The Langdale Pikes.

We had a similar kind of surprise at nearby Rydal Hall, a grand house dating back to 16th century with woodlands and gardens which are free for the public to explore.

Walking through the gardens, alongside a stream, we found our way blocked by a simple little stone-built house which, unbeknown to us, held a magical secret.

With trepidation, we opened the door, stepped inside, and were gob-smacked by how a large window on the far wall so perfectly framed a waterfall and plunge pool.

The Grade II-listed summer-house, called the Grotto, was built in 1668 to allow artists to paint in comfort, and became famous during the Picturesque movement (1780s to 1830s).

William Wordsworth, who lived at nearby Rydal Mount, mentioned it in verse and his friend described how he took "much pleasure in exhibiting this beautiful retreat".

Back at Holly Tree Cottage, the visitor's book revealed that a previous sale of the house was handled by the solicitor William Heelis, the husband of author Beatrix Potter.

There's no escaping Beatrix's lasting legacy in this part of the Lakes, especially this year with many events planned to commemorate the 150th anniversary of her birth.

With Peter Rabbit-loving kids aged five and two, we spent a day learning all about the children's author, who found inspiration in the stunning scenery.

First stop was the World of Beatrix Potter, in Bowness upon Windermere, which brilliantly recreates the sights, sounds and even smells of her celebrated characters.

Our kids were wild with excitement as they discovered Jemima Puddle-duck's woodland glade, Mr Tod's underground home and Mrs Tiggywinkle's Kitchen.

In the Peter Rabbit Garden is a bronze statue of three children with Jemima which was unveiled



Rope trick!

by Bridget Jones actress Renée Zellweger, who played Beatrix in a 2006 film.

Visitors can also take a virtual walk of Beatrix's beloved Cumbrian countryside, with 360-degree computer projections and narrations bringing each inspirational scene to life.

From the World of Beatrix Potter it was a short car ferry journey to the author's home, Hill Top Farm, in Sawrey, which she bequeathed to the National Trust.

As Beatrix requested, the 17th century house has remained untouched since she died in 1943, so you can easily imagine her working away at the writing desk.

Hill Top helped inspire Beatrix and copies of her books have been placed around the house, bookmarked at pages where a room, or items in the room, feature in the story.

Just down the road in Hawks-

head is the Beatrix Potter Gallery where originals of her watercolour illustrations are on display in a building that was once her husband's office.

And five minutes from there is the mock medieval Wray Castle, on the shores of Lake Windermere, where Beatrix stayed on her first trip to the Lakes.

Rather than the paintings, furniture and antiques you might expect to find in a National Trust property, the tired-looking interior is now a playground for little explorers.

They can enter the Peter Rabbit Adventure rooms or they can dress up as princes and princesses and build a castle out of foam bricks.

After such a busy day on the trail of Beatrix Potter we were left panting more than her famous bunny after he's been chased by Mr McGregor!



handy for the Lake District's occasional rainy days. There is private parking for one car directly outside the door and an outdoor seating area to enjoy the views across the

valley over a meal or a coffee. It's very centrally located for the Lake District's many attractions. Other must-sees include Dove Cottage & Wordsworth Museum (4.4

miles) and Coniston Gondola (7.3 miles).

■ FOR more information visit [www.thegoodlifecottageco.co.uk](http://www.thegoodlifecottageco.co.uk) or call 015394 37417.



Cerys Caffery at Treetop Nets, Brockhole, and, below, at the World of Beatrix Potter in in Bowness upon Windermere



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