

## Travel: Skelwith Fold Caravan Park



Skelwith Fold Caravan Park in Ambleside, Cumbria.

### David Lewis

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**THERE'S nothing quite like the feeling when you complete a four-hour journey to your holiday destination with two kids under five in the back and realise you might just have forgotten something essential to the success of your trip.**

Every car queueing to get into Skelwith Fold Caravan Park in Ambleside, Cumbria, had a mobile home attached to the rear – except ours.

So it was with trepidation that I entered the reception, fearing the horrible prospect of a frosty return trip for the Lewis family up the M6.

Within minutes, our worries vanished to be replaced by delight as we looked around what would be our home for the next four days.

The two-bedroomed luxury static caravan was bigger than our first flat. The main room featured a double bed, a wall-mounted flatscreen TV and en-suite toilet/shower room.

There was another toilet with shower and the second bedroom featured two single-beds.

The kitchen looked like something from a showhome, while the living room boasted a three-piece suite and another flatscreen, wall-mounted telly complete with in-built DVD player – which proved essential for evening entertainment.

On the northern edge of the sprawling Lake Windermere, Skelwith Fold Caravan Park is set in 130 acres of peaceful, unspoiled and well-groomed surroundings.

The woodland's main attraction is its wildlife inhabitants, including red deer, badgers and dozens of different species of birds.

Explorers can check out all it has to offer by taking advantage of a network of paths.

So inspirational is its scenery that's its owners recently had to publicly deny claims that the grounds help couples conceive.

Internet rumours suggested ten foot-high carved tree trunks encircling a taller wooden henge was in fact a fertility symbol. Not so, said director Henry Wild, insisting it's for "aesthetic enjoyment only". Indeed.

While most visitors do need to bring their accommodation with them, the park offers a number of rentable 'Hideaways' for those who prefer to travel light.

Measuring 14ft by 10ft, the two-person pods feature a luxury double bed, shower and toilet, kitchen with microwave, oven and fridge, TV and lounge space.

For something more permanent, holiday homes are available for purchase, coming with price tags of between £25,000 and £80,000.

On site are 300 privately owned homes and another 150 pitches from just £20.50 a night for touring visitors.

Skelwith Fold is not without its celebrity endorsements – having being honoured with the David Bellamy Conservation Award in each of the last 15 years and being congratulated by Prince Charles for its successful attempt to reintroduce a colony of red squirrels.

During our three-night stay, we became regular customers at the well-stocked, on-site shop, an array of local ales proving popular. The kids, meanwhile, were kept busy in the swing park.

We spent much of our time exploring picturesque Ambleside and Windermere.

The former is a stunning village, offering cafes, shops and bars galore, while for something requiring a bit more get up and go, a sprawling sports ground offers tennis, bowls and crazy golf.

It was there on the first morning of our holiday that we discovered the skies above the Lake District are well used for RAF training.

We couldn't help but cower the first time a jet came screaming just a few hundred feet over our heads and watched with slack jaws as it flipped to one side and spun through the hills.

Very quickly we got used to the interruption and came to view it as a form of entertainment rather than something to complain about.

Our attitude, however, wasn't shared by one middle-aged woman in Windermere, who let rip a high-pitched yelp before bursting into tears as a jet near skimmed the lake.

We spent a couple of days there – one in glorious sunshine, the other as it seemed the entire contents of the lake poured from the skies.

We strolled leisurely on the first day, taking in the stunning sights and sounds. The size of the lake made it feel like a seaside holiday – and with no shortage of ice cream parlours along the main street, we were only too happy to indulge.

Just a short walk from there, we found a funfair, which was fully embraced by our boundlessly energetic four-year-old.

On our final full day, black clouds gathered ominously above us as we ate breakfast and soon fulfilled their promise.

Without hesitation, we decided to visit the World of Beatrix Potter in Bowness-on-Windermere – a treasure trove of memorabilia related to the legendary writer who gave a voice to dozens of animals.

We took the lengthy queues as a heartening sign that it was worth waiting for, and weren't disappointed.

This wasn't our first stay at a caravan park, but we've never felt the inclination to return to some of previous destinations.

When the time came to face that journey back up the M6, we knew we were bidding Skelwith Fold farewell rather than goodbye.

Skelwith Fold Caravan Park, Ambleside, Cumbria, 015394- 3227, [www.skelwith.com](http://www.skelwith.com)

AWARDS: Cumbria Park of the Year 2010 (Cumbria Tourism Awards); 2014 Five-star tourist board quality grading; 2014 David Bellamy Conservation Award (Gold)

PITCHES: Touring caravans and motorhomes from £20.50 per night

TO RENT: Luxury two-person "Hideaway" pods from £xx for three nights

TO BUY: Luxury caravan holiday homes to own from £25,000 to £80,000

CAPACITY: The park has 300 privately owned holiday homes, and 150 touring pitches

OPEN: March to November (inclusive)