



In Praise of a Long Weekend

With the family in tow, Living North heads to a self-proclaimed gorgeous cottage near Whitby for a dose of nostalgia

In the dim and distant past I remember some academic trying to teach me the meaning of the expression 'laudatory epithet'. The latter word suggests a quality regarded as characteristic of the person or thing mentioned. Laudatory suggests a worthiness for praise. As my teacher suggested at the time, always take caution with such claims. So what of the Yorkshire company named Gorgeous Cottages?

Well let's put it this way, if you feel at all down, or even if you are on top of the world, check out their website which, as you would hope, is full of characterful cottages and certainly appear to merit the laudatory epithet gorgeous. One such little beauty is Cowslip Cottage tucked into the hillside in the village of Sleights, just a few miles west

of Whitby and the spectacular Yorkshire coast. The purpose of the trip was to catch up with family, and at the same time re-visit the resting place of my grandmother and the cottage in Robin Hood's Bay where my grandparents and mother spent many a happy holiday.

As we pulled into the off-road parking area which lies to the rear of the cottage, the rain beat down by the proverbial bucketful. Hastily seeking shelter in the cottage that was to be our home for the next three nights, the small entrance hall was quickly filled with our bags, boots and coats. The first and lasting impression of Cowslip Cottage is its homely feel, and as we stumbled into the living area (which combines a well laid out kitchen, dining area and sitting room) the wood-burning stove in the inglenook fireplace

caught our eye. Despite the weather however, we couldn't resist opening the French doors which led to a large private balcony with patio furniture and a BBQ (though not tonight) overlooking the valley below. With the tea brewing we explored upstairs: further evidence of tasteful furnishings and cosy accommodation set over the first and second floors. On the former was a well proportioned double room and a twin bedroom as well as a family shower room. The second floor offered a splendid master bedroom suite which occupied the whole of the second floor, with the star of the show, the free-standing bath, ideally placed beside the window for an uninterrupted view of the valley and hillside beyond.

Happily settled, the plans were hatched for the weekend ahead. Fortunately, the

weather despite the dismal start was due to clear and we decided to explore the nearby coast on Saturday and venture through the North York Moors and thereafter to York the following day. Tonight though, we would relax, cosy up, have a well earned glass of wine and just enjoy family time together. After a night's sleep only occasionally interrupted by an angry moo from the nearby cows who were clearly hacked off with the weather and perhaps the farmer for keeping them out of the barn that night. However, such are the vagaries of the British weather that the following morning, as the forecast had promised, we were greeted by clear blue skies. As I ambled around making coffee I returned to the balcony that had been so wet the previous evening. This morning the stillness of the Esk Valley was broken only by the enchanting whistle of the steam train running along the North York Moors Railway at the foot of the valley far below.

Post breakfast, our first port of call was Robin Hood's Bay. The quaint streets were just as I recalled from years back, and having my wife and three daughters with me made it even more special. We managed to find the cottage amidst the higgidly piggidly alleys and streets (where Google Maps and I failed, the Postie delivered). The beach was busy with visitors making the most of the break in the weather and although the tide was high we managed a short walk, clambering over rocks and enjoying the brisk sea air. We could have enjoyed coffee in one of the many cafés perched on the steep hillside but decided to enjoy the sunshine while we could and made our way to another coastal high spot Runswick Bay. This picturesque bay is the perfect place for a long walk on the beach and the houses here sit almost atop each other as the narrow cobbled streets, some no more than pathways, climb the hillside.

With two walks behind us we decided to head towards lunch and a pub we had heard good things about: The Postgate Inn, Egton Bridge. Lunch was perfect, just casual in the cosy bar, but a delicious mixture of hot sandwiches. We admired the impressive evening blackboard menu and vowed to return another time.

En route home we made a quick pit stop in Whitby. I love this busy, bustling, fishing port where ancient pubs nestle beside chic champagne bars and some of the finest fish and chips to be found. It's riddled with character and characters and you can get lost in its back streets. As dusk fell we drove up to the Abbey ruins, just for a quick squint, and we were rewarded with a moonlit scene which provided a haunting yet romantic view of the most dramatic debris of Henry's dissolutions. After a wonderful day exploring it was 'home' for a Cowslip treat of cosy fire, TV and the handsome steaks and all sorts of other goodies we had purchased Staithes from a highly recommended butcher-cum-deli, Radfords. The cottage was extremely well equipped and while our culinary craftsmanship did not demand anything overly complex, all mod-cons were available. This might be a small point but it is indicative of the overall quality of the property.

After another hearty breakfast our next excursion was to York. The children drained us of cash at York's excellent Designer Outlet (discounted shopping of top brands) and in return I offloaded part of their inheritance in the excellent Crown and Cushion, Welburn.

The North York Moors, York itself and the gorgeous coast of North Yorkshire can keep you busy for many days, alternatively the pleasant view from the balcony across the Esk Valley will give you the opportunity to while away many hours in perfect contemplation.

As we prepared to leave I reflected that, as ever, time had passed too quickly. We had enjoyed a fun and full weekend. Cowslip is a special place that sits proudly within the collection of Yorkshire cottages that offer a little bit of luxury and yes something special too – this is a collection that is gorgeous indeed.

Cowslip Cottage in Staithes is available to rent via [Gorgeous Cottages www.gorgeouscottages.com](http://www.gorgeouscottages.com) 0844 736 6276

