

## A weekend at Duxford Battle of Britain Air Show

Ruby the VW Campervan is parked up on the C&CC site at **Cambridge**. It's a quiet site despite being only a couple of miles from the centre of Cambridge, and has the usual high standard of facilities and cleanliness that we have come to enjoy this year, as we've stayed mainly on Club Sites.



The reason for our visit – as we are under an hour from home – is the Duxford Battle of Britain airshow. We booked our tickets in Fe-

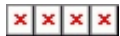
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bruary, and booked the campsite at the same time as this event is so popular that it sold out a number of weeks ago. We opted to stay over and get a weekend ticket – which actually was only a couple of pounds more than just a one day ticket, due to reports of terrible traffic chaos last year. Plus we could both enjoy a proper drink. After quite a bit of research, we decided to book this campsite due to it's close proximity to Trumpington Park and Ride, where there is a free shuttle to and from the airshow.

After a day of gigs and chores, we didn't actually leave home till after 5pm on Friday and we been had dinner before leaving. It only took us an hour to get to the campsite and it was the quickest set up we've ever had!

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Within 10 minutes, we were having a little walk to the local the pub for a pint. The Hudson's Ale house was about 15 minutes walk away towards Trumpington Park and Ride and we enjoyed a pint of their Hudson Ale and Lager before heading back to Ruby for a good sleep. I don't know about you but I always sleep so well in the campervan.



### ***Saturday - a day at the airshow***

Saturday morning dawned rather early as we had set an alarm. The gates opened at the air show at 8am, so we decided to have an early shower and bacon and egg bap before walking with our chairs and a picnic down to the park and ride for 9am. We stopped at the

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Waitrose for a fresh baguette for our cheese and pate picnic.

When we arrived at the Park and Ride there was already a massive queue for the shuttle – but it was early still and so we didn't mind too much. We waited for over an hour and only one shuttle bus had arrived. About 200 people had joined the queue behind us and there were no members of staff advising the situation – the mood was a bit panicky all round as we all knew the flying started at 12:45 and you could sense people calculating how many buses would need to suddenly appear to get us to Duxford in time. Some people at the front had been there since 7.30am!

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By 10.15 I had decided I didn't want to wait any longer, so arranged for an UBER to pick us up. A couple of ladies behind us heard me sounding off to Keith and said they would come in with us if we didn't mind and spilt the fare. 10 minutes later our ride arrived – an 8 seater! It seemed silly for us to only fill half of it, and not entirely knowing how much it would be, I shouted out to the Queue – 4 spaces – who wants to join us! Better to split it 8 ways than 2!

Taxi full to capacity and the driver instructed to take the NON motorway route – twitter had informed us the buses and half of the Duxford crowd were stuck on the motorway – and 20 minutes later we had arrived half a mile from the entrance. The driver kindly let

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us exit before the official entrance rather than sitting in the traffic jam he could turn round and go back the way we came. The fare came to just £14! I chucked on a fiver tip, and we all paid £2.50. Situation taken control of- 8 happy strangers marched the half an mile to Duxford and joined another queue to get in!

Once in, we found a place to set our chairs up and paid an extra fiver to walk the flight line. I'm not sure whether this was worth it or not, we weren't blown away - however that may be because the weather had decided to go awol and start to rain, despite the forecast saying it wouldn't. I think to be honest the stress of getting there had exhausted us!

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We settled down with a couple of pints of Spitfire and awaited the opening of the flying. The opening act was 16 Tiger Moths in formation marking 100 years of the RAF.



The flying went on for 5 full hours and was terrific value for money, it really was. We saw pre WW1, WW1, WW2, Korean, American aircraft – plus modern. Sadly the rain had set in however and we were cold and wet! But we perservered as the forecast for tomorrow was even worse. Photos were impossible as the rain made them unable to focus!

The Red Arrows were an absolute highlight –

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they were just terrific and lifted the crowd (and our) moods no end. 20,000 people were there and every single person was silent. It was actually eeery! Wonderful stuff.

The finale to the show was a flypast formation of 19 Spitfires in the air – the largest ever to have displayed at an airshow. Despite being cold, wet and tired, it was just phenomenal.

As they started landing after the flypast, they played Nimrod over the speakers and I realised that the water on my cheeks was not rain, I was in fact bawling like a baby! It was utterly emotional and I can't believe that almost half the crowd had left directly after the Red Arrows and before the finale so missed

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it.

The airshow finished at 5.45pm and getting back to Trumpington Park and Ride was a mission. We ended up queuing up for another hour and half and so we didn't get back to Ruby until 8pm. We were very tired and cold, but the joys of a lovely hot shower was wonderful, and a quick and easy reheat of a spaghetti I'd made previously made for a stress free dinner time. We were in bed snoring by 9.15pm dreaming of the spitfires.

Sunday dawned rainy and then some! It was so wet that we decided to forget about the Park and Ride and have a lay in before getting Ruby as close to Duxford as we could, for a quick walk around the indoor sections of

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the museum before coming home. We'd written off seeing the flying as we assumed, like most according to Twitter, that there wouldn't be any due to the abysmal weather.

### ***It ain't over till the fat lady sings***

When will us British learn NOT to trust the weather forecast? We found a great (free) parking spot within a mile of the front gate (I'm not going to name it as it may not be there next year!), and dressed head to toe in waterproofs made for the museum. Today there wasn't a queue - mind you we were arriving closer to midday than 11am as we did yesterday.

We explored the whole of the main museum

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hanger, looking at Concorde and the Lancaster up close, amongst others. Duxford Museum is a great day trip by the way, we've been before, but it was good to relook around.

The flying schedule was exactly the same at the Saturday, but I requested to Keith that we nipped outside to watch the Typhoon display as I loved that yesterday but didn't film it as it caught me completely off guard and I was just in awe of it. I just loved the immensity of the noise it made! It was wonderful!

So out of the hanger we emerged – to beautiful blue sky and sunshine! Can you believe it? All the rain had cleared up, so we stayed at the airshow, dressed in our waterproofs

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which we really could have done with yesterday, and enjoyed seeing all the displays again, this time with blue sky as the backdrop and no raindrops affecting the focus of my cameras.



The new Lightning bomber



Our favourites were the Lancaster, Spitfire and Hurricane flypast,

The mustangs



the red arrows

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and of course the spitfires, although it was too windy for all 19 today.



We had a terrific afternoon- our mood completely lifted by being warm and dry. Our secret parking spot was away from the congestion of everyone leaving, so we were back home by 7.30pm feeling very satisfied from a great weekend.

Would we recommend Duxford Battle of Britain Airshow? Absolutely! However, I think their logistical arrangements sucked. If we were to go again, we would stay at Cam-

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bridge campsite and cycle. We couldn't this time as Keefy was recovering from a minor op on his leg. There are loads of bike parking spaces at Duxford. Or I'd park a mile away (check google earth for back roads with lay-bys and walk- but get there very very early. And take your waterproof trousers EVEN if its forecast for sunshine all day!

I hope you like my pics of the planes, I really enjoyed snapping away and was stunned at the performance of my hand heldÂ **Sony Superzoom camera**. Lots of people with HUUUGE lenses on their cameras but I'm pretty chuffed with my pics and it is very portable.

Until next time

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