

February Half Term 2018; Wiltshire and Dorset. Part 2

Tuesday dawned wet and wild as forecasted, so we didn't rush off our site at Dezizes. I'd woken with a stinking cold but was determined not to be held back. After a hearty porridge for breakfast, we packed up and waved bye to the C&CC site. We made a brief stop for groceries at Morrison's in Devizes before carrying on to Stonehenge.

We arrived at 1:00, bang on our ticket time. As members of the National Trust we were able to visit for free, despite being run by En-

February Half Term 2018; Wiltshire and Dorset. Part 2

glish Heritage, the land is owned by National Trust therefore members are allowed in for free- however this isn't too well advertised and you are encouraged to pre book before arriving. Our National Trust membership saved us £21 each!

We were told conflicting things about dogs being allowed in/ or rather not as it turned out to be. It didn't bother us, we appreciate how historically important Stonehenge is, but the misinformation resulted in us wasting half an hour in the rain.

There is a brand new visitors centre that has opened in the last 3 years. You have to get a bus from the visitor centre to the actual site (or walk over a mile each way on a road!). As

February Half Term 2018; Wiltshire and Dorset. Part 2

it was pouring with rain we opted for the bus. The stones were fabulous and well worth the visit – I'd never seen them, Keith had.



However, I couldn't help but feel slightly of the opinion that English Heritage are overcharging people though. I also was completely hacked off about the fact that our National Trust entry didn't allow us an audio guide and we were expected to pay a further £3 for this. I didn't feel the visitor centre added much to the experience. But as I say, the stones were fabulous to see.

Our pitch for the night was actually closer to the Stones than the EH visitor centre. I'm

February Half Term 2018; Wiltshire and Dorset. Part 2

sure EH hate it, but there is a bylaw that allows wild camping on the old Stonehenge Drove road which overlooks the Stones! So therefore it is a rather popular spot for Campervan and motorhomes to overnight park. We decided this would be very cool so had a night next to the stones!



We managed to pick the coldest night of the year, -4 outside! And we have NO heating! ☐ We tackled this minor setback by having a really long drawn out dinner- spaghetti carbonara first followed by pancakes for pudding. By not rushing and washing up between courses, dinner time lasted over 2 hours and we were snug as a bug during this time. We also sank nearly a bottle of mead which

February Half Term 2018; Wiltshire and Dorset. Part 2

definitely assisted with my cold and also warming us up!

https://wanderleefy.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/f04e9-img_4768.mp4

The sky was phenomenal and we couldn't resist some star gazing despite it being a bit chilly. We had nearly every item of clothing on us by this time! We decided to head to bed just after 9pm, and our fleecy duvet set and our 13.5 tog duvet meant we were very cosy and warm- I didn't even need a hot water bottle!

Wednesday morning dawned cold – so cold that our inside condensation had frozen! As had our sliding door! By the time Keith had made me a cuppa and showered me with Va-

February Half Term 2018; Wiltshire and Dorset. Part 2

lentines Day choccies and sweets, we'd defrosted enough to enjoy the reason we'd put ourselves brought this indulgence test- it was so awesome to have our sliding door open and lay in bed looking at Stonehenge!!

☒ The heavens opened – and they stayed open ALL DAY! So we made no rush to leave, enjoying a fry up and some crumpets for breakfast and gallons of tea.

☒ <<<<<<<

leisurely morning, we set off in the direction of Shaftesbury, our next stop, but decided to have a stop at National Trust's Stourhead en route as we were passing by. I was feeling ropey but didn't want to ruin the day so we got our waterproofs and boots on and went

February Half Term 2018; Wiltshire and Dorset. Part 2

for a little explore around Stourhead estate.
I'm so glad we did.

xxxx Stourhead Estate is absolutely breathtaking- and that's coming from us in the depths of winter on a wet and wild day! Seriously beautiful, it's a huge landscapes garden estate, with a lovely walk of about 3 miles in length weaving up and round past countless different trees and bushes. Every now and again you get a glimpse of the lake, which is the head of the river Stour that has been dammed off into a landscaped lake. There are picture perfect bridges, a pantheon, a grotto, a waterwheel. It's just fabulous and despite the cold wet and frankly miserable weather, it was a holiday highlight. We met a NT volunteer in the Pantheon who showed us

February Half Term 2018; Wiltshire and Dorset. Part 2

an original statue of Augusta, and is over 2000 years old.

✖ He said he thought Stourhead was the best garden in UK and we wholeheartedly agree.

There is also a fabulous farm shop, and regular readers will know we have a weakness for these. Armed with our credit card we took battle with the farm shop, stocking up on numerous cheeses, all of which are from less than 30 mins of Stourhead, ice cream, sausages, venison, pork pies, ale. We were in heaven.

After restocking the fridge, we got the road again, this time heading for our campsite, Blackmore Vale Campsite on the outskirts of

February Half Term 2018; Wiltshire and Dorset. Part 2

Shaftesbury. Sadly right from arrival we had a vibe this wasn't going to be quite as we'd expected. It took over 40 mins to "check in" - there was no reception, no answer to the mobile number that was pinned to the gate. After 30 mins traipsing through the holiday park looking for someone, in the rain, I was getting a little fed up. Eventually after being directed to the eighth place (via 2 incorrect places!) I found someone, who preceded to tell me that we weren't expected - I had an email and had paid £20 deposit- but not to worry, there were a few places available so just drove down and find one. So we drove down and of course there was only one, and it had a reserved sign on. Keith went back to the man and he said don't worry about it, take it and he'd send the other people else-

February Half Term 2018; Wiltshire and Dorset. Part 2

where. Glad we weren't the other people! ☐

In the meantime I gave Ruby a good clean- she was FILTHY inside from our wild camping excursion in the rain! Keith did the water and loo and went for a shower. When he came back he was less than impressed- the water kept cutting out throughout his shower and the shower block was gross. Off I went for mine and mine was stone cold- so I left my shower. I went to brush my feet and nearly fainted- look at the sink! ☐☐

☒ Not impressed but of course we couldn't find anyone to inform. Keith went to the loo and came back pale- instead of urinals it was a tile wall to pee up! ☐ it also was clear by now that it wasn't a holiday site it was more

February Half Term 2018; Wiltshire and Dorset. Part 2

of a “permanent site” – all the other caravans had workmen in trade vans on.

The rest of the afternoon went smoothly but we made the decision to cancel our second night and move on tomorrow.

We had a fabulous deli board from our farm shop goodies followed by steak and home-made chips for main and the local ice cream AND a Gu desert for pudding. Well it was Valentines Day!

☒☒☒ **Thursday** arrived and thank goodness, there was no rain! Infact it was a picture perfect winters day, and the sun actually held a bit of warmth. We packed up, I went to inform the site that we would be leaving and

February Half Term 2018; Wiltshire and Dorset. Part 2

highlighted our concerns. Not that the manager seemed at all bothered.

Next stop was our day visit to Shaftesbury. We were both excited- Shaftesbury is home to the famous Gold Hill, or rather Hovis Hill as it's nicknamed as it's the location of the Hovis advert that Ridley Scott directed.

Well, as they would say in Yorkshire, By Heck, what a view. Our first impression of the view from the top of Gold Hill absolutely knocked me for six. It was absolutely breathtaking.

☒☒ Thankfully there was a perfectly located coffee shop with a table right at the peak of the view for us to grab a coffee and gather

February Half Term 2018; Wiltshire and Dorset. Part 2

our thoughts. We decided what made the view quite so special was the combination of the view of the countryside behind the old fashioned houses, cobbled street and NO cars!

✖ We were also lucky that the light was absolutely perfect- however when we visited later on it had clouded over and was still magical.

We popped into the dog friendly Gold Hill Museum and enjoyed our visit, before joining the Shaftesbury Snowdrop Festival trail. This wasn't quite as impressive as I'd imagined but I think I was still bowled over by "that" view so perhaps it never stood a chance.

✖✖ We had a packed lunch on the pretty park

February Half Term 2018; Wiltshire and Dorset. Part 2

terrace which had similarly great views before a pint on the terrace at the Mitre Inn. One last look at our special view on Gold Hill before heading back to Ruby.

🔴🔴🔴 We'd managed to book onto a site on the outskirts of Salisbury, Coombe Caravan Park for the next two nights. Fingers crossed for a better time here!

Until next time

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February Half Term 2018; Wiltshire and Dorset. Part 2

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