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the **Saturday**

Edited by LISA MINOT

HAVEN PARK IDEAL FOR ALL THE FAMILY

I HAD no idea where to take my parents and five-month-old son Albie on holiday – but trains, planes and passport palavers did not appeal.

I needed something easy for me, which had disabled access for Dad and that would not break the bank.

I had fond memories of our caravan holidays as a child but was I just looking back through rose-tinted specs? Only one way to find out.

Haven has 35 sites around the country, with adapted accommodation for wheelchair users, so it seemed ideal.

And 22 of the parks offer camping, so the adventurous can sleep under the stars. We plumped for a spanking-new adapted caravan in Essex, at The Orchards site in St Osyth, about 20 minutes' from Clacton-on-Sea.

Self-catering holiday homes suit any budget and you can keep a lid on your expenditure by bringing your own grub.

That said, there is an on-site restaurant, Mash & Barrel, if you fancy a night out. The Orchards also has a Papa Johns pizza place, Chinese takeaway and a well-stocked Co-op for essentials

you might have forgotten. The park is peaceful, with rental caravans near the entertainments centre and privately owned ones farther afield.

In an unspoilt location, surrounded by seawater creeks, play areas, heated outdoor pools and a pebbly beach, it's perfect for young kids. There is also a golf course and fishing lake. Most important for us, the park was on a flat estuary – perfect for wheelchairs and prams.

Cosy caravan is a real treat

Accommodation is thoughtfully laid out, with lots of space between the caravans. And the on-site maintenance team is quick to help with any requests such as extra chairs.

With a huge ramp leading to the entrance of our van, it was easy for both the wheelchair and pram to glide in.

Inside, it was simple but not spartan – a roomy lounge with dining table, a well-equipped kitchenette and a TV.

My only gripe was the bedroom for Albie and I had just a slim single bed. I was nervous about turning over and falling out, but he was happy in his cot. Down the corridor was a

large wet room with hand rails and room to manoeuvre.

On the edge of the park we discovered the East Essex Aviation Society and Museum, in a historic Martello Tower built in 1805 to repel a Napoleonic invasion which thankfully never materialised.

Now it displays memorabilia and more from one that did – the wreckage of an American P51 Mustang which crash-landed off Clacton in 1945.

Back on site the fit can burn off their energy in an indoor sports centre, or on the all-weather court outdoors, and the heated pools have slides and a splash zone.

The evening entertainment, over a retro Malibu-and-pineapple, was only a little cheesy. It was a rock-themed show in which the female staff danced and belted out classics – a great alternative to playing board games or watching TV.

But at the end of a long day, the cosy caravan is a real treat. This holiday is good old-fashioned fun, just what I was after.

You can't fault the value, and if you book by the end of the month you get next year's stay at today's prices.

LAUREN NAYLOR

You kip in Clacton

GO: HAVEN

FOUR nights' self-catering at The Orchards holiday park in St Osyth is from £129 per family, based on six sharing Prestige accommodation, arriving October 13. Includes kids' clubs, use of leisure facilities and evening entertainment. Four nights' self-catering next spring is from £168 per family. See haven.com, or call 0871 230 1900.

RUN WILD ... fun with kids at The Orchards, above, and seaside at Clacton, right



RIDE STUFF ... Dubai

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India, Bali and Singapore. See hollandamerica.com or call 0843 374 2300.

● ENJOY fabulous Christmas markets by cruising up the Moselle River in Germany for £189 per person, saving £150 each.

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