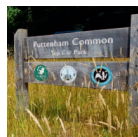




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ARE WE NEARLY THERE YET?

With bestselling author **Adele Parks**



One of Surrey's biggest tourist attractions for families is Chessington World of Adventures. People come from far and wide to visit, enough to justify the park having its own hotels for those wishing to stay for some days.

When my son was younger we always bought annual passes and visited Chessington often, I may well have been able to draw a map of the site with my eyes closed. But, as my son has grown up, inevitably we've visited less frequently. I must have been feeling sentimental about the place because I suggested to my friend that we should take along her six-year-old son and two-year-daughter.

'There's something undeniably wonderful about watching children respond to theme park rides'

There's something undeniably wonderful about watching children respond to theme park rides; their excitement and delight in every splash, rush, twirl or whirl is a tonic. I'd forgotten that uncomplicated pleasure. Although, despite my numerous historical visits, I wasn't much of a tour guide: the park was almost unrecognisable to me. Many of the rides and experiences were new or had benefitted from an exciting facelift since I last visited. Professor Burp's Bubble Works is now a magical, very charming, very popular Gruffalo River Ride Adventure. I loved this literary themed ride. I enjoyed the elation and astonishment of children spotting familiar characters and following the narrative. I was pleased that some old-time favourites were still going strong: Flying Jumbos, Seastorm and Tiny Trunkers will forever have a special place in my heart.

Every family will have their preferences. For our little animal-loving group it was the Zafari, where we were got up-close-and-personal with

giraffes, rhino, zebra and other animals, and Amazu, where we could clamber on rope and wooden bridges above monkeys doing exactly that! The softplay area, Dragon's playhouse, was a hit because hurtling down slides never gets old. Sealife was also a winner. We did that towards the end of the day and the dreamy tranquillity was rather welcome by then!

It's safe to say, we ran out of time, before we ran out of entertainments. The place is enormous, and inevitably some time is lost in queues, loo visits and buying lunch. That's to be expected, but even if we'd been magically transported from one attraction to the next, I'm not sure we'd have covered it all. There was so much to do and see!

My top tip to maximise your day is to take time to study the website before you set off. Be clear about which rides your children are tall enough to go on and which shows (there are many) you want to catch. With a plan, your less likely to miss anything. It was only when I returned home that I realised we'd hadn't visited the actual zoo, where lions, tigers, gorillas and reindeer are housed. An omission that came about because we'd seen a lot of animals, I think mentally we ticked off 'zoo' without realising there were more delights available. There's nothing for it, we'll have to go back! ♦

adeleparks.com
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TOP: The Gruffalo River Ride Adventure at Chessington



© Micael Buck / Chessington World of Adventures

You spin me right round

Adele Parks makes a return visit to Chessington World of Adventures to remember the splash, rush, twirl and whirls of a theme park