

Something For The Weekend?

Black Cat Cottages



Traditional

Luxury

Boutique

B & B

Inn

Retreats, Escapes ...

Feature

If you live or work in a City, you may from time to time dream of escaping into the Country, where the pace of life is most definitely slower (no motorways and usually no broadband!), the air fresher, and village pubs and local shops replace supermarkets and shopping malls. Over Christmas, my Partner and I got the chance to realise such an escape, when we stayed at Black Cat Barn in Southrepps, North Norfolk.

One of two self-catering holiday cottages owned and operated by Black Cat Cottages, Black Cat Barn is a charming converted barn that has a wealth of history within it's timber and flint skin, having been a laundry room (complete with old copper) and a mechanics workshop among other things. It is located in Southrepps village, only a few miles from the sea between the A149 and Mundesley.



The interior has been carefully and sympathetically transformed to give a gorgeous hideaway that has everything you need for a break away from the norm. Upon entering, Black Cat Barn reveals itself to be an open-plan 'L'-shape, with a full-sized, fully-equipped kitchen (right down to the chrome juicer), dining area, and large lounge area - one part for the romantic, with wood burner and soft, fluffy rug in front of a sofa, another for individual relaxation with Lazy-Boy style leather chairs and a large flat-screen TV complete with DVD player and impressive Surround Sound (fully tested with the DVD box-set of '24' that we watched throughout the festive season!).



The WC/shower room (a wet room big enough for two) is on a par with anything I've seen in a 'boutique' hotel - throughout are gorgeous shimmery tiles that radiate lustrous copper hues when wet, and the shower itself is deliciously powerful. Wooden stairs lead up from the lounge area to a mezzanine floor that holds a Super-King size bed beneath a wide Velux that, on clear days offers scenic views for miles and at night, allows you to drift off to sleep while gazing at the stars.



Aside from the wonderful first impression of the seamless combination of the rustic and the contemporary, another highlight of our arrival to the Barn was the level of attention that owner Rebecca Trezise had obviously paid to making our stay as enjoyable as possible. It being the festive season, we were delighted to see a sprinkling of stylish decorations throughout the Barn, along with a hamper of local goodies (much appreciated!). Details about local happenings occurring throughout our stay had been added to the calendar on the wall and there was a folder telling us pretty much everything else we might need to know, from a sample menu for the local pub (The Vernon Arms) to the route of a local walk you could take around Southrepps (which we did). Naturally, I expect decorations and hampers were perks of staying over the Christmas period, but I have no doubt that Rebecca bestows a similar level of attention on all her guests. She offers to help plan outings and suggest activities should you need any assistance (classic car including Hamper filled with Norfolk produce to pootle about the country lanes perhaps?).



If you are planning to enjoy a romantic getaway or are merely too bushed to do little more than make the journey of a few yards between the Lazy-Boy chairs and the village pub, then Black Cat Barn is an ideal retreat from modern life. Away from distractions like phones and computers (mobile phones do work in the Barn but the signal is poor), it can give you the perfect break to recharge your own batteries.



If you do want to explore further a field, the Barn is a great base for exploring all of North Norfolk (and even into Norwich if you so desire).

We made the best of both worlds, alternating days out in the wilds with days where we literally didn't leave the Barn (again, I refer you to the box set of '24'!!). One day we took a 3-mile walk around Southrepps and Trunch - both scattered with 'Quiet Lanes' that are ideal for walkers and offer beautiful views of the Norfolk countryside. On Christmas Eve, we had lunch at The Walpole Arms in Itteringham (highly recommended). On Boxing Day, we drove out to nearby Cromer (only minutes by car) and watched the brave 'Dippers' take to the chilly sea from Cromer Pier. Afterwards we took the coast road to Holkham where we parked up and followed an 8 ½ mile walk from Holkham to Wells next the Sea (where we partook in chips on the Quay - would have been rude not to), and back through Holkham Country Park. On other days, we went into Sheringham (again only minutes by car), and walked along the beach at Mundesley and Overstrand.



Returning home after our weeklong stay at the Barn, I am happy to confess that we were probably more relaxed than we had been all year. Despite the fact that, for us, it was only an hour or so from home, it felt like further such was the level of escapism you can achieve. Our stay was more than comfortable, with everything we needed to hand (even kindling and wood for the wood burner was all supplied), including a few extras that really raise the bar for self-catering cottages (board games galore and the first fire set up ready to go upon our arrival). Southrepps itself is a lovely village that is ideally situated to experience and enjoy all the other wonderful features that North Norfolk, and the wider County, has to offer.



On a very final note, I should point out that, while Black Cat Barn is really a retreat for couples, The Homestead, which is next door, is a larger cottage that is perfect for bigger groups or Families. Having also been inside The Homestead, I can promise that you can expect the same high level of exacting quality and care as is clear throughout the Barn.

What are you waiting for? Plan your Escape now!



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