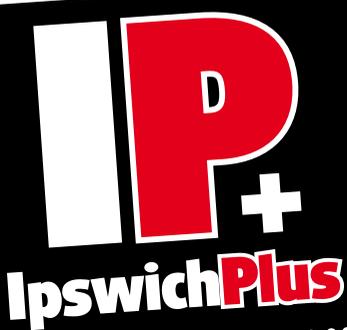


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**EVERY MONDAY**

# Holiday cottage heaven you won't want to leave

## TRAVEL

BY CARL MARSTON

**C**OMBERMERE Abbey is a lap of luxury, nestling in rolling parkland on the Cheshire-Shropshire border.

It is the perfect place to enjoy a relaxing break, in one of the Abbey's 10 grand holiday cottages, all tastefully refurbished with the emphasis on comfort and style.

You will want for nothing – it is genuinely a home-from-home experience.

We arrived on a wintry Saturday morning, taking our time on icy roads, to be greeted with a picture postcard first impression of Combermere Estate.

The park was covered in a blanket of snow, speckled by ancient oak trees draped in white – it felt like Christmas Day!

Twenty-four hours later and the snow was gone, having melted overnight in rising temperatures to reveal the natural beauty of the park.

In essence, we got the best of both worlds.

The holiday cottages are wonderful, most of them housed within the old 19th-Century stables, each of them superbly converted and individually decorated with original features lovingly conserved.

“ The huge coach house doors give the cottage real character, as do the high ceilings, the carved fireplace and the large windows

You are welcome to take your dog – a big attraction – but we chose to leave Oscar, our Italian spinone, in our local kennels.

He would have loved eyeing up the squirrels and hares in the park, but would have perhaps also taken a liking to the curtains in the lodge.

He would also have limited where we could visit during the day.

Instead, I was accompanied by my wife, Helen, and my mum and dad. The cottage was so luxurious that my parents would happily have spent all weekend indoors!

The cottages are of varying sizes, so big families and even wedding parties can be catered for. In fact, Combermere Abbey has made a speciality of hosting wedding functions.

Most of the cottages house four people, but 'Wellington' sleeps five, 'Beckett' sleeps six, 'Malbanc' eight and 'Crossley' caters for groups of 10.

We stayed in 'Callander,' which had only just been refurbished, to a very high standard. It was named as



**STAY IN COMFORT:** Combermere Abbey stable block, where the luxury cottages, below, are housed.

Photos: CONTRIBUTED



### Key facts: Combermere

■ There's an offer of a bargain break during March, which includes 20% off cottage stays, and also a fourth night free when you stay midweek. Prices are from £302 midweek, and from £318 for a three-night weekend stay.

'Nano-breaks' two-night stays are also available from just £260. (All prices based upon a cottage to sleep four, offers are available until March 31)

■ Contact details for Combermere Abbey. Website is [www.combermereabbey.co.uk](http://www.combermereabbey.co.uk) and email is: [estate@combermereabbey.co.uk](mailto:estate@combermereabbey.co.uk) Phone: 01948 662880. Address: Combermere Abbey, Whitchurch, Shropshire, SY13 4AJ.

a tribute to the Scottish ancestry of the current owner, Sarah Callander Beckett, and it is a jewel in the crown.

The huge coach house doors give the cottage real character, as do the high ceilings, the carved fireplace and the large windows. This all adds up to the sitting room being light and airy, and yet also very homely.

Upstairs, the two large bedrooms are both blessed with high ceilings and oak beams, while the generous bathroom has both a bath and shower.

Unsurprisingly, therefore, it was an effort to drag ourselves away from the cottage.

But you must. Combermere Abbey is set within 1,000 acres of rolling parkland and farmland, with a massive 143-acre lake at its heart, with the historic abbey close-at-hand.

The original Cistercian Abbey was founded in 1133, but predictably most of the monastic buildings were

destroyed during the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1536, in King Henry VIII's reign.

Only the Abbot's Hall remained, and was later re-designed as a gothic mansion in 1820.

The stables, built in 1837, where modern-day visitors are accommodated in such luxury, were restored in 1994 by the present owner.

In addition to taking pleasant strolls in Combermere Park, through the woods and around the mere, there are many places to visit, in both Cheshire and Shropshire, as well as neighbouring Staffordshire and north Wales.

We spent a day in nearby Chester, just 25 miles away, to walk along the River Dee, visit the cathedral and browse around the shops.

Nantwich and Shrewsbury are well worth a visit, and we also ambled along the canal tow path to a series of lock gates from nearby Whitchurch.

Back at 'home,' the well-equipped

kitchens mean that you can cook just about any meal, although we tended to cook an eagerly-awaited fry-up in the mornings, and then visit the nearby Combermere Arms, a mile down the road in the village of Burleydam, for a good-quality pub meal in the evenings.

If we had been staying for a week, then we would certainly have made full use of the kitchen, and probably the locally-produced ready meals which are available on site.

And perhaps we will return again.

It was such a pleasant weekend that, just a day after our return to Suffolk, I spotted my parents flicking through the pages of the Premier Cottages brochure, planning future weekend breaks.

You could do worse than choose Combermere!