

THE SUNDAY TIMES
ULTIMATE 100
BRITISH HOTELS

FAMILY

BRING THE WHOLE GANG



THE ICKWORTH **A**

Suffolk

Set in the wing of a grand 18th-century house, within 1,800 acres of National Trust parkland, the Ickworth doesn't have to work too hard at keeping families happy. There's a free creche for under-9s, but what really counts here is the fleet of bicycles, the indoor pool and the lawns, where you can play badminton and footie, or throw a Frisbee. The effect is miraculous. Tightly wound kids sense the space and suddenly seem to

grow. Ours swam a length and rode a bike without stabilisers for the first time – then cried when it was time to go home. Mum and Dad weren't too happy to leave either. The bombproof furniture, easy atmosphere and big green endlessness of it all have a profoundly relaxing effect. The stress ran off us like water.

+ *Times+* offer: kids stay free. Family rooms from £165, B&B; ickworthhotel.co.uk

OUR
WINNER

BEDRUTHAN STEPS **B**

Cornwall

His'n'hers hammams, an expert mixologist in the cocktail bar and two hours of free childcare in the middle of the day all offer parents the hope of "me time". But the winning formula remains unchanged: happy kids mean happy mums and dads, and this complex above the beach at Mawgan Porth buzzes with

under-10s en route to the next activity, whether it's a singing class or a dip in one of the three pools.

+ *Times+* offer: get 25% off a two-night spa break. Family rooms from £150, B&B; bedruthan.com

ST MORITZ **C**

Cornwall

Checking your family in at the St Moritz does not come with

a sense of self-sacrifice. Sure, the kids will have a ball, thanks to the indoor and outdoor pools, and the 4x4 that whisks them to surfing lessons on Polzeath beach. But this sleek ocean liner of a place spoils the grown-ups, too, with a Cowshed spa and a talented head chef in the kitchen. Bucket-and-spade holidays don't come much plusher than this.

Family suites from £210, B&B; stmoritzhotel.co.uk

THE PIG NEAR BATH **D**

Somerset **NEW OPENING**
It doesn't have a pool or kids' clubs, but it does have a kitchen garden, where children can learn about the land from the affable gardener, Ollie, and a chicken coop where they can collect eggs for breakfast. Tearing through

14.09.2014 / 17



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**SUNDAY TIMES DIGITAL**

Meet Aloft Hotels' Botlr, the robot butler who'll serve your martini
thesundaytimes.co.uk/travel

also feature a 650ft zip wire and two high-ropes courses for competitive dads.

Two interconnecting rooms from £660, B&B; fourseasons.com

THE GROVE**Hertfordshire**

The Grove, near Watford, starts as it means to go on. At check-in, your children get to rummage in a toy box to pick a gift. Upstairs, you'll find modern interconnecting family rooms with child-size bathrobes. What next? Well, you could burn off some energy in the dedicated kids' pool, or whizz through the hotel's 300 dappled acres on a bike or tandem. It even offers junior clubs for that first round of golf, and there's a football pitch where England and Barcelona have trained. Family rooms from £340, B&B; thegrove.co.uk

AUGILL CASTLE**Cumbria**

Whatever your age, Augill Castle is the perfect gothic fantasy, an artful mix of richly coloured interiors

and crenellated towers, backed by a moody wall of Pennines. Kids will love the parent-free private cinema screenings and cookery classes, but it's the sense of freedom that is most infectious. This is a family-run place that doesn't stand on ceremony, and there are 20 acres of garden to be roared around in while the grown-ups are toasting by the drawing-room fire. Family rooms from £240, B&B; stayinacastle.com

GLENEAGLES**Perthshire**

It has hosted a G8 summit, its flagship restaurant has two Michelin stars and it's the setting for this month's Ryder Cup. Surely Gleneagles is too grown-up to tolerate kids? Wrong. The place is riddled with them, scampering in and out of the kids' club and Xbox zone, welcome everywhere from pool to putting green, and spoilt rotten with country pursuits such as off-road driving, fishing and falconry. Family rooms from £345, B&B; gleneagles.com

its 20 acres of countryside, they might flush out the odd deer, too. Furthermore, the shabby-chic interiors of this 29-room manor, and the informality of the service, mean parents' pulses needn't rise every time their offspring reach for a chocolate milkshake.

Two interconnecting rooms from £318; thepighotel.com

CALCOT MANOR

Gloucestershire
 The strength of this elegant Tetbury manor lies in the way it embraces

the entire family. It has Wiis and PlayStations, and pays close attention to the latest crazes (loom-band lessons, this summer). For adults, there's a swanky spa and an on-site pub. Rooms have style as well as sterilisers, and with everything from pizza to peppered couscous on the menu, it also ticks the fussy-eater box.

Family suites from £385, B&B; calcotmanor.co.uk

NEW PARK MANOR

Hampshire
 Catering for kids without turning the whole place into a creche is an art, and the

Luxury Family Hotels group has mastered it. New Park Manor, near the pretty village of Lyndhurst, has a smart spa, a heated outdoor pool, a proper kids' menu and all the baby paraphernalia you could wish for but couldn't be bothered to pack. Beyond the gate is the New Forest, which is so beautiful and flat, even bone-idle children will want to explore.

Family rooms from £255, B&B; newparkmanorhotel.co.uk

FOUR SEASONS**Hampshire**

Given all the ancestral oil paintings and cut-glass chandeliers, you'd be forgiven

for thinking that this grand Georgian manor outside Basingstoke was strictly adults-only. The truth is quite the opposite. In the wood-panelled reception, there are steps so toddlers can "check in". The hotel has an adventure playground, a pony club and a laid-back black labrador called Oliver to borrow for walks. From autumn, its woodland will

