

The beautiful South

With the promise of sun, sea and spectacular scenery, Steve Rowe heads off for a tour of England's south coast



THIS MONTH'S SITES



1. BATTLE NORMANHURST COURT

For the most up-to-date details, see The Club website – alternatively, see p71 of the 2015/16 Directory. **Facilities include a playground and a play area.**



2. DALEACRES

For the most up-to-date details, see The Club website – alternatively, see p79 of the 2015/16 Directory. **Facilities include a play area and a games room.**



3. BROOMFIELD FARM

For the most up-to-date details, see The Club website – alternatively, see p75 of the 2015/16 Directory.



4. LITTLEHAMPTON

For the most up-to-date details, see The Club website – alternatively, see p89 of the 2015/16 Directory. **Facilities include a play area.**



You can book your pitch online at caravanclub.co.uk/searchandbook or by calling our Advance Booking Service on 01342 327490.

FOOD + DRINK



Six Bells Inn

In the quiet village of Chiddingly, this pub offers a great range of beers and hearty food. It also hosts jazz and blues music evenings – nice!

Contact: 01825 872227
Nearest featured site:
Broomfield Farm

Mrs Burton's Tea Room

This charming café is near the Battle Abbey gatehouse and offers a fantastic range of cakes and snacks, including a super cream tea.

Contact: 01424 774204,
mrsburtons.co.uk
Nearest featured site:
Battle Normanhurst Court



The Contented Pig café

This high street café in the heart of Littlehampton offers a range of snacks and light bites.

Contact: 01903 719111,
thecontentedpig
littlehampton.com
Nearest featured site:
Littlehampton



Botolphs Bridge Inn

A short walk from the Daleacres site, this pub offers good-quality restaurant meals and is apparently often fully-booked by caravanners using the site.

Contact: 01303 267346, botolphsbridgeinn.co.uk
Nearest featured site: Daleacres

Hastings



What do you look for in a holiday? Is it walking or cycling opportunities, great places to shop, cultural attractions, or lovely beaches? Perhaps it's that most elusive of British holiday features, good weather. Well, England's south coast is uniquely placed to provide all of the above. For a start, consider the weather. The climate here can be a few degrees warmer than the Midlands, plus, being about as far as you can get from the Atlantic-driven weather of the western coast, it's also one of the driest parts of the UK.

My tour was in late March, just after the sites had opened for the season and, apart from one blustery day, the weather was warm and sunny for the rest of the trip.

My first stop was The Club's Battle Normanhurst Court site near the ancient town of Battle, named after the 1066 Battle

of Hastings. It's a part of the south that still feels like a backwater, partly because the main A21 that links it to the M25 turns from a dual carriageway into a meandering single carriageway, making the journey here more of a relaxing country drive than a mad motorway dash; you don't have to battle to get to Battle. The site entrance is just off a fairly main road, so you don't have to tackle any narrow country lanes to get here.

Battle Normanhurst Court is situated in the grounds of a former manor house, so there's some lovely mature planting that makes the place feel like a woodland glade. There are 139 pitches, of which 89 are hardstanding, and many are tucked into private corners, surrounded by shrubs and trees. As well as two heated toilet blocks, facilities here include a playground and a ballground, plus a dog walk.

There's plenty to do in the area, including visiting south coast resorts such as Hastings

and Bexhill. Good food can be found at the Ash Tree Inn, a short drive from the site in the village of Ashburnham, or you can head into the centre of Battle, as I did, and enjoy the fayre on offer at any number of pubs and cafés. I can thoroughly recommend Mrs Burton's Tea Room, not far from the entrance gates of Battle Abbey.

HYTHE AND SEEK

My second stopover on this trip was The Club's Daleacres site, near Hythe in Kent. With its sleepy, narrow high street, this town wouldn't need much set dressing to be the backdrop for an episode of *Dad's Army*. It's also packed with cafés, pubs and charity shops, plus there's a large Sainsbury's superstore just off the A259 as it enters the town from the west.

Where the A259 runs alongside the Royal Military Canal is also a good place to park a large motorhome, before taking

a short stroll into the town centre. If you're a railway enthusiast, you must hop aboard the Romney Hythe and Dymchurch narrow-gauge railway – Hythe Station is near this parking spot.

Daleacres is set in open countryside and offers lovely views over surrounding hills to Lympne Castle in the distance. The site has 134 pitches, of which 45 are hardstanding and six are fully serviced. Recently developed facilities here include a toilet block, plus TV and games room, making it a great spot for families. The Botolphs Bridge Inn is a short walk from the site and provides restaurant-quality meals.

Back on the road, my next stop was Broomfield Farm Club site, located in countryside near the small village of East Hoathly, which is just off the A22 as it heads south to Eastbourne. You have to drive down a few short stretches of country lane to get to the site, but none >>

FOR THE FAMILY



Blue Reef Aquarium

Take the ultimate undersea safari at Blue Reef Aquarium in Hastings and enjoy incredibly close encounters with seahorses, sharks, giant octopus and hundreds of amazing aquatic creatures.

Contact: 01424 718776, bluereefaquarium.co.uk
Nearest featured site: Battle Normanhurst Court

Littlehampton Lifeboat Station

Littlehampton has two lifeboats and both live in a shiny new boathouse. The crew exercises every Sunday morning, so this is the best time to visit the boathouse if you want to see the lifeboats in action.



Contact: 01903 715351, littlehamptonlifeboat.co.uk
Nearest featured site: Littlehampton



Look and Sea Centre

Situated on the banks of the River Arun, this attraction is home to Littlehampton Experience Heritage Exhibition, Harbour Lights Café & Restaurant and the Official Visitor Information Centre for the area.

Contact: 01903 718984, lookandsea.co.uk
Nearest featured site: Littlehampton

Drusillas Park

Animals are only half the fun here. There's Thomas the Tank Engine and Friends, the Hello Kitty Secret Garden and numerous play areas.

Contact: 01323 874100, drusillas.co.uk
Nearest featured site:
Broomfield Farm





This Battle of Hastings battle ground is now prime walking country

so narrow as to cause any major problems. I loved the set-up of this site, with the main open field featuring pitches all round its outer edge, leaving the centre free, like a large village green. A second section takes you off into woodland, with fairly private pitches.

There are 80 pitches in total, of which 34 are hardstanding, with 42 seasonal grass pitches. This is a fairly basic site in terms of facilities. It has no washroom block, but the usual electric hook-up and fresh/waste water facilities are all in place. Despite this, the site offers great value for money at just £12.50 per night all year round.

The friendly warden told me that this site looks amazing when all the plants are in bloom and trees in leaf. It certainly enjoys a lovely, quiet, rural location, so

“The warden told me that Daleacres looks amazing when the plants are in bloom”

this is really a spot where you can leave the rat race behind and get away from it all.

If you feel like doing something a little more active, there are plenty of walking opportunities. There are also some great local villages with pubs that provide decent grub. I liked the Six Bells Inn in Chiddingly, Lewes, which also has jazz and blues nights; the warden will be able to suggest a few for you. If you want to get back to the madding crowd, the seaside resort of Eastbourne is a short drive away.

SMALL WONDER

My final stop was Littlehampton Club site. On the outskirts of this seaside town, it's a fairly compact site with well-trimmed hedges dividing the various sections. There are 108 pitches in total, of which 42 are hardstanding and 18 fully serviced. From most pitches, it's a short walk to the heated toilet block, with parent and toddler facilities and a laundry room. The site also boasts a dog walking area and a small play area for children.

If you like walking, then it's a 30-minute brisk stroll into the centre of Littlehampton. Alternatively, you can drive and park in >>



The town of Battle

CULTURE



Arundel Castle and Gardens

Situated at the top of the hill in the charming town of Arundel, this restored and remodelled medieval castle boasts more than 1,000 years of history. Lovely gardens and great views

Contact: 01903 882173, arundelcastle.org
Nearest featured site: Littlehampton



Battle Museum

This charming museum displays a selection of items of local significance, including the remains of a battleaxe, believed to be a unique relic of the famous 1066 conflict.

Contact: 01424 775955, battlemuseum.com
Nearest featured site: Battle Normanhurst Court

Towner Gallery

New to Eastbourne, this contemporary art museum is a centre for the visual arts in the South-East.

Contact: townereastbourne.co.uk
Nearest featured site: Broomfield Farm



Littlehampton Museum

This museum is in the heart of the town and offers an insight into the community's social history, through a variety of galleries showcasing local people's collections and archaeological treasures.

Contact: Littlehampton-tc.gov.uk
Nearest featured site: Littlehampton



OUTDOOR FUN



Borde Hill Garden

Boasting gardens that are rich in history and fine plants with intimate garden rooms, Borde Hill also boasts magical woodland and parkland, and offers superb views across the Sussex Weald.

Contact: 01444 450326, bordehill.co.uk

Nearest featured site: Broomfield Farm

Cycling

Cycling routes in the South East of England include National Cycle Network Route 2 which skirts the south-eastern coastline and the Downs and Weald route which connects London, Brighton and Hastings.

Contact: sustrans.org.uk



Port Lympe Wild Animal Park

Near Ashford, this park offers an exciting day out, filled with discovery for the entire family. It's home to more than 650 rare and endangered animals, including western lowland gorillas, tigers, lions, giraffe and black rhino.

Contact: 0844 8424647, aspinalfoundation.org

Nearest featured site: Daleacres



Llama Park

This is a great outdoor attraction for animal lovers, with llamas, alpacas and reindeer. There's also a coffee shop serving cream teas and a shop full of alpaca-wool knitwear and gifts.

Contact: 01825 712040, llamapark.co.uk

Nearest featured site: Broomfield Farm



a pay-and-display car park. This small seaside town has a compact shopping centre with pubs, cafés and mainly little independent shops.

I would highly recommend a drive out to the nearby historic town of Arundel, with its impressive castle dominating the skyline. It's a place I always take foreign friends to when they're visiting me in London, as it's the archetypal pretty English town, packed with quaint tea rooms where you half expect to see Miss Marple chatting to local gossips on the next table, plus an abundance of interesting book and antique shops. You can spend hours here.

I hope I've given you some inspiration if you're planning a trip to this part of the world. Daleacres and Battle Normanhurst Court can also provide a scenic stopover en route to the Continent on a Dover/Folkestone crossing to Calais.



MEMBERS' VIEWS



John and Maureen Price from Edenbridge were staying at Broomfield Farm, where they were being visited for the day by fellow caravanners Don and Sheila Henley, who actually have their own seasonal pitch at this site, but hadn't yet set up their caravan when we met them.

"It's a beautiful site in a great part of the country and we've been coming here for over 20 years now, usually staying for several weeks at a time," said John.

"We spent over 100 nights here last year, on our seasonal pitch, usually coming for long weekends," added Sheila. "It's a friendly site, with plenty to do in the area, plus the wardens often organise special events such as a fish and chip night or charity raffles."



Bem and Denise Watts, with their son Danny and daughter-in-law Sandra, plus grandchildren Charlotte and Lily were staying at Battle Normanhurst Court.

"We don't live that far away, so come to stay here quite often," said Denise.

"The grandchildren love it, as there is plenty of space to play and a friendly atmosphere."

"While here, we usually visit Bexhill as the beach is lovely in the summer, plus the grandchildren also love to visit the amusements in Hastings."

Roger and Sue Shepherd from the Isle of Sheppey, were at the beginning of long stay at Broomfield Farm.

"We have been coming to this site regularly for the past five years now, visiting many times each season," Sue said.

"It's a quiet and friendly site with welcoming wardens. We also like the fact that it's a basic site, since this makes it better value for us as pensioners. We always use the facilities in our caravan anyway, so we don't need a washblock.

"There's plenty to do in the area, as well as some great local pubs for food."



Club Together

The online community that just keeps growing

To read even more member views, see our fantastic online forum at caravanclub.co.uk/together