

High five

Holiday parks have come a long way, finds Lee Hayhurst and his family at Haven's Perran Sands in Cornwall



I've got great memories of childhood holidays, staying in a static caravan park in Snowdonia, but it's not the accommodation that I recall most readily.

Yes, there was the novelty of staying in a miniature version of a house, until the weather would trap us indoors with only a tiny black-and-white telly and terrible reception to keep us distracted. But it was the great outdoors – crab-fishing off a pebble beach on Anglesey, and being away from home with friends – that I remember most fondly.

Fast-forward more years than

I'm prepared to admit and, now with three kids of my own, I found myself reminiscing about those caravan holidays as we set off for a stay at Haven's Perran Sands in north Cornwall.

► CLEAN LIVING

We were invited to try the Beach House, a new concept in caravan park accommodation that Haven has pioneered with just two units on this large site. What we found was the sort of holiday accommodation you dream about before you turn the key, full of anticipation about what's inside. We could have been the

stars of a certain global OTA's ad campaign: Booking Yeah, to pinch a phrase.

This was no souped-up caravan disguised with mock pine-cladding or wooden decking. We found ourselves in a bright, airy and extremely well-equipped space, with comfortable, modern facilities, easily big enough to accommodate our group of five with a single bed to spare. If we had brought along our two cats, we could just about swing both of them, at the same time.

Design-wise, it was as if someone had taken a kids' Ikea showroom, scaled it up

to accommodate the whole family, and plonked it on the north Cornish coast. The trendy, colourful decor was complemented by an array of gadgets and modern conveniences that the average caravanner could only dream of.

There was a large flatscreen TV in the living area and TVs in the bedrooms including, to the delight of our two boys, one within each of the bunk beds. Plus there was free Wi-Fi, an espresso coffee machine, dishwasher and retro fridge-freezer in baby blue to match the kettle.

Once we'd taken all this in, ➔

RIGHT:
Beach House,
Perran Sands

FAR RIGHT:
The Eden
Project

BELOW:
Lost Gardens
of Heligan



➔ next came the free-standing refractor telescope, outdoor hot tub and colour-changing mood lighting. With so many gadgets to play with, the only worry was how to convince the kids to go out and explore.

▶ GOLDEN SANDS

Perran Sands has extensive facilities at the heart of the park, including a large indoor and outdoor swimming pool with waterslide, a show lounge and amusement arcade.

The walk down to Perranporth beach is along a footpath that winds through windswept dunes and down steep limestone cliffs. At the bottom there's a wide, golden-sand beach, the sort you can imagine being packed at the height of summer with sun-seekers, surfers and sandcastles.

The short walk to Perranporth over the nearby headland is well worth the moderate effort required. It's not the



You can imagine the beach being packed in summer with sun-seekers, surfers and sandcastles

prettiest of seaside towns, but is well-served with shops, pubs and cafes, so a great place for a Cornish cream tea.

Perran Sands is also ideally placed for visiting some of Cornwall's most-popular tourist attractions. Surfing haven Newquay is a short drive east along the coast, and Cornwall's only city Truro is just inland.

We opted for the Eden Project and the place that inspired it, the Lost Gardens of Heligan. The former, just outside St Austell on the south coast, is a truly world-class attraction.

Around 45 minutes' drive from Perran Sands, the reclaimed kaolinite pit turned eco-park, which opened in 2001, is genuinely jaw-dropping. In the larger of its two huge biomes there is an indoor rainforest, complete with sticky, humid environment. A canopy walkway gives visitors a bird's-eye view of the forest and waterfall, while a yet-to-be-built extension will eventually allow visitors to walk behind the waterfall, traverse a wobbly rope bridge and experience a tropical rainstorm.

There were Halloween school-holiday activities there and at the nearby Lost Gardens of Heligan, a sort of outdoor Eden Project 10 miles away. Combined tickets for the two attractions offer 10% off, so a family ticket costs £89.

Doubling up with both attractions is not only cost-effective but helped maintain the children's interest levels, which were sagging by the end of the day. So we were more than happy to make our way back to the Beach House for a fish-and-chip supper and to check out a live cover band back at Perran Sands. **TW**

Kids' corner



Millie Hayhurst, 10, gives her verdict on Perran Sands

When we stepped into our posh beach house, we couldn't wait to start exploring.

I was very excited with my room, and the whole place was much bigger than I expected with lots of space to play hide and seek. My two brothers had their own room with bunk beds and even a TV at the end of each bed!

We had an amazing view of the sea and a telescope for star-gazing, and outside there was a hot tub but the weather wasn't warm enough to use it. The park's swimming pool was a short walk away through sand dunes. It had a massive slide which was great fun, and there was a sandy beach nearby where we played Frisbee.

One night we went to the bar and watched a very good band which played a lot of songs we knew, including some by my mummy's favourite, Take That. It was my first holiday in a Haven caravan park and I would love to go back with my friends.

**SAMPLE
PRODUCT**

A three-night stay in a three-bedroom Beach House at Perran Sands starts at £704 per family, based on a September 30 stay.
bourneleisure
sales.co.uk

