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Stay the night
Hill House, Norfolk

The leafy village of Saxlingham Nethergate provides the pleasant setting for this great hideaway for a group "staycation". The humble name belies the quality secreted behind a screen of trees - for Hill House is a Grade II-listed Tudor manor house with Victorian additions, sitting in a glorious six acres. Inside, contemporary style and an excellent period restoration blend well to create a house with atmosphere. You can lose each other here: climb the higgledy piggedly Tudor staircase (with a rope for a banister) by the kitchen, and you'll find that toddler you're pursuing has descended by the grander, more modern staircase at the opposite end of the house. In fact, it will be hard to keep the kids downstairs - on the top floor is a games room complete with pool table, PlayStation and home cinema. The grown-ups can enjoy their own home cinema, too, in the comfy sitting room, as well as a fully integrated audio system in all communal rooms. There's a beautiful formal living room and a mahogany-furnished dining room where the table seats 12. But the kitchen-diner is likely to become the social hub in this spacious retreat.

The rooms

There are plenty of beds to choose from here. The house sleeps up to 13 in six doubles (and a study) - two of which have zip-and-links for converting into twins. The two first-floor suites have six-foot beds and individual en-suite bathrooms, with a further family bathroom serving other rooms. Indulgent smellies are from The White Company (our toddler loved the duck-shaped soap left just for her). While the first-floor suites are stylishly simple, there is a romance about the rooms in the rafters - try the one with the four-poster with large adjoining bathroom and free-standing tub.

The food and drink

A generous welcome pack will get you going, but guests are also allowed to harvest produce from the orchard and organic vegetable garden - a nice touch. The smart state-of-the-art kitchen has a choice of Aga or electric oven, as well as every other mod con. Outside catering can be organised or dine out at The Wildebeest Arms (01508 492497; thewildebeest.co.uk), an award-winning local restaurant.

The extras

Guests can have a go at playing croquet or tennis. If you feel the

The access

Babies and children are welcome, as are well-behaved dogs, which get their own gated ground-floor room with dog bowl.

The bill

Minimum stay is three nights from £1,623; seven nights from £2,681.

The address

Hill House, Saxlingham Nethergate, Norfolk NR15 1TE (01386 701177; ruralretreats.co.uk).

Simone Kane



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THE INDEPENDENT

How to have a holiday without going hungry

Are we there yet?
Katy Holland

Here's a tip for any parent trying to lose weight: simply book a holiday in the euro-zone. You won't be able to afford to eat anything, so you'll come back a whole stone lighter.

It worked for me. I was mad enough to go to the Med for half-term, where the eye-watering exchange rate left me high and dry. It was a struggle

just to feed the kids; every time they "needed" another ice cream (£4.50 a go!) or a drink from the hotel bar (£3.50!) I started coming over all faint. So how can a family survive in these hostile conditions? It's time to talk emergency cost-cutting tactics. And I don't mean booking self-catering and living on pasta and tomato sauce for a fortnight.

Instead, the canny parent is going on all-inclusive package deals, the likes of which are apparently becoming increasingly popular. (Thomas Cook alone reports an increase of nearly 50 per cent in its all-inclusive bookings this year.) And there are some very nice establishments which are very happy to throw everything in for you. Take the five-star Knossos Royal Village (00 3 2106236150; aldermarhotels.com), on the east coast of Crete, which has just been completely refurbished and offers lots of children's facilities, from gigantic waterslides to Cretan art workshops and tennis academies. A seven-night all-inclusive stay for two adults and two children in a family room costs £1,319 per adult and £375 per child in July with Olympic Holidays (0800 0933322; olympic.holidays.co.uk).

The Coral Beach Hotel in Cyprus, offered by Prestige Holidays (01425 480400; prestige.holidays.co.uk) is also worth checking out; it has just introduced all-inclusive packages for the first time, and prices for two adults and two children sharing for a week start at £1,421 per adult and £738 for children. Supervised mini clubs and entertainment are all laid on. Of course, with all that food and drink on tap, the drawback is that you may well come back

heavier rather than lighter, but I've got a solution for that, too. Why not opt for an all-inclusive family activity holiday where you can eat as much as you like and then burn it all off again? Acorn Family Holidays (0800 0749791; acornfamily.holidays.co.uk) offers some exciting camping trips in spectacular surroundings in France and Italy, where days are packed with energy-burning activities ranging from kayaking to abseiling. Take their Ardeche adventure and you get to spend two days descending the river in a canoe, sleeping in a bivouac under the stars. All-inclusive prices for the summer holidays start at £1,596 for a family of four. For a holiday in the dreaded eurozone, you won't beat that for family fun with food for all.

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