

GOING AWAY



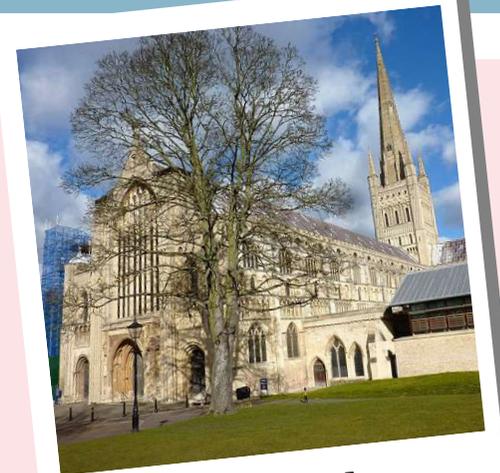
Nicholas Simington
In his studio



Crocodiles
At Thrigby Hall



Japanese railway
Wroxham Miniature Worlds



Norwich Cathedral

Find culture and relaxation in Norfolk

Tim Saunders takes his family to Norfolk to explore its culture and attractions

"Yes, it will be bliss, To go with you by train to Diss," An extract from *A Mind's Journey to Diss* (to Mary Wilson, the wife of Prime Minister Harold Wilson) by John Betjeman, probably my favourite poet.

This is brought to my attention by the artist John Atkinson, who we meet at his studio with little dog Treacle that daughters Harriett (4) and Heidi (2) enjoy stroking.

"You get a lot for your money here," says John, who relocated to Diss from London, eight years ago. "It's only about an hour and half from the

Fritton Lake Lodges, part of Lord Somerleyton's estate, in Fritton in North Norfolk.

The estate was purchased by carpet manufacturer Sir Francis Crossley in 1863 and has been in the family ever since, which is quite an achievement in itself these days.

This has partly been made possible through the current Lord Somerleyton's successful Fritton Lodge venture where there are 80 or so self catering lodges set in 250 acres. Some are still available for purchase. We stay in a three-bed lodge with all mod

walks with mummy while I push Heidi who is having a little nap in her pushchair. We find a nice spot in front of the market to eat our sandwiches and savour the afternoon sunshine.

Afterwards we visit the castle, which dates back to 1096 and is constructed of flint and mortar, faced with a cream coloured Caen limestone. The cathedral was eventually completed in 1145.

We also spend a day outside at Thrigby Hall Wildlife Gardens in Great Yarmouth. The first character we meet is Monty the talkative cockatoo who we discover is actually noisier than Heidi, which is quite an achievement. We are all mesmerised by the crocodiles in the swamp house and cannot believe how long they can hold a particular pose; their mouths wide open – you have to go back a few times to check they are actually real!

It becomes clear that Norfolk is home to a variety of attractions and at Hoveton, Wroxham; the gateway to the Norfolk Broads, we find Wroxham Miniature World. We're not quite sure what to expect but when we visit we are surprised to find a variety of model railways and Scalextric sets.

We are mesmerised at the size of these and our favourite is the Japanese railway complete with cuttings from Japanese newspapers.

On the way back, to break up the four hour journey to Hampshire we stop off at the National Trust's Wimpole Estate and enjoy walking around historic Wimpole Hall.

Trip details

For more information visit:
www.johnatkinson-artist.com
<http://nsimington.co.uk>
www.frittonlakelodges.co.uk
www.thrigbyhall.co.uk
www.wroxhamminiatureworlds.co.uk
www.nationaltrust.org.uk/wimpole-estate
 Watch the videos at
www.travelwriter.biz



Fritton Lake Lodge



John Atkinson
in his studio

We stay in a three-bed lodge with all mod cons and views of the lake

capital," he adds, which has allowed him to hire a chef from London for his latest venture, a restaurant in Diss to compliment the delicatessen he already runs.

John, an entrepreneur, ran restaurants, delis and a graphics business in the city for a number of years. He then bought a property in Diss with his wife Juliette, which they renovated. A successful artist, it comes as no surprise when he says: "I will be exhibiting my industrial themed paintings in the new restaurant at The Boilerhouse in Cobbs Yard, whose name we are still deciding."

We can see why Norfolk appeals to an artist not least because of the large skies and flat landscape, reminiscent of France. But the magical compositions of Nicholas Simington from Old Buckenham focus on people. He studied at Glasgow School of Art and it is nice to drop in on him and his wife Barbara to see his latest picture. "Each one can take me six months to produce and parts are modified until I get it just right," he reveals.

Norfolk is full of many more success stories and we are able to discover some of these during our stay at

cons and views of the lake. My wife particularly enjoys the convenience of the washing machine after family days out when we return in a state.

With two little rascals it is rare to have the luxury of relaxation but we are able to indulge in this precious pastime here. We enjoy watching a bit of television and having a lazy Sunday; the only lazy day we allow ourselves.

Here, there is also an outdoor centre, a pub and hotel, too and it is possible to visit Somerleyton Hall, a wedding venue. Fritton Lake Lodges certainly provides a good base for becoming better acquainted with Nelson's county. It was on September 29, 1758 Horatio Nelson was born to a prosperous family in Burnham Thorpe. (Vice Admiral Lord Nelson died at the Battle of Trafalgar on October 21, 1805 aged 47.)

As it is not far from Great Yarmouth it is necessary to visit this seaside town. There are some pretty chilly winds during our winter/spring visit.

At Norwich, again not that far from Fritton, we have chance to mooch around this historic city. Harriett