

gazette



LEISURE SPECIAL

DAY TRIPPER

Can't get to stay on Brownsea? Then go there (or to any of our hotels for that matter) as a day visitor, p10

Review

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Treasure Island

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WHAT A DIFFERENCE A DAY MAKES...

...especially if you spend it at one of our holiday centres. Dalia Dawood recharged her batteries in her day on Brownsea Island

PHOTOS: JEFF HOPKINS; ROY RILEY

What's the first thing you do when the sun's out? Flip flops on, sun cream at the ready, get a tan that puts the cast of *The Only Way Is Essex* to shame? Me too. It's what lots of Partners do (probably), but the super-organised ones prepare well in advance by booking a stay in one of the Partnership's five holiday centres during the summer months.

That's right, there are five amazing places for you, your family and friends to visit around the UK (see panel overleaf) but you've got to get in quick to book a stay as they fill up fast. However, unlike TOWIE, that's not the only way. You can head to any of the Partnership hotels on a day trip and have just as much fun in the sun (or rain... we're in Britain, after all!) – and you'd be more than welcome. "It's our ambition to fill up with day visitors," says David Pugh, Manager, Estate and Guest Services at Brownsea Castle in Dorset. "We're fully booked for the summer holidays and half term but a day trip is a great alternative, whether you want to relax on the beach or have an activity-packed day out."

Taking David's word for it, I headed to Brownsea Island for a day trip to discover all the exciting things I could do in just a matter of hours. Here's how I got on...



'A DAY TRIP IS A GREAT ALTERNATIVE, WHETHER YOU WANT TO RELAX ON THE BEACH OR HAVE AN ACTIVITY-PACKED DAY OUT'

David Pugh, Manager, Estate and Guest Services, Brownsea Castle



GO ON, GET GOING

Islands generally have a bad rep (*Lord of the Flies*, *Cast Away*, *Lost*... the list goes on), but, having been before, I knew Brownsea Island was a peaceful and picturesque place. The only problem was getting there... I'm not a fan of the open water and wasn't feeling fab about getting into the teeny (but trustworthy) boat that's been taking Partners back and forth for 50 years: *Castello*. My fears were washed away quickly, though, as Skipper Tom Garsden welcomed us aboard and the journey across was lovely. Now it was time for some outdoor fun! And there's no shortage of it on Brownsea. I unleashed my inner child by having a go on the swing, slide and climbing frame and tried my hand (badly) at disc golf and croquet. I even went head-to-head at skittles with actual child Louie Thompson (he won). If you've got kids, they'll be in activity heaven here. And, if you're a big kid like me, you'll be just as satisfied. Adventure seekers can go one better by trying archery or kayaking, available on certain days of the week and, although it's passed this year, every August you can have a go at dinghy sailing with qualified Partner helms during Dinghy Week.



Totalled in skittles battle! Dalia's inner child fails against the real thing

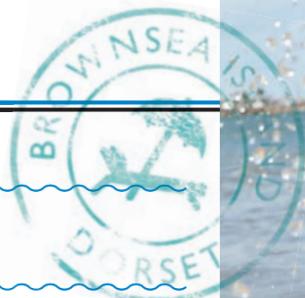


Whoever floats your boat – in this case, Skipper Tom Garsden



Is it Lilliput? No, it's just a really, really big chair





CHILL-OUT ZONE

Activities are fun, but I'm more of a chill-with-a-good-book sort, so when it came time to relax, I was in my element. And that's what Brownsea's all about. "We're more of an inactivity centre," jokes David Pugh, Brownsea Castle Manager Duncan Fisher adds: "Partners love coming here to relax. They love the atmosphere. There's no Wi-Fi, cars or noise, making it a great place to wind down while the kids run wild."

This sounded perfect to me, so my next stop was the beach. Ahh, the beach. Calm breeze, warm sand and shining sun = bliss. I lounged in a deck chair after having made a few sandcastles and, while I could've stayed there for hours, the clock struck 3pm... aka cream tea time! Nothing goes together better than relaxing and eating, especially when it's an indulgent treat, so I sat on the terrace overlooking the water and tucked in to my cream-and-jam covered scone. Delish!

You can have an absolutely splashing time on the beach



VISITING BROWNSEA: NEED TO KNOW

Want to spend a day at Brownsea? There's a few things you'll need to know before making your journey. Car parking arrangements in Poole have been made at the Quay Thistle Hotel. Day guests will need to pay the hourly rate and register their arrival. The Partnership's boat *Castello* departs from and returns to Sandbanks and Poole at specific times of day. Book your place via the Brownsea Castle office (01202 707768).

Full details on the Partner intranet: [Home > Leisure > Residential Clubs > Brownsea Castle](#)

SECRET SQUIRRELS

I've indulged my inner kid, my fondness for relaxing and my craving for sweet treats, but I matched all this with my curiosity for finding out about things by exploring the island. Brownsea is rich in history, heritage and beautiful views, and you could spend the whole day discovering more. One thing I'd definitely recommend is taking in the breathtaking sights on the castle's roof. You've got to climb 117 steps, but it's worth it to see the 360-degree views around Poole Harbour. If nothing else, it's the perfect place for a #brownseaselfie. Speaking of which, I managed to sneak a selfie with one of Brownsea's famous red squirrels – of the soft toy variety! As for the real ones, although there are approximately 200 red squirrels on Brownsea, they're hard to spot, but you might see a few if you go for a hike around the island, 17 acres of which belong to the Partnership. The rest of it is owned by the National Trust and access is free for Partners.

I've had a brilliant day out, just like my fellow day trippers. Jess Smith, whose husband Kristian works in Waitrose's Bracknell head office, visited with her parents and children. "We've loved it! There's lots for the kids to do, all the staff are lovely and it's hugely good value. We've felt privileged to see something so amazing." So have I. 🐿️



The Smith family see the sea from Castello



Sun, sea, sand – and scones. The perfect holiday combo



Dalia practises lounging until she makes it perfect



'PARTNERS LOVE COMING HERE TO RELAX. THEY LOVE THE ATMOSPHERE'
Duncan Fisher, Manager, Brownsea Castle



We capture the Castle – on camera



Top of the world! Or of the Castle, at least



Come on you reads! Go nuts for squirrels on Brownsea



WHAT WILL A DAY TRIP TO BROWNSEA COST YOU?

A typical day visit to Brownsea Castle is less than £20! Here's a breakdown of costs*:

- Day visit fee/boat: £3.75
- Bar snacks/lunch: £5.50-£8.90
- Afternoon tea: £4.50

Total: £17.15

*Prices based on one adult day visit, excluding additional travel costs; kids' prices are lower. Contact the Brownsea Castle office for more information.



DAY TRIPPING AT THE CLUBS

Brownsea's not the only place you can visit for the day – you can also head to the Odney Club in Berkshire, Leckford Abbas, Lodges and Campsite in Hampshire, Ambleside Park in the Lake District and Bala Lake in Snowdonia. All welcome day visitors and Odney makes a day charge of £3.75 for Partners and £2 for dependents (maximum two guests). Michael Holdich, Operations Manager for Leckford and Brownsea, says: "Some Partners may want to stop the night at the Leckford Campsite on their way down for a day visit to Brownsea. We still have availability for pitching a tent." Groundsheets at the ready!

All information on the clubs, including opening dates and contact details, is available on the Partner intranet via [Home > Leisure > Residential Clubs](#)



Leckford Abbas, Hampshire



Ambleside Park, the Lake District



Odney Club, Berkshire



Bala Lake, Snowdonia