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ARE WE NEARLY THERE YET?

With bestselling author **Adele Parks**



I've seen brown signs directing me to Birdworld for many years now and it was past time that I ticked it off my to do list, so I invited along my friend and her daughter, Rosa. Birdworld is the UK's largest bird park, covering 26 acres. It has a truly enormous range of birds: penguins, peacocks, flamingos, parrots, hornbills and toucans, to name but a few. Nearly every bird caused us to gasp. Many are extraordinarily beautiful, they are all extraordinary! I hadn't realised I liked birds quite as much as I now find I do!

We started the day with Humboldt penguin feeding at Penguin Island. Clearly this is a huge attraction, everyone loves a penguin, not least because we've all watched *Happy Feet* on loop. Birdworld's penguins turned out to be just as entertaining and while they didn't burst into song and dance, they did dive and waddle in a way that enchanted the crowd. As the Penguins were

"Rosa was initially squeamish about plunging her hands into a bucket full of fish, but she quickly overcame her fastidiousness when she saw how well breakfast was received!"

eating, one of the staff gave an interesting talk about their habitat, camouflage, breeding and feeding habits. If you're an incredibly lucky individual (like Rosa) someone might gift you the penguin feeding experience. Rosa was initially squeamish about plunging her hands into a bucket full of fish, but she quickly overcame her fastidiousness when she saw how well breakfast was received! The feeding experience included an opportunity to get up close and personal with the penguins in private, which was amazing. Exciting fact, I've stroked a penguin. Rosa got the badge and cuddly toy so you'll just have to take my word for it!

I was concerned that having started the day with the big event, things might deteriorate (if this



Adele and Rosa got up close and personal with the penguins

Plucky penguins

This month bestselling author **Adele Parks** headed to Farnham to visit the UK's largest bird park

is your fear, you can book the feeding experience for later in the day); as it turned out, there was plenty more to see and do.

Indeed, it's worth planning your day around the numerous shows and exhibits so not to miss any, they include (but not limited to) pelican feeding, a discovery theatre show, an outdoor flying display and the Terry Pratchett Owl Parliament. This was one of my favourites. The beautifully crafted display – aimed at educating and creating awareness of these stunning birds of prey – has been created in collaboration with the World Owl Trust and named in honour of the award-winning author, Sir Terry Pratchett. Since opening last year, a number of owls have

successfully started breeding, so they're obviously happy with their new surroundings!

Birdworld also has an Underwater World aquarium and a children's farm. We visited when there were plenty of new baby animals at the Jenny Wren farm: lambs, kids and chicks galore. For young children there's the irresistible opportunity to pet rabbits and Guinea pigs at the animal encounter session. However, be warned, there's also a pet shop; I heard many children plea to take home a rabbit of their own. It's one of the first occasions I've seen parents actively encourage their children to head to the gift shop! ♦

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