

# Make a splash

**Stephanie Krahn** puts the new Butlin's Bognor Regis pool development through its paces, with help from her four-year-old son

**f**ast or slow?, asked the lifeguards, as we waited tentatively at the top of the Family Raft Ride, an enclosed flume that sends riders speeding along in family-sized inflatable rings big enough to fit Mummy, Daddy and our four-year-old son, Noah, with room to spare.

"Fast," said Noah and Daddy – I was outvoted – so the lifeguards gave us a spin and sent us on our way. We screamed as we sped past flashing lights, were plunged into darkness, snaked our way up the sides of the slide at every twist and turn, and only stopped when we were launched out at the bottom. The look of utter joy on Noah's face was priceless.

That look just about summed up our visit to the new £40 million Splash pool complex at Butlin's Bognor Regis, which officially opened at the start of

this month. It's hardly surprising Noah was so excited about having a go on some of the pool's new rides and slides; after missing out on a few of the bigger rides on our last visit, he beamed when he realised he had reached the height requirements (90cm or one metre) for all but one this time.

We flew down the Stick of Rock slide over and over – I barely had time to catch my breath at the bottom before he'd say: "I want to go again" – and only managed to tear ourselves away when we realised the wave machine was about to start and raced over to the 'beach' area.

Then there were the Seaside Gardens rapids, another hit, themed with colourful umbrellas, flags and festoon lighting. The ride snakes around a course of nearly 100 metres, mainly outdoors, with slides ➤





## fast fact

Butlin's pool complex has 20 lifeguards on duty at all times

### CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE:

Butlin's invested £40 million in Splash; Stephanie and Noah with Billy Bear; Paddington at the Seaside is a new show

PICTURES: Butlin's/PA/Ciaran McCrickard



and jets of water along the way. Riders can choose from The Scenic Route or The Short Cut – "The Scenic Route, Mummy!" shouted Noah – and we whizzed around the bends and down slides, before splashing into a pool of bubbling water.

### STAR OF THE SEASIDE

Billy Butlin's daughter Jacquie, who was there for the opening of the pool, says her father was "not only a legend, but an innovator". She adds: "He was the first person to bring dodgems to the UK and the first to open holiday resorts. I think my father would be very proud of what Butlin's has accomplished.

The resort has kept this ethos in mind and has revealed the world's first helter-skelter water ride. The red and white tower – the showpiece of the pool, at 24ft tall – was another of Noah's favourites.

When not experiencing the thrills of the rides we explored the shallow Pavilion Playground and slides, designed for under-fives and ideal for building water confidence, and the Seaside Playground, which has boats, squirting flowers, tipping buckets and Little Tikes ships, added for the Just for Tots weekend. Both are heated to a tropical 30C.

The Lido is the deepest pool, and is perfect for learning to swim. In keeping with the seaside theme, there are four bright beach huts with loungers where families can sit and relax as they keep watch on their youngsters splashing around in the shallow fenced-off area in front.



## SHORELINE HOTEL Butlin's, Bognor Regis

A fun hotel with a nautical theme – complete with octopus sofa and a stool with eight legs – rooms are perfect for babies and toddlers because the furniture has rounded edges to avoid any mishaps.

Behind pirate-themed curtains you'll find bunk beds, but be sure to hire a bed guard for the bottom bunk, as we found a tired toddler sleeping on the floor one night. The bunks have drawers for all-important toys or toddler paraphernalia, plus there's a TV and mesmerising coloured light sure to help any child drift off.

Useful touches include child-height coat hooks, a stool to reach the sink, kids' toilet seats within the main seat and an activity wall to keep little ones occupied.

The hotel is just steps away from the restaurants, play areas, pool, Skyline Pavilion and funfair, so you couldn't be better located.

**BOOK IT:** A three-night stay at Butlin's Bognor Regis Resort, based on two adults and two children sharing a room in the Shoreline Hotel, starts at £384 based on a June 21 arrival.  
bourneleisuresales.co.uk

REVIEWED BY Stephanie Krahn

### CHANGING ROOMS

Butlin's has taken the hassle out of family swimming thanks to research in partnership with parenting website Mumsnet. The huge shower area – complete with a sign saying 'Rub a dub dub' – has 30 showers, so even at peak times we didn't have to wait.

Changing rooms are colour coded by size from two people to four-plus, with lockers in corresponding colours offering ample room for bags. There is also underfloor heating so the floors dry quicker, as well as swimwear dryers.

A total of 110 changing rooms cater for the 956-capacity pool complex, and there are

four fully accessible disabled changing rooms with showers, including one with a hoist. And with a baby-changing table and child safety seat in every family cubicle, there's no need to worry about racing another parent to the one with baby-friendly facilities.

Resort director Jeremy Pardey says: "We created changing rooms that fit everybody's needs. They're not wet and damp, and the heated floor means you don't have to stand on your towel while you're getting changed."

### WHAT'S ON STAGE

The pool is not the only addition, as Butlin's offers a packed entertainment programme. New this year are Paddington at the Seaside and Milkshake! Live, featuring kids' favourites Fireman Sam, Noddy and Digby Dragon.

Guests get tickets for both shows at check-in, along with a What's On guide – I had our week planned before we'd finished dinner! We fitted in a Tots Fun Football session, a visit to the famous fairground, huge soft-play area, World of Wonder (with a hall of mirrors) and indoor tots' fairground. We also spent lots of time in the Discover Animals room in the main pavilion, where Noah used all the effort he could muster to see if he was as strong as an ant, was fascinated by the world's biggest arachnid (a bird-eating tarantula – Mummy was not so keen) and held a corn snake.

The main stage in the Skyline Pavilion also featured the Teletubbies, Mr Men and Little Miss, Butlin's mascots Billy and Bonnie, the Skyline Gang, a tots' disco and silent cinema. For children who enjoy getting creative, there are drop-in arts and crafts sessions, Play-Doh sessions and pottery painting (£8).

There's never a dull moment on a Just for Tots break. The proof? As we left to go home, Noah simply said: "I want to go again." **TV**



## DINEAROUND

Butlin's launched a DineAround package this year that includes breakfast in your hotel, then lunch or dinner in any of the resort restaurants.

We mainly dined in the hotel restaurant because the choice, variety and quality of food was excellent, and the child-height buffet, friendly staff and disposable bibs on every table make life easier – but we also visited The Diner (mainly for the milkshakes!) and Traditional Fish & Chips restaurant. Other options are The Pub & Kitchen, Papa John's (which also delivers to the hotel) and The Beachcomber Inn.

**BOOK IT:** DineAround costs £29.95 per day for adults (aged 15-plus), £14.95 for children (six to 14) and £9.50 for toddlers (two to five); under-tuos are free.



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