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travel



Ladies of the Lakes

MARSHALL LORE: Can three generations of the same family survive an action-packed weekend in Cumbria? Julie Marshall finds out.

THE Lake District, favourite haunt of mountain climbers, backpackers and watersports enthusiasts, is also a wonderful place for a family holiday – even if

you have no interest in outdoor pursuits.

There are stately homes to visit, lakes to cruise on and delightful restaurants and cosy little pubs in picture postcard towns and villages to be wined and dined in.

I recently spent a weekend near Kendal with five members of my family – daughter, sister, niece, mother and aunt – in a bid to prove that three generations of women could co-exist for a few days and enjoy the splendour of the Lakes.

I needn't have worried; from the moment we crammed ourselves and our bags into a too-small vehicle the stage was set for a weekend we would all enjoy immensely. It helped that we were based at the Hynning estate, a delightful complex of seven luxury cottages a few miles out of Grayrigg, right on the doorstep of both the Yorkshire Dales National Park and the Lake District.

Owned by husband and wife team Richard and Jan Hinchcliffe, who live on-site, the accommodation is among



MONKEY BUSINESS: For those with a head for heights, Go Ape in nearby Grizedale Forest is well worth exploring.

The zip wires are strung in tandem so you can race your companion.

some of the best I've come across. Absolutely everything has been thought of: kitchens with juicers, microwaves and dishwashers; an open-plan lounge with a log-burning stove, and spacious bedrooms with large comfortable beds. And what a bathroom!

There's a licensed bar on site and, providing you book in advance, meals can be provided. The first night we cooked and ate a meal together and then sat around the large kitchen table – glasses of wine in hand – and caught up with each other's lives. The two younger girls (aged 20 and 21) don't get to spend as much time as they'd like with their grandmother and great-aunt and so this was a perfect opportunity to do just that.

We'd put together a packed itinerary and were determined to cram as much into the following three days as was possible. Saturday morning found us huddled in our waterproof jackets, brollies hoisted to stave off the relentless rain as we watched the shores of Windermere disappear into the mist from our vantage point on top of one of the boats operated by Windermere Lake Cruises.

The company has 16 boats, which between them make some 1.25 million passenger journeys each year, and



AWAY FROM IT ALL: Main picture left, early-morning mist on Windermere; above, the Hynning estate is a delightful complex of seven luxury cottages; right, the open-plan ground floor; left, members of the Marshall family toasting their weekend break.



WHO TO CONTACT

- Accommodation: www.thehynningestate.com
- Cruise: www.windermere-lakecruises.co.uk
- Arts and Craft House: www.blackwell.org.uk
- Sizergh: www.nationaltrust.org.uk/sizergh
- Go Ape: <http://goape.co.uk/days-out/grizedale>
- Help: To organise your holiday visit www.golakes.co.uk.

though, of course, it would have been nice to bask in glorious sunshine, the damp conditions did nothing to dampen our high spirits.

We lunched at the Laura Ashley-themed Ashley Belsfield Hotel in Bowness-on-Windermere, but, although the surroundings were pleasant enough, the food was nothing special and service was poor.

After lunch we ventured out once more and found, tucked away down a side road in Bowness, Blackwell, a fine example of an Arts and Craft house, definitely deserving of the title of hidden gem. It was built at the turn of the 20th century as a holiday home for Sir Edward Holt, a wealthy Manchester brewer, and has survived with almost all its original decorative features intact. There are no roped off areas and you can enjoy the house as it was intended and even curl up in the window seats with a book to soak up the atmosphere.

Sunday was a day of activity – at least

for four of us – as we ventured into nearby Grizedale Forest for a day of swinging through the trees at Go Ape.

We left the two older members of the party to stroll in the forest; the girls took themselves off to the Tree Top Adventure and my sister and I went off in a Land Rover to the very top of the forest so we could make our way back down on a series of zip wires. It was enormous fun, the wires are strung in tandem so you can race your companion to the finish line. It's also suitable for all ages.

Another three-generation family were all having a go on the zip wires. Ralph Spours, a 74-year-old estate agent from nearby Ulverston, was there with his daughter and son-in-law and two grandchildren. The family had bought him the day out as a birthday present.

There was one other place we wanted to visit. On the way back to Yorkshire on Monday morning we just had time to call into Sizergh Castle, a magnificent medieval house managed by the National Trust. One of the highlights is the Inlaid Chamber where the panelling is inlaid with floral and geometric patterns. From 1890 to 1999 the room's contents were displayed at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London but are now back where they belong under a long-term loan.

The gardens are impressive; there's a lake and a kitchen garden as well as an award-winning rock garden. Much to our delight we spotted a rare slipper orchid blooming incongruously by the side of a bench – a fitting end to a magical weekend and one which I unreservedly recommend – no matter how old you are.



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