

# GETAWAY

**T**HE thought of taking the family on a winter break in a caravan had always left me cold.

I had visions of us all cuddling together in one bed to keep warm while the caravan wobbled in the wind like a bowl full of jelly.

But mobile homes have come a long way in recent times, as we discovered during February half-term at Ruda Park, a Parkdean resort in north Devon.

New for 2019, our three-bedroom Dartmouth caravan was a real home from home, thankfully, with double glazing and central heating throughout.

Extra-wide and long, the living area had a large, curved sofa facing an electric fire with TV above, while the kitchen was spacious and well-equipped.

To our surprise, the super comfy beds and pillows were of the standard you find in leading hotels, and ensured we all slept well, even on a windy night.

There were also two showers (with often overlooked shelves) and so much storage space we could have stayed for four weeks rather than just four days.

As it turned out, the weather was incredibly mild during our break – so much so we were even able to make use of the caravan's veranda.

The record-breaking temperatures also meant we could enjoy a full day on Croyde's family-friendly beach, just a few minutes' walk from Ruda Park.

There are rock pools and sand dunes to explore, although you have to be careful in the dunes because they saw action during the Second World War.

They were used as a gunnery emplacement by US soldiers training for their assault on the Normandy beaches – and sandbags and barbed wire are still buried there.

The beach serves up some of the best surf in the South West but it wasn't so unseasonably warm that we were tempted to sign up for a class at Ruda's on-site Surfing School.

The only way we were going to get wet was at Ruda's indoor fun pool, and we were relieved to find the water was the warmest we'd ever experienced on a caravan holiday.

It's great for all ages, with our four-year-old loving the mini-slides while our eight-year-old got carried away on the rapids and the crazy fast 230ft chute (once was enough for me).

There are two restaurants, including a quiet Italian where the handmade pizzas we ordered were so large and so tasty that we had the leftovers boxed up for our suppers.

Ruda Park also has a fish and chip shop and a convenience store.



Croyde Bay, Devon

A Dartmouth Caravan at Ruda Park

# CARAVAN OF LOVE

**ADRIAN CAFFERY** braves a winter break at a holiday park... and is very glad he did

Further dining options can be found a 10-minute walk away in picture-postcard Croyde village, including pub lunches, cream teas and a vast array of ice creams.

Back at Ruda Park, other facilities include a couple of great obstacle courses, a soft play area, a fishing pond, a multi-sports court and kids' clubs for all ages.

Our two made some shell jewellery at one of the Outdoor 'n' Explore classes, which also teach youngsters shelter-building and fire-lighting techniques.

After tea each night we joined Sid the seagull, Lizzie the lizard, Naarky the aardvark and the excellent Starland Krew entertainers for some games and dancing.

Ruda Park guests can benefit from discounts to some local attractions and we spent the day at The Big Sheep, 40 minutes away near Bideford.

There was a shearing demonstration and a fun insight into the former sheep farm's many weird and wonderful breeds from around the world, which children were able to feed.

One of the advantages of visiting during February is that you might be lucky enough to see a lamb being born – there were several new arrivals during our visit.

A highlight was placing bets on the Sheep Grand National then cheering on Red Ram, Sheargar, Alderknitty etc as their little woolly jockeys raced them over a hurdles course.

But it's not all about sheep. You can also learn how to milk a cow, while during the summer season a Border Collie rounds up Indian running ducks and puts them through an obstacle course.

It's not all about animals either. Our kids enjoyed a train ride, a tractor ride, trampolines, jumping pillows, go-karts, a thrilling chair swing ride and Devon's largest soft play area, Ewetopia.

In summer season there's also a splash zone, pedalos, pony rides and the Rampage roller coaster (yes, they do love a pun at The Big Sheep!).

Other nearby attractions include Lundy Island – famous for its birds and spectacular diving – Combe Martin Wildlife and Dinosaur Park and Saunton Sands.



The Big Sheep



The pool at Ruda Park



Adrian's children enjoying the mild February weather

## NEED TO KNOW

■ **ADRIAN CAFFERY** and family were guests of Parkdean Resorts' Ruda Park in Croyde Bay, Devon.

■ Three nights arriving Friday, May 17, costs £209 (saving £20), staying in an Instow caravan, which sleeps up to eight. Three nights from Friday July 19 is £359 (saving £40), staying in a Torrington caravan, which sleeps up to six. There are also lodges, beach-side apartments and camping and glamping options.

■ Visit [parkdeanresorts.co.uk](http://parkdeanresorts.co.uk) or call 0330 123 4850.