

# Enjoy a taste of luxury in stunning tree houses

Sprawling out in deep woodland, fit with mod-cons and luxury touches, four palatial tree houses have been recently unveiled by a Suffolk holiday park. Tourism correspondent **LAUREN COPE** put one through its paces

It's a balmy Friday evening when, as the working week slips away, we arrive outside the lofty perch we will briefly call home.

It certainly makes a striking first impression.

Perched atop stilts, sprawling across Elveden Forest's woodland, Center Parcs' new tree houses look spectacular (we've forgotten we were ever at work. Or what work is).

We head in, the winding wooden gangway a rustic red carpet, to explore the holiday park's latest des res, which boasts four en-suite bedrooms, stretching balconies, unspoilt forest views, private hot tub, physiotherm infrared room (a sauna to me and you) and a games room.

Inside, it's time to play posh hotel bingo - swanky coffee machine? Check. Robe and slippers? Check. Automatic lights? Check. Games consoles? Check.

While Center Parcs has invested millions in its lodges since 2007, a private concierge and parking outside the front door suggest the exclusive tree houses - there are only four on site - are designed to catch the eye of a particularly discerning customer.

After all, with prices starting at £2,499 for a mid-week break, even £300 per person for three nights is steep.

From state of the art kitchen tools and a Blu-ray player to family favourite board games and glossy magazines, if you want it, it's probably there.

It is tempting to cocoon ourselves in robes and bask in the opulence until Monday, but with just two full days ahead our clan vow to squeeze what we can from the break - a well-meaning plan which is quickly abandoned when exploration discovers the fully-stocked fridges (soft drinks for kids, beers and wine for their adults).

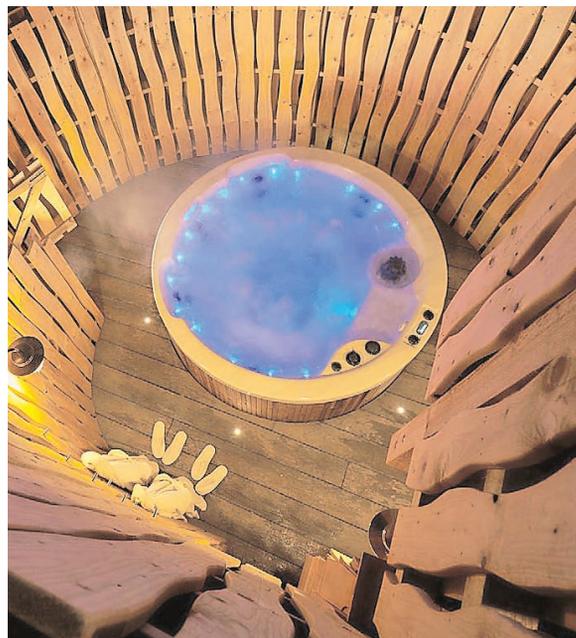
From then, the evening's horizons narrow rapidly to the immediate vicinity of the hot tub and a nearby bottle of Chateauneuf du Pape.

Twinkling at night like a Middle Earth tree-top palace, it's easy to see why the tree houses have been a hit - and as another thrilled child bikes past, asking a disgruntled dad why they aren't staying here, it is difficult to not feel, well, smug.

The next morning, while the older generation relax back at base, we drag ourselves out of the rainforest showers to tackle some of the park's countless activities.

Overcoming family clumsiness, my mum excels on a Segway, while we swing, climb and frantically grab during the aerial adventure - a challenging treetop rope course with a final zoom down the 270-metre zip wire.

As a mild fear of heights kicks in on the first challenge, I politely insist that I need to get down right away please and thank you, but - thanks to some tough love - shake off the nerves and wobble my way to the excellent end. I am now a bona fide



■ **New at Center Parcs: The luxury tree houses are the latest innovation at the Elveden attraction.**

adrenaline junkie.

After an obligatory trip to the pool - if you don't scream on the Tropical Cyclone you're braver than every member of my family - and its ever-excellent rapids, it was time to slow our heart rates at the Aqua Sana spa.

As someone who generally likes being on the go, I wasn't convinced I'd be kept busy for three hours. I clearly hadn't heard about the water beds.

After a good deal of bobbing, I peel myself off and grow increasingly red in the face during a circuit of the excellent steam rooms and saunas, which, with different heats, smells and themes, leave us with irritatingly beatific smiles.

While Center Parcs' food offering has improved over the years, there still isn't a particularly high-end eatery to match the high-end customer, though the incredibly friendly team at Foresters' Inn, its peaceful setting and vast portions make for a memorable evening.

But with a hot tub and barbecue left lonely, the remaining nights are made up of quick soaks, pool competitions and disproportionately competitive rounds of Pictionary.

Before we knew it, Monday morning had arrived and it was time to trudge back down the gangway.

There's no escaping the price - and for many, when adding on the cost of bikes, activities and food, a week in the sun might be more appealing.

But the tree houses are an oasis of luxury for adults, a magical getaway for children and for an unforgettable celebration - our break fell on an 80th birthday - you can't get much better.

Just take me with you. I've got a Pictionary title to reclaim.

For more information, visit [www.centerparcs.co.uk](http://www.centerparcs.co.uk)



## Travel news

■ **Italy** - Quality Villas ([qualityvillas.com](http://qualityvillas.com); 01442 870 055) offers seven nights at Ninfa di Lago (self-catering) from £4,395 (up to 10 sharing) - saving £3,105 (41pc). Available from September 10, 17 or 24.

■ **Norway** - Wildfoot ([wildfoot.com](http://wildfoot.com); 0800 195 3385) offers the eight-day Central Spitsbergen & Aurora Borealis cruise (full-board) from £1,306pp (two sharing) - saving £560pp (30pc). Includes all excursions and transportation throughout. Departs September 16.

■ **Paxos** - Simpson Travel ([www.simpsontravel.com](http://www.simpsontravel.com); 0208 003 6557) offers seven nights at Callista House (self-catering) from £846pp (six sharing) - saving up to £93pp. Includes transfers, car hire and flights from Heathrow on September 18.

■ **Tenerife** - Teletext Holidays ([www.teletextholidays.co.uk](http://www.teletextholidays.co.uk); 020 3001 0628) offers seven nights at the four-star Sandos San Blas Nature Resort and Golf (all-inclusive) from £636pp (two sharing). Includes flights from Stansted on September 20.

■ **Prague** - Thomas Cook City Escapes ([www.thomascook.com](http://www.thomascook.com); 0871 8950045) offers two nights at the three-star Hotel Saint George (room only) from £109pp (two sharing). Includes flights from Stansted on September 26.

■ **Mexico** - Tropical Sky ([tropicalsky.co.uk](http://tropicalsky.co.uk); 01342 886941) offers seven nights at the five-star Dreams Sands Cancun Resort and Spa (all-inclusive) from £1,109pp (two sharing) - saving £470pp (30pc). Includes transfers and flights from London. Valid for travel November 1-December 11. Book by September 30.

■ **Austria** - Titan ([www.titantravel.co.uk](http://www.titantravel.co.uk); 0800 988 5873) offers the eight-day all-inclusive 'Enchanting Danube' Uniworld river cruise from £1,799pp (two sharing) - saving up to £600pp. Includes flights, transfers, excursions and Titan's VIP Home Departure Service. Departs on November 6.

## Local offers

■ Latest holiday offers from Norwich. Telephone Travel Norwich Airport on 01603 428700, email [enquiries@travelnorwichairport.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@travelnorwichairport.co.uk) or visit [www.travelnorwich.com](http://www.travelnorwich.com) to check availability.

■ **Bulgaria** - 18 September 18, seven nights in 4\* Named Hotel in Sunny Beach, All Inclusive from £399 per person

■ **Majorca** - October 9, seven nights in a 4\* Named Hotel in Alcudia, Half Board from £389 per person

■ **Benidorm** - November 7, eleven nights in 4\* Named Hotel. Half Board from £539 per person

■ **Fuengirola** - November 10, ten nights in 3\* Named Hotel, Half Board from £509 per person

■ **Tenerife** - November 24, December 1, 4 and 11, seven nights in 5\* Named Platinum Hotel in Costa Adeje, Half Board from £549 per person - Saving up to £198 per couple

■ **Benidorm** - December 12, four nights in 4\* Named Hotel, All Inclusive from £349 per person

■ **Gran Canaria** - May 1 and 8, seven nights 5\* Named Platinum Hotel in Maspalomas, Half Board from £565 per person - Saving up to £150 per couple

■ **Ibiza** - May 12 and 19, seven nights 4\* Named Platinum Hotel in Santa Eulalia, Half Board from £499 per person

■ Prices are correct at time of going to print, all subject to availability and based on maximum occupancy. Prices excludes £10/adult Norwich Airport Development Fee payable at the Airport.